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Reconceiving the Boundaries of Home

The 'Oikology' of Ephesians

The Letter to the Ephesians is full of the 'ouk' root, relating to 'home', 'dwelling', 'building'. It is the root from which come both 'economy' and 'ecology' in English,¹ and we will find that the sets of connotations carried by each are present in Ephesians. 'Economy', relating to the management of a household, is most evidently in the background of 'οἰκονομία' in Eph. 1:10, referring to the divine plan for the fulness of time. 'Ecology', referring to relations within the natural environment that constitute the homes of living organisms, is implicit in the cosmic scope of Ephesians, the divine plan being 'to unite all things (τὰ πάντα) in him, things in heaven and things on earth (τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς)' (1:10).²

In order not to have to choose between the cultural connotations of 'economy' and the natural connotations of 'ecology', but recognising their inseparability, I will use the neologism 'oikology' to refer to the homely patterns of relating fostered by Ephesians. Its logic is cosmic in scope, reconceiving boundaries not only among human beings but also between human beings and their wider habitats. While the focus of the article will be on questionable intrahuman boundaries, their interrogation depends on an overcoming of the human/non-human binary whose logic they reiterate.

The purpose of the article, more specifically, is to delineate the oikology of Ephesians in repair of a modern liberal inclusivism that unwittingly perpetuates an oppressive colonialist logic. The particular species of inclusivism in view is that which is exhibited by New Testament scholars associated with 'the New Perspective on Paul'.³ However, that the latter is indicative of a more widespread

¹ The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* gives *oikos* (house) for both, mediated by *oikonomía* in the case of 'economy'.

² Unless otherwise stated, English biblical quotations are from the ESV.

³ For the purposes of this article, James D.G. Dunn will be taken as representative, but the same logic could be shown to be operative in others who write from within (or in broad alignment with) this perspective, such as Philip F. Esler and, ironically, N.T. Wright (who would likely

cultural phenomenon is evidenced (among other things) by the prevalent use of buzzwords such as ‘inclusion’, ‘diversity’, ‘equality’, ‘access’ etc. in the strategic documents of major institutions such as my own.⁴ This is in important ways a phenomenon to be welcomed, and clearly so in respect of the kinds of discrimination it is intended to combat. However, it arguably remains bound by the logic of that which it seeks to overcome. In the case of the New Perspective, the specific, underlying problem at stake is that of Christian supersessionism: the replacement of Jews by Christians in the purposes of God.⁵ I will argue that the New Perspective’s ‘inclusivism’ remains captive to a supersessionist logic.

To get at the insidious oppressiveness of an overtly benign inclusivism, I will draw on Willie James Jennings’s powerful analysis and critique of colonialism in *The Christian Imagination*.⁶ In this important work, Jennings traces the racial imagination—in which ‘whiteness’ becomes the (invisible) new landscape—to a loss of connection with real geographical land, funded by Christian supersessionism and achieved as the latter was put to work in the project of European colonialism. Jennings draws a historical connection between supersessionism and colonialism. I am interested in a logic that can at times be illuminatingly named ‘colonialist’ (with its imperial overtones), and can at other times be appropriately named ‘supersessionist’ (when the specific relation between Christians and Jews is in view). While informed by the historical dimensions of Jennings’s argument, my own argument will, in other words, be a conceptual one, in which ‘colonialist’ and ‘supersessionist’ are selectively used to name the particular oppressive logic in view.

espouse neither the term ‘inclusive’ nor the term ‘liberal’). For an account of the New Perspective see Part II below.

⁴ See ‘King’s Strategic Vision 2029’ at <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/strategy/Kings-strategic-vision-2029.pdf>. See also, e.g., the BBC’s ‘Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2016-20’ at <http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2016.pdf>.

⁵ Which is not to say that New Perspective writers all have supersessionism as their target. Arguably more often in view is anti-Judaism, which may be addressed even while more ‘benign’ forms of supersessionism persist. Such might be said to be the case of E.P. Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM, 1977), a landmark work for the New Perspective.

⁶ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

Ephesians is on one reckoning a counterintuitive resource for the repair of a colonialist or supersessionist inclusivism. Its cosmic Christ (1:10) undergirds an ecclesiocentric vision in which a dynamic of predestination and fulfilment is focused in the church as the body of Christ (1:4-5 and 1:22-23), with Christ as its head (4:15). Inclusive of Jews and gentiles, the church is the place of the new man, leaving behind the old, divisive law (2:14-16). While a thoroughgoing inclusivism is only a short step, so it would seem, from the uniting of all in Christ (1:10), Christianity's supersession of a now outmoded Judaism is a short step, or so it would seem, from the oneness of Jew and gentile in the newly inaugurated church.⁷ How is this not a sure-fire recipe for an oppressive inclusivism—one according to which all may be included, but only insofar as they shed their now outmoded identities? Ephesians' ecclesial vision is cashed out, moreover, in the 'household code' of 5:22-6:9, which arguably replicates that vision's oppressiveness in its reinforcement of traditional, patriarchal hierarchies, going further in doing so than its precursor in Colossians, and tempering, perhaps even losing entirely, the subversive dynamic maintained by Paul (or the earlier Paul⁸).⁹

I will resist this account of Ephesians, finding in its oikology a more radical reconception of borders than is entertained by the inclusivist's apparent opening or removal of them.¹⁰ The challenge will be to show how the logic of being 'in

⁷ Cf. David F. Ford, 'A Messiah for the New Millenium', *Modern Theology* 16:1, 2000, 75-90 [79], for a characterization of the plain sense of Ephesians in similar terms. He goes on to offer a nonsupersessionist 'pragmatic' re-reading, framed in categories he draws from Peter Ochs, focused on the "irremediably vague" concept of *pleroma*' (ibid., 83), which he liberates from its overprecise definition by Christian supersessionists. I offer a complementary nonsupersessionist reading in the present article.

⁸ Depending on whether Ephesians is thought to be by Paul himself, or by a later, and more conservative, imitator of Paul. The present rendition would tend to go together with the latter hypothesis, perhaps with the further elaboration that the author is writing in a context in which the church has become more established and institutionalised. In what follows I will not commit to any particular theory concerning the historical circumstances of the letter—to whom it was written and who it was written by—but in order to avoid abstraction, I will refer throughout to the addressees as 'the Ephesians' and to the author as 'Paul'.

⁹ Cf. Dale B. Martin, *Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-First Century* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2017), 318-21, in which Martin posits just such a (historical) trajectory towards conservatism.

¹⁰ The issue of borders or boundaries is also a focus of Ford's interpretation of Ephesians in David F. Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed* (Cambridge: CUP 1999), Chapter 5, 107-36. See also Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Collins, 1960), esp. 33-45 and 144-58, whose thematic centre, derived from Eph 2:14, is Christ's breaking

Christ', as displayed by Ephesians, differs from an inclusivist logic according to which membership may be open to all but comes at a (hidden) price. In other words, the challenge is how to articulate what it means to be in Christ without letting that articulation degenerate into the specification of christologically-derived membership criteria. At stake, in short, is the distinction between colonialist inclusivism and true catholicity.

The article is in two parts. The first part offers a positive account of the oikology of Ephesians, unfolding the dynamics of home in its christological focus and cosmic scope. The argument rides on a distinction between *being-in* a home and *being* a home. *Being-in* draws attention to home as habitat for its members, both as the (physical) place in which they are located, and as the wider set of traditions in which they are nurtured. The word 'habitat' is chosen to indicate the already relational character of the home. *Being* draws attention to home as that which is constituted by its living members and the relations between them, emphasising its moral shape. While *being* identifies home with its members, *being-in* is a reminder that home is more than its members, both spatially and temporally. 'The Container mentality'¹¹ is the name I will give to the flawed imaginative framework that results when the distinction between being and being-in is turned into an opposition such that either of its poles drops away. The container mentality, on this account, is at the root of a colonialist or supersessionist logic, and thus, more specifically, of modern inclusivism.

The second part turns to the New Perspective on Paul, offering an analysis and critique of its inclusivism in the light of the oikology developed in Part I, showing how it perpetuates the supersessionism that it otherwise so tantalisingly promises to overcome. Specifically, I will argue that the concern for inclusivity expressed by New Perspective writers is a sublimated form of the concern for

down of the wall of division. The extent to which Barth manages to avoid a modern liberal inclusivism is a moot question.

¹¹ While this phrase may call to mind what T.F. Torrance, in *Space, Time and the Incarnation* (London, New York & Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1969), calls a receptacle or container notion of space, to be contrasted with a relational notion (4, 56, and passim.), Torrance is concerned with the metaphysics of space and time, while I am principally concerned with the ethics of how space and its inhabitants are configured in relation to one another. This is not to deny a potentially significant relation between the two.

home-inhabitation, one in which the being/being-in distinction has been resolved entirely in favour of being. However, by bringing into focus the concern at the heart of Ephesians for the transformed relation between Jews and gentiles, the New Perspective poses a challenge to the oikology of Part I. Does the latter have sufficient resources, not only to overcome a colonialist logic in the abstract, but to see its alternative through in the face of a specific and stubborn supersessionism? There are passages in Ephesians that appear intractably supersessionist. Do these 'counter-tendencies' to its oikology not only resist, but bring in question the very possibility of, a catholicity that does not ultimately degenerate into colonialist inclusivism?

I. Oikology

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens (πάροιχοι), but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household (οἰκεῖοι) of God, ²⁰ built (ἐποικοδομηθέντες) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure (οἰκοδομή), being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together (συνοικοδομεῖσθε) into a dwelling place (κατοικητήριον) for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2:19-22)

Ephesians is full of extended metaphors that shape and give expression to the identity of the addressees. They are the body of Christ (4:11-16), the bride of Christ (5:25-32), citizens in Israel (2:11-19), a holy temple in Christ (2:20-22), and so on. The οἰκ- root finds its way into several of these, providing a good window, or so I will argue, into the complex dynamic that emerges from their juxtaposition and conjunction. In order to unfold the oikology of Ephesians with its distinctive logic, I will trace the peculiar uses to which the οἰκ- root is put. Being replete with the latter, the above passage is a good place to start.

The passage has two metaphorical centres, envisaging the Ephesians on the one hand as citizens, and on the other hand as a building. According to the first, the Ephesians have been transformed from πάροιχοι (aliens) to οἰκεῖοι (household

members or kin). A πάροικος is ‘a resident foreigner’, one ‘who live[s] in a place without holding citizenship’, or (even more pertinently in the present context) ‘one who lives in a place that is not one’s home’.¹² In becoming οἰκεῖοι the Ephesians gain a new relationship with the place they inhabit and with its other inhabitants. Specifically, as the wider context indicates, they become ‘fellow citizens [συμπολιῖται]’ (2:19) in ‘the commonwealth of Israel [τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ]’ (2:12). In joining something that precedes and exceeds them, they enter into a capacious home.

According to the second metaphor, the Ephesians are the building blocks of an οἰκοδομή (building), specifically a holy temple (2:21), founded on the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone (2:20). The metaphor, with its clear connotations of a contrast between inside and outside, is put to counterintuitive use: the Ephesians are not *in* the building, they *are* the building. The same noun, οἰκοδομή, occurs three more times in Ephesians, but with a verbal meaning to refer to the ‘building up’ of the community: as the body of Christ (4:12), in love (4:16), and by its appropriate speech (4:29). In other words, there is no neutral space that the Ephesians come to occupy (a building that precedes their entry). Rather, the building is constituted by way of the moral activity to which Paul calls them: a home is not just to be occupied, but is to be made.¹³

In the terms of the distinction to be developed between being-in a home and being a home, the citizenship metaphor emphasises the being-in pole, while the building metaphor (counterintuitively) emphasises the being pole. Together they ward off potential misconstruals of each in isolation. First, in the light of the building metaphor, the shift from πάροικοι to οἰκεῖοι cannot be misconstrued as a mere transfer from *outside* to *inside*: ‘the Ephesians were once aliens but are now citizens; they have crossed the border’. This would be to think merely in

¹² These are the meanings given by BDAG on πάροικος and on the cognate verb παροικέω (second meaning). πάροικος is used consistently in the Septuagint to translate תושב (‘sojourner’ or ‘bound labourer’; e.g. Ex 12:45 and Lev 25:6). It is also sometimes used to translate גר (‘resident alien’) (e.g. Deut 14:21), although προσήλυτος is favoured when some measure of integration into Israel is envisaged (e.g. Ex 12:48).

¹³ Cf. Ford, *Self and Salvation*, 119: ‘the new boundaries of self in this place are constituted by the exchanges of communication and action’.

terms of being-in: to render space neutral, carved up by the imposition of borders which divide inside from outside (whether one has buildings or larger geographical territories in view). This is the most basic expression of the container mentality. The container may be filled with more occupants or it may be enlarged, but it is essentially neutral with respect to its contents. Light may be shed on this dynamic by Jennings's analysis of colonialist expansion. As the earth is colonised and boundaries redrawn, its (former) inhabitants are violently detached from the land with which their identities were inseparably connected, and the land is reconceived as arbitrarily divisible by new, invisible lines, and thus as neutral space which can be occupied by anyone. By the same token it becomes a commodity to be possessed and sold by its occupants.¹⁴ What Jennings's analysis brings out is how the container mentality goes together with othering and domination. The insiders are those who have dispossessed those now on the outside. But more insidiously, even when the container is enlarged so as in principle to include everything—the whole earth—the logic of inclusion at play continues to be one of domination. The colonialist includes by imposing a hidden imperialist vision (identified by Jennings as 'whiteness'), and those who do not conform remain 'other' even while on the inside. As Jennings discovers in one of his case studies, 'Colenso's universalism was the other side of his colonialism'.¹⁵

Second, the citizenship metaphor wards off a reduction of the building metaphor to the being pole, which is what happens when the temple constituted by the Ephesians is identified with 'the new temple', a living temple to be contrasted with the old temple of stone. On this—classically supersessionist—scenario, being-in drops away as the Ephesians sever their connection with the commonwealth of Israel as the capacious home they were invited to enter, instead becoming themselves a new home. Uprooted from physical Israel with its historic traditions and inalienable connection with place and land, the new home

¹⁴ See Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 225-26, where Jennings discusses Jefferson's grid system for the Americas, enacted in 1785. Cf. *ibid.*, 48-51, by way of contrast, where he draws on Marshall Thomas's account of the Ju/wasi to display a way of life lived in inextricable connection with the land, a way of life destroyed by colonial powers (Jennings at the same time exposes Thomas's own complicity in a colonialist logic).

¹⁵ Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 146.

is inevitably conceived spiritually (by contrast with physically), inward transformation superseding outward, cultic ceremony. When being is emphasized at the expense of being-in, home is thus reduced to a moral community, abstracted from its habitat. This—ironically—is an inverse expression of the container mentality, now entirely despatialised, and construed in terms of membership in a moral community. Once spatial rootedness is lost to view, the container mentality reasserts itself in metaphorical borders between peoples. This is, in fact, the other side of the same coin as the spatially expressed container mentality. When land is arbitrarily carved up, people are detached from it and habitat becomes neutral, non-relational space. Communal identity must be reimposed by way of (artificial) group boundaries.¹⁶ Literal and metaphorical borders go hand in hand.

The citizenship metaphor is an indispensable counterpoint in relation to a temple that is so readily despatialised, reminding us that the Ephesians do not form a new, pristine entity, but become part of something larger than themselves—and not just a larger moral community, but a wider habitat with historical and geographical roots. While land is not an explicit theme in Ephesians, Jennings's focus on connection with the land in his critique of colonialism captures the logic of being-in that is here expressed by way of the citizenship metaphor. However, so strong is the grip of the supersessionist reading that the citizenship metaphor is itself liable to be pulled into its orb. When this happens, it is treated as a 'mere' metaphor, losing all connection with earthly place, and in particular with historic Israel: citizenship is in heaven, in the new, spiritual Israel. Without being-in, we are left with the moral community of the container mentality. In the next section, we will see just how vital a robust, Israel-rooted reading of the citizenship metaphor is in staving off supersessionist readings, and concomitantly how readily it is uprooted and spiritualised by modern (supersessionist) interpreters.

Citizenship and building metaphors are complemented by the extensive development elsewhere in the letter of a 'body' metaphor, already subsidiarily

¹⁶ Just this dynamic is at the heart of the origins of race as narrated by Jennings in *The Christian Imagination*.

present in the above passage via the organic verb ‘αὔξω’ (‘to grow’, v. 21). Its most concentrated elaboration is in 4:12-16, where Paul envisages the community as the body of Christ (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 12), exhorting its members, by speaking the truth in love, to grow up (αὔξω) into Christ, its head (ἡ κεφαλή) (v. 15), ‘from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow [τὴν αὔξησιν τοῦ σώματος] so that it builds itself up [εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ] in love’ (v. 16). Here, the building metaphor (present in οἰκοδομή) is subservient to the body metaphor.

Unlike either citizenship or building metaphors, the body metaphor strikes at the in/out contrast at the heart of the container mentality. A body (unlike a building or territory) cannot be conceived as a neutral space to be occupied. It is constituted, rather, by the (relatively harmonious) interplay between its members (upset by the ‘occupation’ of a parasite). While in some subsidiary contexts, such as a liver transplant, tonsillitis or the ingestion of food, the in/out contrast is operative, in the primary context it is not. The hands and the feet are part of the body, or attached to it, but they are not *inside* it. Even more so the eyelashes, which would more naturally be said to be on the outside of the body. Considered as a whole, the body does not contain its members; it is made up of them. But unlike the moral community of the container mentality, where being part of is interchangeable with being in, and where the possibilities of inclusion and exclusion remain uppermost, in the case of members of a body, the question is primarily one of healthy or diseased functioning, not of inclusion or exclusion. And a large part of Paul’s letter is taken up with description of and exhortation to health.

Once the controlling in/out contrast has been undermined, the three metaphors together make for a vision of *inhabiting well*, set in contrast with inhabiting badly rather than not inhabiting at all. To put it more boldly, the kind of ‘in’ with which Ephesians is concerned—by contrast with the container mentality—has no opposing ‘out’.

This rings true in several of Paul's usages of 'in'-language and cognate expressions. Thus, to speak of Christ dwelling in your hearts (3:17) is not to deny that Christ is above all as head. To say that you are filled with all the fulness of God (3:19), or that you are a dwelling place for God (2:22), is not to deny that God is all in all (1:23). Again, to say that you dwell in each other (4:25) is not to deny that you are also outside one another. In all these cases, to be *in* is not to be contained by, and thus is not opposed to being *out*. However, the 'in Christ' language that pervades Ephesians presents a challenge.¹⁷ Surely the contrasting state is being 'outside Christ'. Indeed, is not the narrative to which Paul alludes and which forms the backdrop of his letter one of the transfer of the Ephesians from outside to inside Christ? As 2:12-13 has it, 'you were at that time separated from Christ [τῷ καὶ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ] ... but now in Christ Jesus [νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ] you who once were far off have been brought near'.

Read in this way, Christ becomes a (despatialised) container, and belief in Christ (or equivalent) becomes the identity marker for membership in the community, supplanting other identity markers, such as circumcision and other forms of torah observance. With new membership criteria, a new people inevitably supplants an old. The new people, a moral community defined exclusively by Christ, is uprooted from the commonwealth of Israel as its wider habitat—whether as a new Israel in which the traditional symbols of Israel are perpetuated in an attenuated sense, or as the church over against Israel as a pristine new community founded by Christ. Either way, the new community cuts its ties with its home of origin along with its physically rooted traditions. Being in Christ replaces or sublimates being in a home.

A container reading rests on a construal of separation from Christ (χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, 2:12) as the opposite of being in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ, 2:13), the Ephesians being transferred from one state to the other. Such an opposition is hard to

¹⁷ Occurrences are too numerous to warrant listing, especially if one counts occurrences with a substitute pronoun (or with κύριος). But the phrase is there in the opening verse and is prevalent throughout the first three chapters. Ford resists a container reading by noting the letter's 'constant modulation of spatial metaphors', which 'qualifies "in Christ" language in a variety of ways (*Self and Salvation*, 119).

maintain. In the light of 2:1-3 we are invited to read separation from Christ (2:12) as a moral state: deadness in sin, walking according to this world, disobedience, living in the passions of the flesh. At stake is not transfer but transformation, and transformation does not map onto a simple contrast between being outside and being inside Christ. On the one hand, transformation is not complete for those in Christ, as Paul's exhortations of 4:1ff show. The Ephesians' gentile past still lurks in their present, as they continue to 'put off [their] old [selves]' (4:22). They have not yet attained 'to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (4:13). Christ does not yet fill all things (4:10). Unity in Christ is a future prospect (1:10). On the other hand, the Ephesians were chosen in Christ 'before the foundation of the world' (1:4): there is no time at which they were not already in Christ, being prepared for that future unity (2:10).

It makes much better sense, in this light, to construe 'separation from Christ' as the opposite of 'unity in Christ'. Being in Christ, as that which extends back to before the foundation of the world and forward to the eschaton, encompasses both states. The starkness with which Paul frames the contrast between present unity with Christ and past separation from Christ bespeaks a retrospective view of the sinfulness of the past. We can imagine that from the perspective of the eschatological unity still to come Paul will see the present as analogously sinful, a shadow being cast over it by the brilliant future. And we might surmise that in each new chapter of the life of transformation in Christ the sin of the previous chapter will be exposed, as Christ reaches further and further into the depths of sin, transforming them.

Christ is not a container, but is that in which all things cohere. There is nothing outside Christ. Moreover, the unity that is the goal of God's plan in Christ is precisely one in which the dichotomous in/out—as a manifestation of the sinful past—is overcome. As 2:14 has it, the dividing wall has been broken down. To read this christological transformation as transfer from out to in is to read it according to the logic of sin. Far from being a transfer, it is a transformation in which the divisive in/out is itself dissolved. We must thus be careful not to

misunderstand 2:14 to be speaking of a simple removal of the border to create a space in which everyone is included, i.e. in which everyone is on the inside.¹⁸ This would merely be to draw the boundary around everyone, making the outside an empty set. But it would leave the inside/outside dichotomy in principle intact. The result is a bland universalism in which all may be included but nothing is transformed. As Jennings has it, '[t]he theological imagination that deploys divine presence without concomitant real presence and real relationship may be enacting a form of Gentile hubris...'.¹⁹

Let us return to our focal passage (2:19-22) in this light. What does home look like when reconceived after the dissolution of the in/out contrast? It is constituted by the way in which its parts are joined together. The emphasis on joining is clear in the present participle συναρμολογουμένη (being joined together), which describes the building (οἰκοδομή) in 2:21. The same participle recurs in 4:16 (the verb's only other occurrence in the NT) in the context of the body metaphor, with reference to the joints that hold together the body. The preposition σύν (with) appears as a prefix in two other words in 2:19-22: συμπολιται (fellow citizens) in v. 19, and συνοικοδομεῖσθε in v. 22 (to describe the Ephesians 'being built together').²⁰ Home is conceived not as a neutral container to be filled, but as relations to be configured and reconfigured: in terms of joining. As Jennings puts it, commenting on Ephesians 2:13-16, '[s]pace here is both a relational practice and that which is created by a relation between Israel and the Gentiles'.²¹ 'Joining', moreover, is one of the key terms he uses to characterise an alternative to the colonialist logic.²² While he does not define it, we can infer from his usage that he has in mind joining in the sense of 'joints': the connecting of different parts, where particularising relationships resist colonialist homogenisation. My use of the term 'habitat' has a similar purpose of emphasising differential relations over neutralised space.

¹⁸ This is a danger in Barth's otherwise attractive reading in *The Broken Wall*. See esp. 147-48.

¹⁹ Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 167.

²⁰ Barth remarks that 'Ephesians is outstanding among the Pauline epistles because of the number of daring combinations of the preposition *syn*'. Markus Barth, 'Conversion and Conversation: Israel and the Church in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians', *Interpretation* 17:1 (1963), 3-24 [7].

²¹ Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 272.

²² Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 286-88.

The primary ‘occupant’ of this relationally configured home, moreover, is God. It is ‘a dwelling place for God [κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ]’ (2:22). What more definitive way could there be of debunking the in/out mentality? If God, as the one who ‘fills all in all’ (1:23, cf. 4:6), is the one ‘on the inside’, then the inside is turned inside out. Moreover, there can be no creaturely distinction between inside and outside: all creatures are displaced as (potential) occupants, and are called instead together to become a home hospitable to God. The cosmic implications are evident. The *oikos* of God is not limited to a segment of creation, whether that be Israel over against the nations, the church over against the world, or human beings over against the natural world. Its extent is the whole cosmos, which is moving towards its unity in Christ. Paul’s use of complementary metaphors (body and building) to describe the ecclesial community is indicative of its scope as that which variously crosses the natural and the cultural, the nonhuman and the human, the organic and the inorganic, the animate and the inanimate. It is an economy and an ecology.

What the dissolution of the in/out contrast means practically for intra-creaturely relations is captured compactly in 4:2-3, in which Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk ‘with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’. The kind of joining entailed is a patient ‘bearing with one another in love’. Being a creature means existing in relations of responsibility that one does not choose but which one finds oneself already immersed in: a wider habitat, which has no limit in principle to its extent, given the ultimate connectedness of all things. Violence is done when one abstracts oneself from this habitat in order to form ‘special-interest enclaves’.²³ The kind of unity Paul envisages, by contrast, is not a unity of like-mindedness, in which to unite as an ingroup is simultaneously to separate from an outgroup: this is to enact the container logic. Rather, Paul speaks to the Ephesians as those who are united by their common need to be borne by each

²³ A phrase used by George Lindbeck in the context of a contrast with an Israel-like, empirical church, rooted in divine election and not restricted to a select cross-section of human beings. George Lindbeck, ‘The Church’, in G. Wainwright (ed.), *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi* (London: SPCK, 1989), 179-208 [190].

other. Again, there is no limit in principle to who or what might enter into one's proximity, needing to be 'borne with'. Patience is required not only in the face of those who deny that need (for example, 'ignorant' and 'callous' gentiles [cf. 4:18-19]), but more generally insofar it involves the mutual need to be borne by one another in one's sin: bearing with includes the need for mutual forgiveness (4:19).

The unity Paul has in mind, I surmise, is, in the first place, that of solidarity in sin.²⁴ Given the bondage of the whole cosmos to corruption (cf. Rom 8:19-22), this solidarity is cosmic in scope, even if the particular way in which different creatures are related to sin varies widely.²⁵ In the second place, acknowledgment and confession of that sin is what yields recognition of an even deeper unity in Christ, in whom they have already been forgiven (4:32). Unlike the unity of an ingroup, this christological unity has no flipside outgroup, since the ones who need bearing with most of all are those from whom one is most bitterly divided.

We might pause here to ask a question that will arise more and more pointedly as we proceed. How does unity in Christ differ from colonialist inclusion in Christ? Consider, in this connection, the potential 'ecclesial triumphalism'²⁶ of Eph 1:22-23:

And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things
[κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα] to the church, which is his body [τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ],
the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Two responses might be offered at this stage. First, insofar as the whole cosmos is in Christ, its unity in him is not something to be newly created and (colonially)

²⁴ Cf. Barth, *The Broken Wall*, 144-58, in which solidarity with sinners is identified as a hallmark of the church. However, while Barth recognises that the sin most urgently in need of exposure is that within the church, that sin remains a temptation rather than an inescapable reality. Hence solidarity with *sinners* rather than solidarity *in sin*.

²⁵ However, to assume in principle that the perpetration of sin is limited to human beings is to operate with a human/nonhuman binary that the oikology of Ephesians brings in question. See David Clough, *On Animals: Volume 1, Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2015), for a discussion of sin beyond the human.

²⁶ As Ford expresses the danger. 'A Messiah for the New Millenium', 79.

imposed (by the church), but is to be unfolded from what is already given, being discovered as the deepest truth of the cosmos. This is not to assert an over-realised eschatology, nor to downplay the cost of Christ's atoning work. Rather, it is to envisage atonement, not as the initiating of relationship where there was none, but as the healing of broken relationship. The unity has, in this sense, not been lost; it has been damaged and distorted, as is indicated by the fact that our most bitter enemies are as a rule those who are close to us, not those with whom we have no relation.

Second, it is not a question of who is in or out, but of how our already given unity in Christ is to be enacted. And the Pauline answer is by bearing with one another—quite the opposite of colonialist coercion.²⁷ If bearing with entails, in turn, the confession of sin, this must not generate another in/out contrast between those who confess their sin and those who do not, since christological unity can neither be created nor undone by us. To confess sin is merely to witness to a unity that already envelops us and others. It follows that the church, as the gathering of those who confess the cosmos's unity in Christ, cannot be set over against the cosmos or competitively contrasted with it. It is not exclusively God's fullness in such a way as to contain God: God fills all (1:23). Moreover, it is united with the cosmos in having Christ as its head (5:23). Thus, if it is separated out from the cosmos, this is not so as to enact lordship over it. Rather—to put it paradoxically—the character of its set-apartness (or holiness) is precisely to recognise and enact the unity of all things.²⁸

To sum up: If being-in without being results in the arbitrary carving up of space as a neutral container, then being without being-in results in the carving up of people into in- and outgroups. These are two sides of the same coin: the detachment of people from their habitats results in the artificial division of both—into (despatialised) peoples and (neutrally spatialised) containers. The opposition between people and space must be overcome by their right relating,

²⁷ Cf. Ford's description of the ethic of Ephesians as 'one of non-coercive action and speech', involving 'radical reconceptions of one's boundaries' (*Self and Salvation*, 132-33).

²⁸ Cf. Barth's claim in *The Broken Wall*: 'Solidarity and association, inward and outward nearness to those that are still "far"—these are the signs of the holy Church' (150).

which I have articulated in terms of habitat and inhabitation. Paul's ethical vision of 'bearing with one another' involves the truthful (re)configuration of the relations one already inhabits: a caring for one's habitat and all that makes it up (an 'all' that is in principle cosmic). It is only being insofar as it is also being-in (reconfiguration presupposes a habitat). And it is only being-in insofar as it is also being (a habitat consists in the configuring and reconfiguring of relations). Paul's oikology thus involves the non-oppositional pairing of being and being-in, in transcendence of any in/out contrast. While the container mentality chops up the earth and its peoples, Ephesians envisages 'home', not by way of borders between one people and another, one portion of land and another, or between humans and the nonhuman, but in terms of truthful relating. Where the container mentality divides up, Ephesians joins.

II. Inclusivity and Supersessionism

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Ephesians 3:6

But what about the joining specifically between Jews and gentiles? In the first part of the article I have delineated the oikology of Ephesians, showing how it overcomes an insidious container mentality that rears its head in a variety of forms. In the second part I turn to the New Perspective on Paul, as that which brings the joining of Jew and gentile centrally into view. In doing so it has, on the one hand, helped to expose a deep-rooted supersessionism in the Christian interpretation of Paul, but on the other hand, as I will argue, it perpetuates that supersessionism in the form of modern inclusivism. An engagement with and critique of the New Perspective will lead, in turn, to a direct confrontation with passages in Ephesians in which the joining specifically of Jew and gentile is at stake. How does an oikology of joining fare in respect of these stubborn passages?

The New Perspective on Paul is well-known for its exposure and critique of the anti-Judaism embedded within what has come, by contrast, to be known as the ‘old perspective on Paul’.²⁹ If, according to the old perspective, Paul critiques Judaism for its legalism and works-righteousness, then those writing from within the New Perspective are broadly aligned in finding Paul’s concern to be rather with the inclusion of the gentiles within the people of God.³⁰ This crystallises in the most prominent early New Perspective writers into a characterisation of Paul’s beef with Judaism as a critique of its ethnocentrism or (in their terms) ‘nationalism’.³¹ Such a characterisation would seem to find ringing endorsement in Ephesians (whether Pauline or pseudo-Pauline)—with its account of Christ’s overcoming of the division between Jews and gentiles in the creation of one, new man, who (so the reading goes) transcends ethnic identity (Eph 2:15).³² Even more specifically, the indictment of the law in Eph 2:14-16 as a dividing wall of hostility lends itself to a New Perspective interpretation according to which the Pauline problem with the law has to do with its function of separating Jews from gentiles, captured in the phrase ‘the works of the law’, as James Dunn famously interprets it (although that specific phrase no longer appears here).³³

²⁹ The (former) phrase was coined by James D.G. Dunn. See ‘The New Perspective on Paul’, reprinted in James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 89-110. E.P. Sanders’s *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* is almost always named as a touchstone for the New Perspective. For a thorough and balanced survey of ‘old’ and ‘new’ perspectives, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The ‘Lutheran’ Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). For an incisive and no less thorough account of the flaws in the debate so framed, and the proposal of a compelling alternative, see John M.G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2015). For a very different alternative, falling broadly within what has been called ‘the radical new perspective’ or the ‘Paul within Judaism perspective’, see Matthew Thiessen’s *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: OUP, 2016). See *ibid.*, 10-11, for these designations.

³⁰ See Krister Stendahl, ‘The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West’, *Harvard Theological Review* 56:3 (1963), 199-215, for an early articulation of this contrast.

³¹ See Dunn, ‘The New Perspective on Paul’, 105: ‘What [Paul] is concerned to exclude is the racial not the ritual expression of faith; it is *nationalism* which he denies not *activism*’. See also N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 1991), e.g. 243. Wright captures the contrast between old and new covenant communities in the memorable phrase ‘by grace not race’ (e.g., 194), naming Israel’s ‘meta-sin’ as ‘the attempt to confine grace to one race’ (240).

³² See Dunn, ‘The New Perspective: whence, what and whither?’, in *The New Perspective*, 1-88 [30-31], where Dunn appeals to Ephesians in just this connection.

³³ For a retrospective summary of Dunn’s unfolding understanding of this phrase, see ‘Whence, what and whither?’, 7-15. For his interpretation of the disappearance of the phrase after Galatians and Romans, see Dunn, ‘Whatever Happened to “Works of the Law”?’, in *The New Perspective*, 375-88. Dunn understands Ephesians 2:8-10, with its contrast between faith and works, to articulate a principle already well-established within the Jewish tradition, that justification is apart from human achievement, a principle now distinguished clearly from that

Later writers in the wake of the New Perspective have not been slow to point out that such a ‘new perspective’ ironically replaces one form of anti-Judaism with another, the charge of legalism merely being replaced by the charge of ethnocentrism—or (more bluntly) racism.³⁴ Though valid, to be sure,³⁵ I contend that this sharp critique of the New Perspective fails to locate the deeper problem from which its residual anti-Judaism stems. This deeper problem is its perpetuation of the container mentality. The New Perspective writers correctly identify Paul’s concern with the joining of Jew and gentile. But they misdiagnose this concern, I suggest, as a problem of ‘inclusivity’. How are gentiles to be *included* (along with Jews) in the people of God? The problem to be overcome is that of Jewish exclusivity. The solution is to remove, as criteria for membership, those practices that distinguish Jews as Jews. And the result is a ‘universal’, ‘multi-ethnic’, ‘trans-ethnic’—or in short, ‘inclusive’—community. But to think in terms of *inclusion* is to operate according to the in/out contrast that is the hallmark of the container mentality. To include gentiles as well as Jews may enlarge the container, but only by entrenching the in/out contrast. This is evident in the fact that the overcoming of one kind of boundary—an ethnic boundary—results only in the emergence of another one elsewhere—‘faith in Christ’ (say)—and in the concomitant exclusion of unbelieving Jews.³⁶

other, more controversial, principle, namely that justification is apart from Jewish privilege. This is what was at stake in Paul’s phrase ‘works of the law’, which especially had in view those boundary-markers such as circumcision and food laws. Ephesians 2:11-16 focuses the issue of Jewish privilege by targeting the law as such (Dunn, ‘Whence, what and whither?’, 52-53).

³⁴ E.g., Westerholm, *Perspectives*, 250-51. Cf. Paula Fredriksen, ‘What You See is What You Get: Context and Content in Current Research on the Historical Jesus’, *Theology Today* 52 (1995), 75-97 [esp. 96], who makes an analogous point with respect to the portrait of Judaism within historical Jesus scholarship. By the time of publication of Thiessen’s *Paul and the Gentile Problem*—when the New Perspective is no longer new—‘Lutheran’ and ‘new perspective’ readings of Paul can be described in one breath as ‘two camps’ within Pauline scholarship, configured around ‘an anti-legalistic Paul’ and ‘an anti-ethnocentric Paul’ respectively (ibid., 5).

³⁵ As can be seen by the fact that Dunn sees fit to generalise Paul’s concern regarding the division between Jews and gentiles in terms of (all) “attitudes” ... which maintain barriers between peoples and races’, drawing a line of continuity to modern examples of apartheid, and indeed to Christian anti-semitism (Dunn, ‘Whence, what and whither?’, 31-32). The modern agenda is evident.

³⁶ Cf. David G. Horrell, ‘Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship’, *NTS* 62:3 (2016), 439-60. On the one hand, Horrell invites a deconstruction of the ‘dichotomy between Jewish ethnicity and Christian inclusivity’ (ibid., 459), and on the other hand, he suggests that behind the (innocent-sounding) emphasis on Christian inclusivity within New Testament Studies lies the ‘Christian model of “tolerant” social inclusion promoted in secularised form—and often with “intolerant”

Dunn's theology of Paul is a paradigm case. On the one hand, papering over the criteria for inclusion, he can claim that it is 'the total graciousness of God's action in justifying anyone and everyone which rules out all pride ...'.³⁷ On the other hand, that there is a criterion is evident in his characterisation of 'Paul's gospel of justification' as 'for *all* who believe, and on no other condition—not ethnicity, not colour, not race, not class, not creed, not denomination'.³⁸ Belief may be downplayed in favour of (an italicised) 'all', but it remains a 'condition' nonetheless.³⁹ In short, however the new criteria for membership be drawn up, and however innocuous they may seem, 'inclusivity' comes at the price of a new kind of conformity (in this case in terms of belief, along with a relativisation of ethnicity and other differentiating factors). The suppression of boundaries here will mean their reassertion there.

As a consequence, supersessionism inevitably rears its head again. However one may protest that, with the inclusion of the gentiles, Israel (or the covenant) is being expanded rather than replaced, the redrawing of boundaries cannot but entail the replacement of a group defined by one set of membership criteria (in this case, ethnic) by another group defined by alternative membership criteria (in this case, faith in Christ). And the result, to reiterate, will be the exclusion of those who do not conform to the new criteria (in this case, unbelieving Jews). An ethnic people, in short, is superseded by an 'inclusive' people (where 'inclusive' means 'defined *only* by faith in Christ'). Exclusivity lies only just beneath the surface of an apparently innocent inclusivity.

force—by the globally powerful countries of the white Christian West' (ibid., 460). The resonance with Jennings is evident.

³⁷ Dunn, 'Whence, what and whither', 54.

³⁸ Dunn, 'Whence, what and whither', 32-33 (italics original).

³⁹ The point is, if anything, even clearer in Wright's account. Wright makes no bones about the (new) boundary-marker being faith in Christ, '*not* Jewish race, with its badges of circumcision, kosher laws, sabbath observance' etc. And he sums up the matter as follows: 'on the one hand that (only) those who *believe* in Christ belong to the community, and on the other hand that *all* those who believe in Christ, irrespective of racial background, belong' (Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 3). Quite apart from the dubious use of the (modern) category of race, this exhibits a striking complacency about the replacement of a 'Jewish' by a 'Christian' exclusivism.

We are less than a stone's throw away, despite it being far from the intentions of the New Perspective writers, from the colonialist logic expounded by Jennings. Inclusivity is tantamount to that universalism that is the other side of colonialism. The expansion of Israel has imperial overtones, 'faith in Christ' operating as the invisible landscape within which everything is reconfigured (which may in fact turn out to be closely allied to the invisible whiteness exposed by Jennings). Jews can be included (note the inversion), but only insofar as their ethnicity is transcended. And even when on the inside they remain other. This insidious colonialism relies on a dual definition of 'ethnicity'—in both cultural and genealogical terms. Jews must shed their cultural Jewishness (the divisiveness of the law) to be included; but inclusion is only genuine inclusion insofar as they remain inalienably Jews (thus in the genealogical sense). The colonial master at once holds up ethnic Jews as his prize, and strips them of their ethnicity. It is evident that in such a situation there is no true joining.

In this modern liberal inclusivism, being-in drops away while the in/out contrast forcefully reasserts itself in the being of an inclusive moral community.

'Inclusivity' is the sublimated form of home-inhabitation. Specifically, in this inclusive home (Jewish) ethnicity is deracinated, its genealogical aspect being loosed from its wider cultural, historical and traditional moorings. Abstracted from a pre-existing habitat, the inclusive home is constructed *de novo*, its architects the arbiters of who is to be let in.

The oikology of Part I offered an account of home as relationally configured habitat, drawing attention to its deep (historical and geographical) roots, and to its transcendence of more recent inhabitants. It thus ruled out the possibility of a home constructed *de novo*. However, the New Perspective forces us to attend to those verses in which the joining of Jew and gentile is explicitly in view, and to confront their apparently intractable supersessionism:

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing [καταργήσας] the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he

might create in himself one new man in place of the two [ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον], so making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Eph 2:13-16)

In ‘the new man’ we appear to have to do precisely with something *de novo*—‘in place of’ that which was there before. Moreover, to abolish the law is surely to abolish an intrinsic aspect of the former habitat, completing the severance of the new from the old. If a New Perspective reading smooths the transition by appealing to the transcendence of ethnic identity, and the abolition of that which separated Jew from gentile, thus making way for its inclusive vision, what are the options for an oikological reading? If inclusivity is benign supersessionism, but supersessionism nonetheless, an oikological reading must work harder.

The first matter to be addressed is translation. On the one hand, ESV’s ‘in place of’ embeds a supersessionist logic supported by a container mentality. To replace one thing by another assumes the continuity of a ‘place’ into which the new enters and from which the old is expelled. The place must be neutral in order to be indifferent to its contents in this way. In this case the indifferent ‘place’ is covenant (or equivalent), and the church (of Jews and gentiles) comes to occupy it at the expense of Israel. But the phrase overdetermines a more ambiguous Greek, which is better captured by the KJV: ‘for to make in himself of twain one new man’. There is no necessary replacement here. On the other hand, in keeping with most standard English translations ESV has ‘abolish’ for ‘καταργέω’, when another ready meaning is ‘render of no effect’.⁴⁰ The latter need not imply the severance so uncompromising in the former.

⁴⁰ BDAG gives as the second meaning (of three) ‘to cause something to lose its power or effectiveness’. To translate the verb in this way in Eph 2:15 requires τὴν ἔχθραν to be read epexegetically with τὸ μεσότηχον rather than with τὸν νόμον. See also Giorgio Agamben’s fascinating and illuminating comments on the verb καταργέω in *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (trans. Patricia Dailey; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 95-108. While extended dialogue with Agamben in this connection would be worthwhile, for the purposes of the present essay I limit myself to noting his initial linguistic observations. καταργέω, according to Agamben, comes from the adjective ἀργός, meaning ‘inoperative’. It is the opposite, therefore, not of ποιέω, but of ἐνεργέω, and thus means not ‘to perish’ but ‘to de-activate’ (ibid., 95-96).

To discover how these alternative translations can support a genuine alternative to a supersessionist reading, we must cast an eye to the wider context in which the passage occurs:

¹² [R]emember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. ... ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God[.] (Eph 2:12, 19)

We met these verses above in our exploration of the citizenship metaphor, which was pivotal in tethering being to being-in, reminding the Ephesians that they were entering a capacious home with deep roots. However, 2:12-19 is more often read ‘inside out’, starting with the troublesome 2:14-16, and thus with a presupposed supersessionism, and taking the reference to the commonwealth of Israel in that context. The church (so it goes) is a new community (2:15b), having different membership criteria from Israel of old (2:15a), which means that if the Ephesians enter Israel (as 2:19 together with 2:12 would seem to imply), it can only be Israel as utterly redefined—a new Israel.⁴¹ However, if we start with 2:12 and 19, we can take them in their plain sense: the formerly gentile Ephesians have not become members of a new-found community (like the inclusive home of the New Perspective writers), but fellow citizens in the commonwealth of Israel. They are genuinely incorporated into Israel.⁴²

⁴¹ E.g., Andrew T. Lincoln, ‘The Church and Israel in Ephesians 2’, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 [1987], 605-24. Lincoln notes the proselyte terminology of ‘coming near’ used in Eph 2:13, but suggests that as the passage unfolds the terminology is transformed so as to refer no longer to membership within Israel, but rather to membership in the new community created by Christ (ibid., 610-11). He concludes that ‘by the end of the pericope [Eph 2:22] Israel’s privileges in proximity to God, historically associated with the Jerusalem temple, have completely faded from view’, attention shifting to ‘God’s new temple of the end-time’ (ibid., 615). In other words, he avoids the plain sense by severing v. 19 from v. 12. And he is forced to do so by the assumption of a supersessionist newness.

⁴² Lincoln names Markus Barth as someone who has argued for this reading, placing him at one extreme of a spectrum of interpretations of Ephesians in respect of the question of the continuity between the church and Israel (Lincoln, ‘The Church and Israel in Ephesians 2’, 605-607). In *The People of God* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1983), the work to which Lincoln most appeals, Barth does indeed move in this direction. However, even there he does not entirely break free of an alternative paradigm according to which Israel and the church—which he maps onto Jews and Christians—together form the one people of God (see ibid., 9 and 25-26). In a much earlier article

Before returning to the troublesome 2:14-16, let us tease out the oikology of the Ephesians' incorporation. The commonwealth of Israel is the pre-existing, wider habitat in which they find themselves at home. Moreover, their incorporation is not the creation from nothing of a relationship between these gentiles and Jews, but the healing of an existing relationship of alienation (2:12). In other words, it is not a matter of the Ephesians' choice to enter this group as if it were a container, but a matter of the transformation of relationships for which they already bear responsibility. They discover the resources for this transformation in Christ, who heals the alienation, revealing the unity to which they are called in him.

What about those in Israel who do not recognise this unity in Christ? The Ephesians are called to enact the latter precisely by bearing with others, whether with unbelieving Jews in their unbelief or with gentiles in their sinful gentile ways. Bearing with is the opposite of separating off to form new, pristine relationships away from the evils of this world (Eph 2:2). It is the commitment to the healing of existing relationships. Thus the church, as those who confess Christ, do not form a bounded, sub-community within Israel—a 'true Israel' within Israel. The church is not the group of those who are in Christ, demarcated from others who are not (as if Christ were a container). No-one, not even unbelieving Jews, is outside Christ. Rather, the whole cosmos is in Christ, moving towards its unity in him.

It would be better to say, according to the grammar of Ephesians, that the church is to Israel as verb is to noun. Israel (as noun) is an empirical people woven contingently in and through history, embracing moments of significant discontinuity (such as the destruction of the Northern Kingdom), but ultimately held in continuity by the faithful promises of God. At the time of the writing of

this is the reigning paradigm (Barth, 'Conversion and Conversation'). Barth's language there is of the church being 'together with Israel' (e.g., *ibid.*, 7), and he spells out that in Ephesians Paul means by Israel not only ancient Israel, nor only those Jews that confess the Messiah, but (so Barth implies) all Jews—'[t]oday even the young state of Israel ought to be included' (*ibid.*, 9). What is equally clear, by implication, is that the church remains distinct from Israel, and thus that the solidarity of gentile Christians with Israel is not the same as their incorporation into Israel.

Ephesians it is a contested people divided among various sects, including (Jewish and gentile) Christ followers as well as non-Christ-following Jews of various stripes. The church (as verb) is a way of being Israel in commitment to the unity of the cosmos established and revealed in Christ. More specifically, it is Israel in its calling to a life of 'bearing with'—a life most intensely expressed at the present juncture in newly framed relations between Jews and (former) gentiles.

The nonsupersessionism of this vision should be evident. The church enacts Israel by bearing witness to the unity of the cosmos in Christ, and by bearing with others within Israel and gentiles still estranged from Israel who do not read the cosmos through Christ. It thus transforms rather than cuts loose from its wider habitat, inhabiting Israel transformatively rather than replacing it. But the question presses itself again here of whether christological unity differs in the end from christological colonialism. More pointedly, in the present context, is the Christian claim that the cosmos is ultimately united in Christ (or that everyone is in Christ whether they know it or not) a colonising claim? In response, a clear distinction must be drawn between the *claim* about unity in Christ and *that unity itself*. The unity, as the deepest identity of the cosmos, cannot be colonising. The claim, by contrast, may very well be colonising, being dependent not primarily on the character of Christ, but on the character of the Christian claimants. We have already drawn a connection between the container mentality and the logic of sin. Thus, there may be no way of confessing solidarity in sin, and concomitantly the unity of the cosmos in Christ, without at the same time reasserting the container mentality. This does not, however, bring in question the unity itself, which transcends the sinfulness of its claimants.

With this oikological context in mind, we are now in a position to return to 2:14-16: the question of the 'old' law and the 'new' man. Is reinterpretation also possible here? To find out, we must fill in a little bit more of the verbal context:

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from

Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:11-13)

The problem of the law rears its head specifically for uncircumcised gentiles who are separated from Christ, and thus separated from Israel (vv. 11-12). We can surmise, therefore, that the law is rendered of no effect for them (v. 15) insofar as they are 'brought near by the blood of Christ' (v. 13), being incorporated into Israel (v. 19). How exactly are they brought near? According to Lincoln, v. 13 'uses terminology common in later Jewish discussions of proselytism', 'coming near' (γίνομαι ἐγγύς) evoking the Hebrew verbs קרב and רהק.⁴³ Given that circumcision would have been a key aspect of proselytism, we are invited to understand the reference to circumcision in v. 11 as not just denotative but as a salient description of the gentiles in their separation from Christ. On this basis, we can hypothesise that the law is divisive for the uncircumcised gentiles because it declares that as uncircumcised they are cut off from God's people (Gen 17:14). And from this it is a short step to the conclusion that their being brought near by the blood of Christ is their circumcision in Christ, which results in their no longer being cut off by the law, or in other words, which 'renders the law of no effect' for them.

The law, we conclude, is divisive apart from Christ. The cosmic christology of Ephesians suggests, furthermore, that this is not only so for gentiles but also for Jews.⁴⁴ The covenant sign of circumcision was and is effective in Christ, in whom the cosmos coheres, and as the one whose death is the ultimate circumcision. In other words, the law has always had its effectiveness from Christ. What the coming of Christ makes manifest is the unity between Jews and gentiles prepared beforehand in Christ. The new human being (whether Jew or gentile) is the one for whom Christ's circumcision is effective and thus the law no longer divisive.

⁴³ Lincoln, 'The Church and Israel', 610.

⁴⁴ Ephesians, on this reading, cannot be conformed to the two-track theory of salvation put forward by those associated with the 'radical new perspective on Paul', such as Lloyd Gaston, Stanley Stowers and Matthew Thiessen.

Apart from Christ the law cut gentiles off from Jews. The discovery of the gentile Ephesians that the whole cosmos is in Christ is at the same time a discovery that they can have peace with Jews, being incorporated into Israel and no longer cut off from the law. This cannot but also have ramifications for Jews, who are invited to discover how their covenant unity can be manifest in a radically new relationship with gentiles—no longer as proselytes but as circumcised in Christ. Israel is thereby called to a new enactment of its oikological life. The extent to which this will involve leaving behind previous ways in which the law had been enacted need not be resolved here.

On this reading, the coming of Christ represents for Israel not a supersessionist newness in which it is uprooted from its ancient habitat, but an analogical newness which invites Israel creatively to discover new ways in which to enact its deep logic in the new context that has been brought about by the novel way in which gentiles are, in Christ, being incorporated into the commonwealth.

Let us return, for a final time, to the question of whether christological unity ultimately degenerates into christological colonialism. Specifically, in the present context, is it not colonising on the part of Christians to appeal to the cosmic Christ as the one in whom Israel's covenant is effective? Is this not presumptuous in relation to Jews for whom Israel is God's chosen people quite apart from Christ? In order to answer this specific question, let us recall our previous answers to the broader question. First, unity in Christ is to be discovered and unfolded, not created and colonially imposed. Second, it is not a question of who is in and who is out, but of how that unity is to be enacted, to which the Pauline answer is by bearing with one another. Third, the Christian claim to unity in Christ is distinct from that unity itself. Elaborating on the first answer, the Christian claim that Jews are in Christ is not an affirmation of Jewish practice as that which (although Jews do not know it) witnesses to Christ. It is not, in other words, an imposition on Jews of christological identity despite an entirely different Jewish self-understanding. As already given, identity in Christ is not Christianly imposed, nor do Christians know in advance how Jewish practice enacts or does not enact it. Second, because it is not a matter of inclusion or

exclusion, Jews (to be in Christ) must not be found to be 'anonymous' Christians, but are to be borne with. Bearing with means, among other things, attentiveness to the other in her own self-understanding. This means, on the one hand, in the confession of one's own sin, to have one's own self-understanding challenged by that other, and on the other hand, in the confession of deeper unity in Christ, potentially to learn from that other about Christ. Third, insofar as the claim to unity is distinct from that unity itself, Christians do not have the monopoly on unity in Christ. Their witness to it in the making of their Christian claim is precisely to bear with the conflicting claims of others. The Christian claim is thus one that, by its own logic, invites its own interrogation. It is nevertheless a real question whether and to what extent the claim can in fact be made in such a way as to resist the container mentality—in which it once more becomes a colonising claim. Even an answer robustly in the negative, however, would not undermine the truth of the unity to which it sinfully attests. Rather, as might be expected, this would underline just how demanding and even treacherous in practice is the ethics of bearing with to which Paul calls.

Conclusion

The oikology of Ephesians presents a radical alternative to a modern liberal inclusivism. The latter, as an expression of the container mentality, serves only to reinforce the in/out contrast, however large the container becomes. Its key problem, I suggest, is that it assumes that unity is something that must be made or imposed rather than discovered. Its colonialism or imperialism comes from this artificial imposition. The oikological vision I have developed by way of a reading of Ephesians implies, by contrast, that unity is something already there, and that it needs discovering, unfolding and enacting over time. The problem is that we evade this unity. We find ourselves bound to others in fraught relationships that we would rather not have. Our response, so often, is to cut off from those others by the interposition of borders. The desire for inclusivity, I surmise, is a reaction against the border-erecting instinct. However, inclusivity, as the equal and opposite of exclusivity, replays the same logic and so cannot repair the latter. Both assume that the choice to exclude or to include lies with

us. But if the oikology of Ephesians is anything to go by, then we are in fact already bound to the others we 'decide' to include. Inclusivity papers over the wounds of the relationships we already inhabit by lifting them out of their wider habitats and repristinating them on a new footing in deracinated form. It is fundamentally supersessionist. The oikology of Ephesians, by contrast, invites us to 'bear with' those with whom we are in wounded relation, challenging and being challenged by them, and transforming rather than cutting loose from the wider habitat we share with them—and to do so in attestation of our cosmic unity in Christ.