

# Jew-Gentile Distinction in the *One New Man* of Ephesians 2:15

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## Abstract

Two contradictory views of the ‘one new man’ metaphor in Ephesians 2:15 are presented, one arguing that it denies any distinction between Jewish and Gentile Jesus-believers, and the other insisting that it confirms the theory of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction. This paper explores the meaning of the ‘one new man’ with special attention to the question of making distinction between Jews and Gentiles within the *ekklēsia*. The study focuses in turn on each of the three keywords in the metaphor, reviewing their meaning and use in the canon and providing some theological commentary alongside. Supply of the phrase, ‘in place of,’ in some translations is evaluated. Internal evidence in the form of personal pronouns is examined to determine whether it sustains or contradicts distinction theory.

The study concludes unequivocally that the ‘one new man’ in Ephesians 2:15 is a composite unity of Jews and Gentiles who retain their ethnic identities even after spiritual regeneration in Christ. The classification of individuals as believers or unbelievers in Jesus does not erase the biblical distinction

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the South African Theological Seminary.

between Israel and the nations, even within the *ekklēsia*. The mixed usage of personal pronouns in Ephesians confirms this finding. To assert that the ‘one new man’ is created ‘in place of’ Jews and Gentiles is therefore misleading. Major theological implications include the validation of Jewish tradition and practice among Jewish Jesus-believers, and their recognition as the living connection between the nations and Israel. The peace Christ made by creating Jew and Gentile in himself into ‘one new man’ is currently most evident in Messianic Jewish synagogues where members of each party worship together and have table fellowship in unity, whilst retaining their own distinctive faith traditions.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The text and historical interpretations

In Ephesians 2:14–16, Paul wrote:<sup>2</sup>

For he himself is our peace, who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of the partition, the enmity, in his flesh, invalidating the law of commandments in ordinances, in order that he might create the two in himself into one new man, *thus* making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, killing the enmity in himself.

This text indicates that the two, identified in 2:11 as Gentiles and Jews, have become one in Christ. Jesus broke down the barrier dividing the two in order to create ‘one new man’ in which there is peace and reconciliation. ‘One new man’ is a metaphor for the church<sup>3</sup> but, in

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<sup>2</sup> Using the Lexham English Bible except where otherwise specified.

<sup>3</sup> The following section, ‘1.2. The *ekklēsia* and the church,’ explains what is meant by ‘church’ in this paper.

spite of its apparent simplicity, two diametrically opposing views of its nature appear in the literature. Each of these views is underpinned by antithetical perspectives on Israel (by which I mean Jewish people) in the present era inaugurated by the Christ-event.

In the Christian faith tradition (‘religion’),<sup>4</sup> Jesus-believers (whether Jewish or Gentile in lineage) are not bound by obligation to Mosaic Law (though yielding to the ‘moral Law’ is often promoted, those being the timeless moral principles of the Law). An array of texts in the NT, including that quoted above (Eph 2:14–16), is used to justify this orientation. Consequently, Christian theology often dissolves the ancient biblical categories of Israel and the nations, reclassifying all humans into another binary system comprising those who believe in Jesus and those who do not. The church is thus widely understood to be a people of faith whose spirituality transcends their ethnicity, such that the latter lapses as irrelevant or immaterial. Consequently, Paul’s ‘one new man’ is interpreted as the Christian church comprising former Jews and former Gentiles, who are now undifferentiable from any theological perspective. Two witnesses, one ancient and one modern, will suffice to testify to this interpretation of Paul’s ‘one new man.’

Late in the fourth century, John Chrysostom described Jews and Gentiles as ‘two statues, the one of silver, the other of lead,’ which are then ‘melted down’ to produce one new statue that comes out gold, not a mixture of silver and lead (Schaff 2014:71). In Chrysostom’s words, Christ ‘blended them together,’ declaring that ‘so long as they continued still as Jews and Gentiles, they could not have been reconciled’ (p. 72). A similar interpretation was propounded by Martyn Lloyd-Jones last century. He wrote, ‘The Jew has been done away with as such, even as the Gentile has been done away with, in Christ. ...

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<sup>4</sup> See Mason 2007:480–488 for a discussion on the anachronistic term, ‘religion.’

nothing that belonged to the old state is of any value or has any relevance in the new state' (1972:275).

Lloyd-Jones went on to state that 'there is no such thing as a Jewish section of the Christian Church' (p. 277). Citing 1 Peter 2:9–10, he insisted that the church is 'not a mixture of Jew and Gentile, but a new man; Jew finished, Gentile finished, a new creature' (p. 277).

At two separate seminars I attended in 2009, two speakers presented a different interpretation of Ephesians 2:15; they both claimed that the unity of the 'one new man' does not imply, let alone require, a flattening of its Jewish and Gentile members into homogeneity. Instead, the unity spoken of in Ephesians 2:14–16 strengthens the case that Jewish identity of Jews who believe in Jesus is fundamental. The seminars were presented by John Atkinson<sup>5</sup> and Daniel Juster,<sup>6</sup> and seeded the research presented in this paper. Their interpretation of the text leads to the conclusion (further explained below) that Gentile Jesus-believers are joined to (or added to) Israel, rather than replacing (or displacing) Israel.

The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC 2010:24) similarly states, 'One new man does not mean that the distinction and mutuality between Jews and Gentiles are obliterated. Instead, it means that Jews as Jews and Gentiles as Gentiles, with their differences and distinctions, live in unity and mutual blessing in Yeshua.'

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<sup>5</sup> *Whose Law is it anyway?* Roots and Shoots Conference. 25 July 2009; Christ Church Kenilworth, Cape Town. See Atkinson (2008) for his earlier published article containing similar content.

<sup>6</sup> *Interpreting the New Covenant from a Messianic Jewish Perspective*. 23–25 October 2009; Beit Ariel Messianic Jewish Congregation, Cape Town. The essence of Juster's Messianic Jewish theology, in which intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction is pivotal, is available on the internet at [http://youtu.be/zH8xi\\_dz6hI](http://youtu.be/zH8xi_dz6hI) (accessed on 1 August 2014).

A seemingly growing number of modern scholars support this view, which might be called ‘unity with distinction’ or something similar.<sup>7</sup> Markus Barth did so forty years ago:

Ephesians 2:15 proclaims that the people of God is different from a syncretistic mixture of Jewish and Gentile elements. The members of the church are not so equalized, levelled down, or straightjacketed in a uniform as to form a *genus tertium* that would be different from both Jews and Gentiles. Rather the church consists of Jews and Gentiles reconciled to one another by the Messiah who has come and has died for both (1974:310).

Barth’s words are, in part, a reaction against the notion that the church is the ‘third race’ which transcends and succeeds the first two, namely Israel and the nations. ‘Third race’ was a term used by opponents of Christianity as early as AD 200, the first race being the Gentiles, and the second being the Jews (Harnack 1972:273). The oldest extant reference to it is in the Latin Church Father, Tertullian (*Marc.* VII 10), and it is still commonly used in self-designation by the church today. It is possible that the concept of Christians as a race originates from the *Epistle to Diognetus* (1:1), dating to c.AD 170. There, the writer refers to *kainon touto genos*: ‘this new race,’ a term which I posit was equated with Paul’s ‘one new humanity’ in Ephesians 2:15. Unlike Paul, however, the author of *Diognetus* was patently anti-Jewish (see ch. 3–4), inconsistent and sometimes downright incoherent (e.g. by suggesting that Jewish observance of Jewish Law is unlawful, 4:1–2.)

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<sup>7</sup> These usually being post-supersessionist in orientation and roughly fitting into a school called the ‘radical new perspective on Paul,’ or ‘beyond the new perspective on Paul.’ Examples (to my mind) are William Campbell, Mark Kinzer, D. Thomas Lancaster, Derek Leman, Mark Nanos, David Rudolph, R. Kendall Soulen and Brian Tucker. (Some of those listed are members of the UMJC.)

The *genos* referred to above may have meant the human race generically rather than an ethnic race or racial grouping (as ‘Gentile’ denotes all nations excluding Israel), though later literature has stressed the ethnic sense. Thus, ‘third race’ or ‘new race’ terminology can be used to emphasise the *renewal* of humanity (as ‘new human race’ does in Crossway Bibles 2008:2265), or it can be used to express the *replacement* of the former humanity (including ethnic Israel) as in the examples from Chrysostom and Lloyd-Jones above. Hoehner expresses the latter interpretation eloquently: ‘A new race that is raceless! ... They are not Jews or Gentiles but a body of Christians who make up the church’ (2002:379). In contrast, Hardin (2013:232) reaches the opposite conclusion: Ephesians 2:14–18 does *not* signify the formation of ‘a raceless people.’ Similarly, Soulen responds to the notion to the church’s self-perception as ‘a third and final “race” that transcends and replaces the difference between Israel and the nations’ by arguing that ‘the church is not a third column of biblical ontology next to that of the Jews and that of the Greeks...’ (1996:169–170). ‘They do not become a new *generic, uniform* humanity’, according to the UMJC (2010:24, emphasis added).

One is compelled to ask which of the two possible meanings Paul intended. Does the ‘one new man’ Christ created *replace* the elements of which it is constituted, or does it signify a *renewal* (or *transformation*) of humanity? Does the resultant peace, also mentioned in Ephesians 2:15, depend on the elimination of the categories of Jew and Gentile, or is it a peace that triumphs over their differences? This study seeks to answer these questions. Subsequently, I shall briefly discuss the ESV and RSV-NRSV translations’ supply (insertion) of the phrase ‘in place of’ to produce: ‘one new man [NRSV: humanity] in

place of the two'.<sup>8</sup> These clearly favour the replacement paradigm, but is their addition a helpful clarification of the text, or an unintentional obscuration of it?

## 1.2. The *ekklēsia* and the church

For the purpose of this paper, 'church' is intended to denote all believers in Jesus regardless of whether they are Jewish or Gentile, that is, the *ekklēsia* (or *ecclesia*) in general. I ask the reader to bear with the difficulties inherent in this loose and uncomfortable denotation (not a definition), given that I am writing for Gentile Christians who are most familiar with this sense of the word—even with its vagueness. While some scholars prefer to use the term 'church' to denote the Gentile Christian majority of the *ekklēsia*, distinct from the *ekklēsia*'s minority Messianic Jewish membership, to do so here would be to assume a particular conclusion before undertaking the study.

The following are some of the manifold difficulties in using the word 'church' as I do in this paper, in keeping with most of Christian literature. Firstly, the defining criteria for membership are unclear. I refer to Jesus-believers, but what does it mean to believe in Jesus, and how do other key components such as repentance and baptism contribute? Secondly, the denotation does not specify whether or not pre-incarnation believers (like Abraham, see John 8:56) are included. Thirdly, many Messianic Jews dislike being referred to as members of the church (or as Christians) because of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism, past and present, in the Christian church (see Stern 2007:25–26). Finally, 'church' may connote institutionalised Christianity foreign to the NT's presentation of the *ekklēsia*.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that these particular translations do not italicise words supplied by the translators.

### 1.3. Jew-Gentile distinction and related issues

Distinction theory is my term for the theological framework which understands Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus as distinct in certain significant theological senses, including identity and function (role, service) in the economy of God's kingdom. That is, a biblical differentiation exists between Israel and the nations *within the church* similar to that which existed more visibly before Christ. This distinction results in a twofold structure within the church that I label *intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction*. In this framework, the 'one new man,' or 'humanity' as I shall explain, comprises Jews and Gentiles who together are devoted to Jesus. My choice of the word distinction is based on its common use in English Bibles to translate *diakrinō* in Acts 11:12 and 15:9, as well as *diastolē* in Romans 3:22 and 10:12. It is not intended to suggest a superior-inferior relationship in any sense. The concept has already been given several other names, including 'unity and diversity in the church' (Campbell 2008), 'bilateral ecclesiology' (Kinzer 2005:151–179), or 'Torah-defined ecclesiological variegation' (Rudolph 2010).

In contrast to distinction theory, church teaching for most of Christian history has denied that there is any theologically meaningful distinction between Jews and Gentiles in Christ (Soulen 1996:1–2; 11–12, based on a number of NT texts). In my reckoning, the most striking of these texts are Acts 11:12 (in some English translations) and 15:9, Romans 3:22 and 10:12, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:15, and Colossians 3:11. I refer to these as the 'no distinction' texts, as merited by a cursory reading of them. However, I question whether any of these texts individually, or all of them collectively, provide sufficient evidence to overturn the prevailing Jew-Gentile distinction of the pre-Christian era. My research agenda is to examine each of these verses individually to see if they substantiate the Christian tradition. If so, then they refute



distinction theory; if not, it stands. This paper focuses Christ's creation of 'one new man,' mentioned in Ephesians 2:15, which has already been shown above to yield diametrically opposed interpretations with regard to intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction.

A major obstacle in the distinction discourse is that it is inextricably intertwined with numerous theological concerns such as the election of Israel (and thus replacement theology),<sup>9</sup> 'nomology',<sup>10</sup> and eschatology. Wide differences of opinion in these principal issues profoundly impact the discussion, since distinction theory interacts with, and is dependent on, a particular view of them. For example, the same verse in which we find 'one new man,' Ephesians 2:15, also speaks of Christ 'invalidating the law of commandments in ordinances'. It is not possible in this paper, however, to present an interpretation of these words that reconciles with distinction theory (i.e. one which does not regard the Law as annulled).<sup>11</sup> The reader is asked, therefore, to bear in mind that this study is a miniscule component of a rapidly growing body of literature, a little of which I cite, that addresses all the related and interdependent issues mentioned.

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<sup>9</sup> Replacement theology, or supersessionism, is the notion that the church has replaced, or superseded, Israel as God's chosen people. An alternate (non-supersessionist) view is expressed in a recent expression by Mark Kinzer of 'the one two-fold people of God and of the Messiah,' which says, '*The Jewish people and the Christian Church together form the one people of God...*' (Kinzer 2014:3).

<sup>10</sup> An uncommon term which, within theology, denotes the doctrine of biblical law (primarily Mosaic Law). A consequence of denying intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction is the downplaying of legal obligations (deprogramming Jewish Jesus-believers' orientation to Torah) and, therefore, very limited development of nomology by Christian scholars. For illustration, contrast the amount of Jewish literature on the Law with that of Christian literature, as well as the proportion of each to the total corpus of its own faith tradition.

<sup>11</sup> See Woods 2012 for just one of many publications challenging the traditional Christian view of the Law, specifically the dietary laws in relation to Peter's vision in Acts 10:9–16.

## 1.4. Approach

This study is at once biblical and theological. The method used is to examine each of the three words in the phrase ‘one new man’ in turn to see in what ways they contradict or support distinction theory. Examples of how these words are used in other biblical texts are presented in order to evaluate the two views (which could be called *no distinction* and *pro-distinction*). By juxtaposing these radically different theological viewpoints, I have sought to highlight areas of disagreement and to illustrate the significance of the ‘one new man’ as a key concept in the New Testament. Some theological discussion is included *in situ* with each word study, but the main implications are left for the conclusion. A brief study of the use of personal pronouns in Ephesians is made to see if they provide evidence either against or for the theory of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction.

On a personal level, this study has been applied—theology should not happen in a vacuum. While continuing to worship regularly in Christian churches, I have over the past five years also worshipped in synagogues of Reform Judaism, in Messianic Jewish synagogues, and mixed congregations of the Jewish roots movement. Such experience has challenged and shaped my own understanding of Christ’s ‘one new man,’ and when I write of Jews (or Israel), I have real, living individuals in mind whom I regard as representatives of the whole people. Similarly, when I mention the Jewish faith tradition, I have at least a sample of it to relate to. Nevertheless, the study presented is not dependent on my own experience; it is anchored in the biblical text—in spite of unintentional bias it may contain.

## 2. Textual analysis

Paul wrote that Christ sought to create in himself ‘*hena kainon anthrōpon*’ (‘one new man’) in Ephesians 2:15. What exactly did he mean by this? Though there is little dissention in terms of translation, the interpreted meaning of the phrase is disputed. Each of the three words is discussed individually below with special attention to whether or not they speak against intra-ecclesial distinction of Jews and Gentiles. Subsequently, the translators’ supply of the phrase ‘in place of’ in some translations is critiqued. Finally, a literary test is applied to the epistle for a possible validation of the interpretation of ‘one new man’ that emerges from the analysis.

### 2.1. One

The first notable observation about ‘one’ in ‘one new man’ is its deliberate placement in the text. Paul could have written ‘a new man’ (*kainon anthrōpon*) more simply, since Greek has no indefinite article. Why did Paul specify *one*? It appears he wanted to identify a particular new man, yet could not use the definite article for an entity which he had not yet referenced. Moreover, he wanted to be clear that it was one and not plural. Paul emphasised this unity in innovative ways as he prefixed the preposition *syn* with various verbs and nouns in Ephesians 2:19–22; 3:6; 4:3, 16 (Barth 1963:7). (English Bibles usually translate the Greek prefix *syn* with the English prefix ‘co-’ or with ‘fellow’ e.g. ‘co-heirs’ or ‘fellow heirs’ in 3:6.) Notably, these *syn* compounds do not merely pertain to interpersonal relationships; they relate to the two groups, Jews and Gentiles in Christ (Campbell 2008:21).

*Hena* assuredly means one, but Jewish and Christian scholars alike are aware that the word is laden with theological import. God, says Deuteronomy 6:4, is one (‘*ě·hāq̄*—hereafter *echad*—or *heis* in the LXX,

where *heis* and *hena* are inflections of the same word). The *Shema*, as the verse is known in Judaism, is the ultimate proclamation of Jewish faith: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one’ (NIV). The main translation concern here is whether the LORD is ‘one’ or ‘unique,’ as the LEB translates *echad*. The ‘oneness,’ or unity, of God is often used by Jews as to argue against the Christian doctrine of the trinity, though it may also be translated ‘unique’ or ‘alone’ (e.g. Wyschogrod 2004:173–174). The ISV, JPS; NABRE; NLT; NRSV all render *echad* as ‘alone.’ Doing so ‘reads the verse not as making a metaphysical statement about God, namely, that he is one and indivisible, but rather that God alone is to be worshipped to the exclusion of all other gods,’ Wyschogrod explains (2004:174). His aim is not to demonstrate whether God is, or is not, a composite unity but rather, that Israel, like God, is unique; Israel has only one God, Yahweh, and Yahweh has one people alone, Israel, whom he will never divorce (Isa 50:1) or lose compassion for (Jer 31:3–4, 9, 20; Hos 2:16, 19–20; 11:1–6, 8–11; Zech 10:6). Yet, he accepts that composite unity in the godhead is not disproved by Deuteronomy 6:4—a crucial element in Christian theology. Even the renowned Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, acknowledged that the singularity of *echad* with reference to God implies the possibility of a plurality (Atkinson 2008:2).

The concept of ‘one’ meaning the unity of differing elements is native to the Bible, with the word being used of well-known composites such as daytime and night time forming ‘day one’ (*yom echad*, Gen 1:5), and man and woman forming ‘one flesh’ (*basar echad*, Gen 2:24). The fact that Ephesians was written in Greek is no barrier to employing the concept of composite unity found in these two examples, with ‘day one’ translated as *hēmera mia*, and ‘one flesh’ as *sarka mian* in the LXX. (*Mia* and *mian* are feminine inflections of *heis*, as is *hen* in the following example.) The marriage relationship is dependent on the distinction between husband and wife; thus, ‘unity implies

distinctiveness and yet complementarity’ (Atkinson 2008:14). The distinctiveness and complementarity Atkinson mentions are crucial for the united couple to represent the image of God, as Genesis 1:27 expresses so clearly. The image is distorted if both members of the couple are of the same sex, or if they are both neuter.

Similarly, the Greek text of John 17 uses the same word for the unity of Jesus’ believers with each other, and the unity of Jesus with God: ‘so that they may be one [*hen*], just as we *are*’ (17:11); ‘that they all may be one [*hen*], just as you, Father, *are* in me and I *am* in you, that they also may be in us...in order that they may be one [*hen*], just as we *are* one [*hen*]—I in them, and you in me, in order that they may be completed in one [*hen*]’ (17:21–23).

Paul also provided a good example of the compound unity in the body of Christ in Romans 12:4–6: ‘For just as in one [*heni*] body we have many members, but all the members do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one [*hen*] body in Christ, and individually members of one another, but having different gifts according to the grace given to us’.

The same metaphor appears in 1 Corinthians 12:12–30, where Paul stressed the simultaneous unity and diversity of the one body of Christ. He pressed that ‘the body is one’ (12:12); it is ‘one body’ (12:12, 13, 20) but its members are ‘many’ (12:12, 14, 20) and diverse in nature, in function, and in honour. In fact, greater honour is given to some parts than to others ‘in order that there not be a division in the body’ (12:25). Evidently, the unity of the members of the body is not at the expense of their differences. Rather, the healthy functioning of the body is dependent on its members being different and fulfilling different kinds of roles: ‘And if they all were one member, where *would* the body *be*?’ (12:19). In both texts cited above, from Romans and 1 Corinthians, Paul

stressed simultaneously the unity and diversity of the members of the body of Christ. This is the same body, the church, which he referred to repeatedly in Ephesians (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30).

Ephesians 2:15–16 unequivocally identifies this same ‘one body’ as the ‘one new man:’ ‘that he might create the two in himself into one new man ... and might reconcile both in one body.’ By this equation, and with the support of the other epistles cited above, we can deduce that the ‘one new man’ comprises members who are united yet distinct in various significant ways. These distinctions are not arbitrary to God’s purposes, but are deliberate for producing a whole, fully functioning church. Therefore, they are not erased ‘in Christ,’ but the diversity of the members is for mutual blessing within the body, to the glory of God. Moreover, Ephesians 2:11–22 notes that the principal distinction between members of the body is their status in Israel: they are either members of Israel (Jews), or they are drawn from among the nations (Gentiles/non-Jews) into fellow citizenship with Israel—yet without becoming Jews. Thus, the distinction between Jew and Gentile is not at all altered by the unity Christ brought about between them.

The First Council of Nicaea in AD 325 used the word *homooúsios* to describe Jesus and God, the Father, as being of the ‘same substance’ and equally divine in spite of being differentiable. Later, the First Council of Ephesus in AD 431 adopted the term *hypostasis*, or hypostatic union, to express the unity of Jesus divinity and his humanity. Both these truths are examples of composite unities, and are accepted as foundational to Christian theology. Certainly the notion that the unity of the saints suggests in no way that they are, or will be in the age to come, the same in every way, stripped of their unique identity. The Bible even maintains ethnic identities in for those united in Christ

after the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth (e.g. Rev 21:3<sup>12</sup>).

From these examples, it is apparent that the biblical use of ‘one’ in both Hebrew and Greek allows for a kind of unity comprising diverse elements.<sup>13</sup> In fact, such unity seems to have been God’s goal from the beginning; the creation account tells of God making two, Adam and Eve, from ‘singular’ one, Adam, with the intention that the two would be united in ‘composite’ one, (Gen 2:21–24). Is it not therefore reasonable to consider that God’s separation (sanctification) of Israel from the nations was so that the two may ultimately be reunited (not just reconciled), yet remain distinct for the purpose of mutual blessing indefinitely?<sup>14</sup> Soulen (2013:285) summarises God’s agenda for mutual blessing like this:

The church of Jesus Christ is a sphere of mutual blessing between Jew and Gentile where the distinction between them (like that between male and female) is not erased, but recreated in a promissory way, as the eschatological sign and foretaste of messianic peace and mutual blessing among all the peoples of the world.

In a similar vein, the UMJC (2005) stated, ‘Together the Messianic Jewish community and the Christian Church constitute the *ekklesia*, the

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<sup>12</sup> Most translations prefer the singular collective noun, *laos* (‘people’), as per the Robinson-Pierpont edition of the GNT, but the Westcott-Hort, Tregelles and Nestle-Aland 28 all bear the plural *laoi* (‘peoples’).

<sup>13</sup> Contrast my findings with Lloyd-Jones’ emphatic statement: ‘*The unity of this new body is an absolute unity*’ (1972:277). He did not provide any support from how the cardinal number, one, is used in the Bible.

<sup>14</sup> On the theme of mutual blessing of Israel and the nations, see Soulen 1996; 2013 and, with Paul’s letter to the Romans in view, Keener 2013. The concept emerges from God’s covenant with Abraham, which purposes that ‘all the families of the earth’ will be blessed through Abraham, and they ought to bless him also (Gen 12:2–3).

one Body of Messiah, a community of Jews and Gentiles who in their ongoing distinction and mutual blessing anticipate the shalom of the world to come.’

The ‘one new man’ of Ephesians 2:15 may indeed comprise Jews and Gentiles who are united yet distinct. Accordingly, Barth (1963:5) wrote,

There is ‘no distinction’ but full solidarity between all men, whether Jewish- or Gentile-born, when the judgment and the grace of God are described (Rom 3:22f., 3:28f.; 10:12). But the following passages [Eph 2:11–20; 3:5–6] reveal that within the equal treatment of Jews and Gentiles a decisive distinction must still not be forgotten.

Hardin (2013:231) explains that Paul’s language of ‘oneness’ is part of his ‘metaphor of warring parties, which had come to an armistice through the work of Jesus,’ resulting in a new peace in place of enmity—but “‘oneness” and “ethnic collapse” are two very different things’. When the metaphor of ‘one new man’ is recognised as such, the text in Hardin’s study (Eph 2:14–18) ‘cannot be interpreted literally to mean that ethnic distinctions have deteriorated’ (p. 231). He points out that the two parties, Jew and Gentile, indicated by the ‘both’ of Ephesians 2:14 are still two in 2:18 where the same word, ‘both,’ is used again.

The Israel to which Paul generally refers in his writings, the people to whom Gentile believers in Jesus are to attach themselves, is ‘actual Israel’ (Barth 1963:9)—including both Jewish Jesus-believers *and* Jews who do not believe in Jesus. In speaking of the ‘one new man,’ Paul means ‘both Jews and Gentiles just as they are’ (*ibid.*). Similarly, Zetterholm (2003:158) writes, ‘They are certainly “one in Christ”, but it is precisely as “Jews” and “Gentiles” that they constitute this unity.’ This notion is also evident in Romans 9–11, in which Paul wrote that



God's election of Israel stands in spite of Israel's stumbling. Also in Romans, Paul referred to the *Shema* (3:30), deducing that the unity, or oneness, of God himself actually requires ongoing distinction between Israel and the nations in the new covenant era: 'His oneness has been compromised if he is *only* the God of Israel, *only* the God of the circumcised, *only* the God of Torah, and not *also* the God of the nations, not *also* the God of the uncircumcised, and not *also* the God of those outside the Torah' (Nanos 1996:184).

Accordingly, Paul's rationale is that, if the nations have to become Israel to come under God's reign, then God is not the God of every nation but only the God of Israel (Rom 3:29; Nanos 2008:33–34).

Simultaneously, if Israel has to lose its unique biblical identity in order to submit to Messiah, then the God of Israel has changed his identity, since he affixed Israel to his personal name in Exodus 5:1. God is referred to as the 'God of Israel' about 200 times in scripture, often in apposition to the Tetragrammaton. Consequently, for Israel to assimilate entirely into the nations is theologically extremely problematic in regards to God's unchangeable nature. Similarly, if Israel were exterminated, or if another people took its place (as in replacement theology), the faithfulness of the God of Israel would be called into question; the God of Israel 'is identified by fidelity to the Jewish people through time' (Soulen 1996:xi). Thus, Israel's identity must be fixed in order for God's identity to remain constant. On the other hand, Ephesians indicates that Gentile believers are to appropriate a Jewish identity (Campbell 2008:22)—at least to some extent. 'The church is not equated with Israel', but Israel in Ephesians is central to the believers' identity and therefore cannot simultaneously be undermined (p. 23). Indeed, 'one cannot be a joint heir with Israel if Israel is an entity only of the past' (p. 24).

These truths, therefore, are to be held in tension: Israel's unique identity prevails; Gentile believers are not to become Jewish, but they are to identify with the Jews, or Israel, as they cleave to Israel's Messiah and are thus brought into the commonwealth of Israel as co-citizens (but never co-Israelites! Campbell 2008:24). Gentile Christians have an especially close relationship with Jewish believers, who are likewise renewed in Messiah and bind the Gentiles to the life of Israel. Gentile believers must 'remember' their dependence on Israel for their relationship with God (Barth 1963:12, commenting on Eph 2:11ff). This is the unity of the 'one new man' which Christ created: not a unity which erases the differences between Jew and Gentile but one which removes the enmity between the two (Eph 2:14).

Paul makes a similar Jew-Gentile distinction not only in Romans and Ephesians, but in his other writings as well. Rudolph (2010:8) points out, for example, that 'the distinction between Jewish and Gentile identity in Christ is so fundamental that Paul can speak of "the gospel of the foreskin" ... and "the [gospel] of the circumcised" ... (Gal 2:7).' In 1 Corinthians 7:17–24, Paul published his rule for all the churches: each believer is to remain as he was when he was called (to faith in Jesus). Verse 8 of chapter 7 states that Jews ('the circumcised') are to remain Jews ('he must not undo his circumcision') and Gentiles (the 'uncircumcision' or 'foreskin') 'must not become circumcised'. A number of other scholars concur with Rudolph concerning the retention of Jew-Gentile distinction within the church (e.g. Campbell 2008:15; Nanos 2008:17–23, and Tucker 2011). Further, 1 Corinthians 9:20–21 can be aligned with this reading of 7:17–24, as Rudolph does most eminently in *A Jew to the Jews* (2011). These modern readings of Paul provide a consistent, coherent model in which Jewish and Gentile believers are united in Christ while remaining distinct such that the particularity of Israel is retained. In other words, they harmonise with the interpretation that the 'one new man' in Ephesians 2:15 is a

compound unity of differentiated peoples, most essentially of Jews and Gentiles.

The salient point of this discussion is that being ‘one’ in Christ does not mean being homogeneous; the notion of a compound unity is native to the Bible. Christ’s making Jew and Gentile one in himself—as Paul expressed in Ephesians 2:15—by no means proves that their respective distinctions become erased as they are drawn into undifferentiated membership in the church. ‘The “one new man” is apparently not an international, intercultural, sexless or historical superman’ (Barth 1963:6). Rather, the evidence suggests that ‘one new man’ is a metaphor for the state of unity with distinction achieved by Christ. This leads to the question of whether the *newness* of the ‘one new man’ refutes distinction theory, or if it can accommodate old identities in a new body.

## 2.2. New

What did Paul mean when he wrote that the one man Christ created was *new*? The word refers to something that did not exist before, yet surely elements of the new man did, such as the head (Christ himself) and the Jews and Gentiles who comprise the members of his body (cf. Eph 1:22–23; 2:11–16; 4:15–16; 5:23 for use of the head and body metaphor). Does ‘new’ simply mean that the members are spiritually regenerated? This seems plausible considering the transforming work of the Holy Spirit since the Pentecost of Acts 2 and 10, but the noun modified by ‘new’ in Ephesians 2:15 is clearly the corporate entity (‘man’), not the individual members. One needs, therefore, to identify that which is new about the ‘new man.’ Various answers appear in the literature, of which two diametrically opposing interpretations will be presented. These interpretations have greatly differing implications for Jewish believers in many ways (including their particular ethnicity,

their election and roles, their territorial heritage, and their faith tradition and practice.)

Given that the ‘man’ Christ created according to Ephesians 2:15 is ‘new,’ and that this new man comprises Jew and Gentile, are not these categories relegated as old and to be discarded in favour of a new binary classification: those ‘in Christ Jesus’ (1:1) and those not ‘in Christ Jesus?’ After all, is not every person’s ultimate destiny determined by his faith, or faithlessness, in Jesus? Casting this differently, does membership in the New Covenant not become so all-important that membership in the Mosaic Covenant becomes irrelevant, even as the New Covenant replaces the old one? Framing the question this way obfuscates the issue by over-exploiting the discontinuity between the eras before and after Christ’s atonement: before Christ, individuals were categorised as Jew or Gentile; since Christ, individuals are categorised as Christian or non-Christian. This one-dimensional approach is not biblical, for the NT abounds with references to Jews and Gentiles of both believing and unbelieving varieties. That is, a two-dimensional cross-classification system is evidenced in the Bible, as the examples in the following table demonstrate:

	<b>In Christ</b>	<b>Not in Christ</b>
<b>Jewish</b>	Paul (Acts 22:3); James (Acts 21:18–25)	Gamaliel (Acts 5:34–39); Elymas Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6–8)
<b>Not Jewish</b>	Cornelius (Acts 10); Titus (Gal 2:1–3)	King Agrippa (Acts 26); Demetrius (Acts 19:24–27)

*Table 1: Two-dimensional cross-classification system of individuals with biblical examples*

Jewish believers in Jesus continued to live as Jews after the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2. This Pentecost event did not terminate their Jewishness. Moreover, the Gentiles who received the gospel did not convert to Judaism; they continued to live as non-Jews (see Acts 15:22–29). The examples provided in Table 1 demonstrate that one should not let an artificial and overly simplified classification framework—*either* in Christ *or* not—dictate the interpretation of ‘new’ in Ephesians 2:15, but should rather identify the possibilities from real people described in the NT.

If that which was new about the ‘one new man’ was spiritual rebirth, then the prevailing Jew-Gentile classification might be *subordinated* to their identity in relation to Christ without being *eliminated by* it. In other words, one may have a dual identity, both being equally valid simultaneously. This is indeed the witness of scripture clearly portrayed in Acts (15:1–29;<sup>15</sup> 21:17–26) and Romans (1:5–7, 13; 1:16; 3:29–30; 9:22–24; 11:13–15; 15:8–12, 15–19), for example. Thus, in spite of the newness of the ‘one new man,’ his members are really ‘something old, something new,’ as the wedding rhyme goes. Mark Kinzer’s critique of *Lumen Gentium*, a publication of the Second Vatican Council, is helpful:

The biblical concept of newness usually connotes eschatological renewal of an already existing reality. The new heavens and new earth are the old heavens and old earth, glorified and transfigured. The new humanity is the old humanity raised from the dead and transformed. This understanding of eschatological newness is supported by its paradigmatic case—the resurrection of the

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<sup>15</sup> The claim of ‘no distinction’ in verse 9 refers to the manner of salvation—by grace (v. 11)—and is not an elimination of Jew-Gentile distinction, as will be argued in a separate article.

messiah. The risen messiah is new, different, yet the same human being as the one born of Mary (Kinzer and Levering 2009).

Campbell (2008:15) also finds Ephesians 2:15 to indicate transformation rather than re-creation: ‘Pauline transformation in Christ does not mean the creation of a new group without ethnic identity but rather the transformation of those who are Greeks into transformed Greeks, and of Judeans into transformed Judeans in Christ.’<sup>16</sup>

The transformation described above—one that retains Jewish and Gentile (or ‘Greek’) identity—directly contradicts the interpretation of what I regard a more common interpretation of the newness of what Christ created. I selected Chrysostom and Lloyd-Jones as well-known representatives of the latter view to demonstrate the great period which it has spanned in Christian history (about sixteen centuries). Chrysostom (Schaff 2014:72) argued that Paul’s choice of the word ‘create’ (*ktizō*) rather than ‘change’ is significant in that Jews and Gentiles are not merely *changed*, they are *created* anew. His argument hinges on the use of *ktizō* in the LXX and NT which typically portrays God creating something out of nothing. Lloyd-Jones (1972:271–272) presented a similar case: ‘There was nothing there before God created. Creation ... is making something out of nothing.’ He insisted that: ‘It’s not by modification of what was there before; it is not even by an improvement of what was there before. God does not take a Jew and do something to him, and take a Gentile and do something to him, and thereby bring them together. Not at all! It is something entirely new’ (p. 272).

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<sup>16</sup> Campbell included a note on the discourse concerning whether Jews should rather be referred to as Judeans—a notion which, in my view, has considerable evidence but some difficulties.

Thus, for these two famous preachers of very different eras, Chrysostom and Lloyd-Jones, spiritual regeneration is not enough to account for the newness of Christ's creation in Ephesians 2:15. For them, the prior identities of the members of Christ's body are blotted out in his work of creating them newly. The juxtaposition above of two interpretations of *ktizō* (create) and *kainos* (new) in the text shows them to be polar opposites, and thus warrants further investigation.

Psalm 51:10 and 104:30 appear to support Kinzer's reference to eschatological renewal. Notably, in the Septuagint (where they are Ps 50:12 and 103:30 respectively), they both use forms of the words *ktizō* and verbal cognates of *kainos* (Anon. 2011: ἐγκαινίζω; ἀνακαινίζω): 'Create (*ktizō*) in me a clean heart, O God, and renew (*egkainizō*) a right spirit in my inward parts (Ps 50:10).<sup>17</sup> You will send forth your spirit, and they will be created (*ktizō*), and you will renew (*anakainizō*) the face of the earth' (Ps 103:30).<sup>18</sup>

In both cases, both words imply a renewal, not an entirely new creation *ex nihilo*. The former objects are renewed and continue to exist; they are not replaced with completely new ones.

Furthermore, it might be reasonable to harness another interpretation of *ktizō* found in the Septuagint where it can mean 'to form' (e.g. Isa 22:11; 46:11 LXX, aligning with Hebrew *yā·šār*) or 'to found' (i.e. to establish, e.g. Exod 9:18 LXX, aligning with Hebrew *yā·šād*. Anon. 2012: κτίζω.) Though speculative, Paul may have implied that nuance in Ephesians 2:15 to mean either, '...that he might *form* the two in himself into one new man...' or '...that he might *establish* the two in himself into one new man...' (emphasis mine). These options permit

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<sup>17</sup> Using *The Lexham English Septuagint* with LXX verse numbering.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

the ‘new man’ to be something new, yet made from pre-existing entities (namely, Jews and Gentiles) by their transformation or re-arrangement rather than by elimination. They both fit comfortably with the biblical concepts of ‘one’ and ‘new’, and neither requires creation *ex nihilo*.

Another biblical example of renewal is lunar: the Hebrew word for ‘new moon’ is not at all related to the word for ‘moon’ (*yā-rē<sup>ah</sup>*) but rather is derived from *hōdeš*, meaning to ‘make new, restore, renew’ (Swanson 1997; Mounce 2006:470–471). When the Bible speaks of a new moon, it is not a newly-created object but rather one that has been ‘renewed’; it waned, disappeared, then re-appeared as new, yet it was old. For a comparison with something ‘new’ yet ‘not new’ in NT Greek, see Jesus’ commandment on loving one another in John’s writings: John 13:34; 1 John 2:7–8; 2 John 5. The commandment to love one another was not new (Lev 19:18), but Jesus renewed it by adding a requirement: the love commanded must be ‘just as I have loved you’ (John 13:34).

The context preceding Ephesians 2:15 emphasises that Gentiles were formerly ‘alienated from the citizenship [or commonwealth: *politeia*] of Israel’ but are now brought ‘near by the blood of Christ’ (2:11–13).<sup>19</sup> Gentile believers are incorporated into the citizenship of Israel; Juster (2014) refers to this as ‘addition theology’—Gentiles are ‘added’ to the household of Israel through their faith in Israel’s Messiah. This change is part of the newness that Paul meant in ‘one new man.’ Accordingly Kinzer writes,

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<sup>19</sup> Chrysostom switched the order, stating that ‘the Jew is then united to the Gentile when he becomes a believer,’ (Schaff 2014:73). This may have been incidental, but readers of Ephesians will note that it is not Israel that is joined to the Gentiles, but rather that the Gentiles are joined to Israel. Paul taught the same principle to the congregations in Rome (see below).



...the Church should be seen as a renewed Israel, a renewed people of God. It is an eschatological form of Israel, anticipating the life of the world to come by the gift of the Spirit. As an eschatological reality, it is also an expanded Israel, including within its ranks people from all the nations of the world (Kinzer and Levering 2009).

The idea of a ‘renewed Israel’ fits well with the biblical concept of newness, as demonstrated by the examples above. Elsewhere, Kinzer described the Gentile component of the church as ‘*a multinational extension of the people of Israel*’ (2005:15, emphasis original). This is apt wording to express the non-supersessionist perspective, because (i) an extension is not a replacement, and (ii) an extension depends on that which it extends for support—it cannot function independently. As Paul expressed it, ‘you do not support the root, but the root *supports* you’ (Rom 11:18). In fact, Paul referred to the Israelites (presumably only those in right standing with God) as ‘holy ones’ or ‘saints’ (Eph 2:19; c.f. Col 1:12). While Paul in Ephesians emphasised the contrast of what Gentile believers were (pagans) with what they now are (e.g. 2:12–13, 19–22), he did not make a corresponding contrast between Jewish believers and ‘Israelite culture and identity’ (Campbell 2008:16). These points collectively make it very difficult to imagine how the ‘one new man’ can replace Israel as God’s people.

Returning to Paul’s olive tree metaphor (Rom 11:13–24), we see that Gentiles are as branches of a wild olive tree (neither schooled in, nor governed by, Torah), but by faith in Jesus they are ‘grafted in’ to the cultivated olive tree, Israel. (See Stern 2007:47–59 on ‘olive tree theology’). Likewise, Gentile believers ‘became a sharer of the root of the olive tree’s richness,’ (11:17). While this imagery is congruent with the notion of the ‘one new man’ being Israel being renewed and enlarged by the attachment all the nations of the world (as presented

above), it is incongruent with the complete disjunction of the church from Israel, as some interpret the newness to mean. Ryrie (2010:72), for example, stated the church ('new man') is 'not a continuation or remaking of Israel, but something new and distinct from the Israel of the Old Testament.' He stressed a *discontinuity* between the redeemed of this era who are 'in the body of Christ and not some sort of Israel,' going on to explain that 'today redeemed Jew and Gentile belong to God's family of saints without being members of any kind of Israel' (p. 72). My assessment of the biblical data above suggests the opposite of Ryrie's claims. 'Renewed' is not only a permissible interpretation of *kainos* in Ephesians 2:15, but also the best way of understanding it. Yes, the church is a new entity that Christ has created, but not by *replacing* Jew and Gentile (as in replacement theology); rather, it is by restoring, reconciling, and spiritually regenerating them.

There is yet another facet of newness in the 'one new man:' the peace between Jew and Gentile which Christ made by destroying the enmity between them and reconciling them both to each other and to God (Eph 2:14–16). For Lloyd-Jones (1972:278), Christ's peace required the binary Jew-Gentile classification to be discarded: 'the moment we begin to bring in those categories there is no longer peace; there is division, separation, enmity.' However, neither the peace nor the reconciliation calls for eradication of either Jewish or Gentile identity.<sup>20</sup> The unity in Christ that results from bringing 'near' Gentiles, who 'once were far away' (2:13), as God's people does not trigger an 'ethnic collapse' (Hardin 2013:232). Indeed, it is the peace between the

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<sup>20</sup> Lloyd-Jones and others who oppose the continuation of Jew-Gentile distinction within the body of believers appeal to Galatians 3:28 and similar statements in the NT which I identified above as the 'no distinction' texts. These require careful investigation as to the rhetoric Paul employed. Suffice it to say that Galatians contains strongly-worded instructions to Gentile Jesus-believers to retain their non-Jewish identity, and Galatians 3:28 is hyperbole intended to stress the irrelevance of one's social status *in comparison to* one's standing in Christ, which eclipses the former.

church's principal differentiated elements, namely Israel and the nations, which is the eschatological sign of God's sovereignty over the whole world. This peace is not an abstraction, nor a future-only reality; it is a present day sign of the fullness of the peace to come.

'It is a real political and social peace that Christ enables and demands of those who truly belong to his kingdom. As Ephesians 1–2 indicates, through the power of Christ hostility arising from difference can be turned into a cause of celebration of the blessings of God in Christ' (Campbell 2008:15). Paul may have been comparing this peace with that Solomon brought between the northern and southern kingdoms when both those 'far' (Israel in the north) and 'near' (Judah in the south) worshipped together in the then-new temple, as various similarities suggest (p. 17, with citations to Kreitzer 2005:500–501).<sup>21</sup> But the peace and reconciliation brought about by Christ in Ephesians 2:14–16 is not described as a general peace between all nations; it is *specifically* a peace between the nations and Israel, Gentiles, and Jews. Such a peace is somewhat meaningless if, as some writers I have cited claim, there is no more particularity to Israel and Jews 'in Christ' are no longer fully Jewish.

The argument presented above shows that ongoing intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction is permissible and even probable in the 'one new man' metaphor of Ephesians 2:15. Inasmuch as the 'one new man' is not a Jewish man, neither is he a Gentile; he is a new humanity comprising Jewish and Gentile members 'in Christ Jesus.' Before testing that conclusion with other internal evidence, the least

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<sup>21</sup> Kreitzer LJ 2005. The Messianic Man of Peace as Temple Builder: Solomonic Imagery in Ephesians 2:13-22. In Day J (ed.) *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar*. London, New York: T&T Clark International: 484-512.

controversial word in the phrase *hena kainon anthrōpon* needs a brief discussion: *anthrōpos*.

### 2.3. Man

It is generally accepted that the ‘man’ whom Christ created in Ephesians 2:15 is not an individual human being, but a people. Paul did not use the word *anēr* but *anthrōpos*; both words can mean ‘man,’ ‘human’ or ‘husband,’ but the latter can also mean ‘people’ as a collective noun, which fits the context best. Paul’s choice of words is remarkable, because humanity itself is a compound unity comprising differentiated elements (members of the human population), often viewed in subgroups according to gender, race, or family. Thus, *anthrōpos* reflects well the kind of entity represented by the body of believers in Jesus. This nuance may not have been conveyed if Paul had chosen another word like ‘creature,’ ‘vessel,’ or ‘being.’ Recall the metaphor (already presented above) in which Paul described the church as a ‘body’ comprising distinct members (1 Cor 12:12–30 and Rom 12:4–8). Once again, the theme of *unity with distinction* is a paradigm native to the apostle’s writings.

It is therefore surprising that so few English translations use ‘humanity’ (e.g. NIV 2011, NRSV) or ‘people’ (e.g. NLT) to translate *anthrōpos* in Ephesians 2:15. In this instance, ‘humanity’ appears best, especially when taking into consideration Paul’s reference to Christ as the ‘last Adam’ in 1 Corinthians 15:45. In that context (15:42–49), Adam is the ancestor of natural humanity, but Christ is the ancestor of a regenerated (renewed!) humanity. Inasmuch as Christ’s divinity did not displace his humanity—indeed, he was *bodily* resurrected—the spiritual quickening of his followers does not replace their natural bodies. The ‘one new man’ does not displace its members from their current, natural identity. Jews remain Jews, and Gentiles remain non-Jews. This point touches on

a much larger topic, but we should not lose sight of the fact that those who are in Christ are also the sons of Adam.

#### 2.4. 'In place of' the two?

As stated above, some Bible translations explicitly say that the one new man is created 'in place of' the two (Jews and Gentiles) in Ephesians 2:15. If this is the case, then replacement theology has an anchor in the biblical text, but where do these words originate? The answer, quite simply, is in the translators' theology. There are no textual variants in any of the ancient sources that witness to these words; they are 'a gratuitous addition,' as Campbell calls them (2008:19). The Bible translators supplied 'in place of' in order to clarify the meaning, but the meaning they assume does not correspond with the evidence I have presented. Unfortunately, their insertion also serves to validate their theology, though I do not suggest any ill intent—all Bible translators have to make difficult decisions and will naturally favour wording that conforms to their understanding of the 'right' interpretation. Moreover, the English is awkward without the phrase, seemingly needing 'smoothing.' Following the Greek word order, a literal translation of the clause may be '...in order that the [accusative] two [indeclinable] he might create in himself into one new man...' (Harris 2010). There are no significant variant readings. If the logic of the argument presented above is valid, then the critical text does not indicate replacement but rather a new state of unity. I submit that the phrase 'in place of' in some English translations of Ephesians 2:15 is misleading and best omitted.

The discussion above already touched on the profound theological implications of the message of Ephesians that emerges from my (and others') reading of 'one new man,' which is all the more meaningful if the phrase 'in place of' is not supplied to 2:15. Markus Barth (1963:5) made a drastic statement concerning the message of the letter:

‘Ephesians makes its readers aware that it is *wrong and suicidal* for the church ... to claim that she alone is the true, the new, the spiritual Israel—at the expense of the old or fleshly Israel’ (emphasis added). Later, he wrote that ‘it is the distinctive message of Ephesians that no Gentile can have communion with Christ or with God unless he also has communion with Israel’ (1974:337). Though matters of supersessionism and Jewish-Christian relations are too vast for this article, it is important nevertheless to mention the theological significance—the applied meaning—of ‘one new man’ in Ephesians.

## 2.5. A test

Is there an objective test for my finding that the newer identity categories of believers and unbelievers in Jesus do not erase the older ones of Jews and Gentiles? Does the letter to the Ephesians itself offer any internal evidence in this regard? If the two-dimensional identity cross-classification scheme portrayed in *Table 1* is valid, then we might expect potential confusion in the personal pronouns used in the letter, such as ‘we’ and ‘you’ (especially in the plural). That is, the writer, who certainly is to be regarded as a Jesus-believer of Jewish origins, might at times use ‘we’ to denote ‘we Jews,’ or ‘I and the Jews among you [the audience],’ whilst at other times using ‘we’ to denote ‘we believers in Jesus, regardless of our identity as Jews or Gentiles.’ Similarly, ‘you’ might denote either ‘you Jews and Gentiles to whom I am writing,’ or it may refer to ‘you Gentiles,’ excluding the Jews in the audience.

A study of the personal pronouns in Ephesians reveals that this is, in fact, exactly what appears, and the modern reader needs to be particularly careful in interpreting them. The greeting and opening praises appear to include the whole audience of believers, Jew and Gentile, in the pronouns ‘we,’ ‘us,’ and ‘our.’ But at some point there is a switch in usage such that, by 1:12 ‘we’ must refer to Jews, who

‘hoped beforehand [i.e. BC] in Christ,’ and ‘you’—the Gentiles who ‘also when you believed were sealed in the promised Holy Spirit’ in 1:13. Again, in 1:19, the phrase ‘us who believe’ clearly places Gentile believers together with Paul and his believing Jewish kin in the first person plural pronoun, ‘us’. Yet by 2:1, ‘you’ refers to Gentile believers and ‘we’ in 2:3 refers to Jewish believers, each group being differentiated from their unbelieving counterparts. And in 2:4–8 once again, ‘us’ refers to the whole body of believers, Jewish and Gentile, whom God loved, made alive, raised together, seated together for a demonstration ‘in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus’.

The evidence grows stronger still in 2:11, where Paul uses an overspecification (in discourse terminology, Runge 2008a) to explicitly identify ‘you’ as ‘the Gentiles in *the* flesh.’ Such overspecification ‘prompts the reader [to] conceptualize the referent in a specific way’ (Runge 2008b); Paul sought to emphasise that ‘you’ meant ‘the Gentiles in *the* flesh’ and *not* ‘the circumcision in *the* flesh’ (2:11). Note that Paul does not refer to them as formerly Gentiles, or formerly ‘the uncircumcision,’ but rather as formerly alienated (2:12). Instead, ‘you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens of the saints’ (2:18) whilst yet continuing to be distinct from Jewish believers, as ‘you Gentiles’ in 3:1 indicates.

Though the difficulty of identifying the referent of personal pronouns in Ephesians has often been noted in the literature, I have sought to use it as an objective test of the letter’s internal evidence. The test results clearly support the notion of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction.

### 3. Conclusion

Conclusions and related theological issues have been noted throughout the textual analysis above. This section serves to summarise the findings and point out theological implications for the church and several of its doctrines.

#### 3.1. Summary

The traditional Christian interpretation of the NT is that, after coming to faith in Jesus, no distinction remains between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. That is, within the church there is to be no differentiation between Israel and the nations. The purpose of this study was to determine whether Paul's reference to the 'one new man' in Ephesians 2:15 supports this claim. That is, does the text inform us that Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus are no longer distinct in any significant way because of their common membership in the community of Christ? I have presented multiple arguments rejecting that notion based on a study of each of the three words, *hena* (*heis*), *kainon* (*kainos*) and *anthropōn* (*anthrōpos*), concluding that 'one new man' is, in fact, an assertion of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction. Other keywords in Ephesians 2:14–16, namely 'body,' 'create' and 'peace,' proved to be congruent with this finding.

The study firstly found that the biblical concept of 'one' does not necessarily mean a singularity or homogeneity, but it allows for the unity of distinct elements. Some examples, such as the unity of man and woman, suggest that God's purpose was one of mutual blessing. The oneness of God in the *Shema* and NT references to it are proof texts that the nations are not to become Israel, nor is Israel to assimilate into the nations, in order to signify God's sovereignty over all, thus demonstrating that his kingdom has come. Ephesians identifies Gentile



believers *with* Israel, not *as* Israel; Paul retains distinction between the two as he does in his other writings.

The ‘new man’ of Ephesians 2:15 is not created *ex nihilo*. While there are aspects of newness to the body of Christ, not all that is old is discarded. The Christ event did not erase the biblical classification of individuals as Jews or Gentiles. Rather, the NT classifies people according to their faith in Jesus *and* according to whether they are Israelites—yet without any prejudice against Gentile believers who are welcomed as fellow citizens, a kind of extension to Israel. Christ’s body is a *new* man because its members are spiritually regenerated. That which is called new in the Bible is often what we today would call *renewed*. Israel is renewed in Christ, not replaced by the church but expanded to encompass Gentile Christians as co-citizens. Another facet of the newness is the actual peace that Christ brought about between Israel and the nations, which ought to be evident among Jews and Gentiles who, through their faith in Jesus, have become members of his body.

The ‘man’ whom Christ created is clearly a corporate entity, the church, or body of Christ. ‘Humanity’ is probably a more helpful translation than ‘man,’ as it expresses the fact that the body of Christ comprises many human members. Inasmuch as individual saints are not homogenised in this age—or beyond the eschaton—the identities of Jews and Gentiles are not washed away in the waters of baptism. Persistence of Jewish identity in particular is not only defined by ethnicity and culture, but also by faith tradition (including Torah-obligation in a manner not required of Gentile Christians) and a unique function (or service) within the body.

While some Christian commentators have argued that the phrase ‘one new man’ in Ephesians 2:15 refutes Jew-Gentile distinction within the

church, my analysis reaches the opposite conclusion from the same text. The reconciliation of the two groups *as they are* (yet with their members transformed in Christ) is a pledge of Christ's ability to bring peace to bitterest enemies. God's astonishing work of reconciliation loses this significance if Jews and Gentiles are homogenised or blended in Christ, if it becomes 'a mere historical remembrance rather than a miracle that is continually renewed' (Kinzer 2005:171). One may thus understand the church to be a mix of Jesus-believing Jews and Gentiles; they are united in Christ but distinct in their ethnic identities.

The test for mixed use of personal pronouns in Ephesians validates this conclusion by providing internal evidence for a cross-classification of individuals according to two binary classifications: i) either Jew or Gentile *and* ii) as either in Christ or not. Notably, some English translations such as the ESV assert that Christ sought to 'create in himself one new man *in place of* the two...' (Eph 2:15, emphasis added). However, based on my interpretation of 'one new man', I suggested that the translators' supply of the phrase, 'in place of', is misleading. I further suggested that 'establish' might bear Paul's nuance better than 'create', and concur with others who prefer 'humanity' to 'man'. Thus, I propose that the clause in question might best be interpreted, 'in order that he might establish the two in himself into one new humanity...'

The Christian tradition that there is 'no distinction' between Jews and Gentiles in Christ is based on a number of NT texts. In my opinion, the most important of these are Acts 15:9 (and sometimes 11:12); Romans 3:22; 10:12; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:15 and Colossians 3:11. This paper has only addressed one of these key texts, concluding that Paul's calling the church 'one new man' in Ephesians 2:15 does not by any means prove that its members are no longer Jewish and Gentile. Instead, the text allows, and even requires, retention of the Jew-Gentile

classification—even among the members of Christ’s body—in a theologically meaningful way, not merely ethnically or culturally. The other key texts pertaining to the ‘no distinction’ argument remain for further investigation.

### 3.2. Implications

The implications of viewing the church as a unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, rather than a unification that blends the two parties homogeneously, are immense. I shall mention two major ramifications of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction. The first is that it permits and even promotes the practice of Judaism by Jewish believers in Jesus—as long as such practice does not contravene NT teaching. (Distinction theory regards cautions in the NT against taking on the whole Law as being addressed to Gentile Jesus-believers. Such differentiation is not possible in the dominant ‘no distinction’ position.) The modern Messianic Jewish movement thus expresses its Jewish identity through Torah-observance and the development of *halakhic* standards, worship in synagogues following Jewish liturgy and norms, participation in traditional Jewish ceremonies (including circumcision and *bar mitzvah*, for example) and festivals. Typically, all of these expressions are adapted to some degree to include key elements of the NT, especially regarding Christology. Good examples include *Standards of Observance* (a guide to Messianic Jewish *halakhah*; MJRC 2012), *Zichron Mashiach* (Messiah’s Remembrance Meal—a liturgy; Kinzer 2013), and *The Sabbath Table* (prayers, blessings, and songs for the Sabbath; Anon. 2014).

A second important consequence of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction is that Jewish Jesus-believers form a nexus between Israel and the nations, being both members of the people of Israel and members of Christ’s body. Karl Barth discerned this even before the

modern Messianic Jewish movement developed; he recognised that, corporately, Jewish Jesus-believers ‘fulfill their appointed role when they are the ekklesia in Israel and Israel in the ekklesia’ (Kinzer 2005:176; see pp. 174–177 on ‘Karl Barth and bilateral ecclesiology’). Following on closely, his son, Markus Barth, wrote, ‘Brotherhood with Israel is the very essence, not the possible consequence, of the peace Christ has made’ (1963:7). The textual analysis on Ephesians 2:15 presented in this paper concurs with both Karl and Markus Barth on these matters. Therefore, I deduce (as others have done before me, e.g. Rudolph 2013:14) that Jewish believers in Jesus are a bridge that joins the nations to Israel and, furthermore, that the Messianic Jewish synagogue is exemplary as the locus of the peace that Christ initiated, he being their paragon himself.

Messianic Jewish synagogues did not exist when Karl and Markus Barth wrote, but today they flourish as places where Jews and Gentiles express their devotion to Jesus in unity, yet with distinction.<sup>22</sup> All participants who have repented and been baptised are invited to the communion table, while typically only the Jewish members wear *tzitzit* (‘tassles’, see Num 15:37–41; Deut 22:12) and observe other commandments issued specifically to the children of Israel. Messianic Jewish synagogues are a place where representatives from the nations *actually attach* themselves to the faithful remnant of Israel, remembering with gratitude and humility that the new covenant was formed with ‘the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’ (Jer 31:31), not with Gentile nations. Such congregations *observably apply* the theory of intra-ecclesial Jew-Gentile distinction; they offer *concrete evidence* that the ‘one new man’ Christ created (Eph 2:15) is a regenerated humanity comprising Jews as Jews and Gentiles as

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<sup>22</sup> Practices vary, together with the degree of distinction made, but I am presenting what I perceive (through personal experience and extensive reading) to be the dominant model.

Gentiles—all at peace with one another in spite of objections by expositors, like Lloyd-Jones, who have declared this impossible.<sup>23</sup>

Unity and distinction must go hand-in-hand. Neither unity nor distinction of Jesus-believing Jews and Gentiles should be emphasised at the expense of the other (Atkinson 2008:17). The interplay between these two aspects of their relationship creates a tension of interdependence which results in mutual blessing. ‘Just as husband and wife have distinct roles within God’s ideal of a unified, joyful whole, so it is with his calling of Israel and the nations’ (UMJC 2010:24). In fact, the intimate composition and mutual dependence of Jews and Gentiles is essential to the church

*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 (Rudolph 2010:15).

Finally, if there are doctrinal implications, there ought to be a corresponding response in theological education. What I view as a central theme of Ephesians—the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ as a sign or ‘firstfruits’ of the promised eschatological peace between Israel and the nations—is largely overlooked in seminary training and, consequently, in church preaching. To me, it seems that Christian training and preaching generalises Ephesians’ central motif of reconciliation, unity, and peace *between Jews and Gentiles* by presenting instead *all believers in general* as the parties in focus.

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<sup>23</sup> I am not recommending that Gentile Christians leave their churches for a local Messianic *schul*, which would result in the problem of Gentile dominance in numbers in most parts of the world. Church-hosted table fellowship and special worship events could equally demonstrate Jew-Gentile unity with distinction.

Without denying the importance of peace among all Jesus-believers, I suggest that such generalisation results in a diluted and compromised reading of the letter, since Paul specifically identified Jews and Gentiles as the primary parties of Christ's peace accord.

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