Paul's Use of the Exodus Narrative in his
Argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Paul uses analogies between the Corinthians' situation and the exodus narrative in 1 Corinthians 5 to encourage proper ethical deliberation in his audience. He urges the Corinthians to rethink their inherited cultural norms and practices since their ethics have inevitably been influenced by some of the negative values present in their society. Drawing heavily on Deuteronomy's ethical framework in particular, Paul's argumentation focuses on helping the Corinthians understand how to play a good role in the overarching story of God's covenant people by making intertextual allusions to the Israelites' wandering period of the exodus narrative. In doing so, he reminds the Corinthians of their identity as God's covenant community and its accompanying responsibilities. Paul argues that those who desire to play a good role in the overarching narrative must maintain the church's purity since this is the only way that a covenant community can have a proper relationship with God. Therefore, he stresses the importance of making proper judgments and defining clear social boundaries for members of the church. Finally, this thesis argues that Paul is just as concerned with the function of his argumentation as he is with its content since he desires that the Corinthian church has the right ethical discernment to carry out its covenantal responsibilities without apostolic supervision as it faces new moral decisions.

To my wife Joanne,
whose love, encouragement, support, and sacrifices
were instrumental in the completion of my thesis.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Focus and Question

One area that has drawn much attention in the study of Paul's letters concerns his

ethical discourse. 1 Corinthians in particular addresses many issues faced by the

first century church which are still pertinent to the Christian community today,

including sexuality, marriage, ecclesiology, preaching, worship, and women's

roles in the church. For this reason, there has been no shortage of studies

examining the letter's treatment of these topics. When it comes to the study of

Paul's ethics in 1 Corinthians, however, there are still areas that have yet to be

explored sufficiently. For example, although many have demonstrated that Paul

relies heavily on the Scriptures for his ethical thought, few have looked at how he

uses them in his ethical deliberation. In light of this, the following thesis analyzes

the argumentation that Paul uses to lead the Corinthian church through a process

of ethical deliberation. In order to pursue this study, I will focus on how Paul

applies the exodus narrative to the situation in 1 Corinthians. This leads to the

primary question of this thesis: How does Paul use analogies between the

Corinthians' situation and the exodus narrative in 1 Corinthians 5 to encourage

proper ethical deliberation in his audience?

2. Problem

When we examine 1 Corinthians closely, we see that it provides one of the most

detailed examples in Scripture of the ethical life of a first-century church. From Paul's perspective, at least, we get the impression that the Christian community in Corinth is in considerable disarray. From the beginning of the letter, we see that there are divisions in the church because many Christians are following after their favourite leaders (1:10–12; 3:3–9). We see the Corinthians involved in other more obvious kinds of sin that confound many of us in the modern Church. We struggle to understand how those in a Christian community could tolerate and participate in things such as incest (5:1), prostitution (6:15–16), idolatry (8–10), and drunkenness (11:21), to name a few. We must also remember the tendency for some Corinthians who arrogantly parade their perceived wisdom (1:18–2:16) as well as those who boast about their own spiritual gifts, believing that theirs are more important to the church than less honourable gifts (chs. 12–14).

Since 1 Corinthians reveals that the church is experiencing several difficulties, many commentators have focused on finding the causes of the ethical issues Paul addresses in the letter. For instance, older commentators often claimed the problems in Corinth are the result of the Christian community's living in theological error. Consequently, many scholars tried to uncover the parallels between the Corinthian church's theology and ancient sources.[1]

The next stage of scholarship challenged many of these theories about the Corinthians' theological misinterpretations. It focused on understanding the social

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[1] E.g., F. C. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ, His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine* (trans. Eduard Zeller; 2d ed.; 2 vols.; Edinburgh, Scotland: Williams & Norgate, 1876); Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. John E. Steel; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); Anthony Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology in Corinth," NTS 24 (1978): 510–26. John C. Hurd (*The Origin of 1 Corinthians* [London: SPCK, 1965]) argues that the theological confusion on the part of the Corinthians was the result of changes in Paul's own theology.

world of the Corinthian church.[2] In the end, both theological and sociological

models viewed the occasion of the letter as Paul's attempt to correct the church's

ethical framework by providing the right instruction.

As the study of 1 Corinthians has developed, many scholars have come to

believe that reconstructing the Corinthian situation from either a strictly

theological or a strictly sociological point of view is a mistake. Focusing on a

single model creates a dichotomy that does not exist in 1 Corinthians, or

anywhere else in Paul's letters. Instead, it is necessary to recognize that the

problems in the church are the result of a variety of cultural and social influences.

This eclectic approach has successfully demonstrated that the Christians in

Corinth are simply responding to the pressures of the city's assumptions, values,

and social practices that they still share with their pagan neighbours.[3] This

suggests that Paul's overriding goal in the letter is to teach the Corinthians a

counter-cultural way of thinking about their day-to-day lives.

Another line of scholarship relevant to the present thesis considers the

sources for Paul's ethical instruction to the Corinthians. Scholars who study the

Apostle's ethics have tended to focus on finding the sources that shape his moral

thought. They have looked for parallels between his writings and other

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[2] Some scholars sought to construct a picture of the social composition of the Christian community. E.g., Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (2d ed.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003); Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schutz; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

[3] E.g., John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993); Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001).

philosophies of his time to see not only which ones influence him, but also which ones he relies on most for his arguments; these include various perspectives from both Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions. Much of the discussion has focused on the extent to which the Old Testament has shaped Paul's ethics. There are those who argue that Israel's Scriptures do not inform Paul's moral thought, claiming that since he rarely cites them in his ethical instructions, he does not depend on them for his ethics.[4] There have, however, been several helpful studies demonstrating that even though there are few actual citations in the ethical sections of his letters, Paul is still very much indebted to the Scriptures when it comes to his ethical deliberation.[5] The Apostle does not often cite commandments or explicit ethical teaching, but he does cite other kinds of scriptural material in ethical contexts. He also makes less direct references and allusions to events, people, and themes from Scripture as he offers his ethical instruction.

Even though there have been many studies attesting to Paul's use of the

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[4] See Brian S. Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999], 3–9) for a detailed list of those who espouse this position. Rosner, however, does not always differentiate between the question of Paul's use of the Old Testament and his view of the Law. Thus, it is not always clear which scholars Rosner says believe Paul still sees practical value in the Law as opposed to those who maintain that he has completely abandoned the Old Testament (e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith," in *The Old Testament and the Christian Faith* [ed. and trans. Bernhard W. Anderson; New York: Harper & Row, 1963], 14). Many who assume the former position base it on the conviction that the Law of Moses is no longer binding for Paul, not that it is void of any practical significance for the Christian life (e.g., Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004], 408–39). For a discussion of the various ways in which Paul uses the concept of *Law*, see Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 298–300.

[5] E.g., Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); idem, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 143–62; Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*. Victor P. Furnish (*Theology and Ethics in Paul* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1968], 42) explains that the Old Testament "is a source for [Paul's] ethical teaching in that it provides him with a perspective from which he interprets the whole event of God's act in Christ, and the concomitant and consequent claim God makes on the believer."

Hebrew Scriptures for his ethics, surprisingly few studies have examined the way scriptural references contribute to the logic of the Apostle's argument. Instead of investigating *whether* Paul is dependent on the Hebrew Scriptures for his ethics, this thesis will focus on *how* he uses them in his discourse to influence his audience. More specifically, how does Paul use the exodus narrative in his ethical deliberation as he demonstrates the kind of ethical reasoning that he wants the Corinthians to emulate?[6]

3. Methodology

Since my objective in this thesis is to analyze the logic of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5, I will examine how he uses the Scriptures to reason with the Corinthians. In my analysis, I will look at how he leads the Corinthians to make proper ethical insights about their contemporary situations. To determine this pattern, I am going to look specifically at how Paul uses allusions to the exodus narrative to encourage the Christian community to reflect on what it means to be participants in the story of God's people.[7] I will be looking to determine the argumentative function Paul's allusions have on the Corinthian audience.

The framework I will adopt in my treatment of allusions is similar to the one put forth by Richard Hays in his *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul.*[8]

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[6] A few studies have examined Paul's use of the exodus narrative in some of his other letters; e.g., Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story: (Re)interpreting the Exodus Tradition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); William N. Wilder, *Echoes of the Exodus Narrative in the Context and Background of Galatians 5:18* (New York: Lang, 2001).

[7] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 95–102.

[8] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 1–33. See also James W. Aageson ("Written Also for Our Sake: Paul's Use of Scripture in the Four Major Epistles, with a study of 1 Corinthians 10," in

Hays believes that scriptural allusions or echoes[9] are part of what he calls the

phenomenon of intertextuality: the explicit or implicit embedding of earlier texts

within later ones. According to Hays, intertextuality has always played a

significant role for those in Israel's scriptural tradition who not only depended on

earlier authoritative texts, but transformed them in light of their own situations.[10]

For the Apostle it is no different: "The vocabulary and cadences of Scripture . . .

are imprinted deeply on Paul's mind, and the great stories of Israel continue to

serve for him as a fund of symbols and metaphors that condition his perception of

the world."[11] Paul's verbal allusions point to broader associations he is making

between the topic at hand and earlier texts of Scripture, bringing more to mind

than what is actually stated.[12]

Hays also explains that these allusions are not only evidence of larger

connections being made in Paul's mind, but they also seem designed to trigger

similar connections in the minds of the original audience.[13] Paul writes to the

Corinthians assuming that they are informed or implied readers/hearers, those

who could respond appropriately to all of his citations and allusions, recognizing

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Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament [ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006], 152–81) who offers a similar framework.

[9] Hays most often uses the word *echo* in his book, whereas I have chosen the word *allusion* for my thesis. He states, however, that there is very little distinction between the two terms, and therefore, he uses them interchangeably (*Echoes of Scripture*, 29).

[10] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 14.

[11] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 16.

[12] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 24.

[13] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 26. Hays also discusses three other possibilities in identifying the *loci* of allusions: the text itself, the act of reading, and the community of interpretation.

his various literary devices and constructs.[14] How then does an awareness of these intertextual dynamics help us to understand Paul's argumentative aim in 1 Corinthians 5? Paul's allusions to the exodus narrative in this passage seem to imply a set of analogies between that scriptural story and the Corinthians' current circumstance. In looking at his implied analogies with the exodus narrative, I will try to determine how Paul's audience is encouraged to draw on them for its own situation. Furthermore, I will seek to find out how Paul's allusions function as triggers to a larger narrative, encouraging the Corinthians to make the analogical connections by themselves.

One methodological question raised by this approach is how we can know where Paul intended to make allusions to the exodus in 1 Corinthians 5. How do we conclude that Paul is alluding to the exodus outside of verse 7, for instance, where he makes an explicit reference to the Passover? Hays outlines several tests that I will assume as my method of finding allusions in 1 Corinthians 5.[15] The first test is to ask whether the source text was available to Paul and his original audience. This one poses no real problem since it is accepted that the Apostle was steeped in the Scriptures and used them frequently in his letters.[16] Also, even though the Christians in Corinth were predominantly Gentile, it is widely agreed

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[14] See also Dennis L. Stamps, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament as a Rhetorical Device: A Methodological Proposal," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 17.

[15] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 29–32.

[16] See for example, D. A. Carson and Gregory K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academics, 2007), 606–918; Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

that Paul's churches were familiar with the Scriptures as well. For this reason, the

Hebrew Scriptures were a "common currency" that he and his audience shared.[17]

The second test I will use to determine allusions in chapter 5 is to identify

the number and distinctiveness of verbal or thematic links with an Old Testament

passage. The third test is the frequency with which Paul alludes to the same

intertext elsewhere.[18] Finally, a fourth test is to ask whether the suggested allusion

would cohere well with Paul's overall argumentation in the chapter. Individually,

none of these tests can be conclusive, and they involve varying degrees of

subjective evaluation. Nevertheless, taken together the four tests allow us to speak

in more rigorous terms about the relative likelihood that Paul intended a particular

allusion.

4. Outline

In order to appreciate the logic of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5, I will first

establish a working hypothesis as to the situation in Corinth to which Paul was

addressing and his argumentative goal in chapter 5. The first part of my thesis will

examine the social and historical background of 1 Corinthians. Chapter 2 will

begin with a survey of the situation in Corinth—the city and the church—to better

understand the various influences that shaped the typical Corinthian mindset. We

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[17] See James D. G. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998], 15–16) argues that Paul would have taken for granted that his readers understood what he meant by certain scriptural references. When Paul makes a reference to Scripture, he only had to offer a brief formulation in passing without explanation, and this would then evoke knowledge in his readers that he or someone else had already taught them. For example, Paul refers to the Passover (1 Cor 5:7) without explaining what it is, where it can be found, etc.

[18] Another clear example of allusions to the exodus narrative in 1 Corinthians is found in chapter 10:1–22, but there are others throughout the letter (e.g., 6:1–11; 8:1–13; 12:13).

will see that Corinth during Paul's ministry was more like any other colony in the Roman Empire than it was a traditional Greek city. As a result, it was influenced by several cultural norms and practices common with the Romans, which consequently influenced the church's ethical framework as well. Chapter 3 will then survey the history of scholarship on 1 Corinthians and examine some of the influences scholars have suggested may underlie the problems in the church.[19] I will briefly critique these perspectives and then present the reader with the model of the Corinthian situation that I will assume for my examination of 1 Corinthians 5. We will see that understanding both the historical circumstances in Corinth and the scholarly proposals for the issues in the letter will help us appreciate what kind of audience Paul was dealing with when formulating his ethical discourse.

The second part of my thesis will focus on an analysis of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5. I will begin in chapter 4 with a preliminary exegesis of verses 1–5 which will provide an initial sketch of the Apostle's argument. This study will examine the specific circumstances that would best account for the development of Paul's statements, as well as offer additional insight into the particular framework that informed the Corinthian community's pattern of thinking and ethics. Chapter 5 will conclude my investigation of verses 1–5 in which I will identify the allusions to the exodus narrative and then analyze

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[19] Some of these include Judaizers, Gnosticism/proto-Gnosticism, Hellenistic Judaism, over-realized eschatology (spiritualized eschatology), libertines/aesthetic, and other Greco-Roman cultural and philosophical influences. E.g., Meeks, *First Urban Christians*; Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1993); Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology"; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*; Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995).

how Paul uses them in his argumentation. In doing so, I will outline a typology of the ways in which he employs these allusions to influence the ethical life of the Corinthian church. We will see that even from the beginning of his argument in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul draws analogies between the exodus and the Corinthians' situation to remind them of their covenant identity as God's people and the accompanying responsibilities. Once these two foundations are established, Paul uses the consequences of covenantal violations as motivation to stimulate the Corinthians to respond appropriately in their present circumstance.

Chapters 6 and 7 follow a similar pattern to the previous two. I will begin each chapter by offering a preliminary exegetical study of the remaining sections of 1 Corinthians 5 (vv. 6–8 and 9–13), followed by an investigation of the allusions, and then look at how Paul uses them to encourage the proper ethical deliberation in his Corinthian audience. Paul's argument in verses 6–8 focuses on allusions to the Passover to urge the church to reflect upon its own situation to determine whether or not it is playing a good role in the grand narrative of God's covenant people. Part of his motivation in these verses relies on reminding the Corinthians of their role in the *overarching story* and then showing them that those who desire to play a good role in it must maintain the church's purity since doing so is the only way that a covenant community can have a proper relationship with God. In chapter 7, I will explore Paul's purpose in outlining these specific roles for the Corinthian church. It will become clear that by expanding his vice list to include more than just the sexually immoral that he is defining specific social boundaries to help the Corinthians understand how to

properly navigate the theological narrative.

5. Assumptions and Limitations

My analysis of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5 is based on the wide

scholarly agreement that, for the Apostle, a crucial aspect of a proper ethics is a

proper mindset. For Paul, action (ethics) is never separate from thought

(theology).[20] A survey of his letters reveals that the basis for a godly mindset is

the transformation of one's mind by Christ and/or the gospel. Perhaps just as

important, Christians must not let their minds be conformed to the world's way of

thinking.[21] Thus, in order to live a life that is consistent with the will of God, Paul

believes that people must have their minds shaped to a particular pattern of

thought. In 1 Corinthians 5, he relies to a considerable extent on Israel's

wandering experiences recorded in the exodus narratives to demonstrate this

pattern.

As with any study such as this, some limitations must be set in place before

proceeding. First, I am not claiming that patterns from the exodus narrative in

Paul's argumentation are the only significant dimension in his ethical framework.

I am not denying his reliance elsewhere on other ideas such as the role of the Holy

Spirit, being a new creation, and being in Christ.

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[20] There are several scholars who have demonstrated that Paul's ethics and theology are not independent of one another; for example, Victor P. Furnish, *The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996). Raymond Pickett (*The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997], 87–88) argues that "Ethics is never just a matter of what people do, but a question of the interplay between their identity, attitudes and beliefs, and behaviour. . . . Paul's ethical discourse operates on a cognitive level."

[21] E.g., Rom 12:1–2; Phil 2:1–13 (esp. v. 5).

Second, Paul's use of the exodus narrative to encourage ethical deliberation is not necessarily meant to be an explanation of the overall pattern of his argumentation in 1 Corinthians. Although I believe that Paul, in fact, uses the exodus narrative in other places in the letter to frame his arguments, I will leave that for possible future research. As I work my way through chapter 5, though, I will point out where Paul employs these same patterns elsewhere in 1 Corinthians when it is important to my argument.

Third, I will be looking at the logical patterns of Paul's rhetorical argument.[22] In doing so, this thesis will address Paul's own argumentative strategies instead of analyzing ancient theories of rhetoric; it will not be an analysis of how closely Paul conforms to the classical rhetorical categories of Greco-Roman orators.[23] Therefore, I will be using the term *argumentation* as opposed to *rhetoric*, focusing on the strategies Paul himself uses to lead his audience through a process of moral deliberation.

Finally, this thesis will not examine contemporary ethical issues. I am simply looking at Paul's argumentation to the Corinthian church and will leave the reader with the responsibility of interpreting the thesis' implications for contemporary issues. With these limitations in mind, we look now at an examination of the situation in Corinth.

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[22] Stamps ("The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," 26) defines rhetoric as "the ways and means employed in a text to persuade and the effect(s) of those ways and means."

[23] For a discussion on this subject, see R. Dean Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1999); see also Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 20–64; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 39–48.

Chapter 2

THE SITUATION IN CORINTH

Corinth in the first century C.E. was an economically successful and cosmopolitan center that could be compared to cities like New York or London in the modern world. The city's economic prosperity, cultural diversity, and large population helped it to become one of the leading cities in the entire Mediterranean region.[24] 1 Corinthians offers a remarkable picture of Christians struggling to live out their lives in that particularly thriving milieu. Scholars have, as a result, devoted much attention to reconstructing the Corinthian situation to make sense of these difficulties. Their models have uncovered a number of theological, sociological, political, and economical factors that played substantial roles in both the formation and the continued life of those in the Christian community. This chapter will examine the historical situation in Corinth to offer greater insight into the typical mindset Paul encountered when he wrote 1 Corinthians. Once this historical context is established, it will allow us to properly understand how Paul's use of the exodus narrative would have been able to influence change in the church's ethical framework.

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[24] Donald W. Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8. Joseph A. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008], 21) claims that along with Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, Corinth was one of the most important cities in the Mediterranean.

1. The City of Corinth

1.1. Historical Background

In Paul's lifetime, Corinth was more like any other colony in the Roman Empire

than it was a traditional Greek city, and for this reason, it is important to

distinguish first century Corinth from its classical and Hellenistic periods. Corinth

itself was situated on the southern side of the narrow isthmus that connected the

Peloponnesian peninsula to Greece's mainland to the north. It benefitted from this

geographical location throughout its history,[25] resulting in its being a leading

trading centre in both the classical (479–323 B.C.E.) and Hellenistic (323–37

B.C.E.) periods. In this latter period, it became notorious for its political struggles

with Athens and Sparta and for its eventual fall to Macedonian rule.[26]

It was during Macedonian control that Corinth first established ties with

Rome (228 B.C.E.) which had increased its involvement in the Peloponnesus after

intervening during the Second Macedonian War (200–197 B.C.E.). The Romans

expanded their presence by taking control of and reorganizing the boundaries and

governments in the Greek city-states.[27] The Achaean League was then formed to

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[25] Most scholars date the founding of Corinth in the 8th century B.C.E. There is evidence that suggests its surrounding areas were inhabited earlier, but these settlements were of no administrative significance (Christopher Mee and Antony Spawforth, *Greece: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 149–50). Even with this evidence, some historians contend that any details before the 8th century B.C.E. are unreliable because they are often based on legend and myth (John V. A. Fine, *The Ancient Greeks: A Critical History* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983], 1). For example, the ancient writer Pausanias includes mythological information in his historical accounts (*Graeciae description* 2.1.1, 3–4).

[26] For a brief survey of the history of Ancient Corinth, see Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 21–25.

[27] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 24. For a look at the historical relationship between Corinth and Rome, see James Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I: 228 B.C.–A.D. 267," *ANWR* 2.7.1 (1979): 438–548.

counter Roman interference in the region, and Corinth became its chief city.

Despite the Roman general Flamininus' declaration that Corinth was a free city in

196 B.C.E., disputes continued between it and Rome because of differences over

the Greek and Roman definition of *libertas*. Freedom to the Greeks meant

political autonomy, while to the Romans it meant that Corinth owed Rome moral

and legal obligations much the same way a client was obligated to his or her

patron.[28] As a result, relations between Rome and Corinth worsened until 147

B.C.E. when Rome sent a delegation to Corinth insisting that the Achaean League

be dissolved.[29] When Corinth failed to submit to Rome, the Achaean war ensued,

and the League was eventually defeated.[30] In 146 B.C.E. the Romans destroyed the

city under the leadership of general Lucius Mummius, which signified the end of

Greek Corinth as a political entity, as it became an "almost-deserted ghost

town."[31] Many ancient writers discuss the clash that occurred in 146 B.C.E.,

revealing that the Romans sacked and burned the city, and in the process killed all

the male population and sold the women and children into slavery.[32]

Corinth remained mostly desolate for over one-hundred years after its

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[28] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 14.

[29] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 24.

[30] For details of this dispute, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (3d ed.; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2002), 63; cf. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 14–16.

[31] G. D. R. Sanders, "Urban Corinth: An Introduction," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 22. This pattern followed Rome's customary dismantling of the defeated enemies' cities (Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 8).

[32] Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 3:53–54; Strabo, *Geographica* 8.6.23; Polystratus, *Anthologia Graeca* 7.297; cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 41–43.

destruction, when in 44 B.C.E. Julius Caesar rebuilt it as a Roman colony with the

official name *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis.*[33] Caesar, recognizing the

commercial success that Corinth had experienced throughout its history, believed

he could revive it once again to be a thriving economic centre. This confidence

stemmed partly from the fact that it served as natural intersection for trade.[34]

Corinth's geographical location allowed it to control the trade routes in the area,

including two important ports, Lechaeum and Cenchreae.[35] Both ports made it

easy for merchants to establish a quick shipping route connecting Asia and Italy.

The other less-desirable option was a six-day journey around the southern part of

the Peloponnesian peninsula, which could also prove to be very dangerous.[36]

By the time Paul arrived in Corinth, much of Corinthian life was

understandably centred on trade. As a result, the city developed into a vital

economic hub that brought a great deal of wealth to many of its residents. There

were other industries that helped Corinth prosper as well, such as its

manufacturing, agriculture, and service economies.[37] Its manufacturing industry,

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[33] "Colony of Corinth in Honour of Julius."

[34] Strabo (*Geographica* 8.6.20) described it as a "master of two harbours," claiming its strategic location was that which made it a flourishing city.

[35] Lechaeum was two miles northwest and faced the Gulf of Corinth, leading into the Ionian Sea, and Cenchreae was just six miles southeast and overlooked the Saronic Gulf, feeding into the Aegean Sea.

[36] Strabo, *Geographica* 8.6.20. Acts 27 reveals that Paul himself experienced the dangerous nature of this route when the ship he was on shipwrecked (cf. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 51). In order to avoid this voyage, merchants shipped their cargo through Corinth where they were able to unload it in one harbour, carry it across the isthmus, and then reload it on to another ship. The smaller ships were hauled across the isthmus (see John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* [Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999], 213).

[37] For a helpful discussion on these industries in Roman Corinth, see Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 22–65.

for example, made it less dependent on the import process for goods. This was important in its economic growth since it kept money in the local economy, which created jobs, which then created a demand for more local goods.[38] Tourism also helped Corinth experience economic success. One of its major attractions was the Isthmian Games which drew athletes and audiences from all over the Mediterranean. These games were held every other year and ranked second only to the Olympics in their importance.[39]

1.2. Social Ethos of Corinth

As Corinth rose in prominence once again, it developed as a Roman city with characteristics that were very different from its Greek tradition. Caesar rebuilt the city as a Roman colony where much of it was intentionally set up in accordance with other colonies in the Empire.[40] For this reason, the new Corinth was not simply a Greek city masking itself as a Roman one, but a city in which *Romanitas* described its values and culture.[41] Many aspects reflected this change, including its population. Pausanias describes the situation upon the city's resettlement: "Corinth is no longer inhabited by any of the old Corinthians, but by colonists

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[38] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 39.

[39] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 25. For a thorough description of these games, see Oscar Broneer, "The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games," *BA* 25 (1962): 2–31.

[40] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 11. Even Corinth's new name—*Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis*—reflects Caesar's deliberate attempt to Romanize the new colony (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 10). Engels (*Roman Corinth*, 69) expands on this point: "[The new Roman citizens] avoided the more common –*ius* or –*us* ethnic, which implies that the Italian colonists wished to distinguish themselves from the original Greek inhabitants."

[41] Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 11) explains that the term *Romanitas* was first used in the third century C.E. by ancient historians to describe Roman values and culture.

sent out by the Romans."[42] Although there is evidence that suggests there were

people, including Greeks, who continued to dwell in the Corinthian ruins between

146 B.C.E. and 44 B.C.E.,[43] Pausanias' words are understandable since the

resettlement of Corinth provided it with a very different character than that of the

old Greek city. Caesar depended on multiple sources to repopulate Corinth, such

as Roman military veterans, commoners, and former slaves.[44] There were several

advantages for using these groups to populate Corinth. Some claim Caesar wanted

to give land to his military veterans to reward them for their many years of

service.[45] The evidence, however, suggests it is more likely that most of the

colonists were from the freedman class,[46] as well as those who were common

urban traders and labourers.[47] Caesar knew that choosing a site like Corinth would

give these people an excellent opportunity to succeed financially, while at the

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[42] Pausanias, *Graeciae description* 2.1.2 (Jones, LCL).

[43] Similar to Pausanias, Strabo (*Geographica* 8.6.23) appears to exaggerate the extent of the destruction, claiming that Corinth remained uninhabited between 146–44 B.C.E. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 255) argues that Corinth's destruction was likely not as complete as many have usually supposed. There is evidence that suggests the South Stoa was left intact, and the temple of Apollo remained where some priests continued to serve. See also Murphy-O'Connor (*St. Paul's Corinth*, 43) who references Cicero's visit to Corinth in 79–77 B.C.E. (see *Tusculanae disputationes* 3:53): "[Cicero] is the sole eyewitness to the fact that the ruins were not completely deserted. Civic life would naturally have broken down completely, but it would be abnormal if those who had fled the city . . . had not returned when the opportunity offered."

[44] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 16; cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 3.

[45] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 6–7. Robert M. Grant (*Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 15–16) has questioned this claim, revealing that from Augustus to Nero's reign, there is very little coinage and epigraphic evidence to suggest that there were many veterans among the duumvirs in Corinth; cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 64.

[46] Strabo (*Geographica* 8.6.23) claims the majority were ex-slaves.

[47] Grant, *Paul and the Roman World*, 16.

same time gaining their loyalty and devotion.[48]

Archaeological discoveries also reveal that Corinth underwent a Roman transformation upon its resettlement. One of the most visible indications of this was that Latin became the official language in Corinth. John H. Kent's findings demonstrate this transformation by the number of texts that were found written in Latin during the Hadrian reign (117–138 C.E.); only three of one-hundred-and-four were Greek, while the remainder were in Latin.[49] Latin coins and pottery found from the middle of the first century C.E. also indicate a change in Corinth's ethnic identity.[50] Tombstones that were written largely with Latin inscriptions[51]

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[48] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 16–17. Caesar also knew that if he removed some of the "politically disaffected and volatile groups from Rome," he would gain the support of many Italian landowners who would not have their land taken from them. Many of these landowners were disgruntled because of a shortage of land in Rome (Grant, *Paul and the Roman World*, 15). The ancient writer Appian (*Historia romana* 8.136) claims Caesar sent away three thousand of them to Carthage and Corinth who were in need of employment and were likely to cause trouble if left in Rome.

[49] John H. Kent, *Corinth: Results of Excavations Conducted by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, vol. 8.3: The Inscriptions 1926–1950* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), 19; cited in Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, "Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth," in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (eds. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 7. Later excavations have found six Greek Corinthian texts before Hadrian's reign, four of them deal with the Isthmian games, and another with an Isthmian synod. This gives evidence that even the few Greek inscriptions were written specifically in connection with the Isthmian games and not the city of Corinth ("Paul's Church at Corinth," 7). It should be noted, however, that several Greek elements persisted in Roman Corinth (see below). For example, Greek was the *lingua franca*; even Paul wrote to the Corinthians in Greek. On this note, Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 25) explains that given the choice of writing in either Latin or Greek, Paul likely would not have selected the language of the elite, given the way in which the church appeared to have deferred to those few with social rank and status.

[50] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 30. See also John W. Hays' ("Roman Pottery from the South of Stoa at Corinth," *Hesperia* 42 [1972]: 470) findings which demonstrate that during the early years of the Roman Empire, there was an enormous amount of Italian pottery shipped to Corinth rather than Eastern earthenware. According to Hays, this reveals that Roman pottery was the main influence on Corinth's local producers in the first century C.E., compared to the situation in nearby Athens where Italian pieces are far less noticeable.

[51] Engels (*Roman Corinth*, 71) reveals that twenty-six of the forty tombstones that have been discovered, dating from 44 B.C.E. to the third century C.E., were inscribed with Latin names, or at least with Greek cognomens.

and literary works also give some indication that there was a substantial Roman influence in Corinth's population.[52] In addition, Corinth's architecture changed significantly as it was rebuilt with a Roman modernization rather than a "classical Greek authenticity."[53] Some of the existing buildings were used in the new design, but all new buildings were constructed according to Roman architecture.[54] The city's streets were built over the former Greek city according to Roman town planning; they were set up in a grid of parallel streets called centuriation.[55] Even the ancient temples were rebuilt or altered according to Roman conventions. Furthermore, the temples dedicated to the imperial cult were constructed higher than all others to have them look down on the forum, thus giving Corinthian citizens a powerful reminder of Corinth's submission to Rome.[56]

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[52] For example, 1 Corinthians reveals a substantial Latin influence in the Corinthian church. Of the seventeen names associated with the Corinthian correspondence, eight are Latin names: Aquila, Fortunatus, Gaius, Lucius, Prisca, Quartus, Titus Justus, and Tertius. Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 14–15) says that "While the fact that some Christians possessed Latin names does not *ipso facto* indicate Roman citizenship in every case, their presence at the very least provides important evidence of the influence of *Romanitas*." See Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 15–19) for a more thorough analysis of the literary evidence in 1 Corinthians.

[53] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 8.

[54] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 62. Even the new forum was distinctly Roman and was built higher than the older Greek agora (Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 25). Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 8) claims, "The amphitheatre was the only one of its kind in Roman Greece, and all of its three basilicas replicated the Roman West, something seldom found in Greece."

[55] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 8. For a detailed examination of Roman design, planning, and development of Corinth, see David G. Romano, "Urban and Rural Planning in Roman Corinth," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 27–59. Romano considers the work of Roman surveyors (*agrimensores*) as "one of the most enduring physical manifestations of Roman influence on the former Greek city and its landscape" ("Urban and Rural Planning," 59).

[56] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 8–9. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 25) notes that "The south stoa of the old city was reused, as was the archaic temple (of Apollo?), but they were rebuilt in italic architectural style. Temple E, . . . dedicated to the imperial cult, at the west end of the forum, was built totally in Roman design and dominated the forum"; cf. Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 16.13.9.

It should be noted that even though Corinth was a Roman colony during

Paul's lifetime, remnants of the ancient Greek city endured. The Isthmian games

and the Greek language persisted, for example, and Roman Corinth still retained

many of its traditional gods and goddesses.[57] For this reason, some scholars claim

there has been an overestimation in Corinthian studies related to the extent that

Roman influence had on first century Corinth, claiming that its Hellenistic roots

are too often ignored.[58] Although their concerns should be noted, scholars who

highlight the Roman character of Corinth are not excluding Hellenistic influences,

or any other ones for that matter.[59] In reality, aside from Greek and Roman

traditions, there were also many other influences that shaped Corinthian culture

and values in the first century.[60] Even with the diversity that existed, scholars are

drawing attention to the fact that the *dominant* cultural influence in Corinth was

Roman.[61] *Romanitas*, therefore, describes the values that impacted Corinthian

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[57] See Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 5–6.

[58] For example, Robert S. Dutch, *The Educated Elite in 1 Corinthians: Education and Community Conflict in Graeco-Roman Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 50. Dutch focuses his criticism mostly on Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*), whom he believes not only over-emphasizes the Roman influence, but also sometimes misinterprets certain available evidence (*The Educated Elite*, 48–51).

[59] See Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 22) who points this out. A. Duane Litfin (*St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: An Investigation of 1 Cor. 1–4 in Light of Greco-Roman Rhetoric* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 142) describes Corinth as such: "More Greek than Rome, more Roman than Athens, if any city of the first century deserved the hyphenated designation 'Greco-Roman' it was Corinth."

[60] Marion L. Soards (*1 Corinthians* [NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999], 5) explains that "People of diverse backgrounds brought to the life of the city a rich mixture of cultures, religions, languages, entertainment, foods, and other amenities (truly a cosmopolitan atmosphere). Corinth was vigorous and vivacious; the atmosphere was both pluralistic and syncretistic, with distinctive cultures and worldviews existing independently and mixing together to form novel, often unexamined and illogical combinations."

[61] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 22.

residents most during the Apostle's life, not forgetting that the city was as pluralistic and syncretistic as other urban centers in the Roman Empire since it attracted many immigrants from elsewhere in Greece and other parts of the Mediterranean.[62]

One result of a being a pluralistic society was that Corinth had a mosaic of cults in which most people saw no contradiction in accommodating several gods and goddesses into their lives at the same time.[63] There were many who assumed the more deities they worshipped the more they would be protected.[64] Many of the traditional Greek deities such as Poseidon and Aphrodite continued to be popular with many average Corinthians. This is understandable since both of these deities were associated with the sea, for which the Corinthian economy depended upon so heavily.[65] Some of the Greek deities (Poseidon, Zeus, and Aphrodite) were Romanized by giving them new Latin names (Neptune, Jupiter, and Venus).[66] Aside from the numerous cults that existed in Roman Corinth, the imperial cult played a substantial role as well in Corinthian life, where sacrifices and worship

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[62] Craig S. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7. Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 7) explains, though, that these people would not have had the same rights as the Romans: "There were some Greeks who had remained in and around Corinth, . . . but once the colony was established they became resident aliens—*incolae*—and it was the colonists and their descendants who were counted as citizens (*cives*)." Cf. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 17.

[63] Engels, *Roman Corinth*, 44.

[64] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 9: "The temple of Demeter in Pergamum, for example, also had altars to the gods of Hermes, Helios, Zeus, Asclepius, and Heracles" (cf. Acts 17:18–21).

[65] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 6. The Isthmian games were held in honour of Poseidon, and Corinth was known as "the city of Aphrodite."

[66] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 33.

were made in honour of the imperial family. Archaeological discoveries from the first-century C.E. reveal that artifacts, such as portraits and decorated altars, were created to honour these figures.[67] The imperial temple also became the religious focal point of the Corinthian forum as it was constructed to tower over all others. It served as "an ever present symbol of the dominant imperial presence" to the Corinthians.[68]

1.3. Sexual Ethics in Corinth

Another subject relating to Corinth's social ethos that needs to be addressed is its sexual ethics, especially since the present thesis investigates a case of sexual immorality (1 Cor 5), and because of today's popular view that Corinth's sexual ethics were more lax than other cities in the ancient world. While it is true that Corinth had a certain proclivity for sexual sin, the level has been overplayed by some older commentaries.[69] This misconception stems partially from the idea that Roman Corinth's sexual ethics were identical to the older Greek Corinth, which had a reputation for being sexually promiscuous. Much of this perspective can be attributed to Strabo's claim that the temple of Aphrodite housed a thousand sacred

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[67] Nancy Bookidis, "Religion in Corinth: 146 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 156; cf. Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 149–151.

[68] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 4. For a helpful introduction to the Roman imperial cult and to Paul's response to it, see Richard A. Horsley, "The Gospel of Imperial Salvation: Introduction," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 10–24.

[69] E.g., William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1956), 3; W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," in *Romans through Galatians* (vol. 10 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*; ed. Frank E. Gaebelein; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1976), 176.

prostitutes.[70] Strabo's description has come under scrutiny recently for its inaccuracies and exaggerations, not to mention that his comment refers to the situation long before Paul's Corinth (pre-146 B.C.E.).[71] Furthermore, Plato's reference to "a Corinthian maid" as a prostitute,[72] and Aristophanes' use of the term κορινθιάζεσθαι to mean "to practice sexual immorality,"[73] also helped fuel this false impression of Roman Corinth. These writers' descriptions were written in the fourth century B.C.E., not during the time of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians. The evidence suggests there is no reason to assume that Corinth's sexual ethics were any worse than any other port-city in the Mediterranean.[74]

Having said that, the fact that Paul chose to address this issue in his letter reveals that liberal sexual mores were common enough that they affected the church's ethics negatively. Even pagan moralists thought it necessary to address the perils of sexual indulgences such as prostitution and adultery.[75] We should not

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[70] Strabo, *Geographica* 8.6.1.20.

[71] Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 56; cf. Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 7. See also Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 13–14) for his discussion and a list of relevant sources on this matter.

[72] Plato, *Respublica* 404d.

[73] Aristophanes, *Fragments* 354; cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 57.

[74] Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 57. Gordon D. Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987], 2–3) also claims that Corinth's sexual ethic was no worse than any other city of its time: "Sexual sin there undoubtedly was in abundance; but it would have been of the same kind that one would expect in any seaport where money flowed freely and women and men were available"; cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 3.

[75] Plutarch, *Moralia* 768; Seneca, *De beneficiis* 3.16.3. See Alan Booth, "The Age of Reclining and Its Attendant Perils," in *Dining in a Classical Context* (ed. William J. Slater; Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan, 1991), 105–06. Pheme Perkins (*First Corinthians* [Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2012], 12–16) reveals that the trafficking of both male and female prostitutes was a common practice in Corinth's commercial slave trade.

forget, though, that their ideas on morality were not always the same as their Christian counterparts. For instance, adultery in the Roman world often was not about whether a person had sexual intercourse with someone other than his or her spouse, but whether that person had the same rank or status.[76] When a person of high status had sexual relations with his or her slaves, it was not considered adulterous because slaves were considered "benign sexual outlets" for their masters' pleasure.[77] This double standard for the elite is the reason several commentators argue that the maxims such as πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν (1 Cor 6:12; cf. 10:23) were not used by common Corinthian citizens. Instead, they were sayings that only those in society with power and influence embraced because they considered themselves to be free from any moral restraints.[78] Thus, in the context of 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul is understood by some not to be arguing against those in the church who are having sex with temple prostitutes or frequenting brothels, but instead those who are indulging in sexual acts with prostitutes who are part of dinner and banquet occasions.[79] In the Roman world, feasting and sexuality were commonly linked together as part of the accepted social life for powerful members of society. These dinner occasions would often be a time of

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[76] Neil Elliot and Mark Reasoner, eds., *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 252.

[77] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 21.

[78] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 82–89; see also Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1987), 215.

[79] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 76–92. Paul, however, does not identify the type of prostitutes, and therefore, he probably has all forms of prostitution in mind (cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 241).

eating and drinking, followed by hosts providing their guests with prostitutes for "after-dinner entertainment."[80]

This brief look at the sexual ethics in Roman Corinth is meant to provide a few examples that demonstrate that, although the city was no more licentious than others in the ancient world, it fell short of Christian ethics (e.g., 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21). It also reveals that the elite members of society often lived by a very different ethic than the common Corinthian citizen when it came to areas such as sexuality. This point will become increasingly important as we work our way through this thesis. I will argue in chapter 3–4 that it is probable that the man who is committing incest belongs to the elite stratum of society, and it is for this reason that the Corinthians in the church are likely tolerating his behaviour or perhaps feel powerless to stop him. Social conventions in Roman Corinth were a significant factor in determining the ethical praxis of everyday lives in Corinth, the subject to which we turn next.

1.4. Social Relations in Corinth

Roman Corinth's social conventions were also very similar to any other colony in the Empire. One of the defining elements of the Romans was that they viewed social relations in terms of a network in which the rich and powerful would receive the most honour and esteem in society.[81] Corinth's societal structure, as a

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[80] Plutarch, *Moralia* 705; cf. Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 249; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 83–85.

[81] Engels (*Roman Corinth*, 87) explains that "The Romans did not see themselves as independent individuals, as the Greeks did, but as part of a nexus of social relationship," often giving honour and esteem to society's wealthy and influential citizens.

result, was a system that can be visualized as a large pyramid in which a small

ruling elite who possessed significant wealth and high statuses had most of the

power.[82] Consequently, its inequality was evidenced in a society that emphasized

status, power, and social distinction.[83] This resulted in an established prejudice

that pervaded Corinthian culture in which a sense of hierarchy ruled people's

behaviours.[84] Social occasions, such as dinners and banquets, were all places

where distinctions were made very clear.[85] For example, dinner hosts would often

serve the honoured guests the better quality food, while at the same time

humiliating other guests of lower status by offering them the "scraps."[86] It was

during these settings that Corinth's established social hierarchy could be seen

most visibly and where class distinction could be maintained.

Personal patronage was a social convention that was a powerful factor in

shaping Corinth's social hierarchy.[87] Patronage can be described as an

interpersonal exchange relationship, "expressed in terms of reciprocity and

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[82] David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1996), 65.

[83] These were basically divided in terms of two different types of groupings— freeborn/slave and citizen/alien (Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 26): "Depending on which particular categorisation was being used, a person may find himself sometimes in the upper and sometimes in the lower division."

[84] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 26. It was often considered a *faux pas* for a man of reputable status to associate with a person with a low status.

[85] Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 72.

[86] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 68.

[87] Chow (*Patronage and Power*, 41) argues that patronage was so endemic to Roman society that the patron-client relationship operated at several different levels other than just in household relations. Even the emperor could be considered a type of patron for the entire Empire.

loyalty," in which patron and client obligate themselves to each other.[88] Patrons provided clients with tangible items such as food, lodging, economic aid, as well as employment; they would even assume legal protection on their behalf. In return, clients paid their patrons back in intangible items, in terms of loyalty and honour, and even publicized their patrons' name in the community.[89] This was crucial for patrons themselves who wanted to pursue a life of high status, fame, and power, all of which were highly valued in Corinth. It is for the reason that it is somewhat misleading to say that it was only clients who found themselves dependent on their benefactors. In reality, it was an interdependent relationship that served both parties well in their pursuit of varying interests. That is not to say that patrons did not hold most of the power in the relationship, but just as a client received support from his or her patron, patrons were also dependent on a network of clients that would provide them with influence in the public sphere.[90]

Two more important aspects of patronage in first century Corinth should be mentioned. First, the patron-client relationship did not only include those who were in the highest economic echelons of Corinthian society. Rather, one could be a patron if he or she had more influence (i.e., a higher social status) than others

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[88] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 169. Richard P. Saller (*Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 1) gives a similar description: "By patron I mean a person who uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who becomes his 'client,' and in return provides certain services to his patron." It should also be noted that when speaking of patron-client relationships, it does not describe relations in the marketplace where there is a commercial transaction. For a study of the keywords and definitions of patronage in the ancient world, see Saller, *Personal Patronage*, 8–22.

[89] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 31, 102, 169. It was not only patrons who looked for political support from their clients. Clients who desired their own political advancement often attached themselves to a reputable patron (Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 35).

[90] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 33.

further down the social scale. The only requirement necessary to be a patron was that a person had more of something than someone else, and that they had the ability to monopolize these resources so that others would be dependent on them.[91] Second, there was also a deep sense of obligation between patron and client in which the interests of patrons were often to be protected above all else. If clients failed to support their patrons, it would be considered an injustice and would generate hostility between the two parties.[92] This "highly developed protocol" contributed to Corinth's social hierarchy because it reinforced social distinction.[93] The inherent power in giving gifts enabled the wealthy and well-born to exploit those within their social reach. Since a high number of people depended on patrons for their immediate needs, patrons were able to enhance their own statuses and public recognition.[94] As a result, patronage created a hierarchy that accentuated the social inequality that was found so often in Roman Corinth.

The consequence of Corinth's emphasis on *status* was that its citizens were classified into various social strata. A person's social status was determined by

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[91] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 168–69.

[92] Seneca, *De beneficiis* 1.13, 4–8, 13; cf. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 32; Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 33. In *The Laws of Obligation*, for example, former slaves were required to fulfill all responsibilities stipulated by their patrons, or else they would incur severe punitive measures. One such consequence was the freedman's re-enslavement for the offence of *libertus ingratus*, or "ingratitude toward their patrons for failing to meet his annual obligations to his former master" (Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 130).

[93] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 32.

[94] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 166. Patrons would receive a great deal of honour from the wider community who depended on them for these gifts; which consequently brought power and status to the patron. Thus, the act of giving benefactions was in itself something that gave patrons a significant amount of honour (*Secular and Christian Leadership*, 34); cf. Edwin A. Judge, "Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History," *JRH* 11 (1980): 211.

the value that others placed on his or her resources and accomplishments.[95] This

was also a "multidimensional phenomenon" in which individuals or groups

measured their rank along several dimensions, and not necessarily in only one

area. These elements included things such as power, occupational prestige,

income or wealth, education and knowledge, religious purity, family and ethnic

position, and local-community status.[96] The various social aspects did not carry

the same weight depending on the circle to which one belonged. Instead,

Corinthians measured themselves according to their own "reference group" rather

than necessarily by the standards of the entire society. It was possible to have a

high status in one group but a low one in another, thus contributing to the

complex social hierarchy that existed in Corinth. This status dissonance could

lead to restlessness for people to achieve honour and a high status in whatever

dimension they could obtain it.[97] Since Corinth was such a transient city, the

possibility arose for people to rapidly increase their socioeconomic status through

"entrepreneurial pragmatism in the pursuit of success."[98] As a result, many

Corinthians became preoccupied with moving up the social ladder as they

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[95] John M. G. Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity," *JSNT* 47 (1992): 56.

[96] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 54. J. Brian Tucker ("The Role of Civic Identity on the Pauline Mission in Corinth," *Did* 19 [2008]: 76) argues that wealth serves as the most effective indicator of status in Corinth.

[97] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 5. The result was that "status inconsistency produce[d] unpleasant experiences that [led] people to try to remove the inconsistency by changing the society, themselves, or perceptions of themselves" (Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 55; cf. 191).

[98] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 4. Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 32) notes that "Many of the settlers, along with some slaves, would have become the artisans and craftsmen in the city, who would have profited eventually from the traffic and wealth of the metropolis."

jockeyed for socioeconomic positions.[99]

Consequently, the display of one's social status was so important to many Corinthians that they went to great lengths to parade it in pretentious ways. This was most exemplified in the inscriptions that certain Corinthians put up about themselves for such things as their contribution to building projects. A patron named Erastus, for example, had an inscription made to announce that he had laid the pavement in a theater courtyard at his own expense.[100] These inscriptions were often accompanied by statues and were put up in the most visible and prominent parts of Corinth to maximize the effect of bestowing honour on the subject.[101] Plutarch criticized the overt practice of honouring oneself:

> So of all kinds of love that which is engendered in states and peoples for an individual because of his virtue is at once the strongest and the most divine; but those falsely named and falsely attested honour which are derived from giving theatrical performances, making distributions of money, or offering gladiatorial shows, are like harlots' flatteries, since the masses always smile upon him who gives to them and does them favours, granting him an ephemeral and uncertain reputation.[102]

The elite of which Plutarch spoke would maintain these "flatteries" by

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[99] Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 5) writes that this took the form of "schmoozing, massaging a superior's ego, rubbing shoulders with the powerful, pulling strings, scratching each other's back, and dragging rivals' names through the mud—all described what was required to attain success in this society."

[100] Raymond F. Collins (*First Corinthians* [SP; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1999], 23) agrees with the majority of scholars who consider this Erastus to be the same city treasurer Paul identifies in Romans 16:23. This claim has been challenged by Justin J. Meggitt ("The Social Status of Erastus [Rom 16:23]," *NovT* 38 [1996], 218–23]); cf. Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 79–83.

[101] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 25n. Another example of an inscription used to promote oneself was found in an ancient agora that declared, "Gnaeus Babbius Philinus, aedile and pontifex, had this monument erected at his own expense, and he approved it in his official capacity of duovir" (cited in Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 8).

[102] Plutarch, *Moralia* 821 (Fowler, LCL).

surrounding themselves with a large clientele who came to their houses at the

beginning of the day to be handed the "daily dole of money."[103] This continuous

self-promotion would allow people to maintain a good reputation since others

would be forced to "smile upon" them out of necessity to acquire their daily

needs. Dio Chrysostom also testifies to the importance patrons placed on

handouts, regardless of the cost, or whether or not they received anything tangible

in return: "Most beautiful are the rewards which it has established for their

benefactions . . . things for those who supply them entail no expense, but which

for those who win them have come to be worth everything."[104] Having a network

of clients was invaluable for patrons who wanted to move up the social levels and

to obtain more power and influence in society.

2. The Church in Corinth

The above survey reveals some of the typical behaviours, values, and attitudes

that were common in first century Corinth. Although it is impossible to

reconstruct the Corinthian church with perfect precision, it is certain that

Christians, individually and collectively, were influenced by their culture even if

they only assimilated these values and conventions subliminally.[105] There is still

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[103] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 31. Clarke contends that some at least wanted to give the impression that they held a high status in society: "One of the strongest pressures upon the man who wanted to increase the esteem in which he was held, was to enter the competitive round of ostentatious expenditure in benefactions for friends and the city. Some people would get into serious debt through having tried to maintain appearances of generosity" (*Secular and Christian Leadership*, 31).

[104] Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 75.7; cf. 66.2 (Crosby, LCL).

[105] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 5. Today's scholarly consensus is that Christian communities reflected the greater society in which they existed; cf. Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of*

much that can be discovered about the church's social composition that will inform our analysis of Paul's argumentation to this particular audience.

Acts 18 reveals that Paul arrived in Corinth from Athens during his second missionary journey (18:1) and stayed with two fellow Jews, Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he shared the trade of tentmaking.[106] The Apostle began his ministry in the synagogue where he reasoned with the Jews on the Sabbath (Acts 18:4–6), and he describes himself as the one who "laid the foundation" for the church in Corinth (1 Cor 3:10) over the eighteen months he spent in the city testifying about the crucified Christ (Acts 18:5). We can also assume that after Paul departed Corinth, the church continued to grow as members of the Christian community came to the faith through the preaching of those such as Apollos (1 Cor 1:12; 3:4–22). Paul writes to the church in response to both oral reports (1 Cor 1:11) and letters from the Corinthians themselves (cf. 1 Cor 7:1; 8:1; 11:18; 12:1; 15:12).[107]

The exact number of Christians in the Corinthian church is difficult to estimate,[108] but we do know that the ethnic and religious composition consisted of both Jew and Gentiles. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 7:18–19 that some were already circumcised implies that there were in fact Jews in the congregation, or

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Early Christianity (Rockwell Lectures; Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 31; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 51–73.

[106] Paul made tents to support himself during his time in Corinth (Acts 18:2–3; cf. 1 Cor 9:12–18). There is some question, however, as to whether the word σκηνοποιοί should be translated "tentmaker," "leather-worker," or even "maker of stage properties" (cf. BDAG, 928–29).

[107] Most scholars estimate that the writing of 1 Corinthians was in the 50's C.E. (54 or 55). See Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 29–32) for a discussion on the dating of 1 Corinthians.

[108] Murphy-O'Connor (*St. Paul's Corinth*, 182) believes it had a "base figure" of about forty to fifty people.

else his argument would have had no significance to his audience.[109] The scholarly consensus, though, is that the Corinthian church consisted predominantly of Gentiles since Paul claims that many of them were former pagans who had been previously "led astray to idols incapable of speech" (1 Cor 12:2; cf. 8:7).[110] Nevertheless, we can assume that like many of those in Paul's churches, whether being Jews or Gentiles, the Corinthians were well acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures.[111] Therefore, we can assume that Paul's implied audience was able to recognize allusions to the Scriptures since these texts were the substructure of the Apostle's teaching. It is also likely that many of the Corinthians were converted to Christianity through the synagogue (cf. Acts 18:4), thereby being exposed to the Scriptures.[112]

The church's social composition was similar to Corinth's as it consisted of a spectrum of socioeconomic statuses.[113] Paul's own words in the letter offer several important clues to the church's internal stratification. He asks the Corinthians to consider their calling: "Not many of you were wise according to human standards, not many were powerful, and not many were of noble birth" (1 Cor 1:26). His remark that *many* were not wise, powerful, or of noble birth

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[109] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 10.

[110] All Scripture translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

[111] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 15–17; Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 90–91.

[112] Dunn (*The Theology of Paul*, 16) explains that many of the Gentile converts in the churches associated with Paul "came into Christianity via the synagogue, as proselytes or God-fearers. . . . The fact that the LXX was unknown to wider Greco-Roman circles confirms that such familiarity as Paul clearly assumes must have come in many cases at least from lengthy exposure to the scriptures in a synagogue context."

[113] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 73.

reveals that a significant number had a low status in society, some of whom were apparently slaves (1 Cor 7:21–23).[114] This is demonstrated later in Paul's discussion on the Lord's Supper in which he mentions that there are some in the church who are mistreating and humiliating those "who have nothing" (1 Cor 11:22). These examples, however, should not give us the impression that the church was solely a religious movement from the lower classes. Paul's reference to the *not many* in 1 Corinthians 1:26 also implies that there were some who had powerful positions in society.[115] One such person was Erastus, whom Paul mentions in Romans 16:23 had the official title οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως ("city treasurer"). Although the exact nature of this office is not certain,[116] it appears that Erastus was a person of high civic status.[117] Other wealthy members in the community included Chloe, who sent her household to Ephesus to give Paul word of the troubles in the community (1 Cor 1:11). Her ability to travel, as well as to have the means to send an envoy as she did, indicates that she had significant economic resources.[118] The letter also reveals that there were other Christians

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[114] Paul addresses a slave in his argumentation in 1 Corinthians 7:21–23, and for this reason, Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 64) believes that since Paul's discussion in this passage deals with marriage, divorce, and celibacy, it would be a strange that he would mention slaves if they were not part of his audience.

[115] Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 70–72. Theissen defines the term *wise* as "those who belong to the educated classes (that is, 'wise according to worldly standards')"; the *powerful* are those who have influence in Corinthian society; and those "of noble birth" are part of the ruling class (*The Social Setting*, 72).

[116] Theissen (*The Social Setting*, 75) notes this means that Erastus held an elected high city position, or he was someone of less importance, possibly even a slave, who was employed in the city's financial administration.

[117] For a look at this evidence, see Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 75–83; cf. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 58–59.

[118] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 57.

such as Gaius (1 Cor 1:14) who had the financial means to host Paul and the whole church in their own homes (Rom 16:23).

This evidence suggests that the church was a socially and economically eclectic community that reflected the city of Corinth. Many Christians experienced a high level of status inconsistency when they joined the church, perhaps even more, since they showed signs of high status in one or more dimensions but typically were accompanied by low rankings in others.[119] Some likely gained a status in the church that was, in some cases, out of sync with their status in other contexts. Therefore, it is understandable that some in the Christian community faced similar social situations as those in the rest of society. Self-promotion and social climbing, driven by individualism and competition, inevitably surfaced in the church, as some Christians used the community as another opportunity to compete for status.[120] This competition is illustrated from the outset of the letter where Paul speaks of the divisiveness in the church in which some Corinthians are aligning themselves with their favourite leaders (1 Cor 1:10–12; 3:4).[121] Thus, Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives evidence that

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[119] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 73. For example, Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 21) says, "The evidence is that Paul was well educated, and in that regard he would have been identified with and received by the well-to-do. His Roman citizenship would have worked in the same direction. But a number of other factors also mattered. Paul's standing in regard to all the variables that counted in social status—including also wealth, political influence, and family—made him a person with considerable status inconsistency."

[120] Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, 191–92) explains, "The churches, too, were mixtures of social statuses. The kinds of relationships that the member previously had to one another, and still had in other settings—between master and slave, rich and poor, freedman and patron, male and female, and the like—stood in tension with the *communitas* celebrated in the rituals of baptism and the Lord's supper. There was tension, too, between the familiar hierarchy of those roles and the freedom of the Spirit to confer distinction, by means of some charisma, upon a person of inferior status."

he believes many of the Corinthian Christians are still behaving according to some of society's harmful values (1 Cor 3:3).

Through our investigation of the historical situation in Corinth, we have discovered that it was much like any other Roman colony in Paul's lifetime. The city's social hierarchy was very much on display where those with higher statuses possessed significant power that allowed them to take advantage of the weaker members of society, thereby underscoring the social inequality that existed. Patronage was one such convention in which this was most visible. Although it was an interdependent relationship, those in the lower classes were subservient to their patrons since non-compliance could have been detrimental to their welfare.

We also looked at how the Corinthian church resembled its city in many ways. Because the community was a blend of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, the ethical framework of the church was often informed by some of the same values present in the greater society. For this reason, Paul often encourages the Corinthians to rethink their inherited cultural norms and practices which have produced misguided and sometimes faulty conceptions of wisdom, value, honour, and leadership. As we examine his argumentation in 1 Corinthians

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[121] In Corinthian culture, association with these prized leaders/teachers would increase one's own status in the community (cf. Tucker, "Civic Identity," 78). Corinth was known for those in the Sophistic tradition who engaged in rivalry with other Sophists, often competing for students. The more students teachers obtained, the more they were honoured and afforded great social status. In turn, students would compete among themselves for the attention of their chosen teachers. Students then would offer their exclusive loyalty and were expected to defend their teachers before others; this practice inevitably led to factionalism (see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 179–202; cf. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 93–94). Philostratus (*Lives* 588) draws attention to the fact that loyalty to one's teachers could be so strong that it would produce violence to the point that some would even be beaten; cf. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 101.

5, we will see that Paul is trying to change the Corinthian church's basic worldview in ways that will ensure that the community does not continue to take the same shape as its surrounding culture.[122]

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[122] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (IBC; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1997), 11–12.

Chapter 3

HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP ON 1 CORINTHIANS

The following chapter will continue to establish a working hypothesis of the

Corinthian church's ethical framework, which will then inform us of Paul's

argumentative goal in 1 Corinthians 5. This investigation will trace some of the

developments that have significantly shaped the interpretation of 1 Corinthians.

Scholars seeking to better understand the issues Paul addresses in the letter have,

historically, reconstructed the Corinthian situation from one of three major

approaches. These models explain the various issues in the church to have

stemmed from 1) religious and philosophical influences; 2) the misunderstanding

of Paul's teaching; and 3) socio-historical factors. After surveying these positions,

I will offer a brief sketch of the interpretative model I have adopted for the

present thesis. I will argue that the Corinthian church's problems are the result of

its members having had their worldviews shaped by several cultural values and

ideologies, not simply theological ones.

1. Religious and Philosophical Influences

1.1. Gnosticism/Proto-Gnosticism

Gnosticism is one religious and philosophical parallel that some scholars claim

accounts for the problems in the Corinthian church.[123] This ideology is often

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[123] The tendency to view the problems in the Corinthian correspondence from a Gnostic perspective was very common in earlier research. In a 1973 monograph, Birger A. Pearson (*The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians* [SBLDS 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1973],

characterized as "a radically anticosmic dualism" where one's true identity is understood to have nothing to do with the material world; therefore, one is indifferent to everything in it.[124] Walter Schmithals, one of the most notable contributors to this perspective, argues that the source of all problems in the church stems from Gnosticism.[125] Schmithals bases this on his reading of 1 Corinthians 12:1–3 where he alleges that some Corinthians see no contradiction in confessing Christ in times of communal worship, yet cursing him at the same time. This reasoning is based on their Gnostic Christology that "sharply separates the man Jesus and the heavenly spiritual being Christ," which they regard the former without significance.[126] Consequently, the Gnostic Christians can easily confess Jesus as the Christ, yet also curse his human side since they consider it contrary to the "celestial Christ" who is without flesh.[127] In relation to 1 Corinthians 5, Schmithals claims that the Corinthians' liberal sexual ethic is the result of a Gnostic dualistic idea that what happens in the body has no significance in the spiritual world. This allegedly provides some in the church with the idea that they have freedom, for instance, to commit immoral sexual activities. Although Schmithals acknowledges that a Gnostic libertinism is

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1) noted that "it has become almost standard now to refer to the opponents of Paul in Corinth as 'Gnostic.'"

[124] Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 139.

[125] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 36–115. Schmithals claims the Gnostics were of Jewish origin (*Gnosticism in Corinth*, 115).

[126] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 128.

[127] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 129. Schmithals argues that Paul writes the church when he received word from some who were "not sure as to whether such an expression (ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς) could occur ἐν πνεύματι θεοῦ" (*Gnosticism in Corinth*, 124).

difficult to prove as the source for the Corinthians' toleration of incest, he believes it should be accepted as the likely assumption based upon the total situation in Corinth.[128]

There are several difficulties with attributing a Gnostic source to the problems in the Corinthian church. First and foremost, most scholars recognize that Gnosticism did not develop until the second century C.E., and therefore, using it to explain the issues in the letter is no longer a tenable theory.[129] The term *Gnosticism* should thus be reserved for second century C.E. writers, and those who fail to recognize this are, as Robert McL. Wilson articulates, "reading first-century documents with second-century spectacles."[130] Others have shown that Gnostic writers almost never advocate a libertine ethic themselves. It is usually a matter of others accusing them of this stance.[131] Furthermore, evidence from the Nag Hammadi texts reveals that plenty of Gnostic writings show a penchant for asceticism, but that there are none that advocate for "loose sexual morals." This liberal attitude about sex would also be counter to the Gnostic idea that sex and

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[128] Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 237. Jean Héring (*La Première Épitre de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* [Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1949], 9–10) agrees that Gnosticism was the reason for the considerably lax Corinthian sexual ethic: "Le parti des libertins, qui s'appelaient aussi le gnostique, . . . [prenait] une attitude très libre dans les questions se rapportant à la vie érotique et au sacrifice païen."

[129] See Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 163–87; see also Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 69–71; Pheme Perkins, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 20–29.

[130] Robert McL. Wilson, "Gnosis at Corinth," in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett* (eds. Morna D. Hooker and Stephen G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 109.

[131] Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 165. Michael D. Goulder ("Libertines? [1 Cor. 5–6]," *NovT* 41 [October 1999]: 237) argues that the parallels for Gnostic libertinism are restricted to the writings of the Church Fathers who opposed them: "We need not think that the Fathers were lying over sex scandals in Gnostic groups: most groups include some members who are led into temptation, and the Fathers have just been happy to believe the worst."

procreation were "the enemy" since they led to a continuous extension of the

material world.[132]

When Gnosticism no longer was an acceptable interpretation, some scholars

began suggesting that the issues in Corinth reflect an incipient Gnosticism.[133]

Since Gnosticism was not developed when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, they argue

that the influence behind the Corinthians' problematic theology eventually led to

what later became known as Gnosticism.[134] Much of the proto-Gnostic argument

appears to depend on the perception that the Corinthians are enamored with

gnosis and *sophia*. For example, Gerd Theissen claims that the strong Christians

are forcing their ideology on the weak based on what they perceive as their own

superior *gnosis*. They are determined to rid of "obsolete religious restrictions"

now that they have this knowledge about such things as eating meat sacrificed to

idols. Theissen also contends that Paul's use of Gnostic sayings is more evidence

of a proto-Gnostic theology in Corinth: "All of us possess knowledge" (8:1) and

"all things are lawful" (10:23).[135] According to Theissen, this liberal attitude is

not common in all Gnostic groups, but it was "to be found only among Gnostic

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[132] Goulder, "Libertines," 237.

[133] Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (trans. James W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress, 197), 15.

[134] Wilson ("Gnosis at Corinth," 111) says that "there also can be little doubt that something was already in process of developing in the first century which may properly be described as at least a kind of *gnosis*." F. F. Bruce (*1 and 2 Corinthians* [NCB; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980], 21) affirms that it would be anachronistic to call the Corinthian opponents *Gnostics*, but that their teachings can legitimately be called "insipient Gnosticism" because from the Corinthian correspondence, one can see how "congenial a soil the seeds of Gnosticism were about to fall." Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 145) calls the influence in Corinth "quasi-gnostic." See also Cornelia C. Crocker, *Reading 1 Corinthians in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 137.

[135] Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 132.

Christians."[136]

The proto-Gnostic approach proposed to explain the Corinthian situation also has its weaknesses. Theissen's evidence relies heavily on second century C.E. writers to make his assumptions about attitudes and beliefs in the Corinthian church.[137] He has not successfully shown that any distinctive Gnostic belief system, such as that of the Valentinians or the Basilidians, derives from a Corinthian theology, let alone from Christianity in general. The word *gnosis* was widely used in philosophical and religious movements in the first century. The fact that a group claims to have superior knowledge that gives it better insight was common, and it is not reason enough to place it on a path toward Gnosticism.[138] Furthermore, Gnosticism was such a variegated assortment of groups that it is impossible to pinpoint a specific theology that was uniform among them all. The danger of applying Gnostic roots to Corinthian Christianity is that it does not help us reconstruct the situation in the Corinthian church because anyone in the first century who held some form a philosophical or anthropological dualism could be

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[136] Theissen, *The Social Setting*, 134. Theissen states that "analogies between Corinthian gnosis and later Gnosticism could be found in the fact that in both instances a typical recasting of Christian faith is evident with its rise into the higher classes."

[137] Theissen (*The Social Setting*, 132–36) relies on Irenaeus' repudiation of the second century C.E. Gnostic Valentinian and Basilidian movements to make his case for a Corinthian Gnostic libertinism. Interestingly, Theissen himself states that a proto-Gnostic connection to the Corinthians is "unsatisfactory," but still claims that "even if the speculative fantasies of later Gnostics cannot be imputed to the Corinthian Gnostics, neither can the parallels between the two be ignored" (*The Social Setting*, 132).

[138] Martin, *The Corinthian* Body, 71. *Contra* Elaine Pagels (*The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* [Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1992], 1–10) who looks at how the second century Gnostics relied on Paul's writings even if they misread him in most cases. Pagels also provides an exegetical study specifically on 1 Corinthians and its Gnostic interpretation (*The Gnostic Paul*, 53–86).

considered a proto-Gnostic.[139] There are certainly resemblances that Gnosticism

and Christianity share, but it is better to avoid conceiving it as a Gnostic religion,

and instead view it as a product of many sources from a variety of religious

movements.[140]

1.2. Hellenistic Judaism

Once the Gnostic position became untenable, some attempted to locate the

theological views of the Corinthians in the context of Hellenistic Judaism.

Richard Horsley suggests that the true nature of proto-Gnosticism in Corinth

comes instead from Hellenistic Jewish religiosity which focuses on *sophia* and

gnosis.[141] These emphases find their parallels in Wisdom of Solomon and Philo

and are the cause of the dispute between Paul and the Corinthians. Some in the

church consider themselves to be strong and wise and have become obsessed with

sophia and *gnosis*.[142] They attribute to themselves, as a result, a false notion of

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[139] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 71.

[140] Williams, *Rethinking Gnosticism*, 3–5.

[141] Richard A. Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8:1–6," *NTS* 27 (1980): 32. See also Horsley's earlier work ("Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status among the Corinthians," *HTR* 69 [1976]: 269–88) where he outlined a similar argument. James A. Davis (*Wisdom and Spirit: And Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1:18–3:20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period* [Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984], 62) also believes the answer to the Corinthian problem lies in Hellenistic Judaism's sapiential literature, drawing attention to sources such as Philo, the Book of Sirach, and Qumran: "The fact that common themes [in these sources] are present allows us to give definition to the phenomenon of wisdom as it existed and developed across a broad spectrum of post-biblical Judaism," and against such a background, it is possible to understand and investigate the "manifestation of wisdom at Corinth."

[142] Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth," 51. Like Horsley, Wilson ("Gnosis at Corinth," 110) argues that the Corinthian *gnosis* can be explained from a "Hellenistic Jewish religion of enlightenment" which can also be found in the writings of not only Philo, but also in sources such as the Wisdom of Solomon.

what they think is a special spiritual status.[143] Horsley believes this exalted status

complex is found in the *pneumatikos-psychikos* terminology, and that it is this

issue that Paul attempts to adjust in the Corinthian church.[144] He cites

1 Corinthians 15 as an example, where he interprets the Corinthians' thinking to

include "*the pneumatikos and* the *psychikos* respectively as the person of heaven

and the person of earth or as two types of humanity, the heavenly and the

earthly."[145] Horsley bases this reading on Philo's writings which distinguish

between two types of individuals: "the heavenly *anthrōpos* vs. the earthly

anthrōpos."[146] Horsley argues that this same contrast also lies behind the

problems in 1 Corinthians 1–4. This *pneumatikos-psychikos* distinction (1 Cor

2:6–3:4) is, according to him, adequately and comprehensively paralleled only in

Philo.[147]

The idea that the problems in the Corinthian church developed because of

Hellenistic Judaism is possible in some respects. Some members of the

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[143] Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth," 32.

[144] Horsley ("Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos," 274) defines *pneumatikoi* as "those capable of possessing special spiritual revelation or wisdom, in contrast to the *psychikoi* who do not have this ability." Pearson (*The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, 7–14) had also argued for the same reconstruction of the Corinthian situation by looking at the original context of the terms *pneumatikos* and *psychikos*. He claims that their background is found in "Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom speculation" or "Hellenistic-Jewish speculative mysticism," stating that "The opponents in Corinth believed in the immortality of the soul, and not the resurrection of the body. And they held to this doctrine on the basis of Scripture!" (*The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology*, 17).

[145] Horsley, "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos," 274.

[146] Horsley, "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos," 277.

[147] Horsley, "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos," 280. Horsley considers Paul's polemic in 1 Corinthians 1:26 and 4:8–10 to be directed toward those who understood themselves as "the wise, perfect, and spiritual." They, contrary to those who were "foolish, babes, and psychics," also falsely saw their exalted status in terms of being "nobly born, rich, kings, glorious" (εὐγενής, πλούσιος, βασιλεύς, and ἔνδοξος) ("Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos," 282).

community like Apollos were Jews, and we know that he influenced the church to quite an extent (1 Cor 3:4–9).[148] It is also plausible to suggest the Jewish idea of *sophia* influenced some Corinthians to believe that they have achieved a high spiritual status. The problem with Horsley's theory is that, although Jewish wisdom traditions encouraged the Corinthians to seek wisdom, the love of wisdom was universal in Greco-Roman culture. The Philonic parallels could just as easily be interpreted from other Platonic and Stoic philosophies. As Barclay points out, "It is quite possible that the Corinthians, without any Philonic influence, were engaged in a similar process, combining their Hellenistic theological culture with Jewish terms and traditions taught by Paul."[149] In a sense then, the Corinthians could have created a form of Judaized Hellenism, just like, but not dependent on, Philo's creation of a Hellenized Judaism. Horsley's theory is further weakened in that nowhere in the letter does Paul attribute the source of Corinthian wisdom to a Jewish background, but instead he associates it with Greek cultural values (1 Cor 1:22).[150] Another problem with Horsley's reconstruction is that it is difficult to locate the influence behind the Corinthians' love of wisdom and knowledge. Associating these ideas to books such as the Wisdom of Solomon or to Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., Philo) carries little weight since Proverbs, Psalms, Sirach, etc. also demonstrate similar emphases. Paul simply does not give any evidence from where the Corinthians' derived their

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[148] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 118.

[149] Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth," 65.

[150] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 21; cf. Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth," 65.

supposed higher knowledge.[151]

2. Misunderstanding of Paul's teaching

2.1. Paul's Theological Development

There are others who have set aside the idea that outside philosophical influences

are the source of problems in the Corinthian church. John Hurd argues that

scholarship has wrongly assumed that the Corinthians are troublesome,

quarrelsome, immoral, and licentious.[152] Paul is the real problem, and any

theological misinterpretation in the letter is caused by his teachings changing over

time. According to Hurd, Paul revised his theology based on what was laid out at

the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), and the Corinthians were caught off guard when

they received word from this new conservative Paul. This confusion was

accompanied by anger over the Apostle's "sudden change in perspective and his

demand for observance of a cautious list of prohibitions."[153] They had first known

Paul as enthusiastic, but he later became condemning and concerned only with

correction and prevention.[154] No matter how creative a theory, Hurd's

reconstruction remains highly speculative. Since it depends on the letter itself, it is

curious that there is no evidence in the letter that suggests Paul has changed his

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[151] Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth," 61.

[152] Hurd, Origins of 1 Corinthians, 277.

[153] Hurd, Origins of 1 Corinthians, 277.

[154] Hurd, Origins of 1 Corinthians, 82; see also 289–95. Hurd believes Paul was less cautious in his "original preaching" (Origins of 1 Corinthians, 273–83). It is also noteworthy that Hurd believes the reports Paul received may have been exaggerated since they came from people whose emotional reactions caused biased opinions about the problems in the church (Origins of 1 Corinthians, 61).

position on any issue.[155] It is also significant that Paul imposed regulations in

1 Corinthians without ever mentioning the Jerusalem council.[156]

2.2. Over-realized Eschatology

Although Anthony Thiselton is not the first to suggest that the problems in the

Corinthian church are the result of an over-realized eschatology,[157] he is one of

the most influential contributors to this model.[158] Thiselton argues that Paul is

dealing with a defective eschatology on the part of the Corinthians who have

radically reinterpreted his theology. This idea is based partially on 1 Corinthians

15:12 (cf. 4:8), which explains the Corinthians' "one-sided eschatology" in which

they imagine that the promises of the age to come have been fully realized in the

present age.[159] This eschatological distortion and imbalance correlates to

Thiselton's second main claim: some of the Corinthians have a faulty view of the

gifts and work of the Holy Spirit, which translates into their enthusiastic view of

the Spirit.[160] As a result, they consider themselves on a different eschatological

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[155] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 24.

[156] Floyd V. Filson, review of J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians, JBL* 84 (1966): 452.

[157] Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 109) claims that the Corinthians were acting "as if the age to come were already consummated. . . . For them there is no 'not yet' to qualify the 'already' of realized eschatology." Similar positions are found in Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 49–50; Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 87–88; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Rev. ed.; Macon, Ga.: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 30.

[158] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 510–26.

[159] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 518. Thiselton later clarifies that "The question was *not* whether the Corinthians believed that their resurrection was past, but whether they placed such weight on the experience of transformation in the past and present that when they thought about resurrection the centre of gravity of their thinking was no longer in the future" ("Realized Eschatology," 524).

[160] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 512.

level where their physical behaviour is a matter of indifference since they are now dead to the flesh.[161] Thiselton says the Corinthians' liberal sexual ethic reflects their misinterpretation of Paul's use of the slogans πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν (6:12; 10:23) and πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν (8:1).[162] The case of the incestuous man in chapter 5, for example, was a matter of the community, not primarily the sinner, being pleased with this situation. Thiselton claims that there were "self-styled 'spiritual' men at Corinth [who] wished to parade their new-found freedom as a bold testimony of their eschatological status."[163] He believes this outlook explains the Corinthians' faulty interpretation of Paul's previous letter when he commanded them not to associate with the sexually immoral (5:9–10). Thiselton contends that the Corinthians' total "lack of realism" came from thinking that Paul's directive did not include Christians, since Christians were above any law. They considered the *natural* person, though, to still be condemned since he or she remained part of the pre-eschatological age.[164]

One problem with Thiselton's reconstruction is that even though some of

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[161] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 512. In his earlier article, Thiselton ("The Meaning of Sarx in 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors," *SJT* 26 [1973]: 211) had argued the same point where he stated that the Corinthians thought that they "were on a new plane of life, and felt that they could do anything," and therefore, their flagrant disregard of the law was a demonstration of the superiority of their status as "those who reign as kings" (1 Cor 4:8).

[162] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 515: "There can be no doubt that these constitute quotations from the theologizing of the Corinthians themselves, even if they in turn originally took them from Paul. . . . The Corinthians likely felt drawn towards a more radical application of Paul's own eschatological dualism than he himself had seemed to allow."

[163] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 516. A similar explanation is given for 6:12–20 which allegedly also demonstrates that the Corinthians thought that what they did in the body no longer mattered (cf. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 462).

[164] Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology," 516.

the Corinthians appear to have eschatological misunderstandings, it seems that it

is because of their *lack* of an eschatological vision, not an over-realized one.[165] In

1 Corinthians 15, for instance, Paul is not giving details about the resurrection

because some of the Corinthians are boasting that they have already realized the

resurrection in the present age, as Thiselton argues. The Apostle's argument

suggests instead that there are some who are actually denying that there is a

resurrection at all (vv. 12–19). Paul says, "Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised

from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised"

(1 Cor 15:12–13). Paul's argument is based on the Corinthians' idea that Christ

has not even been raised, not one that implies they are already reigning with him

in some realized eschatological state.[166] Another weakness of Thiselton's view is

the notion that the Corinthians have a sexual laxity based on an over-realized

eschatology. As mentioned, Thiselton points to the Corinthians' use of slogans to

show that they have essentially radicalized Paul's understanding of them. Even if

we were to assume, however, that the Corinthians had a lax sexual ethic, these

maxims were common in Corinth and were linked to a whole perspective outside

of Paul's teaching,[167] as well as much writing connected to freedom and

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[165] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 14; Maria Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline: A Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Corinthians* (Tesi Gregorianna Serie Teologia 32; Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1997), 64.

[166] Martin (*The Corinthian Body*, 122) argues that Paul is deliberately misconstruing the Corinthian position for argumentative purposes, and the Corinthians do, in fact, believe in a resurrection.

[167] These expressions are found in both Stoic and Cynic writings. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6:104, 7:125; cf. Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 61.

permissiveness.[168] It is important, therefore, to be cautious before asserting that

the Corinthians' understanding of Christian freedom is a radical form of Paul's

teaching on the subject.[169] The over-realized eschatological perspective ignores

the more likely sociological and cultural influences that shaped the Corinthians'

sexual ethic.[170]

2.3. Spiritualized Eschatology

Gordon Fee agrees that the Corinthians have an over-realized eschatology, except

that he prefers the term *spiritualized* eschatology to describe the Corinthians

theological error. Fee chooses this distinct expression because it focuses on the

Corinthians' problem of being "puffed up" as a result of their experiences in the

Spirit. The real issue Paul is facing is that the Corinthians have a false sense of

what it means to be *pneumatikos*.[171] They understand themselves strictly in

spiritual terms since they believe they are fully experiencing the Spirit already as

those who are, with the Spirit, part of the Eschaton.[172] Fee argues that the

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[168] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 81–96; cf. Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.7, 8; 3.22, 38; 4.1.

[169] Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 61.

[170] See Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 25–26; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 13–14 (cf. 221–23); Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 25–28. Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 40) responded to this criticism in his later commentary, stating that although he still stands by the conclusions of his earlier article, he has modified his outlook to a certain degree. He now includes the possibility that cultural influences also impacted the Corinthian church's ethical framework: "I now perceive the [Corinthians'] theological misconception combined with the seductive infiltration into the Christian church of cultural attitudes derived from secular or non-Christian Corinth as a city."

[171] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 10–11.

[172] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 12. Fee claims that one of the contentions between Paul and the church is that some Corinthians are not sure whether the Apostle is part of the *pneumatikoi* (1 Cor 14:37) (*First Corinthians*, 10).

Corinthians' spiritualized eschatology derives from a worldview that has been exposed to a lifetime of Hellenistic dualism. The result is a "dim view" of their continued material existence, including anything associated with the body.[173] The body is of no importance to the *pneumatikoi*, either in the present or the future; therefore, they can do with it as they please. The Corinthians' "understanding of spirituality gives them both a false view of freedom ('everything is permissible') and of the body ('God will destroy it')," from which they justify going to prostitutes (6:12–20).[174] Fee also links the case of incest in 1 Corinthians 5 to the same slogan, "everything is permissible." He claims the Corinthians take pride in the man's incestuous relationship because they believe that the truly spiritual person in Christ is no longer subject to consequences for what is done in the body.[175]

Fee's spiritualized eschatology view shares some of the same shortcomings as other models. There is no indication in the letter that any of the Corinthians have a dualistic framework that devalues the body. Furthermore, Dunn argues that even if some Corinthians have a *theologia gloria* in relation to issues of sexual immorality, it provides no explanation why some are, for instance, taking others to court (6:1–8). The problem arises when one tries to imagine the Corinthians are

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[173] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 11. Fee argues earlier that a theological stance lies behind every issue in 1 Corinthians. The interpreter of 1 Corinthians, he says, must therefore "determine what influences/positions in the Corinthian 'theology' allowed them not only to adopt [a certain] behaviour but also to argue for the right to do so" (*First Corinthians*, 5).

[174] Fee (*First Corinthians*, 250–51) claims that these *pneumatikoi* affirm sexual immorality because, "Being people of the Spirit . . . has moved them to a higher plane, the realm of the spirit, where they are unaffected by behavior that has merely to do with the body."

[175] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 201–02.

united in their opposition against Paul on all issues except for the issue of

licentiousness and asceticism.[176] Fee's argument also does not take into account

that an emphasis on the spirit in Jewish or Greco-Roman thought does not

automatically imply an ethical laxity. It is likely that social conventions are

playing a much greater role in the Corinthians' toleration of sin than some

dualistic misinterpretation that allows them to be free to commit sexual

immorality. While being caught up by harmful cultural values, some Corinthians

are parading as spiritual people despite the fact that members of the community

are participating in and/or tolerating obvious sins.[177]

3. Socio-Historical Factors

The socio-historical approach to the study of 1 Corinthians is another influential

model that seeks to explain the numerous issues in the letter. This approach

engages with ancient archaeological and literary evidence in an attempt to

reconstruct the Corinthian context. Although there are differing conclusions

proposed by those who adopt this method, the common thread among them is that

the key to interpreting 1 Corinthians is not primarily about finding *religious*

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[176] James D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 38–39; see also Goulder, "Libertines," 336–37.

[177] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 14: "Paul cannot deny their spiritual experiences (2:4), nor does he want to denigrate them. But he will not speak to them as spiritual ones; they instead are fleshly (3:1)." Marshall (*Enmity in Corinth*, 182) explains that the idea of ὕβρις includes people being full of themselves and "inclined to indulge [their] own desires and wishes without respecting the wishes, rights, and commands of other people." Marshall argues that the Apostle is faced with a group of Christians in Corinth where the idea of ὕβρις emerges, bringing with it the notion of superiority. The Corinthians neglected their behaviour because they viewed themselves as "great-souled" people, despising others, but in reality, they were no better than anyone else (*Enmity in Corinth*, 185–86). He believes that people who show characteristics of ὕβρις "think they are the most important people in existence" on the one hand, but also have a faulty perception of themselves on the other (*Enmity in Corinth*, 197).

parallels but is, instead, about examining the various sources that relate to everyday life in Corinth.[178] In addition, this approach often views Paul positively as one who is implicitly or explicitly challenging the established cultural conventions and values of Corinthian society that have shaped the Corinthians' worldview.[179] Those in the church had been life-long citizens of Corinth before their conversion, and when they became Christians they did not automatically forsake all of the accepted cultural values.[180] Bruce Winter, for example, argues that all the issues in the church are the result of the Corinthians having "culturally determined responses" to various aspects of Corinthian society.[181] Therefore, Paul responds in the letter to issues created "by the influence of secular ethics or social conventions on this nascent Christian community."[182]

John Chow argues that patronage was one of these conventions that significantly influenced the actions—and inactions—of the church since it was

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[178] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 30.

[179] See Adams and Horrell ("Paul's Church at Corinth," 33–34) who point out that these conclusions are not the case with all socio-historical models, citing feminist approaches as an example that seeks to reverse the positive portrait of Paul afforded to him by traditional scholarship.

[180] Timothy B. Savage (*Power through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 99) argues that the conflict in the Christian church is the result of "two opposing perspectives: the worldly outlook of the Corinthians and Paul's Christ-centered viewpoint."

[181] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, x: "[The Corinthians] could only have contemplated responding differently if they had been specifically taught alternative ways to do so." See Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 6) who also argue that cultural rather than "exotic" influences are behind each issue in the letter.

[182] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 4. Winter adds that "Paul specifically charges the Corinthians with 'walking in a secular way' and behaving like other 'men' in Corinth (3:3, 5)." Since the church felt is it necessary to write Paul on certain issues, Winter believes all of the problems Paul deals with in the letter are those in which he had not previously provided any instruction, and/or the Corinthians severely misinterpreted certain issues that they had not encountered before (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 1–4).

such a significant part of the Corinthians' daily lives. For this reason, Chow says

that it is understandable that the Corinthians would not be completely free from

the pressures this social convention put upon them, especially immediately

following their conversion.[183] More specifically, Chow believes that patronage is

a major cause behind the church's toleration of the incestuous relationship in

1 Corinthians 5, where many Corinthians may not have wanted to offend the man

less he withdraw his support of the church.[184]

Other writers who espouse a socio-historical approach explain the problems

in the Corinthian church to be the result of major "fault lines" that divided the rich

and the poor,[185] divisions in which rival groups are engaged in a struggle for

political power,[186] or Stoic influences that best account for Paul's criticism of the

Corinthians.[187] Still others explore a range of other sociological factors, such as

the role of women in the Corinthian church,[188] the reasons for a lack of conflict

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[183] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 82. See Clarke (*Secular and Christian Leadership*, 23–40) and Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 184–205) for similar emphases.

[184] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 170.

[185] Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 69. Martin identifies the higher status group with those whom Paul calls the "strong" and the lower-status group with those he labels the "weak." He says evidence of this is already found in 4:8, where Paul's rhetoric was unloaded on only part of the Corinthian church—the "certain ones" who were puffed up (*The Corinthian Body*, 65). See also Theissen (*The Social Setting*, 69–110) who argues that social stratification is the source of conflict in the Corinthian church that was caused by an influential minority from the higher social strata; cf. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 67–70. Some challenges to this assumption have been brought forth by Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 75–180.

[186] Laurence L. Welborn, *Politics and Rhetoric in the Corinthian Epistles* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1997), 1–42; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*.

[187] Terence Paige, "Stoicism, ἐλευθερία and Community at Corinth," in *Worship, Theology, and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (eds. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 180–93.

[188] Margaret Y. MacDonald, "Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7," *NTS* 36 (1990): 161–81. For a prominent feminist perspective, see Elizabeth

between the Corinthian Christians and the non-Christian world,[189] and even how

such things as grain shortages and famines affected everyday Corinthian life.[190]

The common theme among the majority of these proposals is that various social

factors best explain the various issues reflected in 1 Corinthians, and Paul's letter

offers the Corinthians a counter-cultural perspective to these various issues that

are causing problems in the church.

Although proponents of the socio-historical approach do not necessarily

make this mistake, one potential weakness of focusing on Roman Corinth's

secular influences, rather than strictly *religious* ones, is that this may give the

impression that there was a dichotomy between the *theological* and the

sociological. Unlike the modern conception of religious vs. secular, the ancient

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Schüssler Fiorenza, "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 33 (1987): 368–400.

[189] Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth," 48–74. Barclay, comparing the Thessalonian and Corinthian churches, argues that the "presence or absence of conflict in social interaction with outsiders had an important influence on the development of the two churches and their perception of their Christian identity" ("Thessalonica and Corinth," 50). The Thessalonians experienced a significant amount of conflict with outsiders (1 Thess 1:6; 2:2, 14–16; 3:3), whereas the Corinthians did not have the same hostile experiences, but instead they enjoyed social harmony with outsiders ("Thessalonica and Corinth," 57–58). Barclay claims that although Paul never seems to deny their relationship to Christ, it is clear he believes there still remained too much of the Corinthian culture in the church: "The Corinthians could gladly participate in this church as one segment of their lives. But the segment, however important, is not the whole and the centre. Their perception of their church and of the significance of their faith could correlate with a life-style which remained fully integrated in Corinthian society" ("Thessalonica and Corinth," 71). For a similar position, see James Walter, "Civic Identity in Roman Corinth and Its Impact on Early Christians," in *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth* (ed. Daniel N. Schowalter; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 397–417; cf. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul*, 689–92) who argues along the same lines as Barclay when comparing the Corinthian church with the one in Rome.

[190] Bruce W. Winter, "Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines," *TynBul* 40 (1989): 86–106; repr. in Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 216–32. For a detailed discussion on sociological approaches to other issues in New Testament studies, see Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 9–32; see also Margaret Y. MacDonald's (*The Pauline Churches: A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], 2–28, 31–84) work for a helpful introduction to various sociological influences on Pauline churches.

world did not separate these two categories so distinctly; the secular sphere in the Roman world was intertwined with people's religious life.[191] In other words, the theological was always fused with the sociological in Ancient Corinth, and both must be considered together when interpreting an ancient text such as 1 Corinthians.[192]

Another potential problem to avoid with the socio-historical approach is not to depend only on the elite literary sources of Corinthian society to provide understanding on the situation in Corinth. Justin Meggitt argues that one area of scholarship that has been neglected is in the study of Corinthian pop culture, and that it has only looked at certain "exegetical commonplace" writings such as those of Plato and Cicero. Meggitt insists that studies must also explore the common way of life and value systems of those not necessarily read in academia. If not, one may only become acquainted with the ideologies and philosophies of the elite and not actually those of the majority of people in a particular society like Ancient Corinth.[193]

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[191] Adams and Horrell ("Paul's Church at Corinth," 26n) note the problem with using the term *secular* to describe the situation in the ancient world: "The term 'secular' . . . should be subject to a caveat: the notion of a 'secular' public sphere, distinct from the (privatised) realm in which religion operates, is a thoroughly modern invention."

[192] Horrell (*Social Ethos*, 119–20) explains that "Sociological and theological perspectives should not be viewed as mutually exclusive alternatives, although their forms of analysis and priorities are different. . . . If theology is profoundly contextual—arising from and acting within a particular social setting—then we would expect particular forms of theology to be linked with particular social contexts." See also Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 49; Richard A. Horsley, "1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as an Alternative Society," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 242–52.

[193] Justin J. Meggitt, "Sources: Use, Abuse, Neglect: The Importance of Ancient Popular Culture," in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (eds. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 241–53.

4. Present Thesis' Approach

As the preceding survey demonstrates, scholars have reconstructed the causes for

the problems in the Corinthian church in a variety of ways. Many assume that

theological and/or philosophical sources from outside the church best explain the

Corinthians' "misinterpretation of the faith." Numerous others search for evidence

from Corinthian society to discover the various cultural influences that have

shaped the church's ethical framework. As a result of so many proposals, some

have suggested that it may not be possible to locate a Corinthian ethic within any

specific framework.[194] Nevertheless, this thesis' approach is to examine

1 Corinthians from a socio-historical perspective. It must be kept in mind that in

doing so, this approach includes, but is not limited to, religious and philosophical

influences. It seeks to discover all relevant information that will help to

understand Paul's audience and how it would receive his argument.

As we consider the Corinthian church and the specific problem Paul

addresses in chapter 5, we must remind ourselves that he is writing to people

whose worldview has been naturally influenced by numerous cultural practices

and values over a lifetime. Thus, identifying one particular error that is

responsible for the issues in 1 Corinthians should be avoided.[195] One should be

careful, therefore, in defining the sources of influence in the Corinthian church

too precisely since each influence cannot be neatly separated.[196] As we noted

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[194] Adams and Horrell, "Paul's Church at Corinth," 22.

[195] See Hays, *First Corinthians*, 8.

[196] As Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, 15) explains, there are many popular philosophies that can be identified in the letter that the Corinthians would have "picked up on the streets." Although

when we examined the situation in Corinth, the city was a complex cultural mix where several religious, economic, political, and sociological influences affected the lives of its citizens. Paul may respond to the issues theologically by alluding to the exodus narrative, but this does not mean the problems in the church are necessarily the result of a particular faulty theology. Therefore, the next chapter will investigate the possible influences so that we can best reconstruct the reasons for the Corinthians' toleration of incest and Paul's accusation of their being arrogant (1 Cor 5:1–2).

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he warns to be careful in putting a specific label on a Corinthians' *error*, nevertheless, he goes on to identify the error in the church as "proto-gnostic."

Chapter 4

PRELIMINARY EXEGESIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1–5

Up to this point we have examined the historical situation in Corinth and surveyed

various scholarly developments in the study of 1 Corinthians. Through this

investigation, we have been able to appreciate the values and behaviours

associated with the typical Corinthian. We also explored a number of proposals

that scholars have offered to explain the problems in the Corinthian church. This

background gives us an overall view of what issues Paul faced as he considered

his argumentation to the Corinthians. Now that we have an understanding of the

average Corinthian mindset, this chapter will narrow our focus by offering a

preliminary exegesis of verses 1–5 to reconstruct the specific details in

1 Corinthians 5. This will enrich our comprehension of why the Apostle chose to

develop his argumentation in the way he did and how his Corinthian audience

would hear his instruction.

1. 1 Corinthians 5:1–2

1.1. Translation

[1] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and a kind of

sexual immorality that is not even tolerated among Gentiles, so that a man has his

father's wife. [2] And you have become puffed up with pride! Should you not be

mourning instead, so that he who has committed this act is removed from among

you?

1.2. Preliminary Exegesis

The first few verses of chapter 5 identify the problem that Paul confronts in the

Corinthian church. There is a man in the community who is engaged in πορνεία

(5:1a), which can refer to any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse—prostitution,

adultery, or sexual immorality.[197] It is reasonable, however, to translate πορνεία

as "sexual immorality" because the context reveals that Paul is referring to a man

who "has his father's wife" (5:1c).[198] He does not say whether the father is alive

or dead,[199] but we know that the relationship involves a son and his stepmother,[200]

and therefore, under Jewish law is considered incestuous (Lev 18:8; 20:11; Deut

22:30).[201] The relationship also appears to have been going on for some time since

Paul states that this man *has* or *is having* (ἔχειν) his father's wife. The word ἔχειν

is in the infinitive present active, which points to a continuous relationship rather

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[197] BDAG, 854.

[198] The context negates prostitution as a possible translation. Furthermore, even though the word πορνεία can be used for adultery (Sir 23:23), it is ruled out in this case since Paul would likely have chosen the term μοιχεία, which is used differently than πορνεία when talking about extramarital sexual relationships. This is the case in 1 Corinthians 6:9 when Paul differentiates μοιχεία from πορνεία (cf. Matt 15:19); cf. "πορνεία," *GNM*, BibleWorks 8.

[199] The immoral relationship between the woman and the son could have been initiated as a result of the father's death or his divorce of the woman (cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 200). Goulder ("Libertines," 339) argues that the father is likely not alive because "Paul is doing his best to maximise the scandal, and he would rub it in further if the father were still alive." If the father were still living, though, it is possible that he may not have been part of the church. Like the woman, he would not have been subject to Paul and the church's judgment (5:12–13).

[200] Although this is the dominant view, see Craig S. de Vos ("Stepmother, Concubines and the Case of Πορνεία in 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 44 [1998]: 104–14) who argues that the woman had been the father's concubine, not his wife.

[201] There is also no reason to conclude that the woman is the son's biological mother because Paul would have used the phrase ἑαυτοῦ μητέρα ("his own mother") if that had been the case (Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 233). Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 158) notes that this distinction is the case in Leviticus 18 where the writer juxtaposes the prohibition of uncovering "the nakedness of your mother" (v. 7) with "the nakedness of your father's wife" (v. 8); cf. Lev 20:11; Deut 22:30; 27:20; *t. Sanh.* 10:1.

than a one-time act of indiscretion.[202] Due to the ongoing nature of the

relationship, it is possible that it is cohabitation[203] or a formal marriage.[204] We

cannot be certain in the end of the exact details, but it is probable that the son has

been engaged in a relationship with his stepmother for some time.

Paul also describes the man's sin as one "that is not even tolerated among

Gentiles" (5:1b). Although he does not supply a verb in this clause, given the

context of the Roman world, *tolerate* is helpful in understanding what Paul has in

mind rather than "not found" (NRSV) or "does not occur" (NIV). These translations

may give the impression that this type of behaviour did not exist or was unheard

of in Paul's time.[205] The reality, though, is that there were criminal cases in which

this type of incest was addressed and condemned in Roman society.[206] In some

cases, if these people were found guilty, they could be banished from the city,

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[202] Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 122; Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 111.

[203] So Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 96. Conzelmann argues for cohabitation based on the notion that both Roman and Jewish law forbade a man from marrying his stepmother; see also Goulder, "Libertines," 339.

[204] So Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 133–34. The line between marriage and living together in the ancient world was often unclear. The deciding factor essentially came down to whether the couple intended to live together as a married couple. Since the time in question is so long ago, accurate intentionality is thus difficult to determine (*Patronage and Power*, 132–33).

[205] Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 235) argues that even if Paul meant "not found" in 5:1b, it "does not mean that no pagan has ever committed it, but his rhetorical exaggeration is coping with the recognition that even pagans did not tolerate it. . . . Paul knows that Gentiles developed certain moral standards, as he admits in Rom 2:14, and he was undoubtedly aware of the severe penalties of Roman law, which had no leniency for such conduct." According to Fitzmyer, then, it was an argumentative strategy used by Paul to heighten the Corinthian guilt in allowing this to go on in the community; so Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 199). Even so, "tolerate" is helpful in interpreting the passage because this type of incest was, in fact, found but not necessarily tolerated among the Gentiles.

[206] E.g., Gaius, *Institutiones* 1.63; Justinian, *Digest* 23.2.14; 48:39; cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.2.12.

have their citizenships revoked, and/or lose all of their property.[207] The fact that

Roman law had provisions for dealing with these cases of incest is in itself

evidence that this relationship existed in the Roman world. Regardless of the

translation, what is important about Paul's description is that the Corinthians are

tolerating a relationship in their community that even the surrounding culture

believes is unacceptable.[208]

Even more disconcerting for Paul is that some in the community are

boasting while this shameful behaviour exists among them. For this reason, he

rebukes the Corinthians in verse 2a, claiming they are "puffed up with pride" (καὶ

ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστε). Although Paul's introduction to chapter 5 (Ὅλως

ἀκούεται [v. 1a]) may have appeared to denote a new topic, the Corinthians'

boasting is still at the forefront of his thought.[209] In 1 Corinthians 4:14–21, he

denounces the pride of some in the Corinthian church and threatens to discipline

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[207] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 45–46. Incest, coupled with adultery, was such a serious crime in Roman law that it did not have a five-year statute of limitation like many other crimes (*After Paul Left* Corinth, 46).

[208] See Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 45–49.

[209] Some commentators consider that Paul is transitioning in a new direction in 1 Corinthians 5 because he addresses a new case of sexual immorality (See Lambert D. Jacobs, "Establishing a New Value System in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 5–6 as Persuasive Argument," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 382. See also Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 53; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 209. Although Paul is dealing with new subject matter in chapter 5, there are common threads that tie his argument to the preceding sections of the letter. The Corinthians have a misplaced arrogance in which some wrongly consider themselves the πνευματικοῖς (3:1). Paul had previously pointed out that since the Corinthians were in Christ Jesus, they were enriched in every way (1:4–9); therefore, they have nothing to boast about in themselves. He also reminded them that God chose them, most of whom are not considered wise according to worldly standards (1:26–28). The reason is so that no one could boast in God's presence: "And because of him you are in Christ Jesus . . . Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (vv. 29–31). Paul wants their faith to rest in the power of God, not the wisdom of men (2:5), which some were doing the very opposite by boasting in certain personalities (1:12–13; cf. 3:4–23).

them for thinking that the kingdom of God consists of talk rather than of power

(4:20). Thus, when Paul states that "It is actually reported," his concern is that

some are boasting while this sin is being tolerated in the church.[210] He is

undoubtedly disturbed with the individual's sin, but like in chapter 4, he considers

it a symptom of the deeper problem facing the Corinthians as whole (5:2a, 6).[211]

Therefore, the problem in the church will not be resolved merely by dealing with

the individual sinner, but the congregation's arrogance and its toleration of his

sin.[212] Ὅλως ἀκούεται, then, ties Paul's discussion in chapters 4 and 5 together

making the transition seem less disconnected. For this reason, Ὅλως ἀκούεται

could be translated "*in short*, it has been reported,"[213] because the example of

incest provides the evidence from chapter 4 that the Corinthians have no reason

whatsoever to be proud of themselves. In fact, from what is reported to Paul, there

are actually three specific examples that should shock the Corinthians into feeling

shame: the case of incest (5:1–13), improper lawsuits (6:1–11), and having sex

with prostitutes (6:12–20).[214] These three examples are, *in short*, the reason the

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[210] Paul's use of the word φυσιόω in both chapters (4:18–19; 5:2) indicates continuity of concern. Some translations such as the NIV miss the immediate connection between the two chapters because they provide two different words to describe the Corinthians' arrogance, and therefore, they may give the impression that there is a shift in focus. For example, "arrogant" is used in chapter 4 and "proud" in chapter 5 with reference to sexual immorality.

[211] Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 109.

[212] The fact that the perpetrator's name is not even mentioned is evidence of Paul's communal emphasis (J. Paul Sampley, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: Acts – First Corinthians* [ed. Leander E. Keck; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 848).

[213] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 156.

[214] Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 151) explains further: "The three issues that Paul comments upon in [5:1–6:20] complement the previous discussion in chapters 1–4. In these opening chapters he insinuates that the church is riven by unnecessary strife fed by unjustified spiritual pride. Threatening to come after them with a rod (4:21), however, seems a bit extreme to settle such

Corinthians should have been mourning rather than been prideful. They are

wrongly puffed up with a perceived "sense of spiritual power, knowledge, and

wisdom," but their lack of recognition of sin is the true indication of their spiritual

condition.[215]

In contrast to the Corinthians' attitude, Paul defines the proper way of

thinking for such a case. He asks the church, "Should you not be mourning

instead, so that he who has committed this act is removed from among you?"

(5:2). Paul uses the verb πενθέω ("to mourn" or "to have sorrow") with the

conjunction ἵνα ("in order that") to express not merely a feeling of sorrow, but

also a proper judgment of sin.[216] A correct understanding of sin involves an

awareness that something must be done about it (cf. 2 Cor 12:2). Paul, as a result,

expects the Corinthians to agree with him on this matter (cf. 5:3–4) and then to

take the proper course of action by removing this man from the church (5:2; cf.

vv. 5, 7, 13).[217] According to the Apostle, true maturity is demonstrated by action,

not just words (cf. 4:20). Thus, a sign of the Corinthians' maturity would have

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problems. The three cases cited in 5:1–6:20 make that threat more understandable." See also
Soards (*1 Corinthians*, 109): "From the mention of Corinthian arrogance in reaction to the
Apostle's style of ministry in chapter 4, Paul specifies an instance of that arrogance by taking up
the topic of immorality; thus Paul concretizes his criticism and illustrates the validity of his
accusations."

[215] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 159.

[216] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 96. Πενθέω refers to a "passionate grief which leads to
corresponding action" (Bultmann, "πενθέω," *TDNT* 6:42). Barrett's (*First Corinthians*, 122)
translation is also helpful in understanding what Paul is saying in verse 2: "Did you not rather go
into mourning, *and show the sincerity of your mourning by taking the necessary action* in order
that he that had committed this deed might be taken away" (emphasis mine).

[217] Most commentators believe the woman was not part of the Christian community since
Paul did not call for the same disciplinary action to be taken against her; he only calls for the man
to be removed from the church (5:5; cf. 5:12a). Cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 201; Hays, *First
Corinthians*, 81.

been if they had never tolerated this man's sin in the community (5:2b).

1.3. The Nature of the Corinthians' Boasting

In examining the details of 1 Corinthians 5, we noted that Paul's assessment of the Corinthians is that they are misguided in their boasting (5:2). His rebuke does not necessarily imply that every member of the community tolerated the man's sin.[218] It is possible that this issue is one of the reasons the church is divided.[219] We can surmise that those who reported this issue to Paul were concerned about the sinful son's presence in the church. Regardless of whether or not his criticism is directed to all of the Corinthians, the question still remains: Why would even some of the Corinthians tolerate sexual immorality in the church?

Most commentators answer this question by arguing that the Corinthians are boasting either a) *because of* the man's sin or b) *despite* it. Those who opt for the

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[218] Collins (*First Corinthians*, 210) believes Paul's rhetorical question in verse 2 is directed at the conceited members of the church and that these members are to be understood as the leaders of the community. Paul, though, says "you" (ὑμεῖς—2nd person plural) have become puffed up. Thus, it appears more likely that he is rebuking the entire church for allowing this sin to go on "among them" (v. 1), not just its leaders. This communal appeal seems consistent with other parts of the letter, such as Paul's preceding plea to the church not to follow after the wisdom of the world, evidenced by its attraction to particular leaders (1 Cor 1:10–4:21). His exhortation in 1:10 is to the ἀδελφοί (i.e., to *all* the brothers and sisters), and therefore, he calls on every member of the church to agree, to be like minded, and to be united (1:10). Thus, his appeal is not only directed to the leaders in the church, but to the entire community to take action.

[219] Mitchell (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 112) argues that the incestuous man has probably contributed to the church's divisiveness. It is possible, as she proposes then, that the passage is related to the section dealing with the Corinthians' spiritual disorder, evidenced by the σχίσματα in the church (1:10). She claims that all other issues Paul deals with in the letter are as well (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 111–21); see also Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (2d ed.; ICC; New York: Scribner, 1967), 95. Although discord may influence some of the issues Paul deals with in the letter, many argue it is a mistake to conclude that internal disunity dominated all subject matter in 1 Corinthians. Paul's argument in chapters 5 and 6, for example, appears to derive from his condemnation of sexual sins, not factionalism (cf. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 261–64; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 33).

first view claim the Corinthians are celebrating the sinful relationship itself.[220]

Many of these commentators see this notion as a direct result of the Corinthians'

misinterpretation of the slogan that "all things are lawful for me" (1 Cor 6:12).

Paul is supposedly attacking a theological stance among the Corinthians who feel

that they have been freed from the law now that they are in Christ. Their disregard

of the law is the evidence that they are already reigning as kings in the new age

(1 Cor 4:6). Consequently, this over-realized eschatology allows them to do what

they want in the body because their physical actions no longer have any

ramifications in the spiritual realm.[221]

Scholars who argue that the Corinthians are boasting *despite* the incestuous

relationship reject the idea that some in the church are proud of the sin (i.e., they

have a libertine theology). It is supposed, instead, that because of their ill-founded

self-perception, whereby they consider themselves to have a heightened

spirituality, their arrogance has manifested itself in *overlooking* or *ignoring* the

man's sin.[222] In other words, the church is boasting even though there is an

undisciplined sexual sinner in the community. With such a disregard for morality,

the conclusion for scholars who adopt this position is that the Corinthians have no

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[220] So Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 104–05; Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 54; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 201–03; Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 111–12; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 388–90; Nigel Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2d ed. Epworth Commentaries. London: Epworth, 2005), 50.

[221] See Fee, *First Corinthians*, 250–54; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 388. 1 Corinthians 6:15–17 is another example used to demonstrate this perceived reasoning on the part of the Corinthians. The Corinthians justified having sex with prostitutes because they thought that what they did in the body no longer mattered (e.g., Thiselton, "The Meaning of Sarx," 211).

[222] So Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 52; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 159–62; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 49; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 53; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 156–57.

reason to take pride in what they perceive as spiritual maturity.[223] In the end,

choosing between the two views presented above has important implications for

our study of 1 Corinthians 5. If Paul is reprimanding the Corinthians because they

have a distorted Christian confession, one would expect his deliberation to focus

on correcting the church's theology. On the other hand, if the Corinthians are

boasting despite the incest that exists in the church, then Paul's deliberation

would probably be aimed more at strengthening their ethical discernment.

There are several reasons it is more likely that the Corinthians are boasting

despite the sexual immorality rather than because of it. If they are justifying this

man's behaviour on theological grounds, Paul would have refuted their doctrinal

errors more specifically, not rebuke them for their boasting.[224] Instead of

correcting their theology, Paul actually encourages the Corinthians to use what

they already know to inform their ethical decisions (esp. vv. 6–8). Furthermore,

up to this point in the letter, the Apostle appears to have been more concerned

with the Corinthians' conforming to harmful cultural values than he has been with

theological misunderstandings (e.g., 1 Cor 3:3).[225] This is revealed once more in

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[223] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 159. Robertson and Plummer (*First Corinthians*, 96): "Paul does not mean that they were puffed up because of this outrage, as if it were a fine assertion of Christian freedom, but in spite of it. It should have humbled them to dust, and yet they still retained their self-satisfied complacency."

[224] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 160. Katherine Callow ("Patterns of Thematic Development in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13," in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* [eds. David A. Black, Katherine G. L. Barnwell, Stephen H. Levinsohn; Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 201) argues that there is no specific connection between the incest (v. 1) and the boasting on the part of the Corinthians (v. 2) because Paul's "use of καὶ rather than δὲ in verse 2a makes it more likely that they were already puffed up."

[225] Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 128. Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 76–109) offers another explanation for the slogan "all things are lawful for me" (6:12), claiming that it was not a libertine maxim espoused by Corinthians in general, but one which was used only by society's elite who thought they were free from any moral restraints.

chapter 5 when he uses the word φυσιόω to describe the Corinthians' attitude (πεφυσιωμένοι) in verse 2a. This word can be understood as a groundless way of thinking that has been inflated by a worldly mind.[226] It is the same word that Paul uses in chapter 4 when he warns the Corinthians not to go beyond what is written so that they would not take pride (φυσιοῦσθε) in favour of one person over another (v. 6).[227] It seems from this evidence that the Corinthians are boasting over personalities, not in sins that derive from doctrines that justify participating in behaviours such as incest. Moreover, given the probable link between 4:18–21 and chapter 5, it is hard to believe that the nature of the Corinthians' arrogance would suddenly change just two verses later in 1 Corinthians 5:2a.

The notion that the Corinthians have a libertine theology also seems inconsistent with other parts of the letter. Chapter 7 reveals that Paul is dealing with some who are apparently adopting an opposite position. Rather than celebrating different kinds of sexual sins, they are abstaining from all sexual activity, believing that the Christian life involves the complete abandonment of sexual relations (1 Cor 7:1–9).[228] It would be peculiar if the Corinthian church has two extreme views on sex, one ascetic and one libertine, yet only questioned Paul

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[226] BDAG, 1069. Paul makes a similar argument to those in the church at Colossae, who are warned not to let anyone disqualify them by being deceived into the worship of celestial beings. For Paul, the grounds for such worship is based on those who have become "puffed up (φυσιούμενος) without cause *by a human way of thinking*" (Col 2:18 NRSV). Paul's opponents in Colossae have become arrogant because their minds are completely oriented toward worldly thinking (see Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* [TPNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008], 224–25).

[227] Paul first describes the Corinthians' arrogance in favour of some personalities over others in 1:10–17 and then again in chapter 3 (esp. v. 21).

[228] Goulder, "Libertines," 334–48; cf. Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 38–39.

about the former in the letter they had sent him (1 Cor 7:1). One would have expected the Corinthians to write him asking, "Some of our leaders say we should give sex up and others say any sexual union is all right: what do you think?"[229] Such polarized viewpoints in the community certainly would have begged for an answer. It is for these reasons that it is a mistake to suppose that even some of the Corinthians are boasting because they celebrate this man's sin. As we will see below, there are cultural factors at play that are causing the Corinthians to avoid removing this man from the church.[230] In conclusion, it should also be noted that in order for Paul's comparison of the Corinthians to the Gentiles to be effective (v. 1b), he must assume that the Corinthians are sensitive to the Gentiles' attitude towards this particular sin. If this was not the case, his entire argumentative strategy in verses 1 and 2 is pointless.[231]

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[229] Goulder, "Libertines," 336–37.

[230] Although I have shown that Paul's emphasis in this chapter is on the community as a whole and not the individual man guilty of incest, it still can be asked why this man would so blatantly disregard sexual purity yet claim to be a Christian. To understand this, however, one must look at much more than just the conventional laws and norms of Roman Corinth, and even more specifically, the church's ethics. One reason the son may be involved in this relationship is because people do not always adhere to the principles by which they claim to live and often respond inappropriately to the God they claim to know (cf. Rom 1:21) (see Ian W. Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing: Story, Experience, and the Spirit* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009], 19). The man may very well be a Christian, but he may also have competing desires. For instance, relationships between sons and their stepmothers in the ancient world were often sexually tempting. Given the fact that many Roman marriages involved the taking of younger wives, second marriages frequently created situations where fathers took wives in the age range of their sons. Thus, many cases of incest in Roman Corinth involved the behaviour of consenting adults and not the abuse of children, for which much of the discussion of incest in today's context concerns itself (see Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 48–49).

Another motive the son may have for participating in this relationship is the desire to improve his economic interests. A man could gain substantial wealth through marriage since it meant that he gained his wife's share of her family inheritance (See evidence in Richard P. Saller, "Roman Dowry and the Devolution of Property in the Principate," *CQ* 34 (1984): 195–205). Chow (*Patronage and Power*, 137–38) offers several other reasons why the man in chapter 5 may be economically motivated to marry his stepmother. For example, unmarried people could pay heavier taxes, and it was even possible for unmarried men to lose the right to their inheritances.

[231] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 161; cf. Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 52.

1.4. Societal Influences on the Corinthians' Ethical Framework

The above analysis suggested that the Corinthians' toleration of sexual immorality

is not the result of a theological justification in which members of the church are

taking pride in the incestuous relationship itself. Rather, some in the church are

boasting as though they are spiritual ones despite the sinner's presence in the

community. It was also noted that the reason for ignoring the son's behaviour is

the result of societal influences having an impact on the Corinthians' ethical

framework.[232] Their hesitancy to deal with the problem is understandable since

many of them were recent converts, and they brought with them prior values that

were not necessarily compatible with the gospel.[233] Even so, Paul criticizes the

Corinthians for "behaving according to human inclinations" (1 Cor 3:3 NRSV)

because they were applying the world's wisdom to the church's ethics. The

following section will examine some of the possible cultural influences that may

have played a substantial part in the Corinthians' choosing to overlook this man's

sin.

The most likely social factor that impacted the church's ethical decisions in

this case is that the incestuous son had significant influence in the church. It is

reasonable to assume that those in the community with high social statuses

replicated the conventions of Corinth's other forms of ἐκκλησία during Christian

meetings.[234] Influential Christians, therefore, could use their power to manipulate

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[232] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 46–54; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 162–63.

[233] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 4.

[234] The word ἐκκλησία means "an official gathering" or "a formal meeting of 'The People'" (Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 190); cf. BDAG, 303.

the community in ways they had learned through normal cultural practices.[235]

Since the elite members of the church did not want to give up the privileges that

accompanied their social status in the larger society,[236] it may be even possible

that the immoral man of chapter 5 is pressuring the weak members by threatening

legal action against them. This would help to explain why some in the church are

silent while he is clearly violating Christian ethics.[237]

The Corinthians are perhaps also ignoring the man's sin because he is a

powerful patron in the community.[238] For some to criticize him for his sexual

relations would violate their patron-client relationship, one that in the Roman

world was often unconditional regardless of the patron's morality.[239] Tension

between the two parties then could easily have led to enmity and possible

sanctions against a client, or to an even greater extent, the entire church.[240]

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[235] Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 192–93. It must also be kept in mind that, unlike many churches today, the Christian community in Corinth was a small close-knit social unit. The amount of communal pressure against those in opposition to the son's sin would have been much stronger than what we would find in many larger churches where the community is not as dependent on each other (Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 8).

[236] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 157.

[237] This may help explain the unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6 and why Paul brings up the issue of the law courts (1 Cor 6:1-8) between two discussions on sexual immorality in 1 Cor 5:1–13 and 6:12–20. Will Deming ("The Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6," *JBL* 115 (1996): 289–312) contends that the crisis to which Paul is addressing in 1 Corinthians 5–6 is a matter of a single case of sexual misconduct in which some members of the church are attempting to settle in the courts. The result of this, according to Deming, is conflict and moral confusion in the community. For a similar argument, see Peter Richardson, "Judgment in Sexual Matters in 1 Corinthians 6:1–11," *NovT* 25 (1983): 37–58.

[238] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 158; see also Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 139–40; Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 89–108; Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 53.

[239] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 51: "In addition, members of the church would also be in patron-client relationships with individuals who were not members of the church and thus be caught in obligations which ran counter to their Christian commitment."

[240] Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 49; see also Clarke (*Secular and Christian Leadership*, 33) who says the sense of obligation to patrons was often so strong that those who did not return

Therefore, the Corinthians would have had second thoughts before confronting

him. It would have been easy to overlook the sins of a person whom they relied

upon to contribute economically to the church, or who would open up their homes

for assemblies.[241] Although we can only speculate that if the sexual offender had a

lower social status, it is quite possible that the Corinthians may have exercised

discipline against him since expelling him from the church would have had very

different communal ramifications.[242]

It must also be kept in mind that it would have been difficult for the

Corinthians to confront the son because of the normal patriarchal values held in

Roman Corinth. There was often no shame involved for men who had sexual

relationships outside of marriage even if their behaviours may have been contrary

to the moral standard of the particular group to which they belonged.[243] In

Corinthian culture, that which was considered right often depended on whether it

brought honour or shame. Consequently, shame often was not measured in terms

of what was morally acceptable, contrary to Jewish and Christian ethics. For

anyone, including Paul, to question this man's sexual habits could have appeared

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favours were thought to have committed an injustice significant enough to justify enmity between the two parties.

[241] Goulder, "Libertines," 347–48: "So we may accuse [Paul's] pneumatic opponents of respecting persons and of inconsistency, procrastination and dishonesty; but not of *gnostisierender Libertinismus*."

[242] Chow (*Patronage and Power*, 139) considers the elite in the church to be the ones behind all the issues in 1 Corinthians: they cause divisions in the church (4:6) and are people without love or knowledge (8:1; 13:4). Paul is still acting in response to these same opponents in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and chapters 8–10. Although Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 157) doubts Chow's claim, he considers that "Chow is probably right in saying that they were the main troublemakers. They obviously had the most to lose by following Paul's program of deinculturation."

[243] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 157.

as an unnecessary restriction on his normal male privileges.[244] In considering

1 Corinthians 5, it is possible that Corinthians are being pressured into protecting

the son's honour rather than pursuing his removal from the community, regardless

of the fact that his actions were immoral.[245] Although this scenario may seem

unlikely given that the relationship in question was even taboo in Corinthian

society, there were ways of circumventing laws relating to such things as a

marriage between a son and his stepmother.[246] It does not mean that the

relationship was necessarily recognized under Roman law, but that the strong and

powerful often manipulated the system for their advantage.[247]

It is more likely that the above sociological factors are the reasons the

Corinthian church is tolerating sexual immorality as opposed to having a distorted

theology that equates freedom with licentiousness.[248] The Corinthians are falling

back into a default mindset where they naturally act and think similarly to those in

their culture. The cultural norms are outweighing their judgment on ethical issues,

even though they involve clear violations of God's moral standards. Paul is thus

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[244] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 154.

[245] Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 79; cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 10.2.12.

[246] Some contend that even certain Jewish traditions argued it was possible for a man to claim that his former social relations were dissolved when he became a proselyte, and therefore, he was then free to marry anyone he wanted, including his stepmother. See Peter J. Tomson (*Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* [CRINT 3.1; Assent/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1990], 100–01) for relevant sources and for his challenges to this assertion; cf. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 62n, 83n.

[247] Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 133.

[248] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 162: "To assume that a theological pretext lies behind every problem in Corinth is both naive and unrealistic. People generally do not think through some theological rationale for an action before doing it. Greco-Roman religiosity normally did not affect moral behaviour, and new converts would not have been accustomed to think through the religious implications of their conduct"; cf. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, 14.

trying to get the Corinthians to see that they have to reflect on their thinking, practices, and attitudes because he knows that it is too easy to be swayed by the same thinking patterns that they had learned from their surrounding culture.

2. 1 Corinthians 5:3–5

2.1. Translation

[3] For though I am absent in body but present in spirit, I have already judged in the name of the Lord Jesus the one who has done this as though I were present. [4] When you are assembled and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, [5] hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

2.2. Preliminary Exegesis

As the number of different translations suggests, verses 3–5 have proven problematic for translators and commentators alike.[249] What is clear in these verses, however, is that after criticizing the arrogant *you* in the church for having failed to take action (v. 2), Paul now uses himself as an example of one who has responded appropriately. He has "already judged"[250] the man even though he is "absent in body but present in spirit" (5:3).[251]

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[249] Much could be said concerning the interpretation of verses 3–5; however, space does not allow for a comprehensive investigation, and therefore, only that which is pertinent to the present thesis will be discussed. For an in-depth treatment of these verses, see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 392–400.

[250] The verb *to judge* (κέκρικα) in verse 3 carries the idea of reaching a decision or conclusion based on a cognitive deliberation (BDAG, 568).

[251] See Colossians 2:5 for a similar example where Paul tells his audience that he is with them in spirit even though he is not physically present. Some commentators suggest Paul is using language that can be understood in the same way that one might say he or she is with friends in

One of the main difficulties in translating verses 3 and 4 is the placement of

the phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ. It comes after one of the

following options: a) τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον, b) συναχθέντων ὑμῶν, or

c) ἤδη κέκρικα. A strength of the first translation option is that ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ

κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ directly follows τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον.[252] This

translation, however, seems to suggest that the man commits incest "in the name

of our Lord Jesus," as though he believes he is free from any law that forbids him

from having sex with his stepmother.[253] This option is doubtful since it is highly

unlikely that there is a libertine theology in the Corinthian church. Furthermore,

Paul is not asserting anything in these verses about the man's motivation for

committing this sexual sin. Instead, his focus continues to be on the responsibility,

attitudes, and actions of the whole community.[254] An alternative translation is that

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thought even though they are apart (Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 123; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 50). Others argue that in some way Paul believes he is spiritually present with the Corinthians as they deal with this issue (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 157–58). He is claiming that when the church is gathered together, the Holy Spirit is understood to be with them (cf. 1 Cor 3:16), and for him, this means that he is also with them by the same Spirit (Fee, *First Corinthians*, 203–05). In the end, the text does not specify exactly what Paul means by *in spirit*. It is probable that through the Spirit, Paul sees his letter as communicating his presence to the Corinthians in some tangible way, not simply in some fictive sense (Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 391). Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 165) says, "[Paul] explains in 6:17 that those united to Christ become one spirit with him. This fundamental idea may be the basis of how his spirit can be present with them (cf. Rom 1:9; 8:16; 1 Cor 14:14–15; 2 Cor 2:13)"; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 203–05; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 84.

[252] In other places, Paul uses the same phrase directly following its verb (1 Cor 6:11; 2 Thess 3:6; Col 3:17); see Fee, *First Corinthians*, 207n.

[253] See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "I Corinthians 3–5," *RB* 84 (1977): 239–245. Richard A. Horsley (*1 Corinthians* [ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 1998], 80) also opts for the reading that the incestuous man does this act "in the name of the Lord Jesus." He believes the man understands himself to have a new spiritual status which makes "all things lawful" (6:12).

[254] Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 206) claim that "We would expect [Paul to say] 'in Christ,' rather than in 'the name of the Lord Jesus,' if a perverse distortion of Christian freedom were being reported."

"in the name of our Lord Jesus" comes after συναχθέντων ὑμῶν (e.g., ESV,

NIV).[255] It is argued that this corresponds with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:20,

which refers to the realm in which the community is to assemble and act; the

opposite one in which they are to hand over the incestuous man, who is in Satan's

realm (v. 5). Therefore, when they are assembled together, they are to do so "in

the name of the Lord Jesus."[256] Some claim, though, that placing ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι

τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ after "when you are assembled" is redundant since

immediately following this Paul uses the similar phrase, σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ

κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ.[257] The last option, which I have chosen, translates ἐν τῷ

ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ after ἤδη κέκρικα (e.g., NRSV).[258] This is

consistent with the context of the chapter since part of the problem Paul is dealing

with appears to be a lack of authority on the part of the Corinthians when dealing

with the judgment of sinners in the Christian community. Paul, on the other hand,

has already passed judgment on this man "in the name of the Lord Jesus." His

authority comes from the Lord Jesus, and it is with this same authority that he

expects the Corinthians to expel the man from the church.[259]

Next Paul continues to urge the Corinthians to come to the same judgment

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[255] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 384; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 228, 236.

[256] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 237.

[257] Fee (*First Corinthians*, 207) argues that this placement "overloads the verb 'assembled.'" Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 111), however, believes this argument to be arbitrary and says that this translation is just as possible as any other; cf. Mare, "1 Corinthians," 217.

[258] E.g., Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 205–06; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 206–07; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 155.

[259] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 207; cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 167.

as he has: "When you are assembled and my spirit is present, with the power of

our Lord Jesus, hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that

his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:4–5). Paul wants the

Corinthians to envision themselves as a community which comprises three

different agents: Jesus, Paul, and the church. His words, then, could be interpreted

as follows: "When *you* and *I* are assembled, with the power of our Lord Jesus, *we*

are to remove this wicked person from among the community."[260] This paraphrase

suggests Paul's intention in chapter 5 is not to exercise his apostolic authority in

order to make a unilateral decision without the community's participation, as

some commentators claim.[261] Instead, he wants the church to recognize that it has

also been invested with the power of Jesus to declare that this man is no longer

part of the covenant community.[262]

In verse 5 Paul elaborates on the judgment the incestuous man should

receive from the church: "Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the

flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Cor 5:5).[263] Most

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[260] See Fee (*First Corinthians*, 204) who believes that the subject of the verb is a compound subject, and therefore, this same "we" is to hand the man over to Satan. According to Fee, this is "undoubtedly related to [Paul's] understanding of life in the Spirit." Fee continues, "The action is to be a community action (not a church tribunal), carried out in the context of the Spirit. The term 'power' is reference to the Spirit, who is dynamically present among them when they assembled together" (*First Corinthians*, 206). See also Murphy O'Connor ("I Corinthians 3–5," 244) who notes that since Paul mentions he is "present" with the Corinthians three times in vv. 3–4, it still gives him a voice in this judgment "without destroying their responsibility."

[261] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97. Horsley (*1 Corinthians*, 79–80) believes Paul has become impatient with the Corinthians' inaction; therefore, he is using his authority to command them to expel the man from the church.

[262] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 84.

[263] Based on both the context and the Greek text, it is curious that the NASB translates παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ as "*I have decided* to deliver such a one to Satan" (5a). Paul's argument in chapter 5 is that this judgment is not to be a unilateral act, but one in which the

commentators agree that this *handing over* refers to the man's expulsion from the community.[264] This act carries with it a forceful judgment that the Corinthians would understand means a loss of privileges the man would have enjoyed as part of the community of faith.[265] Paul specifies that the church is to hand him over to Satan, which is a place outside the realm of God's redemptive protection and open to the destructive power.[266] Being handed over to this realm means that the man is no longer part of the community where he would be supported by other believers and be privileged with those who experience the "edifying gifts and loving concern" of others.[267]

Paul then includes the reason for handing this man over to Satan, stating that it is "for the destruction of the flesh." The question that has caused much debate among commentators is what exactly does he mean when he refers to "the destruction of the flesh"? Some commentators consider the Apostle's words as some type of declaration that this man will surely die.[268] Others who also view

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community is expected to participate. Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 168; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 158.

[264] Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 126; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 208. To "hand over (παραδοῦναι) to Satan" assumes that Satan acts as God's punishing agent in some way (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 169; cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* [Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2001], 302).

[265] Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (2d ed.; TNTC; Leicester/Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1985), 88. Fee (*First Corinthians*, 209) believes this expulsion likely meant the exclusion from the gathering of the church for worship, including meals and suppers honouring the Lord.

[266] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 85; cf. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 126; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97–98; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 397.

[267] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 209.

[268] So Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 97. Conzelmann compares this to 1 Corinthians 11:30 where it speaks of certain Corinthians abusing the table of the Lord. On this matter, Paul reveals that it is "for this reason many of [them] are weak and ill, and some have died." Similarly, Bruce

this as a physical judgment opt more for the idea that Paul's intention is that his physical suffering is for the purpose of his repentance, not his death.[269] Some of them claim this physical testing is paralleled in Job (1:12; 2:6) where he is also handed over to Satan. Therefore, Job's suffering was indeed an attack by Satan on his physical *flesh*, but it was intended by God as redemptive and not as a final destruction.[270] Those who reject these physical curse interpretations understand that Paul does not have the man's death or physical suffering in mind, but instead, the destruction of his sinful nature or sinful inclination.[271] Thus, his "carnal nature" would be destroyed by being handed over to Satan's realm,[272] and his expulsion would then shame and shock him into repenting since it meant that he would likely face a bleak existence without the care and support of the Christian community.[273]

(*1 and 2 Corinthians*, 55) believes Paul's language calls for something more severe than merely excommunication. He compares the handing over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh to the discipline that Ananias and Sapphira received from the Apostle Peter in Acts 5:1.

[269] So Simon J. Kistemaker, "'Deliver this Man to Satan' (1 Cor 5:5): A Case Study in Church Discipline," *MSJ* 3 (Spring 1992): 44; Mare, "1 Corinthians," 217–18.

[270] Kistemaker, "Deliver this Man to Satan," 44.

[271] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 158; cf. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 105. *Contra* Morris (*First Corinthians*, 88) who insists it is unlikely that Paul's phrase "the destruction of the flesh" refers to the destruction of the sinful nature, as though the immoral man's excommunication would have some sort of purifying effect on him. Morris contends, rather, that throwing the man out into the realm of Satan on his own would make things worse for him morally.

[272] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 212.

[273] Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 158–59) argues that since many in the church did not have advantages in Corinthian society, Paul knew that once this man was removed from the community, his exclusion would act as a "shock therapy" that would perhaps quench his sinful inclinations and shame him since in the Greco-Roman world, a person's fate outside of his or her *ekklesia* was often worse than death. If the man wanted to remain a part of any Christian fellowship, it would be difficult for him since the Christian community was very different than it is today. He could not simply change churches, and this grim reality was what Paul hoped would lead to his repentance and restoration.

Although each view is possible, the latter interpretation is preferable. This

conclusion is consistent with Paul's disciplinary approach elsewhere where

repentance and restoration is often the purpose of his church discipline.[274] Even

though the word σὰρξ can speak of the physical body,[275] in this context, Paul

appears to be referring to "the destruction of the *mind* or *stance* of the flesh."[276]

This imagery is also found in his other letters where he asks his audience to

"crucify the flesh" (Gal 5:24; cf. Rom 7:5–6).[277] Perhaps the main reason why

Paul's words should be interpreted as remedial is because of the salvific motive

he provides next. The man is to be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the

flesh "*so that* (ἵνα) his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (v 5b). Paul's

intent appears to be that this man will be excluded from the community so that he

will not be able to share in the spiritual life of the church.[278] This handing over,

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[274] When Paul writes 2 Corinthians, he talks about a previous letter that had made some of the Corinthians sorrowful (7:8). He then says he rejoiced not in the fact that they were sorrowful, but that this godly sorrow led to repentance (vv. 9–10). Paul then speaks about his purpose in writing that letter: "So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God" (v. 12 NRSV). These words suggest that Paul's emphasis is on the church's decisive action. Because this action led to the repentance of one of its members, some believe that Paul is talking about the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5; therefore, it might suggest that the Apostle's instruction to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh was in fact remedial. See Colin Kruse, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (TNTC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987), 44–45. *Contra* Fee (*First Corinthians*, 212) who argues that the two passages are not speaking about the same person.

[275] Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 64. See pages 62–73 for Dunn's detailed discussion on the meaning of σὰρξ.

[276] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 396.

[277] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 212.

[278] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 213. Second Temple Judaism often replaced execution with excommunication when applying scriptural texts to its own communities (see William Horbury, "Extirpation and Excommunication," *VT* 35 [1985]: 27–30); cf. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 82.

then, is for the good of the man's salvation since the church's disapproval could stimulate him to change his behaviour and restore him to the community.[279] If Paul really intends the "destruction of the flesh" to refer to death or physical suffering, it seems strange that his own judgment of the man is different from what he required of the Corinthians (5:2c; cf. v. 13b).[280] Paul's later instruction that they not associate with people like him during social occasions (5:11) also suggests that he is not prescribing the man's death, but simply community exclusion.[281] Even with the number of possible interpretations for the various parts of verses 3–5, we should not lose sight that Paul's primary concern here is with the church as a whole, not the fate of the individual sinner.

In this chapter we examined the specific problem of sexual immorality in 1 Corinthians 5. Although some scholars have suggested that the Corinthians and/or the man are justifying incest on theological grounds, I argued that Corinth's entrenched social conventions have likely inhibited the community from expelling the man from the church. It is also probable that the Corinthians are tolerating the man's sin because he possesses a high social status and wealth, and his removal from the community may cost the church significantly.

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[279] Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 108; cf. Jules Cambier, "La Chair et l'Esprit en 1 Cor 5:5," *NTS* 15 (1968–69): 228.

[280] Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 100.

[281] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 212. See David R. Smith (*"Hand this Man over to Satan": Curse, Exclusion and Salvation in 1 Corinthians 5* [London: T&T Clark, 2008]: 7–56) for a helpful discussion on the interpretation of "hand this man over to Satan" that commentators have proposed throughout church history. Smith himself favours the view that the consequence of Paul's curse on the sinner leads to death. For a contrary position, see James T. South, "A Critique of the Curse/Death Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:1–8," *NTS* 39 (1993): 539–61.

In addition, we have investigated Paul's response to this sin and discovered that although the Apostle believes the incestuous son should be judged, he is more concerned with the Corinthian community's attitude than he is with the individual sinner's shameful behaviour. In a sharp rebuke, Paul accuses the Corinthians of being arrogant because instead of boasting, they should have all been mourning over this sin. Even though he clearly outlines the punishment that the church is to administer in such cases, he is not making an apostolic decree that must be blindly followed. The Corinthians must administer judgment in this situation since they are the ones who are truly responsible to maintain the purity of the church in Corinth (5:3–5).[282]

Now that we have established a working hypothesis of the Corinthian church's ethical framework, we are prepared not only to identify parallels between the Israelites of the exodus generation and the Corinthians' situation but also to understand how the Corinthian church would receive Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5. With this in mind, we will turn to look at how Paul uses allusions in verses 1–5 to encourage the proper ethical deliberation in the Corinthian church.

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[282] Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (trans. Frank Clarke; London: SCM Press, 1961), 192. Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 105) argues that Paul "sets out to create the condition necessary for the community to come to its own conclusion" (cf. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 128).

Chapter 5

PAUL'S ARGUMENTATION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1–5

We have seen that Paul received word that a man in the Corinthian church is

having a sexually immoral relationship with his stepmother. Instead of focusing

on the guilty individual, he addresses the Corinthians as a whole, whom he

believes should already have done what God expected of his people when a

person participated in this kind of sin—his or her removal from the community

(1 Cor 5:2). Although Paul introduces the problem of incest by noting that even

the Greco-Roman world did not condone this type of behaviour (5:1b), his overall

argument is influenced heavily by the Jewish ideas of holiness and community

judgment found frequently in the exodus narrative. This chapter will first locate

the possible allusions to this story in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 and then analyze how

Paul employs them in his ethical deliberation. We will observe that these first few

verses are an important part of his overall argument in chapter 5 because he uses

these verses to locate the Corinthians within the overarching narrative of God's

covenant people. It will become clear that Paul draws analogies between the

exodus narrative and the church's current situation to remind the Corinthians of

their covenant identity and the responsibilities that derive from this identification.

1. *Prima Facie* Evidence of the Exodus Narrative in 1 Corinthians 5

It will be helpful to first set up the overall evidence that points toward the *prima*

facie likelihood that Paul has the exodus in mind before analyzing the specific

allusions in 1 Corinthians 5. As I mentioned in the introduction, relying on one particular test to determine whether or not Paul intended to allude to the exodus story cannot be conclusive. All of them together, though, can allow us to be more certain that he is drawing his readers' attention to this narrative in 1 Corinthians 5. First, we know that the implied reader in Paul's audience would be able to hear the allusions to the exodus narrative in the Apostle's deliberation since he or she would have been familiar with the source texts from the LXX. This seems to be evident since Paul does not have to explain the significance or meaning of something like the *Passover*. He mentions it knowing that his audience would understand the historical context surrounding this event. The same can be said about his word-for-word citation from Deuteronomy in verse 13b, ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, in which he offers no exposition of the text.[283]

The second method for finding allusions in 1 Corinthians 5 is to identify the number of thematic and verbal links it has with the exodus narrative. We will see that there are many thematic parallels, such as Paul's explicit reference to the Passover (v. 7b), and the correlative aspects of this event: leavened and unleavened bread (vv. 6–8) and the celebration of the feast (v. 8a). There are also other allusions such as the proper mourning over sin (v. 2a), judgment (vv. 2–5, 12–13), and idolatry (v. 10–11) to name a few. There are verbal links present as well, such as Paul's choice of words, "a man has his father's wife," to describe the incestuous relationship in the church. This language describes a son's sexual relations with his stepmother, and as we will see, is found only in the LXX within

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[283] John Paul Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (SBLStBL 183; Atlanta/Leiden: Society of Biblical Literature/Brill, 2005), 91.

the context of Israel's wilderness experience. Similarly, the command to ἐξάρατε

τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (v. 13b) is an exclusion formula that is found in

several passages in Deuteronomy.

Third, Paul connects the church with Israel's exodus experience elsewhere

in the letter. A clear instance of this is 1 Corinthians 10 in which he uses stories

from Israel's journey in the wilderness as examples for the Corinthians (10:6).

Paul refers to Israel in verse 1 as πατέρες ἡμῶν ("our fathers"), and in doing so he

is not only linking the two together in the history God's people, but he is also

identifying the Corinthians as *Israel*.[284] One could make the case that identifying

the church as Israel is reason enough to make a connection with the exodus, since

this event was the quintessential, defining moment in Israel's salvific history. The

fourth test in finding the certainty of Paul's allusions is whether the suggested

allusions cohere with his overall argument in 1 Corinthians 5. The validity of this

test will be examined as we work through Paul's argumentation.

2. Paul's Allusions to the Exodus Narrative

2.1. "A man has his father's wife"

An obvious place to start looking for allusions to the exodus narrative in chapter 5

is by examining the first few verses where Paul explains one of the problems in

the Corinthian church—sexual immorality. There are many cases throughout the

Hebrew Scriptures in which sexual immorality is condemned because it is

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[284] Ben Witherington (*Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* [Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1994], 38) explains that when Paul identifies the Corinthians as Israel, he does not imply that they are *ethnic* Israel. See also Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 9–12.

considered contrary to the holiness of God.[285] These relationships include

incestuous ones similar to the case in 1 Corinthians 5.[286] In verse one Paul refers

to the relationship as γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν. The phrase γυναικὸς τοῦ

πατρὸς is a similar verbal construction that is found in the LXX on four occasions

(Lev 18:8; 20:11; Deut 22:30 [23:1]; 27:20). The command in Leviticus 18:8

forbids a man from uncovering the nakedness of "his father's wife" (γυναικὸς

πατρός σου). The same verbal distinctiveness is found in Leviticus 20:11 where

the writer also provides a similar construction to refer to an incestuous

relationship between a son and his father's wife (γυναικὸς τοῦ πατρὸς). Likewise,

Paul's description of the incestuous relationship in verse 1c, γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ

πατρὸς, matches Deuteronomy 22:30, where the writer states, οὐ λήμψεται

ἄνθρωπος τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ. This same command is repeated a few

chapters later in 27:20: ἐπικατάρατος ὁ κοιμώμενος μετὰ γυναικὸς τοῦ πατρὸς

αὐτοῦ. In order to determine the certainty of whether or not Paul is actually

referring to these texts, we must ask the following questions: a) How frequently

was the phrase γυνή τοῦ πατρὸς used in the standard way of referring to this form

of incest in Jewish literature, and b) was it the normal way of referring to a

stepmother in the Greco-Roman world?

The likelihood that Paul is alluding to at least one of the aforementioned

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[285] Lev 18:6–23; 20:10–21; Deut 22:13–30; 23:17–18; Jer 23:14–15; Mal 3:5.

[286] E.g., Gen 49:4; 1 Chr 5:1. In the Jewish extra-biblical tradition, incest is also seen as a serious sin and an affront against God. The writer of *Jubilees*, for instance, states that "There is no forgiveness in order to atone for a man who has done this, forever, but only to execute him and kill him and stone him and to uproot him from the midst of the people of God. For any man who does this in Israel should not have life for a single day upon the earth because he is despicable and polluted" (33:10–13); see also Sir 23:16.

verses is increased by the fact that apart from these texts in Leviticus and

Deuteronomy of the LXX, forbidden relationships between a son and his father's

wife/woman are always described differently. In Genesis 49:4 (cf. 35:22) the

writer refers to a case of Reuben's sexual relations with Jacob's concubine

Bilhah: ἀνέβης γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην τοῦ πατρός σου τότε ἐμίανας τὴν στρωμνήν οὗ

ἀνέβης ("went up to your father's bed"). The text in 1 Chronicles retells this story

using the same language: καὶ ἐν τῷ ἀναβῆναι ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ

("when he went up upon his father's bed") (5:1). Another example of a son

having a sexual relationship with his father's woman is found in 2 Samuel 16:21

where the writer describes the sexual act as going into his "father's concubine"

(τὰς παλλακὰς τοῦ πατρός σου), rather than how Paul describes sexual relations

between the son and the woman of 1 Corinthians 5. It is true that concubines and

stepmothers are two different categories, but they are comparable since any sexual

activity that a son has with his father's woman is considered disgraceful and is

prohibited in the LXX.[287] This evidence suggests that there are no other instances

in the LXX in which the phrase γυναικὸς τοῦ πατρὸς is used to describe this type

of sin other than in these four verses in Leviticus and Deuteronomy.[288] Paul's

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[287] Amos 2:6–7, for example, lists several items that profane God's holy name, including when a father and his son share the same woman sexually. The writer of *Jubilees* also connects the two categories of concubine and wife, linking Reuben's sexual relations with his father's *concubine* with the prohibition described in Leviticus 18 and 20, and Deuteronomy 22 and 27; cf. William R. G. Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 466; see also James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 63n.

[288] In extra-biblical literature, the writer of *Pseudo-Phocylides* writes on Leviticus 18:8, which deals with the prohibition of sons who share their father's wives, but he refers to the woman in the relationship as the son's *stepmother* (μητρυιῆς); cf. Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality*, 466.

implied audience, therefore, would hear allusions to the LXX rather than any other

Jewish text that speaks of a son and father sharing the same woman.

Another reason it appears that Paul is alluding to the texts in Leviticus and

Deuteronomy is because until the Byzantine period (ca. 330–1453 C.E.), there was

no general word in Greek literature to describe incestuous relationships, let alone

those between a son and his stepmother.[289] This demonstrates that Paul's

reference to this type of incest would be very identifiable to his audience as an

allusion to the LXX since it does not surface as a standard way to refer to a

relationship between a son and his stepmother in any Greek literature.

Furthermore, the common word for *stepmother* in Ancient Greece was μητρυιά.[290]

The fact that the Apostle refers to the woman as γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς instead

of defining her as the man's μητρυιῆς increases the probability that his audience

would locate his language in the LXX rather than elsewhere.

2.2. Community Discipline

There are also thematic parallels between these four verses in the LXX and

1 Corinthians 5:1–5 that increase the probability that Paul is alluding to these

scriptural texts in his argument to the Corinthian church. Paul insists that the

appropriate action in this case is the son's removal from the community (5:2b,

5a). In the same way, the incestuous relationship between a son and his

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[289] Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, eds. "Incest," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (4th ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 731.

[290] E.g., Aeschylus, *Prometheus vinctus* 727; Hesiod, *Opera et dies* 823–25; Plato, *Leges* 930. For more examples in which the term μητρυιά is used for stepmothers in ancient Greek literature, see Patricia A. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers: Myth, Misogyny and Realities* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 3–7, 13.

stepmother in Leviticus is reason for community discipline. In Leviticus 18, the writer discusses several unlawful sexual acts, including incest (vv. 6–18), but also relations with a menstruating woman (v. 19), a neighbour's wife (v. 20), a person of the same sex (v. 22), and animals (v. 23). The judgment to be carried out by the community for all these offences is that each offender is to be "cut off from his people" (v. 29). Similarly, Leviticus 20 warns the Israelites not to overlook (i.e., to tolerate) the sin that was among them, which appears to parallel Paul's accusation against the Corinthians in this present case. Instead of tolerating the immoral offenders, the Israelites are told to remove them from the community because if they did not, then God himself will set his "face against them and against their family, and will cut them off from among their people" (Lev 20:4–5 NRSV). It was necessary that offenders in Israel be disciplined, such as those who had sexual relations with their stepmothers (20:11).[291]

Similar to the passages in Leviticus, community discipline is also a thematic parallel between 1 Corinthians 5 and the two texts in Deuteronomy. In chapter 22, the writer begins a section on sexual immorality (v. 13), which includes cases of adultery (v. 22), violating a neighbour's wife (vv. 23–24), rape (vv. 25–27), and sexual relations with a stepmother (22:30). For most of these cases, the punishment for violating God's law is the offender's removal from the community (vv. 21, 22, 24). Even though verse 30 does not state directly that the offender must be purged from the community, the same punishment is implied. The context of Deuteronomy 22 demonstrates that sleeping with one's stepmother

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[291] It should be noted that the result of the sinner's removal in these cases is death and not simply his expulsion.

would also fall under the prohibition of a man sleeping with another man's wife

(v. 22a).[292] As for chapter 27, the writer declares, "Cursed (ἐπικατάρατος) is the

one who sleeps with his father's wife" (v. 20). Biblical curses do not always

include the notion of a person's expulsion from the community, but the context of

Deuteronomy 27 would at least include this action since these curses appear to be

founded in Leviticus 18 and 20 where this relationship requires that the offenders

be removed.[293]

2.3. Deuteronomic Citation

We have been able to show so far that the Levitical and Deuteronomic texts which

prohibit sexual relationships between a son and his father's wife share similar

verbal and thematic parallels with 1 Corinthians 5:1–5. Even though Paul's

implied audience would recognize that his allusion is from the LXX, more

specifically, Deuteronomy 22:30 can be identified as the prominent intertext in

chapter 5 because Paul concludes his argument with a direct quotation that is

found several times in Deuteronomy: ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν

(v. 13b).[294] This exclusion formula is used three times in Deuteronomy 22 alone

as it relates to various sexual immoralities: ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν

(vv. 21, 22, 24).[295] Despite the fact that Deuteronomy 22:30 does not include the

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[292] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 82–83; cf. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 160.

[293] Gary H. Hall, *Deuteronomy* (CPNIV; Joplin, Mo.: Zondervan, 2000), 408.

[294] Paul changes the verb ἐξαίρω to a plural aorist imperative to fit the context of his argument in chapter 5.

[295] Although verse 22 is a slight variation, which speaks of removing the evil "from Israel" rather than "from among you," the same implication applies—remove the person from the

same exclusion formula as the other examples in chapter 22, I noted above that the contextual proximity to the other verses containing this formula makes it highly probable that the Israelites were expected to administer the same judgment to a man who commits incest with his father's wife (v. 30). Paul appropriates the same command to the incestuous son in 1 Corinthians 5.[296]

2.4. Assembly of the Lord

Not only does Paul's use of the Deuteronomic exclusion formula make it likely he is alluding to Deuteronomy in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5, another closely related association strengthens the probability the context of Deuteronomy 22–23 is the text that predominantly shapes his argument. The allusion from Deuteronomy 22:30 (cf. 1 Cor 5:1c) is immediately followed by regulations that deal with entering the assembly of the Lord (Deut 23:1–8). The forbidden sexual relationships listed in Deuteronomy 22:13–30 and the additional restrictions given in 23:1–8 are viewed as having a detrimental effect on the Israelites' relationship with Yahweh.[297] Thus, the people are commanded to purge the evildoers from the community to protect the purity of the Israelites before God. Those who are guilty are forbidden from entering the ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου, a phrase used six times in Deuteronomy 23:1–8 to refer to the place where the people encounter Yahweh.[298]

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covenant community (cf. 17:12). The Deuteronomist also gives the same command for other violations against Yahweh (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19, 21:21; 24:7).

[296] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 160; J. Gary Millar, *Now Choose Life: The Theology and Ethics in Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 137.

[297] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 137.

[298] Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT: Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), 296: "The *assembly* (*qahal*) of the Lord refers to the covenant people of God, particularly

The Israelites are commanded to keep themselves from every evil thing "because the LORD [their] God travels along with [their] camp . . . therefore [their] camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among [them] and turn away from [them]" (Deut 23:9 [10], 14 [15] NRSV). This context fits well with Paul's theological framework in all of 1 Corinthians, since he also places a great deal of emphasis on the ἐκκλησία ("church" or "assembly") in the letter.[299] He stresses throughout chapter 5 how critical it is for the Corinthians to maintain the purity of the ἐκκλησία to protect its relationship with God. Even the judgment of individuals is to take place when the Corinthians are assembled (vv. 3–5). It appears from this evidence that, although the other scriptural texts describing the same incestuous behaviour are no doubt embedded in Paul's symbolic world, the fact that he uses the exclusion formula (5:13b) and the context of the Lord's assembly reveals that Deuteronomy 22:30 is at the forefront of his mind as he develops his argument in chapter 5.[300]

Since I have argued that Paul draws allusions to Deuteronomy's ethical

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when they are gathered in his presence. . . . Here the word has a general reference to Israel as a worshipping community."

[299] Paul uses the word twenty-two times in 1 Corinthians to show that the Corinthian ἐκκλησία is an assembly which is made up of saints who are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1:2). He also uses ἐκκλησία to refer to a gathering where divisions are out of place (11:18, 22), people are built up (14:4, 5, 12), saints are instructed (14:19), and there is order (14:33).

[300] *Contra* V. George Shillington ("Atonement Texture in 1 Corinthians 5:5," *JSNT* 71 [1998]: 29–50) who argues that the closest parallel to 1 Corinthians 5 is Leviticus 18:8 based on its surrounding context concerning the atonement of Israel (Lev 16). Shillington believes Paul's command to "hand over" the incestuous son to Satan in verse 5 echoes Israel's "scapegoat" tradition; the Apostle simply replaces Azazel with Satan. In the same way, the son in the Corinthian church bears the sin of the community so it will be saved in the day of the Lord. The context of 1 Corinthians 5, however, does not appear to favour Shillington's proposal. Paul believes the man must be removed from the community because his presence is a contamination (vv. 6–8), not that he bears the sins of the many for the purpose of the community's atonement. See Garland's (*1 Corinthians*, 183) critique of the shortcomings of Shillington's thesis.

framework in particular, we must ask whether it is appropriate to speak of these legislative sections of the Scriptures as a part of the exodus *narrative*. To answer this question, it is important to understand that even when laws are presented to the Israelites, they are never given in isolation; they are found within a narrative setting. In other words, the laws are given at a particular point in the context of the larger narrative.[301] For instance, the "section of laws" in Deuteronomy (chs. 12–26) is part of Israel's overarching story, just as the more narrative-style material that comes to mind is that is presented in the book of Exodus, or even in the first eleven chapters of Deuteronomy. This section of laws in Deuteronomy is critical to the story because, while the Israelites are waiting for Yahweh to give them orders to cross the Jordan, so they can enter the promise land, this new generation must renew its covenant with Yahweh. The laws given in chapters 12–26 are part of the narrative since they provide the details of how the Israelites are to play a good role in the land of which they are about to take possession.[302]

Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5 is similar since he and his audience are part of the same grand narrative at a different stage. The Corinthians must also know how to play a good role in their own chapter of the story. Therefore, even when Paul relies on "non-narrative" parts of the Scriptures, they are never

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[301] Harry P. Nasuti, "Identity, Identification, and Imitation: The Narrative Hermeneutic of Biblical Law," *Journal of Law and Religion* 4 (1986): 9. Assnat Bartor (*Reading Law as Narrative: A Study in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010], 17) explains that "Several laws mention historical events that occurred in the past, before the laws were given, or events that will occur in the future, following the outline of the main narrative." Bartor goes on to explain that from a literary perspective, there is no difference between the section of *laws* and other parts of the Pentateuch because these laws "arise as a response to events during the wanderings in the wilderness, and which therefore belong to the main story" (*Reading Law as Narrative*, 19).

[302] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 99.

divorced from the overarching story of God's covenant people.[303] It is for this reason that when the Apostle alludes to the legislative parts of Scripture, which chronicle some of Israel's wilderness experiences, we can still speak in terms of his alluding to the exodus narrative.

2.5. Intertextual Evidence of the Exodus Narrative in 1 Corinthians

Part of this chapter's objective has been to demonstrate that Paul uses the exodus narrative in his ethical deliberation in chapter 5. Before moving on to examine the structure of his argument, one further illustration must be considered to show the relative probability that Paul is using the exodus narrative in the letter as a starting point for his arguments. In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle offers examples from Israel's exodus generation, recalling some of the judgment that the Israelites incurred for committing certain sins during their wilderness experience: idolatry (v. 7; cf. Exod 32:6), sexual immorality (v. 8; cf. Num 25:1–9), criticizing God (v. 9; cf. Exod 17:7; Num 21:4–9; Deut 6:16), and grumblers (v.10; Exod 17:2–3; Num 11:1; 14:2–4, 36). Paul uses these stories to warn the Corinthian community of the terrible punishment that awaits those who disobey God. Even though his reference to these events can only demonstrate that they were on his mind when he wrote chapter 10, it nevertheless strengthens the cumulative case for the exodus narrative as the background for his argument in chapter 5.[304]

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[303] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 134.

[304] Other possible examples in the letter demonstrate that allusions to the exodus narrative are a critical part of Paul's ethical deliberation (e.g., 6:1–11; 8:1–13; 12:13). N. T. Wright (*Paul: In Fresh Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005], 94) considers 1 Corinthians 8:6 a redefinition of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4).

We have noted above that the language in Paul's description of incest, γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν (5:1c), is found almost exclusively in the LXX (Lev 18:8; 20:11; Deut 22:30; 27:20). Although all four texts (and their contexts) play an important part in Israel's exodus narrative, I argued that Deuteronomy 22:30 is the prominent allusion in 1 Corinthians 5 partly because Paul quotes the word-for-word exclusion formula found several times in Deuteronomy 22, a section dealing with forbidden sexual relationships. I also noted that his allusion would consequently trigger analogies to the larger Deuteronomic tradition that are associated with such things as community discipline, the assembly of the Lord, and the curses and blessings associated with obedience.

3. Paul's Argumentation

So far in this chapter we have examined several possible allusions that suggest Paul is referring to the exodus narrative in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5. We are now in a position to examine his argumentation to appreciate how he uses analogies between the Corinthians' situation and the exodus narrative. The Apostle begins with two references that are intended to shape the Corinthians' understanding of themselves: a comparison to the ἔθνεσιν (v. 1b) and a man who has γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς (v. 1c). We will see that Paul refers to both of these to encourage the Corinthians to see themselves as God's covenant people. As a result, they should recognize that they now have responsibilities to fulfill, or they will face consequences for their disobedience.

3.1. Situating the Corinthians in the Overarching Story

Throughout the remainder of this thesis, I will argue that one of the reasons Paul

draws from the exodus narrative in his argumentation is to *situate* the Corinthians

within the *overarching* or *grand* theological narrative of God's covenant people.

First, however, it is necessary to examine briefly what it means to say that Paul is

situating the Corinthians in the same overarching narrative as those from the

exodus generation. We must recognize at the outset that the story of the exodus is

central to Israel's tradition since it is this event that marked the starting point for

the Jews as God's covenant people.[305] The event was then recalled every year in

subsequent generations through the ritual of the Passover (cf. Exod 12:14). The

exodus event was also "actualized and made present for every generation. [It] was

recalled as having been experienced by every Israelite in the present day. As such

it became a symbol of what God had done in the past, is doing in the present, and

will do in the future."[306] The exodus, therefore, served to form the identity of the

Jews: they were a people who had been liberated from Egyptian slavery by

Yahweh. This identity then shaped the ethical framework of succeeding

generations who could examine this story and determine the kinds of behaviours

necessary for those playing a good role in this story. The readers of Deuteronomy,

for example, were placed within the continuing narrative of Israel's exodus and

thus were expected to apply, refine, and reapply its implications to new social and

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[305] Walter Brueggemann (*Hope within History* [Atlanta: John Knox, 1987], 10) calls the exodus narrative a "governing paradigm in biblical faith."

[306] Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 36. Keesmaat also noted earlier that "Invariably, that which Israel is to remember and pass on is God's saving act for them in the exodus event. It is not an overstatement to say that this mighty act of salvation constituted the 'core tradition' which shaped Israelite belief" (*Paul and His Story*, 23).

political contexts in which they found themselves.[307]

Paul's argument follows the same Jewish tradition which retells, adapts, and applies previous generations' stories to its own situations.[308] In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle uses stories, language, and symbols from the exodus tradition to suggest that the Corinthian Christians are experiencing their own re-interpreted exodus event and calls them to see themselves as a part of Israel's story.[309] In fact, the grand narrative of God's covenant people includes both the ancient Israelites and the Corinthians at different stages of the same story. The story of God's covenant people began with the exodus event and is presently being reinterpreted for the Corinthians with the introduction of the Christ event. Paul is situating the Corinthians in the same grand narrative by drawing analogies between the exodus generation and the Corinthians' situation so that, as we will see, they will come to realize their common identity as God's covenant people and the responsibilities necessary for those in that role.[310]

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[307] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 28. Millar goes on to say that Israel's history "reflects an ongoing struggle to address basic questions fundamental to the existence of individual and community in relationship to Yahweh. There is unity because these questions were essentially the same for each generation and because they asked the questions of the same revealing God. There is diversity because new situations and times of national upheaval inevitably mark vigorous activity in seeking ethics for the new order" (*Now Choose Life*, 40).

[308] Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 36. Keesmaat later writes that the exodus "had an identity-shaping role within Israel's tradition and Paul's retelling had a similar function in his preaching" (*Paul and His Story*, 188). See also Ronald E. Clements, "Christian Ethics and the Old Testament," *Modern Churchman* 26 (1984): 22.

[309] Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 25.

[310] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 134–35. Hays (*Conversion of the Imagination*, 161) notes that "Such a 'use' of the OT in ethical reflection goes far beyond reading the text as a rule book and suggests that the community of the new creation must discover the will of God through boldly imaginative readings of the old story."

3.2. Covenant Identity

Paul begins 1 Corinthians 5 by revealing that there is a shameful situation in the Corinthian church in which a man is having a sexual relationship with his stepmother. This detail alone would be disgraceful enough for a Christian community, but what exacerbates the problem is that the behaviour in question is τοιαύτη πορνεία ἥτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (v. 1b). At first glance, Paul's comparison of the Corinthians and the Gentiles may appear to be irrelevant in a discussion about how he uses the exodus narrative in his argument.[311] Some have argued that Paul is making an appeal to a universal moral standard, not a Jewish one, to argue his point that the church should not tolerate this type of sin.[312] In the Apostle's mind, however, this behaviour is first and foremost a violation of Israel's law, and it is for this reason that he finishes his argument with an allusion to Deuteronomy 22:30 where the same forbidden relationship is mentioned and called to be purged from the community. Therefore, we should not miss what Paul's words are revealing even as he states the details of the problem in chapter 5: the description he offers of the sin is in itself a strategy that he employs to remind the Corinthians of their covenant identity.

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[311] Since Paul mentions that this relationship is τοιαύτη πορνεία ἥτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (v. 1b), some scholars have suggested that the Apostle is concerned with the scandal this particular sin creates in the greater Corinthian community; the sinful relationship hinders the work of evangelizing Gentiles (Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 19; cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 209). This idea, however, is not supported by the text. If the scandal is really Paul's main concern, it is noteworthy that he does not mention "pagan sensibilities" again in the chapter. There is also no indication that there is an actual historical case in which Gentiles were aware of this situation and were thereby scandalized by it. In the end, whether or not this sin is the cause of a scandal in Corinth is pure speculation, not to mention that it is beside Paul's purpose in chapter 5 (Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 103).

[312] So Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 107.

In making reference to both the ἔθνεσιν ("Gentiles") and γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ

πατρὸς ἔχειν, Paul is making a subtle juxtaposition that sets up his entire

argument in chapter 5. To him there is a clear distinction between two contrasting

identities—Israelite and Gentile. His reference to the Gentiles reveals that he no

longer regards the Corinthians as those who fit into the category of the ἐθνῶν.[313]

Since Paul is addressing them as "former-Gentiles," it means that this is the first

step he takes in situating them in the same overarching narrative as those who

were part of the exodus generation, even if it is merely at an implicit level. This

idea is also found later in the letter when, speaking to the church, Paul refers to

the Israelites as "our ancestors" (πατέρες ἡμῶν), thus again implying that the

Corinthians are Israel (10:1).[314] He then proceeds to recall several of Israel's

wilderness experiences to warn the Corinthians of the consequences of disobeying

God (vv. 6–10).[315]

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[313] Hays (*First Corinthians*, 81) defines ἔθνος as "non-Jews"; cf. Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 21. Terence L. Donaldson (*Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997], 236) makes a similar claim: "The shape of Paul's rhetoric concerning Gentile salvation can best be accounted for in terms of an underlying pattern of convictions in which Gentiles are thought of as proselytes to an Israel configured around Christ."

[314] Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 134–35. Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 218) argues that "This idea is further reinforced in v. 18 where Paul reminds the audience of 'Israel according to the flesh,' which surely means OT Israel and implies a distinction from an Israel according to the Spirit, that is, the *ekklēsía*—both Jew and Gentile in Christ." Some scholars, however, object to the claim that Paul is identifying the Corinthians as Israel (e.g., J. Brian Tucker, *"Remain in Your Calling": Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* [Eugene, Oreg.: Pickwith, 2011], 131–32). Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 220) says it is possible that Paul uses the first person plural pronoun (ἡμῶν) in an exclusive manner to refer to himself and his fellow Israelites. This suggestion would be similar to what is reflected in the mishnaic tradition (e.g., *m Bik* 1:4). For more arguments in favour of the assertion that Paul is identifying the Corinthians as Israel, see Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 448–49; Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 21; Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 38.

[315] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 9; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 379. Hays (*Echoes of Scripture*, 96) notes "That this is a matter of theological conviction for Paul, not just an unreflective use of an early Jewish Christian tradition, is suggested by an unguarded turn of phrase

The question then is how does this reference to the Gentiles function in Paul's argumentation? At the outset, we should recognize that his words reflect a common Jewish outlook not only on incest, but also on the general morality of the Gentile world, which was considered to be the epitome of wickedness to the Jewish mind.[316] Now Paul is claiming that the Corinthians' actions (or inactions) and attitude in this situation are even more deplorable than those in that wicked world.[317] They are presumably saints (1:2; cf. 1:30), but this case of incest in the church undermines this identity. Paul's contrast of identities lays before the Corinthians the true condition of their ethical framework. Their record in dealing with sin is worse than the Gentiles, and Paul uses this as a rebuke to intensify the Corinthians' sense of shame and guilt so that they might reconsider their attitude in this particular situation.[318]

Paul's allusion to Deuteronomy 22:30 to describe the sinful behaviour is another implicit way in which he is attempting to shape the Corinthians'

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just two chapters later, as he opens a new topic of discussion: 'Now concerning spiritual gifts. . . . You know that when you were Gentiles (ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε) (12:1–2). . . . ' The casual imperfect tense of his description (ἦτε) indicates that Paul thinks of the Corinthian Christians as Gentiles no longer; they have been incorporated into Israel. . . . That is why Paul can describe this new community of Gentile and Jewish believers as 'the Israel of God'" (Gal 6:16).

[316] E.g., Wis 12:2–16:1; cf. Rom 1:19–32; see Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 16.

[317] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 153. Israel's prophets would often criticize Israel's sin for being even worse than its neighbours (Amos 1–4; 2 Kgs 21:9; 1 Macc 7:21–25). Although the Pentateuch does not necessarily have similar explicit examples, its writers still often use other nations as a negative model for Israelite behaviours. E.g., Exod 23:32–33; 34:12; Lev 20:23; Deut 7:3–5; 12:29–31 (cf. Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 199).

[318] Callow, "Patterns," 201. Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 119) describes Paul's argumentative strategy in verses 1–2 as "attitude-molding." She argues that it is consistent with ancient writers and orators who would often elicit shame and guilt as powerful motivators to persuade people to change their thoughts and behaviours (cf. Aristotle, *Rhetorica* 2.6.1–27). Derek McNamara ("Shame the Incestuous Man: 1 Corinthians 5," *Neot* 44 [2010]: 307–26) believes that Paul's entire argument in 1 Corinthians 5 centers around shaming both the Corinthians and the incestuous son.

understanding of their covenant identity. Similar to how his citation of the

Deuteronomic exclusion formula functions (1 Cor 5:13b), Paul's allusion to

Deuteronomy 22:30 ("a man has his father's wife") makes the theological

argument that God's words to Israel applies to the Corinthians since they "have

been grafted into the people of God" (see Rom 11:17–24).[319] It is for this reason

that a few verses later Paul can describe the church as the Passover bread (1 Cor

5:7).[320] In other words, the Corinthians' identity is found in the same narrative as

that of the Israelites who played a role before them. Therefore, along with his

implicit reference to the Corinthians as former-Gentiles, Paul's allusion to

Deuteronomy 22 invites the Corinthians to see Israel's story not as outsiders

looking in, but as those who are fellow participants in the same overarching

narrative.[321] Paul will use this idea to develop the rest of his argument by

reminding the church that, as a result of this identity, it has some of the same

ethical obligations that Israel had when dealing with sin. The implied reader, then,

should not only feel shame for tolerating the incestuous man's sin, but like the

Israelites of old, he or she should also acknowledge that the church must remove

the sinner from the community because his presence violates the Corinthians'

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[319] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 159. Hays explains even further that this reading concerning the Gentile Corinthians "depends upon Paul's assumption of a grand framing narrative. . . . The covenant command of Deuteronomy can be heard as the word of God for the Gentile Corinthians only because God has acted to reconcile the world to himself and thereby bring them into 'the Israel of God' (cf. Gal 6:16). Within that overarching story, Scripture provides the symbolic vocabulary for Pauline ethics. Paul's rereading of Scripture in light of God's reconciling work in Christ produces fresh imaginative configurations, calling on his Jewish contemporaries to read the text in surprising ways and his Gentile converts to read their lives anew within the story of Scripture" (*Conversion of the Imagination*, 160).

[320] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 160–61.

[321] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 9.

covenant with God. The remainder of this chapter will look at how Paul's allusions encourage the Corinthians to make further connections between their own situation and the exodus narrative based on the reality that the Apostle considers them God's covenant people.

3.3. Covenant Responsibilities

The Corinthians' covenantal identity implies that they now carry the same ethical responsibilities as the Israelites.[322] It is for this reason that Paul later frames his argument regarding the expulsion of this particular sinner in terms of covenantal responsibilities: ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (5:13b).[323] The Deuteronomist uses this same expulsion formula several times to command the people of Israel to expel those whose actions have breached the covenant (Deut 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:22, 24; 24:7).[324] If this intertext is where Paul's argument situates the Corinthians, and the Corinthians are capable of discerning this allusion as he intended, then they should also be familiar enough with the

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[322] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 80–81.

[323] In saying that the Corinthians now carry the same responsibilities as Israel, this does not mean that Paul imposes all of Torah on the Corinthian community. There are laws found in Deuteronomy that he does not transfer to the Corinthians (e.g., circumcision [1 Cor 7:17–20; cf. Rom 3:30; Gal 5:6; 6:15]). The question then is how do we know which elements of Deuteronomy's context apply to the Corinthians and which ones do not? As important a question as this is, the scope of this thesis cannot answer it adequately since 1 Corinthians 5 is simply too small of a test case. In order to provide a satisfactory answer, we would have to examine how Paul uses Scripture in his deliberation when he deals with issues that depend more on varying circumstances, unlike this case of incest. Westerholm's (*Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 408–39) work, however, may be of interest to those seeking a discussion on the role Old Testament law in Paul's letters. In his chapter, "The Law in God's Scheme," Westerholm offers nine theses that are helpful in resolving the tension that exists in the Apostle's "insisting as he does that believers are not 'under the law' while maintaining that they nonetheless 'fulfill' it" (409). See also Hays' chapter, "The Role of Scripture in Paul's Ethics" (*Conversion of the Imagination*, 143–62) for a thoughtful discussion on the way Scripture functions in Paul's moral vision.

[324] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 65.

historical context of Deuteronomy in which "a man has his father's wife" is located. This assumption seems reasonable since Paul provides this allusion without offering any explanation before moving on to the next part of his argument. He assumes that the implied readers in the Corinthian audience are familiar enough with the LXX that they will detect the allusion.[325] In other words, the allusion to Deuteronomy 22:30 heightens the audience's sensitivity to the fact that this relationship is an explicit violation of Israel's covenant with God.[326] The Corinthians would then be reminded of the context associated with this allusion even if Paul's entire argument did not become fully evident until he concludes his deliberation on the matter in verse 13b: "Remove the wicked person from among you." Therefore, the implied reader would note from the beginning of chapter 5 that the man's relationship with his father's wife echoes a scriptural prohibition with an accompanying judgment: "Cursed is anyone who lies with his father's wife" (Deut 27:20).[327] A brief sketch of the Deuteronomic tradition, therefore, will be helpful in understanding the kinds of analogies Paul presents to his

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[325] Although Hays (*Echoes of Scripture*, 21–22) makes this same point about Paul's readers based on the Job 13:16 allusion in Philippians 1:19, his reasoning applies to the Corinthian situation as well. When the audience hears Paul's allusion, "a man has his father's wife," he or she will "without consciously marking the allusion, sense a momentary ripple of elevated diction in the phrase, producing a heightened dramatic emphasis. The reader whose ear is able, however, not only to discern the echo but also to locate the source of the original voice will discover a number of intriguing resonances." Tom Holland ("A Case of Mistaken Identity: The Harlot and the Church [1 Corinthians 5–6]," *American Theological Inquiry* (2008): 56) notes that this occurs again in verse 7 when Paul makes another "throw-away statement" about the Passover without any explanation.

[326] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 81.

[327] Holland ("Mistaken Identity," 56) argues that the Corinthians had a familiarity with the Old Testament beyond a simple superficial reading and that they could understand the wider implication to Paul's allusions: "This fact suggests that they had been educated to such a level of theological sophistication that they were able to read the OT text in the light of the new covenant, and then understand how the lessons of the Jewish scriptures applied to the New Testament church."

audience so that it will be able to recognize the types of behaviour and attitudes God desires from those in the theological narrative.

Deuteronomy is considered by most scholars to be a covenant document that outlines the relationship between Yahweh and his chosen people, Israel. Although Yahweh is the initiator of this relationship, it is nevertheless one that requires an obedient response from Israel.[328] The covenant theology of Deuteronomy has thus been defined as one "whereby YHWH and Israel are pledged to exclusive loyalty and fidelity to each other; YHWH is to assure the well-being of Israel, [and] Israel is to live in trust in and obedience to YHWH."[329] It is in light of this understanding of Deuteronomy that the book's exhortations and laws are to be interpreted. The prohibition in chapter 22, "A man shall not take his father's wife" (v. 30), is found within the larger section of covenant stipulations (chs. 12–26). The purpose of these laws is to define in precise terms the covenant relative to "cultic, moral, and social/interpersonal/interethnic relationships" so that Israel can obey God.[330] This tells us that Israel had

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[328] Craigie (*Deuteronomy*, 36–37) also notes that since the covenant was a part of a continuing relationship between Yahweh and Israel, it had to be renewed regularly. For this reason, the book of Deuteronomy could be more appropriately defined as a *covenant-renewal* document since it is a renewal of a previous covenant made by the people of Israel. Eugene H. Merrill ("The Theology of the Pentateuch," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament* [ed.; Roy B. Zuck; Chicago: Moody Press, 1992], 74) explains the book in this manner: "Fundamental to an understanding of Deuteronomy is the recognition that it is not so much a covenant document as a covenant-renewal text. The covenant itself had been made and recorded at Horeb/Sinai (1:6; 4:1–2, 5, 10, 15, 23, 33–40, etc.), but it must now be restated and reaffirmed because a new generation had been born that had not personally made its commitment to Yahweh. Moreover, new historical and sociopolitical forces were at work."

[329] Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 17. For a brief comparison between Deuteronomy and other ancient near-eastern covenant treaty forms, see Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 41–44. See also Millar's examination of the covenant language found in Deuteronomy (*Now Choose Life*, 47–52).

[330] Merrill, "The Theology of the Pentateuch," 79.

responsibilities to fulfill as a nation in covenant with God. Considering that Paul

draws from this Deuteronomic framework to make analogies between the

Corinthians' situation and the exodus narrative, what can be derived from this

framework that demonstrates how he uses it in his moral reasoning to the church?

An important aspect of Deuteronomy reveals that violations of the covenant

are never considered an individual matter. Even when a violation is committed by

one person, the judgment that is required calls for a shared responsibility, and so

for this reason in chapter 22, the writer makes repeated calls to the people to take

collective action in punishing individuals. In other words, the judgment handed

out to those who have violated covenant stipulations involves the community. For

example, "And the elders of that city shall take the man and punish him . . . "

(v. 18); "the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones . . . " (v. 21); "So

you shall purge (ἐξαρεῖς) the evil from among you" (vv. 21, 22, 24).[331] Paul's

argumentation displays the same emphasis on corporate responsibility that we see

in Deuteronomy. Although he himself delineates the son's punishment (vv. 5, 13),

he never strays from a corporate aspect of responsibility since he directs his

imperatives in chapter 5 to the church as a whole.[332] His rhetorical question in

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[331] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 84. Rosner notes several other examples from the wilderness generation that show the Israelite's corporate responsibility to judge the sin within its community. In relation to the context of 1 Corinthians 5, Rosner believes that "Numbers 15:35 ('the entire assembly must stone him,' the sabbath-breaker), 35:24 ('the assembly must judge' a case of homicide) and Leviticus 24:14, 16 ('the entire assembly is to stone him,' a blasphemer) are comparable."

[332] Calvin J. Roetzel, *Judgment in the Community: A Study of the Relationship between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 118. Paul's emphasis on corporate responsibility in chapter 5, however, does not negate the fact that he holds individuals responsible to maintain moral purity in their own bodies as well, since the Holy Spirit is within them (1 Cor 6:19–20).

verse 2, for instance, suggests that even the act of mourning over sin is a corporate responsibility: "Should *you not be mourning* instead, so that he who has committed this act is removed from among you?[333] Paul also states five times that the Corinthian community must remove the sinner from the church (vv. 2, 5, 7, 11, 13). This communal emphasis is even evidenced by the fact that he uses the second plural personal pronoun nine times to help demonstrate both the culpability and responsibility of the entire group in this case. Furthermore, verse 6 reveals that Paul emphasizes the effects of sin on the entire community when he states that even a little leaven permeates "the whole batch of dough." It is for this reason that the Corinthians, as a covenant community, are required to take action together: "Clean out (ἐκκαθάρατε) the old leaven." It is only if this imperative is obeyed can they, as *a community*, properly celebrate the feast in sincerity and truth (v. 8).

Paul's emphasis on corporate responsibility is also demonstrated in the surrounding context of his allusion ("a man has his father's wife"; cf. Deut 22:30). I noted in the last section that there is a high probability that Paul's allusion triggers analogies to the Deuteronomist's discussion on admission to the Lord's assembly (Deut 23:1–8). Deuteronomy 22:13–30 describes various covenant violations involving sexual immorality that the Israelites are responsible

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[333] The word πενθέω is often used in the LXX to refer to mourning over the sins of the people. For instance, in Ezra 10:6, the writer says that Ezra "was mourning (ἐπένθει) over the faithlessness of the exiles" in prayer, where he was essentially confessing the sins of the people as if they were his own (cf. Neh 1:4; 1 Esd 8:72; 9:2). Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 72) explains that "Just as Ezra mourned (πενθέω) over the sins of the community, so Paul enjoined the Corinthians to mourn (πενθέω) over the sin of the incestuous man. Just as Ezra demanded that the sinners separate from their foreign partners or else suffer expulsion themselves (10:8), so Paul demanded the expulsion of the sinner unless he separate from his illicit partner"; cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 210; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 163–64.

to judge. Chapter 23 then transitions into how these improper sexual relationships, among other violations, affect the people's relationship with God.[334] Several times the writer explains that the person who violates these prohibitions affects the community's purity, and as a result, he or she "may [not] enter the assembly of the Lord" (vv. 1, 2, 3, 10). The Israelites are warned that they are required to keep their camp holy, and that not doing so would cause Yahweh to "turn away" from them (Deut 23:14). Similarly, Paul bases his theological framework in chapter 5 on the importance of maintaining the purity of the ἐκκλησία in order to protect the people's relationship with God. Earlier in the letter he draws attention to the fact that the church is God's temple, and that God will destroy anyone who defiles it (3:16–17).[335] For this reason, "when [they] are assembled, . . . [they] are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (5:4–5a). Therefore, the Corinthians have a responsibility to remove any impurity that is present in the church because failure to do so would defile the people of God, which is an idea that Paul develops further in verses 6–8 (cf. 6:19–20).[336]

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[334] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 137. Merrill ("The Theology of the Pentateuch," 82–83) also points out that "The covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel presupposed a law on a vertical plane, a set of guidelines to regulate precisely the form and manner of man's access to a holy God. . . . [All] actions of the community and its citizens had to be couched in terms of purity and righteousness. . . . The laws of purity (22:5–23:18) dealt directly or indirectly with forms of separation and care for safety and the helpless (though some are difficult to integrate), and they testify to the need for Israel to maintain its covenant purity and separation."

[335] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 75; cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 235–36. Paul also reiterates in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 that the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit, linking once again the necessity to flee from any sexual impurity in the church. See Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 75–76) who also offers several reasons why 1 Corinthians 3:16–17 finds its roots in the temple/holiness tradition of the Old Testament.

[336] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 138. Brueggemann (*Deuteronomy*, 142) writes, "The initial imperative of the corpus of statutes and ordinances is an insistence of Israel's right worship of YHWH as the first venue in which Israel's loyalty toward YHWH is to be enacted... Between introduction and conclusion are four units (vv. 2–7, 8–12, 13–19, 20–27), each of which takes up

A second connection that Paul wants the Corinthians to make with the

Deuteronomic tradition to their own situation is that sin, whether individual or

corporate, has ramifications for the entire community. The Deuteronomist reveals

that there are consequences that would result from either the people's obedience

or lack thereof in cases where the covenant is violated. In other words, the reason

Israel must recognize and take responsibility for judging sinners among them is

because *even the sin of individuals affects the whole nation.*[337] Deuteronomy

19:13, for instance, commands that those guilty of murder must be punished for

the welfare of the nation: " . . . so that it may go well with *you* (σοι)." The same

idea is found in chapter 29 where the writer speaks of one person's sin being able

to bring calamity on all the land (vv. 19–21).[338] The idea that judgment would be

incurred by the community is so threatening that even when a sin is committed in

which no one is brought to justice, the community is still responsible to seek

God's forgiveness (Deut 21:1–9).[339] The same can be said in chapters 27–28

where, after the section of specific stipulations is given (chs. 12–26), the writer

reveals that Israel's obedience to these laws would result in God's blessings for

the entire nation, whereas disobedience would lead to curses.[340] The curses served

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another aspect of the importance of the 'public performance' of Israel's undivided loyalty to
YHWH."

[337] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 66. See also James G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 14.

[338] See also Exod 16:27–28; Num 16:24–27; Josh 7:1, 26; 22:16–18.

[339] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 43; cf. Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (IBC; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1990), 211–12.

[340] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 43–44; cf. McConville, *Law and Theology*, 15–17.

as solemn warning for the Israelites who were, therefore, faced with the decision

to either renew their covenant with Yahweh, or to face his judgment because of

their failure to walk according to his laws (26:16–19). These warnings make it

clear that Israel was offered a "bright prospect of a future with God [that] was

contrasted with the bleak despair of a future without God."[341] These examples all

suggest that removing sin in Israel was understood to be necessary for the

preservation of Israel since the entire nation would be threatened with impending

judgment if it were not removed.[342]

Paul's argumentation encourages his audience to consider these same

implications. The Corinthians should understand that they, like the Israelites, are

in a covenant with God that requires obedience. The Apostle expects the

Corinthians to heed his command to remove the sinner because, otherwise, they

will incur God's judgment for their own disobedience. Considering that Israel has

a history of unfaithfulness and was judged for it, Paul's echoes to the

Deuteronomic context provide the Corinthians convincing evidence that shows

them that God's warnings of impending judgment are not empty (cf. 1 Cor 10:5–

12).[343] The Corinthians may very well be on this same trajectory unless they

themselves take control of this shameful situation.[344] They should realize that they

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[341] Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 43–44.

[342] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 66.

[343] Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 465) argues that if the Israelites faced such horrifying ends in the wilderness when they reject a concealed Christ who helped them throughout their journey, then the Corinthians can expect much more condemnation if they reject the revealed Christ. Garland adds that "Understanding the exodus from this particular perspective, as a morality tale that mirrors the present, reveals that God has not suddenly become more lax in punishing transgression with the shift of the ages."

[344] Holland, "Mistaken Identity," 65–66; cf. Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 44.

stand in the same position of imminent judgment as the Israelites would have if they had tolerated this kind of relationship.[345]

The ethical motivation in Paul's argument is, therefore, based on leaving his audience with an important choice to make, much the same way as the Deuteronomist leaves the Israelites. Throughout Deuteronomy, we often see the writer asking the people of Israel to make a choice (4:39; 7:9; 8:5; 9:3, 6; cf. 31:12–13). It is evident that the Deuteronomist regards the need for the people to make a conscious decision to obey Yahweh as a central motivator that accompanies those in covenant with God.[346] Likewise, Paul implicitly offers the Corinthians a decision to make. They can choose to obey God by removing the sinner from the community, and in doing so, renew their covenantal relationship with him.[347] They can also refuse to do anything and suffer judgment like the Israelites did when God promised that they would not see the land inheritance that he was to give them (cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17).[348]

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[345] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 97.

[346] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 50.

[347] The idea that true repentance involves a response is consistent with Paul's words elsewhere in his Corinthian correspondence. In a circumstance also involving sexual immorality, he uses "to mourn" (πενθήσω) to parallel the concept of godly sorrow with repentance (2 Cor 12:21); cf. Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 201.

[348] It should be noted, however, that Paul does not necessarily expect that the Corinthians will suffer the same level of judgment as the Israelites did for their disobedience. Jewish writers did not always argue that the consequences of their own immediate situations were as severe as the intertextual texts they used in their arguments, and vice versa. Richard N. Longnecker (*Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999], 18–21) cites Hillel's (ca. 60 B.C.E. – ca. C.E. 10) "seven rules" of exegesis to demonstrate that Jewish rhetoricians would use very severe intertextual analogies to motivate their audiences' behaviour even when the actual consequences may not be as extreme for their immediate situation. Hillel's fifth rule, for example, states that "a general principle may be restricted by a particularization of it in another verse; or conversely, a particular rule may be extended into a general principle" (cited in Longnecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 20). Hillel's rule demonstrates that just as Jewish thought could

In conclusion, we have explored Paul's argumentation in this chapter by focusing on how he uses allusions to the wandering period of the exodus narrative. Our findings suggest that the most prominent allusions in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 echo the Deuteronomic context of chapters 22 and 23, which speaks of the same forbidden sexual relationship with which Paul is dealing. I argued that, as a result, the Apostle's allusions draw the minds of his implied audience to the wider Deuteronomic tradition. Paul intends for the Corinthians to make analogies between this tradition and their current situation to remind them that their identity is now found in the ongoing story of God's covenant people, Israel. He expects the church to acknowledge that with this identity, there are critical responsibilities that accompany it. In this particular case, the Corinthians are responsible for removing the incestuous man from the community to protect their relationship with God. As it stands presently, the sinner's mere presence in the church is enough to defile God's assembly, thereby making a right relationship with him impossible. Paul, at the beginning of his argument in chapter 5, is presenting the Corinthians with a very important decision to make about their future as a community: They can either accept their covenantal responsibilities and remove the incestuous man from the community or, similar to Israel, expect God's judgment.

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argue from minor to major cases, it could also work the other way around by arguing from major to minor cases.

Chapter 6

PAUL'S ARGUMENTATION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6–8

We saw in the last chapter that Paul's allusions to the exodus narrative play a significant part in his argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5. In verses 6–8, he makes use of Passover imagery to continue encouraging the Corinthians to draw analogies between their current situation and the exodus narrative. His argument in these verses emphasizes the need for the Corinthians to reflect upon their present role in this overarching story so that they will recognize the importance of maintaining the purity of the church which is necessary for properly worshipping God.

1. Preliminary Exegesis

1.1. Translation

[6] Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough? [7] Clean out the old leaven, so that you may be a new batch of dough, just as you [really] are unleavened; for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. [8] Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, or with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

1.2. Preliminary Exegesis

Paul's concern in verses 6–8 remains on the community as he continues to

admonish the Corinthians collectively. He criticizes them again for their

misplaced arrogance by stating that their "boasting is not good" (5:6a). This

returns to the theme of boasting that Paul touched on in chapter 4 and then again

in chapter 5 when he reprimanded the Corinthians for being puffed up with pride

(v. 2a).[349] We have already seen that Paul is not criticizing the Corinthians for

taking pride in the sinful incestuous relationship itself, but rather for their

misguided boasting. The Corinthians have no reason to take pride in themselves

when such a conspicuous sin is present in the church (5:2).[350] The community's

misplaced pride is made even clearer by Paul's question: "Do you not know that a

little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough" (5:6b). He uses the clause οὐκ

οἴδατε ὅτι several other times in the letter to present information with which the

Corinthians should be familiar (3:16; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16; 9:13, 24).[351] Paul is

implying that the church should know that this behaviour should not to be

tolerated in a covenant community. His rhetorical question also contains a

common baking metaphor that describes the nature of leaven.[352] The Corinthians

would be familiar with the idea that leaven from a little piece of an old batch of

dough will quickly permeate the new dough to which it was added (cf. Gal 5:9).

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[349] Καύχημα for Paul is not always negative. Of the nine times he uses the verb in his letters, only here does it have a negative meaning (cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 100).

[350] *Pace* Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 178; Robertson and Plummer, *First Corinthians*, 101. *Contra* Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 55; Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 111–12. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 178) explains the problem behind the Corinthians' boasting: "The Corinthians are plagued by a penchant for self-admiration, but this scandalous case confronts them with the sobering truth that their spiritual airs are baseless. They have no reason to gloat but every reason to be ashamed— they need to quit boasting and set their house in order." Paul had stated earlier that the Corinthians could boast provided they were doing so in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31).

[351] Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 124n.

[352] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 95.

Paul uses this analogy to encourage the Corinthians to consider how tolerating

even a little bit of sin will inevitably have consequences for the entire church.[353]

Paul then continues his argument by using the symbolic image of leaven to

reiterate the appropriate action the church should take in such cases: "Clean out

the old leaven, so that you may be a new batch of dough, just as you [really] are

unleavened" (5:7a). The words "Clean out the old leaven" is a reference to the

preparation that took place each year in Jewish homes before the Passover festival

in which the people would ceremonially remove all leaven from their homes

(Exod 12:15; cf. 13:7). This practice was required to ensure that the bread for the

feast was free from any old leaven. This requirement symbolized the new

beginning that the people of Israel experienced as a result of their exodus.[354] This

fresh start is emphasized in the next phrase which Paul indicates is the reason

cleaning out the old leaven is so important for the church: " . . . *so that* (ἵνα) you

may be a new batch of dough." That he considers the Corinthians a "new batch of

dough" is significant for understanding how he believes they should think and act

as a community. Paul expects them to clean out the old leaven because this is now

consistent with their identity as those who are truly unleavened. The Corinthians

have no reason to be reintroducing the old leaven to the fresh batch of dough if

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[353] Many commentators believe Paul is urging the Corinthians to get rid of the sin because it serves as a bad example within the community. Thus, it is a way of pointing out that tolerating this sin could tempt others to follow the son in similar ways (i.e., "One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel"). A similar idea is found later in the letter when Paul speaks about the effects bad company has on good morals (15:33). If the sinner is left undisciplined, others may be encouraged to participate in the same sin. Church discipline, therefore, functions as a safeguard to preserve the integrity of the community (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 159; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 216).

[354] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 405.

they wish to keep the Passover feast (cf. 5:8).[355] This reality that Paul describes in

verse 7 is fundamental to his ethical framework since the practices of the church

depend on the dough already being unleavened. This framework is found

elsewhere in Paul's letters (e.g., Gal 5:25), and it is often described in terms of the

indicative-imperative.[356] The Apostle's ethical imperative to *clean out* becomes

operative because the theological indicative, "just as you [really] are unleavened,"

is a reality in the Corinthians' lives.[357]

Paul's final clause in verse 7 contains the explanatory conjunctions καὶ

γὰρ,[358] which reveal a critical element in his motivation for ethics: "For Christ our

Passover lamb has been sacrificed (ἐτύθη)" (5:7b).[359] The sacrificed lamb here is

a reference to the slaughtered lambs whose blood was smeared on the Israelites'

doorposts the night they would be freed from Egyptian slavery.[360] The lambs'

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[355] Morris, *First Corinthians*, 90.

[356] E.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 128–29; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 217. Wolfgang Schrage (*The Ethics of the New Testament* [trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 171) explains that "The indicative, whatever its substance, implies and justifies the imperative. Alternately, the imperative harkens back to the indicative, on which it is based. This observation is confirmed by the beginning of the specifically parenetic sections of the Pauline epistles, and above all by the logical connective 'therefore'" (cf. Rom 12:1; Gal 5:1; 1 Thess 4:1).

[357] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 403. The imperative and indicative is fundamental to Paul's ethical thought elsewhere (Rom 6:11–14, 19; Col 2:20–3:14). Barrett (*First Corinthians*, 128) explains the importance of this indicative-imperative relationship in Paul's words in verse 7: "The people of God have in fact been freed from sin; because this is so, they must now avoid sin and live in obedience to God's command. The imperative is unthinkable without the indicative, which makes the otherwise impossible obedience possible; the indicative is emasculated if the imperative, which gives it moral bite, is wanting."

[358] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 673.

[359] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 159. On this note, Soards (*1 Corinthians*, 115) writes that "because of what God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ, humans are set free to eliminate corruption from their lives and to become the persons that God's Spirit is empowering them to be."

[360] Hays (*First Corinthians*, 83) notes that Paul is not referring to a sacrifice for the atonement of sin in verse 7. Even though the Passover lamb was not originally understood as a

blood marked the people out as those who would be saved from God's wrath and destruction (Exod 12:26–27).[361] Similarly for Paul, God has saved the Corinthians through the Christ event, and the significance of this event demands that the Corinthians now live in view of what Christ has already accomplished in their lives.[362]

Next Paul gives another ethical imperative as he begins verse 8 with the conjunction ὥστε, showing the expected action that accompanies the truths he has mentioned in verses 6–7. Christ has been sacrificed (5:7b), *therefore* (ὥστε), the Corinthians are required to take proper ethical action as a result: "Let us celebrate the feast" (5:8a). "*Let us* celebrate" is a hortatory subjunctive often used to exhort or command the writer's associates. The audience is urged to unite with the writer or speaker to a particular course of action which he or she has already decided must be.[363] Paul's appeal is for the Corinthians to be united with him on this matter (cf. 5:3–5), and then for them to move on to the celebration, which only comes once the old leaven has been purged from the community (5:6–7).[364] "Let us celebrate" also continues Paul's communal emphasis in chapter 5 where he first charged the Corinthians to act responsibly by removing sin when it finds

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sacrifice, it later became linked with atonement (see Ezek 45:18–22). In the early church and the New Testament, there was also a "tendency to run together different metaphors and descriptions of Jesus' death, thereby blurring older distinctions. . . . Paul's language [in 1 Corinthians 5:7] suggests that the same evolution of imagery was already well advanced in his theology" (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 216–17).

[361] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 83.

[362] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 180.

[363] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 464.

[364] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 406.

itself in the church. Now he calls upon them to celebrate together, thus giving a full picture of appropriate worship in the covenant community.

Paul's vision of this celebration is developed further with the specific ethical application in the remainder of the sentence. He calls upon the Corinthians to celebrate the Passover, "not with old leaven, or with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Paul is certainly concerned with the Corinthians' toleration of sexual immorality, but in verse 8 he expands the scope to include all malice and wickedness.[365] The terms κακία and πονηρία often appear to be synonymous. Κακία has "the quality or state of wickedness,"[366] and πονηρία speaks of a "state or condition of a lack of moral or social values."[367] In order for the Corinthians to celebrate the feast, it is critical that the old leaven of malice and wickedness is first removed. These should be replaced in the positive sense with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."[368] Εἰλικρινείας has the idea of "purity of motive,"[369] and ἀληθείας is "the quality of being in accord with what is true."[370] The two nouns together epitomize Paul's understanding of the *unleavened* life.[371]

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[365] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 218–19. This is reinforced later in the chapter when Paul offers a list of more sins other than πορνεία that could just as easily apply to his argument (5:10–11).

[366] BDAG, 500.

[367] BDAG, 851. Πονηρία could also be described as "'a wicked nature' as 'one who is bent on doing what is wicked' or 'one who habitually does what is wicked'" ("πονηρία," *L&N*, BibleWorks 8).

[368] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 242.

[369] BDAG, 282.

[370] BDAG, 42.

[371] "The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," according to Ciampa and Rosner (*First Corinthians*, 215), "comprehensively characterizes the new way of life. Both terms indicate an

2. Paul's Allusions to the Exodus Narrative

The preliminary exegesis of verses 6–8 revealed that Paul uses imagery of the Passover in his argument. The Passover is at the heart of Israel's exodus story since the event precipitated the end of the nation's slavery in Egypt and started a new relationship with God. The story is located within the context of the ten plagues that God sent upon the Egyptians leading up to the Israelites' actual departure from Egypt (Exod 7:14–10:29). The final plague involved God's warning that he was going to kill every firstborn—person and animal—in the land of Egypt (11:5–9).[372] This judgment was part of God's plan to fulfill his covenant with the people of Israel (6:1–5) by delivering them from the hands of the oppressive Egyptians and giving them the land that he had promised Abraham (6:6–9; cf. Gen 15:13–14). This exodus would mark a defining chapter in the nation's history, and because of this God declared that this event would "be for [Israel] the beginning of months" (12:2). In preparation for this event, on the tenth day of that initial month, each Israelite household was told to take a one-year-old lamb or goat without blemish (12:3–5). The whole congregation on the fourteenth day would gather together to slaughter these animals at twilight (12:6). The people were then to smear blood from the slaughtered lambs on the doorposts of their houses (12:7), for this action would notify the destroyer what households were to be spared (i.e. *passed over*) from the impending execution (Exod 12:13; cf. 22–23, 27). By recalling this salvific event in verses 6–8, Paul is relating the

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authentic transparency, a perfect correspondence between their profession of faith and their new life."

[372] The actual execution of the tenth plague itself is described in Exodus 12:29–32.

current Corinthian situation to Israel's exodus to have the church identify with this experience.

2.1. "For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed"

A reasonable place to begin looking at Paul's allusion to the Passover in verses 6–8 is by examining his reference to the slaughtered Passover lamb: καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (5:7b).[373] This reference draws his audience to consider Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16:1–8, both of which are two important scriptural texts that deal with the exodus/Passover event. The word pairing Paul uses, τὸ πασχα ("Passover lamb") with ἐτύθη ("has been sacrificed"), is a rare juxtaposition that is paralleled in both of these Old Testament texts.[374] In Exodus 12:21 Moses instructs Israel's elders to go and "select lambs for your families, *and slaughter the passover lamb*" (καὶ θύσατε τὸ πασχα). Likewise in Deuteronomy 16 we find the same verbal structure on three separate occasions: θύσεις τὸ πασχα (vv. 2, 6) and θῦσαι τὸ πασχα (v. 5). Here again the writer is discussing the various elements of the Passover, including the lamb that is to be slaughtered. Even though the Deuteronomist does not mention the destroyer in connection with the Passover lamb in chapter 16, it should be kept in mind that he, like Paul, is also able to make an allusion to a defining moment in the nation's

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[373] This is the only time Paul mentions τὸ πάσχα in all his writings.

[374] The only other occasion outside two references in the Gospels (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7) that τὸ πασχα is used with ἐτύθη is found in 1 Esdras (1:1, 6; 7:12). Since we cannot be sure if 1 Esdras existed during Paul's lifetime, I will not treat it as a possible allusion in 1 Corinthians 5. Suggestions for the date of composition of 1 Esdras range from the middle of the second century B.C.E. to 90 C.E.; cf. Michael F. Bird, *1 Esdras: Introduction and Commentary on the Greek Text in Codex Vaticanus* (Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 6.

history without going into detailed explanations.[375] Like the implied Israelite

reader, the Corinthian audience member would take notice of Paul's allusions and

be able to connect the necessary parallels with his or her own situation.

One difference between the Corinthian text and those in Exodus and

Deuteronomy is that Paul inverts the order of τὸ πασχα and the cognate verb θύω.

A further variation is the voice of the verb θύω ("to sacrifice") he uses in relation

to τὸ πασχα. Whereas Exodus 12:21 and Deuteronomy 16 (vv. 2, 5, 6) use the

active voice, Paul writes in the aorist passive (". . . the Passover lamb *has been*

sacrificed"). Both of these discrepancies can be explained primarily because the

Apostle chooses the word pairing for his own purposes to further his argument.[376]

The Corinthians are *already* (past tense) unleavened (v. 7a) because God has

provided a Passover lamb that has *already been sacrificed* (past tense) (v. 7b).

Even with these minor differences, Paul's unusual word choice (τὸ πασχα with

ἐτύθη) demonstrates that he is drawing the implied readers to consider the

contexts of Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16.

2.2. *"Clean out the old leaven"*

A second association to the Passover is Paul's command to "Clean out the old

leaven" (7a). As we noted above, this command is an allusion to the ceremonial

removal of leaven from the homes of the Israelites in preparation for the Passover

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[375] It appears that the Deuteronomist encourages his audience to make such parallels since he offers merely a "summary statement" of the entire context of the exodus, focusing only on the themes that are particular to his emphasis in the book: the Passover as a commemoration of the exodus (vv. 1, 3, 6) and the place/land that the Lord God will choose for his people (v. 2) (see Craigie, *Deuteronomy*, 241).

[376] Dean O. Wenthe, "An Exegetical Study of 1 Cor 5:7b," *The Spring Fielder* 38 (1974): 135.

(Exod 12:15). The Israelites were not only forbidden to eat leavened bread

(ζύμην) (Exod 12:15, 19–20; cf. 13:3, 6–7; Deut 16:4), but they were also

required to clean out all leaven in their households and territories (Exod 12:15,

19; 13:7; Deut 16:4). Those who failed to comply with this ritual were punished

by being "cut off from Israel" (Exod 12:15). This practice continued throughout

Jewish history whereby the Jews would clean their homes of any leaven, a ritual

that symbolized the purification of the people.[377] The Corinthians, well aware of

this tradition, would not only hear Paul's allusion to the practice of removing

leaven from one's house, but also the penalty that accompanied its violation.

2.3. "Let us celebrate the feast"

Another verbal parallel that contributes to Paul's allusion to the Passover is his

directive to "celebrate the feast" (5:8a). This feast commemorates the defining

moment in Jewish history—the exodus. Although the feast to which Paul refers

had distinct elements, the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, he

and his audience would associate the two together since they became so closely

related over time. The feast itself was originally instituted as a meal that involved

the eating of the slaughtered lamb with unleavened bread (Exodus, 12:3, 8–10;

Deut 16:2–4a).[378] The Israelites were to celebrate this meal together throughout

future generations because it was a way to remember what God had done for his

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[377] Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 405) says that partially from an interpretation of Zephaniah 1:12, the Jewish tradition of purging the house of all yeast was so intense that it included the rigorous searching out of the entire house with candles to ensure there was no yeast even in its corners.

[378] After the exodus, Moses reiterated the Passover requirements twice more in Exodus 12 (12:21–28; 12:43–13:1). Deuteronomy 16:1–8 outlines the requirements for the two feasts.

people in Egypt (Exod 12:14, 24; Deut 16:1, 3). An important aspect of the

festival included the command for the Israelites to eat only unleavened bread

(ἄζυμα) for seven days (Exod 12:15; cf. 12:18, 20; 13:6, 7; Deut16:3, 8).[379]

Failure to comply with these regulations would result in a person being "cut off"

from the congregation (12:15b; 19–20). As we have seen, Paul brings to mind the

slaughtered Passover lamb (5:7b) which was eaten during the feast. He also

saturates this passage with references to leaven (ζύμη) and unleavened (ἄζυμος)

bread, which are directly related to the proper celebration of the festival (5:8a).

Like the authors of Exodus and Deuteronomy, Paul gives similar directives to the

Corinthians about who can and cannot participate in this meal.[380] Only those who

eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth are permitted to participate in the

celebration (5:8). Not only does Paul play upon the Passover and the Feast of

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[379] It should be noted that there are differences in Exodus and Deuteronomy concerning the festivals' details. For example, Exodus 12 stipulates that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days after the initial day that celebrated Passover (8 days in total), whereas in Deuteronomy 16:8 it overlaps with the Passover feast which states that it is six days (7 days in total). These modifications can be attributed to varying practical purposes based on differing contexts (see Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 25–26; cf. 36–37).

[380] Paul is following other Hebrew writers who outlined regulations for those participating in the covenant meal. We see this in Exodus 12:43–51 where the writer is not so much worried about where, what, or how the people are to eat the Passover lamb or goat, but *who* may eat it (Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academics, 2011], 197). The text reveals that "no foreigner shall eat of it" (12:43), but only those who have been circumcised (12:44–45, 48–49). These later stipulations in Exodus 12 were necessary because after the start of the exodus a group of non-Hebrews (a "mixed multitude") began to accompany the people of Israel on their journey (12:38). The text in Exodus emphasizes that God would only allow those who fit the requirements to participate in the Passover meal, and therefore, social boundaries were required.

Similar to the author of Exodus, Paul gives orders to the Corinthians about who can participate in this covenant meal. Paul picks up on the festival language in verses 6–8 (ζύμη and ἄζυμος) to show that only those who meet the purity requirements are allowed to celebrate this meal. If they did not meet these requirements, they would be "cut off" from the community (5:2, 12–13; cf. Exod 12:19). Paul is again showing the importance of purity in using the allusion to the Passover to demonstrate those who *fit* the definition of being *unleavened*. He explains that it is only the unleavened who may truly participate in the Passover and claim Christ as their "Passover lamb."

Unleavened Bread language in verses 6–8 (ζύμη and ἄζυμος), but chapter 5 contextually bares other evidence that points to meal restrictions. In verses 9–11 the Apostle lists a number of sins that disqualify those who commit them from sharing a meal with other members of the community (1 Cor 5:11b). Paul's emphasis on the meal is also demonstrated later in the letter when he outlines who can and cannot participate in the Lord's Supper: "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty for the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor 11:27).

3. Paul's Argumentation

We saw that Paul's argumentation in verses 1–5 begins by placing the Corinthians in the overarching narrative with a comparison to the Gentile world and an allusion to Deuteronomy 22:30, a text that defines the same incestuous relationship as 1 Corinthians 5: "a man has his father's wife." These references remind the Corinthians of their covenantal identity, and that as a result, they have covenantal responsibilities that they must fulfill if they aspire to avoid God's judgment. In verses 6–8, Paul continues to allude to aspects of the exodus narrative. This time he focuses on the Passover to urge the church to reflect upon its own situation so it can determine whether or not it is playing a good role in its own chapter of the unfolding narrative of God's covenant people. Paul's argumentation forces the Corinthians to see that those who desire to play this part must maintain the church's purity since this is critical for a proper relationship with God.

3.1. The Corinthians' Role in the Overarching Narrative

Paul's allusions to the exodus story function as an important motivation for the Corinthians to expel the incestuous son because these allusions remind them of their present role in the story of God's people. Paul's argumentation encourages the Corinthians to recognize that the overarching narrative encompasses both them and the ancient Israelites at different stages of the story. By presenting his argument this way, Paul is asking the Corinthians to reflect upon the place in which they are currently situated so that their actions fall in line with those in the past who have played a good part.[381] Similarly, when they interpret their own situation, they should identify actions that are contrary to this role since they would be the types of behaviours consistent with how the *deceived* act and, therefore, must be avoided.[382]

The Apostle later uses this same type of argument in 1 Corinthians 10 where he provides the Corinthians with examples of the types and antitypes of those in the story so that they can identify patterns of obligation that are recognizable from analyzing those who have played different roles in the narrative (1 Cor 10:5–12).[383] In 1 Corinthians 10, God was not pleased with most of the Israelites, so

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[381] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 122–24.

[382] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 127: In this sense, Paul's allusions are helping the Corinthians identify "the similarities between the narrative role of the 'types' and that of the 'antitypes'" (135). Keesmaat (*Paul and His Story*, 16) also draws attention to how the story enables "people to orient themselves in the world; [it provides] a context in which to act, a framework or expectations of how the world works and how one should act within that world."

[383] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 134–35. As Scott explains, Paul also offers contrasting roles in 1 Corinthians 12:1–3 when he discusses the issue of prophecy in the church. Some are saying, "Let Jesus be cursed," while others are saying, "Jesus is Lord" (12:3). According to Scott, "A person who speaks in the latter way is thereby identified as being aligned with and empowered by the Spirit, while someone speaking in the former manner is by definition excluded from that role. More broadly, Paul can interpret the former paganism of the Corinthian believers as having

they experienced God's judgment when they were "struck down in the wilderness" (v. 5; NRSV) for their idolatry (v. 7), sexual immorality (v. 8), criticism of God (v. 9), and grumbling (v. 10). These behaviours remind the Corinthians that God's people faced judgment in the past when they continued in their sins. Consequently, the ethical implication is that the Corinthians should be able to anticipate how God will respond to the sin tolerated in their own covenant community.[384] Therefore, if the Corinthians can come to recognize their current place in the grand narrative by examining their behaviours, then Paul believes that they should be able to take the appropriate actions corresponding with those who have played a good role before them.[385]

Paul begins his argument in verse 6 by pointing out that the Corinthians are not presently playing a good role in the overarching narrative. As he did in verse 2, he reprimands them for their inappropriate boasting (Οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν) when such a sin is present in the church (5:6a). Paul's question reveals that he believes the Corinthians should have known tolerating this man's behaviour

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marked them as those in the story who were deceived, living against God" (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 126–27).

[384] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 135–36.

[385] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 129. It should be noted that although I did not stress this aspect of Paul's argumentation in my previous chapter, the Apostle, nevertheless, employs this same strategy in verses 1–5. There as well he presents a vision of the good roles the Corinthians should be fulfilling in the story: they should not tolerate behaviours that even Gentiles would condemn (v. 1); they should mourn when a brother or sister participates in immoral behaviours (v. 2a); and they should expel those who are involved in them (v. 2b, 5). Paul also contrasts himself with the Corinthians to offer an example of how one who is in covenant with God ought to respond in these situations. Building on the "imitation motif" that he began in 1 Corinthians 4:14–17 (see Boykin Sanders, "IMITATING PAUL: 1 Cor 4:16," *HTR* 74 [1981]: 363), in verse 5:3a he says, ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ ("For I"), which serves as an emphatic expression that outlines the difference between his attitude compared to the Corinthians who refuse to mourn over this sin (see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 390; cf. Collins, *First Corinthians* 211).

would lead to harmful consequences for the church: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough?" "Do you not know" (οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι) is part of his strategy to show that the arrogance of some Corinthians is misguided especially when the community is in danger of being judged if this sin continues to be ignored.[386] Paul made it clear in the opening verses that shame is the only attitude appropriate for the Corinthians' tolerance of this sin (v. 2). This question, then, is another way to amplify the contradiction between the church's identity as a covenant community and its actions.[387]

Paul's question is completed with an image that describes the effects of a little leaven on a batch of dough (5:6b). The metaphor is used to demonstrate that if the Corinthians had considered the situation correctly, they should have known that the sexually immoral man is harmful to the entire church. Although there is a Jewish tradition in which *leaven* has negative connotations,[388] at this point in his argument, Paul is simply referring to how even a little leaven in a batch of dough can quickly multiply to permeate a new batch to which it was added.[389] The image effectively relies on the Corinthians' common knowledge of the powerful and penetrating effects that leaven has on a batch of dough.[390] They would all comprehend this simple, daily observation, and therefore, the probability of Paul's

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[386] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 215.

[387] Roy A. Harrisville, *1 Corinthians* (ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), 84.

[388] Cf. BDAG, 429. There are also Roman and Greek writers who speak of the association of leaven with corruption (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis historia* 18:26; Plutarch, *Quaestiones romanae et graecae* 289).

[389] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 98.

[390] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 95.

persuading them to expel the man from the church is increased.[391] Some of the

Corinthians may have supposed that tolerating the man's sin would not be

harmful because he is only one member of the community (i.e., μικρὰ ζύμη). The

metaphor's implication, however, is that even the "little leaven" (μικρὰ ζύμη) of

his sin affects the entire church (i.e., "the whole batch of dough").[392] The

Corinthians can expect that if they continue to tolerate this relationship, even what

some might consider a little amount of sin will eventually lead to God's judgment

of the entire community. Paul's argument makes it clear that any social security

this man may bring to the church in terms of his power, influence, or wealth does

not outweigh the judgment that the Corinthians will inevitably experience if he is

offered continued fellowship in the community.[393]

For this reason Paul commands the Corinthians to "Clean out (ἐκκαθάρατε)

the old leaven, so that [they] may be a new batch of dough, just as [they really]

are unleavened (ἄζυμοι)" (5:7a). The verb ἐκκαθάρατε is a parallel to his

scriptural injunction in 5:13b (ἐξάρατε) and serves to reinforce his command to

remove the incestuous man from the church.[394] Unlike Paul's argument in verse 6

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[391] Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 124.

[392] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 95. Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 402) notes "the emphatic position of μικρὰ, little. Paul calls attention to the unstoppable, spreading, disastrous influence on the nature and identity of the whole community which is out of all proportion to what those who were self-satisfied evidently imagined could spring from a 'little' case of immoral relationship."

[393] Hays, *1 Corinthians*, 87.

[394] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 96–97. Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 405) points out that both verbs contain the prefixed preposition ἐκ, and that similar to ἐξάρατε in 5:13b, "The imperative ἐκκαθάρατε is the first aorist active imperative of ἐκκαθαίρω, in which the compound ἐκ signifies both motion and intensity, and the effective aorist signifies the summons to perform a specific act. It is not too much to perceive in the Greek compound and syntax an implicit urgency about effectively completing this action with thoroughness, especially in its ritualistic context."

which emphasized the proportional effects of leaven on the dough, verse 7

focuses on the absolute incompatibility of leaven in a batch of unleavened bread

(ἄζυμοι).[395] This allusion is a reference to the removal of leaven from Jewish

homes in preparation of the Passover feast (Exod 12:15). This practice ensured

that the bread for the festival was free from any old leaven, which symbolized the

purification of the Jewish people.[396] Paul refers to this feast for his own purposes

by exhorting the Corinthians to prepare themselves for their own Passover by

examining their own *house*, a concept that he previously used in the letter to refer

to the church (1 Cor 3:9). The Corinthian community (i.e., "God's house") must

be cleansed just as the Jewish homes were required to be during the times of the

Passover feast.[397] The Corinthians are, therefore, to remove any leaven they find

in their community, which in this case is the man who is in a sexually immoral

relationship with his stepmother. It is clear that Paul views the purging of sinners

(i.e., leaven) from the church as a serious matter for God's covenant people. Like

the Jewish Passover tradition in which the people lit candles to search even in the

dark corners of their houses to ensure that no leaven was present, the Apostle

wants the Corinthians to be equally diligent in cleaning out the leaven in their

own community.

Michael Newton (*The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 91–92) explains the inherent idea of expulsion in Paul's words: "The use of the verb ἐκκαθαίρω indicates the presence of something unclean which needs to be removed and here Paul is clearly pointing to the fornicator who must be excluded so that the community as the 'new lump' and 'unleavened' can function as intended."

[395] Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 125.

[396] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 405.

[397] Newton, *The Concept of Purity*, 92. See also Fee, *First Corinthians*, 218.

The Apostle then provides a critical reason why the Corinthians are to clean out the old leaven: " . . . so that you may be a new batch of dough, just as you [really] are unleavened." In order to prepare for Passover, Paul wants the Corinthians to see the urgency of living out the reality that they really are unleavened.[398] In other words, the Corinthians' exodus in Christ must be demonstrated by their actual experience as a covenant community.[399] The Passover ritual of household purification was to emphasize a fresh start, and like the Israelites, the slavery that characterized the Corinthians' former existence was no longer to be evident in their ethics (cf. 6:9–11).[400] The toleration of the son's sin puts the Corinthians' identity in question because it reveals that they are not fulfilling their covenantal responsibilities. The Corinthians must clean the man's sin (παλαιὰν ζύμην) from the church since it is incompatible with who Paul believes the Corinthians are and must continue to be (ἄζυμοι). His use of the word ἄζυμοι demonstrates the reality that the Corinthians must completely dissociate from all παλαιὰν ζύμην since their existence must be defined by being in a new unleavened condition.[401] Consequently, they must never turn a blind eye to the

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[398] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 159.

[399] J. K. Howard, "'Christ our Passover': A Study of the Passover-Exodus Theme in 1 Corinthians," *EvQ* 41 (1969): 101: "As with the old Israel the deliverance of individuals is only effected as they are members of the community and only as such can it be demonstrated."

[400] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 405.

[401] Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 125) explains that "Paul sets before the community a consideration of its own quality and underscores the incompatibility of *zyme* with this new condition. The community cannot BE *azyme* and at the same time BE *zyme*, which it would necessarily be even if only a little *zyme* were in its midst. This fact is validated by the proverb. The incompatibility demands resolve and Paul has proleptically stated what it is to be" a new batch of unleavened dough (v. 7ab).

shameless behaviours that betray who they are as a community.[402] Paul is no

doubt well aware that in other social settings it may be deemed acceptable to *look*

the other way when powerful men are violating group norms and values, but this

is not to be the case in the church. The Corinthians must follow Israel's model, as

they did on the night of Passover, and "clean out the old leaven," so that they can

properly celebrate their own deliverance.[403] The present situation reveals,

however, that the Corinthians are late for the Passover celebration since elements

of corruption still threaten to infect the church.[404]

Next Paul explains the reason the Corinthians are late for the Passover by

alluding to the most noteworthy aspect of the exodus event: "For Christ, our

Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (5:7b). This brief statement is the core of

Paul's argument in terms of both significance and placement because it reinforces

the imperatives found in these verses (5:7a and 5:8a).[405] This reference to Christ

as "our Passover lamb" is critical to his argument because it was on the night of

the first Passover that the Israelites smeared the blood of the slaughtered lambs on

their doorposts to be identified as those who would be saved from God's

judgment in the land of Egypt. The Israelite homes that were marked with the

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[402] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 179. Collins (*First Corinthians*, 214) writes, "The juxtaposition of indicative and imperative is typical in Paul. Neither the indicative nor the imperative should be minimized at the expense of the other. For Paul the indicative and the imperative exist in creative tension. The Corinthians' situation requires an appropriate mode of conduct."

[403] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 86.

[404] Howard, "Christ our Passover," 101.

[405] Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 126) notes that Paul's reasoning in v. 7c functions "as a hinge which a) explains and qualifies the apposite statements in 7b and 7a which in turn illumine and ground the command in 7a and b) grounds the exhortation that will follow in v. 8."

lambs' blood were protected from God's wrath and thus were spared from the

ensuing widespread execution (Exod 12). Paul uses the imagery of the

"slaughtered Passover lamb" in his argument because, like the original exodus,

the metaphor of the lamb serves to declare that Christ's blood marks out the

Corinthian Christians as a distinct people. Those who have his blood "splashed on

their doorpost" (i.e., their lives) are protected from God's judgment.

Paul's Passover imagery also reminds the Corinthians of the saving

significance of Jesus' death. Although he does not articulate the full meaning of

this event, the implications of his identification of the Corinthians as ἄζυμοι in

verse 7 are clear. Similar to the deliverance the Israelites experienced during the

original exodus, through Christ's saving act, the Corinthians have been released

from the bondage of their former lives to a new life characterized by unleavened

living.[406] For Paul, this unleavened condition should consequently bring a real

change of allegiance on the part of the Corinthians.[407] Those who claim to identify

with Christ's death must also commit themselves to turn from sin as God intends.

Paul elsewhere seems to suggest that the reason for the Christ event is partially

"to free human beings from the sin which makes their relationship with God

impossible and places them under the threat of divine wrath" (Rom 6:1–11).[408]

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[406] For a similar Pauline understanding of the "new life," see Rom 6:1–11. Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 127n): "As Israel, through the power of God was redeemed from the bondage of slavery, set apart by the blood of the lamb to be protected and brought forth as his people, so are Christians saved by the power of God through the redemptive historical act of Christ, purified by his blood and established as God's people."

[407] Wenthe ("An Exegetical Study," 137) relates this to the same change of allegiance the Israelites experienced when they were freed from the rule of the Egyptians.

[408] Scott (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 131) explains that in Romans, "Paul responds in 6:2–5 by reminding his opponent of the mechanism by which believers participate in this grace—their

Under the current circumstances, the Corinthians' toleration of incest would suggest that their allegiance is misplaced since their current actions are not consistent with those who have been made slaves to Christ (cf. Rom 6:16).

3.2. Ethical Motivation for Playing a Good Role in the Story

When we look closer at Paul's allusion to the slaughtered lamb, the question we must explore at this point is how might he intend such a salvific reference to effect ethical change in the Corinthian church? The Apostle's reference (καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός) offers a theological reason why the Corinthians must remove the incestuous man from the community.[409] He also uses this imagery because the Christ event is crucial to the overarching narrative of God's covenant people. Paul's strategy of placing the Corinthians in the appropriate story to encourage ethical action follows many Hebrew writers who also shaped Israel's moral life by remembering, retelling, and reinterpreting how God had acted on their behalf.[410] Noteworthy for these writers was the exodus because this

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identification with Christ in death and (in the future) resurrection. The Apostle then points out the key aspect of this narrative situation. 'We know (γινώσκοντες),' Paul says, 'that our old self was crucified with him *so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin*'" (author's emphasis).

[409] Many scholars believe verses 6–8 is essentially a theological explanation that Paul intends to help the church come to an understanding on its own that the expulsion of the incestuous son is necessary (Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 123–24; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 198). Some argue that unlike verses 1–5, which rely heavily on *pathos* to persuade his audience, Paul relies on the *logos* in verses 6–8. He provides the theological rationale (i.e., *logos*) for the appropriate attitudes and actions he has already specified for the Corinthian church in verse 1–5 (Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 124). Even so, this does not negate that the images Paul uses in these verses also play a substantial role in the affections and emotions of the Corinthians (i.e., *pathos*), and thus he uses them to motivate the Corinthians to obedience.

[410] Bruce C. Birch, "Moral Agency, Community, and the Character of God in the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* 66 (1994): 27. For example, in 1 Samuel 12:24 –25, Samuel tells the people of Israel to "fear the LORD, and serve him faithfully with all your heart; for consider what great things he has done for you" (cf. 1 Sam 30:23–35; Psalm 78:7).

event marked the beginning of a new relationship between Israel and Yahweh.[411]

In Paul's ethical deliberation, the Christ event now becomes the decisive marker

in the history of God's people (i.e., the new exodus). In the same way the exodus

functioned for the Israelites, the Christ event is a *memorial* that allows the

Corinthians to reflect upon the works of the Lord, and Paul uses this allusion to

call the church to take appropriate action.

Since Deuteronomy is critical to Paul's argumentation, an examination of

the Deuteronomist's emphasis on *remembering* the exodus event in his ethical

framework is necessary.[412] The first three chapters of Deuteronomy summarize all

that God has done for the Israelites throughout their history. The people are

reminded of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 1:8),

demonstrating how God has always acted on their behalf (1:30–31). In chapter 4,

Israel is urged to obey the law based on God's prior actions: "*So now* (καὶ νῦν),

Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe,

so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your

ancestors, is giving you" (4:1 NRSV). The implication is that after reminding the

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[411] Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 357. Christopher J. H. Wright (*Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004], 27–28) explains how the context of the exodus and its narrative plays in Israel's understanding of itself, and then, how this then acted as a motivation for obedience: "There we find the Israelites oppressed and in slavery in Egypt, crying out to God. Then God hears them (2:23–3:25) and then he acts; he promises to free them (Exod 6:5–8). . . . God first redeemed them out of their bondage, and then made his covenant with them, a covenant in which their side was to keep God's laws, as their response of grateful obedience to their saving God." See also McConville, *Law and Theology*, 18–20.

[412] Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 181) believes "'The theology of Deuteronomy' is characterized by an emphasis on the exodus as the formative event in the life of the nation, and the belief that Yahweh is now Israel's absolute ruler who much be obeyed in every detail of life, and that he has given Israel a land in which to enjoy relationship with him together"; cf. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 22–23.

Israelites of all God has done for them, there must be an obedient response on their part. In chapter 5, the Deuteronomist repeats the Ten Commandments (Deut 5:7–21), but he first reminds the Israelites what God has done for them: "I am the LORD your God, *who brought you out of the land of Egypt*, out of the house of slavery" (5:6 NRSV). Once more, the idea is that the author first demonstrates that God has done something—he brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt—and then he appeals to this event as he proceeds to give the commandments.[413] In Deuteronomy 6:12–15 and 20–25, the author once more reminds the Israelites to remember their salvation (i.e., the exodus) and offers this reality as the basis for obedience to Yahweh. These texts in Deuteronomy make it clear that ethical demands are not simply *because God commands it*, but rather, the law has meaning for Israel because it is founded in the *gospel*, the historical events of its redemption from slavery in Egypt.[414]

Paul uses the Christ event in 1 Corinthians 5 in much the same way to motivate the Corinthians to respond properly in their present situation. He draws attention to the slaughtered Passover lamb as he exhorts his audience to specific

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[413] The author repeats this pattern in 5:15 in dealing with the Sabbath: "*Remember* that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, *and the LORD your God brought you out* from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; *therefore* the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (NRSV).

[414] C. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 28. God brought them out of Egypt (God has done something) "in order to bring us in (for a purpose), to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. [Now] then the LORD commanded us (i.e., the motive) to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case (6:23–24 NRSV)." Cf. Deuteronomy 7:8; 7:18–19; 9:1–13 [esp. 9:12–13]; 11:1, 7–8; 15:15; 24:22. I also noted in the previous chapter that the thematic and verbal parallels of Deuteronomy 22 and 23 to 1 Corinthians 5. Deuteronomy 23 also shows that the writer's motivation for the Israelites to walk in the Yahweh's statutes has its roots in remembering the exodus before they were called to keep themselves from every evil thing (v. 4). Memorializing the exodus event continued to be the basis for ethical exhortations in future generations outside of the Pentateuch as well (e.g., Josh 24:1–17; 2 Kings 17:7–8, 34–41; Mic 6:4–8; Bar 2:11–12, 4:8).

imperatives (5:7a, 8a). Like the Deuteronomist, Paul's instructions are predicated

on what God has already done for the community of believers. He uses God's act

in Christ since he knows this reminder can, like Israel's stories,[415] be entrenched

into the Corinthians' minds in a greater way than simply ordering them to expel

the incestuous man. The Apostle wants them to remember what God has done for

them because it prompts them to consider the implications of their covenantal

relationship with God, and therefore, it serves as an impetus for them to obey

God.

Contrastingly, Paul's Jewish tradition has several examples of how

forgetting one's relationship with God inevitably leads to a failure to obey him.

Time and time again in the Old Testament the result of Israel's *forgetting*

produced disobedience, and it is for this reason that the Scriptures constantly warn

the Israelites not to forget what God has done for them (Deut 8:2, 11–14; Isa 1:2–

4; Jer 2:1–13; Ezek 16; 20; 22:12; Amos 2:10; Hos 13:4–6; Mic 6:3–5). In all

these examples, the writers say the problem is that the Israelites have forgotten the

Lord, and consequently, they are no longer motivated by the ethical implications

of what God has done for them in their past.[416] This is perhaps the reason that

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[415] N. T. Wright (*Paul*, 11) explains that "[The Jews] were not merely storytellers who used their folklore (in their case, mostly the Bible) to illustrate the otherwise unrelated joys and sorrows, trials and triumphs, of everyday life. Their narratives could and did function typologically, that is, by providing a pattern which could be laid as a template across incidents and stories from another period without any historical continuity to link the two together. But the main function of their stories was to remind them of earlier and (they hoped) characteristics moments *within the single, larger story* which stretched from the creation of the world and the call of Abraham right forwards to their own day, and (they hoped) into the future."

[416] Millar (*Now Chooses Life*, 166–67) points out that the Deuteronomist's repeated call to remember Yahweh and his acts reveals that he thinks the Israelites are in danger of constantly forgetting Yahweh (Deut 6:10–14; 8:11, 17–19; 9:7; 11:16) because of "the likelihood of Israel's failing to obey Yahweh and forgetting the allegiance they owe him. God's people, then, . . . need

even from the beginning of Israel's days as a nation, God called for a memorial of the exodus event (i.e., Passover) for future generations to keep it fresh in the memories of the Israelites (Exod 12:14). The writers of Scripture consistently use the idea that, in the exodus, the Israelites have experienced God's goodness and blessing when he acted on their behalf: "This is what Yahweh had done *for you*." Therefore, the appropriate ethical response to the law comes from being grateful to God for what he has already done for his people.[417] It is this salvific experience of encountering God's goodness that partly turns the remembering into motivation for ethical living. Even later generations use the exodus to motivate Israel to obedience through laws that are framed in an "explicitly personalized" way. The people are addressed as "the 'you' whom God had delivered from bondage" (e.g., Deut 15:15).[418]

Paul likewise personalizes his argument to the Corinthians by drawing analogies between their chapter and the exodus chapter of the grand narrative. He states that the Corinthians are unleavened because Christ has already delivered

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to counter their innate tendency to forget. All kinds of visual and memory aids are necessitated by their weakness." Cf. Keesmaat, *Paul and His Story*, 23; C. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 44–45.

[417] C. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 43. See also C. W. Scudder ("Ethics in Deuteronomy," *SwJT* 7 [1964]: 36) who notes that "Israel can receive the blessing of God only through obedience, but this obedience must carry with it the affection and devotion of the whole heart. The love of Israel for their God is the right response to his redeeming love." For this reason, God's laws are not revealed in the Old Testament either by offering propositional truths. Dunn (*The Theology of Paul*, 47) speaks about this when demonstrating that Paul's Jewish presuppositions are based in the experiential dimension of his belief in God: "It was not merely enough to have a theoretical acknowledgment that [God and his laws were] true, but that 'to know God' was to worship him, to be known by him; it was a two-way relationship of acknowledgement and obligation" (1 Cor 8:3; Rom 1:28; Gal 4:9).

[418] C. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 42: "Such a direct and often personal motivation for obedience to God's law is one of the most characteristic features of Deuteronomy, which as a whole document sets out to exhort and persuade Israel to be loyal to the Lord and to observe the terms of their covenant relationship with him" (*Old Testament Ethics*, 43).

them from bondage (5:7). The removal of the incestuous man from the church would in itself be a proper response to what God has already done on their behalf through Christ. The fact that the Corinthians would choose to do nothing about this man's sin reveals, at least on the surface, that this "shared history no longer matters."[419] Paul is surely aware that this failure resembles those who had forgotten their covenant with God in the past.[420] He uses imagery from the Passover preparation ritual, for example, which served to remind the Israelites of their relationship with God. Paul provides reminders in his argumentation, then, to bring the Corinthians' focus back to their own relationship with God. As it did for the Israelites, Paul's Passover allusions encourage the Corinthians to remember that their covenant with God is more important than any other relationship or demand upon their lives. Perhaps this is why assembling together is critical for Paul since it provides the opportunity to continually remember that covenant.[421]

3.3. Celebrating the Feast as a Good Role in the Story

Paul focuses again on the Passover imagery in verse 8 as he urges the Corinthians to "celebrate the feast" as another aspect of the good role they can play in the overarching narrative. The reality is, however, that their present situation is

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[419] C. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 43.

[420] Cf. Num 25; 1 Cor 10:8.

[421] The Lord's Supper, for instance, gave the Corinthians the opportunity for remembering the salvific event of Jesus' death (1 Cor 11:23–26). Gordon D. Fee (*Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007], 123) believes that "Paul and the early church understood this meal as a replacement of the Passover meal, so that Christ the Lord has assumed the role of honouree that in Judaism had for centuries belonged to Yahweh alone and that in surrounding cultures belonged to the various 'gods' and 'lords' of the pagan cults." See also Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 441.

preventing them from fulfilling this imperative. They are tolerating sin and thus

demonstrating the mistake of thinking they can worship God while allowing the

old leaven to linger in the community (5:8). Paul reminds them again that since

the Passover lamb, Christ, has already been sacrificed (5:7b), no one playing the

part of the saved, including himself,[422] should desecrate the already inaugurated

worship by introducing leaven to the celebration (5:8b).[423] The Corinthians must

recognize that they cannot approach God when those in the covenant community

are not being disciplined properly any more than the Israelites could when they

failed to judge sinners among them.

The proper celebration also relates to Paul's earlier allusion to Deuteronomy

22–23 (cf. 5:1–5) because it helps the Corinthians to understand that he believes

the holiness of the church is a serious matter when it comes to its approaching

God. The context of these chapters in Deuteronomy deals with the proper

requirements for admission to the assembly of the Lord. Those who have sexual

relations with their fathers' wives, for example, are not permitted to participate in

this assembly. It is only those who are holy who can approach God, and in the

place he chooses.[424] Paul uses this parallel to provoke the Corinthians to have a

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[422] Paul includes himself in this directive, evidenced by the subjunctive, present active, and first person plural form of ἑορτάζω he uses: ἑορτάζωμεν (5:8a).

[423] Wenthe, "An Exegetical Study," 137: "The significance of the point for Paul's argument is crucial—when the lamb has been *etuthe* (slaughtered), then the new order, a new state of affairs exists, which dare not be contravened." Exodus 12 explains the purpose of the prohibition of eating leavened bread—the speed with which they "were forced to leave Egypt" (cf. James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001], 205). There was no time to wait, and similarly, the Corinthians can wait no longer—they must remove the leaven (i.e., the incestuous man) from their midst immediately.

[424] Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 145–46): "The laws consistently declare that the primary responsibility of Israel in Canaan is to worship Yahweh, and to worship him at the place and in the way he chooses. . . . Israel must constantly listen to the divine word, and allow that to define their

strong sense that protecting the church from sin is critical to their relationship with God. He argues that lingering sin in the community has negative effects on the church's relationship with God, not only in terms of blessings and curses, but also in terms of contaminating the church (vv. 6–8). This Deuteronomic context is important to Paul's argument because the Lord's assembly is where God meets with his people. Paul argues that now the covenant community is the temple of God since this is now "the place where God dwells" (3:16–17).[425] The critical implication is that the Christian community is to be kept holy.[426] The Corinthians' boasting while this sin took place among them led to the neglect of this sense of responsibility, and thus they allowed God's house to be defiled. For Paul, it is imperative that the church continue to keep its house in order,[427] so they can in fact "be what [they] already are in Christ"—a new batch of dough (5:7a).[428]

Paul is not implying that the Corinthians are to celebrate the feast only when

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worship. And then Israel must keep on the move, regularly going to the place chosen by God to enjoy his presence. Conversely, Israel must repudiate the ways of Canaan. As God's chosen people, her whole life must reflect the distinctiveness which God requires. This is the only way to live obediently in the land."

[425] Richard B. Hays, "Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians," *ExAud* 10 (1994): 37. Scott (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 133) explains how this same emphasis on holiness is evident earlier in the letter: "Paul asks whether or not they know that their community constitutes the temple of God in which God's spirit dwells (1 Cor 3:16). This implies that they are, as a community, holy. The destruction of such a holy 'site' through factionalism and power struggles will bring God's wrath on the ones responsible, just as God visits punishment on anyone who violates his holy place in Jerusalem (3:17)."

[426] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 235–36.

[427] Newton, *The Concept of Purity*, 92. Heil (*The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 96) explains further Paul's intention in verse 8a: "[On] the basis of the crucifixion of Christ, God's people are to keep an ongoing feast of the celebration of God's forgiveness by holy living. . . . They are to celebrate their new life in Christ minus the 'old leaven,' a command that ties the present broader imperative to the earlier specific one. This at least includes an elimination of the kinds of sexual immorality represented by the excluded man."

[428] Pickett, *The Cross in Corinth*, 110.

they are assembled together. His use of ἑορτάζωμεν in verse 8 broadens the

application to give an image of the purity of the Christian life in its entirety.[429]

Unlike today's society, there was no dichotomy between the secular and the

religious, either in Ancient Corinth or within the context of the exodus and

wandering narratives. Paul envisions the malice-free lifestyle to be lived in every

sphere of life; therefore, the Corinthians must celebrate their own Passover as a

way of life and as the basis of their ethics. This understanding of the Christian

existence means that they are to live in such a way that reflects the reality of their

new identity in Christ.[430] Given this identity, Paul argues that the Corinthians

have entered into a new freedom from slavery to be God's holy people.[431] Paul

calls upon the Corinthians to celebrate the feast "with the unleavened bread of

sincerity and truth," not with the old leavened dough of "malice and wickedness"

(5:8b). Truth and sincerity in this context produce the idea that the Corinthians

must remain faithful and true to their Christian identity in all situations.

Ultimately, Paul believes it is necessary for the Corinthians to reflect on whether

they truly desire to move forward as a community being deceived, wrongly

thinking they are the πνευματικοῖς, or whether they would rather be one that is

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[429] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 96–97. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 180) also touches on this: "The present tense ἑορτάζωμεν may be added to the evidence from the context that Paul is not thinking in terms of the celebration of a Passover rite but metaphorically in terms of a continual celebration. . . . [Paul] refers to the Christian life as a feast honouring their redemption." See also Fee (*First Corinthians*, 218n) who notes that the present tense ἑορτάζωμεν is significant as it implies the *continual* celebration of the feast; cf. BDAG, 355.

[430] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 407.

[431] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 406. Wenthe ("An Exegetical Study," 138) adds, "The fact that the lamb has been slain transports Paul's readers into a new state of affairs, into a new identity; they are now celebrants in the festival: *therefore* they should conduct themselves with an eye to their status."

characterized by celebrating their relationship with Christ in sincerity and truth.

Paul's command to celebrate the feast once more defines what it means to play the role of God's covenant people. It is for this reason that his emplotment of the Corinthians in the theological narrative helps them to recognize how they are operating as a church. Once they have been reminded of this, Paul trust that, as a community, they will understand the seriousness of violating their covenant with God and then will be compelled to take the appropriate action to reconcile that relationship.[432] Important to this strategy is that Paul assumes the Corinthians have the faculties to take the right action in this case. Nowhere in chapter 5, or any place else in the letter for that matter, does the Apostle rebuke the Corinthians for having a false confession of faith. Instead, he disciplines them as true children of God in order for them to reconsider their current place in the story. Moreover, Paul's emplotment of the Corinthians is a motivation because, in situating them in the grand narrative, he is not asking them to act in a way in which they are incapable.[433] Rather, he is summoning them to do something they already have the means to carry out now that they are in Christ.[434]

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[432] Scott (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 134) explains that Paul's moral discernment "seems in large part to be a matter of a) deciding whether or not a given action is appropriate for the narrative role of the 'saved' b) by asking whether the action is consistent with the identity of the saved as it is defined by the theological story."

[433] Scott (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 130) argues that Paul's understanding of the Christian's "skill of moral discernment" appears to derive from his or her "ability to distinguish actions which align one with a good role in the theological story from those actions which identify a human being as headed towards destruction."

[434] Evidence that Paul believes the Corinthians have the adequate ethical faculties is found even from the beginning of the letter. In the opening thanksgiving he reminds the Corinthians that they were given the grace of God in Christ (v. 4), were enriched in all speech and knowledge (v. 5), did not lack any gift (v.7), and were called into fellowship with God's Son Jesus Christ (v. 9). What is noteworthy about this list is that the Apostle never questions that he is addressing fellow Christians. This may seem obvious, but to a church with numerous problems, there could be some

Considering how Paul emplots the Corinthians in the overarching narrative, his argument in verses 6–8 appears to indirectly present the Corinthians with another choice to make, just as he did in verses 1–5. This time, rather than putting it in terms of blessings and curses, the Corinthians must decide whether they want to worship God properly or to continue to desecrate his house by tolerating the sinner's behaviour, thus making a proper relationship with God impossible.[435] His call to celebrate the feast with "sincerity and truth" as opposed to "malice and wickedness" helps to demonstrate that there is a choice to make between two possible courses of action. Paul is helping the Corinthians recognize that they now are faced with a decision in which they still have time to "shift their allegiances before the consummation begins and the fate of human beings is sealed."[436] Paul's motivation to take the appropriate action comes from the Corinthians' ability to position themselves appropriately in the theological narrative by recognizing which actions fit those who will experience blessings and those who will experience judgment before it is too late.[437]

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doubt. Paul demonstrates by his words, however, that he still believes the Corinthians are part of the body of Christ, and because of this reality, they still have the means to follow through with the instructions he was about to give them in the letter.

[435] This same ethical framework is found throughout Deuteronomy, where the author continually calls for the Israelites to respond to the covenant in terms of a decision to make; see Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 47–51) for a comprehensive look at this concept and the corresponding references from Deuteronomy.

[436] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 129: "This is the reason that Paul's specific ethical instructions are often accompanied by reminders about what his hearers know is in store for those who play the part of the wicked and faithless" (e.g., 1 Cor 5:5; 6:9).

[437] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 129–30: "[T]hose who act out the role of the 'wicked', who stand outside God's saving action in Christ, will be excluded from the eschatological kingdom and face judgment instead (cf. 1 Cor 6:9). The end which awaits human beings is entirely determined by the role which they play in the narrative" (128; cf. 141).

The role that the Corinthians must choose to accept is found in Paul's sustained concern in verses 6–8: the church in Corinth must be a holy people.[438] He does not require them to separate from the world (cf. 1 Cor 5:10), but he wants them instead to see their lives through the hermeneutical lens of the overarching story of God's action on behalf of his people. Even though the exodus chapter is different from their own chapter, the good roles the Israelites played in that stage should nevertheless dictate how the Corinthians should act now in a later stage of the unfolding story. This should allow the Corinthians to properly discern the right behaviours, conventions, and attitudes they should follow instead of roles that are imposed on them by Corinthian society that have the potential to negatively affect the community. In the case of 1 Corinthians 5, the Corinthians are likely tolerating this man's sin because they are allowing the culture's deep sense of obligation towards patrons to dictate their actions. Failure to fulfill patron-client commitments led to detrimental consequences for clients and their families. Paul, however, wants the Corinthians to feel a deeper sense of obligation

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[438] E.g., 1 Cor 1:2; 3:9, 16–17; 5:2, 9–13; 6:12–30; 7:32–35; 9:24–17; 10:6–22; cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 25; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 96–97. Mitchell (*Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 112–16) argues that Paul's underlying concern behind all issues in the letter, including chapter 5, is combatting political divisiveness. She bases her argument on the fact that the same Greek political terms for order and peace found in 1 Corinthians 1–4 are present throughout the letter. According to Mitchell, when Paul deals with sexual immorality in chapters 5, his real concern is to unite the Corinthians and to command them to expel the incestuous man in order to end the factionalism that plagues the community. Although Mitchell's thesis is helpful to our understanding of 1 Corinthians in some respects, it also falls short in many others. There is little in the text of 1 Corinthians 5 that suggests Paul is concerned with political factionalism. It appears rather that he is concerned with condemning *porneia* because it affects the purity of the Corinthian community (Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 261). It is certainly plausible that this sin's presence in the church did, in fact, cause division among the Corinthians, but to say that it is what lies behind Paul's entire argument is incorrect. Paul sees the son's relationship with his stepmother as a contamination to the community, and therefore, he would still require the Corinthians to expel the son even if there was unity in tolerating his immorality (see Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 102).

toward God. Therefore, no matter the consequences of disassociating with the sexually immoral son, Paul requires the Corinthians to recognize their responsibility as God's people, and this in itself should inform their decisions as a community on ethical matters. Paul does not care about the son's status because, for him, the Corinthians' relationship with God should take precedence over what this man can offer the community. His presence, even if it is only a little leaven, contaminates the whole church (cf. 5:6b), and it must not be tolerated.

In summary, we have seen that Paul's argumentation in verses 6–8 uses imagery from the Passover to draw analogies between the Corinthians' situation and that of the exodus generation. His imperatives to "clean out the old leaven" and to "celebrate the feast" both express his underlying concern that the Corinthians play a good role in the overarching narrative. Paul's uses these images to demonstrate to the Corinthians that it is necessary for those desiring to play a good role in the narrative to maintain the church's purity because it is only then that a proper relationship with God is possible. Paul trusts that if the Corinthians can come to recognize where they are presently situated in the story by examining the way they are behaving, then they should also be able to take the appropriate action that corresponds with those who have played a good role before them. For the Apostle, the Christ event must define the ethical framework for the Corinthian community, just as the exodus event defined the ethical pattern for the Israelites.[439] Although the Christ event is the element of the story that requires a difference between the good role of the exodus generation and that of the

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[439] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 10.

Corinthian church, Paul makes it clear in his argument that it is still God's will for the Corinthians to maintain the moral purity of the church.

Chapter 7

PAUL'S ARGUMENTATION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 5:9–13

The following chapter will complete our investigation of Paul's argumentation in

1 Corinthians 5. Once again we will begin with a preliminary exegesis to provide an

initial sketch of the Apostle's thought in verses 9–13. After this is established, we

will then identify the allusions to the exodus narrative and conclude with an

analysis of how Paul employs them in his argumentation. We will see that he relies

again to quite an extent on the Deuteronomic framework to formulate his argument

to the Corinthians. In these particular verses Paul emphasizes the importance of

defining clear social boundaries for the Corinthians to understand how those in the

story can properly fulfill their role as a covenant community. I will conclude this

chapter with a brief examination of an important implication of Paul's overall

argument in 1 Corinthians 5. We will see that even though he offers the Corinthians

specific commands and social boundaries in chapter 5, he is just as concerned with

the function of his argumentation as he is with its content. Paul's objective is to

create a Christian community that possesses the right ethical discernment so that it

can fulfill its covenantal responsibilities in future moral situations without always

relying on his apostolic instruction.

1. Preliminary Exegesis

1.1. Translation

[9] I wrote to you in [my previous] letter not to associate with the sexually immoral.

[10] Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would have to go out of the world. [11] But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who is known as a brother or sister who is sexually immoral, a greedy person, an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or a swindler; do not [even] eat with one such as this. [12] For what have I to do with judging those outside [the church]? Do you not judge those inside [the church]? [13] But God will judge those outside [the church]. Remove the wicked person from among you.

1.2. Preliminary Exegesis

Paul mentions a previous letter in which he warned the Corinthians about relationships with the sexually immoral: Εγραψα[440] ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις (v. 9). The incestuous man in chapter 5, evidently, is not the first case of πορνεία in the church, and it is possible the Apostle is dealing with the same case for a second time.[441] He reiterates his previous instruction that the Corinthians are not to συναναμίγνυσθαι with these people. The word συναναμίγνυσθαι means "to mix" or "intermingle," and in the context of social interaction can be translated "to associate with."[442] Paul uses συναναμίγνυμι only

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[440] The word ἔγραψα in verse 9 is a true aorist, contrary to verse 11 where γράφω is used as an epistolary aorist. Fee (*First Corinthians*, 222) believes "the English perfect in the NIV, 'I have written,' defies explanation" and should be avoided. The implication, as Fee suggests, is that a translation like the NIV could possibly give the impression that the Corinthians had not yet received the previous letter (cf. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 243). For a further discussion of the use of these aorist tenses, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 562–63.

[441] Sampley, "First Corinthians," 849.

[442] "συναναμίγνυμι," *GNM*, BibleWorks 8. It conveys the idea of associating with someone in the sense of "involving special proximity and/or joint activity, and usually implying some kind of reciprocal relation or involvement—'to be in the company of, to be involved with'" ("συναναμίγνυμι," *L&N*, BibleWorks 8).

one other time in his writings (see 2 Thess 3:14). Similarly, he calls for the church in Thessalonica to stop associating with those in the community who, by their behaviour, have brought their membership in the church into question.[443]

Paul clarifies in verse 10 that he did not have the sexually immoral of this world in mind in his earlier correspondence. Instead, his concern was that the Corinthians not associate with the πόρνοι in the church. Since he has to repeat this earlier directive, his last letter was either misunderstood or ignored by some of the Corinthians. Paul's seemingly sarcastic clarification suggests the latter: " . . . since then [they] would have to go out of the world" to avoid all contact with these people (v. 10c). His point is that it is absurd to think that Christians could avoid intermingling with sinners in the world, since the only way this would be possible is if they left it altogether.[444] This misunderstanding, then, was perhaps a deliberate one on the part of the Corinthians who wanted an excuse not to deal with the sinner.[445] The son's influence in the Christian community may have played a significant part in the Corinthians' keeping silent on this matter, since to offend him may have resulted in an unfavourable situation for those who depended on his patronage.[446] Paul, however, feels they already should have

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[443] Greeven, "συναναμείγνυμι," *TDNT* 7:854. Notice that in 2 Thessalonians 3, as well, the person is still regarded as a "brother" and is to be warned as such (καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγεῖσθε, ἀλλὰ νουθετεῖτε ὡς ἀδελφόν) (vv. 14–15). This helps further show that Paul's primary concern in cases of church discipline is the person's repentance and not physical death (cf. 1 Cor 5:5).

[444] Although Paul is not concerned with the outside world, his view is still consistent with Jewish thinkers in his negative view of pagan morality. Paul does not think much of the world since he acknowledges that it is filled with the sexually immoral, the greedy, swindlers, and idolaters (Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 186).

[445] So Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 130.

[446] Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 53; cf. Chow, *Patronage and* Power, 139–40; Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 89–108.

responded accordingly (cf. 5:2, 6b), and for that reason, he is not going to accept the church's toleration of the son's sin any longer.[447]

Although Paul's discussion up to this point has been focused on the sexual sinner, he adds a list of other types of people with whom the Corinthians are not to have fellowship; they include the πλεονέκταις, ἅρπαξιν, and εἰδωλολάτραις (5:10b). The πλεονέκταις ("the greedy") can be defined as a person who has an "unrestricted longing for possessions which sets aside the rights of others."[448] These kinds of people correspond well with the common Corinthian cultural ambition to "gain more social status, power, or wealth," even if it meant at the expense of others.[449] Next Paul includes the ἅρπαξιν to speak of those who are swindlers, a subcategory of the πλεονέκταις.[450] "Swindler" is a more precise translation than "robbers" (e.g., NRSV) which may give modern readers the impression that Paul has *bandits* or *thieves* in mind.[451] Thiselton translates ἅρπαξ as "extortionists," which is a helpful way to understand what Paul means here: "Extortion instantiates precisely the kind of 'stealing' which genuinely tempted

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[447] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 185.

[448] Delling, "πλεονέκτης," *TDNT*, 6:269. It can also be associated with the attitude of the powerful (2 Macc 4:50; Wis 10:11).

[449] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 411; see Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, 24) who claims there were a lot of "status-hungry" people in Corinth. See also Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBLDS; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 129–72.

[450] This is demonstrated in Paul's use of the coordinating conjunction *and* between πλεονέκταις and ἅρπαξιν, rather than *or* which he uses next in the list between ἅρπαξιν and εἰδωλολάτραις (. . . ἢ τοῖς πλεονέκταις καὶ ἅρπαξιν ἢ εἰδωλολάτραις [v. 10b]). Wallace (*Greek Grammar*, 281) explains that "Although one could be greedy without being branded a swindler, it is doubtful that the reverse could be true. The idea, then, is 'the greedy and [especially] swindlers.'"

[451] The word ἅρπαξ ("swindler" [BDAG, 134]) is used to distinguish it from λῃστής ("robber" or "bandit" [BDAG, 594; cf. 2 Cor 11:26]).

earlier Christians in business or property, who could manipulate rents or charges as a misuse of power without appearing flagrantly to rob in the criminal sense of the term."[452] When taken together, the πλεονέκταις and ἅρπαξιν are those who enrich themselves by unfairly taking advantage of the "have-nots" and disregarding their rights and needs.[453] Lastly, Paul includes the εἰδωλολάτραις ("idolaters") as those with whom the Corinthians are not to associate. This list *demonstrates that the Apostle is not only concerned with the Corinthians keeping* company with the sexually immoral, but also that they should avoid association with the greedy, swindlers, and idolaters.

Paul leaves no more place for confusion in verse 11 when he says, "But now I am writing to you not to associate with *anyone who is known as a brother or sister* (τις ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος) who is sexually immoral, greedy, an idolater, a reviler, a drunkard, or a swindler." It is not those in the world with whom Paul is concerned, but with any person who *claims to be* a brother or sister in the church.[454] For Paul, these people do not belong in the community, and because of their actions, the Corinthians must distance themselves from them to maintain the community's moral purity.[455] Paul knows the immoral people outside of the community cannot corrupt the church; it is the immoral within who do (cf. 1 Cor

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[452] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 411–12.

[453] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 186: "The predominant perception in the ancient world was that the supply of goods was limited, but everyone could have the necessities of life if others did not have too much. The greedy seriously threatened the balance of society and worsened the poverty of others. They prospered only by depriving and defrauding others, who in turn became wretched and destitute."

[454] BDAG, 714.

[455] Fee, *First Corinthians*, 224.

5:6).[456] He then presents his audience with another vice list, this time adding

λοίδορος ("reviler") and μέθυσος ("drunkard") to the previous ones he offered in

verse 10. The word λοίδορος can be defined as a person "who intentionally abuses

another with speech."[457] Paul does not intend the lists in verses 10–11 to be an

exhaustive catalogue of unacceptable behaviours for Christians, but rather, they

are meant to be illustrative of the kinds of people whom he believes the

Corinthians should exclude from any type of communal fellowship.[458]

Scholars have long debated whether the sins Paul mentions in chapter 5 are

actually present in the Corinthian church. Some argue that his vice lists do not

represent any specific sin in the Christian community,[459] and that these lists were

common in ancient moral deliberation among various philosophies.[460] Even

though the Apostle may use traditional material,[461] the specific sins in his lists

appear to be tailored to the specific situation facing the Corinthian church since

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[456] Origen, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, cited in Gerald Bray, ed., *1–2 Corinthians* (ACCS 7; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 47.

[457] "λοίδορος," *GNM*, BibleWorks 8; cf. 1 Cor 4:12. Collins (*First Corinthians*, 222) relates λοίδορος to *hybris*, which he notes is an attitude for which Paul rebukes often in the letter (cf. Hanse, "λοίδορος," *TDNT* 4:293–94).

[458] Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 116. Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 413) writes that Paul has in mind those who continue to participate in these practices. These sins are characteristic in the lives of those who are *so-called* Christians, not those who may at times commit these sins, but later turn away from them.

[459] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

[460] See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 218–19; cf. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 81. For a discussion on both the vice and virtue lists in the Pauline epistles, see Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 662–65.

[461] For example, Paul's vice list appears to be consistent with Jewish tradition. As we will examine in more detail in the next section, the sins Paul mentions in chapter 5 echo those in Deuteronomy: sexual immorality (22:20–22, 30), idolatry (17:2–7), false witness/reviler (19:15–19), drunkard (21:20–21), and swindler/thief (24:7); cf. Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 217.

they all correspond to issues elsewhere in the letter. For example, the issue of the πόρνος is the subject of 1 Corinthians 5, but it reappears in chapters 6–7 (cf. 10:8). The other sins in verses 10–11 are also present in the epistle: πλεονέκτης and ἅρπαξ (6:1–8; 10:24), εἰδωλολάτρης (chs. 8–10), λοίδορος in (3:3–4; 16:11), and μέθυσος (10:7; 11:21).[462] Paul's words just a few verses later in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10 also give evidence that he relates particular sins to those in the church. He explains that those who participate in the sins he describes will not inherit the kingdom of God. He then adds, "And this is what some of you *were*" (1 Cor 6:11a).[463] We can confidently surmise that at least some of the sins in his vice lists reflect actual sins in the church.

Next Paul outlines the extent to which the Corinthians should not associate with such people: "Do not [even] eat with one such as this" (5:11c). The exact degree to which the son is to be excluded cannot be certain, but it would certainly include his participation in the Lord's Supper.[464] Some commentators believe that

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[462] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 412; cf. Peter S. Zaas, "Catalogues and Context: 1 Corinthians 5 and 6," *NTS* 34 (1988): 622–29. See also Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 188) who writes that Paul does not usually "cut and paste" his vice lists, but instead, he "identifies practices that were already destroying the moral fabric of the community or were prevalent in the surrounding culture that threatened to encroach on the life of the church."

[463] Gerald Harris, "The Beginnings of Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5," *NTS* 37 (1991): 6.

[464] Fee (*First Corinthians*, 226) believes it would be unnecessary for Paul to say "not even" if he only had the Lord's Supper in mind since the Corinthians would certainly assume that if they were "not to associate with" the son (v. 11a), that this certainly would include during the Lord's Table; cf. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 415. Jonathan Schwiebert ("Table Fellowship and the Translation of 1 Corinthians 5:11," *JBL* 127 (2008): 159–64) believes, however, that translating μηδὲ as "not even" in verse 11c is unwarranted because it exerts more force in Paul's words than is necessary by a simple reading of the Greek. Schwiebert considers τῷ τοιούτῳ μηδὲ συνεσθίειν to be on the same level as μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι ἐάν; therefore, he translates it "Nor to eat with such a person" (162). The context of these verses, though, appear to warrant that μηδὲ be translated "not even," which Schwiebert himself says is acceptable if the passage warrants it ("Table Fellowship," 162). Paul is clearing up a previous misunderstanding in which the Corinthians tolerated sexual immorality in the church. Paul reiterates that they are not to associate

Paul intends the sinner to be excluded only "from the community as it gathers for worship and instruction."[465] Still, others understand that the dissociation Paul has in mind includes all social relations, or in other words, no contact whatsoever.[466] It is likely that Paul's command includes more than just mixing with these sinners during times of Christian worship. In most cultures, the social role of eating together emphasizes kinship because it is a very strong means of social bonding that provides people with opportunities for meaningful conversation.[467] Paul's command of complete disfellowship highlights the gravity of tolerating sin in the church, and it appears to be consistent with the seriousness of the situation demonstrated in the fact that he expects the Corinthians to hand the man over to Satan (v. 5).[468]

Paul concludes chapter 5 by returning to the theme of judgment: "For what have I to do with judging those outside [the church]? Do you not judge those inside [the church]?" (5:12). This repeats his argument from verses 9–11 where he stated that it is not his concern, or at least not his responsibility, to judge the actions of those outside (τοὺς ἔξω) the faith community, only those inside it (τοὺς

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with these people, and just to make it clear so there is no room for any more misunderstandings, this includes even table fellowship.

[465] E.g., Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 108; Fee, *First Corinthians*, 226.

[466] E.g., Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 244; Christophe Senft, *La Première Épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (2d ed.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1990), 77.

[467] Collins, *First Corinthians*, 217. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 189) also notes this reality: "Eating together connoted more than friendliness in ancient culture: it created a social bond. When Christians ate together, it reinforced and confirmed the solidarity established by their shared confession of faith in Christ. Refusing to eat with fellow Christians guilty of such acts breaks all social ties with them."

[468] Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 244.

ἔσω). Paul recognizes that he and the Corinthians have no authority over those outside the church. In contrast, he stresses that the Christian community is indeed responsible for cleaning its own house of any leaven (cf. 5:6–8): "Do you not judge those inside the church?" The hortative μοι ("I") in 5:12a and the parallel ὑμεῖς in 5:12b (pl. "you") also demonstrate that Paul makes both himself and the Corinthians responsible for carrying out this judgment (cf. 5:3–5).[469] Therefore, he expects the Corinthians to respond appropriately by affirming that they are to judge those in the church, and that they are to leave God to judge those outside the community who practice such things (5:13a).[470]

In the final clause of verse 13, Paul repeats the proper judgment he expects the Corinthians to administer: ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν. This is the fourth time Paul has mentioned this verdict in chapter 5 (5:2, 5, 7). His command is a word-for-word scriptural formula found several times in Deuteronomy that relates to various covenant violations.[471] Once more Paul uses the plural form of the verb ἐξάρατε as an imperative to point out that the Corinthians together must exercise discipline to preserve the community's purity.[472] The removal of the man

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[469] Fee (*First Corinthians*, 226) notes that μοι is the "unemphatic 'me' and implies that Paul is not dealing with himself personally, but with himself as he represents the Christian community" (cf. 5:3–4). Thus, the audience is to view Paul's first person pronoun as hortative, meaning that they understand that Paul intends his words to apply to the community (cf. Garland, *First Corinthians*, 190).

[470] Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 117; cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 226.

[471] We saw earlier that the prominent allusion in verse 13 is Deuteronomy 22; however, the same formula is used several times elsewhere in Deuteronomy (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 24:7). See pages 91–92.

[472] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 416. Peter S. Zaas ("Cast Out the Evil Man from Your Midst [1 Cor 5:13b]," *JBL* 103 [1984]: 259–61) argues that Paul may also intend the expulsion to dissuade others from committing the same sin; see also Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 70.

from the community is not an apostolic prerogative. It is to be exercised by the whole church under the authority of Christ (cf. 5:3–5).[473] For this reason, in verse 11 Paul asks the *entire* church to stop associating with sinners. From this demand, it appears that Paul expects the whole church to play some type of role in the judgment of individuals, even if it is only a supportive role. Only if this judgment is being fulfilled can the Corinthian church claim to be God's holy covenant community.

2. Paul's Allusions to the Exodus Narrative

2.1. Allusions to the Wider Deuteronomic Context

Paul's clearest allusion to the exodus narrative in 1 Corinthians 5:9–13 is a word-for-word quotation from Deuteronomy: ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (5:13b). The only difference between Paul and the Deuteronomist is that the Apostle changes the verb ἐξαίρω to a plural aorist imperative to fit the context of 1 Corinthians 5. Although he does not introduce the citation with the common γέγραπται,[474] its non-Pauline vocabulary suggests that he is purposely drawing the audience's mind to the exclusion formula in Deuteronomy. The verb ἐξαίρω is a New Testament *hapax legomenon*, and the prepositional phrase ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν includes a second-person plural reflexive pronoun that is also only found here in the New Testament.[475] Paul's unusual language, therefore, alludes to at least some of the texts in Deuteronomy where this formula is used (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19;

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[473] Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 132.

[474] Paul writes this preamble several times to introduce Scripture in 1 Corinthians (1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7; 14:21; 15:45).

[475] Cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 223–24; Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 91.

21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7). Furthermore, the fact that this formula appears several times within a concentrated section of Deuteronomy (chapters 13–24) makes it probable that Paul's implied reader would be able to recognize his concluding statement in 1 Corinthians 5 as a scriptural injunction, even if he or she had only a general knowledge of the Scriptures.[476]

If Paul's scriptural citation in verse 13 is evident to the implied Corinthian audience member, where precisely would he or she locate this formula since it is mentioned nine times in the book of Deuteronomy? As I noted earlier, the most likely possibility is that Paul is alluding to Deuteronomy 22, where ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, or a close parallel, is found three times (vv. 21, 22, 24).[477] Furthermore, the way in which Paul describes the case of incest in the Corinthian church is the same way in which the Deuteronomist refers to this relationship: a man has "his father's wife." I demonstrated that this way of referring to incest involving one's stepmother is not found outside of Jewish literature. The reference is also found almost exclusively in the Pentateuch (Deut 22:30; 27:20; cf. Lev 18:8; 20:11), and therefore, it makes it easily recognizable to any person familiar with these texts.[478] Another parallel between

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[476] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 90. The extent to which those in Paul's churches were familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures may be a topic of debate in New Testament studies, but to suggest that the majority of his audience could not recognize and appreciate his allusions to Scripture would mean that Paul, who founded the Corinthian church, "underestimated the capabilities of his audience in this regard and was thus a rather inept author indeed" (*The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 90n).

[477] Hays (*Conversion of the Imagination*, 159–60) also makes this argument, claiming that Deuteronomy 22:22 is the closest case to 1 Corinthians 5. This is a different conclusion from his earlier work in which he referred only to Deuteronomy 17:7 when discussing the subtext for Paul's use of the exclusion formula in 1 Cor 5:13b (*Echoes of Scripture*, 97).

[478] See pages 86–89.

Deuteronomy 22 and 1 Corinthians 5:13b is that chapter 22:13–30 provides a

series of laws for several different sexual violations, and then concludes with a

prohibition that directly correlates to the case of the incestuous son found in

1 Corinthians 5:1: "A man shall not take his father's wife, so that he does not

uncover his father's nakedness" (22:30 ESV). It is true that Deuteronomy 22:30

does not specify a penalty for the case, but as Paul considers the Corinthian

situation, he appropriates the exclusion formula found in verse 22 to verse 30

because of its contextual proximity.[479] It is reasonable to conclude that if a man is

having sexual relations with his father's wife (Deut 22:30), he would also be

guilty of lying with the wife of another man (Deut 22:22), and thus deserving of

the same legislative measure.[480] Furthermore, the context of Deuteronomy 22 also

coincides well with Paul's emphasis on the necessity of the Lord's assembly

being free from impurities. After a list of sexual violations, the Deuteronomist

offers additional regulations that deal with how Israel was to enter the assembly

of the Lord (ἐκκλησίαν κυρίου) (23:1–8). Paul's theological framework in

1 Corinthians 5 is also found within the context of the Corinthians' relationship to

God. He has already identified them as the temple of God, warning them that if

anyone defiles that temple, God will destroy him or her (3:16–17; cf. 6:19–20).

Even with this evidence, however, the allusions in 1 Corinthians 5

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[479] Paul is following tradition in appropriating the exclusion formula of Deuteronomy 22:22 to verse 30. For example, Leviticus 20:11 prescribes death as the punishment for committing sexual immorality with his father's wife.

[480] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 160. See also Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 82–83. Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 137) notes that the case of adultery in verse 22 serves as the center of the structure for these two units in Deuteronomy 22 (vv. 13–21 and 22:23–30) for emphasis, thus giving more reason that the case of a man committing incest with his stepmother (v. 30) is also deserving of the same punishment as described in the exclusion formula.

associated with the Deuteronomist's exclusion formula seem to echo more than just chapter 22. One text often cited as an allusion in 1 Corinthians 5:13b is Deuteronomy 17:7.[481] This verse also contains the command to "purge the evil from among you," and its content and structure is quite similar to 1 Corinthians 5–6. Some scholars such as Sean McDonough believe that when Paul quotes the formula, he is not simply picking up themes from Deuteronomy, but that he is specifically alluding to chapter 17.[482] McDonough argues that ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν (17:7) brings the issue of removing abominations from Israel to a climax (Deut 17:1, 4), which is a parallel to Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5.[483] He then points out that, starting in Deuteronomy 17:8, the writer discusses "judging difficult cases within Israel."[484] This is relevant to the context of 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 in particular where we see the Corinthians not being able to make proper judgments (1 Cor 6:1–8). McDonough demonstrates the importance of *judgment* by examining the words related to κρίνω that are used several times in Deuteronomy 17 (vv. 8, 9, 11, 12), and which coincide with Paul who also makes several references to judging in his letter (1 Cor 5:2, 12–13; 6:1–8). Like the Deuteronomist in 17:1–7, Paul starts with a notorious sin and then moves to other cases in chapter 6 (cf. Deut 17:8–12).[485] A final parallel that

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[481] See Fee (*First Corinthians*, 227) and Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 244–45) who both treat Deuteronomy 17:7 as the parallel to 1 Corinthians 5:13b, and Deuteronomy 22 is merely mentioned as a cross-reference to the exclusion formula.

[482] Sean M. McDonough, "Competent to Judge: The Old Testament Connection to 1 Corinthians 5 and 6," *JTS* 56 (2005): 99–102.

[483] McDonough, "Competent to Judge," 99.

[484] Deuteronomy 17:12 then repeats the exclusion formula.

[485] McDonough, "Competent to Judge," 100.

McDonough makes between Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Corinthians 5–6 is that in Deuteronomy the Israelites were to bring the guilty ones to the place of the Lord to be judged—the temple location where the "priests and Levites will render judgments." Likewise, Paul expects the Corinthians to judge the incestuous son when they are "assembled in the name of the Lord" (v. 4). The Corinthians have already been identified as God's temple in 1 Corinthians (3:16), which makes them "the temple [to which] people are to be brought to be judged."[486]

Although McDonough is correct in pointing out the parallels between 1 Corinthians 5 and Deuteronomy 17:1–12, there is no reason to isolate Paul's allusion to this particular text. There are similar themes and parallels in the other passages where the exclusion formula is located that make it possible that the Apostle also has these texts in mind, not simply Deuteronomy 17 or 22. As already mentioned, the Deuteronomist uses this formula several times in the section of laws as it relates to the Israelites purging the community of those who violate their covenant with Yahweh (13:5; 17:7, 12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7). Clearly *purging* is a common pattern for the Deuteronomist when dealing with various offenses against Yahweh. Deuteronomy also shows that the purging to take place does not only involve what might be considered the most shocking sins like sexual immorality or idolatry, but also others such as false witnesses (Deut 19:15–21; cf. 1 Cor 5:11). The theme of properly judging those in the community is a recurring one for both Paul and the Deuteronomist. This is clear in the Pauline text where the Apostle uses the word κρίνω, or a cognate form,

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[486] McDonough, "Competent to Judge," 100–01.

three times in 1 Corinthians 5:12–13,[487] and again six times in 6:1–6.[488] Similarly,

in the chapters in Deuteronomy where we find the exclusion formula, it deals with

numerous προστάγματα and κρίσεις ("commands" and "judgments") that the

Israelites must be careful to follow (12:1) if they want God to bless them rather

than to curse them in all that they do (11:26–32). The writer's emphasis on

judging or judgment is evident throughout chapters 12–26 by the sheer number of

times he uses words such as κρίνω (16:18; 25:1), κρίσις (12:1; 16:18, 19; 18:3;

19:6; 24:17; 25:1), and κριτής (16:18; 19:17, 18; 21:2; 25:2). It is true that

Deuteronomy 17 has a high concentration of the words κρίσις (17:8 [4x], 9, 11)

and κριτής (17:9, 12, 19), but it seems from the evidence above that the writer is

concerned with the judgment of the people of Israel in the entire section.

Furthermore, Deuteronomy 12–26 corresponds well with Paul's argument in

verses 9–13 (esp. v. 11) in which the Apostle demonstrates to the Corinthians that

he is not solely focused on one particular type of sinner being expelled from the

community. Paul's mind would certainly have been shaped by the section of laws

found in Deuteronomy 12–26, and the fact that he does not introduce or locate

any one of these texts in a particular chapter of Deuteronomy means that his

audience does not necessarily need to have any one specific text in mind where

this formula is used. The Corinthians only need to recall that Paul's allusion is an

authoritative scriptural formula from the overall context of Deuteronomy 12–26

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[487] Paul had previously brought up *judging* in verse 3 when he says, ἤδη κέκρικα ὡς παρὼν τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον.

[488] Paul also uses the word κριτήριον ("law courts" or "legal action") twice in verses 2 and 4, and κρίμα ("lawsuit") in verse 7, which both relate to "judgment."

that he is now applying to their own situation.[489]

2.2. Parallels between Paul's Vice Lists and Deuteronomic Laws

A final parallel in 1 Corinthians 5 to the context of Deuteronomy 12–26 is based

on the lists of sins Paul mentions in verses 10–11. Although we have seen that he

is likely referring to actual sins present in the church, it appears the sins he

mentions are also closely paralleled in Deuteronomy 12–26 with sins that demand

those who commit them to be excluded from the community.[490] What is striking

about 1 Corinthians 5:11 is that five of the six sins included in Paul's list

correspond with those in Deuteronomy which include the exclusion formula to

"remove the wicked person from among you."[491] These include the sexually

immoral (22:13–30), idolaters (13:1–5; 17:1–7), revilers (19:15–19), drunkards

(21:18–23), and swindlers (24:7):

1 Cor 5:11[492]	Deuteronomy	Exclusion Formula
Sexually immoral	promiscuity, adultery, and incest (22:21, 22, 30)	Yes
Greedy	no parallel, but paired with "swindler" in 1 Cor 5:10	No
Idolater	idolatry (13:1–5; 17:2–7)	Yes
Reviler	malicious false testimony (19:16–19)	Yes
Drunkard	rebellious drunken son (21:18–21)	Yes
Swindler	kidnapping, slave-trading (24:7; LXX uses the noun κλέπτης, "thief")	Yes

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[489] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 91. *Contra* Christopher M. Tuckett ("Paul, Scripture and Ethics: Some Reflections," *NTS* 46 [2000]: 411–16) who argues that no Corinthian reader would have been able to pick up Paul's allusion to Deuteronomy. See also Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 139–40) who contends that Christology, not any content or citation from the Torah, is the basis for Paul's ethical instruction in 1 Corinthians 5.

[490] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 68–70; cf. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 88.

[491] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 69; cf. Hays, *First Corinthians*, 87.

[492] This chart is adapted from Brian S. Rosner, "Deuteronomy in 1 and 2 Corinthians," in *Deuteronomy in the New Testament: The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London: Continuum International, 2007), 122.

The only exception is "the greedy," where no parallel is found in Deuteronomy

that calls for the Israelites to remove (ἐξαρεῖς) τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν. The

greedy are, however, paired with ἅρπαξιν in verse 10, and covetousness or greed

is condemned elsewhere in Deuteronomy (e.g., 5:21; cf. Exod 20:17).[493]

Considering this evidence, the parallels to the sins in Deuteronomy found in

1 Corinthians 5:11 suggest that they are more than a coincidence.[494]

3. Paul's Argumentation

The previous section demonstrated that Paul uses the Deuteronomic context to

situate his audience within the overarching narrative. Therefore, what kinds of

intertextual analogies does he expect his audience to draw for their own situation?

In the last chapter when we analyzed the Apostle's argumentation, we noted that

much of his argument aims at emplotting his Corinthian audience in the proper

theological narrative. His ethical motivation depends on his audience's

recognizing its current role, and then adjusting it to those who have played a good

role before it. Although I will not elaborate on this particular aspect of Paul's

argument in this section, it is important to note that he employs this same strategy

in verses 9–13 as he offers the Corinthians a picture of the proper roles for those

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[493] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 411.

[494] Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 69. There are other aspects of Deuteronomy 12–26 that find parallels to 1 Corinthians 5. For example, contained within these chapters of commands is a reference to the celebration of Passover (Deut 16; cf. 1 Cor 5:7–8). The section's ethical framework, like Paul's in 1 Corinthians 5, follows a "pattern of indicatives followed by imperatives which is repeated throughout the laws" in Deuteronomy 12–26 (see Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 117); e.g., 13:10; 14:1–2; 15:15; 20:1; 23:4; 24:9; 26:18. Also, McDonough ("Competent to Judge," 100–01) argued for a direct parallel between Deuteronomy 17:7 and 1 Corinthians 5 based on the fact that in both texts the discipline is to take place before the entire community and before the Lord. This practice, however, is also evident in other parts of Deuteronomy (e.g., 19:17, 20a), thus appearing to demonstrate that Paul's allusion is deeper than might be expected.

in the overarching narrative:

i.   They are not to associate with any so-called brother or sister who is sexually immoral, an idolater, greedy, a swindler, verbally abusive, or a drunkard (vv. 9–11a).

ii.   They are not to share in table fellowship with those who participate in these sins (v. 11b).

iii.   They are to judge (i.e., discipline) these people if they are part of the covenant community (v. 12b).

iv.   They are to "remove the wicked person from among [them]" (v. 13b).

This section will explore Paul's purpose in outlining these specific behaviours for the Corinthian church. It will become clear that he is defining these behaviours so that the Corinthians will recognize that social boundaries are necessary for a covenant community because they help God's people know how to properly navigate the theological narrative.

3.1. Social Boundaries in the Covenant Community

After using figurative language to insist that the Corinthians must keep the church free from impurities (vv. 6–8), Paul continues this theme in verses 9–13 in clear, straightforward language. He begins his argument by drawing attention to the congregation's failure to set up social boundaries appropriately in the past (v. 9). The Apostle clarifies that when he previously commanded the Corinthians to set up this particular marker in the church—stop associating with the sexually immoral—he did not mean creating a boundary in relation to those outside the church (v. 10).[495] This suggests that the Corinthians had ignored or misunderstood his previous instruction, or at least they had failed in its application. Regardless of

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[495] This is also why Paul does not call for any judgment against the woman involved in the case of sexual immorality (i.e., the "father's wife"); she is most likely not part of the Christian community (see Collins, *First Corinthians*, 201).

their motivation,[496] Paul's implication is clear this time: "The community failed to discern evil that corrupts the community and to judge and discipline those inside, *tous eso* (cf. 5,12) who perpetuate evil."[497]

In order to show the Corinthians the importance of setting clear social boundaries in the church, Paul alludes to the Deuteronomic context once again. Even though his primary allusion in 1 Corinthians 5 as a whole points to Deuteronomy 22–23, I argued in the previous section that the scope of his allusion does not end there. The sins he mentions in his vice lists (vv. 10–11), for example, appear to parallel those in the wider Deuteronomic context where the exclusion formula is found on several occasions in Deuteronomy 12–26. We saw in our treatment of allusions in verses 9–13, that Paul, by expanding his intertextual parallels to this section of Scripture, expects his audience to consider several implications from the Deuteronomist's list of commands and not only from the context that involves a man having sexual relations with his stepmother (Deut 22:30). Therefore, what implications can be drawn from these intertextual allusions to Deuteronomy?

When the context of Deuteronomy 12–26 is examined closely, we see that one of the author's desires is for Israel to be able to define what behaviours make a person unfit to be a part of the covenant community. There are numerous

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[496] The Corinthians seem to have understood Paul's idea of social boundaries, since the Apostle's tone in verse 10 suggest that they should have already known that he meant the sexually immoral in the church (cf. 5:6: "Do you not know . . . ?"). As I mentioned in chapter 4, the Corinthians' neglect in taking the necessary action against this sinner suggests he was probably someone of significant status in the church. Many in the church were dependent on patrons, and it is quite possible the Corinthian church relied on this man's patronage in some way; they may have even assembled in his house (see Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 82; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 49).

[497] Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 132.

examples in this section of laws that the writer provides to set clear social

boundaries, even apart from the times he uses the exclusion formula.[498] The

implication for Israel—community and individuals—is that it must adhere to

these stipulations if it desires to approach God (i.e., to enter his assembly).[499] It is

important to understand that the laws in Deuteronomy 12–26 are not simply given

as an arbitrary list of commands for individuals, but instead are given with the

purpose of preserving Israel's purity,[500] both ritually (e.g., Deut 23:1–14) and

morally (e.g., Deut 17:2–7; 22:13–30).[501] For this reason, establishing social

boundaries is absolutely critical to Israel's existence since these boundary markers

determine the type of relationship the people can have with God.[502]

One parallel between Paul's argument in verses 9–10 and the context of

Deuteronomy 12–26 is that the Apostle makes a distinction between the

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[498] Deut 12:2–5, 29–31; 13:1–5, 6–11, 12–18; 14:1–2; 17:2–7, 15; 18:9–14, 19–22; 19:15–21; 20:18; 21:18–21, 22–23; 22:5, 13–30; 23:1–7, 17; 24:1–4, 7, 8–9; 25:11–12, 16, 17–19.

[499] Deut 12:1–28, 29–32; 14:3–21, 22–29; 15:1–6, 7–11, 19–23; 16:1–8, 9–12, 13–16, 21; 17:1; 18:13; 23:1–14, 17–18; 26:1–19.

[500] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 136–37. On this note, Craigie (*Deuteronomy*, 17) points out that the book of Deuteronomy is not simply a "corpus of law," but instead "a record of *words* addressed by Moses to the Israelites. The style is hortatory, that of an orator addressing his congregation with words designed to move them to obedience and commitment to the Lord of the covenant."

[501] See Jonathan Klawans' (*Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 21–42) discussion on the differences and interrelatedness of ritual and moral impurity in the Hebrew Scriptures. Klawans explains that *ritually impure* persons are those who are "excluded from participation in certain ritual acts and barred from entering sacred precincts" because of various natural processes (23). *Moral impurity*, on the other hand, "results from what are believed to be immoral acts," which can defile both the individual sinner and the land of Israel (26). Klawans notes, however, that later generations in Judaism did not always make a distinction between certain impurities. Idolatry, for example, was considered sometimes both ritually and morally impure by some groups (see 113–14).

[502] Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 137) notes that Deuteronomy 23:1–8, for example, is a transition that moves from Israel's improper sexual relationships (22:11–30) to how they affect the nation's relationship with Yahweh.

expectations he has on those inside and outside of the covenant community. More

specifically, he is not calling for the Corinthians to separate from pagans, but

from those who claim allegiance to Christ yet live like pagans. This reasoning is

consistent with the Deuteronomist whose ethical deliberation is also primarily

concerned with setting boundaries so the people of Israel can identify and then

judge those among them who are not living up to their covenantal responsibilities.

Deuteronomy 12, for example, which sets the tone for the rest of the section (chs.

12–26), is a sustained argument against the idolatrous practices of the Canaanites

and their immediate threat if Israel were to adopt them.[503] The writer's purpose in

bringing up these practices, however, is not only to declare that they are sinful,

but that he expects the Israelites to repudiate all of them because they and those

who practice them have no place within Israel's national boundaries.[504] Paul

likewise does not write the Corinthians to command them to stay away from those

outside the church who are wicked (5:10) or to judge their behaviours (5:12–13a).

He demonstrates elsewhere in the letter that he has no problem when the church

mixes with outsiders.[505] He instead concerns himself with those members of the

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[503] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 109. Millar also makes this point later when he says that the Deuteronomist was "equally unconcerned to give an accurate description of the lifestyle and behaviour of the nations. . . . So the sweeping condemnation of the practices of these tribes in 12:31–32 is not so much a treatise on Canaanite religion, . . . but a demand that Israel avoid being contaminated by the ways of Canaan, which are repugnant to God" (*Now Choose Life*, 148).

[504] For example, the need for the Israelites to rid of anything associated with Canaanite idolatry. The people were commanded to destroy all idolatrous shrines (12:2–4, 29–31) since they were "symbolic of the Canaanite way of life" (v. 4). Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 109) explains that "By destroying [these shrines], Israel repudiates every practice and attitude that departs from a pure Yahwistic faith (cf. 7:5). . . . The particular temptation which Israel would face in Canaan must be resisted at any price (cf. 6:18; 7:1–11). Failure to do so will result in the death of the nation, as compromise in this area denies the very nature of Israel as God's people."

[505] As MacDonald (*Pauline Churches*, 68) explains, Paul consistently demonstrates that his concern is with the ethical life of those in the church: "Paul forbids the community members to eat

church who bring in the harmful behaviours and values from *outside* that will negatively shape the church's ethics if tolerated. The Corinthian Christians, like the Israelites, must therefore not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister yet participates in any behaviour that is contrary to the theological narrative. Paul's discussion on proper social boundaries stresses the necessity of removing all sinning members—and their influence—from the church.

The Apostle's parallels to Deuteronomy 12–26 in his vice list (v. 11) further encourage the Corinthians to think in terms of how community boundaries are to shape their ethical framework. The list he offers is representative of the types of people the church is to judge for a failure to live by covenantal norms (cf. 5:12b). Paul uses ἀδελφὸς coupled with πόρνος (also πλεονέκτης, εἰδωλολάτρης, λοίδορος, μέθυσος, and ἅρπαξ) to show that these identity markers are mutually exclusive. A so-called brother or sister cannot claim Christ as his or her Passover with the rest of the church if he or she is at the same time indulging in sexual immorality. The Corinthians must exclude anyone from the covenant community who participates in these sins.[506]

Paul's vice list also implies another parallel to Deuteronomy 12–26 that the Corinthians should recognize: God is concerned with more than just the most abhorrent sins among his people. The Deuteronomist commands the Israelites to

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with the believer who is guilty of immorality (1 Cor 5:11), while apparently legitimating eating with unbelievers, irrespective of their life-styles (1 Cor 10:27)."

[506] Pascuzzi (*Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline*, 133) notes that "The vice list makes evident that there is no double standard for Paul nor does he expect one to operate within the community. A vice-doer who is a brother is still a vice-doer and hence a rank sinner. This is the reality with which the community must deal. Here Paul draws the line not between Christians and pagans or Christians and Jews but between Christians and pseudo-Christians." See also Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 69.

purge a broad variety of sinners from the covenant community.[507] The breadth of

these commands are meant to demonstrate that there is no sphere of Israel's

existence (nation and individual) that is outside the covenant that they have with

Yahweh.[508] Paul uses the Deuteronomic framework to teach the Corinthians to

regard other sins in the same way as sexual immorality. These sins contaminate

the church, and he expects the Corinthians to remove those who practice them

from the community (v. 13b). Thus his final words in chapter 5 call for the

Corinthians to purge the πονηρὸν from among them, not simply the πόρνοι, which

was the initial subject of chapter 5 (v. 1). This all-encompassing word that

describes the wicked indicates that he wants the Corinthians to apply this

exclusion formula to future contexts as well.[509] As a result, the Corinthians should

not view any area of life as insignificant or inconsequential. Paul considers the

less visible sins to be just as dangerous to the life of the community as those such

as the incestuous affair that even Corinthian society deems as intolerable (cf.

5:1b).[510] For example, sinners who fall into the category of the greedy and

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[507] Deut 13:*5*, 9–10, 15–16, 17:5, *7*, *12*; 18:12, 20; 19:12–*13*, 19; 21:9, *21*; 22:*21*, *22*, *24*, 25; 24:*7*, 16 (italics indicate a verse containing the Deuteronomic exclusion formula).

[508] Craigie (*Deuteronomy*, 42–43) argues that the purpose Deuteronomy 12–26 is to demonstrate that all life is under the rule of God: "Hence the broad scope of the specific stipulations is significant; the stipulations do not cover every possible contingency that could arise in human living, but they indicate by their breadth and diversity that no area of life is irrelevant or unimportant to the member of the covenant community." See also Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 141.

[509] Heil (*The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 92) explains that the aorist imperative in verse 13 (ἐξάρατε) allows for Paul to be referring to both a specific individual, as in the immediate case, and to any person in general who is involved in various sins.

[510] Paul makes a similar argument in verses 6–8 where he states that any malice or wickedness (i.e., leaven), regardless of how *small* it may appear, is enough to contaminate the entire community (i.e., dough) and thus has the potential to bring curses upon the church if tolerated.

swindlers (v. 11) may be the types of people who are tolerated—or even go unnoticed—by those in Roman Corinth, a city where justice is often set aside for the pursuit of wealth and power.[511] Paul, on the other hand, views these people just as morally culpable as idolaters and the sexually immoral.

Next Paul's command to "not [even] eat with one such as this" (v. 11c) offers the Corinthians a specific example of an appropriate social boundary for the church. This directive makes it clear that any person who shares in the fellowship of the church should face complete social isolation from the rest of the community if he or she continues participating in Paul's aforementioned vices. This may sound harsh, but eating with someone whose life is defined by sin blurs the church's identity as God's holy people.[512] Excluding these sinners from a meal is therefore an expression of what Paul expects a covenant community to do if it is dealing with the sin of its members properly. The seriousness of his directive is only fully appreciated when we realize that this is counterintuitive to Corinth's cultural conventions where being shunned by one's group would be a monumental disgrace.[513] The excluded person's dishonour is heightened even more when we consider that those whose status was inferior would never consider treating a more powerful member of society in this manner. Paul's instruction helps the church to recognize what is at stake if sin is tolerated, even if this means

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[511] Cf. pages 71–75.

[512] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 87. Garland (*1 Corinthians*, 189–90) argues that "Christians who are no different morally than unbelievers blur the clear distinctions between the church and the world and destroy their testimony to God's transforming power in their lives."

[513] Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 219.

committing the societal *faux pas* of an inferior shaming his or her superior.[514] The

Corinthians should have the mindset that what truly counts is the honour and

shame that God alone can bestow, not a powerful member of society.[515]

3.2. Judging Evildoers in the Covenant Community

Paul proceeds to ask two questions that are intended to teach the Corinthians that

the church's holiness is an issue of internal discipline: "For what have I to do with

judging those outside [the church]? Do you not judge those inside [the church]"

(5:12).[516] This is evident in the terms he uses for identity markers, *insiders* (τοὺς

ἔσω) and *outsiders* (τοὺς ἔξω), which set up two polarized categories that are

intended to draw attention to the importance of having responsible social

boundaries in the church.[517] Paul's first question goes back to what he said a few

verses earlier when he reminded the Corinthians that in his previous letter he had

not asked them to separate from the immoral in Corinthian society (vv. 9–10). It is

not for the church to judge those outside (v. 12a), for this responsibility belongs to

God (v. 13a).[518] When a member of the covenant community, though, is claiming

to be an insider but is acting like an outsider, it contradicts Paul's understanding

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[514] Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 219. Collins (*First Corinthians*, 217) notes that Paul's order to avoid table fellowship with people whom the Corinthians have "ties of fictive kinship" heightens the seriousness of his command.

[515] Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 155.

[516] Hays, *First Corinthians*, 87. Paul's purpose in 1 Corinthians 5, as Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 416) argues, is to have the covenant community legislate and execute the rules of the community with the authority Christ has given them (cf. 1 Cor 5:4).

[517] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 417.

[518] Even though Christians do not judge the world in their present role, they will participate with God in judging it in the future (1 Cor 6:2); cf. Fee, *First Corinthians*, 227.

of the fundamental boundaries in the covenant community; therefore, the church has the responsibility to judge in these cases.[519] This same responsibility was given to Israelite judges who were put in place to ensure that Israel obeyed God and took action when the people disobeyed (e.g., Deut 17).

Paul's emphasis on setting community boundaries continues in verse 13 when he answers the two questions he posed in verse 12: a) God has the responsibility to judge those outside the church (v. 13a); b) it is the church's responsibility to judge those within it (v. 13b). Paul's exclusion formula, "Remove the wicked person from among you," reinforces the several other similar directives he specified from the previous two units in 1 Corinthians 5 (vv. 2b, 5, 7a).[520] The formula's non-Pauline language would suggest that he is purposely encouraging his audience to make their own intertextual connections. The scriptural injunction that the Apostle cites is used in the Deuteronomic context to call upon Israel to remove those from the community who have violated their covenant with God, and therefore, his reference to it represents an evident relationship with Deuteronomy's covenant motif.[521] It also indicates that by doing so he has transferred Israel's disciplinary responsibilities over to the church in Corinth.[522] The Corinthians, like Israel, have covenantal obligations,

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[519] Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 185.

[520] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 92. The formula serves as a conclusion of sorts to the original Deuteronomic allusion in chapter 5: "a man has his father's wife" (5:1c; cf. Deut 22:30).

[521] See Deut 17:7, 12; 19:13, 19; 21:9, 21; 22:22, 24; 24:7. Cf. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 65–70.

[522] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 159.

and Paul assumes his readers will recognize that they are presently standing in the same position of judgment as Israel did when they were unfaithful by tolerating sin in their community (cf. 1 Cor 10:1–22).[523]

Paul also employs this scriptural command to draw his audience's mind back to the familiar theme in 1 Corinthians 5 of the church's responsibility to ensure the holiness of the community. Like Deuteronomy's audience, Paul knows that the church cannot approach God without first removing the sin from within its boundaries. Thus by transferring this command to the Corinthians' ethical framework, Paul is reshaping their consciousness so that they will embrace their corporate responsibility to maintain the church's holiness.[524] The Corinthians must remember that no matter how small the sin may seem (cf. 5:6), they cannot celebrate the feast together in sincerity and truth if they allow the old leaven to linger in the community (v. 8).[525] As is made evident in Deuteronomy, God does not tolerate anything that is unholy in his presence; he even threatens to turn away from his people if anything shameful is found among them (cf. Deut 23:14).[526]

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[523] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 97. Hays relates this to 1 Corinthians 10:1–4 where Paul places Christ back into the exodus: "If Christ was present to Israel in grace and judgment just as he is now present to the church, the Corinthians have no remaining ground for supposing themselves to possess an immunity from judgment that Israel did not possess" (*Echoes of Scripture*, 97).

[524] Hays, *Conversion of the Imagination*, 23. See also Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 70–73.

[525] Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 119) says that the most important issue for the Deuteronomist is to urge the Israelites to live differently than those around them. If syncretism was tolerated, it "would inevitably disrupt Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh."

[526] See Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, 73–80) for a discussion on this matter. Millar (*Now Choose Life*, 111) notes that Israel was often warned to be careful about *places* (e.g., 13:10–14). He later adds that "the emphasis is placed on continuing the journey in obedience within the land by repudiating all things Canaanite. God must be worshipped in accordance with what he says" (*Now Choose Life*, 114).

Israel's judges needed to understand that all allegiances, including familial, were second to their responsibility to carry out communal discipline. They were to base their judicial decisions not on what was easiest to do but on their desire to conform Israel's ethical life to God's covenantal expectations.[527] Similar to the Corinthian situation, there were no doubt pressures that arose among the Israelites that may have tempted some to look the other way and to tolerate a person's sin (e.g., family ties, costs associated with offending an influential member of the community, etc.). Israel's judges, however, were still obligated to command the people to purge sinners from the community. Paul expects the Corinthians likewise to "remove the wicked person" from the church because even the most powerful in society are not to receive a *carte blanche* to do as they please, no matter what social values and conventions dictate. The community is to judge these people just as much as anyone else since the church's relationship with God is much more important than any undesirable consequences that may result from violating cultural norms.

In this chapter we have seen that Paul draws upon the wider Deuteronomic context in 1 Corinthians 9–13 to help the Corinthians understand ways in which they can properly navigate the theological narrative. His parallels include not only the Deuteronomic exclusion formula in verse 13 but also his vice lists, which I argued include sins that closely parallel those associated with the formula in Deuteronomy. Paul draws analogies from these instances to urge the Corinthians to purge the evildoers from their community. Since the church has failed in setting

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[527] Millar, *Now Choose Life*, 126.

social boundaries in the past, the Apostle outlines specific behaviours that define those with whom the Corinthians should not associate in the covenant community. We also noted that another prominent theme for Paul was his emphasis on judgment, and more specifically, the judging of *insiders*. He makes it clear that he expects the church to take responsibility for judging members of the church who claim to be insiders but whose behaviour is as sinful as those outside the church. At the end of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5, his scriptural command is somewhat of a conclusion that ties the entire argument together. It encourages his audience to consider the recurring motif that he has stressed throughout the chapter: that the Corinthian church is responsible to ensure that the covenant community is holy, because a failure to do so will hinder any possibility of its worshipping God properly, and thus playing a good role in the overarching narrative.

4. Overall Implication of Paul's Argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5

We will conclude this chapter by looking at the implication of Paul's overall argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5. As important as the holiness motif is in Paul's argument, our analysis suggests that he is just as concerned with the function of his ethical deliberation as he is with its content. The Apostle's objective is not simply to give his audience commands to obey (i.e., content) but to create a Christian community in Corinth that possesses the right ethical discernment so that it is able to carry out its covenantal responsibilities as it faces new moral decisions (i.e., function).

From the beginning of 1 Corinthians 5, we see how critical the function of Paul's ethical deliberation is to his argumentation. His entire argument builds upon the fact that the Corinthians have not properly discerned the right course of action in this case. This is revealed by Paul's question in verse 2 when he asks, "Should you not be mourning instead, so that he who has committed this act is removed from among you?" In order to help the Corinthians with their moral discernment, Paul provides an ethical framework with examples for them to emulate. In verses 3–5, for instance, he offers himself as one who has played a good role. He, unlike the Corinthians, has had the right mindset in this situation because he has "already judged" the son (v. 3). The verb that Paul uses in verse 3 for *to judge* (κέκρικα) carries the idea of reaching a decision or conclusion based on cognitive deliberation.[528] In other words, having considered how one might play a good role in this instance, the Apostle has concluded that the man must be removed from the covenant community.

Paul also demonstrates in verses 6–8 that he is concerned with the Corinthians' ethical discernment. His Passover imagery is designed to have the Corinthians consider the theological implications of the overarching narrative. In particular, these images encourage them to reflect upon those who have played a good role in the past both in its preparation and celebration. Likewise in verses 9–13, Paul expands his argumentative scope to include a list of various sins that will help the Corinthians consider the implications of the wider Deuteronomic ethical framework where more roles can be seen. Even when he provides an explicit

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[528] BDAG, 568.

scriptural citation (v. 13b), it is not given in isolation. It begins, rather, with a

proper understanding of what those in the theological narrative did before them

when faced with such a situation. The Corinthians would hear this allusion and it

would force them to decide for themselves whether or not this incestuous

relationship is appropriate for those whose identity is defined by the narrative.[529]

It is for these reasons that it is important for the Corinthians to recognize their

position in the story because it enables them to discern for themselves the proper

actions of God's covenant people.

The function of Paul's argumentation is important because he believes it is

crucial for the Corinthians to think critically about whether or not Corinth's

cultural assumptions are consistent with the implications of the Christ event. Paul

understands that the Corinthians' contact with the surrounding culture will

inevitably lead to new situations that conflict with the Christian faith (cf. 5:10).

Therefore, his argument trains the Corinthians to exercise their ethical

discernment. This is consistent with his other letters in which he also seems to be

more concerned that his audiences know how to discern what is ethically

acceptable rather than simply be given specific moral imperatives.[530] Moreover,

Paul knows that not all moral issues will be as straightforward as the one in

1 Corinthians 5. As a result, the Apostle's emphasis on moral discernment will

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[529] Scott (*Paul's Way of Knowing*, 134) notes that "even when Paul's ethical knowledge does seem to rely on non-narrative formulations, he consistently interprets them in light of the key events in his theological narrative. It is not simply that prostitution renders one impure. Such impurity is illegitimate for one who has become a temple of God's Spirit through identification with Christ"; see also Holland, "Mistaken Identity," 62.

[530] Scott, *Paul's Way of Knowing*, 120–21. See Rom 2:18; Phil 1:9–10; cf. 1 Cor 4:4. Cf. Mark Gravrock, "Why Won't Paul Just Say No? Purity and Sex in 1 Corinthians 6," *WW* 16 (1996): 444–55.

become increasingly evident in the letter as he moves away from the black and white issues found in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 and deals with more of the "grey areas" in later chapters where the church's ethical decisions depend more on the circumstances (1 Cor 7:1–11:16).[531] Ethical discernment is necessary if the Corinthians are to sustain themselves as a covenant community without constant apostolic supervision. Paul argument in 1 Corinthians 5, then, is working to instill a mature mindset in the Corinthian community because in the end it is the Corinthians, not the Apostle, who must be able to recognize for themselves when these cultural practices conflict with a good role in the narrative.

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[531] Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 381. This type of ethical discernment is also the crucial element in Paul's argument in Romans 12:1–2. Brendan Byrnes (*Romans* [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1996], 365) explains that Paul wants his audience to understand that the "renewed mind" is what creates "the capacity to discern what is required to live according to God's will." See also Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 287.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

As we analyzed Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5, we noticed that his

ethical deliberation often arises from a common understanding of how to use

Scripture for ethics. When Paul alludes to a specific verse (e.g., Deut 22:30; cf.

5:1b) or cites a specific scriptural formula (e.g., Deut 22:21, 22, 24; cf. 5:13b), it

is not a proof-text that he gives simply to convince the Corinthians that they

should not tolerate sexual immorality in the church. Rather, all of his intertextual

allusions and citations must be understood within the context of the overarching

narrative in which these intertexts are found. Therefore, his ethical framework

"derives coherence" from a common ethical understanding of God's covenant

people relative to this grand narrative.[532] In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul uses the exodus

narrative to draw analogies between the Corinthians' chapter and the Israelites'

wanderings chapter of the narrative. In comparing these different stages of the

story, the Apostle highlights the behaviours that help the Corinthian church to

understand how to play a good role in the overarching story of God's covenant

people. Although Paul's ethical discourse follows the Jewish tradition of

readapting previous generations' experiences, the Christ event for him means that

the part the Corinthians are to play from the exodus narrative is not exactly the

same as the Israelites'. Nevertheless, God still requires the Corinthians to play

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[532] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 158.

their role well no matter the stage of the story.

When we examined 1 Corinthians 5, it became apparent that Paul believes the Corinthians are presently playing a bad role in the narrative. More specifically, he is troubled that the Corinthian church is tolerating the incestuous relationship more so than he is with the individual sinner. As a result, his argument highlights the wrongful attitudes that the Corinthians possess, stating that they are puffed up with pride despite the fact that this situation should have led them to an attitude of corporate mourning. Although many scholars have proposed theories that claim the Corinthians and/or the man are justifying this sin on theological grounds, I argued that it is more likely that social conventions have prevented the Corinthians from confronting the man about his sin because of his high social status. It is also probable that the Corinthians are overlooking his sin since it may involve expelling a wealthy member of the community, and thus, costing the church as a whole. Regardless of the exact reason for the Corinthians' toleration of this man's sexual sin, for Paul, it is unacceptable that a church would not take action against such a person (vv. 2, 6).

After establishing the socio-historical background to 1 Corinthians 5, we then began to explore Paul's use of the exodus narrative in his argumentation. We noted that his ethical deliberation began in verses 1–5 by making an indirect juxtaposition of identities, comparing the Corinthians' ethical framework with the Gentile world, implying that they are now *former* Gentiles. Paul then alludes to Deuteronomy 22:30, a text that speaks of the same type of sin he is confronting in the Corinthian church. He uses both of these references to invite the Corinthians

to see Israel's story not simply as an example to follow, but as one in which they are participants in the same overarching narrative. Paul's references remind the Corinthians of their identity as God's covenant people, and that because of this identity, they now have covenantal responsibilities. In this particular situation, the church is responsible to expel the sinner from the community to protect its relationship with God. I also argued that Paul is indirectly presenting the Corinthians with a choice that is reminiscent of the one the Deuteronomist gave his audience: The Corinthians can either accept their responsibilities as a covenant community and remove the man from among them or, like Israel, face God's judgment.

When we looked at Paul's argumentation in verses 6–8, we saw that he alludes to several aspects of the Passover. His imperatives to "clean out the old leaven" and to "celebrate the feast" express his underlying concern that the Corinthians play a good role in the grand narrative. He also refers to Christ as their own sacrificed Passover lamb, alluding to how God has made them, like the Israelites during the original exodus, a distinct people who are free to live a life of moral purity. These allusions are important motivators in Paul's argument because they trigger analogies to the roles the Israelites were required to play in the exodus narrative. Paul uses them to encourage the Corinthians to examine both the good and bad roles of the past to reflect upon their current role in the overarching story. He stresses that those who desire to play a good role must maintain the church's purity since it is impossible for the Corinthians to celebrate their own Passover feast with the old leaven in the church.

In verses 9–13, Paul once more employs the wider Deuteronomic framework as the basis of his argumentation. The clearest instance is his citation of the exclusion formula in verse 13b, which is found several times in Deuteronomy 13–24. I argued that since the Deuteronomist repeats the command nine times in a concentrated section of Scripture, Paul's analogies are not necessarily restricted to only one of these specific passages in which the formulas are found. I also noted that Paul's vice lists appear to parallel the laws in Deuteronomy 12–26 where the exclusion formula is used to command the Israelites to remove covenant violators from the community. He expects the Corinthians to draw analogies from the wider Deuteronomic context to their own situation to understand the proper roles for God's people. With this in mind, we discovered that Paul's concern is to show the Corinthians that it is their responsibility to judge members of the covenant community. He emphasizes the need for the Corinthians to define clear social boundaries since their relationship with God depends on the proper judgment of the church. Paul wants the Corinthians to accept their corporate responsibility to maintain the church's holiness.

I concluded my thesis by looking at the overall implication of Paul's argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5. We discovered that Paul's objective in chapter 5 is not simply to give the Corinthians commands to obey; instead, his aim is to strengthen their ethical discernment. He does this by offering the Corinthians various intertextual tools that force them to reflect upon whether or not they are playing an appropriate role in the grand narrative. The examples Paul offers, from Deuteronomy in particular, help the Corinthians recognize for themselves when

Corinth's cultural practices are contrary to a good role in the story. Although he does not restrict himself to Deuteronomy's ethical framework, we have seen that Paul's argument relies heavily on it for its motifs, themes, and even explicit citations to situate the Corinthians in this overarching narrative.

In conclusion, we should not be surprised that Paul chose the wandering period of the exodus narrative as a foundational intertext for his argumentation in 1 Corinthians 5 since the Corinthian and Deuteronomic audiences are dealing not only with the same type of sexual immorality in their midst, but they also share similar social situations. Most importantly, they are both covenant communities trying to live in cultures that have many values and behaviours that are contrary to those God desires for his people. Deuteronomy is essentially a look at how God's people are attempting to re-imagine themselves within the context of the exodus story. Paul likewise writes to people who are living in their own *post-exodus*. Therefore, the Apostle provides the Corinthians with an ethical model that displays both good and bad roles that should help them recognize how to properly navigate their journey as God's covenant people.

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