CONFERENCE PROCEEDING

Paul's "Rule in All the Churches" (1 Cor 7:17-24) and Torah-Defined Ecclesiological Variegation

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> 17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to (1 Cor 7:17-24).[1]

In preparation for this conference, I asked a number of church leaders if they were familiar with Paul's "rule in all the churches." Notably, not a single leader who responded to my ad hoc survey was aware of such a rule. Based on this response and my general familiarity with ecclesial theology, I think it is likely that Paul's "rule in all the churches" has become a "rule in few of the churches" today. While many would probably be content to see this state of affairs continue, especially those who do not like church rules, there remains the nagging question, "Should a teaching that Paul considered important enough to be a universal rule be almost universally neglected by contemporary Christians?"

The aim of this paper is to introduce Paul's rule to those who are unfamiliar with it, and to make the case that Paul's rule is a lynchpin that sustains the church as a body of Jews and Gentiles.[2] In part one of the paper, I will discuss Paul's rule as it relates to Jewish continuity, the apostle's indifference to Jewish difference (1 Cor 7:19), and the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). In part two, I will address the effects of the church not keeping Paul's rule, the Jew-Gentile *ekklesia*, and whether Paul's rule can be implemented today.

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[1] *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984). I am quoting intentionally from one of the most popular English translations of the New Testament.

[2] For a fuller discussion of Paul's theology of Judaism, see David J. Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23* (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 2006; forthcoming by Mohr-Siebeck in the WUNT II series).

Paul's Rule and Israel's Irrevocable Calling

In the English language, we sometimes speak of a person's "calling in life"—a path or direction that seems to be laid out for them and that reflects their unique disposition, talents or motivations. Today, it is unusual for us to speak about the calling of a nation or ethnic group. But in first century Jewish thought, Israel's election was of paramount importance and a sense of national calling was normative. Paul can therefore say in Rom 11:28-29 that "as regards election they [the Jewish people] are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the calling (κλῆσις) of God are irrevocable."

In 1 Cor 7:17-24, Paul draws on this Jewish conceptual framework, and presents Jewish calling as an illustration to help communicate his stance on marriage and celibacy. Paul's point is that just as Jews should remain in their calling as Jews, and Gentiles in their calling as Gentiles, so should the married and celibate remain in their respective callings.[3] Each has the Lord's approval. The Corinthians should not think of celibacy as good and marriage as bad (1 Cor 7:17-27). Eschatological blessing is not contingent on marriage or celibacy.[4]

Though the issue of Jewish and Gentile callings is presented in 1 Cor 7:17-24 as a supporting argument,[5] Paul makes clear that he regards the affirmation and perpetuation of these callings

[3] See Appendix. For a study of how 1 Cor 7:17-24 fits within the wider context of Paul's social vision in the letter, see Bruce Hansen, *"All of You Are One": The Social Vision of Gal 3.28, 1 Cor 12.13 and Col 3.11* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 105-157.

[4] Does 1 Cor 7 reflect an imminent eschatology? There is a spectrum of views on Paul's eschatological expectations in 1 Corinthians. "As Deming and Wimbush urge, Paul's pragmatic pastoral criteria [e.g. his instruction in 1 Cor 11:2-16 that women should wear headcoverings] do not suggest a theology of eschatological imminence which depends on the conviction that the Pauline communities are the last generation" (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 575). David Garland concurs, "He is not talking about how little time is left but about how Christ's death and resurrection have changed how Christians should look at the time that is left. He is not recommending that one should take the short-term view of life, nor is he offering an interim ethic for the impending end-time tribulation. Instead, he understands the compressing of the time to mean that the future outcome of this world has become crystal clear…Fee comments (1987:339), 'Those who have a definite future and see it clearly live in the present with radically altered values as to what counts and what does not.' It requires them 'to rethink their existence'" (David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* [BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003], 328-329). See also Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture & Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 161-163. For my argument, however, the more important point is that even if one were to conclude that Paul expected an imminent return of the Messiah, it would still remain necessary not to overstate an eschatological motive for his instructions; Paul was also influenced by christological and ecclesiological concerns, among others. Granting an imminent eschatology, the question would still remain, "How imminent? And what was the interim ethic Paul envisaged for Jesus-believers in Corinth?" Following this line of thought, a reasonable argument can be made based on Paul's "rule in all the churches" and the principle of divine callings (1 Cor 7:17-24) that Paul wanted his communities in the interim to reflect Torah-defined ecclesiological variegation. A related question addressed later in the paper under the heading "A Church of Jews and Gentiles" is whether Paul viewed the church as a prolepsis of Israel and the nations in the eschaton. If this was the case, Paul's interim ethic could have been informed by Second Temple Jewish eschatological expectations that envisioned Jewish and Gentile identity continuing in the age to come (see footnote 63).

[5] The church in Corinth appears to have begun with a core of Jesus-believing Jews—Aquilla and Priscilla (Jews from Rome) as well as Crispus the president of the synagogue (ἀρχισυνάγωγος) and all his family (Acts 18:1-2, 8). Luke notes that Paul stayed "next door (συνομοροῦσα) to the synagogue" with a God-fearing Gentile named Titius Justus (Acts 18:7). The term συνομοροῦσα means "was bordering on" or "having a common wall with." Perhaps the Jesus-believers in Corinth first met in this home next to the synagogue. "The fact that Luke shows that Paul remains spatially as near to the synagogue as possible is more or less a metaphor for his being as closely connected to the synagogue as can be and that thus Luke makes a point about Paul's desire for a continuing relation to Jews" (Bart J. Koet, "As Close to the Synagogue as Can Be: Paul in Corinth [Acts 18.1-18]," in *The Corinthian Correspondence*, ed. R. Bieringer [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996], 409). Paul's reference to Jews and Greeks (1 Cor 1:22-24; 9:20-21; 10:32; 12:13), circumcised and uncircumcised (1 Cor 7:17-20), Apollos (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4-5, 22; 4:6; 16:12; cf. Acts 18:24; 19:1), Cephas (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5; cf. Gal 2:7), Timothy (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; cf. Acts 16:1-4), Passover (1 Cor 5:7), the people of Israel (1 Cor 10:18), the timing of the Jewish festival of Pentecost (1 Cor 16:8) and the gift to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:3) all suggest that the church in Corinth remained within the orbit of Jews and Judaism.

as a fundamental outworking of his rule in all the churches. The association with a universal "rule"[6] underscores the importance he attaches to these callings.[7] The principle behind this rule that Jews should remain Jews, and Gentiles should remain Gentiles, is that each person should remain in the calling he was in when God called him. This is the kernel of the rule. Paul repeats this principle three times in 1 Cor 7:17-24. Note the parallel structure:

> v. 17 each one (ἑκάστῳ) should retain the place in life (περιπατείτω) that the Lord assigned (ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος) to him and to which God has called him (κέκληκεν).
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> v. 20 Each one (ἕκαστος) should remain (μενέτω) in the situation [calling] (κλήσει) which he was in when God called him (ἐκλήθη).
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> v. 24 each man (ἕκαστος), as responsible to God, should remain (μενέτω) in the situation God called him to (ἐκλήθη).

Verse 24 states: ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη . . . ἐν τούτῳ μενέτω (literally: "in what he was called, in this remain"). Here the "in what he was called" (NRSV "to which God called you") seems to refer to particular modes of life and not simply to "God's call to salvation."[8] This argument is strengthened when the parallel in verse 20 is examined: ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη, ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω (literally: "in the calling in which he/one was called, in this let him remain"). Most translators concede that in verse 20 κλήσει refers to one's place in life when called (NRSV, ESV, NASB, REB, NET; *cf.* 1 Cor 1:26).[9] This would suggest by extension, on the basis of Paul's use of ἐκλήθη in verses 20 and 24, that the "situation" (κλήσει) in life is itself a calling.[10] This is how Augustine interpreted 1 Cor 7:17-20:

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[6] NRSV, ESV, RSV, NIV, NJB, REB, NLT, NCV, NIRV, CJB. "I make this rule (διατάσσομαι) in all the churches" (*BDAG* 2000:238). Cf. διατάσσω in 1 Cor 9:14; 16:1; Ti 1:5; Luke 17:9-10; Acts 7:44; 18:2; 23:31; 24:23.

[7] 1 Cor 7:17-27 may reflect Pauline halakhah, "A halakhically specific reading enables us to imagine Paul as violently protesting against forcing the law on non-Jewish believers, while still supposing Jewish believers to remain law-observant. In parallel to this specific reading, we are able to see that Paul's 'law theology' does not intend to do away with the law but to argue its distinctive value for Jews and for non-Jews. Yes, there is 'law theology' in Romans and Galatians, but its application is halakhically specific: it has distinct practical implications for Jews and for non-Jews. Both are justified by faith only—*therefore* non-Jews must not start observing the law and Jews must not stop doing so. Such is the message of Paul's 'ecclesiastical rule' in 1 Corinthians (7:17-20)" (Peter J. Tomson, "Halakhah in the New Testament: A Research Overview," in *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, eds. Reimund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez, Didier Pollefeyt and Peter J. Tomson [SJSJ 136; Leiden: Brill, 2010], 204-205); "Indeed, the fundamental conviction of Paul, and in my view the key to understanding his theological position on law and faith, is that all people must remain in the condition in which they were when they were called (1 Cor 7:17-20)" (Anders Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. Bengt Holmberg [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2008], 80-81). Also Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism," in *Codex Pauli* (Rome: Società San Paolo, 2009), 54; Magnus Zetterholm, "Paul and the Missing Messiah," in *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Magnus Zetterholm (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 49-50.

[8] It is notable that Paul can refer to his apostleship as a calling, "Paul, called to be an apostle (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος)" (1 Cor 1:1; cf. Rom 1:1). Here, "called" does not refer to a calling to salvation but a calling to a particular kind of service in God's kingdom. Later, in 1 Cor 12:4-5, 28-31, Paul identifies apostleship with "gifts" (χαρίσματα) and "services" (διακονιῶν) of God.

[9] For a survey of call language in 1 Corinthians, see Brad R. Braxton, *The Tyranny of Resolution: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 40*f.*

[10] "But the concern throughout is with their social situation *at the time* of that call, which is now to be seen as that which 'the Lord assigned to each' . . . Paul means that by calling a person within a given situation, that situation itself is taken up in the call and thus sanctified to him or her" (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 310). Also Mark D. Nanos, "The Myth of the 'Law-Free' Paul Standing Between Christians and Jews," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4 (2009): 3; Joel Willitts, "Weighing the Words of Paul: How do we understand Paul's instructions today?" *The Covenant Companion* 3 (2009): 28-30. More cautious is W. A. Beardslee, *Human Achievement and Divine Vocation in the Message of Paul* (London: SCM, 1961), 63.

> "Was one called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised [1 Cor 7:18]," *that is, let him not live as if he had not been circumcised*...Because of the view which he expressed in the words: "Was one called having been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was one called being uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised [1 Cor 7:18]," *he actually conformed to obligations* (Augustine, *Op. mon.* 11 [12]; italics mine).[11]

This is also how Rabbi Jacob Emden, a leading eighteenth century Torah scholar, interpreted 1 Cor 7:17-24 in *Seder Olam Rabbah Vezuta* (1757):

> But truly even according to the writers of the Gospels, a Jew is not permitted to leave his Torah, for Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians (Gal 5) "I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, the Messiah will do you no good at all. You can take it from me that every man who receives circumcision is under obligation to keep the entire Torah." Again because of this he admonished in a letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7) that the circumcised should not remove the marks of circumcision, nor should the uncircumcised circumcise themselves…You may therefore understand that Paul doesn't contradict himself because of his circumcision of Timothy, for the latter was the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father (Acts 16), and Paul was a scholar, an attendant of Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, well-versed in the laws of the Torah. He knew that the child of a Jewish mother is considered a full Jew, even if the father should be a Gentile, as is written in the Talmud and Codes. He therefore acted entirely in accordance with the Halakha by circumcising Timothy. This would be in line with his position that all should remain within their own faith (1 Cor 7). Timothy, born of a Jewish mother, had the law of a Jew, and had to be circumcised, just as he was enjoined to observe all commandments of the Torah . . . for all who are circumcised are bound by all the commandments . . . Certainly, therefore, there is no doubt that one who seeks truth will agree with our thesis, that the Nazarene and his Apostles never meant to abolish the Torah of Moses from one who was born a Jew. Likewise did Paul write in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7) that each should adhere to the faith in which each was called. They therefore acted in accordance with the Torah by forbidding circumcision to Gentiles, according to the Halakha, as it is forbidden to one who does not accept the yoke of the commandments.[12]

Alan Johnson notes that the NIV translation of 1 Cor 7:17-24 followed Luther and the reformers who considered this text evidence of the existence of "vocational" callings (i.e. callings to a particular way of life in the service of God).[13] Johnson, however, regards "called" in 1 Cor 7:17 as a reference to one's *call to faith* in Christ:

> The NIV translation of verse 17 is unfortunate. Following Luther and other sixteenth-century reformers who understood "calling" and "called" throughout this passage as vocational or occupational callings, the NIV renders the text as *each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him to which God has called him*. Better is the

[11] Mary Sarah Muldowney, trans., *The Work of Monks*, in *Saint Augustine: Treatises on Various Subjects*, ed. Roy J. Deferrari (FOC 14; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 323-394. Latin: PL 40.547-582; CSEL 41; BA 28.

[12] Harvey Falk, "Rabbi Jacob Emden's Views on Christianity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 19:1 (1982): 107-109. Cf. Ernst F. Stroeter, "Does the Jew, in Christ, Cease to Be a Jew?" *Our Hope* 2:6 (December 1895): 129-134.

[13] "Vocation" is derived from the Latin *vocare* ("to call"). "Calvin interpreted 'vocation' in a way very similar to Luther's. God, he says, has appointed duties and a way of living for everyone, and these ways of living are 'vocations'" (Rupert Davies, "Vocation," in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, eds. Alan Richardson and John Bowden [London: SCM, 1983], 602).

> TNIV: "each of you should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to you, just as God called you." The primary emphasis is on Christian behaviour that is appropriate to our call to faith in Christ in every situation of life in which we may find ourselves when we were called to salvation. On the other hand, that Paul also says *the Lord assigned* [to each] hints that as a secondary matter these life situations may also be thought of as in some sense divinely ordered...Verse 20 comes closest to Luther's sense of vocational calling.[14]

Though Johnson de-emphasizes the "life situation" aspect of "calling" in 1 Cor 7:17, he acknowledges that "these life situations [referred to in verse 17] may also be thought of as in some sense divinely ordered" and that verse 20 supports this argument. Anthony Thiselton concurs with this assessment:

> Yet in v. 20a τῇ κλήσει comes very close to the notion of a *calling* to a specific state or role. The very use of the phrase ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος [the Lord assigned] in v. 17a should make us wary of claiming that Paul did *not* regard some prior role in society as a matter of divine vocation.[15]

Wolfgang Schrage similarly views κέκληκεν in verse 17 as a call to salvation and τῇ κλήσει in verse 20 as a reference to the situation and modality of the calling, the concrete condition of the calling.[16]

To sum up, 1 Cor 7:20 links κλήσει ("situation"/ "calling") with ἐκλήθη ("called"). Verse 24 ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη ("in what he was called") points back to the antecedent (v. 20 κλήσει situation/calling) in the same way that verse 17 points toward it: "This situation, this setting-in-life in which the call of God has reached one, is now (by extension) itself described as a 'call'...it seems to be the only solution which respects the context."[17] For this reason, Hans Conzelmann and others translate 1 Cor 7:20, "Each should remain in the call(ing) in which he was called."[18]

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[14] Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 121.

[15] Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 549. "Thus despite the relativization of everything in Christ, the situation (the point of receipt of call – κλῆσις) in which one received the call to faith has a specific significance in Paul's ethics. This remains a vital factor in determining future conduct even in issues as significant as whether or not to accept or reject circumcision. One's situation may not be the decisive factor, but it is still significant. So circumcision or lack of it still plays a role in the ethical decisions of those in Christ…So even if, as some would hold, ethnic issues—Jew or Gentile—are not quite so pressing in Corinth as sexual matters, our discussion thus far confirms that for Pauline ethics, circumstances form part of the criteria for ethical decision in Christ...Whatever eschatological freedom Christ-followers may enjoy, this freedom is limited by one's situational starting point when called to faith, which Barth terms, 'the whole of the particularity, limitation and restriction in which every man meets the divine call and command.'...The fact that Paul uses call/κλῆσις for the point of receipt of the call to faith indicates that he is in fact giving a Christological significance to the human status and condition at this crucial juncture. Those who are called must take into account and respect where they and others were when they were called...The force of Paul's theologizing must not be overlooked. Calling takes place at a particular time and place and that status remains a given, an essential component of one's ongoing identity in Christ, subject only to the Lordship of Christ" (William S. Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2006], 91-92).

[16] Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* II (EKK; Düsseldorf: Neukirchener Verlag and Benziger Verlag, 1995), 137-138.

[17] Gregory W. Dawes, "'But if you can gain your freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990): 684 n. 17. Luther argues in his *Kirchenpostille* (*WA* 10.1.1, 308) that all godly spheres in life are divine callings to service (Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957], 1-7), but this would seem to go beyond what 1 Cor 7:17-24 states. Following Dawes, a medial view between the minimalist (Johnson) and maximalist (Luther) positions on 1 Cor 7:17-24 would seem to be in order.

[18] Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. J. W. Leitch (Hermeneia 36; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 125. Cf. "Let each man continue in that calling in which he was called" (C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First*

Two intertextual arguments add to the cumulative case that Paul in 1 Cor 7:19-20 viewed "circumcision" (περιτομὴ) and "foreskin" (ἀκροβυστία) as God "assigned" *callings*. First, Jew-Gentile distinction reflects an historic calling; the Lord elected Israel to be his "treasured possession out of all the peoples" (i.e. set apart in identity and manner of life). The Jewish nation was called to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6; Dt 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). This was Israel's service to God.[19]

Second, in Rom 11:29, Paul uses the term κλῆσις to refer to the "irrevocable calling" of the Jewish nation:

> As regards the gospel they are enemies of God for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved, for the sake of their ancestors; for the gifts and the *calling* (κλῆσις) of God are *irrevocable* (Rom 11:28-29).[20]

When κλῆσις in 1 Cor 7:20 is interpreted in light of κλῆσις in Rom 11:29, the position we have argued for receives significant support. Noting the possible correlation between the Jewish κλῆσις in 1 Cor 7:20 and Israel's irrevocable κλῆσις in Rom 11:29 (which can be viewed as a calling to service),[21] Adolf von Harnack concedes that Paul in 1 Cor 7:17-24 was encouraging Jesus-believing Jews to view their Jewishness as a divine calling.[22]

The Circumcised Should Not Put on Foreskin

The notion of a Jewish calling finds further exegetical support in Paul's command to Jesus-believing Jews in verse 18: μὴ ἐπισπάσθω ("do not put on foreskin"/ metonymically: do not

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Epistle to the Corinthians [2nd ed.; BNTC; London: A & C Black, 1971], 169); "Let each one remain in the calling in which he or she was called" (Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* [SP 7; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1999], 274); "Each in the calling in which he was called, in this let him remain" (Braxton, *The Tyranny of Resolution*, 8).

[19] See Edward Breuer, "Vocation and Call as Individual and Communal Imperatives," in *Revisiting the Idea of Vocation: Theological Explorations* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 42-43. Israel was to be a servant nation that mediated the knowledge of God to the Gentiles (Dt 4:5-8; Ex 8:10; 9:14; 14:4, 18; 18:11). The Prophets elaborate on the theme of Israel's holiness and mission/witness (Is 2:2-4; 41:8; 42:6; 43:10; 44:1-2, 8, 21; 49:3-6; 60:3; 61:6; 62:12; Zec 8:23; 14:16-21). From the Second Temple period, Ex 19:6 is attested in Peter's correspondence (1 Pt 2:9; cf. v. 5) and in Qumran literature (*4Q*504; cf. *4Q*491). Philo considers the Ex 19:6 calling fundamental to Israel's identity (*Abr*. 56, 98; cf. *Legat*. 3; *Mos*. 1.149; *Praem*. 114; *Spec*. 1.97, 168; *QE* 2.42). See Peder Borgen, "Philo and the Jews in Alexandria," in *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*, eds. Per Bilde, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Lise Hannestad and Jan Zahle (Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1992), 135; David Winston, "Philo's Ethical Theory," in *ANRW*, eds. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 398-399. He compares the Jewish nation's role to a king's royal estate and to a priest who ministers on behalf of a city (*Plant*. 54-60; *Spec*. 2.163-67).

[20] See Joseph Sievers, "'God's Gifts and Call Are Irrevocable': The Reception of Romans 11:29 through the Centuries and Christian-Jewish Relations," in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, eds. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 127-173.

[21] C. E. B. Cranfield (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* II [ICC; T&T Clark, 1979], 581) comments on Rom 11:29, "By ἡ κλῆσις here we may understand God's calling of Israel to be His special people, to stand in a special relation to Himself, and to fulfil a special function in history. Compare Paul's use of κλητὸς in connexion with his own call to be an apostle (I.I)." The pairing of "gifts" with "calling" in Rom 11:29 supports the case that κλῆσις is an election for service *alongside sonship*. The gifts mentioned in Rom 3:1-2 and 9:4-5 (commonly recognized as antecedents of τὰ χαρίσματα in Rom 11:29) enable Israel to fulfil its servant calling. They equip and empower the Jewish nation to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

[22] Adolf von Harnack, *The Date of the Acts and of the Synoptic Gospels*, trans. J. R. Wilkinson (NTS 4; New York: Williams & Norgate, 1911), 47.

assimilate or Gentilize yourself).[23] The graphic language is a likely allusion to 1 Macc 1:11-15 (c. 100 BCE) where the expression "removed the marks of circumcision" is linked to dejudaization and the adoption of Gentile customs that collapse Jew-Gentile distinction:

> In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, *for since we separated from them* many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to *observe the ordinances of the Gentiles*. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, *and removed the marks of circumcision* (καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας)*, and abandoned the holy covenant* (καὶ ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ διαθήκης ἁγίας). They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil (1 Macc 1:11-15; italics mine).

Notably, the clause "and removed the marks of circumcision" (1 Macc 1:15) is immediately followed by the words "and abandoned the holy covenant." The two are interrelated since circumcision is *pars pro toto* language for Jewish life as it relates to law, covenant and customs.[24]

In the first century, Philo makes the same correlation by placing circumcision at the beginning of his discussion *On the Special Laws* (*cf.* 1 Macc 1.48, 60-61; 2.46; 2 Macc 6.10; Josephus, *Ant*. 13.257-58, 318; *Jub*. 15.25-34). James Dunn explains:

> Circumcision was not merely a single act of law-keeping. It was the first act of full covenant membership and obligation. "Circumcision" could stand metonymically for a whole people precisely because it characterized a people's whole existence, a complete way of life. As Christians today speak of a "baptismal life," so we could speak of a "circumcision life."[25]

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[23] "*Let him not undo his circumcision*...Paul is thinking of more than a surgical operation, of one kind or another. The converted Jew continues to be a Jew, with his own appointed way of obedience" (Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 168). Gundry-Volf concurs with a metonymic interpretation of μὴ ἐπισπάσθω (Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Beyond Difference? Paul's Vision of a New Humanity in Galatians 3.28," in *Gospel and Gender: A Trinitarian Engagement with being Male and Female in Christ*, ed. Douglas A. Campbell [London: T&T Clark, 2003], 19). See also Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 122; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 312 n. 27; Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 126 n. 10. Contra Winter who argues that 1 Cor 7:20 refers to epispasm operations (Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 146-164). Winter, however, offers no direct evidence that epispasm was common enough in the first century to warrant Paul making a "rule in all the churches" (v. 17) banning the operation. More recently, Braxton (*The Tyranny of Resolution*, 165-170) has argued for a non-metonymic reading of μὴ ἐπισπάσθω but with less evidence than Winter. It should be noted that the metonymic and non-metonymic positions are not mutually exclusive. A metonymic interpretation of 1 Cor 7:20 would include epispasm among the diverse ways that Jews could assimilate into Gentile identity and lifestyle. Even if Winter and Braxton were correct, the underlying principle in the context of 1 Cor 7:17-24 would be the same: Jews should remain in their calling as Jews and not take on Gentile calling.

[24] Josephus' retelling of 1 Macc 1:11-15 brings out this interconnection. According to Josephus, "…they were *desirous to leave the laws of their country, and the Jewish way of living according to them, and to follow the king's laws, and the Grecian way of living*: wherefore they desired his permission to build them a Gymnasium at Jerusalem. And when he had given them leave they also *hid the circumcision of their genitals*, that even when they were naked they might appear to be Greeks. Accordingly, *they left off all the customs that belonged to their own country, and imitated the practices of the other nations*" (Josephus, *Ant*. 12.240-241; italics mine).

[25] James D. G. Dunn, "Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, but...(Gal 5.2-12; 6.12-16; cf. 1 Cor 7.17-20)," in *La Foi Agissant par L'amour (Galates 4,12─6,16)* (Rome: Benedictina, 1996), 86. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, "What was the issue between Paul and 'Those of the Circumcision?'" in *Paulus und das antike Judentum*, eds. Martin Hengel and Ulrich Heckel (Tübingen: Mohr- Siebeck, 1991), 297.

Like Philo, Paul views circumcision in metonymic terms. He divides humanity into two groups: the circumcised and those with foreskin (Gal 2:7-9;[26] 5:3; Rom 2:25-27; 3:30; 4:9-16; 15:8; Phil 3:3; *cf.* Eph 2:11; Col 3:11; 4:11).[27] Rom 2:25 and Gal 5:3 confirms that Paul linked circumcision to law observance. In Rom 2:25—"Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision (περιτομή) has become uncircumcision (ἀκροβυστία)"[28]—Paul describes circumcision as integrally related to Torah observance (Jewish identity), and lack of Torah observance is indicative of foreskin (Gentile identity). Circumcision is incomplete without the circumcised life.

In Galatians 5:3, Paul makes the same point in more explicit language—"Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised (περιτεμνομένῳ) that he is obliged to obey the *entire law* (ὅλον τὸν νόμον)"—Paul uses circumcision here as *pars pro toto* language for keeping all of God's commandments. The apostle upholds the Second Temple Jewish understanding that ritual circumcision initiates one into the covenant. Covenant responsibilities (detailed in the law) are binding on the circumcised one.[29] As Dunn puts it, "'the Jewish way of life' was a complete package" (*cf.* Mt 5:18-19; Jas 2:10).[30] Following this line of thought, Dieter Mitternacht contends that Galatians 5:3 should be read straight up as "whoever is circumcised (including Paul) is obligated to observe the whole law."[31] Paul's words appear to imply that he was living the circumcised life. Otherwise, his words would have had no force:

> If the Galatians did not know Paul as a Torah-observant Jew, then the rhetoric of 5:3 would have no bite: "I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole law." Otherwise, they might simply respond, "but we want only what you have: Jewish identity, without obligation to observe 'the whole law.'"[32]

Against this Second Temple Jewish backdrop, Harnack understood Paul's "rule in all the churches" (v. 17b)—μὴ ἐπισπάσθω (do not assimilate or Gentilize yourself)—as an imperatival instruction to "remain faithful to the customs and ordinances of the fathers."[33] Since the law was

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[26] The distinction between Jewish and Gentile identity in Christ is so fundamental that Paul can speak of "the gospel of the foreskin" (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας) and "the [gospel] of the circumcised" (τῆς περιτομῆς) (Gal 2:7). Contra Walker who rejects Pauline authorship of these words (William O Walker, "Galatians 2:7b-8 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65 [2003]: 580). The two gospels may reflect the lifestyle callings noted in 1 Cor 7:18.

[27] Paul's inclusion of women under the categories of circumcised and foreskin adds to the case for a metonymic interpretation of 1 Cor 7:18. For a discussion of the covenant identity of Jewish females, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 111-142.

[28] See Joel Marcus, "The Circumcision and the Uncircumcision in Rome," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 76.

[29] Shaye J. D Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 218-219, 324-325.

[30] Dunn, "Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision," 88.

[31] Dieter Mitternacht, "Foolish Galatians?—A Recipient-Oriented Assessment of Paul's Letter," in *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 409. See Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010), 151-152.

[32] Mark D. Nanos, *The Galatians Debate: Contemporary Issues in Rhetorical and Historical Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 405. Also Mark D. Nanos, "Rethinking the 'Paul and Judaism' Paradigm" (paper presented at the Yale Post-Grad Seminar, March 3, 2005), 21; Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Edinburgh: T & T, 2000), 171.

[33] Harnack, *The Date of the Acts*, 43.

fundamental to Jewish identity,[34] Harnack concluded that, by implication, Paul encouraged Jesus-believing Jews to remain law observant. In Harnack's view,

> the Jewish Christian is to keep the Law because in it is given the manner of life which God had willed *for him*. Hence *the whole Law* continues to exist as custom and ordinance for Jewish Christians.[35]

Harnack's interpretation of 1 Cor 7:18 and 20 is strengthened by Paul's use of nomistic language in 1 Cor 7:19b—"but obeying the commandments of God" (ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ)[36]—as Peter Tomson has argued:

> I conclude that *the observance of distinct sets of commandments by Jewish and gentile Christians was the basic principle of Paul's missionary work*, and he laid it down in the rule, "circumcision is nothing and the foreskin is nothing, but keeping God's commandments."[37]

In support of Tomson's contention, it is notable that "'Keeping the commandments of God' is similar to the exhortation that the Corinthians conduct their lives in a way that is in accordance with their call from God (v. 17)."[38] If the κλήσει (calling to a particular way of life) differed

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[34] Carl R. Holladay, "Paul and His Predecessors in the Diaspora: Some Reflections on Ethnic Identity in the Fragmentary Hellenistic Jewish Authors," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, eds. John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbright and L. Michael White (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 456-457; James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 179-181, 221.

[35] Harnack, *The Date of the Acts*, 44. Harnack held that the promises of God to the Jewish nation were still valid from Paul's perspective (Rom 11:12-15, 25-27) (Adolf von Harnack, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. J. R. Wilkinson [NTS 3; New York: Williams & Norgate, 1909], 282, 288; Harnack, *The Date of the Acts*, 46). Jesus-believing Jews were to live out Israel's call to be a priestly nation and serve as conduits of spiritual blessing to the Gentiles (Rom 15:27). Jews needed to remain law observant in order to fulfil Israel's eschatological calling: "for if the nation no longer observes its Law, then it is no longer the Jewish nation; and thus there is now no nation for which the special promise belonging to the Jewish nation can be fulfilled. Thus life in accordance with the Law must continue" (Harnack, *The Date of the Acts*, 51).

[36] Thielman has shown that the expression "obeying the commandments of God" (τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ) occurs throughout Second Temple Jewish literature and consistently means "keeping the law of Moses" (Frank Thielman, "The Coherence of Paul's View of the Law: The Evidence of First Corinthians," *New Testament Studies* 38 [1992]: 237-240).

[37] Peter J. Tomson, "Paul's Jewish Background in View of His Law Teaching in 1 Cor 7," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 267-268. See also Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) for evidence of halakhic reasoning in 1 Cor 7-10. Not a few scholars have arrived at the same conclusion as Tomson: "It is clear that Paul throughout his life continued to practice Judaism: and that he expected Jewish converts to do so, cf. 1 Cor 7:18…" (W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925], 122 n. 54); "Paul observed the Law, and that in the pharisaic manner, throughout his life. In 1 Cor 7:18 he implies that obedience to it is his duty…" (W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980], 70); "Saul expected those of his converts who were Judahists to continue to practice Judahism and to respect its laws (1 Cor 7:19) and he expected the same of himself. Anything else would have been hypocritical: it was only the Gentile followers of Yeshua to whom the finite rules of Torah did not apply, at least not fully" (Donald H. Akenson, *Saint Saul: A Skeleton Key to the Historical Jesus* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 252); "Paul nowhere suggests that *Jews* should reject their Torah observance, and in fact seems to assume that they would and should remain committed to it (1 Cor 7:17-20; cf. Gal 5:3; Acts 21:17-24)" (Douglas Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology Beyond Christendom and Modernity* [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003], 219); "The apostle himself in 1 Corinthians 7:17-20 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—and only that. In either case, what matters are the applicable commandments of God" (Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 170-171); Gudrund Holtz, *Damit Gott sei alles in allem: Studien zum paulinischen und frühjüdischen Universalismus* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 247-250.

[38] Collins, *First Corinthians*, 284.

between Jew and Gentile (1 Cor 7:18-20), it is plausible that Paul, a first century Jew from a Pharisaic background, held that God's commandments for Jews and Gentiles differed as well.[39]

I conclude that Paul's statement in 1 Cor 7:18–μὴ ἐπισπάσθω ("do not put on foreskin")–required Jesus-believing Jews to continue to live the circumcised life as a matter of *calling* and not to assimilate into Gentile lifestyle (1 Cor 7:17-20).

Paul's Indifference to Jewish Difference

But what of 1 Cor 7:19a where Paul says, "Circumcision is nothing (οὐδέν), and uncircumcision is nothing (οὐδέν)"?[40] Here Paul seems to indicate that Jewish identity is relativized to the point of indifference in Christ. David Horrell argues that "nothing" or "not anything" points to unimportance.[41] But given the context of 1 Cor 7:19, οὐδέν is more likely "related strictly to salvation,"[42] that is, "neither circumcision nor the lack of circumcision has ultimate bearing on salvation."[43] With respect to status before God and eschatological blessing, being Jewish or Gentile is irrelevant.

I contend that Paul uses hyperbole in these passages to stress that being "in Christ" is *more important than* being Jewish. This means that being Jewish could still be very important to Paul.[44] He is simply relativizing A to B. In support of this reading of 1 Cor 7:19b, there are several occasions when Paul uses "nothing" (οὐδέν) or "not anything" (οὔτε...τι) language in a clearly hyperbolic way. First, with respect to the work of planting the Corinthian congregation, Paul describes himself as nothing compared to the Lord:

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[39] What were the "commandments of God" for Gentile believers? Given that Luke portrays Paul as delivering the apostolic decree to Gentile believers, and the likelihood that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians after the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council decision (Acts 18:1-18), it is reasonable to assume (from a canonical perspective) that "keeping the commandments of God" for Gentiles included the responsibility to "obey the regulations" (φυλάσσειν τὰ δόγματα [Acts 16:4]), the four "requirements" (ἐπάναγκες), listed in the apostolic decree (Acts 15:28; 21:25). One of these "regulations/requirements" was to "abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols" (εἰδωλοθύτων). Paul's instructions in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 can be interpreted to mean that Gentile believers in Corinth were to abstain from what they knew to be idol-food. Marcel Simon considers 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 to "represent a sort of commentary on the Decree" ("The Apostolic Decree and its Setting in the Ancient Church," in *Le Christianisme Antique et son contexte religieux: Scripta Varia II* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1981], 429-430). Notably, this is not a recent view. The early church fathers read Paul "in light of the Decree, which was assumed to have the full authority of the apostles" (John C. Brunt, "Rejected, Ignored, or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols in Early Christianity," *New Testament Studies* 31 [1985]: 113-124).

[40] Cf. Gal 5:6; 6:15.

[41] David G. Horrell, "'No Longer Jew or Greek': Paul's Corporate Christology and the Construction of Christian Community," in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, eds. David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 343; David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 18, 260 n. 50.

[42] Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 126.

[43] Collins, *First Corinthians*, 284. Also J. Brian Tucker, "Negotiated Identity and Paul's Rhetoric: The Use of Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theory in the Corinthian Correspondence to Support the Pauline Mission," Centre for Rhetoric and Hermeneutics and the New Testament Rhetoric Project, Redlands, CA, January 19-20, 2007, 17; Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 91-93; Mark S. Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism: Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 72-75; Tomson, "Paul's Jewish Background in View of His Law Teaching in 1 Cor 7," 266; Pamela Eisenbaum, "Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?" *Cross Currents* 50 (2000-01): 515; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 550; Carol J. Schlueter, *Filling Up the Measure: Polemical Hyperbole in 1 Thessalonians 2.14-16* (JSNTSS 98; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 126*f.*

[44] Wayne A. Meeks, "The Christian Proteus," in *The Writings of St. Paul: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), 442; William S. Campbell, "The Crucible of Christian Identity: Paul Between Synagogue and State" (paper presented at the annual meeting of The British New Testament Conference, Birmingham, 2003).

> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything (οὔτε...ἐστίν τι οὔτε), but only God who gives the growth (1 Cor 3:5-7).

Are Paul and Apollos truly nothing? Did they really do no work of any significance? On the contrary, their work was vital to the establishment of the Corinthian congregation. But *relative to* what God did, the miracle of changing lives, their work was nothing. Similarly, Paul writes in 2 Cor 12:11, "I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing (οὐδέν εἰμι)." Again, was Paul—the apostle to the Gentiles—truly "nothing"? Or is he saying that, *relative to* the Lord, he is nothing, even as *relative to* the super-apostles he is something?

Another example of Paul relativizing two important works of God is 2 Cor 3:6-11. Here Paul contrasts the glory of Moses' ministry with the ministry of the Spirit. Though God performed miracles through Moses' ministry that were unparalleled in history, Paul refers to Moses' ministry as having no glory now, for "what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendour that surpasses it." It all pales in comparison. Moreover, three times Paul uses a *kal vachomer* (*a fortiori*) argument to compare old covenant and new covenant experiences of the presence and power of God (vv. 8, 9, 11). *Both* are truly glorious revelations of the God of Israel, but one is more glorious than the other. To emphasize the "surpassing glory," Paul uses language that downplays the Sinai revelation. But it is wrong to mistake this as trivialization of the old covenant glory.[45] It is instead a rhetorical device intended to highlight the greater glory. *He refers to something genuinely important to emphasize what is even more important*. It is likely that Paul uses the same rhetorical device when he refers to circumcision and uncircumcision as "nothing."

Second, Paul's manner of expression (οὐδέν...ἀλλὰ) in 1 Cor 7:19 is consistent with the Jewish idiom of dialectic negation in which the "'not...but...' antithesis need not be understood as an 'either...or,' but rather with the force of 'more important than.'"[46] Consider, for example, how the prophet Hosea makes the same kind of hyperbolic-comparison statement when he speaks in the name of the Lord, "For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6). Sacrifices were important, for the Lord commanded them, but "steadfast love" was *even more important*. To emphasize this, the Lord states that he does *not* desire sacrifice. The negative statement should be taken as hyperbole; it is a Hebrew rhetorical device. A variation of this is found in the *Letter of Aristeas* 234. See also Mark 2:17 and 7:15.[47]

Third, Paul's anti-circumcision language (directed at Gentiles) in Galatians can be understood as upholding Jew-Gentile distinction rather than collapsing it. "Circumcising Gentiles would have made Jews and Gentiles all the same. Paul's vehement rejection of circumcision demonstrates

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[45] Scott Hafemann, *Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3* (WUNT 81; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1995), 321-327.

[46] Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, 51. Cf. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 260-264; Roger P. Booth, *Jesus and the Laws of Purity: Tradition History and Legal History in Mark 7* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986), 69-70; Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 147.

[47] Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 147; David J. Rudolph, "Jesus and the Food Laws: A Reassessment of Mark 7:19b," *Evangelical Quarterly* 74:4 (2002): 297-298.

his commitment to maintaining Jews and Gentiles as different and distinct, and militates strongly against seeing Paul's goal as creating human homogeneity."[48]

Consistent with his 1 Cor 7:17-24 rule in all the churches, Paul refers to "Jews" and "Gentiles" (Greeks) in his letters.[49] To Peter, who withdrew from eating with Jesus-believing "Gentiles" (Gal 2:12), he says, "You are a Jew" (Gal 2:14). The writer of Colossians 4:10-11 refers to Aristarchus, Mark and Justus as "the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God." By contrast, Titus is a "Greek" (Gal 2:3). In Romans 11:13, Paul writes, "Now I am speaking to you Gentiles." All of this suggests that, for Paul, the Jew-Gentile distinction is preserved, not erased in Christ.[50] "He accepts, and even insists on retaining, the differences as ethnic-identity markers at the same time as he strips them of soteriological significance."[51]

Paul and the Jerusalem Council

Luke's portrait of Paul adds canonical and conciliar weight to the above interpretation of Paul's "rule in all the churches." Acts depicts Paul stating that (1) Jesus-believing Gentiles do not need to take on Torah observance as proselytes (Acts 15:1-5, 22-31) and (2) Jesus-believing Jews should not assimilate into Gentile identity (Acts 21:20-26). Luke describes the Jerusalem Council as adopting Paul's position and then commissioning Paul to deliver the apostolic "decree," the "requirements," to a number of churches for them "to obey" (Acts 15:28; 16:4). Six chapters later, in Acts 21:25, Luke delineates the Jerusalem Council decision as applicable to all Jesus-believing Gentiles. Patristic evidence indicates that the "apostolic decree" (as it came to be called) was widely observed in the catholic church.[52]

What are the implications of the Acts 15 conciliar decree for Jesus-believing Jews? This is a question that has been largely overlooked by theologians. The Jerusalem apostles and elders ruled that "brothers of Gentile origin" (ἀδελφοῖς τοῖς ἐξ ἐθνῶν) were exempt from the requirement of circumcision (Acts 15:23). Gentiles did not need to become Jews and live the circumcised life in order to be saved. At the same time, the Jerusalem ruling gave no indication that Jesus-believing Jews were exempt from the responsibilities of Jewish covenantal life. As F. Scott Spencer points out, "The representatives at the Jerusalem conference–including Paul–agreed only to release *Gentile* believers from the obligation of circumcision; the possibility of nullifying this covenantal duty for Jewish disciples was never considered."[53] If the Jerusalem

[48] Eisenbaum, "Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?" 518; Mark D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 116 n. 84. Circumcision remained a "principal marker of Jewishness" for Paul. See James D. G. Dunn, "The Jew Paul and His Meaning for Israel," in *A Shadow of Glory: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, ed. Tod Linafelt (New York: Routledge, 2002), 209; James D. G. Dunn, "Who Did Paul Think He Was? A Study of Jewish-Christian Identity," *New Testament Studies* 45 (1999): 189-190; Dunn, "Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision," 82.

[49] For a discussion of the term "Greeks," see Christopher D. Stanley, "'Neither Jew Nor Greek': Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996): 101-124.

[50] Denise K. Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 76; Denise K. Buell and Caroline J. Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123 (2004): 247-250; Kathy Ehrensperger, *Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* (LNTS 325; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 192-193.

[51] Gundry-Volf, "Beyond Difference?" 21.

[52] Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 464; Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Community," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 74-75; Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law*, 178.

[53] F. Scott Spencer, *Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 159. I interpret Acts 15:10-11 to mean that Jews experience soteriological blessing "through the grace of the Lord Jesus" and not by Torah observance according to the standards of Pharisaic

leadership had viewed circumcision as optional for Jews, there would have been no point debating the question of exemption for Gentiles or delivering a letter specifically addressed to Gentiles. Michael Wyschogrod rightly notes that both parties at the Jerusalem Council shared the assumption that circumcision and Torah observance remained obligatory for Jesus-believing Jews:

> From this episode [Acts 15], a clear conclusion can be drawn. The Jerusalem community harbored two parties. There were those who believed that gentile believers in Jesus had to be circumcised and accept full Torah obedience as part of their conversion to Jesus. Others in the Jerusalem community of Jesus believers believed that gentiles did not have to be circumcised but their faith in Jesus together with a version of the Noachide commandments was sufficient. *But it is clear that both parties agreed that circumcision and Torah obedience remained obligatory for Jewish Jesus believers since, if this were not the case, one could hardly debate whether circumcision and Torah obedience were obligatory for gentiles. Such a debate could only arise if both parties agreed on the lasting significance of the Mosaic Law for Jews. Where they differed was its applicability to gentiles. But both sides agreed that Jewish believers in Jesus remained obligated to circumcision and the Mosaic Law.* The verdict of the first Jerusalem Council then is that the Church is to consist of two segments, united by their faith in Jesus.[54]

The Jerusalem council decision presumes that Jews will (and should) remain Jews in keeping with the "covenant of circumcision" (Acts 7:8; Gn 17:9-14).[55]

In Acts 21:17-26—the mirror text of Acts 15—this theologoumenon is made explicit.[56] Here Paul sets the record straight that the rumors about him are false[57] (i.e. he does not teach Jews to assimilate but to remain faithful Jews) even as Paul himself lives as a Torah observant Jew.[58]

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halakhah (note the Pharisaic context of the demands in Acts 15:5). It does not follow from this statement that Peter considered Jesus-believing Jews exempt from the responsibilities of Jewish covenantal life stipulated in the Torah or that he considered these responsibilities necessary for salvation. He may have viewed them as commandments of God for Jews, the observance of which did not have a direct bearing on salvation. Similarly, the apostolic decree lists a number of ritual "requirements" (ἐπάναγκες) for Jesus-believing Gentiles (Acts 15:28-29) but there is no indication that they are necessary for salvation.

[54] Michael Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," *Modern Theology* 2 (1995): 170-171; Cf. Daniel Marguerat, "Paul and the Torah in the Acts of the Apostles," in *The Torah in the New Testament: Papers Delivered at the Manchester-Lausanne Seminar of June 2008*, eds. Michael Tait and Peter Oakes (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 111-117; Scot McKnight, "Jesus and James on Israel and Purity," in *James the Just and Christian Origins*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 110; Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the New Testament: Practice and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1995), 108.

[55] Paul thus circumcises Timothy (Acts 16:3), the son of a Jewish mother, as a testimony that Jews should circumcise their sons. Luke refers to Jesus-believing Jews as the "circumcised" (περιτομῆς) in Acts 10:45 and 11:2.

[56] In Acts 21, James anticipates Paul's concern that a public testimony of Torah faithfulness may be misinterpreted by Jesus-believing Gentiles to mean that they too should be Torah observant. James reassures Paul that the Gentile believers will not misunderstand because "as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication" (Acts 21:25). Here James points back to the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council decision that exempted Jesus-believing Gentiles from full Torah observance: "James parallels the necessity of Jews keeping the law with the necessity of Gentiles to keep the Apostolic decree (21:25)" (Chris A. Miller, "The Relationship of Jewish and Gentile Believers to the Law between A.D. 30 and 70 in the Scripture" [Ph.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1994], 142; cf. Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," 475; Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," 170; Heiner Ganser-Kerperin, *Das Zeugnis Des Tempels. Studien zur Bedeutung des Tempelmotivs im Lukanischen Doppelwerk* [Münster: Aschendorff, 2000], 275 n. 15). This is reinforced by Luke's use of φυλάσσω in Acts 16:4 (in reference to Gentile observance of the apostolic decree) and in Acts 21:24 (in reference to Paul's Torah observance).

[57] Subsequent to Acts 21, Paul confirms three times that his life and teachings are consistent with the Torah (Acts 24:14-18; 25:8; 28:17). Once he refers to himself in the present tense as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6).

[58] Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, 55-73.

Factoring in Luke's account, we conclude that there are *two universal rules* in the New Testament that enjoin Jews to remain Jews, and Gentiles to remain Gentiles—one authorized by Paul (1 Cor 7:17-24) and the other by the Jerusalem apostles (Acts 15). Paul's direct involvement in delivering the apostolic decree to the churches (Acts 15:22−16:5) would furthermore suggest from a canonical perspective that these two rules are really two apostolic expressions of the same rule in principle.[59] Many Jesus-believers today view the Apostles' Creed and the canons (rules) of the Ecumenical councils convened in the fourth through ninth centuries as authoritative standards of Christian life and doctrine. How much more should contemporary Jesus-believers find significance in Paul's rule and the Jerusalem Council's apostolic decree—universal directives that go back to the beginnings of the church and that reflect full apostolic authority.

The Effects of the Church Not Keeping Paul's Rule

Paul's rule instructs the circumcised to remain circumcised and not to become uncircumcised. Throughout most of church history, however, the church's policy has been the exact opposite—Jews who believed in Jesus were expected to leave behind their Jewish identity and assimilate into Gentile Christianity. As an example of this sentiment, Jerome wrote to Augustine in 404 C.E.—"since they [Jesus-believing Jews] want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians" (*Epist.* 112.13; 75.13). Augustine replied to Jerome that "the Jewish ceremonies are to Christians both hurtful and fatal, and that whoever observes them, whether he was originally Jew or Gentile, is on his way to the pit of perdition" (*Epist*. 82.18).[60]

A number of regional and ecumenical councils, beginning with the Council of Elvira in *c.* 305 C.E., prohibited Christians from associating with Jews and observing Jewish ceremonies. The Second Council of Nicea (787 C.E.) was the first ecumenical council to explicitly ban Jesus-believing Jews, who lived as Jews, from the church (canon 8). Baptized Jews were expected to renounce all ties to Jewish life through confessions like the following:

> I do here and now renounce every rite and observance of the Jewish religion, detesting all its most solemn ceremonies and tenets that in former days I kept and held. In the future I will practice no rite or celebration connected with it, nor any custom of my past error, promising neither to seek it out nor to perform it (Of Erwig, *Leg. Vis.* 12.3.14).[61]

Because the church did not keep Paul's rule, it became a broken family. It became an all-Gentile church with a *persona non grata* view of practicing Jews, a deformity never envisioned by Jesus and his apostles.

A Church of Jews and Gentiles

Markus Barth wrote in 1969, "The church is the bride of Christ only when it is the church of Jews and Gentiles…the existence, building, and growth of the church are identified with the common

[59] See Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 126 n. 12.

[60] Augustine held that Paul lived during a transitional age when God permitted Jesus-believing Jews to remain Jews in honor of the "divine authority and the prophetic holiness of the sacraments" (*Epist*. 82).

[61] James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 395.

existence, structure, and growth of Jews and Gentiles."[62] Why is this? *It is because the church is a prolepsis of Israel and the nations in the eschaton*. Interdependence and mutual blessing between Jew and Gentile reflects the *raison d'être* of the church and anticipates the consummation when Israel and the nations, in Torah-defined unity and diversity, will worship ADONAI alone. As George Howard asserted in 1979, a Jew-Gentile church testifies to the oneness of God and the ultimate plan of God:

> The gospel as Paul preached it demanded a continued ethnic distinctiveness between Jews and Gentiles in order that…[ADONAI], the God of the Hebrews, could be conceptualized by both Jews and Gentiles as the God of all nations…This is certainly his point of view in Rom. 3:29-30 where he says: "Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since God is one." His thought is: if God is one he must be the God of both Jews and Gentiles. Belief in…[ADONAI] as the one universal God thus demanded mutual recognition between Jews and Gentiles that they both belonged to the same God. We may even go further and say that any attempt on either side to erase the ethnic and cultural nature of the other would be to destroy Paul's particular concept of unity between Jews and Gentiles…In Romans 11 Paul describes God as maneuvering Israel and the nations in such a way as eventually to include all within his kingdom (*cf.* Rom. 11:11-36). Thus it is necessary for Paul's thought to distinguish ethnically between Jews and Gentiles since each had an ethnic role to play in the salvation of the other. The ultimate goal, in Paul's mind, was the mutual recognition of each under the divine rule of…[ADONAI], the God of Abraham…Paul's particular insistence on unity between Jews and Gentiles, as opposed to some nebulous concept of world unity, gives the continued observance of the law on the part of Jewish Christianity an important role to play within his gospel…All of this is to say that with Paul salvation is the unification of uncircumcised, non-Torah-abiding Gentiles with circumcised, Torah-abiding Jews under the one divine headship of…[ADONAI], the God of Abraham.[63]

Countering Paul van Buren's argument that "Only one Jew is essential to the Church and that is the Jew Jesus,"[64] Isaac Rottenberg points out that "Jewish-Gentile unity belongs to the *esse* [being], not

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[62] Markus Barth, *Israel and the Church: Contributions for a Dialogue Vital for Peace* (Richmond: John Knox, 1969), 90-91.

[63] George Howard, *Paul: Crisis in Galatia. A Study in Early Christian Theology* (SNTSMS 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 66, 79-81. Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity* (London: Routledge, 2003), 158 maintains that Pauline ecclesiology is rooted in Jewish eschatology, "Paul thus simultaneously obliterates and accentuates the differences between Jews and Gentiles. They are certainly 'one in Christ,' but it is precisely as 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' that they constitute this unity. In building up this theological construction, Paul makes use of traditions deeply embedded in his own religious tradition. Monotheism, the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles, and covenantal nomism are combined with a firm conviction of living in the messianic age." Cf. Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 81; Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, 181-184; William Horbury, "Jerusalem in Pre-Pauline and Pauline Hope," in *Messianism Among Jews and Christians: Twelve Biblical and Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 218, 223; William Horbury, "Land, sanctuary and worship," in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context*, eds. John Barclay and John Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 221-222; Scott Hafemann, "Eschatology and Ethics: The Future of Israel and the Nations in Romans 15:1-13," *Tyndale Bulletin* 51 (2000): 174, 186, 190-191; W. D. Davies, "Paul and the People of Israel," in *Jewish and Pauline Studies* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 139, 141; Douglas Harink, "Paul and Israel: An Apocalyptic Reading" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Philadelphia, November 2005), 1-26; Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism*, 151-179; John Howard Yoder, *The Jewish-Christian Schism Revisited*, eds. Michael G. Cartwright and Peter Ochs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 31-35, 69; Brad R. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African-American Experience* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 69, 72; Seth Turner, "The Interim, Earthly Messianic Kingdom in Paul," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25:3 (2003): 323-342; L. Joseph Kreitzer, *Jesus and God in Paul's Eschatology* (JSNTSS 19; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 131-170; George Wesley Buchanan, *New Testament Eschatology: Historical and Cultural Background* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 90-120.

[64] Paul M. Van Buren, *Discerning the Way* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), 155.

just the *bene esse* [well-being] of the Church."[65] R. Kendall Soulen has made a formidable case for Jew-Gentile ecclesiological variegation in his book *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*:

> Traditionally, the church has understood itself as a spiritual fellowship in which the carnal distinction between Jew and Gentile no longer applies. The church has declared itself a third and final "race" that transcends and replaces the difference between Israel and the nations…The proper therapy for this misunderstanding is a recovery of the church's basic character as a table fellowship of those who are—and remain—different. The distinction between Jew and Gentile, being intrinsic to God's work as the Consummator of creation, is not erased but realized in a new way in the sphere of the church. The church concerns the Jew as a Jew and the Gentile as a Gentile, not only initially or for the period of a few generations but essentially and at all times.[66]

Increasing numbers of churches today are affirming Israel's irrevocable election and repudiating supersessionism, however, such statements should be concomitant with support for Torah-defined ecclesiological variegation. Soulen notes that a logical implication of renouncing supersessionism is affirming Jew-Gentile distinction and Jewish continuity within the church:

> For Wyschogrod, the acid test of the church's theological posture toward Israel's election is the church's conduct toward Jews in its own midst, that is, toward Jews who have been baptized…If the church acknowledges the abiding reality of Israel's corporeal election, it will naturally expect baptized Jews to maintain faithfully their Jewish identity. But if the church truly believes that it has superseded God's covenant with Israel, it will prohibit or discourage Jews from preserving their identity as Jews and members of the Jewish people. In short, the problem of supersessionism turns on the church's capacity to acknowledge the abiding religious significance of Israel's corporeal election and hence the abiding religious significance of the distinction between Gentile and Jew.[67]

Soulen and Wyschogrod put their finger on the crux of the matter. If the "gifts and the calling of God are *irrevocable*," they are irrevocable for *all Jews*, including Jesus-believing Jews.[68] A genuine post-supersessionist church would affirm the irrevocable calling of Jesus-believing Jews to live as Jews and raise their children as Jews.[69] To put it another way: the church needs to practice Paul's rule today if it is to renounce supersessionism fully and be restored as a body of Jews and Gentiles.

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[65] Isaac C. Rottenberg, *Jewish Christians in an Age of Christian-Jewish Dialogue* (1995), 99. A collection of essays published "by the family and friends of the author in honor of his 70th birthday for distribution among circles engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue."

[66] R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 169-170.

[67] Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*, 11.

[68] David Novak notes that, according to Orthodox Judaism, Jesus-believing Jews remain elect and part of the covenant ─"The important thing to remember when dealing with the issue of the Jewish Christians is that according to normative Judaism, they are still Jews. Jewish status is defined by the divine election of Israel and his descendants...Since Jews are elected by God, there is absolutely nothing any Jew can do to remove himself or herself from the Covenant. The rule concerning individual apostates is based on a Talmudic judgment about the Jewish people as a whole: 'Even when it has sinned, Israel is still Israel' (Sanhedrin 44a)" (David Novak, "When Jews are Christians," in *The Chosen People in an Almost Chosen Nation*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 97). See also David Novak, *The election of Israel: The idea of the chosen people* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 198-199, 235-240; Wyschogrod, "Letter to a Friend," 167-168; Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (New York: Cassell, 2000), 192.

[69] See Bruce D. Marshall, "Christ and the cultures: the Jewish people and Christian theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 82, 91-93.

Practicing Paul's Rule Today

But how can Jews remain faithful to the covenant of their fathers in an overwhelmingly Gentile church? For Wyschogrod, the answer is found in Messianic synagogues that promote "sustained Jewish Torah observance" (consistent with the Jerusalem model in Acts 15; 21:20-26).[70] Messianic synagogues, of the kind Wyschogrod advocates, are necessary because of the communal nature of Jewish life.[71]

Do such communities exist? It is estimated that today there are 400-500 Messianic synagogues around the world.[72] In North America, the majority of Messianic synagogues are affiliated with the Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) and the International Association of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (IAMCS). The UMJC defines Messianic Judaism as "a movement of Jewish congregations and congregation-like groupings committed to Yeshua [Jesus] the Messiah that embrace the covenantal responsibility of Jewish life and identity rooted in Torah, expressed in tradition, renewed and applied in the context of the New Covenant" (www.umjc.org).

In addition to Messianic synagogues, there are Messianic Jewish theological schools (such as the one I work for in Los Angeles–Messianic Jewish Theological Institute–which recently established a Center for Jewish-Christian Relations).[73] There are Messianic Jewish community centers, day schools, Hebrew schools, summer camps, Israel Aliyah programs, women's organizations, halakhic councils and benevolence organizations that work directly with the Israeli *Knesset* (national parliament).[74]

[70] See Michael Wyschogrod, "Response to the Respondents," *Modern Theology* 2 (1995): 236-237, 239.

[71] David J. Rudolph, "Messianic Jews and Christian Theology: Restoring an Historical Voice to the Contemporary Discussion," *Pro Ecclesia* 14:1 (2005): 58-84.

[72] David H. Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement With an Ancient Past* (Clarksville: Lederer, 2007), 271-272.

[73] See www.mjti.com.

[74] David J. Rudolph and Joel Willitts, eds. *Introduction to Messianic Judaism: Its Ecclesial Context and Biblical Foundations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming 2011); Mark S. Kinzer, *Israel's Messiah and the People of God: A Vision for Messianic Jewish Covenant Fidelity*, ed. Jennifer Rosner (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010); Matthew Levering, "Supersessionism and Messianic Judaism," in *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom: Engagements With the Theology of David Novak* (London: Continuum, 2010), 12-46; Richard Harvey, *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology: A Constructive Approach* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009); Peter Hocken, "The Messianic Jewish Movement: New Current and Old Reality," in *The Challenges of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Messianic Jewish Movements* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 97-115; Pauline Kollontai, "Women as Leaders: Contemporary Perspectives on the Roles of Women in Messianic Judaism," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 6:1 (2009): 1-17; Mark S. Kinzer, "Messianic Gentiles & Messianic Jews," *First Things* 189 (2009): 43-

Messianic synagogues have proven to be indispensable for living out Paul's rule. Over the past twenty years, thousands of Jews in churches have embraced their calling to remain Jews in a Jewish communal context and have sought out Messianic synagogues. As a result, Messianic synagogues have tripled in number. After three years of researching Messianic Judaism, sociologist Shoshanah Feher concluded that Messianic Jewish families grow in their sense of Jewish identity as a result of being part of Messianic synagogues, "The congregants show a distinctive trend toward increased Jewishness: Those who grew up Jewish now value their heritage more fully."[75] Rabbi Carol Harris-Shapiro concluded her book *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey Through Religious Change in America* with the following words:

> Until now, according to Jewish communal expectations, the amount of ritual indicates the strength of Jewish identity. Quantifiable Jewish ritual had dominated sociological research on Jewish continuity; what Jews do has classified them as "more" or "less" Jewish, more or less in touch with the "golden thread" that binds Jews to their ancestors and to each other (S. Cohen 1988; Goldscheider 1986). For example, the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey assumed individuals had a stronger Jewish identity if they had regular synagogue attendance, fasted on Yom Kippur, visited Israel, practiced Jewish holidays, did not put up a Christmas tree, and lit Shabbat candles (Kosmin, et al. 1991, 35-36). If ritual is the sole measure of Jewishness, the Messianic believers I knew in the

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47; Dvir Abramovich, "Jesus-Believing Jews in Australia: Celebrate Messiah as a Case Study," *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations* 4:1 (2009): 1-28; David J. Rudolph, "Contemporary Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, ed. M. Avrum Ehrlich (vol. 1; Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 146-150; David J. Rudolph, "History of Judeo-Christian Communities in the Jewish Diaspora," in *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Culture*, ed. M. Avrum Ehrlich (vol. 1; Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 136-139; Keri Zelson Warshawsky, "Returning To Their Own Borders: A Social Anthropological Study of Contemporary Messianic Jewish Identity in Israel" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008); Stern, *Messianic Judaism* (2007); Pauline Kollontai, "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Case of Messianic Jews," *Journal of Religion and Society* 8 (2006): 1-9; Rudolph, "Messianic Jews and Christian Theology," 58-84; Kinzer, *Postmissionary Messianic Judaism* (2005); Pauline Kollontai, "Messianic Jews and Jewish Identity," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3:2 (2004): 195-205; Cohn-Sherbok, *Messianic Judaism* (2000); Carol Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism: A Rabbi's Journey Through Religious Change in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1999); Shoshanah Feher, *Passing Over Easter: Constructing the Boundaries of Messianic Judaism* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1998); Shoshanah Feher, "Managing Strain, Contradictions, and Fluidity: Messianic Judaism and the Negotiation of a Religio-Ethnic Identity," in *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*, eds. Penny E. Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland (Walnut Creek: AltaMira, 1997), 25-50; Gershon Nerel, "Messianic Jews in Eretz Israel, 1917-1967: Trends and Changes in Shaping Self Identity" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1995); Ruth I. Fleischer, "The Emergence of Distinctively Jewish Faith in Jesus, 1925-1993" (Ph.D. diss., King's College, University of London, 1995); Bruce Stokes, "Messianic Judaism: Ethnicity in Revitalization" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1994); David J. Rudolph, *Understanding Messianic Judaism* (Denver: Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations, 1993); John R. Stone, "Messianic Judaism: a redefinition of the boundary between Christian and Jew," *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 3 (1991): 237-252.

[75] Feher, *Passing Over Easter*, 140-142.

> congregation would score favorably, certainly outstripping the average "Jew by religion" in their attendance at services and possibly even doing other Jewish practices. If *doing* Jewish is *being* Jewish, ironically, Messianic Jews are more Jewish than many born Jews.[76]

The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) interviewed a broad spectrum of the American Jewish community, including Messianic Jews. One survey question asked: "Is being Jewish very important in your life?" According to the findings, 100% of all Messianic Jews interviewed said "Yes" to the survey question. This was higher than any other Jewish group interviewed, including Orthodox (77%), Conservative (58%), Reform (40%), and Reconstructionist (49%).[77] Sergio DellaPergola, who tabulated the results, summed up the significance of the data as follows:

> Not unexpectedly, the perceived importance of being Jewish is highest among those who consistently manifest their identity via a religious definition and a clear denominational preference. The expected gradient among the major denominations (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform) emerges. Jews who are consistently secular display far lesser interest for being Jewish. The amount of interest is quite variable, though generally low among other subgroups with the survey population, including ex-Jews. *One small group with extremely high percentages of interest in Judaism is those preferring the Messianic denomination*.[78]

The empirical evidence demonstrates that Messianic synagogues make it possible for the church to observe Paul's rule. My own story confirms this assertion. In 1975, my father, a Jewish lawyer from New York, became a believer in Jesus and began attending a local church. The pastor of the church encouraged my father to visit a Messianic synagogue where he would be able to live out faith in Jesus in a Jewish communal context. This led to my father joining the Messianic synagogue.

Because this pastor upheld Paul's rule (probably more out of instinct than response to 1 Cor 7:17-24), I was raised as a Messianic Jew.[79] I now have three daughters, all of whom have been raised in Messianic synagogues and identify as Messianic Jews. My oldest daughter is an undergraduate student at Johns Hopkins University, and she tells me that she will raise her future children as Messianic Jews. The Messianic synagogue option enabled my parents (both of whom are halakhically Jewish) to pass on Jewish identity to their children and grandchildren.[80] But things could have turned out differently had the pastor not intervened. If the pastor had welcomed my father into his church, without welcoming his Jewish calling, the likelihood is that I (like the vast majority of Jesus-believing Jews who attend Gentile churches) would have assimilated into Gentile Christianity.

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[76] Harris-Shapiro, *Messianic Judaism*, 186.

[77] Sergio DellaPergola, "New Data on Demography and Identification Among Jews in the U.S.," in *Jewish Intermarriage in Its Social Context*, ed. Paul Ritterband (New York: The Jewish Outreach Institute & The Center for Jewish Studies. The Graduate School of the City University of New York, 1991), 86. Among born Jews who identified as "Christian," 21% responded "Yes."

[78] DellaPergola, "New Data on Demography and Identification among Jews in the U.S.," 84; emphasis mine.

[79] I also regularly attended a Conservative synagogue with my mother who is not a Messianic Jew.

[80] David J. Rudolph, "No Pork, Just a Little: Reflections on Our College Road Trip," *JewishJournal.com* (November 4, 2009).

There are presently over one million Christians in the United States who have a Jewish parent.[81] We do not know how many of these Christians of Jewish descent attend churches; however, there is little question that the number is in the hundreds of thousands. Church leaders who meet these individuals can act on Paul's rule by connecting them with Messianic synagogues where the ethos and community life reflects a commitment to Jewish covenantal living.[82] But how can a church leader uphold Paul's rule if the person or couple does not want to attend a Messianic synagogue or if there is no Messianic synagogue in the area?

To begin with, church leaders can encourage baptized Jews to move in the direction of "staying Jewish," and help them toward this end. They can explain to them, on the basis of 1 Cor 7:17-24, that being a Jew is a calling from God, and that God wants them to keep the covenant of their fathers. The Jewish member of a church can be counseled to remain connected to the Jewish community, either through a Messianic affiliation, a mainstream synagogue, or both. They can be encouraged to study Hebrew, attend *parsha* (Torah portion) classes, give *tzedakah* (charity) and engage in *gemilut chasadim* (acts of kindness) within the Jewish community, to grow in their walk with God and to become better Jews.

Pastoral leaders can advise Jews in their churches, including those who are intermarried, to maintain Jewish life in their homes through welcoming the *Shabbat* (Sabbath), celebrating Jewish festivals, keeping kosher and hanging a *mezuzah* (a small case containing a parchment of Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21 with God's name written on the back) on their doorpost, among other Jewish observances. Jewish life is centered in the home. The church leader may be able to work closely with a local rabbi (Messianic or mainstream) who is willing to assist with Jewish lifecycle events such as *bris/brit milah* (circumcision) ceremonies, bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings and funerals.

The pastor or priest needs to make room for Jews to live as Jews within the church, teaching the Scriptures in a way that affirms Israel's irrevocable election, and the existence of distinct callings for Jews and Gentiles. All of this takes commitment and knowledge on the part of the church that wants to honor Paul's rule that Jews should remain Jews and not assimilate. Without such commitment and knowledge, Jews in churches will naturally gravitate toward assimilation, as they have done throughout history.[83]

Given this ecclesial challenge, baptized Jews who continue to identify as Jews can help their communities develop the vision, educational programs and resources needed to live out Paul's rule. Notably, the first ecumenical conference of Jesus-believing Jews in modern times met in Helsinki on June 14-15, 2010 to "affirm their Jewish identity, their faith in Jesus and their desire for unity." Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Messianic scholars from England, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Russia, and the United States—all of them Jewish—met to discuss the

[81] See David J. Rudolph, *Growing Your Olive Tree Marriage* (Clarksville: Lederer, 2003), 180 n. 2.

[82] Relationship building and joint activities between local churches and Messianic synagogues help develop the trust necessary to make this possible.

[83] E.g., more than 400,000 Jews became members of churches between the early nineteenth century and World War II but less than one percent of their descendants are self-identified Jews today. See Mitch L. Glaser, "A Survey of Missions to the Jews in Continental Europe 1900-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 159-161; Philip Cohen, *The Hebrew Christian and His National Continuity* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1909), 37; Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Chosen People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880-2000* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 49-51; Rachel L. E. Kohn, "Ethnic Judaism and the Messianic Movement," *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 29:2 (1987): 89. Those who argue for the theoretical possibility of Jewish Christian continuity without upholding Paul's rule typically offer no socio-historical evidence to support their case.

"significance of Jewish continuity in the Church, as an ongoing link between its historic beginnings, its present life, and its future hope." Speakers included Father David Neuhaus, SJ, Patriarchal Vicar General for Hebrew speaking Catholics in Israel, and Father Antoine Levy, OP, director of the Studium Catholicum in Helsinki. After two days of meetings, the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Messiah issued the following statement:

> We thank God for bringing us as Jews to the knowledge of Jesus the Messiah, and we express a debt of gratitude to those from the Nations who have transmitted the knowledge of Christ from generation to generation. While we seek to speak on behalf of those who share our Jewish identity and faith in Christ, we have no official mandate from our respective communities. In what follows we are expressing our own deeply held convictions.
>
> At this unprecedented event, we have experienced the depth of our bond, and at the same time we have wrestled with the diversity of our ingrained theological and cultural constructs. In spite of church divisions, we have come together as Jews who believe in Jesus. We hope that sharing the fruit of our common efforts will benefit our brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not aim to issue a definitive declaration, but to initiate an ongoing process of discussion.
>
> There are many Jewish people in the body of Christ. We believe that this reality reflects God's intention that Israel and the Nations live as mutual blessings to one another. In fact, the Church in its essence is the communion of Jews and those from the Nations called to faith in Christ.
>
> In light of this truth, we think that the life of Jews in the body of Christ has theological significance for that body as a whole. Their presence serves as a constant reminder to the body that its existence is rooted in the ongoing story of the people of Israel. This story resounds throughout the celebration of the liturgical life of the community. We believe that this story finds its center in Israel's Messiah. We believe that Jews within the body are a living bond between the Church and the people of Israel. Accordingly, we would like to explore concrete ways in which Jewish people may live out their distinctive calling in the body of Christ.
>
> Finally, we wish to express to our Jewish brothers and sisters who do not share our faith in Jesus the Messiah that we consider ourselves to be part of the Jewish people and are committed to its welfare.[84]

The consultation's desire to "explore concrete ways in which Jewish people may live out their distinctive calling in the body of Christ" reflects a new ecumenical vision for Jewish continuity in the church that challenges long-held approaches to boundary construction.

Conclusion

No one likes church rules. However, Paul's "rule in all the churches" (1 Cor 7:17-24) should be embraced because it sustains the church as a body of Jews and Gentiles. When we do not keep Paul's rule, the church becomes devoid of practicing Jews. Some people are fine with this and

[84] The consultation was jointly organized by the MJTI Center for Jewish-Christian Relations and the Helsinki Studium Catholicum.

say: "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile"[85] or "the church is a third race."[86] But the evidence surveyed in this paper indicates that Paul took great care in his letters to differentiate between Jesus-believing Jews and Gentiles for the purpose of mutual blessing.[87] Moreover, Paul (like the Jerusalem apostles) formulated a universal rule that the circumcised should remain circumcised (i.e. practicing Jews), and that the uncircumcised should remain uncircumcised in keeping with their respective callings from God. Churches today have rules about all kinds of things—chewing gum in the sanctuary, where members can park their cars, etc. More than once I have been asked to take off my hat because it was a rule. If the church cares enough to practice these rules, perhaps the time has come for it to practice Paul's "rule in all the churches" and the Jerusalem Council's decree—both universal directives that bear the seal of apostolic authority.

Appendix

Having presented an interpretation of 1 Cor 7:17-24 that supports the notion of lifelong Jewish and Gentile callings, the objection may be anticipated that such a reading would contextually infer that being a slave is a lifelong calling (1 Cor 7:21).[88] A response to this argument is found in Gregory Dawes's 1990 *CBQ* article "'But if you can gain your freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)."[89] Dawes proposes that we understand 1 Cor 7:17-24 in the context of Paul's discussion of marriage and celibacy in 1 Cor 7:1-39. He contends that 1 Cor 7:17-24 functions as a *digressio* integral to Paul's argument, and that an analogy exists between pair 1 (circumcision and slavery) and pair 2 (marriage and celibacy). In support of this argument, Dawes notes the parallelism between verse 18 and verse 27:

1 Cor 7:18	1 Cor 7:27
Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised?	Are you bound to a wife?
Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. μὴ ἐπισπάσθω	Do not seek to be free. μὴ ζήτει λύσιν
Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised?	Are you free from a wife?

[85] Horrell, "No Longer Jew or Greek," 321-344.

[86] Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

[87] See Rudolph, *A Jew to the Jews*, for a discussion of Gal 1:13; 2:14; 3:28; 5:6; 6:15; Phil 3:8; 1 Cor 9:19-23; 10:32; and Rom 14.

[88] Because of the ellipsis at the end of v. 21 (μᾶλλον χρῆσαι), translators can add the word "slavery" (NAB) or "freedom" (NRSV). Dawes and Garland survey the lexical and syntactical problems with the "remain in your slavery" view as well as Bartchy's "third possibility." See Dawes, "'But if you can gain your freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)," 689; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 308-311.

[89] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 298-316, adopts Dawes's approach.

Let him not seek circumcision. μὴ περιτεμνέσθω	Do not seek a wife. μὴ ζήτει γυναῖκα

Dawes suggests that in 1 Cor 7:17-24, Paul uses circumcision and slavery as illustrations to communicate his stance on marriage and celibacy. The Corinthians questioned whether married life was compatible with the life of a Jesus-believer (1 Cor 7:1) and specifically whether a married person should remain married.[90] Paul responds by encouraging single people with sexual desire to marry (vv. 2-8); he commands the married to remain married even if married to an unbeliever (vv. 10-16). Marriage is good and has its advantages (vv. 2-6). Being single is also good and has its advantages (v. 7). It is wrong to think of celibacy as good and marriage as bad. Neither way of life is sin (1 Cor 7:28, 36-37). Both marriage and celibacy have the Lord's approval.

In order to emphasize that *both marriage and celibacy have the Lord's approval*, and that each should remain in their respective calling,[91] Paul reminds the Corinthians of "circumcision" and "foreskin," which are callings from the Lord. Jews are called to remain in their calling as Jews; Gentiles are called to remain in their calling as Gentiles. It is wrong to think of "circumcision" as good and "foreskin" as bad, or the reverse. Both have God's authorization and seal of approval. Both callings are consistent with the believing life. Jews *and* Gentiles have commandments to keep. "With respect to salvation no social situation is more advantageous than another."[92]

The point of the circumcision-foreskin illustration is that the Corinthians should adopt the same perspective toward marriage and celibacy (v. 27); each is a legitimate calling from God. The Corinthians should not think of celibacy as good and marriage as bad (see esp. vv. 17-27). Eschatological blessing is not contingent on marriage or celibacy. More important than whether someone is married or celibate is whether they keep the commandments of God:

> Paul wanted to assert (perhaps against those who, for super-spiritual reasons, wanted to dissolve their marriages) that what was important was not one's marital status, but rather one's Christian obedience—keeping God's commandments.[93]

But just because marriage and celibacy are both good, and matters of indifference with respect to eschatological blessing, does this mean that (for those without prior commitments) there is no advantage to choosing one over the other? Paul would have the Corinthians know that, while their affirmation of both celibacy *and* marriage in the community is essential, there are distinct advantages of celibacy over marriage for those who are not yet married and for those who are no longer married. What is the advantage of celibacy over marriage? Celibacy is a special "gift

[90] In 1 Cor 7:1, Paul seems to restate the Corinthian view, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is well for a man not to touch a woman.'"

[91] Since Paul permitted the single person to marry but not the married person to divorce, it may be reasonably assumed that Paul considered the single person's "calling" to be epistemologically less absolute until it was clarified through either marriage or a conscious decision to remain celibate. Natural desires may lead to the clarification of one's calling ("But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry" [v. 9]; "if his passions are strong...let him marry as he wishes" [v. 36]). Paul also recognizes that one's calling can be affected by circumstances beyond one's control (e.g., the death of a spouse [v. 39]).

[92] Collins, *First Corinthians*, 274.

[93] Colin G. Kruse, *Paul, the Law and Justification* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 124.

from God" (χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ) (1 Cor 7:7, 17). What is the purpose of this gift? Paul explains that a celibate person's attention is not divided. He/she does not have to think about pleasing their spouse. They can devote themselves fully to the Lord in body and spirit (1 Cor 7:32-35).

To ensure that the Corinthians do not lose sight of the advantages of celibacy as he extols the goodness of marriage, Paul uses a second illustration—the slave who can gain his freedom should take advantage of the opportunity (1 Cor 7:21b). The correlation of this illustration to celibacy is supported by Paul's use of "bound" (δέδεσαι)/ "free" (λέλυσαι) language to describe celibacy in 1 Cor 7:27. Paul's point by analogy is that "the person who is already celibate or who has been married and is now once again single is urged to take advantage of this opportunity to remain single-mindedly devoted to the Lord (*cf.* v 35)."[94]

When 1 Cor 7:17-24 is interpreted in this way, the pericope is not a digression from Paul's discussion of marriage and celibacy in 1 Cor 7 but is integral to it. Dawes's proposal allows for the possibility that circumcision and slavery are not illustrations that mean the same thing. Rather, they are complementary.[95] This means that Paul's rule in all the churches can be understood to indicate that a Jew has a lifelong calling to be a Jew without necessarily implying that a slave has a lifelong calling to be a slave.

[94] Dawes, "'But if you can gain your freedom' (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)," 696.

[95] A similar use of complementary illustrations occurs in 1 Cor 3:5-7 and 1 Cor 15:35-44a (Dawes, "'But if you can gain your freedom' [1 Corinthians 7:17-24]," 686-689).