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The Church of God in a Pagan World: Studies in First Corinthians

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Harding University
67th Annual Lectureship

The
Church
of God
in a
Pagan World



STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

At no other time in history has there been a more pressing need for the church or the living God to reach out to a dark world full of sin. The study of First Corinthians, which will set the tone for the 57th annual Harding University Bible Lectureship, can provide an anchor for God's people who are willing to reach out to others in sharing the message of light and peace, a message of hope and salvation for the lost.

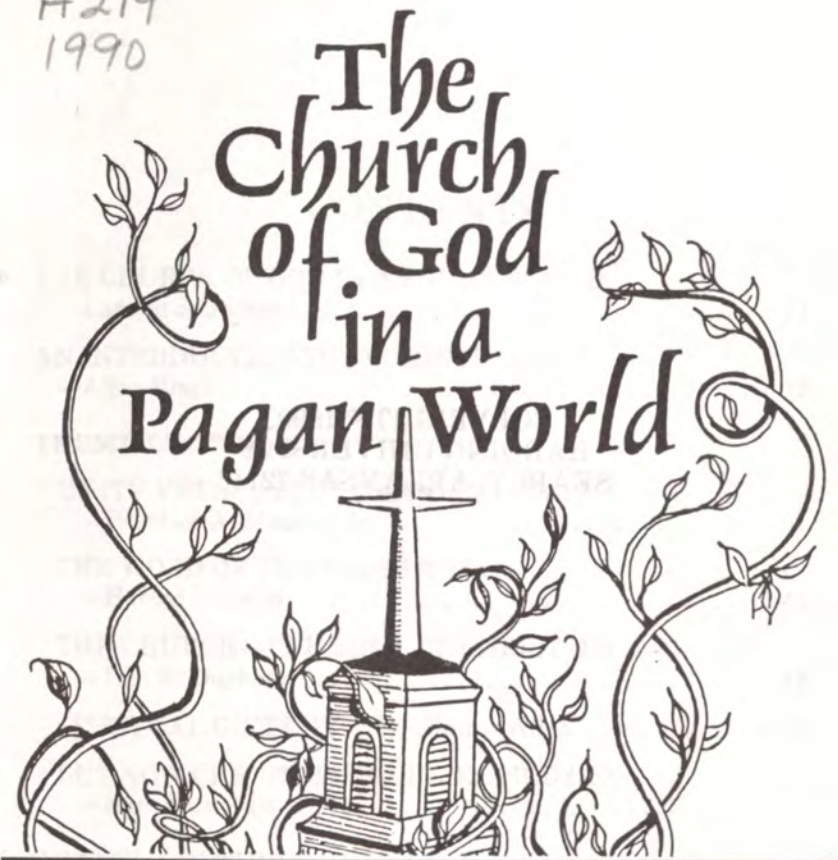
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David B. Burks
President

The
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STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Harding University
67th Annual Lectureship
September 30-October 3, 1990

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FOREWORD

The Bible is an eternally contemporary book. Its writers were inspired by God to proclaim *his* message to their fellow-men. This message is a word of hope, comfort, instruction, exhortation, and warning for men of all ages.

First Corinthians, written by the apostle Paul, confronted the issues facing new Christians in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth about the middle of the first century A.D. The fervency of the letter is apparent on every page. The Corinthians needed to refocus on "Christ crucified . . . Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24).

This book, *The Church of God in a Pagan World: Studies in First Corinthians*, focuses on the message of the letter and draws applications for Christians today. The fifty-three speakers and writers have carefully explored the various themes to draw contemporary applications for the church today, which still exists in the tension of a pagan world. Our idols may not be as apparent as those of Corinth, but their effect upon the soul may be just as deadly.

We express our appreciation for each author who has contributed material for this book. Their greatest compensation will be the careful study that you give to their messages. They would want you to read carefully and to search the Scriptures to see if what they have said is true.

I want also to express appreciation to Cindy Drumheller, secretary of the Church Relations Office, and to David Crouch and his staff in the Public Relations Office. They have done their duties cheerfully and professionally. It is my prayer that this lectureship will cause us all to praise the Lord of glory.

Don Shackelford
Lectureship Director

THE CHURCH OF GOD IN A PAGAN WORLD

LANDON SAUNDERS

And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:3-5).

For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power (1 Corinthians 4:20).

The question of "the church of God in a pagan world" hinges on the question of God.

It is not a problem of paganism in the world. Paganism has always been in the world and always will be.

The problem is paganism in the church. That is the problem in 1 Corinthians. Paganism is the "wisdom of men." The church lives by the "power of God." The problem is whether the church is guided by the "power" of the Spirit or the "talk" of pagan thought and practice.

A CURRENT TREND

Just how pagan is the church? Many people in the world do not see the church as a major help in developing and maintaining a genuine relationship with God. They see the church as part of the problem, not as an obvious solution to the problem.

In my own research on how outsiders view the church, I found the following: Those looking on do not see churches of Christ as substantively different from any other church; they believe churches are powerfully driven by self-interest, by

very "human" goals and motivations. To them, the church demands conformity without toleration or reason; it nurtures and manipulates guilt and fear; it just wants money for its buildings, overhead, and programs; its issues are often artificial, not real; it has as many problems as people outside the church; it is not as compassionate as many helping groups outside; it oversimplifies the world and believes it has a doctrine to explain everything.

In spite of these feelings, there is some increase today in church attendance, and I suspect that trend will continue over the next ten years as we approach the year 2000. Naisbitt points out: "Religious belief is intensifying worldwide under the gravitational pull of the year 2000, the millenium."¹

Yet, that "gravitational pull" does not necessarily mean that people have changed their minds about most churches (or that the churches have become more God-centered). Rather, the actual trend is toward being "spiritual" rather than being "religious," the latter indicating active life in a mainline church. In other words, more people today seek spiritual life; they just do not seek it in the context of mainline churches.

A PROBLEM AND A CHALLENGE

That brings us to an interesting problem. Corinth is sometimes cited as a church more nearly like churches today than some of the other congregations mentioned in the New Testament. Reuel Lemmons used to say, "When people say they are the church of the New Testament, I like to ask them, 'Which one?'" Then he would add with a twinkle in his eye, "The only one I can tell that we're even close to being like is Corinth!"

While we know the point he was making at the time, it might be helpful for us to ask in what ways we are *like* Corinth, and even more importantly, in what ways we are *unlike* Corinth.

In the matter of *problems*, we are certainly much like them: factionalism in the church, sexual immorality among Christians, legal disputes between church members, marriage and divorce, food offered to idols, hair styles for worshipers, spiritual gifts, the Lord's Supper, death and resurrection.

We are looking at something different, though. We are look-

ing at the problem of the church in a pagan world. The problem of paganism is more fundamental than a list of "church" problems.

Paganism goes straight to the issue of God himself. It is the central challenge to the whole concept of one God. It encompasses anything and everything that sets itself against God or puts itself in the place of God. It fills the places where God's genuine presence is absent.

Paganism is finally the only problem any of us face. Is God genuinely present in our lives? Is he genuinely present in our churches? Is there an Eternal Presence in us that has total dominion over us, that accounts for the nature and newness of our lives—our thoughts, our motivations, our goals? Or do we have places in our hearts reserved for the hallowing of *our* opinions, *our* biases and prejudices, *our* traditions, even *our* history?

It is on this very question—the question of God—that we may find ourselves *unlike* the church at Corinth. For all of the problems at Corinth, there seemed to be no doubt that God was present among them. They were called the "church of God . . . sanctified in Christ Jesus . . . called to be saints" (1 Corinthians 1:2). "In every way you were enriched in him" (1 Corinthians 1:4). Centering his appeal in the power of God in Christ throughout chapter 1, Paul boldly states, "He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus" (v. 30). He reminded them that their faith rested "in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5).

The question was not whether or not their problems could be solved; they could. The question was who (or what) was in control of the Corinthian church. Would God be God among them, or would they replace God with the "wisdom of men" and behave like "ordinary men" (1 Corinthians 3:1, 3)?

While no one would deny we are like the Corinthians at the point of problems, the greater question is this: *Is God as present in our churches as he was in the church at Corinth?* Would an unbeliever come into our churches, have "the secrets of his heart . . . disclosed; and so, falling on his face . . . worship God and declare that God is really among you" (1 Corinthians 14:24, 25)?

This is the issue of "the church in a pagan world." It is not

problems. The people of the world would forgive any church for having problems. The issue turns on the question of God's indisputable presence in the church. The issue is whether or not one can find a real, a profound, a life-changing experience with the living God in the churches. Millions today do not believe they can.

THE WORLD WE FACE

The problem is further aggravated by confusion in our culture.

We live in a nation where some 94 per cent of the people profess some kind of faith in God. And that faith rests, however loosely, upon the Judeo-Christian concept of God. On the face of it, that sounds positive. A closer look reveals some darker elements.

For example, what is the nature of the God believed in? Is he a God of power, of immediacy, of sanctions? To what degree does he shape character, form values, determine ethics, and influence goal-setting? Is he the God of direct experience, or is he a cultural, historical, nostalgic image called God? Is he the God of power of which Paul speaks, or is he an impotent pagan god called by biblical names?

If one judged our culture by its principle organs of communication—television, magazines, advertising, many books, movies—one would (risking severe understatement) seriously question whether our culture is "Christian."

This is perplexing, is it not? How do we explain, on the one hand, 94 per cent of the people saying they believe in God when, on the other hand, it is clear that Judeo-Christian values have little influence in all the principle ways we receive communication today, a fact made clear every evening on television?

A "God" of words survives, but does a God of power? Has that cultural "God" of words become the "God" of churches? And is this the reason so many people do not look toward the churches when they seek understanding and relationship with God?

The issue today is paganism in the churches. When religious words replace the reality of God, that is paganism.

HOW MUST WE RESPOND?

Given these considerations, what do we do? How are we to proceed?

First, we must focus on the fundamental issue itself, God, not on externals and distracting issues.

Jesus pointed to the central thing that matters in Luke 17:20. The Pharisees had asked when the kingdom was coming. That is, when are we going to come into our own as a church?

Jesus says there are no external criteria for success—not signs to be observed, or this place or that place. Only one evidence: Is God in your midst?

To what extent do we measure our relationship with God by external matters? We are faithful because we are in the right church. We are faithful because we go to church regularly. We are faithful because we go by the Bible. We are faithful because we believe more correctly than other religious people. We are faithful because we read the Bible every day.

The peril of this approach is that it puts the *self* squarely at the center of things. That is the great danger of religion today: It enthrones *self*—our programs, our rightness, our perfection in belief, our traditions.

We are in service to ourselves; it shows up in what we are anxious about—our budgets, for example. We are so driven by economics—great debts for buildings and facilities. We must maintain stability, or we might be forced to default on financial obligations. I am convinced that debt is determining the choices and priorities—even biblical positions—of many elders. We are in service to our own success.

We are into building the biggest churches we can and at almost any expense (no matter that nowhere does the New Testament ever indicate that a congregation's goal should be to be the biggest church it can be). Wrong goals are terrifying in their power. In pursuit of them, we displace God.

What if the church today was stripped of everything—buildings, lectureships, titles, programs? What if all we had was what was in our hearts?

What is the real nature of our relationship with God?

The church has but one great task: *Keeping alive in its midst a sense of God that establishes the values of God in the hearts of the worshipers that will enable them to respond to a pagan world as God responds.*

The church can struggle with problems on any level and in whatever number without losing its soul, without losing its respect in the large community in which it exists. *What the church cannot lose is a demonstrable sense of God's presence.* Only that can finally disqualify it as the church of God.

Paul dealt with all the problems in 1 Corinthians from this perspective. The contrasts are between acting according to the "flesh" and acting like people of the "Spirit." Paul says there is a telling, noticeable, unmistakable difference between the two. It is this difference the world is looking for today.

What are the evidences of God's real presence in the church? What happens when God-centeredness replaces pagan motivations?

First, relationships are centered in grace, not self-interest. Because of him, we are willing to be defrauded by a brother (1 Corinthians 6:7, 8); we are willing to remain "in the state in which [we] are called" (1 Corinthians 7:20); each will not "seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Corinthians 10:24); we will not seek our "own advantage, but that of many" (1 Corinthians 10:32); in the body "God has composed" we will give "the greater honor to the inferior part" (1 Corinthians 12:18, 24); the new challenge of love will revolutionize our motivations, our behavior, our goals (1 Corinthians 13). Is this the spirit that our churches are most known for today?

Second, how can we get past our "religion" to relationship? Much of the focus of 2 Corinthians is on this very issue. Nowhere is the process more powerfully stated than in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Let me suggest three points that would focus our attention on the tension between acting according to the "flesh" and acting according to the "Spirit," three places where the "flesh" and "Spirit" would do mortal combat.

1. *Love your enemies.* Why should we love our enemies? Jesus answers, "So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). Few things "try" our humanity as much as loving our enemies. Yet, Jesus says it makes us like God. It forever changes our value base from "flesh" to "Spirit." That is the answer to paganism, no matter how complicated the cultural situation.

2. *Do good and expect nothing in return.* Again Jesus said, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish" (Luke 6:35). God keeps loving the ungrateful and selfish of our world no matter that they do not return his love and goodness.

The church walks after the "flesh" when it places conditions on its love and good works. It is led away from God's character . . . to pagan thinking and action.

The great character of Christians is this: We do what we do because that is the way we are, not because of what we get in return. In this we are transformed into his image.

3. *Cultivate the secret life with God.* "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). "But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:3, 4). The same is true with prayer and fasting.

Learning to do what we do without reward from men causes us to be less self-centered and more God-centered. Our significance is derived from our relationship with God in secret, not from the plaudits of men and women.

Nothing moves us more powerfully into the nature of God. Nothing would go so far to take self-aggrandizement away so that God's life can be manifest in us.

The life that loves only those who love back, the life that does good only when something is received in return, the life that acts for the favorable notices of men and women—this life

preempts God's life. It sets itself up as God. It is pagan.

For the church to be the church in a pagan world then, it must cultivate a new agenda, set new spiritual goals for the members, renounce the ways of the flesh that take the place of God. Then, and only then, will the love, grace, and character of God—the power of God—be felt in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike.

NOTE

¹John Naisbett and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000* (New York: William Morrow, 1990), 271.

LANDON SAUNDERS, of New York City, lectures in "Feeling Good About Yourself" Workshops as a source of community outreach. His radio messages on the one-minute program "Heartbeat" are heard on seven hundred radio stations across the nation. He has two film series, "Heart of the Fighter" and the recent "Hearts of Fire." He is the author of a new book, *How to Win 7 Out of 8 Days a Week*. His educational background includes Freed-Hardeman College, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion.

AN INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS

ALLEN BLACK

The title of this year's lectureship, "The Church of God in a Pagan World," gets at the heart of the fascination and the relevance of 1 Corinthians. Here the great apostle Paul fascinates us as he addresses the multiplicity of problems that face a group of Christians struggling with their pagan surroundings and their own pagan pasts. The Corinthian church clearly reflects its cultural environment with its emphasis on wisdom and rhetoric, its involvement in sexual immorality, its struggles with idolatry, the conflicts between the "have's" and the "have not's," the desire for ecstatic spiritual experiences, and many other features of a pagan society. It almost seems incredible that so much of the world appears in the church, until we look back at ourselves and our own involvement in the "neopaganism" of twentieth-century America. Then the fascination of 1 Corinthians multiplies as its contemporary relevance becomes apparent.

Before we cross the centuries from the first to the twentieth, we must cross in the other direction.¹ In order to understand the relevance of Paul's words for our time, we must first understand their relevance for his own. We need to transport ourselves through space and time to a major business and shipping center in the southern part of ancient Greece at the middle of the first century.

THE CITY

Pliny the Elder, a contemporary of Paul, pictured the Peloponnesian peninsula as a broad-bladed leaf hanging by its stem from the bottom of Greece.² The isthmus connecting the

Peloponnese with the mainland is a small portion of land some ten miles long and at its most narrow point only about four miles wide.³ Corinth was at the southwest corner of this isthmus, presiding over the isthmus and the harbors on either side, Lechaëum and Cenchreæ.

Corinth became an important trade center primarily because it controlled traffic to and from the peninsula and back and forth across the isthmus. Rather than sailing around the Peloponnese it was common practice to ship cargo from Rome to the eastern Mediterranean or vice versa via the isthmus between the two harbors. Small ships were even loaded onto wooden platforms on wheels and transported across from harbor to harbor. Lying between the two harbors, Corinth became an important port city.

Another factor in Corinth's reputation as a trade center was the manufacture of objects made of bronze. Corinthian bronze pieces were collectors' items valued throughout the Roman world during the first century A.D. Even the Herodian temple in Jerusalem had its "Corinthian Gate," overlaid with Corinthian bronze.⁴

Besides its importance as a port and a manufacturing city, Corinth was known as the city in charge of the Isthmian games, held every two years in the spring and surpassed only by the Olympiad. Although the games were held in the nearby town of Isthmia, they were administered from Corinth and brought large numbers of visitors to Corinth every two years.

The city Paul knew was Roman Corinth, established as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. The old city, Greek Corinth, was largely destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. For roughly a century, the city lay in ruins—although the great first-century B.C. author Cicero⁵ and modern archaeological discoveries of buildings dating to this period both indicate it was not uninhabited. When Julius Caesar refounded the city as a Roman colony many of those who moved there were freedmen, former slaves looking for the opportunity to move up the social ladder. The differences between rich and poor were probably marked, as is indicated in 1 Corinthians 11.

Like many port cities, this one had a long-standing reputation for sexual misbehavior. Our nonbiblical sources for this

observation focus on the older Greek Corinth, but 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 are perhaps confirmation of the common presumption that things had not changed drastically in the first century A.D. In earlier centuries the very name "Corinth" was associated with sexual immorality.⁶ And although he was describing the pre-146 B.C. city and his accuracy is questionable, Strabo's comment that the temple of Aphrodite at Corinth housed one thousand cult prostitutes indicates something about the city's reputation.⁷

Like other Greco-Roman cities, Corinth had many beautiful buildings representing the varied cultural interests of the people. Public facilities included numerous baths (which served as community centers in Roman cities) and a theater which would hold an estimated fourteen thousand people.

Luke indicates in Acts 18 that one of the buildings in Corinth was a synagogue, representing what was perhaps a sizeable Jewish population. Numerous temples represented the "many 'gods' and many 'lords' " (1 Corinthians 8:5) worshiped in pagan society. Both Greek and Egyptian cults were well represented. Temples, statues, coins, and ancient authors indicate the worship of Apollo, Athena, Tyche, Aphrodite, Neptune, Asclepius, Demeter, Kore, Poseidon, Poleimon, Isis, and Serapis.⁸

The excavated temple of Asclepius is especially useful as an example of pagan practices. Asclepius was the god of healing, and his sanctuaries were places where many claimed to be healed. The temple at Corinth contains dining rooms which provide an illustration of what Paul had in mind when he wrote about eating in pagan temples⁹ (1 Corinthians 8; 10).

When Paul arrived in Roman Corinth, it was a thriving urban center, home to tens of thousands of people and host to a constant stream of sailors and travelers as well as the biennial visitors to the Isthmian games. It was a wealthy center for commerce and manufacturing, but contained multitudes of the poor, including many freedmen. It was known for the immoralities typifying port cities (a sort of ancient New Orleans) and was not aided in this respect by the multitude of pagan religions that constituted the religious culture of most of its citizens. As in our own society, there must have been

many whose lives were full of emptiness and who ached for something to fill the void.

THE CHURCH

The story of Paul's establishment of the church at Corinth is told by Luke in Acts 18:1-18 and can be supplemented from 1 Corinthians. During his second missionary journey, Paul came to Corinth from Athens, where his work does not seem to have been very effective (Acts 17:15-34). By contrast, the work at Corinth was apparently quite fruitful, especially among the Gentiles.

Paul moved in with Aquila and Priscilla, two Jews who come to Corinth when the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome. According to Suetonius, the action of Claudius was based on rioting among the Jews "at the instigation of Chrestus."¹⁰ This is probably a reference to quarreling about Christ. The expulsion is commonly dated to A.D. 49. Aquila and Priscilla worked in the same trade as Paul and probably already shared his faith in Christ.

As was his custom, Paul began his missionary efforts in the synagogue, where he argued with both Jews and those Gentiles who attended the activities there. Although he was opposed strongly by many Jews and eventually left the synagogue, there are also indications of some success. Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, became a Christian along with his household (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:14). Some evidence shows that his successor, Sosthenes, was converted as well. The reference in Acts 18:17 to the beating of Sosthenes may indicate that he was a sympathizer with Paul, and it is possible that the Sosthenes identified in 1 Corinthians 1:1 as co-sender of the letter is the same man, now a Christian.

When the Jews turned against Paul, he left the synagogue and began teaching out of the house of Titius Justus, a Gentile who had previously worshiped God at the synagogue (Acts 18:7). Some would identify him with Gaius, a man described as a convert of Paul's in 1 Corinthians 1:14. The house of Titius was next door to the synagogue, which made it a particularly good base of operations for reaching others like him. Paul was

successful in reaching many Corinthians (Acts 18:8, 10). In addition to Jews and God-fearing Gentiles, 1 Corinthians itself indicates that he converted many pagans (1 Corinthians 8:7; 12:2). In fact, the dominance of pagan cultural issues in 1 Corinthians and the lack of attention to Jewish issues suggest that the church was dominated by those of pagan background.

According to Acts 18:11, Paul stayed in Corinth eighteen months. The opening words of 2 Corinthians indicate that his success reached beyond Corinth to "the whole of Achaia." Before his departure, the Jews made an attempt to get the proconsul Gallio to render a judgment against Paul. However, this effort actually turned out to help to ensure that the state would not interfere with Christianity's growth in Achaia, since Gallio refused to cooperate and declared the matter a religious dispute beyond his jurisdiction. It is noteworthy that no references to persecution exist in the Corinthian letters.

Luke's mention of Gallio has accidentally become the major reference point for Pauline chronology, enabling scholars to date Paul's stay at Corinth with a high degree of accuracy. Fortunately, Gallio is mentioned in extant fragments of an inscription containing a letter written by the emperor Claudius.¹¹ The dates in the inscription lead to the conclusion that Gallio began his proconsulship in July of A.D. 50, or more probably, A.D. 51. The customary term was one year. Furthermore, a letter written by Gallio's famous brother Seneca indicates that he did not even finish his one-year term.¹² Therefore, Paul's departure from Corinth can be dated fairly confidently to the second half of 51. He probably arrived in early 50.

When Paul left Corinth, Priscilla and Aquila went with him as far as Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19). There they met Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, who Luke describes as "an eloquent man, well versed in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24). He believed in and taught accurately about Jesus, but until Priscilla and Aquila taught him, he knew only the baptism of John. Apollos is important to the story of the church at Corinth because after leaving Ephesus he went to Corinth and labored as an evangelist (Acts 18:27, 28; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10—4:21).

The church at Corinth, then, was established by Paul beginning in A.D. 50. It was composed largely of former pagans,

whether they had come to Christ through Judaism as proselytes or God-fearers or had been converted directly from paganism. Some of the Corinthian Christians were Jews, among whom were at least one and possibly two former rulers of the local synagogue. Paul worked in their city for 1½ years in a successful mission which reached into the whole surrounding region. After his departure, the Corinthians were blessed by the coming of Apollos, who also was effective in his mission efforts. Christianity at Corinth was off to a good start. But the church was also plagued by the difficulties inherent in the surrounding culture. Paul's first two letters to them, written within five years of the beginnings of the church, reflect these problems.

THE LETTER

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is no longer extant. It is briefly described in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. All we know of its content is that it instructed the Corinthians not to associate with those who bear the name of Christ but are sexually immoral or covetous, or are idolaters, revilers, drunkards, or robbers. Like 1 Corinthians, it dealt with the problems typical of a church in the pagan world.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is our 1 Corinthians. It was written while he was at Ephesus during the third missionary journey. In 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9, he indicates this rather clearly when he says, "I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries." This does not fit the circumstances of the second missionary journey when Paul spent only a short time in Ephesus, but does fit the third when he stayed there for over two years (Acts 18:19-21; 19:1-10). This dates the letter somewhere between A.D. 53 and 55. The Corinthians were still very young in the faith.

Paul wrote the letter in response to at least three sources that had informed him of situations developing within the church. The first named are Chloe's people, who had informed Paul about the quarreling going on at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11). These could have been members of this otherwise

unknown lady's household or business. They may have lived in Corinth or visited there from Ephesus and returned with their observations. In addition to their report about quarreling, they may have informed Paul about other problems at Corinth, such as those discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Paul's second source of information is a letter from the Corinthian Christians themselves. He clearly refers to the letter in 1 Corinthians 7:1: "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote." It is commonly suggested that the phrase "Now concerning" in 1 Corinthians 8:1 and 12:1 is used to introduce his treatment of new sections of the letter he received. If so, chapters 7, 8-10, and 12-14 apparently offer replies to questions he had been asked in the letter. It is possible that all of chapters 7 through 15 deal with matters mentioned in the letter.

This is an important part of the background of 1 Corinthians. Interpretation is heavily affected by what one supposes was in the letter at various points. It is like listening to one side of a phone call and trying to interpret it correctly by imagining the other side. Translations frequently mark the translators' opinions about possible quotes from the letter by quotation marks (as in the first few verses of chapter 8). The translations are generally conservative on this matter. Some commentators, on the other hand, are quite free to attribute various statements in 1 Corinthians to the letter from Corinth.

A third source of information about the church was the visit of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, brothers from Corinth who visited Paul in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:17, 18). Stephanas and his household had been the first converts in Achaia (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16). Paul's exhortation to "give recognition to such men" (1 Corinthians 16:18) indicates that they were leaders in the church at Corinth. It is likely that they carried the letter from the Corinthians to Paul. We do not know what particular matters they may have told him about.

From all these sources, Paul learned about numerous situations at Corinth that were matters of grave concern. The letter may be outlined around these problems. Chapters 1 through 4 focus on the divisions at Corinth created by an unhealthy allegiance to various Christian leaders based on pride in

human wisdom. Chapter 5 demands the expulsion of a brother who was living with his father's wife. Chapter 6 rebukes some who were taking fellow Christians to court and others who were hiring local prostitutes. Chapter 7 turns to their letter and responds to questions about whether to get or stay married. Chapters 8 through 10 take up the question of whether it is permissible to eat meat that has been offered to idols. Chapter 11 rebukes some men and women at Corinth who were improperly veiling or unveiling themselves and the problem of the abuse of the Lord's Supper in which the rich were having a feast while the poor were being deprived. Chapters 12 through 14 address the Corinthians' unhealthy pride in spiritual gifts, especially tongue-speaking. Chapter 15 rebuts those who actually say there will be no resurrection of the dead. And chapter 16 discusses the collection for Jerusalem, personal instructions, and final greetings.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul brings "the word of the cross" (1:18) to bear on all of these problems. Repeatedly, he calls them to live on a different plane than that of their pagan neighbors and their own pagan pasts. He encourages them to put pride to the side and love in the middle. He encourages them to become what they are, to live as if they are the temple of the Spirit and were bought with the price of the death of the Son. He encourages them to be the church of God even though they live in a pagan world. His words can be a great encouragement to us as well as we seek to hear the word of the cross and apply it to our own tendencies to live like pagans.

NOTES

¹Some useful commentaries on 1 Corinthians are C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975); Carl Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Living Word Commentary, ed. Everett Ferguson (Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979); and Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987).

²Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 4:9-11.

³For documentation of this and most of the following comments about the city see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Good News Studies 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983).

⁴Josephus *War* 5.201-5.

⁵Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 3.53.

⁶Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 56.

⁷Strabo *Geography* 8.6.20; Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 55-57.

⁸Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 15-22.

⁹Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 161-67.

¹⁰Suetonius *Claudius* 25.

¹¹Murphy-O'Connor, *Corinth*, 141-52.

¹²Seneca *Letters* 104.1.

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THEME LECTURES

UNITY VERSUS SECTARIANISM

(1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

PRENTICE A. MEADOR, JR.

Maybe you heard the story about the three churches located at the same downtown intersection. Once church could be heard singing, "Will there be any stars in my crown?" followed by the second church singing, "No, not one," followed by the third church singing victoriously, "Oh, that will be glory for me."

Leslie B. Flynn, in his book entitled *Great Church Fights*, tells of these three actual church conflicts:

1. A Canadian church had no middle aisle, but rather a divider down the center of the pews which allowed one family to sit on one side and the other family to sit on the other.

2. A Pennsylvania church held two services every Sunday morning. In the main auditorium, some twenty members listened to the minister who had been voted out but refused to leave. Downstairs about eighty people were led in worship by a returned missionary who at their invitation was acting as their minister until the other one left. Flynn adds, "Sometimes a State Trooper parked outside to ensure order."

3. While looking for a new minister, a church in Wales broke out in a feud, and the newspaper gave this report:

Yesterday, the two opposition groups both sent ministers to the pulpit. Both groups spoke simultaneously, each trying to shout above the other. Each group called for hymns, and the congregation sang two—each side trying to drown out the other. Then the groups began shouting at each other. Bibles were raised in anger. The Sunday morning service turned into a bedlam. Through it all, the two preachers continued trying to outshout each other

with their sermons. Eventually, a deacon called a policeman. Two came in and began shouting for the congregation to be quiet. They advised the forty persons in the church to return home. The rivals filed out, still arguing. Last night one of the group called a "Let's-be-friends-meeting." It broke up in an argument.¹

To a divided church in Corinth, Paul writes a major block of Scripture on the subject of "sectarianism." We are indebted to Rick Oster in his 1984 Harding University Lectures on 1 Corinthians for pointing out that 1 Corinthians 1:10—4:21 focuses throughout on the same issue—sectarianism. Why does Paul devote more space to this issue than any other? Why does he address sectarianism before he addresses any of the other major problems in the church at Corinth? Perhaps, there are at least two reasons: (1) All of the other issues reveal a lack of understanding of the unity of the body of Christ (lawsuits, immorality, pride, drunkenness, etc.), and (2) sectarianism is the most serious and fundamental problem in the congregation. It places the church in the greatest jeopardy. The Corinthian church has spiritual "AIDS." This disease wipes out the immune system of unity and makes the church vulnerable to many other diseases such as pride, immorality, hatred, intemperance, and lack of discipline. Paul knows that if he can build the immune system of unity back into the body, it will become less vulnerable to other diseases. For Paul, unity versus sectarianism is a life-and-death matter!

Let us carefully consider the following text and its implications for the church today.

THE CORINTHIAN CLIQUES (1 Corinthians 1:10-12)

Before addressing the various cliques of the Corinthians' church, Paul reaches for the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to formally appeal to his brethren. Because certain cliques could lead to substantial schisms, Paul calls them to "be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Corinthians 1:10b). Paul's argument is profound: Unity can exist when each Christian in a church has his mind and thought "transformed"

by Jesus Christ (Romans 12:2). Each Christian bears proper relationship with other Christians because each one is properly related to Christ.

How did Paul learn of the Corinthian cliques? Not by an anonymous letter, an anonymous phone call, a fifth-handed rumor, or a single witness. Word had personally reached Paul "from Chloe's household . . . that there are quarrels among you" (1 Corinthians 1:11). Chloe is nowhere else mentioned in the New Testament, but she and members of her family have personally made clear to Paul that the church he established five years earlier in Corinth is now filled with cliques.

Imagine a modern-day church that has had several ministers fill its pulpit. Some of the people say, "Our favorite preacher was the first minister because he knew how to inspire us and start us as a congregation." Others might quickly add, "We preferred the second minister because he was such a great counselor. He knew how to help us with our daily and personal problems." Others would add, "But our third minister was the greatest speaker we have ever had. His sermons inspired us, and we really felt like we'd been to worship having heard him preach." Still others would quickly state their preference: "But our fourth pulpit minister knew how to visit the sick. He always was with us at the hospital whenever there was illness or surgery." Finally, another group would add, "But our fifth minister was such a tremendous manager and administrator. We always met the budget, increased our staff, and developed our programs."

In a similar way, Christians divided themselves among their favorite preachers at Corinth. However, personal preference turned into doctrinal differences. So Paul tells that the report that has reached him states, "One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Peter'; still another, 'I follow Christ'" (1 Corinthians 1:12). In commenting on this passage, Carl Holladay writes, "All four groups are to be understood as coming under Paul's censure."²

The sectarianism of the Corinthian cliques leads to three problems: (1) allegiance to a human leader, (2) loyalty to a particular doctrinal emphasis, and (3) dismemberment of the body of Christ. In addition, their sectarianism caused them to

quarrel with each other. All went to the same church, but they elevated themselves above others in the congregation so that they actually mirrored their own culture. Those in the church are acting like Jews who seek a sign and Greek philosophers who seek wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:22). The primary struggle of the Corinthian church is not so much with sinister forces from the outside, but forces from within—idolatrous loyalties to their religious leaders.

The "Paul" Clique

This group of Christians would look upon Paul as the earliest leader of the church, elevating him to a position of pre-eminence and looking down upon others who do not come under his authority. It would be easy for this group to focus upon his personality traits, his temperament, his way of handling people and problems, his speaking style, and his knowledge of the Scriptures. Pride would be taken in any personal contact with Paul including religious discussions, meals, and personal moments. Boasting could take place on the grounds of a special righteousness felt, because of a closeness to the great apostle.

The "Apollos" Clique

This faction of the Corinthian church could easily boast that its leader is one of the most gifted speakers in the brotherhood. As Greeks, the Corinthians could boast of the pre-eminence of rhetoric and oratory in their history and culture. They could point with pride to the similarity between Apollos and one of the great orators of the past, such as Pericles, Demosthenes, or Lysias. Apparently, Apollos seems to have mastered rhetoric and oratory which are the pre-eminent arts in Greco-Roman education. But pride could also be taken in the great knowledge of Scripture which Apollos displays (Acts 18:24). So pride and eloquence and knowledge of Scripture could elevate the "Apollos" clique above the rest of the brethren.

The "Peter" Clique

This spiritually-inflated group of Corinthians could boast in following one of the original apostles. He had seen Christ before and after his resurrection. His tenure as a Christian

leader included many accomplishments, such as giving the first gospel sermon to both Jews and Gentiles, helping to spark the very beginning of Christianity, having suffered imprisonment for his faith, and having constant association with other brotherhood leaders. They could take special pride in his Jewishness—his knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, his observance of the Jewish holidays, and his deep respect for tradition. The ground of boasting in Peter's apostleship, close association with Jesus, and his Jewishness could give them a special edge over the other members of the Corinthian church.

The "Christ" Clique

This group of Corinthians would seem not to be open to the charge of misplaced loyalty. The question is not one of commitment or loyalty, but one of pride! The "Christ" group assumes that it enjoys some kind of special relationship to Jesus not shared by any of the other Christians. As "super-Christians," they see Christianity as their own private property. Meanwhile, they relegate other Christians to second-class status with the implication that anyone else does not really belong to Jesus. Their vocabulary is filled with words like "commitment," "submission," and "disciplining." As they look down their long theological noses at others, they contribute their part to the dismemberment of the body of Christ that is taking place in Corinth.

Not only do these cliques breed strife, they undermine the true authority of Christ. Division in the body of Christ is spiritually impossible!

THE UGLY SPIRIT OF SECTARIANISM

What makes sectarianism so wrong? Why does Jesus attack this spirit whether he sees it in Samaritan religion or Judaism? Why does Paul paint sectarianism in such bold, vivid colors?

Consider the following five characteristics of sectarianism: (1) Sectarianism develops into "in-group" vocabulary. (2) Sectarianism criticizes good when done by the "wrong person." (3) Sectarianism loves the "system" more than people. (4) Sectarianism opposes truth when taught by an "outsider." (5) Sec-

tarianism justifies wrong when done by an "insider." Sectarianism leads to self-righteousness, a judgmental attitude, and a position of condemnation of all others. Frequently, I have been asked the question, "How can I love a person without conveying to him or her that I approve of what they are doing?" Jesus teaches three fundamental answers to that question: (1) Love is not license. (2) Forgiveness is not compromise. (3) Acceptance is not agreement. Jesus never compromises nor agrees with adultery, cheating, murder, or stealing, but he loves, forgives, and accepts prostitutes, tax collectors, and "the totally lost of the land." He viciously attacks the narrow, exclusive, possessive, divisive spirit of sectarianism. What makes sectarianism so wrong? Why does Jesus focus on it as a target for attack?

First, he knows that sectarianism violates the love of God. Pride replaces a humble heart and a willing spirit to unconditionally love God. Sectarianism, therefore, breaks the first commandment. Second, Jesus knows that sectarianism violates the love of people. Strife, dissension, and faction replace an unconditional acceptance in service to people. Sectarianism, therefore, also breaks the second commandment. Third, Jesus knows that sectarianism merely mirrors the culture. The world builds categories, gives labels, builds walls, develops strife among people, and feels pride. Sectarianism simply brings this baggage into the church. Fourth, Jesus knows that sectarianism results in a weak church. Where there is no love, no forgiveness, and no acceptance, the church dies. It becomes an ineffective institution conducting business as usual like so many other institutions of the world. Fifth, Jesus knows that sectarianism results in a loss of impact. John R. W. Stott says it best, "The price of a divided Christendom is an unbelieving world." Bound up in the red tape of tradition and bolstered by its own self-serving arguments, the sectarian church gives evidence that it is not God's people. Sectarianism does not lead to great churches but to "great church fights."

UNITY IN CHRIST (1 Corinthians 1:13-17)

The Corinthian cliques are so serious that Paul devotes more

space to this issue than any other in 1 Corinthians. So deep was his concern for this issue that Paul will later conclude his second letter to the Corinthians with these words: "For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder" (2 Corinthians 12:20).

Churches split, not because of theology, but because people are on "power trips." Power is the lifeblood of sectarianism. Coercion, domination, control—that is the language of "power." Corinthian cliques result when people within a church go on "power trips."

As power lies at the heart of sectarianism, love lies at the heart of unity. In any relationship, as love increases, power decreases. In any congregation, as unity increases, sectarianism decreases.

So Paul presents love in the person of Christ as the final solution of sectarianism:

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one could say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power (1 Corinthians 1:13-17).

In order to promote an atmosphere of tolerance, love, and kindness, which will allow unity to develop, Paul presents a number of rhetorical questions. Paul designs each question to cause the divided church at Corinth to see *the primacy of Jesus Christ*. In order to drive home his argument of the superiority of Christ, Paul downplays his part in baptizing some of the Corinthians. He knows that the relationship between himself and any baptized by him could easily become a misplaced loyalty. Though Paul expresses his gratitude that he actually baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanas, Christ commissioned Paul to evangelize, to proclaim the gos-

pel of Christ to which baptism is a proper response. His argument is not to disparage baptism, but to uplift the proclamation of the gospel of Christ and the person of Christ. If he can successfully convince the Corinthian cliques of the power of the cross of Christ, they will feel the love of God. As their love for God increases, their need for control and domination over each other decreases. The result—Unity!

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

What are the practical implications of Paul's message on unity for today's church? Clearly, the implications are direct for a brotherhood that can be so easily shaped by powerful personalities and persuasive speakers. Armed with eloquence and a knowledge of Scripture, men can easily become the center of attraction in our religion. Unintentionally, groups of people can begin to fashion themselves around a special doctrinal emphasis taught by a powerful brother. They so look up to him that his opinions become doctrine, his personal views become traditions, his interpretations become law. As power increases, love decreases, and sectarianism replaces unity.

How can a spirit of oneness be developed in today's church? First, *by keeping our personal faith in Christ strong*. How is your own private walk with God? How is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Is worship dynamic or dull? Are you keeping God's priorities for life clearly in mind? Is the cross of Christ and the grace of God empowering your life with optimism and dynamism? Does your study of the Word include the Gospels?

Second, a spirit of oneness comes *by building stronger relationships with fellow Christians*. Unity develops when we begin to love people, not condemn them. We are at our best when we are loving each other. Yielding to each other rather than insisting upon our own point of view becomes a sign of strength, not weakness. By refusing to coerce, enforce, or dominate, we give love, forgiveness, and acceptance a chance to work in our local congregations. We must give room to each other for personal opinion and differences on non-fundamental doctrines without forced orthodoxy. Unity is built by loving

our fellow Christians, not enforcing our views.

Third, a spirit of oneness can develop *by always coming down on the side of "love."* As a fellowship, we must learn that certain doctrines are more important than others. Not all doctrines are equal. Not all doctrines are in equal proximity to the cross. Some are closer to the cross than others. "Love" is found at the cross. It is bathed in the blood of Christ. Servant love draws men and women to Christ. Love washes feet, visits the sick, cares for the wounded, and looks for every opportunity to do good. Love refuses to play church politics, but quietly goes about a life of servitude. It refuses to be turned into sectarianism. Love never looks more like a winner than when it appears defeated. Reviled, love does not return the same. Bruised and nailed to the cross, love proves victorious. Far beyond the moment of death on the cross, love endures and brings men to God and to each other in unity. Ernest Freemont Tittle puts it in eloquent language:

You may place upon the brow of truth a crown of thorns. You may mock truth, scourge it, spit upon it. You may even crucify it between two lies. But ever on the third day it rises from the dead, begins to be seen, heard, and heeded. In any given twenty-four hours love may prove to be no match at all for sheer brute force. A crossbeam, some nails, a hammer, a spear, a sponge dipped in vinegar and lifted to lips in anguish; a loud inarticulate cry as one who has put his trust in love gives up the ghost. But when sheer brute force has had its little day of triumph and vanished from the earth—love is more than ever alive and begins to govern the ages.³

NOTES

¹Leslie B. Flynn, *When the Saints Come Storming In*, formerly titled *Great Church Fights*, updated and expanded (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1988), 75-76.

²Carl Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Living Word Commentary, ed. Everett Ferguson (Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979), 29.

³Ernest Freemont Tittle, *Jesus After Nineteen Centuries* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1932), 142-43.

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THE WORD OF THE CROSS (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

HAROLD HAZELIP

The cross itself, as used during the reign of Tiberius, consisted of an upright stake called a *stipes*—which was generally fixed permanently in a cement socket at the place of execution—and a cross-beam called a *patibulum*, a baulk of timber about seven or eight feet long which the victim was compelled, as part of the punishment, to shoulder from the prison-store to the waiting upright. A notch, or some other similar wood-joint, close to the top of this upright, allowed the cross-beam to be nailed or bolted in position, and about four or five feet from the ground there would be a series of holes to allow the insertion of a peg, called *sedilis excessus*, to support the victim's crotch; this was to prevent the entire weight of the body from slowly dragging the hands and arms from the nails or other fixing.

After scourging, the victim would be cut down, kicked and dragged to his feet, and carrying the *patibulum*, would be driven on by blows from the flat of the sword, or goaded with it, to the place of execution.

And there the victim would be felled to the ground, the *patibulum* would be thrust beneath his neck, his arms gripped and then tied to the cross-beam with cords, and his hands nailed to it with heavy iron nails, square in section. This nailing would be either through the palm, or the forward fold of the wrist, and was intended to prevent the hands from jerking free during the convulsions which crucifixion produced.

Then the cross-beam would be dragged across the ground to the *stipes* and hoisted up until it could be

secured in the notch. Other cords might be tied around the waist as an added precaution against the convulsions of agony jerking the body even off the nails—in would go the supporting peg—and then, finally, the feet themselves would be nailed, either with one nail driven between the metatarsal bones of the two crossed insteps, or with two nails, one through each heel behind the Achilles tendon.

And there he remained hanging until he died, anything up to seven, eight, or nine days later.

... This was a death of movement, ceaseless movement, ceaseless writhing and twisting, seeking some relief, some lesser pain, some temporary stay on death, some lull in the onslaught of the senses, an easement which cannot be found, for there is none. . . .¹

This is a description of the cross by a modern author. The New Testament does not explain the details of how the crucifixion took place. The original readers of the New Testament knew about crucifixions. The practice was widespread. It occurred in Egypt, Phoenicia, Carthage, Persia, Assyria, even India, as well as Greece and Rome. It was called "the unhappy wood" or "the unhappy tree." It was the most terrible, shameful death possible—reserved for slaves and non-citizens.

But it is the crucifixion which gives meaning to everything else in Jesus' life. When an artist paints a picture, the full plan may be hidden until the last stroke of the brush. Other strokes may keep suggesting the meaning of the painting, but the last touch adds new significance to the entire painting. So it is with Jesus' crucifixion. We understand a great deal about Jesus from his life and teaching, but we do not fully understand what God has done in Christ until we view the cross.

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

We do not read the New Testament for long until we see that, to the men who wrote it, the cross is the center of all of Christianity. Christians do not see Jesus primarily as a person who lived a brilliant life. Rather, we see him as the eternal Son of God whose visit to the earth found its full meaning

in his death. The cross is central. Paul wrote, "... I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Peter wrote, "[Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10:11). As he struggled with the cross which lay in the future, he said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). The cross was central to his mission: "For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus attached great significance to his own death. The one event he asked his disciples to remember was his death (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). When we leave our loved ones, we want them to remember us when we were well and happy. Who would want to remember a death, especially a cruel death?

The writers of the Gospels, however, use from one-fifth to one-half of their space in a description of events connected with Jesus' death. The preaching of the apostles, the letters they wrote, place a great emphasis upon his death. What would we think of the biography of a great man if the writer spent most of his time discussing the way the person came to die? Our interest in great men is in their achievements, not their deaths.

Through the centuries, when the message of the cross has been preached, people have been won to discipleship. When the cross has been forgotten, Christianity has waned. The early church re-enacted the death of Christ as they observed the Lord's Supper on the Lord's Day; each Sunday Christians partook of the bread and the fruit of the vine and recalled how he died (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7). They re-enacted his death every time a new person came into the church. Baptism finds its significance in the death of Christ (Romans 6:3-5). The cross was preached by word and deed in the early church.

WHY WAS THE CROSS NECESSARY?

Why was Jesus crucified? Few people today would agree with the Sanhedrin in their charge that he was guilty of blasphemy and consequently deserved to be executed. Does anyone take seriously the fabrication of *The Passover Plot* which depicts Jesus as an angry political revolutionary who was unexpectedly killed while trying to fake his own death?

Why was he crucified? Partial explanations have been given from human sources. He was a threat to the religious establishment of his day. The Gospels show how anxious the religious leaders were to contain his influence (John 11:47, 48). The Roman government wanted to preserve order, and the crowds who followed him may have startled Roman leaders.

The writers of the New Testament strongly insist that he was completely innocent. And the verdict of the ages agrees with them. He is called the "Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14); "a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:19); "holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners. . . ." (Hebrews 7:26). The passing of time has not dimmed the beauty of his life. When Mahatma Gandhi died, the highest praise the Hindu and Moslem leaders of India could find was to call Gandhi "Christlike."

Since Jesus was innocent, why was the cross necessary? Why could God not simply wave a hand over human sin and forgive us? This question assumes that we know a lot about divine forgiveness and that it is a simple process.

Actually, apart from the gospel, we know very little about divine forgiveness. Paul wrote, "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). God is not a sentimental grandfather. Those who obey him are promised a reward; those who disobey are promised punishment. God did not choose simply to say that sin does not matter.

How, then, should we understand the atonement? How did his death take away our sins? The truth that Jesus died to save us is more important than our attempts to explain how this happened (John 10:15). The Bible does throw light on the meaning of his sacrifice for us.

His death had significance because of who Christ was. If he had only been the best of men, he would be only one of many martyrs. He would be a hero, but his death would have no power to save us. Because he was the Son of God, his death had special power to atone for the sins of others.

WHAT DID HIS DEATH ACCOMPLISH?

The New Testament presents a series of pictures to show what the cross means, *what his death accomplished*. If we use the terminology of the bank, we were in debt; he paid our debt (1 Peter 1:18, 19). To use the terminology of the slave market, we were slaves; he ransomed us (Mark 10:45). Using the language of the law courts, we stood condemned before God's judgment seat; he bore the penalty for our wrongs (Romans 3:23-26). To apply the language of the home, we were children who had disgraced ourselves with God's family; he restored us to the family circle (Romans 8:16, 17). To employ the language of the battlefield, we were prisoners of Satan's fortress; Jesus broke in and set us free (Matthew 12:25-29).

In Jesus' death, *God identified himself with man*. He had made us for fellowship, but we forfeited the privilege. He came, in the person of his Son, and took our guilt upon himself. I do not know if God has populated any other planet in the universe, or if he has visited another planet. I do not know how much he cares for the moon or stars. I do know that he came as close to earth as he possibly could when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

God cannot condone our evil. He must condemn it. Paul concluded, "For our sake [God] made [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He made him to be sin. What does this mean? A father allows his son to drive the family car. The son has an accident. The father is not responsible for the accident, but he is responsible for allowing his son to use the car. God made us free. He is not responsible for our sins, but he is responsible for our freedom. Just as the father pays for the repair of the car and the damage done in the accident, God places the burden of human sin upon Christ and sets us free.

Jesus' death also *shows us how serious sin is to God*. He had warned Adam and Eve, "... in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Genesis 2:17). When they ate the forbidden fruit, they were immediately separated from God. But God was gracious. He did not impose capital punishment upon the human race after each sin.

Suppose his grace should go even further. He himself becomes the greatest sufferer of all. He permits men to torture his own Son. The Son returns no evil. However, his goodness and his bearing witness to the truth are offensive to mankind. He does not come to condemn the world but to save the world (John 3:17). Yet the world condemns him to die. The entire event shows how costly our rebellion is. God demands justice; we know how serious sin is when we view the cross. In his death, *Jesus won the victory of love over hatred*. He perfectly revealed God's love. Evil spreads in our world. One wrongs another; the other retaliates. How can this be stopped? Only if someone refuses to be contaminated. "When [Christ] was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23).

In the Middle Ages, God was occasionally pictured weighing each ounce of Christ's suffering and granting an equal amount of forgiveness. The New Testament picture is very different: "... God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. ..." (2 Corinthians 5:19); "... God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8); "... God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. ..." (John 3:16).

Jesus' death shows us the limit to which God will go to set us free, what sin really means to God, and that love overcomes evil. Through his death he also *gave life new beginning for all of us*. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). Jesus did not go astray. His "food" was to do his Father's will (John 4:34). He even became "obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:8). Human suffering had often been mysterious. Or it was regarded as punishment for wrongdoing. His suffering was voluntary ... and lonely. Whereas we had disobeyed, Jesus obeyed the Father's will.

What does all this word of the cross actually mean for you and me? It means that this is what God is really like. Jesus began his earthly life in a stable. He ended it on a cross. He came to the place where we actually live and suffered for us. The ancient Greeks had their stories of the gods living high on Mount Olympus, enjoying themselves royally, but those gods had little or no interest in the affairs of ordinary mortals. A few ancient philosophers believed in one god whom a special elite might know if they learned the secret of achieving mystical oneness with him.

Cicero complained that the gods of Epicurus did nothing! Our God has done something in Christ to redeem us! How do we respond? A child may accept all of the care his parents lavish upon him as his right. He may not understand the secret of his birth, or the depth of parental love. We may accept all God has done for use as "our right." We may miss the depth of his love.

I cannot fully explain the death of Christ. But I can respond to his death and benefit from it. We are sinners, in rebellion against God. Because we could not atone for ourselves, Christ came to offer himself as a sacrifice for us. Now we must die too. We become crucified with him, and our lives become reflections of his life (Galatians 2:20).

NOTE

¹G. W. Target, *We, the Crucifiers* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 139, 141.

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THE CHURCH—THE BODY OF CHRIST (1 Corinthians 12)

KEN R. DURHAM

The ancient Roman historian Livy preserved a story from the earliest days of Roman history. In the fifth century B.C., long before there was an Empire, a civil war seemed inevitable between the impoverished plebeians and the wealthy patricians. But a man named Memenius Agrippa, himself born of a plebeian family, summoned the war-bound plebeians and told them a simple fable about a civil war that took place in a human body:

Once when a man's parts did not, as now, agree together but each had its own program and style, the other parts were indignant that their worry and trouble and diligence procured everything for the belly, which remained idle in the middle of the body and only enjoyed what the others provided. Accordingly they conspired that the hands should not carry food to the mouth, nor the mouth accept it, nor the teeth chew it. But while they angrily tried to subdue the belly by starvation, the members themselves and the whole body became dangerously emaciated.¹

The plebeians were moved by Memenius' picture of a body at war with itself, and negotiations for peace were soon begun.

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The New Testament uses several images to capture the full dynamic of the community of Jesus' disciples, among them: the church (*ekklesia*), or assembly (Matthew 16:18; Acts 5:11; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2); the saints (*hagioi*), or holy

ones (Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 6:1; Revelation 19:8); the household (*oikeioi*), or family (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6); and the temple (*naos*), or dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21).

Of all the rich imagery Paul employs to describe the family of believers, the word he uses most often is the one which appears first among his letters in 1 Corinthians: the body (*soma*) of Christ.

In the earliest Greek usage, *soma* (first found in the writings of Homer) meant a corpse, a dead body. Later it would come to refer to the whole person, though many of the Greek philosophers thought of the body as the prison of the soul. "I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse," moaned the Stoic Epictetus.

The Stoics, whose ideas and images Paul understood well, also used *soma* as a figure for the cosmos, a "body" in which each individual citizen had his part to play. So Paul was not the first to conceive of a group of people united and mutually dependent like members of a human body. But he was the first to define that body by one particular body, that of the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. "You are a body made of many parts" would have been met with polite Greek nods; but "You are the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27) must have had a startling effect.

Paul's development of this vital image of the church in 1 Corinthians is progressive. In 6:13-20, he argues that sexual immorality is totally unacceptable for Christians because our physical bodies are "members of Christ himself." In 10:16, 17, he describes the Lord's Supper as our "participation in the body of Christ," the one loaf betokening our common membership in the "one body." In 11:17-33, he chastises his brethren for the travesty they have made of the Supper, warning them of the grave consequences of communing "without recognizing the body of the Lord." At this point in the letter, the Corinthians must be seeing an inseparable connection in Paul's mind: between the body of Jesus killed at Calvary and the body of Jesus' disciples given life at that same cross.

I have visited medical school cadaver labs, typically large, well-lit rooms smelling of strong chemicals. There on tables all

about the room are the bodies. For me it is always a deeply disquieting sight. This once was a person. He played; he pondered; he laughed; he dreamed. Now this is only a body; without God's breath of life, first breathed into a clod he called Adam, the person is no longer there.

What then does it mean to call the church the *corpus Christi*, the "body of Christ"? That the church is a corpse? Some churches, sadly, are cadaverous: The breath of God's life is nowhere evident, and the coroner's bleak report reads as it did of Sardis: "You are dead" (Revelation 3:1). But of course, the biblical image is just the opposite: The church that Jesus builds (Matthew 16:18) is like Jesus—a living, vibrant, active, productive entity—in many ways like a second incarnation of Christ himself.

"NOW ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS, BROTHERS" (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

If you had walked into a mid-first-century Corinthian worship service, you probably would not have thought immediately of a coordinated, mutually-supportive body. You might have seen the Apollos Contingent clustered off to one side, casting furtive glances across the room at the Cephas Clique. The sharing of the Lord's Supper would have seemed like anything but a fellowship meal—more of a Darwinian buffet with the poorer members coming up empty-handed. And you might have found yourself watching the competition among certain "gifted" members as they jockeyed for a hearing of their impressive glossolalia.

The devotional confusion of the Corinthians was mirrored in their doctrinal confusion about bodies. "Why does it matter how my body behaves sexually, so long as I keep my soul pure? Was Jesus really raised bodily from the dead? And if he was, what difference does it make?"

Nowhere is their confusion more apparent than in their attitude toward spiritual gifts. Their understanding and use of spiritual gifts violated the very purpose for which God gave them in the first place: "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). "My gift marks me as most spiritual!" one seemed to be

saying, while another was wondering, "Why does this church need me? I have no gift at all."

Every Christian is gifted, Paul responds firmly. "To each one" (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11) is given at least one of God's *charismata*, his grace gifts. Today we pronounce people "gifted" who do something well and do it naturally: the leaping ability of Michael Jordan, the voice of Placido Domingo. Something in them which we say they were "born with," once harnessed and refined, becomes an extraordinary skill.

Grace gifts are something you might say Christians are "re-born with." The same one Spirit that every baptized believer receives (Acts 2:38) gives gifts to believers to facilitate their unique roles in accomplishing the work of Christ on this earth: to bind up the brokenhearted, to love the unlovely, to be ministers of reconciliation, to seek the lost.

Paul lists nine examples of manifestations of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. He is not listing all the grace gifts (see also 1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11), but it is apparent that the ordering of this list means to play down the importance of tongues, which has clearly become a divisive issue in Corinth.

THE BODY IS A UNIT (1 Corinthians 12:12, 13)

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed for his disciples "that they may be one" (John 17:11). But is hard to imagine a more mixed assortment than those folks who made up his earliest church. Not only was the Corinthian body composed of "Jews and Greeks, slaves and free," but also some (formerly) highly dysfunctional people (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Only the Spirit of God, Paul argues, can bring unity out of such diversity.

What about religious unity? Let us never forget that the movement that gave rise to the churches of Christ in America was a *unity* movement.

First, nothing is essential to the conversion of the world but the union and cooperation of Christians. Second, nothing is essential to the union of Christians but the

apostles' teaching and testimony. . . . Union and truth combined are omnipotent.²

In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed not only for his disciples to be one, but also that they be "sanctified by the truth" (John 17:16). Unity and truth. Pursue only one of the two, and the result is usually a rigid, close-minded exclusiveness; pursue only the other, and you likely end up with an easy and flabby ecumenism. Can we as a brotherhood afford to forsake either goal to pursue only the other, when our Lord prayed that his church be characterized by both?

What a tragedy it is that one of Christianity's greatest symbols of unity with and within the body of Christ—baptism—has become "the water that divides" (the title of a book on baptismal controversies) many religious people. Many think we immersionists are all wet. But there remains no more powerful symbol of our union with the sacrificed, buried, and raised body of Jesus than the "one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5) his disciples have in common.

"NOW THE BODY IS NOT MADE UP OF
ONE PART BUT MANY"
(1 Corinthians 12:14-20)

Diversity of function is what makes the human body so wonderfully versatile and powerful. A body that is all eyeball would not only be grotesque; it could not hear a thing (1 Corinthians 12:17)! Or smell. Or speak. Or move about. So then, diversity is no threat to the body of Christ. Indeed, diversity in the church is not something to be tolerated; it is something to be applauded, encouraged, and cherished as evidence of God's hand in shaping the body according to his heterogeneous design: "In fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

If God is the architect of this body's design, then there is absolutely no room for inferiority complexes in the church. Every member has an essential role in his grand design. It should be a prayerful and primary concern of every individual

Christian, aided by his ministers and elders and other brothers and sisters, to find his role(s), his job(s), his function(s) in the local church.

Once a Christian begins to understand what his grace gift is, it is vital that he put that gift to use to God's glory. He must not fall into the trap of comparing and coveting others' gifts—as though the foot said, "I'd rather be a hand! If they won't let me hold things, then I'll just refuse to walk" (1 Corinthians 12:15). Do not second-guess God's "arrangement" of the body, Paul seems to be saying; accept your limitations, find your work, and do it with all your heart.

"THE EYE CANNOT SAY TO THE HAND,
'I DON'T NEED YOU' "
(1 Corinthians 12:21-26)

Neither is there any room for superiority complexes in the body of Christ. As Paul introduces this same discussion of the body in Romans 12, he begins bluntly, "Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought." Never, never, never does one member say to another, in word or deed, "You're not needed around here; you're just excess baggage." He may be very different from you. He may have only one talent to your five. He may not yet have discovered his grace gift. But the fact that you do not see his true beauty and usefulness to the body in no way makes him dispensable!

On the whole we do a pretty spotty job affirming most of the gifts (gifted people) in the church. We fuss and coo over the more publicly-gifted, or "presentable" (1 Corinthians 12:24) members of the body, but leave many wondering, "Is my little gift—of encouragement, or administration, or generosity, or mercy—really that useful to God?"

The spirit of individualism—the view that my rights and needs as an individual are the paramount concern—that many social critics say has become "cancerous" in our culture³ is within the body of Christ a *sin*. It wars against Christ's Spirit and purposes, keeping his body ever fragmented, ever uncoordinated, ever weak and ineffective.

Paul would have me hold in tension two vital truths about

my identity in the body. On one hand, I am uniquely gifted and uniquely important to its life and function; others in the body need me. On the other, I am completely dependent upon the body for my spiritual life and function; I need the others in the body.

"NOW YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST" (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

When was the seed of this image—the church as the body of Christ—first planted by God in the mind of Paul? Perhaps it was Paul's first conversation with his Master: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" . . . "Who are you, Lord?" . . . "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4, 5). The first lesson Christ taught Paul about his church was this: "Whatever you do to it, you do to me."

We must be careful not to equate Christ and his church. Christ was flawless; his church is not. Not everything the church says and does is an expression of the mind of Christ. But if the church is to be the body in which Christ lives and works today, then it should follow that:

1. Christ will be the star of the church. Not the preacher or songleader, not the facility or programs, but Christ the Lord will be our central focus and our gospel message. In short, we will demonstrate in all that we do that we are a church of Christ.

2. We will recognize that we are members of his church by virtue of *his* grace and not by virtue of our own virtue. We are joined to one another not by our rightness but by his righteousness. Unless it is Jesus who connects us to the body, we will be as dead and useless as Malchus' ear lying there in the grass of Gethsemane.

3. The church will be where Jesus was: out among the people, amidst their real lives, in their marketplaces. The body will make Jesus touchable and accessible to people in their search for meaning and wholeness.

4. The church will value the people who make up parts of the body the same way Jesus valued people. No preferential treatment is given on the basis of education, wealth, or

appearance. Every member is gifted, important, and loved, and they know it.

WE BELONG TO ONE ANOTHER

"Each member belongs to all the others," Paul told the Roman body (Romans 12:5). We are attached to one another in this organism. That means everybody—the weirdoes and the flakes, the libs and the fundies, the rednecks and the snobs, the eggheads and the anti-intellectuals, the Republicans and the Democrats. Why? Is this God's grand idea of a joke? Is this his way of testing just how committed we are? No, we are attached to one another because we *need* one another for our spiritual survival and function.

We belong to *all* our brothers and sisters, not just those who live in our suburb or sit in our quadrant of the church auditorium. We do not belong just to those who love us (Matthew 5:43-47). Our ties and commitment to one another within this body have nothing to do with my loveliness or yours. It has everything to do with the ugliness of the common cross that redeemed us, and the beauty of the common Lord we have made blood-covenant with.

This body, this church was designed by its head to be a place where people are there for one another. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). We do not shoot our wounded here. We do not give you our love as long as you dress right, talk right, attend right, parrot doctrine right, and then show you the door when you do not.

Because this body is the one place in this crazy, selfish, individualized world where the criteria for acceptance is not whiter teeth and fresher breath. It is the one place where weakness is not considered a liability but a shared problem . . . the one place where failure and pain are not grist for the gossip mill but burdens to be borne together . . . the one place where vulnerability can be risked, doubt and frustration expressed, and sins confessed and overcome . . . the one place where we can be made whole.

Together We Are Whole

Alone, I am partial.

It is all I am—But still not *whole*.

Alone, You are partial.

It is all you are—But still not *whole*.

Together, We are partial.

It is all we are—But closer to *whole*.

I know things you do not.

Your knowledge fills some of my voids.

I think things you do not.

Your mind stimulates my self-satisfaction.

I am things you are not.

You fill areas in which I am empty.

But

Together we are *closer* to being *whole*.

Yes

Together there is more.

But not enough.

Together, we are:

Branches in need of a *vine*.

A body in need of a *head*.

In him

Together

We are whole.

Richard Hall

NOTES

¹Livy 2.30.

²Alexander Campbell, "Christian Union," Essay.

³Robert Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), vii.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS¹

(1 Corinthians 12—14)

JIMMY ALLEN

1 CORINTHIANS 12—THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Confession of the Spirit (vv. 1-3)

In a letter, the Corinthians had inquired about spiritual gifts (v. 1; cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 16:1). In their heathen past, they had been led astray to serve dumb idols (v. 2). Idols, being lifeless, could not speak (Habakkuk 2:18, 19); hence, no revelation of spiritual truth had ever been given by them. This was true regardless of how the brethren may have been misled by idolatry prior to their conversion.

No one could say, "Jesus be cursed," by the Spirit (v. 3; RSV). "Spirit" can mean sphere or instrumentality. Hence, this may refer to any disciple serving in the realm ruled by the Spirit (Ephesians 6:18), or it may describe one inspired by the Spirit (Revelation 1:10). Those guilty of this blasphemy may have been Corinthian saints who claimed their spiritual gift led them to such frenzy they had no control over themselves. Paul later showed this to be false (1 Corinthians 14:32). However, contextually, the best interpretation is that the statement was a "revelation" given by an idol. Furthermore, no one could say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Spirit (v. 3; RSV). Obviously, more than words is meant. Here, the expression conveys a heart backed by a life surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.

The Nine Gifts of the Spirit (vv. 4-11)

There were diversities of gifts (vv. 4-7). "Gifts" denotes they were given by God, "service" denotes the goal of the gifts, and "working" denotes the means by which the gifts were manifested. "The same Spirit," "the same Lord," and "the same God" indicate that all three Persons in the Godhead functioned

through the gifts. The common good of the spiritual body was the purpose which the gifts were intended to accomplish (v. 7; RSV).

The Nine Gifts (vv. 8-10). "The word of wisdom" here and in 1 Corinthians 2:6-13 is used concerning the truth made known by the apostles. This view coincides with the apostles given in the list of positions at 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. A distinction is made between apostles and prophets (1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 27-31); however, prophets also revealed the gospel or God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 3:3-5). Likely, the difference between the two is that the apostles had permanent and plenary inspiration and the prophets had only partial and occasional inspiration.

"The word of knowledge" likely characterized miraculously endowed teachers who effectively communicated "the word of wisdom" revealed by the apostles. Teachers are listed among the seven positions in 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. "Faith" is not that trust possessed by all of God's people which comes from hearing the message (Romans 10:17) but a supernatural gift which enabled some to perform miracles (1 Corinthians 13:2; Matthew 17:14-20; 21:21; Luke 17:6; Acts 3:16). "Gifts of healing" (Acts 4:30; 5:15, 16; James 5:14, 15) is self-explanatory. "Working of miracles" is a broader class of miracles than the two given immediately above as it included acts of punishment (Acts 13:9-11) as well as acts of mercy. "Prophecy," as pointed out above, was a gift by which God's wisdom was made known. Since prophecy has been done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), God has no prophets living today. Those who claim to be prophets must be considered as false prophets. "Discerning of spirits" enabled one to tell the difference between those who spoke by the Holy Spirit and those who did not (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21; 1 John 4:1). Today the difference between true and false teaching can be discerned by a study of the New Testament.

"Tongues," according to some scholars, were ecstatic utterances rather than foreign languages. Paul's reference to tongues of angels in 1 Corinthians 13:1 is cited to support this view. Conceivably, every reference to tongues in 1 Corinthians could refer to ecstatic speech. However, in 1 Corinthians 13:1,

Paul did not actually say some spoke in angelic language. Rather, he said even *if* one did speak with the tongues of angels, not having love in his heart, he would not please God. A similar concept is found in Galatians 1:8 where Paul wrote of an angel preaching another gospel. He did not mean angels actually preached to men. He meant even *if* an angel preached a message other than the gospel, it was not to be accepted.

Tongues should be understood as foreign languages for the following reasons. First, every reference to tongues in 1 Corinthians can as easily be applied to foreign languages as to ecstatic utterances. Second, the tongues spoken on Pentecost Day were foreign languages (Acts 2:4, 6, 8, 11). Since obscure passages are to be interpreted in light of plain passages, unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise, the tongues of 1 Corinthians are the same as the languages of Acts 2. Third, Paul's quotation of Isaiah 28:11, 12 in 1 Corinthians 14:21 is an explicit reference to a foreign language. To avoid this conclusion, one must deny that the historical setting of Isaiah has any bearing on Paul's use of the quotation.

"The interpretation of tongues" refers to the translation of foreign languages into a language understood by the people. One might have the gifts of tongues and interpretation (1 Corinthians 14:13). If a person spoke in a tongue and interpreted his presentation, the result was the same as prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:30).

The Church Compared to a Body (vv. 12-26)

There is only one body (vv. 12, 13, 20). Since the body is the church (Colossians 1:18), it follows there is only one church. The body likely refers to the universal church rather than to a single congregation. If each local church is a body, there is one head, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22, 23), over thousands of bodies, and Paul's figure of one head and one body is destroyed.

"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (v. 13) is taken by some to mean baptism in the Holy Spirit; however, this view is incorrect. There are only two cases of Holy Spirit baptism in the New Testament (Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-46), the last occurring at the house of Cornelius ca. A.D. 35. When Paul wrote Ephesians 4:5 ca. A.D. 60-62, there was only one bap-

tism. The one baptism which will abide as long as the world stands is administered by men (Matthew 28:18-20). The only baptism men can administer is baptism in water (the Lord baptized in the Spirit, Matthew 3:11, 12). Hence, the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5 must be water baptism. Since there is no evidence for the Corinthians having been baptized in the Spirit, but there is proof for their having been immersed in water (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17), verse 13 must be a reference to water baptism. It is true that some spoke in tongues as a result of Spirit baptism; however, some received tongue-speaking ability through the imposition of apostolic hands (Acts 19:1-5). All things considered, the Corinthians must have received the gift of tongues, as well as all other spiritual gifts, by the hands of Paul.

What does it mean to be baptized into the body by the Spirit? Some think as Christ baptized others through his disciples (John 4:1, 2), the Spirit now baptizes through the saints. Another view is that the Spirit in inspired men taught the lost to be baptized into one body. Others believe the Spirit works through the written word in leading men to be baptized into the body.

Christians Are Members of the Body (vv. 14-26). This section was written because there was division among the brethren based on a misunderstanding of the gifts. Apparently, some were arrogant because of the impressionable nature of their gifts. Others were envious of those whom they felt God had more highly favored. They considered themselves inferior due to the lack of ostentatious display in the exercise of their gifts.

There are several lessons to be learned from this passage. First, each member should have been content with the gift he had (vv. 15, 16; Romans 9:20). It is foolish for a foot to complain because it is not a hand or an ear to complain because it is not an eye. Second, each member fulfills a useful function in the spiritual body even as the eye, ear, and nose play a vital part in the human organism (vv. 17-19). Third, members are mutually dependent upon one another (vv. 20-24). As the eye needs the hand and the head needs the feet, Christians need one another. The church is not composed of independent individu-

als but men and women who must depend upon one another. I may go to heaven because of you, and you may go to heaven because of me. Fourth, those members considered less honorable must be invested with greater honor (vv. 23, 24). One-talent disciples must be honored to the point where they can stand on equal footing with five-talent saints. Fifth, members should have the same care for one another in suffering and in honor (vv. 25, 26). Sixth, there should be no discord among the members (v. 25). One hand should not attempt to cut off the other. The two, under the direction of the head, should work together for common goals. Seventh, the place and function of the members is determined by God (1 Corinthians 12:18, 28). Each should use what he has to the glory of God. If one complains about his role in the kingdom, he reflects on the Lord's wisdom. The issue is not what we should do if we were gifted as others but what we are doing with what we have.

The Nine Positions (vv. 27-31)

These positions coincide with the nine gifts mentioned earlier (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Paul's admonition that they should desire the higher gifts (v. 31; RSV) is an indication they could do something to prepare themselves for the reception of the gifts. The more excellent way of love is treated in the following chapter.

1 CORINTHIANS 13—HOW LONG THE GIFTS WERE TO LAST

Gifts Contrasted With Love (vv. 1-3)

When miraculous (tongues, knowledge, prophecy, faith) and non-miraculous gifts (generosity and martyrdom) are compared to love, the latter is shown to be the greatest of all.

Love Defined (vv. 4-7)

Love is defined by what it does. See *Survey of 1 Corinthians*² for a treatment of Paul's fifteen virtues which describe true love.

Gifts Were Temporary but Love Is Eternal (vv. 8-13)

"Perfect" does not refer to Christ. Some, who maintain that the gifts are now being exercised and will continue until the

Lord's second coming, contend that Jesus, as the Perfect One, is under consideration. In reply to this view, it should be noted that "perfect" in Greek is neuter gender (*to teleion*) just as "imperfect" (RSV) or "in part" (KJV) is neuter (*ek merous*). Apparently, a thing or process rather than a person is contemplated. If this were referring to Jesus, the masculine gender would be used instead of the neuter (i.e., "he who" rather than "that which"). Admittedly, the neuter is once used concerning Christ (Matthew 1:20). However, he was still a fetus in Mary's womb at the time. Furthermore, the expression there is *to gar* instead of *to teleion*. To my knowledge, there is not a place in the New Testament where *to teleion* is ever used in reference to the Savior after his birth or in connection with his second coming. "Also, since *teleion* is set in contrast to that which is 'in part' (*ek merous*), it must refer to the culmination of a process. The second coming is not a process; it is an instantaneous event."³

"Perfect" does not mean the perfect state of heaven which will begin at the second advent of Christ. Some, who believe gifts will last until the consummation of the age, have taken that position. Waymon Miller, in response to such thinking, wrote: "Paul's argument would have been superfluous and meaningless had this been meant, for all understand that in the eternal realm no need for prophecies, tongues, knowledge and the like will exist."⁴

At this point, verse 13 must be considered. The word translated as "now" in this verse is from *nuni* which may refer to time (Acts 24:13; Romans 6:22) or to a logical conclusion (Romans 7:17). In verse 13 "now" is *logical* and not *temporal*. It is taken this way in the RSV where *nuni* is rendered as "so." Paul did not mean that faith, hope, and love are eternal and the gifts are temporal (implying that the gifts would last until the end of the world). Earlier, he had stated that "love never ends" (v. 8; RSV). He did not make a similar affirmation for faith and hope. As a matter of fact, faith, in the sense of belief (not in the sense of trust), and hope, in the sense of expectation, will cease to exist (i.e., be replaced by absolute knowledge, Hebrews 11:1; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:24, 25) when time ends. Paul was saying that faith, hope, and love will continue

after the gifts have ceased. Since faith and hope continue in time, it necessarily follows that the gifts were to be done away in *time* and *before* the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. According to Phillips' translation of verse 13, it is "*in this life*" (emphasis mine) that we have faith, hope, and love. Since it has already been established that love is eternal (v. 8), obviously, love will be experienced in the next life too. Here, then, is Paul's sequence: (1) cessation of gifts in time; (2) cessation of faith and hope when time ends; and (3) continuation of love forever (which accounts for its being greater than faith and hope).

"Perfect," from *teleion*, can mean mature or full grown; however, the authorities also indicate it can mean "the complete revelation of God's will and ways, whether in the completed Scriptures or in the hereafter." The context of the passage favors the view of the full or complete revelation of God's Word. They had partial, imperfect, or incomplete knowledge and prophecy at the time (tongues, which also were to cease, must fit into this category, too, for when interpreted, the result was the same as prophecy or knowledge) (v. 9). That was true because only a part of the New Testament had then been given. The entire new covenant was not revealed at the same time. It was made known over a period of about fifty years. Much was yet to be revealed after Paul penned 1 Corinthians (ca. A.D. 54-55). Once God's message was set forth in its totality, the partial or incomplete was replaced by the full or completed communication. When Revelation, the last New Testament book, was finished about A.D. 95, the canon was completed and the whole existed. This does not mean all New Testament books had to be placed into one volume before gifts were done away. It does mean gifts ceased by the time Revelation was written. In response to one who wrote that the view herein maintained is "novel" and "hardly defensible either in the light of the context or the passage or modern scholarship," it should be pointed out that "the prevailing belief" from the time of Chrysostom onward "is that these gifts were destined only for the apostolic period, and have already ceased."⁵

1 CORINTHIANS 14—HOW THE GIFTS WERE TO BE REGULATED

Prophecy Superior to Tongues (vv. 1-5)

First, prophecy was superior to tongues because the tongue-speaker did not speak to men but the prophet did (v. 2). The tongue-speaker did speak to men when those present understood the language (Acts 2:4-12) or when he was interpreted (v. 5). Paul meant he did not speak to men when he was not understood. Apparently, speaking in tongues without interpretation was a common occurrence at Corinth.

Second, the tongue-speaker edified himself, but the prophet edified the church (v. 4). Again, this means there was no edification of the church by tongues unless there was interpretation. The threefold function of prophecy was to edify, exhort, and comfort (v. 5).

The Necessity for Interpretation of Tongues (vv. 6-19)

Paul's illustrations were the flute, harp, and bugle (vv. 6-8). Unless those instruments gave distinct notes or sound (i.e., spoke the language of music), one would have no knowledge of what was being played.

The results of tongue-speaking without interpretation were as follows (vv. 9-12). First, it was a wasted effort like speaking into the air (v. 9). Second, the hearers were not benefited (v. 6) because they could not understand what was spoken (vv. 10, 11). Third, the speaker and hearers were as foreigners to one another (v. 11). Rather than engaging in such useless activity, they were urged to edify the church (v. 12).

The section dealing with the necessity of interpretation (vv. 13-19) shows that interpretation was essential for others to understand, participate in prayer meaningfully (v. 16), and receive edification from tongue-speaking (v. 17).

If prayer for the power to interpret (v. 13) was answered affirmatively, it came by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Peter and John prayed for some of the Samaritan disciples, laid hands on them, and they received the miraculous measure of the Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). Interpretation, like any other spiritual gift, was passed on to others *only* through the hands of the apostles.

When one prayed in a tongue without interpretation, the spirit prayed but the mind or understanding was unfruitful (v. 14). "Spirit" may be a reference to the Christian's spirit under the miraculous control of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, it could refer simply to man's spiritual gift. Either conclusion, practically speaking, is the same. "Mind" (RSV) means "the understanding" (KJV), thoughts, or ideas held by the one praying in a tongue. His mind was unfruitful since his thoughts could produce no fruit in others who did not have the ability to understand the tongue in which he spoke.

To pray with the spirit means to pray with a spiritual gift or with one's own spirit under the direction of the Holy Spirit; to pray with the understanding means to pray so that others can understand the thoughts of the prayer's mind (v. 15). Obviously, this demanded interpretation of the prayer offered in a tongue. This explanation also applied to singing with the spirit and the understanding. Because verse 15 relates to an assembly where spiritual gifts were exercised and there are no such gatherings today, it is a misuse of language for one in a modern church setting to ask God to help brethren worship "with the spirit and with the understanding." It is correct to pray that worship will be sincere and intelligent, but Scripture is misapplied when the verse is used in this way.

Paul spoke in tongues more than any of the Corinthians (v. 18); however, he preferred speaking in a few words so that others were instructed by his understanding rather than many words in a tongue which others could not comprehend (v. 19).

The Purpose of Tongues (vv. 20-25)

Tongues were a sign for unbelievers (v. 22). In verse 21 Paul quoted Isaiah 28:11, 12, which indicated that stubborn, unbelieving Israel would be addressed by God through the lips of the Assyrians. That prediction was fulfilled when Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C.

As the tongues of foreigners were a sign of ancient Israel's unbelief, the languages spoken at Corinth in the first century were a sign for unbelievers (v. 22). Tongues as signs, like other miracles, were performed primarily to confirm, corroborate,

or verify the apostolic message as having come from God (John 20:30, 31; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4). Tongues were evangelistic in the sense of turning the attention of unbelievers to the gospel by which they could be saved.

Tongues were a sign to unbelievers when properly used (vv. 22, 23). Tongue-speakers addressing the group one at a time and each being followed by an interpreter (v. 27) signified to unbelievers that the message proclaimed by Christians was from above (v. 22). Bedlam occurred when all spoke at the same time, and to unbelievers such indicated madness (v. 23). Surely, the unsaved were turned away from the church by that type of disorder.

Prophecy was superior to a multitude of tongues (i.e., misused tongues) in dealing with unbelievers (vv. 23-25). After tongues were used to attract the attention of non-Christians, prophecy (i.e., inspired teaching) followed. The conversion of the unsaved is set forth in verses 24 and 25. First, the non-member was convinced or convicted by all. Likely, that means he was convinced of sin, righteousness, judgment (John 16:8-11), the truth that Jesus was Christ (Acts 9:20-22) and that Jesus could forgive his sins (Acts 10:43; 1 Timothy 1:15). Second, he was judged or called to account by all. This probably refers to the searching, examining, and questioning he experienced due to truth's presentation. Third, the secrets of his heart were made manifest or disclosed. The Word of God, as a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12), led him to see his true spiritual condition before the Lord (an understanding every lost person must reach to be saved). Fourth, he acknowledged that God was among them, fell on his face, and adored the Almighty.

All To Be Done Decently and in Order (vv. 26-40)

Since many desired to participate in the meetings (v. 26), structure was necessary for learning (v. 31), encouragement (v. 31), and edification (v. 26). This indicates that unstructured services offer little, if any, benefit to Christians.

An Explanation of the Activities (v. 26). "Hymn" or "psalm" is a song offered by a gifted person. Singing with the spirit and understanding (1 Corinthians 14:15) refers to the same activ-

ity. Apparently, there was solo singing by gifted people in the assembly. "Lesson" or "doctrine" was a "word of knowledge" (1 Corinthians 12:8) presented by one with the gift of teaching (1 Corinthians 12:28). "Revelation" was teaching given by a prophet (1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:30, 31). "Tongue" and "interpretation" are self-explanatory.

Paul's Instructions Concerning Procedure (vv. 27-35). Tongue-speakers (vv. 27, 28). Not more than three were to speak at one service (v. 27). They were to speak one at a time (v. 27). Interpretation was to be given (v. 27). If no interpreter was present, they were to be silent (v. 28). In the absence of an interpreter, they could speak to themselves and to God (v. 28). Undoubtedly, this is a case of silent speaking.

Prophets (vv. 29-33). No more than three were to speak at one service (v. 29). Other prophets were to weigh or judge what was said (v. 29). Apparently, some of the prophets had the ability to distinguish between spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10) and judge whether what was said was true or false (1 John 4:1). They were to speak one at a time (vv. 30, 31). When revelation was made to another, the one speaking was to discontinue his speech (v. 30). This was possible because the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets (v. 32) and God is not the author of confusion but of peace (v. 33). It had to be done if all were to learn and be encouraged (v. 31).

Women (vv. 34, 35). They were to keep silent in the church for two reasons (v. 34). First, they were not allowed to speak (v. 34). In my judgment, 1 Corinthians 11:5 indicates that prophetesses were permitted to address the assembly (this is discussed in *Survey of 1 Corinthians*⁶). If this is the case, there were exceptions to this rule. Furthermore, since it is necessary for women to speak when they sing (Ephesians 5:19) and confess Christ (Romans 10:9, 10), it was not intended that they should be excluded from those practices. The meaning is that ungifted women were not allowed to teach a group in which men were present. Second, they were to be in subjection as taught in the law. Subordination of woman to man began in Eden (Genesis 3:16) and will continue until the end of time, regardless of its denial by feminists. The prophetess excepted, a Christian woman teaching a group, gathering, or assembly

of men exercises authority over those men and transgresses the will of God (1 Timothy 2:11, 12). It is possible for a woman to teach a man as Priscilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26); however, she can never teach *over* a man without doing violence to Scripture. The authority of man is not restricted in teaching as is the woman's (Titus 2:15).

If they desired to know anything, they were to ask their husbands at home (v. 35). That statement was not directed to a single woman, a widow, a lady with a non-Christian husband, or a woman mature in the faith whose mate was a recent convert. Obviously, it was written to women whose husbands could answer their questions! Paul was referring to ladies married to prophets. Apparently, some prophets' wives were interrupting them as they prophesied to the congregation. Their activity stopped the flow of God's revelation. Remember, they did not have copies of the New Testament as we do now. The apostle corrected their rudeness and commanded them to ask questions at home rather than continue to disrupt the communication of God's spoken word.

It is shameful for a woman to speak at church (v. 35). As pointed out above, it was no shame for a prophetess to speak or even for an uninspired woman to speak as she sang praises and confessed Jesus as Lord. It would not be shameful for a lady to ask that a song number be repeated in a modern-day assembly. It was shameful for a woman to speak in teaching over men and in interrupting prophesying. This does not mean the church has authority for female evangelists. A proper understanding of 1 Timothy 2:8-15 will forever keep Christian women from occupying the pulpit.

Paul's Warning (vv. 36-40). First, since the message did not have its origin with the Corinthians, they needed to give heed to what was written (v. 36). Second, the gifted ("spiritual") were to acknowledge that Paul's writing came from the Lord (v. 37). Third, those who failed to recognize the authority of Paul's Epistle were not to be recognized (v. 38; RSV). Recognition may refer to one's being approved by God. Fourth, desire to prophesy and do not forbid tongue-speaking (v. 39). Since gifts have ceased (see remarks at 1 Corinthians 13:8-10), this verse has no application to the modern church. Fifth, all

things are to be done decently and in order (v. 40).

A Concluding Thought

When the Sabbath was done away, Sabbath regulations were also done away. Similarly, when spiritual gifts ceased, the teaching concerning their regulation also ceased. It is impossible to regulate what is non-existent. Since this chapter was written to control long-gone phenomena, one might conclude that it has no relevance for present-day disciples. However, such is not the case. There are six principles in the chapter (aim for love, v. 1; be mature in thought, v. 20; all things are to be done for edification, v. 26; God is not the author of confusion but of peace, v. 33; women are subordinate to men, v. 34; all things are to be done decently and in order, v. 40) from which Paul made specific applications to spiritual gifts. Although the gifts and their regulations have ceased, *the principles continue to abide*.

NOTES

¹The material in this lesson is discussed in greater detail in Jimmy Allen, *Survey of 1 Corinthians* (Searcy, Ark. By the Author, 1975), 214pp. This book can be obtained by writing to Harding University or 3 Magnolia Drive, Searcy, AR 72143.

²Allen, *Survey of 1 Corinthians*, 161-63.

³Robert G. Gromacki, *The Modern Tongues Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1967), 123.

⁴Waymon Miller, *Modern Divine Healing* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Miller Publishing Co., 1956), 320.

⁵J. P. Lange, *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures—Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 271.

⁶Allen, *Survey of 1 Corinthians*, 131-32.

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BUT NOW CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED (1 Corinthians 15)

NICK HAMILTON

The gospel has two primary facts, each of which is supported by the strongest of evidences. The introduction of 1 Corinthians 15 presents us with these facts and their proofs.

The first fact is the death of Christ. That he "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" gives us reason to know that this is the most important fact we can ever be called upon to believe. The evidence for his death is his burial.

Though his death occurred at the hands of his enemies, his burial was handled by his friends. As his body was washed, wrapped, and anointed for its burial, reason suggests that had there been any sign whatsoever of life—just the slightest of animation or the hint of a breath—the whole proceeding would have been stopped and every effort made to revive him. Our loved ones are never buried unless we are positive of their death. His burial is strong evidence of his death.

The second fact is his resurrection. He also "has been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." The proof offered of his resurrection was numerous eyewitness sightings of him after the discovery of his empty tomb. In the Gospels, Matthew tells of four, Mark and Luke of three each, and John of four. Paul (in 1 Corinthians 15) summarizes by listing six separate sightings where he presented himself alive following his death. The weight of the testimony can best be measured in that one of these appearances was to more than five hundred individuals at once. Most of them were still alive at the time of the writing of this book and were willing to present their eyewitness accounts all over again! No better evidence can be presented to the court than the testimony of eyewitnesses all of whom agree. In this case, all the eyewitnesses agreed to the

fact of his resurrection. We are left today with more than ample reason to accept both facts of the gospel.

BUT WHAT IF HE WAS NOT RAISED?

To the church in Corinth, Paul addresses this question. Remember, he appears to be writing a group of Christians who believe in Christ's resurrection, but doubted their own. To them, Paul poses the hypothetical "if" and a series of seven conclusions which cause their arguments to fail.

1. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. But what of the testimony of the empty tomb and of the grave clothes? What of the eyewitnesses he has just enumerated? And where is the body of Christ? As one writer has stated, "Just produce the body of that Jew and Christianity falls." If there is no resurrection, where is that body?

2. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then our preaching is vain. Literally, there is no substance in it. A gospel without a risen Savior is no gospel at all. Paul would never have changed from devout Jew to follower of Christ if there were a Calvary with no resurrection. He would never have preached a dead Lord, only a risen one.

3. If there is no resurrection, then your faith is vain. The term translated "vain" in this setting means worthless as opposed to empty. The idea is that there is plenty of faith, but it is not worth anything. It is a futile faith. Apart from the resurrection we might be ever so zealous to believe, but what good is it to us if we do believe?

4. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then we are false witnesses. Paul would have to confess that if there is no resurrection, then he is a liar and keeps company with liars. Those worthy men who were apostles—Peter, James, John, etc.—were really not worthy at all. And the faithful of Hebrews 11 were not men "of whom the world was not worthy" but were themselves deceivers of their fellowmen. And the biggest liar of them all was Christ himself who promised a resurrection and withheld the only truth meaningful to a lost humanity. Hence, there is no transforming power to the gospel (Philippians 3:8ff.).

5. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then we are all still sinners. The freedom we feel from our guilt is mythical, and the relief of not having to face again our transgressions is a falsehood. In truth, we have not changed at all if there is no resurrection.

6. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then those who have died have perished. Hence, there are no precious memories, and there is no hope for a great reunion. There is no purpose for optimism nor reason for hope when we stand by the grave of a loved one. Their tombstones should read "perished," and the sooner forgotten the better. The message we preach should be, "In Christ are all dying and perishing." Christianity is totally hopeless.

7. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then we are the most to be pitied of all men who have ever lived. We are a sad lot, looking forward to a judgment when wrongs will be punished and righteousness, though victimized here, will be rewarded. We are deceived into thinking that there is yet a future, when all that there really is is today.

Obviously, not one of these seven arguments is acceptable to Paul. He seeks in this chapter to show the futility of Christianity without a resurrection, and no argument could possibly be given which would have the weight of the logical conclusion of what it means if there is no resurrection. That thought alone makes the denial of the resurrection self-destruct.

WHAT HIS RESURRECTION MEANS

Death is a fact of life. Because Adam sinned, we must all face death. We have no say in the matter. But, as Robert Milligan writes, "What we have lost unconditionally in Adam we have regained unconditionally in Christ." Because of his resurrection, we, too, will be raised.

He is a kind of "firstfruits" of our resurrection. In Old Testament days on the feast of ingatherings or harvest (Leviticus 23:9ff.), a sample was gleaned from the fields of one of the first sheaves to ripen. It was cut and beaten by a soft cane into a perforated pan which was then shaken over an open fire to allow the chaff to fall through and burn up. Wind would blow

off the dust and particles until all that remained was the harvest, from which, using oil, bread was made. All this was an earnest of the harvest to be celebrated before they would return to the fields. The "firstfruits" was then a sample of the whole harvest. The resurrection of Christ is a sample of our resurrection. He is in that sense the firstfruits of us—he is our forerunner in the resurrection. Our resurrection is assured because of his.

But there is more. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead" (Romans 1:4). While on the earth, he was declared to be God's Son (Matthew 3:17). Yet it was in his resurrection that he received that position in its fullest. In speaking of the resurrection, Paul says, "And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers, that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (Acts 13:32, 33).

He reigns today and will until the abolition of all enemies including death. On that glorious day of his return, he will leave his work of intercession, complete his assignment in judgment, and mount the throne of glory to rightfully resume his place as the sovereign Lord over all the universe!

OUR RESURRECTED BODIES

It is difficult to understand the spiritual in light of the physical. Here is where many people falter in their faith concerning the resurrection. Remember that we can only explain (or understand) such things by physical comparisons which give us some ideas. We have no frame of reference for understanding these great truths in any other way.

To accommodate us, Paul gives some illustrations. There is an inseparable connection between the seed and the stalk and yet such a difference. In the same way, there is a definite connection between the body that we bury and the resurrection body, while still there is a vast difference. That body is laid to rest a corruptible body, and it is raised an incorruptible one. Yet it is the same person! While this body is ideally suited

for this environment, we can be confident that that body will be perfectly matched for that existence. That is the point of Paul's mention of celestial and terrestrial bodies. What makes this hard for us to understand is that we have no frame of reference to understand the spiritual. We live in the flesh and understand in the flesh. Paul speaks of spiritual realities.

With greatest of assurance he affirms that the moment is coming when we shall be victorious over death. Just as Jesus Christ conquered death, we too shall share in his victory. There is no way that the epitaph "perished" should describe our death, for in his resurrection he released those who through fear of death had been subject to bondage by the adversary, reducing him to impotence and releasing us to a lifetime of steadfast, unmovable service in the work of the Lord.

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CHAPEL LECTURES

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED (1 Corinthians 1:18-31)

EVERTT W. HUFFARD

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

THE VERDICT: CHRIST CRUCIFIED OR ROMAN PRIDE

On the sands of the Mediterranean, in the capital of the Roman province of Palestine, an encounter between Roman pride and the preaching of Christ ended in deadlock. Paul appealed to Caesar. The matter, at least for the authorities in Caesarea, ended with Paul on board that ship for Rome.

Paul had disturbed Felix, the governor, because he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus, righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:24, 25). Although that session ended abruptly, Felix discusses these things with Paul frequently over the next two years, hoping Paul would take the opportunity to bribe his way out of prison.

Porcius Festus succeeded Felix and showed less sympathy to Paul. As Festus reviews Paul's trial with King Agrippa, he acknowledged that Paul had not violated Roman law, but that the real issue was over a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed to be alive (Acts 25:19). As Paul repeats his story to the king, he confesses to his own efforts to destroy belief in Christ. Due to a humbling experience on the road to Damascus, he began a ministry to Jews and Gentiles. As a Jew, he still believed in the Law and the Prophets. But he preached "that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles"

(Acts 26:23). Festus mockingly accused Paul of insanity. No doubt, he thought, the foolishness of such a message should be obvious to all, Jew and Gentile alike. How could someone believe such a story and maintain any sense of pride and sophistication?

As I excavated closer to the late Roman strata of our "pit" in Caesarea, in 1980, the irony of that first-century encounter hit me. The Roman Empire and its rulers had reason to boast of their wealth, power, and security. Before them stood Paul, poor and powerless, except for his right to appeal to Caesar. While his message may have touched the hearts of some of the rulers and their court attendants, the resurrection of a dead man in Jerusalem was too weak and simple. Was it the pride of Rome that blinded them or the lack of the drama associated with Greco-Romans gods that made the message "foolish"?

History undeniably confirmed the unseen power in Paul's message. For, here I was, nineteen centuries later, a believer in Jesus Christ, digging in the long forsaken ruins of the Roman Empire. Paul's message of Christ crucified, not Roman power, wisdom, or gods endured the passing of time. Now who can boast, Festus or Paul?

Allowing my imagination a bit of freedom, I dreamed of coming across the skeletal remains of rude, yet "wise," Festus. Raising him to life for a few minutes, I would ask him if he wanted to change his mind. This Caesarean episode of "Back to the Future" would certainly humble the most arrogant Roman. Paul's message left no room for pride in human wisdom, strength, wealth, or power. Thus, he could write to the church in Corinth:

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength (1 Corinthians 1:22-25).

THE CROSS AND HUMAN PRIDE

Paul identified two types of wisdom: human and divine. There is the wisdom of Rome and the wisdom of Christ. Because the message of the cross demands a verdict, one cannot be "wise" in both arenas. Either response runs the risk of making "fools" out of us: a fool in the eyes of Festus because it did not make sense, or "fools" in the eyes of God because one did not respond to an eternal Christ.

We are witnesses to the power of God in the message of Christ. With over a third of the world's population claiming some form of allegiance to Christ, the message of the cross has overwhelmingly outlived and overpowered Rome. Paul is known worldwide. An estimated 3,500 churches are established each week with some degree of knowledge of Jesus Christ. Bibles, churches, and daily Christian service continue to give witness to a resurrected Christ. Festus, meanwhile, lies dead, unknown, powerless. Collapsed aqueducts, broken columns, jugs, and coins testify to the past glory of Rome. Rome can no longer boast. Christ can. Rome met defeat within a few centuries. Roman emperors could condemn Paul and threaten the early church, but, as T. R. Glover observed, "the day was to come when men would call their dogs Nero and their sons Paul."¹

This perspective from history needs to inform our life today. The preaching of Christ still demands a verdict that requires insight into an unseen future. The wisdom of the world still leads to pride and idolatry. The preaching of Christ crucified continues to offend pride in national strength, education, or personal success.

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee observed that the response of Jews and Gentiles to Paul's message represents the basic idolatries of humanity. God must be powerful and wise by our standards and to our benefit before we will "trust" in him, much less obey him as Lord.

For both, the ultimate idolatry is that of insisting that God conform to our own prior views as to how "the God who makes sense" ought to do things. . . . Their [Jews] idolatry was that they now had God completely figured

out: he would simply repeat the Exodus, in still greater splendor. . . . Their idolatry [Gentile] was to conceive of God as ultimate Reason; meaning of course that *we* deem to be reasonable.²

In our galley of deities today, what signs, what wisdom do we seek? Where do we set Christ in the temples full of objects of gratification, financial security, social status, aerobic health, success, and individuality? Each of these idols gives us something to boast about. The message of the cross is an offense to each. Christ cannot sit on the same shelf.

The cross offends the norm that marriage is only based on need's gratification and "love" rather than a covenant backed by the honor of the vows each partner has made. The cross called for death, a willingness to die to self and live for someone else. Christian marriage, the one that lasts through time, moves from a promise, not toward a promise.³ Christians cannot boast of their own ability to make their marriage work, but in humility credit God for the joys of companionship and sustained faithfulness to each other.

The message of Christ crucified challenges the exalted assumption that every student must seek higher education to gain financial security and power rather than training for sacrificial roles in ministry, missions, teaching, or social services. The difference between any university and a Christian university is the message of Christ crucified. It is a difference in what each school would boast about. Their criteria and objectives would be viewed as foolish by the world's standards. What makes Harding a distinctively Christian institution is not the successful athletic program but an athletic program that can produce athletes with Christian character and a mission to serve; not a business school from which the top firms seek its graduates but one that produces business personnel with integrity and a commitment to serve the church; and not a Bible program that seeks to make a respectable science out of religion but one that produces faithful Christians whose only boast is in what God has done through them. Such a school has grounds for boasting when its graduates go out as servants rather than consumers, who select churches on the basis of

opportunities for service rather than size or services rendered to them.

The message of the cross offends our pride in the human body. Both body and soul need exercise and self-control. One will, like Rome, die. The other, like the message of Christ crucified, will live on. Human wisdom will not allow us to approach worship, prayer, study of the Word, or fellowship with Christians with the same degree of intensity that we jog, diet, and coordinate skin color to make-up and clothes. Christ crucified offends any attempt to take pride in beauty, strength, or youthfulness.

Christ crucified makes absolutely no sense to consumers. The cross appears to them as an unnecessary waste. The message of Christ crucified is not "user friendly." The wisdom of the world produces "better" software, the kind Satan sold Eve in the garden. The point at which we assume we can go beyond the wisdom of God, we repeat the Fall. We empty the cross of its power (1 Corinthians 1:17). The token attempts at evangelism, missions, and benevolence in the local church fail to do justice to the power of God. Worldly wisdom can convince us that the gospel is simply not practical. As if no one will buy first-century software anymore.

Without the power of the gospel of Christ, we doom our local church structures to strata of rubble in some future archaeological excavation. Meanwhile, the poor, the powerless, the "foolish" in the world continue to reflect the image of God and shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:26-30). They glory in the grace of God while the "Festus types" die in their worldly wisdom, lost and forgotten (2 Corinthians 1:12).

NO BOASTING IN THE CHURCH

But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:27-29, 31).

The Passover and human pride cannot coexist. A Passover never made much sense to outsiders, be they Canaanites, Europeans, or Americans. The wisdom of the world could not fit the Exodus into its paradigm. Likewise, the Lord's Supper, the memorial of the message of Christ crucified, makes no sense to the world. For the same reasons, communion and human pride cannot coexist. Our God is one God, and we gain access to Him only through the risen Lord.

The church, the fellowship of the crucified, continues to be the humble witness to the wisdom of God. Paul wrote this letter to the "church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy. . . ." (1 Corinthians 1:2). This letter gives more teaching on the church than any other of Paul's letters. There is a real and necessary sociological dimension to the preaching of Christ crucified. Worldly wisdom is convinced that belief in Christ is just a personal matter or private opinion. Paul made it a public matter, subject to the judgment of God. It became especially public in the visible existence of the church in the community. The sanctified become the church, so when brothers go to law against each other, when the church is divided, when immorality is tolerated, the cross is emptied of its power through the church.

It is difficult to find many examples of conversion from idols to God in the history of Christian missions, without offense, struggle, and humility. A believer ceases to boast in the heroic deeds of his gods, patron saints, ancestors, or personal achievements. But in our context in America, it is far too easy to be baptized without leaving our idols and pride behind. As Paul sought to correct the human wisdom that made baptism a magical rite, so we may need a greater prophetic role today to confront the tendency to make baptism a mechanical step that rushes candidates to the water without discarding their idols.⁴ We have allowed it to become so individualized that it is often done in private, emptying it of its power of public witness to the power of the preaching of Christ crucified. As we divest the cross of its power, we stunt the spiritual growth of a newborn Christian. The failure is evident when boasting continues in one's ethnicity, education, wealth, or power, rather than in Christ.

Fellowship in Christ was a puzzle to human wisdom at Corinth. They needed further instruction on the nature of the church (1 Corinthians 3:5-23). As the proclamation which lasts must be built around the message of Christ crucified, so must a church which glorifies God be built on the power of Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 3:11). This church sacrifices for God through missions and benevolence. As Christ, it gives more than it receives. It works for God. It sets a course that prevailing fads, political powers, and cultural norms cannot change. In the end, it boasts only in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31).

CONCLUSION

I am of the opinion that one reason we quit growing as churches is when we began boasting about our rate of growth, the size of our churches, the soundness of our doctrine, or the quality of our education. Worldly wisdom aborts the unseen because it threatens the validity of our boasting. Just ask Felix and Festus. Time has, beyond doubt, confirmed the wisdom of Paul's complete surrender to God through Christ. The wise would want Christ to be exalted in their body (Philippians 1:20, 21). The early church grew when it preached Christ crucified.

NOTES

¹Quoted by F. F. Bruce in the dedication of his book, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

²Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 74-75.

³Lewis Smedes, *Caring and Commitment: Learning to Live the Love We Promise* (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1988).

⁴Cf. Fee for a discussion of 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 and Paul's effort to confront folk religious perspectives of baptism, 61.

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YOU ARE THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

JIMMY ADCOX

Randy Alcorn, in his book entitled *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution*, begins chapter 1 with this statement:

Ask the enlightened American what he thinks of Christian sexual morality. To him, it's a fossil—an antique that went out with washboards and penny candy. Who believes any more what the Bible says about sex? Old ladies and helpless traditionalists, the same folk who still use push lawn mowers, manual typewriters, and clothes that are years out of style.

The moral ice-age is over. Exit the dogmatic dinosaurs of sexual repression. Enter the sensuous sirens of sexual expression. We live in the age of sexual enlightenment, presumably but a few years from sexual utopia. *So what does this bright new age look like?*

Newspapers publish invitations for sexual partners. A singing telegram service sends male strippers to act out sexual fantasies in private homes. Rows of pornographic tabloids line city streets, available to any child with a curious mind and a few spare quarters. Prostitutes, massage parlors, adult book stores, strip joints, peep shows, female impersonators, gay baths, singles bars, sado-masochist leather shops—they've become as much a part of urban America as skyscrapers and parking meters.¹

Some of these remarks may still sound out of line with the daily problems facing most Christians. But they are only deeper symptoms of the twisted views of human sexuality that color the landscape of our society. These twisted views are part of the world in which we live and by which we are affected.

And as Christians, we are not immune. Every sin to which people in the world are vulnerable, Christians are also vulnerable. Any preacher or counselor whose openness invites the confidence of struggling Christians is aware of how real sexual temptation and perversion is even to those within the church.

As real as the problems are today, they were just as real in first-century Corinth. There Christianity came face to face with every conceivable immoral lifestyle. Paul's list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is followed by the statement, "And that is what some of you were" (v. 11). It was from these lifestyles that they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus and by the Spirit of God. Even though they had become Christians, they (like many today) had not yet learned to think like Christians. Many of them were still guilty of approaching their Christian lives with residual perspectives of pagan influence. As a result, many of them had not yet learned to live like Christians.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THINKING LIKE GOD

In 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Paul directly addresses problems of sexual immorality among Christians in Corinth. Apparently, some Christians had convinced themselves that they could become involved with prostitutes without violating their spiritual commitment to Christ. Sexual immorality was not only practiced by them, they even tried to justify it theologically. Their argument was that in the higher realm of the Spirit they are unaffected by behavior that had merely to do with the body. A false theology of Christian freedom, the human body, and sexual relations led to behavior that was a denial of their calling.

It is significant that Paul did not begin with an exhortation to "flee sexual immorality." Christians need such exhortations, and Paul later presented it in this text. But he did not begin by attacking their behavior. Instead, he began by attacking the theology that permitted their behavior. God knows there must be more than simple conformity to a legal code. He wants transformed lives that have learned to think

like God. They do the will of God because they have come to share the mindset of God. They were not merely to be aware of God's law. They were to be filled with God's Spirit!

Paul knew that such an approach was essential for spiritual maturity and power. People will always tend to follow the values shaped by their theology, adequate or inadequate, over external rules. Our mindset and values define what we are. Rules only define what we ought to be. Rules are imposed from without. As a result, they may reign under ordinary circumstances, but when times of stress or pressure come, our true belief system (if contrary to God) will overpower the rules and find justification for our desires.

Our worldview defines how we see the world and, therefore, how we respond to it. Our theology, as part of that worldview, defines how we see God and the things of God as they relate to our world. Every Christian possesses a theology, whether good or bad. Even the Corinthians had a view of God that determined their view of life. In their case, that view was inadequate and became the justification for their sinfulness.

One's theology is critical. That is why what was at stake here was not just a question of ethical conduct, but of the gospel itself. The Corinthian view of Christian freedom and the relationship between body and spirit threatened to deny the very meaning of the Christian faith. Paul understood that the only way to help them overcome the power of sin was to reshape their understanding of Christ into a mindset more consistent with the nature of the gospel. If they were sincere about their Christian lives, they would want to conform them more completely to the meaning of the cross and the nature of God. In fact, he knew that unless they came to share that new point of view, they would be powerless to conform to a new way of life.

This does not mean that rules are bad. God's law is holy, righteous, and good (Romans 7:12). But for spiritual growth and maturity to come, God's will must be internalized. The nature of God that produces his law must become our nature. It is at this point that many young Christians fail. They may grow up strongly grounded and committed to the law of God. But when their sinful nature (worldly mindset) challenges the rules, the rules no longer seem to fit their way of seeing things.

This creates a real tension that must find some resolution.

Many of you as students are wrestling with the dichotomy between what you have been taught and how things now seem to you. How do you resolve these uncomfortable incompatibilities? You either scrap the rules and all the religion that goes with them, create your own view of God to conform to your own view of life, or draw closer to God and his Word to evaluate what you have been taught in the light of the nature of God and the meaning of the Christian faith. Hopefully, you will do the latter. When you do, you may discover that something you have been taught was not correct. That is okay, so long as you are being reshaped by the nature and will of God and not by your own self will. Seek God through his Word, open your life to him, and let him shape your view of yourself and your view of life. Allow him to transform you into his own image by his Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). That is where you will find the direction and power for a godly life!

HOW YOU THINK ABOUT CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

As Paul confronted their faulty theology, he first addressed their view of Christian freedom. Apparently, the Corinthians had adopted several slogans in defense of their conduct. The first of these was, "Everything is permissible for me." It is found here and is repeated in 1 Corinthians 10:23 in a discussion of idolatry. The slogan may be tied to a group in Corinth who claimed to be "spiritual," but were repeatedly censured by Paul for their arrogance.

The wording of this slogan is not inconsistent with a principle found in much of Paul's teaching. Understood in the context of non-essentials, this is a valid principle. It may have been used to affirm Christian liberty in opposition to Jewish forms of legalism. But it is not an absolute principle in all areas of Christian ethics. It was abused by some in Corinth in an effort to excuse themselves from excesses of behavior that were contrary to Christ. They used the slogan to reinforce their belief that what one did in the body was independent of what one was in the spirit. They interpreted freedom in Christ to provide license for sexual immorality.

Even assuming the principle to be valid in its proper context. Paul makes it clear that it is not an absolute principle. He so qualifies it as to negate its application in the areas of their concern. First, he writes, " 'Everything is permissible for me'—but not everything is beneficial." Christian freedom is not to be used indiscriminately. Christian conduct is not determined by whether or not I have the right to do something, but by whether or not that conduct is spiritually helpful for myself or others.

Second, Paul writes, " 'Everything is permissible for me'—but I will not be mastered by anything." The Christian is to live only under the Lordship of Christ. Anything that takes control of our lives and leads us away from Christ is sinful, even if it is otherwise morally neutral. Paul's thought may be that they were mastered by sexual sin. Or it may be that they had become enslaved by the very freedom they claimed to exercise. They were more concerned about "doing their thing" in the name of freedom than they were about the welfare of others or the Lordship of Jesus. Or as Fee suggests, the word (from *exousiazō*) may be interpreted as used in 1 Corinthians 7:4. As the married partner has "authority over" the other's body, so this might refer to coming under the "power" of the prostitute. That is, by being joined to her in sexual immorality the Christian makes someone else, outside of Christ, the unlawful lord over one's own body.² In any case, an abuse of freedom will only lead back to slavery.

In a time when there is a renewed understanding of God's grace and forgiveness, much emphasis needs to be given to the nature of Christian freedom and the foundations and motivations for Christian conduct. It is easy for shallow Christians to so interpret grace that sin is softened and moral stamina is weakened. Grace properly understood does not encourage sin. Instead, it leads to a deeper relationship with God which empowers us to the kind of godly living that was never possible through human achievement. God did not save us from sin so that we might find justification for our sinfulness. Such a lifestyle is a direct contradiction to the gospel and will result in condemnation (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). He saved us from sin that we might be delivered both from its condemnation and

from its practice. Any other perspective is a denial of the gospel itself.

HOW YOU THINK ABOUT YOURSELF

The Christians at Corinth also found justification for their sinfulness because of a faulty theology of the human body. They argued, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food—but God will destroy them both" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Their point was that just as what one eats has no bearing on one's inner spiritual life, so the physical act of sexual promiscuity has no bearing on one's spiritual life. They would extend their slogan to say, "Sexual activity for the body and the body for sexual activity." They were saying, "God created us with physical, biological drives that must find expression. The meeting of these physical needs has nothing to do with one's spiritual relationship with God. The body is irrelevant. Only the spirit counts." Their faulty theology came from thinking that the body was irrelevant to spiritual life.

Paul responded by upsetting their slogan: "The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Corinthians 6:13). Far from the body being an unrelated entity only to be destroyed, it will be resurrected from the grave by the power of God (1 Corinthians 6:14). Because of God's value and purpose for the body, it is not just the spirit of man that is a member of Christ. Rather it is the whole person, body and spirit, that is a member of Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15). What one does with the body, therefore, is not done independently of Christ, but is done as an extension of Christ. How then could one take the members of Christ and make them one with a prostitute?

This unity between body and spirit is a principle we can understand if we pause to think of our own experience. Lewis Smedes says it well:

We sense that our bodies are not mere baggage carried around by souls, to be discarded when we die. When our stomachs hurt, we hurt; when our bodies are seasick, we are seasick; what we do with our bodies, we do with our selves. Christians may sometimes piously talk as though

souls were some sort of air bubble inside their bodies; but ordinarily they act as though their bodies are their very selves. Our bodies *are* us—the outside of us, but still us. This reflects Paul's view: a person's body was his outer self and his soul was his inner self—not another self. When a body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the person is a temple (1 Corinthians 6:19); when a person glorifies God in his body, he is glorifying God as a person (1 Corinthians 6:20); when a person gives his body to be burned, he gives himself to the flames (1 Corinthians 13:3); when a Christian yields his body as an offered service to God, he yields himself (Romans 12:1). And when two bodies are united in sex, two *persons* are united. The body is the person, the outside person that touches the world around him.³

For this reason, Paul says that to have sexual intercourse with another is not only to join a member of Christ with that person, it is also to become one with that person. "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh' " (1 Corinthians 6:16). Paul denies that one can have sexual relations with another with no meaning beyond the physical act itself. People call it casual sex. For Paul, that is a contradiction in terms. The very nature of sexual union is more far-reaching than the physical act. Paul affirms—in a way not made completely clear, that sexual intercourse is an act that typifies and seals a life-union between two people. He uses the same terminology to describe what happens in intercourse with a prostitute as was used to describe what happens in sexual intercourse with one's mate (Genesis 2:24). This does not mean that one is automatically married to the prostitute or to someone else with whom one has been sexually immoral. It takes more than sexual relations to constitute a marriage (cf. John 4:18). But that is exactly the reason that sexual immorality is wrong. A person cannot have sexual relations with another and leave his soul parked outside. The persons are involved because souls are in the act. The physical side of intercourse is a sign of what ought to happen on the inside. The

impact of this can be illustrated by the fact that two people will seldom feel the same toward each other afterwards. They may love each other as never before. They may deeply resent each other. Or they may only feel comfortable with each other. But after intercourse, the relationship is somehow different than before.⁴ In any case, they have in some way given themselves, and allowed themselves to be given, completely to another person, body and soul, without the commitments and responsibilities of marriage. To do so outside of marriage is to form a life-union with another person without the married commitment and relationship of life-union. That is not only contrary to the will of God, it is also damaging to the persons involved and contrary to our nature as persons united as body and spirit.

In verse 17, Paul contrasts the union of the body in sexual intercourse with the unity of spirit that is found in the Lord. How can a person who is united in spirit with the Lord violate that relationship by uniting himself with another in a form of sexual immorality that is contrary to the Lord?

There are various interpretations of verse 18, and the meaning is uncertain.⁵ However, it may be that the interpersonal nature of sexual intercourse (involving both body and spirit) is what makes fornication in some unique way a sin against one's own body in a way that no other sin is.

CONCLUSION

Paul has stated that Christian freedom is not absolute and that Christian behavior is to be determined by the Lord. He also affirmed that we are not only the Lord's in spirit, but that our bodies belong to and are for the Lord as well. Whatever we do in the body we do in the spirit and as an extension of our relationship with the Lord. Furthermore, sexual intercourse outside of marriage constitutes a unique sin against the body because of the life-union effect it has upon those involved. Because of the unique relationship we sustain to God in the body, we cannot commit sexual immorality without affecting our relationship with God. Because of the unique meaning of sexual intercourse, we cannot commit sexual immorality as a

purely physical act. The "one flesh" principle involves the whole person, body and spirit.

Paul drives home his thoughts with a question, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" The body is not irrelevant! It is God's dwelling place. It is set aside for God's service. It must be kept pure and holy for the sake of the Holy Spirit given by God to live within it. "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." The redemption price paid for our sins also purchased us as a people for God's possession. We must live what we are!

Using your body to serve and please God is to give *yourself* to the Lord. Nothing less will do. "Therefore honor God with your body."

NOTES

¹Randy C. Alcorn, *Christians in the Wake of the Sexual Revolution: Recovering Our Sexual Sanity* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1985), 15.

²Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 251-53.

³Lewis B. Smedes, *Sex for Christians: The Limits and Liberties of Sexual Living* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1976), 131-32.

⁴*Ibid.*, 132-33.

⁵For insight into the differing positions taken on this verse see Brendan Byrne, "Sinning Against One's Own Body: Paul's Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Corinthians 6:18," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 608-16; R. Kempthorne, "Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of I Corinthians 6:12-20," *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968): 568-74; and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Corinthian Slogans in 1 Cor. 6:12-20," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978): 391-96.

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COMPETING IN THE GAMES

(1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

KENNETH V. NELLER

Have you noticed how confused our society is about "rights"? To many people, "I want my rights!" is the national battle cry.

Believe it or not, this confusion has at times made our streets unsafe. An acquaintance of mine once gasped in disbelief when the driver of his cab totally ignored a red light.

"Not to worry," said the driver nonchalantly. "My brother does it all the time."

A block later the driver stopped for a *green* light. "Why stop now?" his passenger asked.

"Because my brother might be coming the other way!"

Confusion about rights! We are concerned about the rights of dolphins inadvertently captured and killed by tuna fishermen. We have spent millions of dollars to preserve a tiny fish from extinction. Yet, we stand silently by while millions of fetuses are aborted on barely more than a whim. "I've got my rights!" they say.

Sure, we all have rights. The Declaration of Independence speaks of our "inalienable rights." But we had better be careful about confusing politics with Christianity. Our Constitution was written to preserve our rights, but the Bible talks a great deal about *giving up our rights!*

Isn't that what Christianity is all about? In Philippians 2:5ff., Paul holds up the ideal model of Jesus. Jesus was equal with God, but "gave up his rights" and became a man. Although Jesus had every right to live the life of a wealthy, comfortable nobleman, he "gave up his rights" and became a servant. Jesus also did not deserve to die, but he "gave up his rights" and died anyway—and a torturous death at that!

So what about a Christian and "rights"? Many Christians

today are just as confused as everyone else because they do not have the model of Jesus fixed firmly in their minds.

That was also true nineteen hundred years ago in Corinth. Paul spends most of what we call 1 Corinthians trying to correct problems in the church at Corinth which had arisen as a result of Christians abusing their freedom in Christ or exercising their rights in a non-Christlike way.

In 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1, for instance, Paul addresses a situation where some Christians are eating food which has been offered in sacrifice to idols and thinking nothing of it. Other Christians, however, observing this action, considered it idolatry. Nevertheless, emboldened by their brethren, they were eating the food offered to idols, sinning against their consciences, and thus ruining their relationships with God.

Paul deals with this problem by addressing those who are eating idol food with clear consciences. He says, "Sure there is no other god but God. Consequently, to offer food to an idol means nothing. But not everyone is so enlightened. You, therefore, should be careful that the exercising of your Christian freedom does not cause someone else to stumble and sin! You should be ready to give up your rights, as I am, rather than cause a brother in Christ to fall."

In chapter 9, Paul gives a personal example as an illustration of this principle. He has the right, he says, to receive monetary support as a preacher of the gospel. He gave up this right, however, rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. As a matter of fact, Paul makes it his practice to give up his rights and become a slave to everyone, so that many might be saved (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). He does this, he says, "for the sake of the gospel, so I might share in its blessings." In other words, for Paul, the giving up of one's rights is what Christian living is largely about—it is a necessary attitude in order to receive the blessings of the gospel: salvation, the spiritual prize.

In this context Paul says:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last;

but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

By speaking in athletic metaphors, he describes how a Christian should live in order to get the prize.

RUN TO FINISH (1 Corinthians 9:24)

In most races, only the top finishers get a prize. In the Christian race, however, *all* finishers get the prize! It is a tragedy that so many Christians today think that all a person has to do is send in one's entry fee, and the prize is theirs! "I've been baptized," they say. "I've entered the race; I've got my receipt (baptismal certificate). Now, I'll get the prize!"

Really?! "Well, okay. You have to attend a few meets (on Sundays). But if you show up most of the time, you're saved!"

What a terrible, dangerous attitude! It is not those who merely enter the race, but those who *finish* it who receive the prize. "Run in such a way as to get the prize," Paul says. He was certainly concerned about his own salvation. That is one reason why he "beat his body." After having started the race, he wanted to be sure to finish in order to win the prize!

He illustrates by pointing to the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:1ff.). They all passed through the Red Sea. They all saw the pillar of cloud and fire. They all ate the manna and quail. In other words, thousands began the race, but how many finished? And because it is so easy to become unfaithful to God and not complete the race, Paul warns the Corinthians. "If you think you are standing firm, be careful you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Even Paul was earnest in his desire to finish the race and be faithful to God all the way. That is why he ran so diligently (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27). It was not until ten years later, broken and spent, that he could write, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

If we are to receive the prize of salvation, we must run to finish. We must also run with discipline.

RUN WITH DISCIPLINE (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Have you watched athletes training? Have you seen basketball players running "ladders"? Have you seen track runners or football players running up and down stadium steps? Baseball players holding their arms straight out and twirling them until they ache? You may wonder, "Why are they doing that?" They themselves may be wondering the same thing! The answer, of course, is that they are "in training." They are disciplining their bodies and their minds in order that they might win.

That is Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 9:25. In order to win the prize, a Christian must go through "strict training." He or she must practice self-discipline. In practical terms, how does a Christian do that? Does he pray for three hours every night while kneeling on gravel? Does he go to listen to the most boring preacher one can find?

No. The word translated "strict training" (*egkrateuetai*) is also used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:9. There it is translated something like "controlling oneself" or "having self-control" in the context of controlling one's passions or lusts.

Therefore, Paul is saying that if we want to get the prize, we need to control our desires and passions. We cannot do anything we want to do when we want to do it—even if technically it is not a sin. We must *give up our rights* for the sake of others and for the sake of our own souls (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27).

In order to win the prize, we must run to finish, run with discipline, and—finally—run with purpose.

RUN WITH PURPOSE (1 Corinthians 9:26)

Why *do* we run, anyway? Have you thought about that? In an athletic or academic contest, our purpose is to do our best—to

come in first, if possible. In our careers we also want to do our best, to excel, to reach our full potential. Even in our Christian lives, we run to "win" the prize.

But in all of our running, what is the cost? At whose expense do we "win"? Perhaps we expect that when we break the tape at the finish line there will be clapping and cheers. All too often, however, there is just an accusing silence, and as we look over our shoulders we see the lives of those whom we have used, ignored, or caused to stumble.

Paul writes to the church: "Yes, run to get the prize (v. 24); strive to get the crown (v. 25). But be sure you don't get disqualified (v. 27)." One purpose in running is not just to save ourselves, but also *others* (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). That is how Paul ran the race—giving up his rights for the sake of others—so that they, along with himself, might be saved.

This principle is so beautifully illustrated by an event in the lives of two boys named Joey and Toby. They were "special" boys with mental and physical disabilities who one year participated in the Special Olympics—an event which itself is a tribute to the indomitable human spirit. Joey and Toby were strangers, competing in the same race. Even though a spirit of camaraderie filled the air, they eyed each other as they prepared for the race, as competitors are wont to do, wondering who would be the faster.

When the starting gun sounded, Toby jumped out to an early lead. He ran too fast, however, overextending himself, and he tripped and fell. Joey ran past him. Toby got up, running as fast as he could. He caught up with Joey, but again overextending himself, tripped and fell. As Joey approached the finish line, he looked back over his shoulder and saw Toby on the ground, crying and beating the track with his fist in frustration.

Then, an astounding thing happened. Even though Joey would have finished first, he stopped and went back, allowing the other racers to pass him up. He helped Toby up, and they completed the race together, arm in arm. When they crossed the finish line, there was a moment of silence. Then an explosion of cheers came as the coaches, the crowd, and their fellow competitors gave them a standing ovation. And when the

award for the most outstanding competitor was given, guess who won the prize?

That is how to run the race with Christlike purpose.

CONCLUSION

Yes, we all have rights. Some of us may think we have the right to drink a beer if we want, to smoke if we want, to pop a pill now and then. We have the right to dance if we want, to watch whatever movie we want, to wear whatever clothes we choose, to act anyway we want to in the privacy of our homes (or back seats!). But that is not how to run the Christian race.

This is the reason Paul concludes this lesson on "rights" by saying in 1 Corinthians 10:31—11:1, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, or Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"—who, though he was equal with God, gave up his rights and showed us how to run in order to get the prize.

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BIBLE FORUM

BACKGROUND THOUGHTS ON THE "NEW" HERMENEUTIC IN CHURCHES OF CHRIST

HOWARD W. NORTON

People in churches of Christ are suddenly interested in the study of hermeneutics. Almost always, this topic draws excited crowds to classes and lectures across the country as interested Christians seek the latest information on the hottest topic in our brotherhood at the present time.

DEFINITIONS

A person has to wonder if there would be the same level of interest in the subject if we just announced that a certain class or lecture would be about the interpretation of the Bible and its application to life today. I strongly suspect that the sophisticated, academic ring of the words "hermeneutic" and "hermeneutics" adds to the brotherhood's fascination with a subject that is as old as the Bible itself.

"Hermeneutic" and "hermeneutics" come from the Greek words *hermeneuo* and *hermeneutes* which mean, respectively, "I interpret" and "translator."¹ Hermeneutics, then, is a transliterated Greek expression which has come to mean the science of interpreting Scripture.

Numerous scholars have pointed out that *exegesis* has the task of telling modern man what a particular passage *meant* when the author penned the original words. Hermeneutics, on the other hand, performs the important functions of interpreting that original message and telling people what the author's words *mean* today.

The present advocates of a "new" hermeneutic say, in effect, that our brotherhood has erred in the past in the way it has interpreted the Bible and applied its teaching to modern

times. How have we interpreted the Scriptures? Specifically, we have said, in summary, that there are three major methods for discovering God's will for our lives today, both collectively and individually.

First, we can know his will for us today through viewing the direct commands of God and his inspired spokesmen. When modern men cry out of deep guilt and ask, "Brothers, what shall we do?" we have believed that the direct command of Peter is the exact answer to give them. Peter said (and says to us, as we have reasoned in the past), "Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (NIV). A "thus saith the Lord" in the form of a direct command has carried the weight of divine authority as we have sought God's will for our lives in modern times.

Second, we can know his will for us today through looking at the approved examples found in New Testament writings. We have partaken of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week because that is the clearest example of when the early church observed the sacred meal and fits other Scriptures concerning congregational gatherings.² We appoint a plurality of elders in each church because that is what Paul and Barnabas did (Acts 14:23). If the word of God indicates approval of practices in the early church, we conclude that those approved examples have God's blessing upon them today as well.

Third, we can know God's will for us today through the use of necessary inference. Interestingly, those who advocate a new hermeneutic direct their heaviest criticism against this hermeneutical principle, even though it is the specific principle without which the application of the Bible in our world becomes an utter impossibility. It is also the critics' most frequently used hermeneutical principle. It is through the use of necessary inference (or logic or rational thought) that we determine even which direct commands apply today and which do not. We must also use the necessary inference to determine which approved examples speak to our day. Without necessary inference, Bible study becomes an exercise in futility.

Necessary inference is vital in determining, for example, that the papacy is not a viable option for the church, that infant

baptism is not an acceptable practice in the Lord's church, that the baptism of Acts 2:38 is water baptism, or that women cannot serve as elders in churches of Christ.

These three major principles of biblical interpretation are at the heart of the traditional hermeneutic we have used to determine what God's will is for our generation. Those who advocate the new hermeneutic have not provided us yet with any better approach for finding out what the original biblical content means in our day. They have spent the bulk of their creative energies to date pointing out alleged weaknesses in the traditional approach. We need to look seriously at the criticism and evaluate it.

ALLEGED WEAKNESSES

First, the critics say that the traditional way we have applied the Scriptures does not answer all of the questions relating to interpretation and should, therefore, be replaced. We do not practice the holy kiss, they say, and it is a direct command. We do own property and build church buildings, and no approved example is given for that in the New Testament. Some people say that necessary inference allows us to support Christian colleges, while others insist that necessary inference does not permit it. The critics seek a new hermeneutic that will take care of all these unresolved, divisive problems.

Second, these same people believe that the focus on commands, examples, and inferences causes us to treat the New Testament like a legal document rather than like love letters written from God through inspired men to churches they truly cared for. With so much attention focused on commands, examples, and inferences, God the Father, who is the real author, is nearly forgotten. His mind and his personality virtually disappear, as people make a legal investigation of documents which the critics claim were never meant to be used in this way.

Third, the traditional approach assumes a pattern for the New Testament church that, according to the critics, cannot be found within a group of love letters. If these documents were a constitution, as Thomas Campbell described them in

The Declaration and Address,³ perhaps a pattern could be established. It could not, however, through the use of casual love letters.

Fourth, the critics blame the traditional hermeneutic for most of the divisions which have occurred within the Restoration Movement over the last nearly two hundred years. A movement that advocates religious unity has itself divided many times, they insist, over issues that would not have arisen had it not been for the hermeneutic being employed.

Fifth, they affirm that traditional hermeneutic is legalistic and, by its very nature, does not deal adequately with the nature of the Sovereign God who chose to reveal himself through the inspired documents. Neither does this approach focus sufficiently, they say, on the Lord Jesus Christ and his work to bring salvation by grace through faith. There is too much focus on the message rather than the man, Jesus Christ.

Sixth, the traditional method, the critics complain, does not deal adequately with the cultural and historical differences that exist between the first and the twentieth centuries. We cannot properly apply the Scriptures unless we understand their cultural and historical context. Much harm, they say, has come to the church because of poor exegesis that, in turn, has produced false applications of Scripture to our day. It is important to separate the historically and culturally temporary parts of biblical revelation from that which is eternally applicable to each generation.

Seventh, they say, the traditional hermeneutic depends too much on the rational thinking adopted by Thomas and Alexander Campbell and passed on to subsequent generations in the Restoration Movement. The Campbells, say the critics, had too much faith in human reason, and the traditional hermeneutic reflects their weakness even today. We are too cocksure of our ability to arrive at truth through human reason and too unwilling to let feelings and emotions have a place in our congregations.

Eighth, they continue, the traditional hermeneutic has neglected the study of the Gospels and the Old Testament. C. Leonard Allen, Professor of Bible at Abilene Christian University, makes this point in his latest book entitled *The*

Cruciform Church and emphasizes that we must recover "the Jewish Scriptures as a vital and functional part of our Christian life . . . [and elevate] the Gospel accounts to equal status with the Epistles as authoritative documents for the church."⁴

Ninth, Allen, who disowns any relationship with the more radical advocates of the new hermeneutic,⁵ further believes that the traditional hermeneutic has failed to show due respect for the different types of literature used by God to reveal himself to man. To treat a Psalm the same way in which one treats the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3 is to miss the significance and beauty of Hebrew poetry.

Tenth, according to some, the traditional hermeneutic has turned biblical theology into a "flatlands," where no grand themes rise against the sky like mountains. Jesus dealt with the dangers of seeing every commandment as of equal importance in Matthew 23:23: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the *more important matters of the law*—justice, mercy and faithfulness" (NIV; emphasis mine). A flat theology sees every concept as of equal importance. Jesus did not hold this view.

This list of ten alleged weaknesses⁶ does not necessarily exhaust the criticisms being leveled at the hermeneutic we have used in churches of Christ; but it does, I hope, fairly represent some of the key issues involved in the discussion. It seems appropriate that we now evaluate these charges.

AN EVALUATION OF THE CRITICISM

Let us take up, one by one, the objections mentioned in the section above and attempt a brief response to each.

First, the critics are correct in saying that a strict appeal to "direct command, approved example, and necessary inference" does not answer all of the hermeneutical problems presented when we attempt to apply the Bible to our modern world. The other side of this coin, however, is that our brightest minds have never claimed that it did. A few decades ago, J. D. Thomas, then chairman of the Bible department at Abilene Christian University, wrote a book on hermeneutics

entitled *We Be Brethren*. He clearly stated that we can never divorce common sense from the equation when we apply the Bible to our day.

When our brethren have said that we can know God's will by "direct command, approved example, and necessary inference," they were speaking a kind of "shorthand," just as Peter did on Pentecost. When asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's response was, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you." There was no mention of grace or faith and certainly no full explanation of God's work from before the beginning of time to save man from his sins.

We all speak "shorthand," and that is a perfectly acceptable procedure among friends and family. The critics are not being fair to suggest that the three hermeneutic principles we call "direct command, approved example, and necessary inference" are all we have used in our application of God's Word. They do, however, sum up in a few words how God speaks to man today. In our practice, we have brought more factors than these to bear on biblical interpretation.

Second, some brethren are entirely too legalistic and seem at times not to see the forest for the trees. Missing the spirit of the Word while obeying the letter is older than the New Testament church itself. No one in his right spiritual mind advocates an approach to scriptural interpretation that hides the Sovereign God and his only begotten Son. On the other hand, the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, and we must obey it. Whether one prefers to call the New Testament a series of love letters or a constitution ultimately does not matter. If one thinks that the New Testament is a constitution, as Thomas Campbell apparently did, it is a loving constitution. If one prefers to think of the New Testament as love letters, as many of our brothers do today, they are love letters with a divine message that must be obeyed, even as if the words were a legal document from God. A person can respect the authority and the binding nature of God's revelation without losing sight of the God who authorized the words.

Third, it does not follow that a love letter is incapable of providing a pattern. A love letter can contain detailed information about the kind of relationship that the writer wants

with the reader. It can describe the way in which he or she hopes decisions will be made in the home. It can lay out a detailed plan concerning travel plans or how a rendezvous will take place. Surely, Paul's epistles to Timothy were love letters, but a clear pattern of qualifications for elders and deacons is given, as well as specific instruction for handling other problems in the church.

Fourth, it seems to me that the divisions in the Restoration Movement have been somewhat exaggerated. Of course, one division is too many, and we deplore even one. It seems to me, however, that most of our divisions have resulted more from personality clashes than from poor hermeneutical principles. Regardless of what the critics say, in the area of the country in which I live there are "division" lines that are regularly being crisscrossed by people moving back and forth across these human lines that have been drawn. The use of direct command, approved example, and necessary inference puts a heavy focus on the need to be doctrinally correct (see Paul's admonition to Timothy in 1 Timothy concerning sound doctrine), but it does not follow that this approach to hermeneutics is the primary cause of our divisions. Consider the fragmentation in the charismatic movement and among the Pentecostals. Look at the earthquake proportion of the divisions within Roman Catholicism and the Evangelical movement. In none of these strife-ridden groups is direct command, approved example, or necessary inference the dominant hermeneutic.

Fifth, I am in agreement that our approach to Scripture must deal spiritually with the nature of God the Father and with that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Attention to legalistic detail that overshadows the Father and the Son is wrong. When we have become buried in the legalistic minutiae of Scripture to the point that we have lost sight of the Creator, we have sinned.

Sixth, from the time I was a small boy who was privileged on occasion to sit in adult Bible classes, my teachers tried to deal with the cultural and historical differences that exist between the first and twentieth centuries. No doubt, there has been some poor exegesis. No doubt, there still is some poor exegesis. The need for proper historical and cultural knowledge in

Bible application is not a new idea. Nothing is new about this point. Good Bible teachers in our fellowship have always been keenly aware of the historical-cultural problem in hermeneutics and have tried to separate the temporary from the permanent.

Seventh, our approach to the study of the Scriptures is rational to a fault and continues that way because of Alexander Campbell's faith in human reason. Alexander Campbell did have faith in human reason. Is that wrong? God certainly expected the Israelites to be rational in their understanding of the law of Moses. Ezra was rational in his approach to God's revelation. Jesus shows repeatedly that he expected his hearers to be rational and draw conclusions. Paul wants his readers to understand rationally the glorious salvation that has come to them. Why has thinking rationally suddenly become a bad thing for Christians to do? To be sure, it is wrong to claim knowledge that we do not have and to claim as certain that which cannot be proved; but it is correct to approach the Scriptures with the humble conviction that we are capable of understanding their message.

Eighth, we agree that God's people must not neglect any portion of his divine revelation. This has apparently been done by some preachers and teachers, and those being fed by such people have been cheated. The practice of neglecting portions of God's Word must stop. On the other hand, there has been a strong tendency in recent years to downplay the Epistles in favor of the Gospels. This also is an abuse by some, and it must be corrected. Unless we can trust Matthew, we cannot trust Paul. Unless we can trust Peter, we cannot trust Luke, because these men were moved to write and were guided in that writing by the same Holy Spirit.

Ninth, we agree that good exegesis, and therefore, good hermeneutics, must come from a proper appreciation of the various types of literary forms used in the Bible. A Psalm is not a codified law, and a parable is not a historical narrative. We miss the beauty of the message when we fail to respect the literary form in which it comes to us. Having treated with due respect each literary form, however, let us remember that the truth revealed in God's Word is just as authoritative in one

literary form as it is in the other.

Tenth, our "shorthand" version of the traditional hermeneutic has tended to produce a "flat" theology that makes every biblical truth of equal importance. There have always been those good, spiritual thinkers who refused to let this happen; but too many of us have failed to see the great mountain range of spiritual truths which stretches from Genesis to Revelation and which helps us see God and his marvelous plan for our lives. Here is an area in which we need help.

Although it is obvious that I do not accept as valid all the alleged weaknesses charged against our traditional hermeneutic, I want to believe that these ten criticisms stem from a sincere desire to do a better job of studying and applying the Scriptures. A person can criticize the hermeneutic and hold to every one of these negative views and still be a very loyal brother or sister in Christ.

I fear, however, that some among us criticize the traditional hermeneutic for two other reasons, both of which are invalid. First, there are apparently those who do not believe that objective truth is attainable. Since it is unattainable, we must let everyone believe what he wants to believe. For some reason, these critics think they can understand what the Bible says about Jesus; but they do not believe they can understand—or that it is important to understand—what Jesus says about the church. If the biblical account of the church is insignificant, one wonders at what point the biblical account of Jesus will also become insignificant to them.

Second, there are apparently those who are so anxious for the church to grow numerically and be accepted on a par with the denominations that they would like to do away with some of the embarrassments they find in the church of Christ (e.g., opposition to instrumental music, limited public roles for women in the assembly, and salvation only for immersed believers). Since they know that these doctrinal positions cannot be changed if we continue to depend on direct commands, approved examples, and necessary inference, their agenda is to trash the traditional hermeneutic and develop a new one that will allow them to shape the church to fit today's cultural demands and their own preferences.

Those who criticize our hermeneutic on the basis of the last two points above are the "radicals" within the movement for a new hermeneutic. The radicals do not want the hermeneutic fine-tuned. They want it replaced. They are teachers who must be carefully observed and for whom we should pray.

HOW WE ARRIVED AT THIS POINT

Churches of Christ are in a very delicate position today. Our plea requires a non-ending search of the Scriptures, and we must not fault the thinkers who continue to ask questions and search for biblical answers. Our plea also insists that we must obey God's Word, once we discover what it is. Some of those in favor of the undefined "new" hermeneutic worry us, however, because they appear to be so heavily influenced by the demands of today's culture and their own wishes, that the latest social fad tends to become the lens through which they interpret Scripture. Instead of Scripture sitting in judgment on culture (e.g., the woman's role in the home, church, and society), culture threatens to sit in judgment on divine revelation. Further, the strong desire of some involved in the "new" hermeneutic to make churches of Christ into the image of the denominations around them makes us question their reasons for desiring a "new" hermeneutic. At the very time when we should be proclaiming the Word of God, we find numerous influential people among us in serious doubt about what the Word really says and whether or not there is any real hope of discovering a "thus saith the Lord."

How did a people once so convinced of its message reach this point?

We as a brotherhood have made some serious mistakes, and this has undermined the confidence of many. Let me list some of these mistakes:

1. We elevated our own likes and dislikes to the level of biblical doctrine. A case in point is the human doctrine that disallows the possibility of singing and partaking of the Lord's Supper at the same time. Why? Because someone somewhere gave his human opinion that we cannot perform two acts of worship at once. Numerous people now cling to this human

tradition as if God himself had spoken it.

2. We have been guilty of poor exegesis, and that nearly always precedes poor hermeneutics. A case in point is the way in which we have interpreted 1 Corinthians 13:8, as we have taught about miraculous spiritual gifts.

3. We have been narrowly sectarian in some congregations and have been unwilling to admit to our fellowship those who have obeyed the same gospel as we. Conservative Christian Church members, for example, are our brothers in Christ because they were baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. To refuse them membership in our congregations because they were never listed on the roll of the churches of Christ in the Yellow Pages is a sectarian view of the church.

4. We have often failed to keep up with the real issues of the generation in which we live. It is a temptation to me, even now, to want to live as if nothing had changed since the 1950s; but our world has changed. Church leaders who are unaware of the effect of drugs, illicit sex, shattered families, working mothers, and a host of other challenges faced by people today are simply out of touch. Church leaders, church programs, and the church's public teaching and preaching must address these issues with a biblical word of help and hope.

5. We have gone through a generation, I fear, with very little teaching concerning the nature, mission, and uniqueness of the church. No wonder so many people in our pews have no idea of why we are different from the Mormons or the Methodists. Some have heard little or no preaching on God's plan for his collective people, the church.

6. We have sometimes been arrogant in our use of Scripture and have claimed certainty when we did not have a right to claim it. When we teach with confidence a false conclusion, our hearers have reason to doubt us on the teachings that are right and cannot be wrong.

7. We come from a rural background, and we have continued to think "rural" in our approach to the church's life and work. Perhaps we need someone like Dr. Glover Shipp, managing editor of *The Christian Chronicle* and an urban anthropologist, to help us think through our mission and devise urban methods to reach urban people facing urban needs.

8. We have confused our position on doctrine with our position on methods. Many church leaders who insist on correct biblical doctrine and are, therefore, called conservatives have become conservative, even reactionary at times, on methodology for teaching, preaching, and serving. What we need are conservative leaders who stand firmly for biblical teaching who are also "liberals" in their willingness to devise new methodologies that work.

It is to our shame that we as a group are unwilling or unable to do this. Either our people tend toward a "fortress" mentality or they find it difficult to reach out to the world without giving in to the world. I wish we could be like the Jewish rabbi, Fritz Pinkuss, and other Jewish leaders who met with Pope John Paul II in Sao Paulo in 1980 as part of a delegation for better understanding between Christians and Jews. They told the pope, "Brotherhood, with a clear respect concerning the religious distinctions that we profess."⁷ In other words, they wanted the pope to understand that while they were willing to meet with him for the sake of better understanding between Christians and Jews, they were not willing to compromise their convictions in any sense of the word.

We also must learn to stand firmly for convictions and still be flexible in our methods and contacts. We must reach out without selling out. We must be willing to change in a thousand ways in order to become all things to all men and yet never surrender one word of biblical truth in the process. We must be uncompromising in our God-given beliefs and yet avoid rudeness when we proclaim them. Like Pinkuss and his friends, no friendly dialogue or overture with those who differ from us can ever be an excuse for giving up the truths we profess.

9. We have been too quick to divide over so-called "issues" that were more personality clashes than they were disagreements about the Scriptures.

10. We have placed too much emphasis on numerical growth and have thereby decreased the emphasis on doctrinal purity. That numerical emphasis is almost non-existent on the pages of the New Testament. There is no haranguing, no threat of damnation, and no "guilt-tripping" in the New Tes-

tament in order to make the church grow. People who become overbalanced on church growth often become all too willing to sacrifice divine truth in order to multiply numbers. The Boston Movement is a case in point.

11. We have lost almost total communication with the younger generation of preachers. Our preachers' gatherings should be a time when those who are older pass on to young men information gained through years of study and struggle, and the younger preachers enlighten older brethren concerning the problems and challenges of the generations that are now coming into their own. On the contrary, preachers' gatherings in most places have become a classic example of generational segregation. We who are older must reach out and listen. Then we will have the right to talk, and the younger people will give us a hearing.

There are major differences in the way in which those under forty-five years of age and those over forty-five think. We are talking about babyboomers when we refer to the younger group. These are people born between 1946 and 1964. Every church leader needs to study this group in order to learn how it thinks and why it thinks as it does. Two good books to start with for better understanding are Mike Bellah's *Baby Boom Believers* and Landon Y. Jones' *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation*.⁸

One reason these generations do not think in the same way is that each was conditioned by a different set of circumstances. The older generation endured the Depression, World War II, and the Cold War. This older generation tends to trust leaders, believe in team work, be loyal to institutions, be willing to sacrifice and affirm the difference between right and wrong.⁹

Babyboomers, on the other hand, have been conditioned within a nation where radicals assassinate great men, the government sends young soldiers to die in a hopeless war in Vietnam, the President's political enthusiasts break into the Watergate offices of the Democratic Party, the first United States President in history resigns to avoid impeachment, and community leaders and athletic heroes become involved in drugs. And add the fact that there is a widespread feeling among babyboomers that there is no way to arrive at objective

truth. It is no wonder that this younger and very powerful generation resists most kinds of authority and has little or no allegiance to any institution (including the church of Christ).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? A PROPOSAL

I believe strongly in what we are attempting to do in churches of Christ. We are still trying to be Christians only, to be free in Christ, to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where it is silent. I write these words in room 904 of the Hotel Samambaia in Sao Paulo, Brazil—a Portuguese-speaking city with 18 million people in the greater metropolitan area. We have just visited three other smaller Brazilian cities. Our plea appeals to people in South America, in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, in Europe, and in our own nation. We must not give up this plea. We must never cease to search for a “thus saith the Lord” for what we do.

We are dangerously close, however, to tossing out the baby with the bath water as we critique our traditional hermeneutic. To avoid this tragic error, I submit a fourfold proposal:

First, let us remember that the hermeneutic of “direct command-approved example-necessary inference” is a “short-hand” statement for what our brethren have advocated through the years as a proper hermeneutic. Let us remember that our best thinkers, though, have never been so naive as to believe that those three items were exclusively the way to apply God’s Word today. On the other hand, there is no way to know God’s Word for today without appealing to these three windows to the Word of God. To advocate that we disregard any one of them is to cut us off from the divine guidance so needed in our lives today.

Second, let us fine-tune the traditional hermeneutic. Dr. Thomas Olbricht, chairman of the division of religion at Pepperdine University, proposed this in a speech at Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts in January 1989. Much of the fine-tuning can be done, he pointed out, by remembering the God who gave us the Bible and by seeking to view the Bible from the standpoint of his nature and goodness. Further fine-tuning can come through the use of common-

sense historical and cultural knowledge, a proper respect for the literary forms of the Bible, and a more serious use of the whole Bible, rather than just the New Testament Epistles.

Third, we must seek to hear and understand what those from other generations are saying. This requires patience, humility, kindness, and a willingness to listen to other points of view. Taking time to listen and learn from each other can, however, save us all from serious mistakes.

Fourth, we must preach the Word. God has shown us recently how easy it is for him to move in the affairs of men, as country after country has turned its back on Communism and opened its doors to other philosophical, political, economic, and religious ideas. It would be the tragedy of tragedies if, in this moment of the open door, we failed to have a message of hope, or if we lost the will to deliver it.

Fifth, let us preach our beliefs and doubt our doubts. Retired Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed it up well when he said, “The first rule of wing walking is,—Don’t let go of anything until you have something else to take its place.”¹⁰

CONCLUSION

Discussions concerning hermeneutics will probably continue in the years ahead. Let us neither neglect the discussions nor spend all of our energies debating the issues. A dying world needs most of our attention, and we are in the last days.

NOTES

¹F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2d ed., rev. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 78.

²J. D. Thomas, *We Be Brethren* (Abilene, Tex.: Biblical Research Press, 1958).

³Thomas Campbell, *The Declaration and Address* (1809).

⁴C. Leonard Allen, *The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1990), 52.

⁵Dr. Thomas Olbricht, chairman of the division of religion at

very concerned about the extremists within the movement for a new hermeneutic. Both were participants in a program at Freed-Hardeman University in the fall of 1989.

⁶I am grateful to my graduate students at Oklahoma Christian University of Science and Arts who prepared papers dealing with some of these issues in a course called Seminar in Advanced Hermeneutics. These men have helped me see the issues more clearly and have served as a sounding board for ideas I needed to test. They are not, however, responsible for possible mistakes in this lesson.

⁷Fritz Pinkuss, *Estudar, Ensinar, Ajudar: Seis Decadas de um Rabino em Dois Continentes* (Sao Paulo, Brazil: Livraria Cultura Editora, 1989), 86.

⁸Mike Bellah, *Baby Boom Believers* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988); and Landon Y. Jones, *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981).

⁹Thomas H. Norton, my son, was the first person to help me see the uniqueness of this generation. He lectured on babyboomers at the Pepperdine Lectureship in 1989 and at the Oklahoma Christian Lectureship in 1990. Jim Tuttle and Robert Young, two of my graduate students, presented excellent unpublished papers on this subject and further helped me to see the significance of this generation. Some of their findings appear in this section.

¹⁰Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr.'s quotation appeared in *The Daily Oklahoman*, 7 December 1989, 17.

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CURRENT HERMENEUTIC ISSUES

F. FURMAN KEARLEY

The brotherhood has been flooded with much discussion about hermeneutical principles and the so-called "new hermeneutics" for the past two years. Nearly every lectureship and paper has given much attention to this.

We are charged to introduce this discussion by a twenty-five minute discourse each on current hermeneutic issues. I will attempt to address only a few of these.

First, some are affirming that the Bible cannot be understood, and that it is impossible for all men to understand it alike. We reject this notion and will give evidence that God intends the Bible to be understood and has revealed it so that men can understand it alike.

Some advocating the "new hermeneutics" have affirmed that the Bible is to be understood as "love letters" or other various types of literature. They reject the concept that the Bible is to be regarded as a constitution, blueprints for church and Christian conduct, or the pattern for genuine Christianity. They deny that the New Testament is law in any sense. I refute these allegations and affirm that the literary and authoritarian nature of the Bible is that of covenant—the old covenant and the new covenant.

Third, the discussions about hermeneutics have left the impression that previous generations of the Restoration have developed a special set of laws or rules or principles of interpretation that are different from those of other groups or different from those that are used by ordinary people in the everyday walk of life. They have inferred that early restorers have developed a special set of hermeneutics and unless someone accepts that special set of hermeneutics, they cannot

understand the Bible as restorers do. I reject these assertions and implications and will affirm that the only principles of interpretation or of hermeneutics that are correct are the natural principles embedded by God in the mind of each of us as babies which enables us to learn language, communicate in language, and understand others as they speak to us. The same principles by which we understand our parents, our teachers, our bosses, and everything in everyday life are the only principles applicable for the interpretation of God's Word.

THE BIBLE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD

In John 17:20-24, Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers. Tragically, those who claim to be Christians are divided and become more so each year. Such division ought not to be (1 Corinthians 1:10; John 13:34, 35).

Four basic problems stand as the main causes of this division: (1) the lack of belief in and respect for the Bible; (2) the meager and inadequate study of God's Word; (3) the failure to handle aright or rightly divide or properly study the Bible; and (4) the sinful self-will of mankind which interprets the Bible through its own lust and selfish desire and refuses to submit to the will of God.

Due to the division and confusion, many have concluded that the Bible cannot be understood at all or can never be understood alike by all men. This is a tragic and unfounded false conclusion.

In reality, only a handful of people, relatively, have ever made a serious attempt to study and understand the Bible. Of the present adult generation in the United States 1 out of 5 have never read the Bible other than a random quote here or there. Another three-fifths of the people of America have never read even the New Testament through one time from cover to cover carefully. Less than 10 per cent have ever read the Old Testament through completely. Only 11 per cent in the United States are daily Bible readers. The statistics in England and Europe are even lower.

How can it be concluded that it is impossible to understand the Bible if people have never really made a serious attempt to

understand it, and most have never even read it through one time?

In my personal experience, teaching in Christian schools and training preachers, I have conducted special surveys of my classes. Only 60 per cent of the graduate students majoring in Bible, some preaching and others planning to preach, have ever read the New Testament completely through. Only 40 per cent have read the Old Testament through.

All of this leads me to believe that relatively few have made a serious attempt to understand the Bible. Therefore, they have no basis to conclude that one cannot understand the Bible.

The Bible affirms that it can be understood. Paul told the Ephesians, "By revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)" (Ephesians 3:3, 4; KJV). Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, affirmed that the Ephesians could understand the message which he wrote by inspiration.

In Ephesians 5:17, Paul charged, "Wherefore be you not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." It is obvious that Paul wrote his Epistles to churches and individuals expecting them to understand his letters as we expect those to whom we send letters to understand what we write.

The entire Bible was written and set forth before mankind with the presumption that those who heard it and read it could understand it and obey it. Moses, in Exodus 24, read the book of the covenant to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey" (Exodus 24:7; NIV).

The law required that the people of Israel assemble every seven years and read orally the law to all the people. It was obviously believed that they could understand it. Joshua wrote a copy of the law on plastered stones assuming the people could read it and understand it (Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Joshua 8:31-35).

Josiah, upon discovering the lost book of the Lord, assembled the people and read it to them. They heard it and renewed their allegiance to it (2 Kings 23:1-3). God sent the prophets to

preach to the people. Though in most of the instances the people did not obey the prophets, still God held them accountable to the message of the prophets and punished them for their disobedience. He knew the people did not obey, but he knew they could understand if they wanted to give up their sin and follow righteousness (2 Kings 17:13-20; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Isaiah 6:1-13).

In Matthew 13:51, Jesus asked his disciples if they understood his teachings, and they answered, "Yes." Jesus knew that many would not understand, but he also knew they could understand if they would submit their will to God's will (Matthew 13:13-17).

The nature of God assures us that we can understand the Bible. God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He does all things well. Since it is his will to reveal his instructions and plan of salvation to us so that we can know it, understand it, and obey it, then we know he has the ability to do this. The Bible, as it is, is addressed to man as he is, and it is capable of being understood by each human being.

God would not give us his will in a form not understandable by us. Titus 2:11-13 affirms, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world." God's instructions can be understood by believing, penitent people who want to do God's will and not their own. Jesus said, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak for myself" (John 7:17). The only reason people do not understand the Bible is because they are self-willed and refuse to submit to the will of God. They refuse to study, refuse to handle God's Word aright, refuse to give up their sins, and corrupt God's Word rather than repent.

That God expects his Word to be understood is emphasized by the fact that he will hold us accountable to it and judge us by it. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

THE COVENANT NATURE OF THE BIBLE

A central issue in the present discussion concerning how to interpret the Bible is the nature of the Bible as to authority. I have read and heard many discussions rejecting the concept that the Bible is a constitution or that it contains the pattern or blueprint for church membership, organization, or worship. Some writers deny that the New Testament is law. They affirm that the Old Testament was law but that the New Testament is grace. Many affirm that the New Testament is not law or constitution but simply love letters.

The purpose of all this discussion seems to be to remove the authority of the New Testament. Those rejecting the constitutional nature of the Bible or the law nature of the New Testament seem to want to cut man free from any responsibilities, obligations, or duties to obey God. They seem to want to free humans to choose their own way of living, acting, serving, or worshiping God. Their conclusion seems to be that anything man wants to do is all right so long as he loves God and his fellowman.

Their emphasis upon the New Testament being a collection of love letters seems to be that the New Testament is just a book of suggestions and man is free to accept or reject them and to create his own ways if he desires to do so.

Such an approach to the Bible is disastrous. It relegates the Bible to a position of no importance and no authority in directing the church in the twentieth or twenty-first century. It allows each person to do what is right in his own sight. Such a philosophy can never unite the people of God. It will only further divide them as each one follows the way that is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6).

What is the literary nature of the Bible? Does the Bible have anything to say about it?

The Bible affirms that its essential literary and even legal nature is that of a covenant, a testament, a will. Strange it is that all the recent discussions have never mentioned the obvious covenant nature of the Bible. Perhaps this is because men have been discussing their ideas and have refused to go to God's Word to determine its nature.

Hebrews 8:13 states, "In that he says, a new covenant, he has made the first old." This passage and the context clearly lay the foundation for recognizing that the Bible consists essentially of two covenants: the old covenant and the new covenant. That this should have escaped the discussion of the so-called scholars about the nature of the Bible is amazing. Nearly every Bible of every version is divided physically into the two parts: the Old Testament (covenant, will) and the New Testament (covenant, will).

Hebrews 8:6 says of Christ that he is "the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises." Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Jeremiah identified the first covenant as the one God made with the Hebrew people when he took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt. He stresses that the people of Israel broke that covenant. A careful study of the Old Testament indicates that in fullness this covenant begins in Genesis 12 when God called Abraham and reached a culmination at Mount Sinai when God revealed his complete covenant through Moses. The rest of the Old Testament gives the record of God's covenant relationship with his people. It describes how they continuously rebelled against his covenant and broke it and were carried into captivity because of their disobedience.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews identifies the new covenant as the one mediated by Jesus Christ. A careful study of the New Testament reveals that it is composed of material that describes the historical circumstances surrounding the proclamation, sealing, and probation of the will, testament, or covenant of Jesus Christ. Obviously, the wide variety of material in both the Old Testament and New Testament is more than the covenants themselves. However, all of the material is covenant related material. It was composed by the guidance of God, the teaching of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. All of it is presented as essential for mankind to understand the covenants of God. All people today live under the new covenant and will be judged by it (John 12:46-50).

What is the nature of these covenants? In a general sense a covenant can sometimes be thought of as similar to a contract. However, in a contract usually there is negotiation by both

parties or groups of parties as they agree to terms of duties, responsibilities, and rewards. Clearly, the Old Testament and New Testament were not contracts or covenants in this sense.

In the sense of a will or testament, the one who makes the testament or will dictates all the terms. The beneficiaries of the will must accept the terms unequivocally if they are to receive the benefits.

The old covenant was dictated entirely by God and contained what he desired mankind to do (Exodus 20:1—25:40). The duty of the Hebrew people was to accept it and obey it. They heard it and agreed to its terms but repeatedly sinned and refused to obey what they had agreed to do (Exodus 24:3; 2 Kings 23:3).

The new covenant was expressed by Christ and by his inspired apostles commissioned by Christ to speak it and write it. Mankind's only part is to accept and obey the covenant of Christ (Matthew 7:21-18; Hebrews 5:9). The writer to the Hebrews strongly emphasizes the covenants and contrasts them. In 1:1-3 he says, "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by diverse portions and in diverse manners, has at the end of these days spoken unto us in his son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds."

He emphasizes that it was important for people to obey the first covenant, but he states more strongly that disobedience to the covenant of Christ will be punished more severely than disobedience to the Old Testament covenant (Hebrews 2:1-4; 10:26-31). Even the Old Testament covenant had grace, but the New Testament covenant has more grace. However, it is still a covenant which is a special form of law. All societies have maintained special sanctity for the last will and covenant and have insisted on their beneficiaries obeying all conditions.

We must study more carefully the covenant nature of the Old Testament and, especially, the covenant nature of the New Testament. We must know the covenant of Christ and execute its conditions faithfully for we shall not escape if we neglect so great a salvation. We must study and interpret the Bible as one does a will. The New Testament (covenant) is the most important legal document ever produced. How one interprets and

obeys it will determine where he spends eternity and whether he inherits eternal life or loses his inheritance eternally (Mark 10:17; Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3-10).

GOD'S WORD IN MAN'S LANGUAGE

Often we talk about the science of hermeneutics or the process of exegesis. These big words scare people into thinking it is difficult to understand the Bible. Many have concluded that there are special principles of interpretation for the Bible, different from anything else. Therefore, they think only scholars who spend a lifetime of study can hope to understand the Bible. Many have concluded that the Bible is an enigma, full of hard sayings that the common man cannot understand.

These concepts are far from the truth. God chose to reveal his will to mankind in ordinary human language so every person can understand. We have God's will in man's language.

There are no special principles which one must study and apply to understand God's Word. The principles for understanding the Bible are exactly the same principles that we use in all human communication to understand human language.

This is especially true if one understands the concept of cross-cultural communication. Normal problems exist when persons of one culture try to communicate with persons from another language and culture. A person from the United States will encounter certain problems in attempting to communicate with a person from the Chinese culture even though they are attempting to speak the same language. The principles in our studying and understanding the Bible are exactly the same as the principles involved in understanding any piece of literature from a culture somewhat different from ours.

God chose to reveal his will to man in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The Bible as written and preserved in these languages was written in the common, ordinary language of the common man in Israel or in the Greek world. If we could communicate with and understand those people and they us, and certainly, we could, then we can understand the Word of God.

Paul explained this in Ephesians 3:3-5: "That by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few

words, whereby, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit."

The process of God's Word in man's language is this: (1) God made his will known to the Holy Spirit. (2) The Holy Spirit moved holy men. (3) Holy men spoke, then wrote, God's revelation in human language. (4) We have God's Word in human language, the same language we use to communicate with one another. (5) When we read and study and apply the same principles we do to understand one another, we can understand God's will for our lives.

The basic principles to understand human language are innate in the human mind. God has programmed in each baby the ability to hear sounds, to make sounds, and to relate sounds to people, things, events, and situations. The ability to communicate is a wondrous evidence for God as Creator and Designer. We develop by natural process a vocabulary, an understanding of grammar, the ability to recognize and distinguish statements of fact, commands, questions, or exclamation. Children, long before school age, understand the significance of past, present, or future tense verbs and all other basic features of language. They do not know the analytical terminology, but they know, understand, and use the function because God has programmed into our minds the ability to communicate.

What are the basic principles for understanding human language and communicating one with another? If we can know and apply these to the study of the Bible, we can understand it alike. Baseball rules, Monopoly rules, and instructions for operating computers and other technical equipment are written in human language. Humans in the same culture and humans in cross-cultural situations can read these, understand them, and play baseball alike or Monopoly alike or operate the computers effectively. The same can be done with regard to the Bible.

The first principle is that we must understand the meaning of the words. In English, we have *Webster's Dictionary* or other comparable ones to help us understand the words alike.

If we are studying French, German, or other languages, we have widely used and accepted dictionaries that enable us to know the meaning of the words.

In most instances we can understand the Bible translated into English by using good English dictionaries. This understanding can become more complete by using a good dictionary of Greek or Hebrew words such as *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Of course, for deeper and more exact study, one can use technical dictionaries.

A second principle in understanding human language is to understand the grammar and syntax. Again, however, if we can understand the grammar and syntax of the baseball rule book, the Monopoly rules, or the instructions to a computer, we can understand the grammar and syntax of the Bible. Occasionally, we may encounter a more complicated construction, but special handbooks and good commentaries can help us with those.

A third principle is that we must understand the historical background. My wife received a letter from a long-lost relative whom I never knew. This letter referred to people, places, and events that were totally unfamiliar to me. I could not understand much of it until my wife explained the relation of the people to one another, when the events took place, and where.

On the other hand, we received a letter from friends who were our classmates in college about a class reunion. References were made to events and places of our college days. This I readily understood because it was a part of my own experience and historical background.

When we are reading about events in the Bible that took place thousands of years ago in Egypt, Israel, or Babylon, at first they do seem strange and difficult to understand. The more we will learn about Bible geography and the ancient history of the Roman Empire and other historical situations to which the Bible refers, the easier it is for us to understand the things said in the Bible.

Many people make the mistake of trying to read the Bible through twentieth-century glasses. In order to understand the Bible we must, as it were, read those events that happened

during the first century through first-century glasses. We must study those events that happened during the tenth century B.C. in the historical setting of the tenth century B.C. The more we will transport ourselves in our minds to the place and the time when biblical events took place, the more easily we can understand it. Good Bible history books and good commentaries can help us to do this.

To understand and appreciate the Book of Ruth, one needs to understand the meaning of the word "glean," the process of gleaning, and the culture in which gleaning was practiced. To understand foot washing, we need to understand the culture of the Greco-Roman world, the necessity and extent of walking. We must feel, if possible, the dirty, tired feet of a weary pilgrim and the wonder of refreshment brought by the hospitality act of washing a traveler's feet when he finishes the journey and enters a haven of rest.

A fourth important principle is to understand the context in which a statement is made. If we hear a statement made by someone out of context, we may put a wrong interpretation on it. For example, if someone is overheard in a restaurant to say, "I am deeply in debt," one could wrongly interpret that to refer to financial debt and go forth and start a bad rumor. The person in context may have meant, "I am in debt to my parents, my teachers, and many people for great contributions to my life." Every statement must be understood in full context.

If Jesus were quoted in part and out of context as saying, "If any man hates not his own father and mother he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26), one could quickly conclude, wrongly, that Jesus taught hatred of one's parents. In context and in culture, this statement simply means that while one must love his father and mother, one must love Christ even more.

Other principles of understanding human language and God's Word in human language need to be considered and studied carefully. However, the point of this article is that there are no special rules for interpreting the Bible. The principles and process for understanding any human communication are inborn and are a part of the wonderful blessing of human communication. God has revealed his will in human language "whereby when we read we can understand" God's

will for our lives. The process and principles of interpretation are the same for a child understanding its parents or a worker understanding his boss.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND THE "PERFECT"

(1 Corinthians 12—14)

JIMMY JIVIDEN

In the middle of Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12—14 he says, "But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." There is a diversity of opinions about the meaning of "perfect" in this context.

Often when I lecture on glossolalia, I have a forum for questions. The question most often asked is, "What is the 'perfect' of 1 Corinthians 13:10?" My response is, "I don't know. Next question." Usually I will then give my opinion, but it is only an opinion. I do not know what the "perfect" of 1 Corinthians 13:10 is. I spend ten pages in one of my books saying just that.

The rejection of the charismatic teaching of miraculous spiritual gifts does not rest on this passage of Scripture. Paul does predict in this passage that spiritual gifts will pass and infers that they are the less excellent way. The text cannot prove, however, when they are to pass.

THE PROBLEM

The problem of defining the "perfect" is that both the language and the context are unclear.

The word translated "perfect" is *to teleion* which is translated "complete, mature, and perfect." In the text it is used as an adjective. One must ask, "The perfect what?" Is Paul talking about perfect love, perfect law, perfect church, perfect heaven, or what? It is impossible to know from the grammar what noun *to teleion* modifies.

One interpretation would understand the "perfect" to be Jesus. He is the only perfect person. He has no sin, nor was

guile found in his mouth. This interpretation is popular with charismatics because of its theological implications. Such an interpretation would indicate that miraculous spiritual gifts still exist and will continue until Jesus comes again.

Another popular interpretation is that the "perfect" is the Bible. Such an interpretation has much to commend it theologically, as will be seen later. The problem is that it is often supported by shabby scholarship. The proof text for this interpretation is taken from James' reference to the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). This cannot be done. One cannot take a common adjective from one context and demand that it mean the same thing in another context.

To teleion is nominative in case, singular in number, and neuter in gender. Since the gender is neuter, it would automatically exclude some interpretations. *Iesous* and *nomos* are masculine. *Agape* is feminine. *To teleion*, however, is neuter. Dana and Mantey in their grammar state, "The relative pronoun agrees with its antecedent in gender and number, but *not* in case."¹

One must not make too much of this rule. There are exceptions.

In Hebrews 8:13 *kainen* is feminine as is its antecedent *diatheke*, but the neuter relative pronoun *to* is used to refer to the feminine *diatheke*. In 1 John 1:1, 2 the neuter relative pronoun *ho* is used in referring to the eternal Word of God who became flesh.

A. T. Robertson in his grammar says, "Sometimes also the relative agrees neither with the antecedent nor with the predicate substantive, but gathers the general notion of a thing."²

The general rule would indicate that whatever the perfect is, it would be in the neuter gender. There are, however, exceptions to this rule.

The context might offer some help in defining the "perfect." The general context is the discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12—14. In verse 10 Paul says love never fails even though the three representative spiritual gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are to pass away when the "perfect" comes. The passage concludes by contrasting the three abiding gifts of faith, hope, and love with the three passing gifts of

prophecy, tongues, and knowledge. Maybe the "perfect" is *agape* love. It is prominent in the context. A strong case can be made for this interpretation, but there are some problems.

First, if the "perfect" is *agape* love, we are still waiting for it. I do not find greater love in the church today than what appears to have existed in the first-century church. If perfect love has come, I must have missed it. If it has not yet come, then prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge still exist. My charismatic friends would, therefore, be right in claiming them. A good guide of interpretation is this rule: If an understanding of a text does not fit the clear teachings of the rest of the Scriptures, then one must question this understanding.

Second, there is still that old problem of gender. *Agape* is feminine, and *to teleion* is neuter. This could be one of those exceptions, but I would hate to base my interpretation of a passage on what might be an exception to a rule of grammar.

Third, another problem with this understanding is that the three representative gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are supposed to be the imperfect and incomplete parts of the coming whole. It is difficult to see how this could be *agape* love. How can *agape* love bring to completion prophecy and knowledge? How does *agape* love make such miraculous spiritual gifts obsolete?

Another interpretation is based on understanding that the context is the body of Christ as related in 1 Corinthians 12. This understanding would suggest that when the church matures, the partial will be done away. This sounds good, but it is too far removed from that which is supposed to be its context. This understanding does, however, deal with the problem of gender. *Ekklesia* is feminine, but *soma* is neuter.

Another interpretation based on the context is that the "perfect" is heaven. Paul used a triple analogy to illustrate the change that takes place from the partial to the perfect. His first analogy was from childhood to manhood. The second analogy was seeing a man's image in a mirror and seeing the man himself. The third analogy was from partial knowledge to full knowledge. The understanding that the "perfect" is heaven is based upon the idea of "face to face." This interpretation suggests that "face to face" means seeing Jesus in

heaven. John wrote about such a time and said, "We shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). This is the understanding conveyed in the song we sometimes sing entitled "Face to Face With Christ, My Savior."

MY JUDGMENT

Although I do not know what the "perfect" is, I suggest this as a possible interpretation. It is the full revelation of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scripture. The grammar does not show this, but neither does the grammar prohibit it. It does not come out of the context, but neither does the context exclude it. This understanding fits what Paul said would happen and did happen in the first century. There was a passing of the temporary, miraculous spiritual gifts during the time that there was the completing of the revelation of Jesus Christ within the New Testament Scriptures.

One can see this happening within the New Testament itself. Spiritual gifts are prominent in the earlier writings, but no reference is made to them in the later writings.

There are direct predictions of these spiritual gifts passing in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 and Ephesians 4:8-16.

It can also be shown that the theological purposes of spiritual gifts were no longer needed.

This understanding fits into the reality that the partial gifts of prophecy and knowledge would be supplanted by the complete revelation of God's will in the New Testament. Just as the perfect was better than the partial, so also is the full revelation better than the partial revelation.

Could it not be that the more excellent way of 1 Corinthians 12:31 was the way of *agape* love shown in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8? Could it not be the "perfect" of 1 Corinthians 13:10 is the full revelation of God's will revealed in the Scripture that made obsolete the partial gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge?

SOME THINGS WE KNOW

I do not usually use 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 in rejecting contemporary claims for miraculous spiritual gifts. To do so is to get bogged down in what the "perfect" means. This distracts

rather than contributes to the discussion.

One can know some important things about the spiritual gifts from this passage of Scripture. (1) They are destined to be "done away" or "cease" (13:8). They do not abide (13:13). (2) They are only a part of the whole which is to come (13:9). (3) The child-man analogy would indicate that when the church grew from a stage of immaturity to full maturity that these childish, miraculous spiritual gifts would be done away.

NOTES

¹H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 125.

²A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1934), 713.

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UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

HUGO McCORD

If the Lord tarries ten more years, what will the phrase "the church of Christ" mean to young people? And to older people? In 1990 to many young people and even to older ones the phrase signifies "the Church of Christ," that is, a small sect among many. One hears about "Church of Christ preachers" and "Church of Christ congregations" and even, "I am a Church of Christ." The familiar King James English about Peter, "thy speech betrayeth thee" (Matthew 26:73), is true today about many people: Their language shows they do not understand the meaning of the Holy Spirit's word underlying the word "church."

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

Angels were present when God created the heavens and the earth. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). But before the world was made the One whose understanding and love are infinite had already purposed through Jesus' blood to build a select group together, an *ekklesia* (Psalm 147:5; 1 John 4:8; 1 Peter 1:20). In that *ekklesia* before the admiring eyes of myriads of angels, the many strands of God's wisdom were to be displayed (Ephesians 3:10, 11). Long before Jesus came to the earth and built his *ekklesia*, the angels knew that something marvelous was in the offing, toward which they intently gazed (1 Peter 1:12).

But neither to angels nor to men had the divine purpose been fully revealed. It was even styled a mystery (Ephesians 3:3, 4). No eye had seen, no ear had heard, and no heart had imagined the good things to be realized in the *ekklesia* (Isaiah 64:4;

1 Corinthians 2:9, 10). The prophets sought and searched diligently for the meaning of some things that they themselves had written (Matthew 13:17; 1 Peter 1:10). But in the fullness of time, according to the divine Computer who sets the year, the month, the day, and the hour, finally was made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places through the *ekklesia* the manifold wisdom of God (Revelation 9:15; Ephesians 3:10, 11).

THE EKKLESIA

What is the significance of the Spirit-selected word *ekklesia*? Simply, it refers to a called-out group, as to an assembly to discuss the public business of the city of Ephesus (Acts 19:39). The same word describes a shouting, unruly mob called out to vent their hate against Paul (Acts 19:32, 41). Also the Israelites, who were called out of Egypt to go to the land of promise, were an *ekklesia* (Acts 7:38).

Similarly, all people who respond to Jesus' call through the gospel to come out of sin and to live in a holy calling are the New Testament *ekklesia* (Matthew 11:28; 16:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:9). They have been made partakers of the heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1). Sinners, some formerly drunkards and street-walkers, some snobbish hypocrites, some good moral people, all now washed in the fountain of the Lamb's blood, are living exhibits of the eternal purpose of a loving God. Heavenly beings gaze down in joyous amazement as they see the many-stranded wisdom of God preparing sinners to go to heaven (Ephesians 3:10). Thanks be to him for caring enough to plan and to perfect the *ekklesia*.

Most English Bibles mistranslate *ekklesia* by the word "church." However, the first English translation of the Greek New Testament correctly rendered *ekklesia* as "congregation" (William Tyndale, 1525). King James I, being the head of the Church of England, ordered his fifty-four translators to retain "the old ecclesiastical words," specifying that "the word church" was "not to be translated *congregation*."¹ Accordingly, most English Bibles today have 112 instances of the non-biblical word "church."

However, though the word "church" is unscriptural, it is not anti-scriptural unless it leads people to think of a physical house. The Lord's called-out people make up a spiritual house or household or family (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10). In the Lord's house or household or family are all of his children, and outside are the devil's children (John 8:44).

THE SUNAGOGUE

The New Testament *ekklesia* (sinners called out of sin to be saints) are at times a group "come together in the *ekklesia*" (now meaning "assembly"; 1 Corinthians 11:18). The Holy Spirit also uses another word to describe the assembly: the *sunagoge*, meaning "synagogue," "a leading together," "a congregation," "an assembly" (James 2:2). Those who love the Lord do not willingly miss the assembly (*episunagoge*; Hebrews 10:25). They meet for the communion, for praise, for prayer, for giving, for edification, and for fellowship (1 Corinthians 11:20; 16:2; Ephesians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 2:42). They delight in such exercises, which are not done grudgingly or of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7).

THE PANEGURIS

God knew, in his multiple strands of wisdom (Ephesians 3:10), that for sinners to enter the home of the soul, they would have to be called out of sin and that they would need to be called together in assemblies in preparation for the last and greatest of assemblies. The climax or end-objective of the Father's eternal purpose is to bring together in a general assembly, a festal gathering, the spirits of just men made perfect, and an innumerable company of angels, and Jesus' *ekklesia*, and God himself in a universal convocation, a *paneguris* (Hebrews 12:23). The word is a compound: *pan*, "all," and *aguris*, "assembly." Thus the *paneguris* is a meeting in which all are assembled.

Festive rejoicing accompanied the Israelite feast days:

Seven days you shall keep a feast to Jehovah your God in the place which Jehovah shall choose; for Jehovah your

God shall bless you in all your increase and in all the work of your hands, and you shall be altogether joyful (Deuteronomy 16:15).

The Greek Old Testament calls such a feast a *paneguris* (Hosea 2:11; 9:5; Ezekiel 46:11). Among the Greeks a *paneguris* was a celebration at the Olympian games. Among Christians the *paneguris* of all time is an unending celebration in eternal happiness, in company with all the redeemed of all the ages, the whole family of God in heaven and on earth, human and angelic (cf. Ephesians 3:15).

In some sense (since the writer of Hebrews uses the past tense, 12:22), Christians are already experiencing the *paneguris*, the general assembly. Though spatially separated, Christians are even now in spiritual company with God and with all those on God's side, living or dead. But in the fullest sense, until Christians sit down in the eternal kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, until they see the face of God and the great white throne, the *paneguris* is yet future.

NOTE

¹Alexander Campbell, "King James' Instructions," *The Christian Baptist* 2, no. 4 (1 November 1824): 75.

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UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

NEALE PRYOR

What right do we have to exist as a separate religious group known as the churches of Christ? Certainly it is not because we need more religious groups. Christendom is already divided into hundreds of factions. Nor are we the only ones who are honest and sincere. We are not the richest or the smartest, or even the most important in the world's eyes.

The one thing that sets us apart is the plea for *undenominational Christianity*. When we cease to have that distinctive plea and regard ourselves, and are regarded, as just another denomination, the sooner we dissolve and become a member of the other denominations, the better.

There are three fundamental truths that we need to teach and uphold in order to stay faithful to this plea.

NO CHURCH BUT THE LORD'S CHURCH

The Greek word *ekklesia* comes from a root meaning "called out." In New Testament times it had lost the concept of "the called out," and meant any assembly, group, or congregation of people. *Ekklesia* is used four times in the Book of Acts to refer to a group different from the Lord's church. The congregation in the wilderness was called an *ekklesia* (Acts 7:38). The mob at Ephesus was described as an *ekklesia* (Acts 19:32, 41). The law court was called an *ekklesia* in Acts 19:39. By definition the *ekklesia* of the Lord is the assembly of the Lord's people.

The assembly of the Lord's people is the group of the saved. Some have asked, "Do you have to be in the church to be saved?" The reply is "Yes, and more than that. You have to be

saved to be in the church." By the New Testament definition, the church is the group of the people that are saved. To say that you have to be saved to be in the church is the same as saying you have to be saved in order to be saved.

The church is called the family or the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Any child of God is a member of God's family. Obedience to the gospel (faith, repentance, and immersion for the remission of sins) makes one a member of the family of God. It saves him from his past sins, and God adds the saved to his church (Acts 2:47).

Since one who has obeyed the gospel is already a member of the Lord's church, there is no need for him to join any other religious group. Suppose there was a meeting where many people came forward and obeyed the gospel. Several decided to join the various denominations, but there was a group who did not want to join any denomination; they simply wanted to be Christians. They were in the Lord's church.

There are certain facts a person must know before he can be scripturally baptized, such as, that Jesus is the Son of God, that he needs salvation, and that he must obey the gospel. But doctrinal perfection is not necessary for church membership. Some have asked, "Would you baptize those who believe error?" Those are the only ones that I have ever baptized. I have never yet baptized anybody who had the right view on every position.

In the Great Commission, Jesus told the disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and *then* to teach them to observe all things that he has commanded them (Matthew 28:19, 20). This is not to say that we should not try to learn as much as we can about the Word of God and be as doctrinally pure as possible. It means that one does not have to know every answer to every question before he is baptized.

The only confession the eunuch made before baptism was, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Philip did not interrogate him about marriage and divorce, one-child elders, instrumental music, or a number of other issues that are very important.

Perfection of life is not necessary for membership. Sinners are baptized into Christ, and after they are members of God's

family they still make mistakes. Someone has likened the church to a hospital. There are people there who are sick with sin, but they are where the remedy is for their sins. John wrote to the brethren that they sin not. But if any one of them sinned, he reminded them that they had an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

The validity of one's baptism does not depend on the one who performed the baptism. We are not members of the church of Christ because we were baptized by a preacher from the church of Christ. One of our great restoration leaders, Alexander Campbell, and his family were baptized by Matthias Luce, a Baptist preacher.

A person may be baptized by someone who is not even a member of the Lord's church or someone who was a hypocrite, and yet his baptism would be valid.

Anyone who has obeyed the gospel is a member of the Lord's church. He may be living in sin, he may be practicing error and should be disfellowshipped, but he is still a member of the Lord's church. He is still a child of God though he may be lost in his present condition.

NO LORD BUT CHRIST

Christ is the center of our message and must be the center of our lives. When Jesus stood on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, Peter thought that he was giving him great honor by suggesting that three tabernacles be built, one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. God took away Moses and Elijah and said, "This is my beloved son. Hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5).

The message of the early church was Christ. Philip went to Samaria and preached *Christ* (Acts 8:5). As Philip spoke to the eunuch, he began at the Scripture the eunuch was reading and preached unto him *Jesus* (Acts 8:35). Paul said, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

The value of the Bible is to lead us to Christ. It is not intended to be an end in itself. If one learns the book by heart and never

knows the author, he has missed the point.

"Church work" is not an end in itself. All of our singing, praying, preaching, benevolence, mission work, and whatever else is for the honor of God and for the glory of Christ. Christ is central.

The church is the group of those who are committed to Christ. Our confession is that "Jesus is Lord" as well as the Son of God (Romans 10:9). It is one thing to say, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." It is quite another thing to say, "Jesus is my Lord." This involves a commitment.

Christianity is a personal relationship, not adherence to a creed that all of us agree upon. In 2 Timothy 1:12 Paul said, "I know whom I have believed," not, "I know what I have believed." The basis of our fellowship is that we have all obeyed the same gospel and all are following the same Lord (1 John 1:7).

People do not quit the church. They quit Christ and then they have no further reason to go to church. When a boyfriend breaks up with his girlfriend, he does not quit the house where the girl lives, but he quits going there because he is no longer interested in the girl.

It is important that we convert people to Christ and not to the church. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for making a similar mistake. They were more interested in making Pharisees than in leading people to God (Matthew 23:15).

When Naaman was told to dip in the Jordan seven times to be cured of leprosy, he replied, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:12). If he was looking for a good river to wash in, he would go home to the rivers of Damascus. The argument was not which river was the nicest, cleanest, or the best.

Today it is not which church is the friendliest, or has the softer pews, or the more interesting speaker, or more active program. It is what would the Lord have us to do? Our commitment is to Christ and through that, to his body, the church.

NO CREED BUT THE BIBLE

Those who are committed to Christ are committed to follow-

ing his word faithfully. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is our only rule of faith and practice. It is to be believed, practiced, and taught.

The restoration plea to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" is still relevant. "Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were, the utterances of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

One church is better than another. The church that is organized according to the New Testament pattern is better than one that is not. The church that worships according to the New Testament pattern is better than one that does not.

This does not mean that we will always agree in every detail over what the Bible teaches. Salvation does not depend on having all the right positions on every issue. We must allow for growth and maturity in members. We must deal kindly and lovingly with those who are struggling to understand God's will for their lives.

On the other hand there must be a faithfulness to God's Word and a commitment to serve him as closely to the pattern as we can. The restoration of New Testament Christianity is a goal that is worth all our time and effort. Commitment to the concept of undenominational Christianity is a biblical principle and one that is still relevant.

The advice that Jeremiah gave to his people 2,600 years ago is still a challenge to our present age, "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it" (Jeremiah 6:16).

CONCLUSION

We must guard against the growing trends in many of our churches to become denominational in our thinking and practice. The Lord's church must be free from sectarianism. There must be a distinctiveness in our teaching.

Let us not be another denomination. Let us be New Testament Christians, members of the family of God, committed to Christ, and dedicated to following the Bible and it alone.

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**BACKGROUND
TO
1 CORINTHIANS**

CORINTH IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE

WENDELL WILLIS

PRE-CHRISTIAN CORINTH

These three classes I have organized as follows: The first is on the general history of Corinth, especially in the Hellenistic age. The second is on Paul's dealings with the Corinthians—the church with which he had the most correspondence and visits—as best we can tell. The third is on Corinth after the time of Paul. In the last one, in addition to comments about Corinth's renewal, I will focus upon 1 Clement, the letter from Clement of Rome to the church at Corinth included in the collection known as the Apostolic Fathers.

The Location of Corinth

No doubt the character of many cities is influenced, if not determined, by their geography. San Francisco would hardly be the same city if it were not hilly, and Vail would certainly be different if it never snowed there! So, too, Corinth is greatly shaped by the impact of its location. It was the chief city of an area of Greece called the "Corinthia" located at the joining of lower Greece (the Peloponnesus—"almost an island") and the larger mainland. A narrow strip of land, called the Isthmus, about 3.5 miles at its most narrow point, was all that connected the Peloponnesus with the mainland, separating the Gulf of Corinth on the west, serving shipping toward Rome, and the Saronic Gulf serving shipping on the east. Corinth's long history as an important city was due in no small part to its geography, especially its location "between the seas."

This narrow isthmus also served as an alternative to avoid the treacherous voyage around lower Greece, especially the "Cape of Malea." Commercial goods, armies, and even ships

could be moved overland by portage between the two very good ports at Lechaëum (on the west) and Cenchreae (on the east). Control of this shipping trade was the chief source of Corinth's fame and wealth. The city's strategic location also allowed it to control (and tax!) north-to-south land trade within Greece. Corinth also controlled Isthmia, the site of the second most important games among Greeks. These benefits from her location acquired for Corinth the proverbial title "wealthy Corinth" to describe the supremacy of the city in trade.

Already in antiquity there was a desire to cut a canal through the narrow isthmus to allow ships to travel straight from east to west. In addition to changing ships, there was the "Diolcus," a paved portage road across the 3.5 miles on which ships could be dragged. A canal was proposed by many, but only Nero seems to have actually undertaken the project.¹ But other difficulties for Nero ended his attempt, and the canal was never seriously undertaken again until late in the nineteenth century.

Strabo gave the estimated circuit of Corinth in his day (ca. A.D. 29), shortly after its refounding, as 40 stadia, or about 4.5 miles or, including the area within the walls connecting with the Acrocorinthus, 85 stadia (almost 10 miles).

The most visibly outstanding geographical feature of Corinth is the lofty mountain south of the city, the Acrocorinthus. This craggy citadel rises to a height of 1,800 feet above sea level and was an integral part of the fortification of the city, being connected by walls to both Lechaëum and Cenchreae (the so-called "long walls").

The village of Isthmia was part of the Corinthia, located about three miles north of the port of Cenchreae. The Isthmian games were held every two years and were surpassed only by the Olympic games. These games were given a new impetus in the resettled city through the patronage of the Roman emperors. In appreciation of their support, the games were conducted alternately as the Caesarean games and the Imperial games. Because of its location and accessibility, the Isthmia site was also used frequently for Pan-Hellenic meetings—a policy continued after the refounding.

A Brief History of Corinth

A brief history of Corinth will be of interest in appreciating the challenge which faced Paul and other early Christian missionaries when they brought the message of Christ to this bustling metropolitan center.

Corinth's golden age was in the sixth century B.C. under the tyrant Periander. During this time, Corinth became famous as a naval power, developed as she sought to protect her trade interests. Thucydides says that the Corinthians invented the design of the trireme, the classic warship of Hellenistic sea travel.²

In the fourth century B.C. Corinth had a leading role in the plan of Philip and his son Alexander to unite all Greeks into a single "world-house," the *oikoumenē*, with Corinth as the capital of greater Greece. It was at Corinth's sanctuary in Isthmia that Philip met the representatives of the Greek states to proclaim his rule and his son's "election" as leader for a Hellenic war against the Persians.

Corinth also was a leader of the Achaian League of Greek cities that formed following the collapse of Alexander's empire. In the face of increased Roman expansion Corinth tried to reform the league, but in the ensuing war with Rome suffered a disastrous defeat in 146 B.C. at the hands of the Roman consul Leucius Mummius. The popular view that this defeat was followed by a total razing of the city and a depopulation of the area seems to be an oversimplification based upon the parallel destruction of Carthage the same year and that both were rebuilt the same year by Caesar.

The destruction of Corinth in 146 B.C. is described by Strabo (who relied upon Polybius' now lost work) and pictures the carrying away of the art and treasures of Corinth by the Roman soldiers. Since those sent to resettle Corinth in 44 B.C. also looted the old city for salable items, it is difficult to know just how total the denuding of the city by Mummius' soldiers actually was.

The next major event in its history was the refounding in 44 B.C. by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony—*Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*. As a colony Corinth quickly prospered, and in 27 B.C. it was made the provincial capital of Achaia. The Latinized

name distinguishes "new" Corinth from the old Greek city and suggests that the resettlement was definitely intended to be Roman. Most of the new colonists from Rome, largely freedmen and army veterans, were not well off, but it seems too much to say:

The people settled here were the rag-tag and bob-tail of the empire—freed slaves and ne'er-do-wells. . . . No person of "quality" would have deigned to participate in such a movement, except those officials who were under orders to conduct the expedition and see to the reorganization of the new community.³

But freedmen, like slaves, were a diverse element of the society.

The resettlement of Corinth marked the beginning of an almost meteoric resumption of the city's importance. The first colonists probably found most of the old city's structures still usable, and a rebuilding project was quickly launched. Thus by Strabo's time, the last half of the first Christian century, the city was quite beautiful. There was another burst of building activity after the beginning of the Christian era and throughout the first century (probably under Augustus' patronage), about which we will have more later.

In many cases the new colonists built new shrines (seen in the Roman architectural styles). The South Market of the old Agora was remade to resemble a proper forum (as in Rome) with a rostra (or bema; see Acts 18:12-17) where official judgments and declarations were made by city authorities.

Roman Corinth in the first Christian century would have been an exciting and impressive place. The large forum, larger than the well-known one in Rome, would have been as busy as it was attractive. All these improvements suggest that when Paul and his companions visited Corinth, about mid-century, it was the most beautiful and modern, as well as the largest city in Greece.

Religion in Corinth

Some new religions arose in the Roman city (most connected with the imperial family and its well-being), and some older

shrines were enlarged, refurbished, and no doubt somewhat altered. But the most prominent of the old Greek cults were still active during the visits of Strabo, Paul, and Pausanias. They would have been common sites and familiar institutions to Paul's Corinthian converts.

The newest features of Corinthian religious life of the first century were the imperial cults. The emperors gave their names and their influence to the Isthmian games and established oratorical contests in connection with them. Both were "religious" events and attracted contestants and visitors from around the ancient world. A number of shrines and temples are to be related to Augustus and his name. Their main significance was probably political and economic. The old gods (although with new Roman names) remained for devotion, and they were supplemented by new religions from the East, including the one preached by Paul.

Of the important Greek cults at Corinth which survived into the Christian era, the best represented are those of Poseidon, Asclepius, Apollo, and especially Aphrodite (who was worshiped in three representations). The Aphrodite temple on Acrocorinthus is the best known, because it was the object of Strabo's remark about the sacred prostitutes. That charge was probably always false, and the temple on Acrocorinthus was never large. However, Aphrodite was the patron goddess of the city and is the most prominent on the coinage of the city. Aphrodite was to Corinth what Athena was to Athens. Moreover, while the "thousand sacred prostitutes" was probably an Athenian propaganda and a sailor's dream, its currency does suggest something about the reputation that Corinth had in Paul's day for profligate living, a reputation borne out in Paul's letters to this church. It told how Corinthian life was caricatured by its residents and its visitors. (The city's reputation for immorality is well-documented in literature so that the word "Corinthian" could mean prostitute or fornication.)

Aphrodite was also worshiped elsewhere in Corinth: as Tyche (in Temple F on the West Terrace), as the goddess of the sea in connection with Poseidon, and as "Black Aphrodite" with a shrine near a Corinthian cemetery. In a Corinthian drama, Lucius sees Venus (or Aphrodite) rising from the sea.

These collective shrines suggest that in Corinth Aphrodite was not only the patroness of sexual love, she was also protectress of the Isthmia, patroness of sailors, and even as a goddess of death.

Perhaps second in fame in Corinth was the god Poseidon, ruler of the sea, on which Corinth's commercial life depended, and of earthquakes, a constant danger in the Isthmus even today. Poseidon had a large temple at Isthmia, where he ruled as patron of the games, and his statue stood in the harbor at Cenchreae between the shrines of Isis and Aphrodite.

Corinth also had an impressive ancient temple, perhaps of Apollo, of which seven monolithic columns remain standing on the plateau above the northwest corner of the Agora, making it the city's most prominent landmark seen in photos, such as the cover photo for *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Of the actual worship of Apollo we have no hard evidence.

The cult of Asclepius and his daughter, Hygeia, had a large and well located sanctuary north of the Corinthian Agora. It was equipped with some lodging facilities, dining rooms, and covered porticos for both exercise and relaxation (such as might be prescribed for a cure). Little is known of the cult in Corinth specifically, except for evidence afforded by the building complex itself and the abundant terra cotta votives found in the area.

Another Hellenistic cult which was important in Corinth was that of Demeter and her daughter, Kore, whose sanctuary included dining rooms and a theater (presumably for cultic dramas, such as that witnessed by Lucius). The cult itself was originally oriented to agriculture, but this emphasis had shifted before the Christian era. Its importance to the public life of Corinth is that it offers hard evidence of the cultic meals discussed in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

New Corinth, like most international cities of its age, also had many of the non-Greek cults from the East, although again the sources to know about them are limited. Only five Oriental cults can be documented: the two Egyptian divinities of Isis and Serapis, the Mother of the Gods (Cybele), Judaism, and, of course, Christianity.

The Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis are known from

coinage evidence and from an opus sectile glass panel found in the Cenchreae harbor which depicts Egyptian scenes. Above all, there is as evidence the last book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, in which the hero ("Lucius") recounts his conversion to Isis, which tells a large part of what we know about the worship of Isis in its developed, Roman form. How popular her cult was in Corinth is difficult to determine, but two precincts of Isis and Serapis were on the way from the Agora to the Acrocorinthus, as well as in the temple in the harbor at Cenchreae. It seems reasonable to conclude that the cult of Isis-Serapis is only representative of the many new faiths available in Corinth at the time of Paul's mission. He could easily be seen as the proclaimer of another "new divinity." (See Acts 17:18.)

There is also some specific evidence for the existence of Judaism in Corinth. Excavations have uncovered an inscription which appears to have been on the lintel over a door to a synagogue. Although this inscription dates from a later period, its existence accords with the mention of a synagogue in Acts 18:4ff. and with the reference to Jews in Corinth in Philo. Thus, the situation regarding evidence of Judaism in Corinth is similar to that of other Oriental religions in the city.

It is really Christianity in first-century Corinth about which we are best informed—at least in literary evidence. The opposite is true of archaeological evidence of Christianity in Corinth in the first century. This is the topic of our next lesson, but to briefly conclude, we have the letters of Paul written to the church at Corinth. There is also the evidence found in Acts 18. There is a letter of Clement of Rome (1 Clement in the Apostolic Fathers) written to the Corinthian church about A.D. 96, and which we will discuss later.

Archaeologically, there is a mid-first-century inscription reading: *ERASTUS PRO. AED. S. P. STRAVIT* ("Erastus, for the office of aedile, laid [the pavement] at his own expense"). Whether this is the same Erastus that Paul mentions in Romans 16:23 as "city steward" (*oikonomos tes poleos*) is debated. If it is the same Erastus, this inscription constitutes the sum total of our archaeological evidence about Christianity in first-century Corinth. This is no surprise, however,

for the earliest Christians there, as elsewhere, met in homes rather than temples and public buildings. Next, we will turn to literary evidence about the first Christians in Corinth.

CHRISTIANITY IN CORINTH

The first section, Pre-Christian Corinth, may have been somewhat difficult because it featured information new to most of you, but this section may well suffer from the other extreme. The danger in this material is that it is too familiar to establish and maintain interest.

I want to recount the story of Paul bringing the gospel to Corinth and his on-going relationship with those brethren. While he may have worked longer in Ephesus, it seems probable that Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church was both his most extensive and troublesome. From the two letters we have from Paul to the Corinthians, it can be established that he wrote (at least!) four letters to that church and made personal visits at least three times. I hope that by reconstructing those letters and visits (including those by Paul's co-workers Timothy and Titus), it will be possible to recreate the life and the liveliness of the Corinthian church and its experiences with its founding apostle.

Christianity Comes to Corinth

Sometime in A.D. 50, or perhaps early 51, after what must have been a disappointing effort in Athens, Paul came to Corinth (Acts 18:1). There he encountered a revived, industrious, and boisterous city riding a crest of renewal less than a century old. Paul began working with a Jewish couple who had just relocated in this Roman colony because the emperor Claudius had expelled the majority of Jews from the capital city. It is not certain whether Aquila and Priscilla were Christians at this time.

As was his custom, in Corinth Paul began his mission efforts working with the Jews, in fact preaching in synagogues (Acts 18:3). After Paul's preaching in the synagogue was opposed, he moved to Titius Justus, a "God-fearer" whose house was next to the synagogue, and eventually converted Crispus, the "ruler of the synagogue" (one of the few Corinthians personally bap-

tized by Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:14).

Interestingly, Acts says that Paul "reasoned [dialogued] in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading *both Jews and Greeks*." (Emphasis mine.) What were the synagogues of Corinth like, so that Greeks attending needed no comment or explanation? One might suspect that in the recently reconstituted city of Corinth, where thousands of Jews had been settled by Rome, along with others such as retired Italian army units, along with the Greeks, there may have been more fluidity in religious practice than many other places. Perhaps that is why Greeks are simply present at synagogue, and perhaps as well why the Jews felt bold enough to ask civil powers to expel Paul from their midst (Acts 18:12-16), although unsuccessfully. (As a recent arrival, Gallio may not have been familiar with the atypical association of Jews and Greeks in this city.) It strikes the reader as odd that the Jews haul Paul before the governor, but after Gallio dismisses the case the Greeks attack the synagogue ruler, and Gallio paid the event no attention.

Shortly after this difficulty with Gallio and the attack on Sosthenes, Paul along with Priscilla and Aquila sailed from Corinth's eastern port of Cenchreae to Asia Minor. The first eighteen-month visit to Corinth by Paul established a nucleus church, with a prominent local Jewish convert, and perhaps even his successor (Sosthenes, if the "Sosthenes" of 1 Corinthians 1:1 is the same individual). While the beginnings may not have been impressive, there was reason to hope for this new church. Yet its location and its susceptibility to Corinth's cosmopolitan influences made its future uncertain. When Paul later wrote that his most difficult burden as an apostle was his daily anxiety for the churches, surely it is true of no church more than this one in Corinth!

"1 Corinthians": A Lost Letter

The next stage in Paul's relationship with the Corinthians occurred when he wrote a letter with instructions on how Christians should deal with worldliness. This letter (which I will call "A") has not survived. We know of it only from Paul's reference to it in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

In the reference to his letter, Paul was correcting the misunderstanding of the Corinthians about his instructions. It is unclear whether they actually did not understand what Paul had wanted them to do or whether they understood his teachings, found them too restrictive, and thus sought to avoid the demands by caricaturing them. In view of the tone of their letter to Paul as he responds in 1 Corinthians, it seems probable that the Corinthians lampooned Paul's strict moral demands by saying that one cannot avoid sexual temptations without going out of this world altogether (which reflects the common image of Corinth as a rather erotic city).

The Letter From Corinth

The next step in the interchange between Paul and the Corinthians was that Paul received a letter from Corinth with a list of questions they asked of their founding apostle. He also probably received some oral information about activities there. The existence of such a letter is not hypothetical, although its contents are to some degree. In 1 Corinthians 7:1, Paul says, "Now concerning the matters *which you wrote about*. . . ." (Emphasis mine.) The contents of this now lost letter from Corinth can be located by a recurring introductory formula, "Now about" (Gr., *peri de*), that starts several discussions in the last ten chapters of 1 Corinthians. The formula itself, and the rather disjointed association of varying topics, shows that Paul is taking their letter and replying to issues they raise one after the other. The following topics each began with the "Now about" formula: about sexuality in marriage (7:1), about eating meat from sacrificial animals (8:1), about spiritual gifts in worship (12:1), about the collection for the saints (16:1), and about a possible visit of Apollos (16:12).

To this fairly secure list, we should probably add 1 Corinthians 11:2 concerning covering (or uncovering) the head in prayer and chapter 15 about the resurrection of the dead. (Note especially verse 12, "How can some of you say. . ." and verse 35, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?'")

Since we do not have the letter from Corinth, all reconstructions are somewhat hypothetical both as to content and atti-

tude. Yet in reading Paul's responses, we find several clues that their letter was at least defensive, and probably even antagonistic. First, Paul does not just answer the questions; he argues his answer. (This is especially true with the resurrection and with regard to eating sacrificial meat.) Clearly he felt that a simple reply might not suffice. Second, in a few places, Paul seems to be actually quoting from their letter, and in these places the Corinthians' arguments seem to have a clear "edge" on them. This is seen most easily in the topic of the resurrection, but is also the case with regard to the topic of eating sacrificial food. Third, several times Paul shows defensiveness that is not clearly aimed at refuting accusations (such as is true with 2 Corinthians), but nonetheless suggests he is uneasy about the attitude of his converts.

In summary, it would appear that the questions of the Corinthians were not simply informational but argumentative. They were asking not, "May we?" but, "Why can't we?" Thus we see again the real strain of the on-going relationship between Paul and this congregation.

When Paul received the letter from Corinth with its questions, he also received some additional information. Probably this news came from Chloe's people or Sosthenes. The oral report exposed some difficulties that were of great importance and which the Corinthians might well have wished to keep to themselves. This information concerned inner-relations among the Christians in Corinth and some moral issues that Paul felt were so important that they had to be addressed first. What we know of how Paul was informed is contained in the first six chapters of our 1 Corinthians. Fundamentally, the issues are dissensions among the church, with factions each boasting in their "hero" church leaders, and also some blatant immoral conduct that the church has easily tolerated.

1 Corinthians: The Second Letter of Paul

This brings us to the third stage of Paul's dealings with the Corinthians—his second letter to the church (our 1 Corinthians which I will call "B"). We will be unable to consider all the content of this lengthy and diverse letter, but an overview of some issues at stake may help in reconstructing the nature of

this church when the letter was sent from Paul.

The most crucial issue for interpreting 1 Corinthians is how to make sense of the position of the Corinthians that evoked this response. Indeed, when we read 1 Corinthians 1:2, "To the church of God in Corinth, those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy," how can such a mixture of false doctrine, malpractice, and religious arrogance be regarded as Christian at all?

Any moving behind Paul's specific replies is a necessary procedure, but one must rely on hypothetical reconstruction. How can we connect these apparent dissimilar failures and frauds in a coherent way? I offer my reconstruction, which is not unique to me, but is admittedly unprovable in the nature of the case.

It seems that the Corinthian church problems addressed in our 1 Corinthians are a combination of inadequate understanding of the gospel and a faulty intellectual predisposition carried over from their former lives as pagans. Undergirding all these intellectual problems is the deeper problem of a personal arrogance that pervades all theoretical failures.

The gospel story is rooted in Judaism. That being the case, there were some assumptions that one did not need to debate in teaching the gospel, but could assume. To give only one example, Saul, the persecutor of the faith who knew his Old Testament Scriptures, was certain that "Cursed is anyone who is hanged upon a tree" (and equally certain that this passage from Deuteronomy could legitimately apply to those who were crucified). Thus as Saul, knowing this, he rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. But having met the risen Lord and being convinced that he was indeed the Christ, he had to re-examine that passage. He did not cease to believe that it was true. He did come to understand that the curse laid upon Jesus was not for his sins, but for others—Saul included.

But in Greece some assumptions easily granted among Jews required explanations among Greeks—and not infrequently were not rightly understood the first time. Paul's relationship with his Greek churches, and Corinth in particular, is a long, often painful working out of understandings and misunderstandings.

The Corinthians had believed the gospel when Paul first preached there, namely the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus in accord with Old Testament hopes (1 Corinthians 15:1-6). But later they reflected upon what "resurrection" meant and tended to do so coming from their own intellectual background of Greek philosophy (in a popularized form, perhaps). Among Greeks it was assumed that each mortal had within him a "divine spark," a "spirit," part of the god. This "immortal soul/spirit" was housed in a finite, earthly body, but upon death could be released from its house of clay to return to the god.

The intellectual substratum that undergirds this mistaken concept of resurrection is the fundamental dualism of virtually all Greek philosophy. Unlike the Hebrews who believed that the Creator God had shaped matter and "inspired" it fully, the Greeks saw the body as either neutral as to real spirituality or more often hostile to it. Thus they saw body versus spirit, not body and spirit as did the Jews.

Let me try to show the connection between this analysis and the Corinthians. The Corinthian, or better some Corinthian, Christians sought to locate their spirituality in the immaterial soul/spirit and to deny the religious value to bodily life. Thus, they looked for those church leaders whose insights and wisdom offered guidance to a more elevated form of Christian life, in which they were above the common experiences of life. Incest or involvement with prostitutes were not religious issues, for they only concerned this fleshly body and not the eternal, immaterial spark it housed. Sexuality was only a natural drive, not a religious matter.

Two Failed Visits

In response to these problems, Paul sent his loyal assistant, Timothy, to Corinth bearing the letter we call 1 Corinthians to instruct these Christians in "my ways in Christ as I teach them in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:17; cf. Acts 19:21f.). Paul entertained some fears that Timothy would not be fully received in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:10), perhaps because he knew that some were not all that thrilled about seeking advice from Paul. These apprehensions probably led Paul to make a

hurried visit from Ephesus to Corinth. (Note that in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 13:1, the visit he contemplates yet to make is to be the third.) This visit was a disaster, or as Paul labels it "painful" (2 Corinthians 2:1).

From the indirect discussion of the events (2 Corinthians 2:1-11), there seems to have been a particular Christian whose opposition caused Paul pain, and if he was not joined by the Corinthians, they seem not to have taken Paul's side either (2 Corinthians 7:12).

One lesson I would like to suggest from this briefly noted event is that Paul and the Corinthian church were in the process of sorting out their relationships, and they experienced some rough going in doing so. Church life is never really "settled" because it deals with the relationships among people. Too often, ministers have sought to avoid difficulties by going their separate ways, looking for another church which has it more together. (Churches do the same thing too!) While I hope that we may not experience the same difficulties that Paul did, we ought not to assume that problems could be easily solved if we were elsewhere.

The Tearful Letter

Following upon these disastrous visits by Timothy and himself, Paul hastily wrote a "letter with tears" (2 Corinthians 2:3, 4) in which he strongly rebuked the church. This letter (which I will call "C") is in all probability also now lost. Some have suggested that it exists in part, if not whole, as the last four chapters of our 2 Corinthians. In my opinion, this is not the place to spend much time on this hypothesis, so let me refer you to the commentaries on 2 Corinthians.⁴

This "third letter" was apparently taken to Corinth by Titus (2 Corinthians 2:12f.), who subsequently reported on his visit to Paul in Macedonia (Philippi?, 2 Corinthians 7:6-16). The most important thing about the "tearful letter" is that it had sufficient shock value that the Corinthians were shook in their haughty attitude toward their founding apostle. They repented of their opposition and their participation in the rebuff that ended the "painful visit." That alone, Paul says, justified his harshness (2 Corinthians 7:6-11). We need to understand

that Paul's "forceful" letter was "tearful" just to the extent that he was deeply concerned about the Christians at Corinth because they were brothers and sisters in Christ. His motive was not selfish, so that Paul could say, "At least I told them straight," nor was he unconcerned about the impact of his letter—a "your-blood-be-on-your-own-heads" attitude! Parental correction only has its desired impact when the love behind it is seen and realized.

A Letter of Reconciliation

Upon learning that the visit of Titus with the "tearful letter" had its desired effect, Paul penned yet another letter to the Corinthians, a letter of reconciliation—our 2 Corinthians (which I will call "D"). Again we meet the question of the unity of this letter. If it was written as a complete letter, then this letter first celebrates the reconciliation between apostle and church (chaps. 1–9) and then critiques those who have cast slurs on Paul and raised doubts among the Corinthians about their founding apostle (chaps. 10–13). Perhaps in view of the many ups and downs between Paul and the Corinthians, he fears that the wound may have been lightly healed and will rupture again. In this model, his stringent attack on the self-styled "super-apostles" is intended as prevention.

The other strong possibility is that such fears were not groundless, and that after Paul had rejoiced to see relationships with the Corinthians restored to mutual support and "comfort" (a key term) in letter "D" (our 2 Corinthians 1–9), there followed yet again another breach which is addressed in letter "E" (our 2 Corinthians 10–13). Given the stormy history of the relationship between Paul and this church, yet another disappointment is not unlikely.

Among the points made in modern study of the letter, one of the most important is that these chapters show how honor was understood and practiced in the culture of the day. It was common to the Greek world of this age to highly esteem those who honored their own city or community.

Even in this time, there was more sense of attachment to one's city (e.g., Corinth or Athens) than to one's nation (e.g., Greece). In large part, this was because the Alexandrian

Empire, later taken over by the Romans, had flattened the landscape so that little sense of "nation" survived and even the awareness of ethnicity was depreciated. The peculiarities of regional culture in Greece had been swallowed up in Hellenism.

In such an atmosphere, the only fame and honor that counted was local, and there were certain conventions that were to be followed. The title of "Benefactor" was associated with a person who had donated of his wealth and his interest to his city's welfare. Most often this would be associated with support of a public event (games, etc.), building, or temple. Corinth had experienced such benefactions often in the years immediately before and after Paul from famous citizens and emperors. In return for a gift, the city would reciprocate with thanksgiving and praise. This was not a one-way street. Those benefited were expected to look to their benefactor as a model for their own lives and become themselves more concerned for the city and its best interests. The benefactor served as a role model for community support and pride.

In application to 2 Corinthians, let us consider an example to conclude this theme. In chapters 8 and 9, Paul seeks yet again to secure Corinthian participation in the offering he is raising for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. This collection is not primarily a matter of fund-raising, but of mutuality in the gospel. It is benefaction, not taxation. That is clear in the ways in which Paul presents the collection. He does not seek to graphically depict the great need in Judea, enumerating the thousands who lack food and shelter. Nor does he speak of how such gifts will gain a hearing for the gospel by non-Christian Jews.

Rather he speaks of the reciprocity of giving. The Macedonian believers, although limited in resources, have been concretely expressive of their joy in sharing in the gospel, so that they begged for the right to have "fellowship" (the familiar word, *koinonia*) in this "ministry" (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). This was altogether right because they, as all Christians, had already received the beneficence of God's gift in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9). The goal is not that poverty be shifted from Jewish Christians to Greek, but that "there be equity" and if

now you are the givers, no doubt at another juncture you may well be recipients (2 Corinthians 8:13, 14) of others giving. Indeed, this whole arrangement reflects the character of God who gives bountifully—so that we may have means to give to others (2 Corinthians 9:6-10).

Finally, to look briefly at the final chapters of 10 through 13, we see that the focus and tenor has shifted from gratitude and mutual support to one of wearied anger. Some traveling prophets have come to Corinth parading their impressive qualifications so that many Christians have been distracted from the message of the gospel. Equally damaging is that these arrogant late comers have sought to expose Paul as a failure because he cannot show similar pedigrees. Paul finds himself forced to do what he regards as foolish and out of step with the gospel—to set forth his successes and his apostolic credentials to a church that he founded!

I hope that this does not offend, but I think that it is absolutely essential to read these four chapters with a sharp eye for irony and even sarcasm. Paul alludes to what others say about him—the wimp evangelist, without letters of recommendation and not forceful in oral presentation. Using these charges and granting their objective truth, Paul reminds this church, and us as well, that it all depends upon how you see it. Some see a failure driven from village to village, rejected, jeered, and beaten. Paul insists—that it is the manifestation in his own person of the cross of his Lord (2 Corinthians 11:21-30). This is not simply making the best of unfortunate circumstances, it is the embodiment of God's truth that "my power is made perfect in weakness"—most clearly evident in Calvary's cross (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Others may boast of their "elevated experiences"—and Paul could, and does, although indirectly as "a man in Christ" (2 Corinthians 12:1-8). But Paul had rather tell his story of being airlifted *down* the wall in a basket (2 Corinthians 11:33)! In what may be the last occurrence in church history, the "super-apostles" have disparaged Paul for refusing financial support (2 Corinthians 11:7-11; 12:14-18).

CORINTH AFTER PAUL

Later History of Corinth

As noted in the first section, Pre-Christian Corinth, Corinth was in a renewal boom from as early as its refounding by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. This boom continued throughout the first Christian century, and it is reasonable to think that in part it was the hustle and bustle of the city that drew Paul there to evangelize. One might also think that the popularity of the Isthmian games had a great attraction for Paul as a source of potential hearers. At least the athletic imagery is prominent in the Corinthian letters.

The Roman emperor Nero was in frequent contact with Corinth during the early days of the Christian church. Nero competed in the Isthmian contests of singing, speaking, and tragic acting—and, to no surprise, won in all events! Nero also presided at the ground-breaking ceremony to dig a canal through the Isthmus, which featured the use of slaves taken in the first Jewish war. The attempt was soon aborted, however. Another dramatic event of Corinth's life in the last half of the first Christian century occurred in A.D. 67 when Nero visited Greece and in Corinth proclaimed the freedom of the Greek cities (which in practical terms meant exemption from taxation), a privilege that Vespasian revoked only two or three years later in reaction to civic turmoil in Greece.

The next major event in Corinth was not political but topographical, when in the summer of A.D. 77 the area was struck by an earthquake of major intensity. Earthquakes are a common phenomenon around the Aegean, and Corinth's precarious location insures that it gets its share. (In fact, in the 1980s another earthquake in the area severely damaged some archaeological finds from antiquity.) Vespasian and his successors helped rebuild the city and provided for the populace, so that the city was renamed yet again in 79 to include the Flavian emperors as well as the Julian ones!

Corinth recovered rapidly from this earthquake, and it simply became the cause of urban renewal in the city (more later on urban rebuilding). Along with Athens and Patrae, Corinth became one of the leading banking centers of Greece,

as its prominence increased.

The prominence and growth of Corinth continued into the second century, when the emperor Hadrian (A.D. 126-29) refurbished important structures in the city and built an aqueduct to carry water from Lake Stymphalus. Hadrian was very much a lover of all things Greek, a generous benefactor of Athens. In the second century, the Greek heritage reasserted itself in Corinth. (For example, inscriptions are 3 to 1 in Greek, rather than Latin, a great reversal from a century earlier.)

The city reached its peak in prosperity in the second century when it attracted the presence and attention of prominent men in the Empire. Emperors and prominent families (like Herodes Atticus) adorned it with monuments and buildings. Famous individuals like Apollonius of Tyana, Galen the physician, and orators Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides visited and took up residence for periods. Aristides praised Corinth:

... the reason why the land even from the earliest time was praised as "rich" by the poets, [is] both because of the multitude of advantages which are at hand and the felicity which is embodied in it. . . . it is a common city for all Greeks, indeed, as it were, a kind of metropolis and mother in this respect. . . . But so great is the abundance of beauty, desire, and love which clings to it, that it chains all men with pleasure and all men are equally inflamed by it, which it possesses in itself . . . so that it is clearly the city of Aphrodite.⁵

By the visit of that inveterate tourist and travel guide, Pausanias, in A.D. 165, the city had assumed the stature that it would carry for another century until the destructive raid of the Herulians in A.D. 267.

Rebuilding in Corinth

I have already pointed to the fervored rebuilding of Corinth in the 1½ centuries from its refounding by Caesar in 44 B.C. through the end of the first Christian century. Let me give some specifics in illustration.

Perhaps the major difference in Corinth in the first century has to do with the decision of the colonists to relocate the center

of the city to the south of the Archaic Temple (of Apollo?) rather than on the north where it had been. A broad "South Stoa" marked the southern boundary and featured a number of small shops and public buildings fronted by a long covered porch. These are the type of buildings in which craftsmen and merchants would set up shop. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla may have been among them.

The southeastern end of the new city forum (or Agora) had a number of buildings connected with the political importance of Corinth in the first century. There was a large room which has been associated with the Isthmian games, and near to it the South Basilica for the conduct of Roman legal business. Near to these has been found a large elliptical room which has been identified as the "bouleuterion" or "council room" for the city government. Also in the southern part of the forum has been located another building identical in plan to the South Basilica, termed the Julian Basilica, because it contained a number of artistic presentations of the Julian imperial family. All these structures serving governmental purposes help us appreciate the importance of the city to Greece during and after the time of Paul's work.

Many other market areas were provided in the new city's reoriented forum, with shops on the north side and the "central shops" just north of the Southern Stoa. In the midst of those was established the city "bema" or "rostrum" on which official proclamations might be made (as Gallio did with Paul in Acts 18). On the west end especially was a locating of a number of small temples, some open air monuments, and additional shops.

Finally, the northern side of the renewed city featured a series of shops lining the paved road that extends from the ornamental gate to the port of Lechaëum.

A sanctuary to Demeter and Kore which is located about a third of the way up the Acrocorinthus had renewal during the early Roman occupation. Its adjacent dining rooms were probably in use, a new theater replaced the old part of the shrine, and new cult buildings were erected. As mentioned earlier, the cultic meals associated with the shrine may well have been involved in the discussion of idol meat found in

1 Corinthians 8 and 10.

On the northern edge of the city, the Sanctuary of Asclepius and an adjacent bath and fountain to the west were remodeled. At least by the end of the first century this important shrine had a swimming pool and a water reservoir. Later, during Hadrian's rule, it was finished with a beautiful marble revetment, which made it a favorite leisure site for prominent residents and their guests. Corinth was an amiable and entertaining city of the day.

Near to that site has been uncovered a bronze manufacturing shop with casting pit. This is testimony that Corinth's fame as a producer of bronze (such as mirrors and cymbals mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13) continued into the later years as well.

Christianity After Paul in Corinth

Although little concrete evidence of Christianity in Corinth exists after Paul's lifetime, some very important sources may be considered. Most prominent of these is the letter, now contained in the collection called *The Apostolic Fathers*, written from Clement of Rome to the church in Corinth about A.D. 96, immediately after the persecution of Domitian. Clement was apparently the secretary among the leaders of the Roman church (a point mentioned in another Apostolic Father, *Shepherd of Hermas*, Vis. 2.4.3; Clement's name does not appear in his own letter). His lengthy epistle is mostly exhortation, with little doctrinal content. He quotes and alludes to many biblical writings of both the Old and New Testaments. But the most important thing about this letter for our understanding of later Christianity in Corinth is the historical occasion that evoked it.

Clement briefly mentions the concrete situation he addressed in the first chapter and then returns to it in the later chapters in more detail. The problem is the "abominable and unholy schism" in the Corinthian church (1 Clement 1:1). Specifically, the older leaders have been overthrown by younger men, as Clement says "the proud against the prudent" (1 Clement 3:3). He attributes this religious coup to "a few rash and self-willed persons" (1 Clement 1:1). Clement describes

this conduct as "sedition" (1 Clement 2:6; 14:2). He is particularly bothered that this break even yet continues (1 Clement 46:9).

Interestingly, Clement gives no suggestion of genuine theological disagreements behind this rebellion, but focuses upon "jealousy and envy." He appeals, "It is right and holy, therefore, brethren, that we should be submissive to God rather than follow those who through arrogance and insubordination are the ring leaders in a quarrel formented by detestable jealousy" (1 Clement 14:1). He gives a lengthy series of biblical examples of the evil effects of these vices—Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Moses and Aaron, and David and Saul (1 Clement 4:7-13). Adding to these proofs, Clement turns to examples of the disastrous effects of envy in his age, the deaths of Peter and Paul (1 Clement 5:2-7) and other martyrs (1 Clement 6:1-4).

Clement finds this conduct particularly reprehensible because it is out of character for this apostolic church which was once renowned for its faith and hospitality (1 Clement 2:5-7). But now how they are known by pagans is for their unbridled infighting (1 Clement 47:7). He has an eye to the effects of this schism on the church as well: "Your schism has perverted many; many it has thrown into discouragement, many it has bewildered, and to all of us it has brought sorrow" (1 Clement 46:9). In passing, I would note that these mal-effects of church division are as contemporary as Clement's day and deserve careful thought. Too often in church fights, the participants think only of themselves and not of those members who are not aligned with any faction, but find their faith damaged or destroyed just by the hostility among Christians.

Clement addresses directly those responsible for the schism, urging them to "submit to the presbyters, and, bending the knees of your hearts, accept correction and change your mind. Learn submissiveness, and rid yourselves of your boastful and proud incorrigibility of tongue" (1 Clement 57:1, 2). He makes several arguments based upon the need to submit to others, stressing the need for each person to accept his position in life and be responsible in it (using illustrations from military service and the make-up of the human body, i.e., 1 Clement

37:1-5: "all parts conspire and yield the same obedience toward maintaining the whole of the body").

He also warns the schismatics that their jealousy and envy bears directly upon their salvation. It shows that they are not aligned with God but with evil. "You will not find that law-respecting men [here, the deposed leaders] were ever repudiated by holy men. Law-respecting men were persecuted of course, but only by unholy men" (1 Clement 45:3). One suspects that behind this admonition is a criticism of those who rebelled because they regarded themselves as more spiritual than their leaders! (This was a problem Paul also addressed in Corinth.)

Before drawing some implications and conclusions from the picture of the Corinthian church reflected in 1 Clement, it is probably appropriate to note some misuse of the letter. Clement has been occasionally claimed as proof of the authority of the Roman bishop over other churches. This will not hold up on several counts. First, Clement does not refer to a single or "monarchical" bishop at all, but speaks of leaders in plurality and by a variety of interchangeable titles. It is true that Clement stresses the power of church office and traces it through the apostles to Christ. But his point is not the power of the bishops, but the unacceptability of schism in the church. Second, Clement makes no claims for the Roman church's stature; he even says that his admonitions are also appropriate for them. The need is for all to return to the basic Christian traditions (1 Clement 7:2).

In conclusion, it is interesting to note some parallels between this letter and Paul's own relationship with the Corinthians. The most obvious is that the same old problems of divisiveness, jealousy, envy, and boasting continue. Just as in Paul's letters, it is clear in 1 Clement that the church has not really divided, but is fractured into factions characterized by evil attitudes. Paul also had the problem of Corinthians who rejected, or at least strongly questioned, his authority (this appears in 1 Corinthians, and very strongly in 2 Corinthians). Also similar is that the difficulties seem to reflect only a quarrelsome few in origin, but the full church fails to be responsible in support of its leaders.

Clement refers to the earlier factional problem at Corinth

over loyalties to Paul and Peter (1 Corinthians 4) and comments, "That display of factiousness involved you in less guilt, for you took the part of apostles, men of attested merit, and of a man of good repute with them. But now consider who those are that have perverted you and vilified the venerable character of our celebrated fraternal charity." It is bad enough to be divisive, but over such unmerited heroes! He concludes, "Disgraceful, beloved, indeed exceedingly disgraceful and unworthy of your training in Christ, is the report that the well-established [that is, established by an apostle!] and ancient Church of the Corinthians is, thanks to one or two individuals, in revolt against the presbyters" (1 Clement 47:6).

In his argument, Clement includes a probable allusion to the "Hymn to Love" from 1 Corinthians 13, which he restates toward the issue of schism: "Love creates no schism; love does not quarrel; love preserves perfect harmony" (1 Clement 49:5).

Of later Christianity in Corinth, time permits only a brief mention of an exceptional leader, Dionysius. He seems to have been a bishop in the period 166-67 to 174-75 and stood in high esteem to many Christians throughout the world. A prolific leader and writer, he is credited with letters sent to the churches in Athens, Nicomedia, Gortyna, Crete, Pontus, Amastris, Cnosis, and Lacedaemonia, as well as to Soter, a bishop of Rome. In his letters, which have all unfortunately now been lost (we know of them from Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*), he quotes from 1 Clement as being read weekly in the Corinthian church. At least his influence and the church's willingness to continue to listen to the rebuke of Clement suggests, although it cannot be proved, that the Corinthian church did return to a faithful orbit at the end of the second century.

NOTES

¹Pausanias 2.1.5-6.

²Thucydides *History* 1.13.1-5.

³Robert L. Scranton, "Corinth in the Time of St. Paul," *Emory University Quarterly* 5 (1949): 72.

⁴See Frederick Danker, *2 Corinthians*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing

House, 1989); Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987); Victor P. Furnish, *2 Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984); Charles Talbert, *Reading Corinthians* (New York: Crossroad, 1989). Obviously, I cannot commend everything included in these works. However, they are all capable and insightful works and contain the most recent examinations of these letters with excellent bibliographies for additional study.

⁵Aristides *Orat.* 46.22-24.

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GRECO-ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY AND CORINTH

RICHARD E. OSTER, JR.

This lecture is an effort to give a representative picture of how archaeology can and should be used to better understand Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. Even though Corinth's material remains are not as bleak as they probably appear to the typical tourist who walks quickly through the remains of the Roman city, the site is not as blessed as Ephesus with an abundance of archaeological remains such as inscriptions, coins, statuary, and architecture. Nevertheless, with the appropriate use of artifactual evidence from Corinth, one can improve some of the current deficiencies in the interpretation of Paul's letter to this famous church in the Roman colony of Corinth.

CONTINUITY BETWEEN GREEK AND ROMAN CORINTH

As New Testament scholarship slowly moves toward a fuller recognition of the need for an improved understanding of the cultural and historical matrix of nascent Christianity, it will become imperative to manifest a greater sensitivity to the various cultures existing in the ancient cities of the Roman East. This is nowhere truer than at Corinth. Far too many commentators typically state the bare fact that there were two Corinths: one Greek and one Roman. While there were two Corinths historically, they were not so easily divided culturally. This simplistic reconstruction of Corinthian culture, often followed by Classicists also, has now been irreparably damaged by archaeological research. Unaware of recent archaeological evidence, New Testament scholars often follow

the exaggerated literary statements of antiquity which claimed that Corinth lay desolate for the century between its destruction by Mummius in 146 B.C. and its resettlement as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. The archaeological evidence,¹ however, clearly refutes the statement of ancient authors such as Antipater of Sidon, Cicero, Dio Cassius, Livy, Plutarch, Velleius Paterculus, and Strabo that the site was abandoned for a century.

Life did continue at the site of Corinth, and some of the sacred buildings were in use during the period 146-44 B.C.² It is noteworthy that although in one text Cicero declares that Corinth was razed by the Romans, in another place he states that he had seen individuals whom he called Corinthians living in the region.³ What this archaeological evidence signifies is that New Testament scholars will need to look more carefully at the material evidence of numismatics, epigraphy, and architecture as they write concerning the city's cultural heritage and homogeneity at the time of nascent Christianity.

SYNAGOGUE INSCRIPTION AND JEWISH PRESENCE

A very serious misuse of Corinthian epigraphy occurs in the case of the fragmentary "Synagogue of the Hebrews" (*synagoge hebraion*) inscription. C. K. Barrett, for example, states, "The date of this inscription cannot be narrowly determined, but it gives sufficient confirmation of Acts xviii. 4 (he discoursed in the synagogue every Sabbath)."⁴ Hans Conzelmann likewise believes that "the presence of Jews is documented" by this inscription.⁵ Murphy-O'Connor is somewhat noncommittal with the statement, "The lettering is very crude and the date cannot be fixed with any precision."⁶ As will be evident from the material below, it is unlikely that he is correct when he judges that "this lintel [on which the inscription is preserved] may belong to the oldest synagogue in Corinth."⁷

The misuse of this synagogue inscription, discovered in 1898, lies in the fact that its date is relatively late. The earliest Greek epigraphists and later New Testament scholars regarded it as part of the synagogue which was contemporary with Paul's sojourn in Corinth.⁸ Adolf Deissmann believed

fancifully that "it is therefore a possibility seriously to be reckoned with that we have here the inscription to the door of the Corinthian synagogue mentioned in Acts xviii. 4 in which St. Paul first preached."⁹ More recently interpreters have gone with a later date of between A.D. 170 to the early post-Constantinian era. At this point it seems more prudent to go with the judgment of Meritt who stated, "The style of the lettering indicates that the inscription is considerably later than the time of St. Paul."¹⁰

Accordingly, it is illegitimate to argue for conditions of the first-century period at Corinth on the basis of such a late dated artifact. Even if the date of this inscription were to be dated with certainty to the first-century era, it would still be hazardous to infer anything at all about Paul's own personal ministry and work there since this inscription was not discovered *in situ*.

It would, however, be equally erroneous to doubt Luke's picture (Acts 18:1ff.) of a Jewish *synagoga* in early Roman Corinth just because there is no first-century architectural evidence. One's conclusions are exceedingly vulnerable if they are based primarily upon arguments from the silence of the archaeological record, particularly since there are almost no remains of Jewish Diaspora architecture anywhere in the Diaspora which date from the late Republic or early Empire.¹¹

Accordingly, one's decision about Luke's reliability in Acts 18 cannot be decided in this instance on the basis of late epigraphical data on the one hand or on the lack of Corinthian architectural evidence from the early imperial period on the other. Rather, one must deal with this matter in light of the reliability of Philo's statement that there were Jewish colonists sent to, among other places, "Thessaly, Macedonia, Attica, Corinth and most of the best parts of the Peloponnese"¹² and the reliability of Luke and his depiction of Paul's work in synagogues (Acts 18).

LITURGICAL HEAD COVERINGS FOR MEN

Because of its potential implications for a contemporary interpretation of Paul, 1 Corinthians 11:4, "Every man pray-

ing or prophesying with his head covered dishonors his head," has experienced an upsurge in interest among exegetes.¹³ The practice mentioned by Paul in verse 4 of men having their heads covered during liturgical activities of prayer and prophecy has traditionally received little attention. Many commentators fail to mention any pagan evidence, literary or archaeological, and leaves the impression that whatever backgrounds there are should be discussed in light of the later rabbinic parallels. In his recent commentary, Gordon Fee, after demonstrating that verse 4 does indeed refer to a head covering and not long hair, concludes:

Beyond that everything is more speculative. There is almost no evidence (paintings, reliefs, statuary, etc.) that men in any of the cultures (Greek, Roman, Jew) covered their heads. . . . In the final analysis, however, we simply have to admit that we do not know. In any case, it is hypothetical, whatever it was.¹⁴

Earlier scholars and commentators shared the view stated by Fee and also concluded that the whole matter of male head coverings was hypothetical since the real issue of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 was certainly disorderly women and not men.

In an effort to get beyond this neglect of the archaeological data, two recent publications have brought together numerous examples of literary and archaeological data which show the widespread use of male liturgical head coverings in Rome, in Italy, and in numerous cities in the Roman East.¹⁵ This Roman custom can be documented for several generations before and after the advent of Christianity in Corinth. This custom is clearly portrayed on coins, statues, and architectural monuments from around the Mediterranean Basin. The magnificent Augustan monument known as the *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace) and the later Column of Trajan depict this pious gesture. There is, in addition, a sculpture of the emperor Augustus from first-century Corinth which employs this devotional gesture of the liturgical head covering. This evidence of the material culture not only demonstrates that the practice of men covering their heads in the context of prayer and prophecy was widespread during the late Republic and

early Empire, but that the historical matrix of this pattern was Roman. Since Corinth was itself a Roman colony, there should be little doubt that this aspect of Roman religious practice deserves greater attention by commentators than it has received previously. As this happens, the current debate on Pauline attitudes toward issues of gender and culture will rest upon firmer ground than in the past when the "Paul was only speaking hypothetically" hermeneutic dominated.

VOTIVE BODY PARTS FROM THE TEMPLE OF ASCLEPIUS

The collection of votive body parts excavated decades ago from the Corinthian Temple of Asclepius is on view at the archaeological museum in Corinth. These anatomical artifacts are life-size copies in terra cotta of human body parts which a worshiper dedicated to a deity because the deity cured the diseased body part. Aelius Aristides, a prominent rhetorician who lived during the second century A.D., furnishes an informative reference to the god's supernatural healing of diseased body parts and the worshiper's response with votive offerings. He notes, "But some, both men and women, even attribute to the providence of the god the existence of the limbs of their body, when their natural limbs had been destroyed; others list other things, some in oral accounts, some in the declarations of their votive offerings."¹⁶ This deposit of votive body parts from Corinth is one of the largest ever discovered at a Greek healing shrine.

Two misinterpretations of these artifacts have arisen in recent times. The first is of a moralistic nature. Gordon Fee states that "there are a large number of clay votives of human genitals that had been offered to the god for the healing of that part of the body, apparently ravaged by venereal disease."¹⁷ To my knowledge there is no independent scholarly confirmation of this pejorative interpretation which has been given by Professor Fee regarding the votive genitalia at Corinth. Rather, these votive items, in all probability, reflect the supplicants' petition to the deity to heal their lack of fertility, not their venereal disease. Instead of foisting a gross caricature of

Corinthian immorality upon these devotees of Asclepius as Fee has done, one would be better advised to follow the suggestion of M. Lang who states, "The offering of these [i.e., eighteen complete examples of male genitals] may most often have been in gratitude for a return of potency."¹⁸

A second misrepresentation of these votive finds is seen in recent attempts to use these to explain the origin of certain facets of Pauline vocabulary and theology in the Corinthian correspondence. A. E. Hill seems to have been one of the first to advocate this. In brief, Hill believes that,

Paul, no doubt, was familiar with the practices of the Asclepium (since it was apparently Paul's custom to visit the temples of the cities he ministered in if we can trust Acts 17:22-23); and this emphasis on the individual dismembered body parts, in contrast to the whole person, is probably at least a contributory influence on the thought and language of Paul who refers to such dismembered parts in 1 Corinthians 12:14-25.¹⁹

Hill has found support for this notion in the writings of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. Murphy-O'Connor states that in light of the uniqueness of Paul's body language in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 (e.g., hands, feet, eyes, genitals),

Sound methodology, therefore, demands that we look first to Corinth for the source of his inspiration. . . . Against this background Paul would have seen the dismembered limbs displayed in the Asclepion as symbols of everything that Christians should not be: "dead", divided, unloving and unloved.²⁰

He concludes that the votive body parts in the Asclepius Temple served for Paul as a "trigger experience" that "is necessary [in order] to explain the transfer of the body concept to the church" by Paul.²¹

There are at least two points at which one must move with caution in this matter. The first issue, admittedly a minor one, is the implication that something is special about the circumstances of the Asclepius Temple at Corinth and the votive body parts. Items such as these could have been seen by Paul at any

number of locations in the Greco-Roman world. The second point is the apparent assumption that Paul and his converts would have seen these particular votive artifacts just because they have been excavated at Corinth. While personally not wishing to limit either Paul's apostolic gifts or the abilities of the Almighty, unless one assumes the presence of the spiritual gift of "X-ray vision" in the church at Corinth, it is improbable that anyone in first-century Corinth, Christian or otherwise, saw these anatomical artifacts which are now on display at the Corinthian Museum. I say "X-ray vision" because virtually all of these terra cotta body parts were found in closed deposits which can be dated "with some accuracy to the period between the last quarter of the fifth century and the end of the fourth" B.C.²² This does not mean that ostensible healing activities were not going on at the Corinthian Temple of Asclepius in the first century. Rather, this should serve as a caution against leaping across generations in a single bound by collapsing centuries of time and diversity of cultures. The Corinthian excavator Carl Roebuck was of the opinion that,

It is probable that cures were not performed on such a large scale as previously, for, in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods, the great healing centers of Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon were fully established and must have drawn many people who hoped that the god would listen more favorably to their prayers in his better-known sanctuaries.²³

The Corinthian cult of Asclepius *may* or *may not* have been especially famous and effective in healing during the time of nascent Christianity. Devotees of Asclepius in early imperial Corinth *may* or *may not* have regularly used votive items similar to those used centuries earlier. Accordingly, Paul and other Christians *may* or *may not* have seen such anatomical votive items. What can be clearly stated is that until these votive body parts are redated upwards of half a millennium, one should exercise caution in appealing to them for religious conditions and visual experiences contemporary with the first-century era.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this overview has not been to draw out the exegetical and hermeneutical implications of these historical backgrounds. That would have exceeded the limitations of space. This overview has, however, highlighted some of the mistaken and distorted assumptions which have been brought to the text of 1 Corinthians by recent interpreters. From one perspective, all archaeological and historical work is primarily prolegomenon or introductory to the final theological task of New Testament scholarship. However, without the cultural and historical mooring of Scripture, provided in part by archaeological evidence, exegesis and subsequent theology is little more than speculative ideology.

NOTES

¹This issue is thoroughly discussed by James Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I: 228 B.C.-A.D. 267," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 2:7:1: 491-96, and passed on in summary form to New Testament students by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Good News Studies 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983), 43-44.

²Lists of buildings and sanctuaries in use during this period are given by Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I," 495; see also Charles K. Williams II, "Corinth 1977, Forum Southwest," *Hesperia* 47 (1978): 21-23.

³Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 3.22.53 *Vidi etiam in Peloponneso, cum essem adolescens, quosdam Corinthios.*

⁴C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 2.

⁵Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975), 12.

⁶Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 78.

⁷*Ibid.*, 79.

⁸Benjamin Powell, *American Journal of Archaeology* 7, no. 40 (1903): 60-61.

⁹Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, 4th ed., trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), 16, fn. 7.

¹⁰Benjamin Meritt, *Corinth*, vol. 8.1, *Greek Inscriptions 1896-1926* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931), 79.

¹¹A. T. Kraabel, "The Diaspora Synagogue: Archaeological and

Epigraphical Evidence Since Sukenik," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 2:19:1:477-510.

¹²Philo *Embassy to Gaius* 281.

¹³In general Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11:4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 481-505.

¹⁴Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 507-8.

¹⁵Cynthia L. Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St. Paul. Portraits From Roman Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988): 99-115; Oster, "When Men Wore Veils," 481-505.

¹⁶Aristedes *Oration* 42.7, "An Address Regarding Asclepius," in *P. Aelius Aristides. The Complete Works*. Vol. II. Orations XVII-LIII, trans. Charles A. Behr (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1981), 248.

¹⁷Fee, *First Epistle*, 2.

¹⁸Mabel Lang, *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth. A Guide to the Asklepieion* (Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977), 23.

¹⁹A. E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternative Source for Paul's Body Theology?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980): 438. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit. A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1987), 42, seems to be in sympathy with this possible background to Paul's language. G. G. Garner, "The Temple of Asklepius at Corinth and Paul's Teaching," *Buried History* 18 (1982): 52-58, is also supportive of Hill's approach.

²⁰Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 165, 167.

²¹*Ibid.*, 167.

²²Carl Roebuck, *The Asklepieion and Lerna*, vol. 14, *Corinth*, 113.

²³*Ibid.*, 155.

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TRANSLATING 1 CORINTHIANS

HUGO McCORD

INTRODUCTION

How Did 1 Corinthians Originate?

"Every scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). The things Paul wrote were "the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Paul "spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (cf. 2 Peter 1:21). Since the Holy Spirit is deity (John 16:13; Hebrews 9:14), it is impossible that any error was in Paul's autograph.

Do We Need a Translation?

The answer is no for people who read Greek, but billions of people do not understand the language in which Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. A translation then is necessary.

Is There an Inspired Translation?

Since the last person died on whom an apostle laid hands and imparted miraculous power, no inspired translation has been possible (cf. Acts 8:18; 1 Corinthians 13:8). Uninspired men, using copies of Paul's composition, give us translations, which makes them "a human—not a divinely inspired—process"¹ and is "subject to all the faults man is heir to. The perfect translation does not exist." Consequently, "the careful student of the Bible will not rely completely upon one version, but will seek to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the versions he uses."

Is a Literal Translation Possible?

The idea of a word-for-word translation for all Bible books appears attractive, but it does not make sense. For example, Matthew 1:18 would look like this: "of her having been

betrothed of the mother of him of Mary to Joseph before to come together them she was found in womb having the Spirit Holy."

Not only awkward but confusing is a word-for-word rendering of Luke 3:14: "They were asking and him and soldiering saying, what shall we do and we? And he said to them, none shake through nor fig-shine, and be satisfied with boiled food bought of you."

In 2 Corinthians 9:10 a word-for-word translation is nonsense: "The one and chorus-leading seed to the sowing and bread into food a chorus he will lead. . . ."

The inspired apostle John gave the literal translation of the name of a Jerusalem pool *apestalmenos*, "having been sent from" (John 9:7), but no English version uses the literal translation.

Literally, one would not know where a word starts or ends (the first-century Greek manuscripts had no spacing, no punctuation, and were written all in capital letters). With the expertise of thousands of scholars through nearly two thousand years, no one knows for sure where to put a space in *maranatha* (1 Corinthians 16:22). Consequently no one knows certainly what those letters mean. To space after the *n* gives one meaning, but to put it after the third *a* gives another. This problem is not major (affecting no one's salvation), but it is enough of a problem to embarrass would-be literalists. A literal translation, no matter how much admired and desired, would be unintelligible.

Is a Paraphrase Wrong?

Just as a literal translation can be awkward and confusing, so is the idealistic notion of "no paraphrase." In the examples given previously, notice how meaningless it would be to translate without changing phrases.

All translations paraphrase. The Greek "they paid him" in Matthew 26:15 the KJV paraphrased to "they covenanted with him." "The thieves . . . reviled him" in the Greek of Matthew 27:44 the KJV has paraphrased into "the thieves . . . cast the same into his teeth." The Greek of Romans 6:2, "may it not be," in the KJV is "God forbid" (and in fourteen other places).

Paraphrases conveying the thought of the Greek are not wrong, but how easy it is to change the thought: "Easter" (Acts 12:4; KJV); "Drink ye all of it" (Matthew 26:27; KJV); "horses' bridles in their mouths" (James 3:3; ASV); instead of deacons' "wives" (as the context of 1 Timothy 3:11 demands) the ASV inserts "women." Notice also "deaconess" (Romans 16:1; RSV); "layman" (Numbers 16:40; NASB); "you are Peter the Rock" (Matthew 16:18; NEB); "the Word was a god" (John 1:1; NWT); and "sinful nature" (Romans 8:5; NIV).

The literal translation of the word *hrabbi* (John 1:38) is "My Great One." However, the inspired John paraphrased it as *Didaskale*, "Master" (KJV), "Teacher" (ASV).

What Kind of Translation Is Best?

If then a literal translation can be confusing and a paraphrase sometimes misleading, how should a translator proceed? Dr. Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society has characterized: (1) a literal translation as formal equivalence; (2) a paraphrase as the author's thoughts in the translator's words; and (3) the same impression on a twentieth-century reader that was in the mind of a first-century reader as dynamic equivalence. Certainly the latter is the ideal, for the Lord wants "the word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:4) to go into all languages with "understanding" (Psalm 119:130), not misunderstanding.

Accordingly this study in translating 1 Corinthians will in places be literal and in places be paraphrastic in the attempt to convey the exact meaning of Paul's first-century manuscript, rendering "not the words" but "the sense" (Jerome). The verses cited for a possible improvement in translation follow in order:

1 CORINTHIANS 1:2

How should *ekklesia* be translated? By itself the word has no religious meaning. It refers simply to any kind of assembly, any "called [*kaleo*] out [*ek*]" gathering. A native Greek designated "a group of wild animals" in the Thracian mountains as an *ekklesia*. The Israelite nation, called out of Egypt, Stephen described as an *ekklesia* "in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

A group called out to discuss public business of the city of Ephesus Luke designated as an *ekklesia* (Acts 19:39). A shouting, unruly mob called out to vent their hate against Paul likewise by Luke was designated as an *ekklesia* (Acts 19:32, 41). Then the same word described all people who respond to Jesus' call through the gospel to come out of sin and to live in a holy calling (Matthew 11:28; 16:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 1:9). They have become a holy nation "called out" (*ek* and *kaleo*) of darkness into the Lord's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). They have been made partakers of the heavenly "calling" (*kaleo*; Hebrews 3:1).

The word *ekklesia* is not properly translated "church," but most English versions do so. The Greek word for "church" is not *ekklesia* but *kuriakon doma*, meaning "the Lord's house," referring to an edifice consecrated to public worship, and it does not appear in the Bible. The Bible speaks of "the Lord's Supper" and "the Lord's Day" (1 Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10), but not of "the Lord's House."

William Tyndale knew this, and in his English translation of the New Testament in 1525 (the first ever from Greek) he excluded the word "church" in favor of "congregation." King James I, being the head of the Church of England, wanted the word "church" to appear in a new translation and ordered his fifty-four translators to retain "the old ecclesiastical words," specifying that "the word church" was not to be translated "congregation."² As a result most English Bibles today mistakenly have 112 instances of "church."

Though the word "church" is unscriptural, it is not anti-scriptural, unless it leads one to think of a physical edifice. But if one thinks of God's people, it is right to think of them as the Lord's household or family (1 Timothy 3:15; Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 2:5). In the Lord's household or family are all his children, and outside are the devil's children (Acts 2:47; John 8:44).

Today's study in 1 Corinthians, in the pursuit of accuracy, translates *ekklesia* in twenty-two occurrences as "the called out people" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 12:28; 15:9) and as "congregation" (1 Corinthians 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 11:16, 18, 22; 14:4, 5, 12, 19 [2], 23, 28, 33, 34, 35; 16:1, 19). Actually "congregation"

or "assembly" would be accurate in all the occurrences.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:12

The two grand old versions leave the impression in 1 Corinthians 1:12 that each Christian at Corinth was saying that he was following four leaders: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. The KJV says, "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." The ASV says, "Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ."

Arndt and Gingrich comment on *hekastos*, the "every one" or "each one," of this verse: "*every one* has or does something, but one does one thing, another something else."³ The verse then says: "I am saying this, that one of you is declaring, 'I indeed am of Paul'; or another, 'I am of Apollos'; or another, 'I am of Cephas'; or another, 'I am of Christ.'" The NIV follows the suggestion of Arndt and Gingrich: "What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.'"

1 CORINTHIANS 1:13

The word *baptidzo* (1 Corinthians 1:13, 14, 15, 16, 17; 10:2; 12:13; 15:29 [2]) in most English versions is "baptize," which is not a translation but simply a transliteration. A transliteration in no way tells the meaning of the underlying Greek equivalent. William Tyndale translated *baptidzo* in his (the first English from the Greek version in 1525) as "immerse."

But King James I forbade his fifty-four scholars to translate the word, ordering "baptize" to be used. "The translators in their 'Preface to the Reader' confess that there is a polemic interest in retaining certain ecclesiastical words like 'baptism' and 'church.'"⁴

In 1824 Alexander Campbell wrote, "Let it be particularly noticed, that among those words called consecrated ecclesiastical words, and which were forbidden by the king to be translated into English, are the words baptism and baptize."⁵ Consequently, one is not surprised that in 1826 Campbell had published a new version, *The Living Oracles*, which uses the

word "immersion." "Raccoon" John Smith, reading publicly from *The Living Oracles* instead of the KJV, announced that "baptize is a foreign word" and that he would translate it from the pulpit for the people, saying, "As not many of you have the gift of tongues, or of interpretation, I am resolved to speak to you in Greek no more."

- When the American Bible Society adamantly refused to translate *baptidzo* in its English translations, in 1831 someone wrote, "It is an insult to the Holy Spirit to require his truth to be concealed from men to accommodate sectarian views."

Because of the refusal of the ABS to translate *baptidzo*, the Baptists in 1838 withdrew their support of the ABS. With Campbell's assistance, they issued their own version, *The Bible Union*. However, "John the Immerser" was not palatable to people who wanted to say "John the Baptist," and so their new version was discarded.

As late as 1961 the ABS reiterated its policy never to use the word "immerse." Dr. Eugene A. Nida has written:

The insertion of a particular phrase or word for "baptism" should not be a means of stirring up religious controversy or of proselyting. Men equally devout and scholarly have been ranged on the various sides of the baptism question. . . . If both immersionists and nonimmersionists are represented among the missionaries and the native constituency, no translation should employ a word which would rule out one or the other of the interpretations as to the mode of baptism.⁶

A complete discussion of *baptidzo* in the New Testament would include its six forms in Mark 10:38, 39:

Jesus said, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I drink, or be overwhelmed in the immersion that submerges me?" They replied, "We can." Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup that I drink, and the immersion that submerges me will overwhelm you."

The words "overwhelm" and "submerge" are synonyms for "immerse." However, in those places where *baptidzo* is used to

speak not of the action of immersion but its result, the word "wash" becomes an accurate translation, as in Mark 7:4:

After they return from the market place, if they do not wash [*baptidzo*], they do not eat. And there are many other things which they have received to keep: the washing [*baptidzo*] of cups, pots, brass utensils, and dining couches.

Also, Hebrews 9:10 speaks of "foods and drinks and various washings [*baptidzo*]." In addition, 1 Peter 3:21 speaks of the world's being washed clean in the days of Noah by water, which "is a figure of the washing [*baptidzo*] which now saves you, not the removal of dirt from the body, but the appeal to God of a clear conscience."

1 CORINTHIANS 1:21

The KJV rendering of 1 Corinthians 1:21, by omitting a translation of the definite article modifying *kerugma*, "preaching," makes the pulpit delivery called "preaching" a foolish endeavor. That is not what Paul (himself a *kerux*, a "preacher"; 1 Timothy 2:7) was saying. The definite article makes the sentence point to the content of the preaching, not its proclamation.

Indeed, the content of the preaching, namely, "the word of the cross" and "Christ crucified," was to the Gentiles "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23). Therefore, a more accurate translation would be: ". . . it pleased God through the foolishness of what is preached to save the ones who believe."

The ASV properly has the definite article and adds a helpful footnote that the Greek construction speaks of the "thing preached." The RSV also is quite clear: "the folly of what we preach."

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 10

The disgusting and repulsive nature of sexual sins of perversion in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 would be more graphic and repugnant by a closer attention to the Greek words the Holy Spirit had Paul to write. The KJV says:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul's word *malakoi*, translated "effeminate" in the KJV, does describe a certain kind of people, but in Paul's context they are males who dress in women's clothes and who play the part of females in sexual acts with males. The word also refers by metonymy to a *cinaedas*, an instrument of unnatural lust.

Paul's word *arsenokoitai* refers to males bedding themselves in sexual acts with males. In English, they are sodomites or pederasts. The word "pederast" (from *eros*, "erotic love," and *paidos*, a "child") is a male who commits sexual relations with little boys. He is also called a catamite.

The vividness of the Greek words, therefore, calls for a translation something like this:

Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not deceive yourselves. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, not adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit God's kingdom.

The NIV calls the *malakoi* "male prostitutes" and the *arsenokoitai* "homosexual offenders."

1 CORINTHIANS 7:36-38

The KJV's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:36-38 is of a father and daughter:

But if any man think that he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin, if she pass the flower of *her* age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not: let them marry. Nevertheless he that standeth stedfast in his heart, having no necessity, but hath power over his own will, and hath so decreed in his heart that he will

keep his virgin, doeth well. So then he that giveth *her* in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth *her* not in marriage doeth better.

The ASV also looks at the passage as a father-daughter situation and is even bolder than the KJV, for it inserts the word "daughter" three times.

The RSV interprets the passage as between a man and his betrothed:

If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

Similarly, the NIV views the verses as of a man and his fiancée:

If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years, and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.

So we have two scholarly versions taking one stance and two scholarly versions taking a different interpretation. Another scholarly version, the NEB, takes a third position: not a father-daughter relationship, not a betrothed couple's problem, but that of a man and a woman who have decided to live singly, if they can. The NEB describes each as a "partner in celibacy."

When one examines the Greek, one cannot know for sure, in

regard to the word "virgin" (*parthenos*), whether the word "daughter" or "fiancée" or "partner" is understood. However, when one examines in verse 38 the word *gamidzo*, "give in marriage" or "permit to marry," only one interpretation is possible: A fiancé does not "give" his fiancée "in marriage" or "permit" her "to marry." Neither would partners in celibacy, if they decided to give up living singly, "give" a partner "in marriage" to themselves. Thus the interpretation of the KJV and the ASV of a father-daughter situation has to be Paul's meaning. Further, the interpretation of the RSV and the NIV is selfish, sensual, chauvinistic, and cruel. It envisions a man who has engaged a girl, but he does not intend to marry her if he can live without sex. She is to wait on and on until he decides if he can live singly. Her welfare or desire is not to be considered, only his. She is a fire escape to be used only in emergency, "for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 7:9).

I would depart from other versions in their use of the masculine pronouns in verse 36: "he will, he sinneth not." I believe the feminine is more accurate. Here is my translation:

If anyone thinks he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin, if she is mature, and it ought to be so, let him do what she wishes; she is not sinning: let them marry. But he who stands firm in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart to keep his own virgin, he will do well. So he who gives his own virgin in marriage will do well, but he who does not give in marriage will do better.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1

The word *agape* in the KJV in 1 Corinthians appears as "love" twice (1 Corinthians 4:21; 16:24) and as "charity" twelve times (1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:1, 2, 3, 4 [3], 8, 13 [2]; 14:1; 16:14). Whereas in 1611 the word "charity" must have meant love and good will, its common meaning now is a gift to the poor, a meaning not in 1 Corinthians. In fact, the use of "charity" hinders an understanding of the book.

The contrast to knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:1) in Paul's reasoning is not charity but love. Actually a contradiction ensues

in 1 Corinthians 13:3 if *agape* is translated as "charity": "Though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (KJV). Since the common meaning of charity is to feed the poor, the KJV translation is impossible, for charity is feeding the poor. But if "charity" is changed to "love," all is clear, for it is possible to feed the poor and yet have no love.

The words "the poor" are not in the Greek but certainly are understood and needed to make a complete sentence. Arndt and Gingrich say the clause may be translated, "give away all one's property bit by bit" or "dole out" all one's property to feed those in need.⁷

As to the second clause in 1 Corinthians 13:3, there is a variant in the Greek text. Some manuscripts with the KJV say, "though I give my body to be burned," while others read, "though I give my body that I may boast." However, either reading makes the word "charity" objectionable, for it is awkward to say, "though I give my body" either to be burned or to boast "and have not charity." But it is smooth and sensible to say, "though I give my body" either to be burned or to boast "and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."

Furthermore, the personification of "charity" in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 is awkward:

Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; charity never faileth.

On the other hand, the personification of "love" in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 is altogether fitting and proper.

Likewise, the word "charity" is incongruous in 1 Corinthians 13:13: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." The sentence makes more sense to assert that love is greater than faith or hope than to say that charity is the greatest of the three.

Similarly, the use of "charity" in 1 Corinthians 16:14 is a

misfit, "Let all your things be done with charity," but "Let everything that you do be done in love" is meaningful.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:3

Some advocates of women's liberty, unable to refute the clear New Testament teaching about women's submission to men have sought help in turning to the Greek words *aner*, "man," and *gune*, "woman," in 1 Corinthians 11:3. They know that sometimes the context determines that an *aner* is a husband and that sometimes the *gune* is a wife. They think they can see some liberty for women by translating it, "But I would have you know that the head of every husband is Christ; and the head of the wife is the husband." This desperate effort indeed exempts spinsters and widows from submission to men, but it still leaves wives under their husbands. It is not surprising that English versions do not follow such a translation.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:5

The KJV in 1 Corinthians 13:5 asserts that charity is "not easily provoked." The Greek text does not have the word "easily." Perhaps the translators inserted the word because they knew that even Jesus was occasionally provoked (Mark 3:5; 10:14). Also, in view of Paul's additional comment, "Be angry but do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26), and James' statement, "Let everyone be . . . slow to anger" (James 1:19), it would seem that the KJV translators were justified in modifying the word "provoked" with the word "easily."

Paul's word *paroxuno* Arndt and Gingrich say means "to urge on, stimulate, provoke to wrath, irritate," and passively "to become irritated, angry."⁸ Since neither Jesus (harmony requires that the variant in Matthew 5:22, *eike*, be part of the text) nor Paul nor James forbade all anger, yet Paul said there is no *paroxusmos* in love, there must be a meaning of that word that is altogether reprehensible. I have chosen to say that love "is not irritable."

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, claimed that his English translation of the New Testament was "inspired." Though the truly inspired Greek of Paul did not have the word

"easily," Smith, knowing no Greek, simply copied the KJV and used the word.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:10

Paul's phrase *to teleion* means that which is complete, whole, entire, perfect. Arndt and Gingrich observe in regard to 1 Corinthians 13:10 that the words are opposed to *to ek merous*, which phrase means that which is of a part, that which is partial, incomplete, imperfect.⁹

The NIV's omission of the definite article before "perfection" could leave the false impression that Paul was talking about the perfection of heaven, but the phrase *to teleion* in 1 Corinthians 13:10 has no reference to heaven or to the perfection of Christ or to the perfection of the attribute "love." In context the phrase is opposed to that which in A.D. 57 was incomplete, namely, miraculous prophecy and knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8, 10; 13:9). Therefore, I believe an acceptable translation of 1 Corinthians 13:10 would be as follows: "But when that which is complete comes, then that which is incomplete will pass away."

1 CORINTHIANS 14:2

The word *glossa*, "tongue," "language," appears twenty-one times in 1 Corinthians. The KJV, alone among the versions that I know, inserts the word "unknown" six times (1 Corinthians 14:2, 4, 13, 14, 19, 27) before the word "tongue." Their non-Pauline insertion has led people to think that tongue-speaking Corinthians were uttering gibberish, inarticulate sounds, that is, speaking in no human language.

The result is that thousands of people today think that it is a mark of spirituality to emit throat noises, thinking that the Holy Spirit causes their unintelligible noisy display. Tape recordings of such exhibitions taken to university language professors yield no sense whatsoever.

The fact that a Greek at Corinth, listening to an Arabic sermon, without understanding it, did not mean that an Arab could not understand it. The tongues spoken were actual languages and could be interpreted. If no interpreter was pres-

ent, then Paul commanded that the tongue-speaker should "keep silence in the congregation" (1 Corinthians 14:28). It follows then that a removal of the six instances of the word "unknown" would be helpful in understanding 1 Corinthians.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:11

The transliteration of *barbaros* as "barbarian" to the Greeks was not necessarily a stigma, for all non-Greeks were called *barbaroi*, that is, "foreigners." However, since the word does in some cases carry a reproach and an untruth, it is better and clearer for 1 Corinthians 14:11 to be translated this way: "If I do not understand the voice, I will be a foreigner to him who is speaking, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me."

1 CORINTHIANS 16:2

The KJV (and other versions) could be clearer at 1 Corinthians 16:2: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gathering when I come." The normal Greek preposition meaning "on" or "upon" would be *epi*, but that word is not in 1 Corinthians 16:2. Instead one finds *kata*, meaning "down from." However, grammarians recognize what they call a "distributive" use of *kata* with the meaning "every," as in Luke 2:41, "his parents went to Jerusalem every year," and in Luke 16:19, the "rich man . . . fared sumptuously every day," and in Acts 15:21, "Moses . . . is read in the synagogues every sabbath," and in Titus 1:5, "ordain elders in every city." As regards 1 Corinthians 16:2, Arndt and Gingrich make the translation, "on the first day of every week."¹⁰

Alexander Campbell's *Living Oracles* (1826) translated 1 Corinthians 16:2, "on the first day of every week." In 1830 Barton W. Stone, recognizing the excellency of the *Living Oracles*, wrote, "Whenever the church shall be restored to her former glory, she will again receive the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week." I submit the following as a working translation, not of the words exactly, but of the sense of 1 Corinthians 16:2: "Every Sunday let each one of you earmark a contribution, if he earns anything, and put it into the treas-

ury, so that when I come there will be no collections."

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13

The KJV (1611) and the ASV (1901) both translate *andridzo* to "behave one's self like a man," with the words, "quit you like men." "Quit" as meaning to behave surely was correct in 1611 and in 1901, but in 1990 the word only means to stop, to discontinue something. Today's dictionary says that "quit" with the meaning of behavior is an "archaic" usage. Consequently, "act as men" is a better translation of Paul's word.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:22

The nine strange letters in 1 Corinthians 16:22, *maranatha*, the KJV simply copied without any attempt at a translation, only inserting a dash: "Maran-atha." The ASV did the same but omitted the dash: "Maranatha." Arndt and Gingrich first list the letters as being two words, *maran atha*, the "Lord has come" (from the Aramaic *maran 'atha'*, grammatically being peal perfect third person singular), but then they say a better separation of the letters is *marana tha*, "Lord, come!" (from the Aramaic, *marana' tha'*, the imperative masculine second person singular from the verb *'atha'*, to "come").¹¹ Their second translation harmonizes with Revelation 22:20, *erchou kurie*, "Lord, come!" Arndt and Gingrich suggest that the word "our" is understood, and so their translation becomes, "Our Lord, come!"

SUBSCRIPTION

A few Greek manuscripts have a surprising subscription to 1 Corinthians: "The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi by Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, and Timothy." One wonders how such glaring errors could have been added to the letter. Its author was not Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus: They were three Corinthian Christians who visited Paul at Ephesus, but no penmanship is connected with them. Neither did Timothy have anything to do with the writing of the letter, for Paul had sent him from Ephesus to

Corinth before the letter was written (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). The writer was Paul, and Sosthenes was associated with him in the Epistle (1 Corinthians 1:1). Neither was Paul at Philippi when he did the writing, but instead he was in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:8).

It is beyond understanding why the fifty-four KJV scholars, who knew so much about the Bible, succumbed to this blunder and made it a part of their translation. And it is beyond understanding why the doubly erratic subscription remained a part of the KJV from 1611 until 1962, when the American Bible Society finally removed it.¹²

NOTES

¹Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible From KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 10.

²Alexander Campbell, "King James' Instructions," *The Christian Baptist* 2, no. 4 (1 November 1824): 75.

³Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 5th ed., rev. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 236.

⁴Lewis, *The English Bible*, 63.

⁵Campbell, "King James' Instructions," 78.

⁶Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating*, 2d ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 1961), 22, 232.

⁷Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 894.

⁸Ibid., 629.

⁹Ibid., 506.

¹⁰Ibid., 739.

¹¹Ibid., 491.

¹²Lewis, *The English Bible*, 40.

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RECENT STUDIES ON 1 CORINTHIANS

PAUL POLLARD

THE "FACTIONS" AT CORINTH

Not only did the study of the factions in Corinth furnish the cornerstone of Ferdinand Christian Baur's work on the history of primitive Christianity,¹ and much of the later scholarly endeavors of the Tübingen School, but it has intrigued many more recent commentators as well. Baur centered his investigation on 1 Corinthians 1:12 where Paul says, "But this I say, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos,' 'I am of Cephas,' 'I am of Christ.'" In Baur's analysis, the four slogans are reduced to two parties, that is, the Jewish "Cephas and Christ" party and the Hellenistic "Paul and Apollos" party. Thus emerged the famous Jew versus Gentile dialectic of Baur which has had important ramifications to the present time.

In Germany the tendency more recently is to posit a Gnostic background to the Corinthian correspondence and to take 1:12 as a dialectic, not between Jew and Gentile, but between Paul and his Gnostic opponents. Outside of Germany there is a reluctance to assume that Paul is directing his polemic against either Judaizers or Gnostics.² T. W. Manson, however, is not hesitant to argue that Paul was fighting not on one front, as those do who hold the Gnostic position, but that Paul was combating those who, on one hand, wanted to relegate the Gentile Christians to a "second-class citizen" status, and on the other hand, on the inside of the Christian church took advantage of their privileges as Christians.³ In effect, Manson argues that Paul was facing both Judaizers and libertines at Corinth.

The Situation at Corinth

Various efforts have been made to reconstruct the situation at Corinth which led to the parties of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. The general consensus among scholars is that none of the men mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12 actively tried to gain a following for themselves. According to R. St. John Parry, certain local church elders at Corinth had attained prominence for their own views by representing themselves as "champions of great names."⁴ Parry appeals to Paul's discussion in 1 Corinthians 4:15ff., including his use of *paidagogoi* ("teachers") as an indication that the divisions were caused by local teachers and preachers rather than the parties' namesakes. In view of Paul's response to the parties in 1 Corinthians 1—4, it may be that these local leaders considered their own authority as equal or superior to Paul's.⁵

The thesis of W. O. Fitch is that the divisions at Corinth were a reflection and continuation of the dispute recorded in Galatians 2:11-14 concerning certain men from Jerusalem who caused Peter to break off fellowship with the Gentiles. The situation in Corinth is that the issues moved from circumcision and table-fellowship to the question of Paul's status as an apostle.⁶

Richard Reitzenstein argued that the mystery religions provide a model for the parties in that in them the initiate claims his baptizer as his "father."⁷ This interpretation fails, however, because Paul disclaims his own baptismal activity and more than likely few in Corinth could claim to have been baptized by him.

Walter Schmithals has argued that Paul faced in Corinth Jewish Gnostics who denigrated his authority and wished to take over as the centers of authority for the church.⁸ Whether or not Paul faced Gnosticism, ambitious leaders, or some other problem in Corinth, it is exceedingly strange that after chapters 1 through 4 he does not give further information about the parties.⁹ Some scholars have explained this paradox by suggesting that Paul knew the issues being disputed by the Corinthians, but rose above these details and dealt solely with the sinfulness of their division and strife. Another option is that Paul did not want to examine the subjects of dispute for fear

that such a discussion might only serve to further inflame the situation.¹⁰ Parry allows that some of the questions raised by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul were subjects of dispute between the parties.¹¹

F. W. Grosheide maintains that no differences existed between the parties except the slogans. In effect, Paul in chapters 1 through 4 exhorts all the groups to unity—nobody is right. Thus, Paul condemns in the following chapters the whole church and not those of any one group. According to Grosheide, "we conclude that there was no essential or doctrinal difference between the four groups."¹² Another possible angle is that Paul does not specifically deal with any one group after 1 Corinthians 1:12 because they are all (except for the "Paul" party) united in their opposition to him. Thus came the vehement defense of his apostleship in chapters 1 through 4 and in other places in 1 Corinthians (cf. 9:1ff.). The lack of Judaizing activity during the time of 1 Corinthians,¹³ outside of a possible connection with the "Cephas" or "Christ" parties in 1:12, is a fatal flaw in Baur's dialectic between Jews and Gentiles at Corinth.¹⁴

A legitimate question is whether one may with accuracy speak of "factions" and "parties" at all in the Corinthian church. According to C. K. Barrett, there were *erides* ("quarrels"; 1 Corinthians 1:11) in Corinth but this does not mean that the church was divided into factions, for *eris* does not mean "party" but "strife" or "wrangling."¹⁵ In 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul does mention *schismata* ("divisions"), not to say that there were actual divisions in the church, but to say that the *erides* ("quarrels") could potentially develop into *schismata*.¹⁶ Christian Mauer contends that "it is not firmly formulated doctrinal differences and programs that separate the various schools."¹⁷ Rather, in his view, the disputes revolve around the members playing off individual leaders, to whom they are attached, against the others.¹⁸

Barrett suggests that Paul in not admitting real parties acted tactfully, since in 11:18 he has already heard that *schismata* ("divisions") exist and in 11:19 he considers, in view of the Corinthian state of affairs, that there should be *hairesis* ("division").¹⁹ The difficulty with this view is that Paul does not

say that definite factions exist so that fellowship is disrupted. In 11:20, enough unity exists that they can gather around the Lord's table (regardless of their perversion of it once assembled). Although Paul used *hairesis* ("division") in 1 Corinthians 11:19, he intends that this verse be understood eschatologically. That is, factions and divisions must of necessity come on the church in the last days. The divine aim of this affliction is that those who are genuine Christians will emerge from it victorious, while the rest will fall away.²⁰

When Paul speaks of the prevailing circumstances in Corinth, he uses *erides* ("quarrels"), understood as a more restricted term than *schismata* ("divisions"), as actually present leading to *schismata* if they are not stopped. Paul is, therefore, not combating factions but arguments arising from the members, some of whom prefer Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Christ as their teacher to the exclusion of the others.²¹ If there were no actual splits or divisions at Corinth but only the tendency toward factions, this may explain why Paul does not deal with specific issues relating to the parties.²² Munck correctly observes that no clear view is given of the position of the factions in the letter to Corinth,²³ except possibly their opposition to Paul. One, however, must be careful not to dismiss the squabbles as harmless activity. Paul gives too much time and energy to the problem for it to be that.²⁴

If there were no real splits at Corinth, and if Paul does not deal with the peculiar thrust of each party at Corinth, why does 1:12 have such a prominent place in the letter? One approach is the scenario outlined by Nils Dahl. According to this description of the unfolding drama at Corinth, Paul receives an official letter sent by the church at Corinth by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Archaicus. In it the Corinthians maintain their loyalty to the traditions Paul delivered to them (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:2). He also received an oral report from Chloe's people that there was strife in Corinth and some opposition to Paul. Dahl posits that the cause of the quarrels may have been that a delegation was sent to Paul. Some objected to this saying, "Why not write to Apollos who is a wise man or to Cephas who is the foremost apostle?" Others said, "Why ask for advice from anyone? Just say, 'I belong to Christ,' and as

spiritual men we can settle the problems." Paul in dealing with the oral report (chaps. 1—4) and the formal letter (chaps. 5—6), has to be careful not to favor any group in the city. He conveys the impression that there is no competition between himself with Apollos, or Cephas, and certainly not with Christ.²⁵ Thus, everything in chapters 1 through 4 is first directed to disarming the strife, which has the potential for creating deep, long lasting division at Corinth and second to a defense of his apostleship and authority. Unless these two areas were dealt with, then the answers of Paul to the problems in the written document were likely to be unheeded.

Two other approaches to the "factions" at Corinth need to be noted. In one, Vincent P. Branick proposed that the "parties" are non-existent because 1 Corinthians 1—3 is a midrashic-homily composed by Paul prior to the writing of 1 Corinthians and inserted into it. As such it has no exact connection with the historical realities in the Epistle. Only in a general way do the ideas in the homily relate to the concrete needs of the Corinthian community.²⁶ Earlier, E. Peterson also argued that 1 Corinthians 1:16-31 was a homily that Paul delivered in a synagogue in Ephesus or Corinth and later added into the text of 1 Corinthians.²⁷ Although 1 Corinthians 1—3 is stylized and carefully written, that is no reason to argue that it was addressed to some other situation and not the one at Corinth.

In another approach, L. L. Welborn rejects the idea that the parties at Corinth are theologically motivated, but rather sees them in terms of political parties. Paul describes the situation in the Corinthian church in vocabulary like that used to characterize conflict within city-states by Greco-Roman historians.²⁸ Welborn allows that doctrinal differences existed and that claims to possible divine wisdom and knowledge played a part in the controversy, but the real problem in 1 Corinthians 1—4 is that of partisanship. It is this power struggle fueled by social unrest between the rich and the poor (see 1 Corinthians 11:17ff., where it spills out in the public church assembly, and 1:26), and not theological controversy, which led to the writing of the Epistle. Paul attempts to stop a division rather than refute theological aberrations.²⁹

Corinth did have a history of political division, and the

dynamic of poor versus rich was the cause of much of it. No doubt, the church was not immune to the same pressures as 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 indicates. However, it is possible that Paul uses political terminology to deal with "parties" in the church which are theologically motivated and not politically inspired as Welborn argues. Perhaps by the use of political terminology, with which the Corinthians would have been familiar, he helps them to see their partisanship in a more realistic way, especially in view of the disastrous effect partisanship had had politically in Corinth's past history. Evidently, the problems at Corinth in the church were theologically based, and not political, as Paul's argument about baptism in 1 Corinthians 1:13-17 indicates, as well as his emphasis on the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:18ff. Furthermore, if the parties are political in nature, as Welborn argues, why choose religious leaders such as Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and above all, Christ as the leaders of the parties?

The Parties of Corinth

Those of Paul. Although many, if not most, commentators fail to give the same amount of attention to the "Paul" party as they do the others, this group may be the key to the circumstances in the Corinthian church. The existence of a "Paul" group may imply opposition to Paul in the city. That some made it a point of standing by Paul shows that there were others who preferred certain ones to him.³⁰ What makes this view attractive is the extent that chapters 1 through 4 serves as an apology for Paul's authority in Corinth.

Those of Apollos. C. K. Barrett believes that Apollos, due to his Alexandrian background, introduced the pursuit of wisdom into Corinth. But this wisdom was of a "good" type and was in no way the cause of problems in the church. Barrett contends that the "Apollos" party originated due to the eloquence of Apollos. Paul, on the other hand, was reputed to be a poor speaker (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:10). Such a development is not too surprising in a church which placed high regard on the gifts of the tongue.³¹

It is not sound interpretation to say that just because Apollos came from Alexandria that he approved and used Philo's

method of exegesis. There were other influences on Apollos than the Alexandrian. His knowledge of John's baptism suggests a connection with the Jews of Palestine, either directly or indirectly.³² Of greater importance is the fact that Apollos was instructed by Aquila and Priscilla who were two close friends of Paul. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that Apollos was close to Paul in terms of his theology and missionary methods. It is highly unlikely that Paul would have supported Apollos as he did if Apollos had engaged in a worldly brand of wisdom speculation in Corinth.³³

Those of Cephas. It is frequently argued that those of the "Cephas" party were Judaizers who desired to impose the law on all Christians. There is, however, no indication that Paul was fighting Judaizers in Corinth as he did, for example, in Galatia. Both R. St. John Parry³⁴ and Winfred Knox³⁵ contend that the main thrust of the "Cephas" party was not its Judaizing tendencies but rather its opposition to Paul's apostleship and supremacy at Corinth. At the minimum, it can be said that the "Cephas" group represented Jewish Christianity in some form.³⁶

Those of Christ. Since the phrase *ego de Christou* ("but I am of Christ") only occurs in 1 Corinthians 1:12, suspicion has arisen in a sizeable and influential group of scholars that there was no "Christ" party. It is believed that this approach solves an enormous interpretative problem.

One can argue that Paul did not intend a fourth party because in 1 Corinthians he specifically includes all Christians as belonging to Christ. Also, Paul nowhere appears to discuss the claims of the "Christ" people, whereas anyone laying special claim to Christ would likely have been severely criticized.³⁷

If *ego de Christou* ("but I am of Christ") does not refer to a "Christ" party, what did Paul mean by it? Barrett says that the phrase may be Paul's confession of faith that while others at Corinth pledge allegiance to one or the other persons, his allegiance is to Christ alone.³⁸ They follow different men, but say, "I am of Christ!" The problem with this interpretation is that it does not take into account the parallel structure of the verse. That is, if Paul had wanted to contrast the last group

with the others, he would have used *all' ego Christou* ("but I am of Christ").

If there was a "Christ" party, what was its doctrinal stance? Some see them as Judaizing teachers (mainly on the basis of 2 Corinthians 10:7; 11:22, 23). According to F. Godet, this group was led by former members of the priesthood and of Jewish Pharisaism, who by virtue of their learning and status in society considered themselves to be superior to the apostles. They were called "of Christ" because they believed they were the only ones who understood his mind and who kept more firmly than the apostles the true traditions of Christ.³⁹ H. L. Goudge argues that these Judaizers either laid stress on Christ's obedience to law during his life on earth, or else claimed a special connection to Christ by blood. James the Lord's brother was the leader of the Jerusalem church and may have been used by them as an "unofficial" leader.⁴⁰

S. G. F. Brandon says that "the Messiah men" possibly held to the same views as those who came from James to Antioch. Thus, they would stress Jesus as the Messiah and by implication dissociate themselves from the more developed Christology of Paul.⁴¹ On this line of interpretation, the "Christ" party is more conservative than the "Cephas" party; both are of Jewish Christian background, but the "Christ" party is more rigid. Manson moves in another direction and judges the "Cephas" party to be very Jewish in outlook, while the "Christ" party is libertine.⁴²

Conclusion

It is now possible to make some conclusions about the groups mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:12. There was no actual fracturing of fellowship and no real "parties" in the sense of actual divisions. There was quarreling and disputes and a real tendency toward splits. All of the groups appear to be united against Paul, and Baur is correct in his observation that chapters 1 through 4 is an "apologetic section" in which Paul defends his apostolic ministry. The "Paul" party arose because of opposition by others to Paul. The "Apollos" party, theologically, did not differ much from Paul, but followed Apollos because of his eloquence and personal charisma. They may

have opposed Paul's qualifications as an apostle because he was not as dynamic a leader as Apollos. There is no evidence that Cephas ever visited Corinth, but the existence of the "Cephas" party does not depend on his ever having been there. Those in this party were moderate Palestinian Jews⁴³ who were not Judaizers, as it has been argued. The "Christ" party was an actual party and possibly the most legalistic Jewish group in Corinth. Since all of the groups opposed Paul's apostolic authority, the apostle does not deal with each of their peccadillos. Rather, he argues against division and for his apostolic authority in chapters 1 through 4 in order to lay a foundation for the positive reception of his answers to the letter brought to him at Ephesus.

THE SAYINGS OF JESUS IN 1 CORINTHIANS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE JESUS-PAUL DEBATE

Paul's letters give certain information about the life of Jesus, touching mainly the most salient points. For example, he records that Jesus was born under the law as a Jew (Galatians 4:4), of the family of David (Romans 1:3); that he had a brother James (Galatians 1:19), and twelve disciples (1 Corinthians 15:5) among whom he mentions by name James (1 Corinthians 15:7), Peter, and John (Galatians 2:9); that he ate a last meal with them on the night he was betrayed (1 Corinthians 11:23ff.); that he was crucified on a cross (Galatians 3:1; 1 Corinthians 2:2), was buried (1 Corinthians 15:4; Romans 6:4), and was raised from the dead on the third day (1 Corinthians 15:4), after which he appeared to various ones of his followers (1 Corinthians 15:5ff.).⁴⁴ Unlike the Gospels, no details of Jesus' birth, his ministry, his associates, or personalities around the cross are given in Paul's letters.

Of the teachings of Jesus reported in Paul's letters, only four are explicitly cited by Paul as being from the Lord. First Corinthians contains three of the four occurrences in a context dealing with church order and discipline. First, in 7:10, Paul says, "To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband. . . ." Second, 9:14 states: "The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the

gospel should get their living by the gospel." Next, 11:23ff. contains the institution of the Lord's Supper which Paul said he received "from the Lord." Finally, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 15, although debated, may be a saying of the Lord: "For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep."

The question which jumps out to the reader is this: If Paul knew firsthand the teachings of the historical Jesus, why does he not refer to them more often. Several suggestions have been made. Perhaps Paul was more interested in the risen Lord than in the historical Jesus, or perhaps he did not know much, if any, of the Jesus tradition. It has been postulated in a more positive manner that Paul knew far more about the Jesus traditions than he saw fit to relate in his Epistles.⁴⁵ Also, Paul may not have needed to quote expressly the sayings of Jesus because he had taught his converts orally the content of the Jesus traditions and had no need to cover the same ground again in his Epistles which were in fact occasional, that is, written to address specific situations.⁴⁶

A. J. M. Wedderburn, in a different direction, suggests that the scarcity of Paul's references to the sayings of Jesus is possibly due to the fact that the teaching of Jesus had been "taken captive" and used in a legalistic way by his Judaizing opponents with stress on the Jewish law. But, if this is true, then why were Jesus' teachings used by Paul at all? Wedderburn answers that Paul was forced to use them by his opponents due to the nature of their charges against him (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:14) or else some of the sayings had been reclaimed from the Judaizers and "sanitized" for use in the Pauline mission. Related to this suggestion is Wedderburn's hypothesis that Paul hesitates to use the Jesus traditions since it might call into question his own independence and authority in that the leaders in Jerusalem could claim firsthand knowledge of that tradition and he could not.⁴⁷ As these "guesses" by Wedderburn and others indicate, it is a puzzle why Paul apparently neglects to use extensively, at least, the incidents from the life and teaching of Jesus in his Epistles.

The purpose of this lesson is to examine the sayings of Jesus

in 1 Corinthians. To do so involves, by necessity, the New Testament debate concerning the relationship of Jesus and Paul. Before a sampling of the actual sayings and allusions to Jesus' teaching is made, considerable attention must be given to the general contours of the Jesus-Paul controversy.

Background to the Jesus-Paul Debate

The debate over Jesus and Paul has been going on for at least 159 years.⁴⁸ F. C. Baur posed the main issues in it with his famous essay of 1831. "Die Christus-partei in der korinthischen Gemeinde." In his article, he made two key assertions: (1) that Paul's theology was formed in deliberate opposition to the Petrine wing; and (2) that Paul consciously ignored the words and deeds of the historical Jesus in favor of a direct relationship with the risen Lord.⁴⁹

Several major points of response to F. C. Baur developed which set the tone for most future debate with the Tübingen School. First, Pauline theology is seen to presuppose a full knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus and his teachings. Second, Paul's letters contain information about Jesus' life on earth including numerous explicit and implicit references to the teachings of Jesus in them. Third, the alleged unconcern of Paul concerning the historical Jesus is unfounded since only a small part of Paul's missionary activity is known. This assumed lack of concern takes for granted that Paul's letters are typical of his preaching. To the contrary, for the anti-Baur scholars, Paul's letters must have presupposed his preaching; in his oral messages he would have dwelt at length upon the words and deeds of Jesus "for kerygmatic as well as didactic purposes."⁵⁰

In 1904 William Wrede argued that Paul was not interested in the historical Jesus, except in the elemental facts about his existence. Wrede argues that Paul in comparison to Jesus "is far more widely removed from Jesus than Jesus Himself is removed from the noblest forms of Jewish piety. . . . Undoubtedly Paul regarded himself as a disciple and apostle of Jesus and was proud of the fact: he was not himself conscious that he was an innovator."⁵¹ In Wrede's judgment, Paul's theology is the product of his Hellenistic-Jewish background, and he is to

be regarded "as the *second founder of Christianity*."⁵²

Another major line of defense against the Tübingen School was to argue that their use of the letters of Paul as evidence for the whole activity of the apostle was not allowable. Rather, Paul's letters were often one-sided and polemical because of the situations he faced, and they give an incomplete view of what Paul actually taught on the mission field.⁵³ As David L. Dungan has noted, the pro-Baur forces attacked this argument on the basis of it being essentially an argument from silence. Also, they contended that nothing in Paul's letters leads to the conclusion that his preaching was more interested in the historical Jesus than were his Epistles.⁵⁴

A further line of defense against the Tübingen School was the argument that they could hold to a sharp separation between Paul and Jesus only by "ignoring the numerous parallels between their teaching, especially in the parenthetic sections of Paul's letters."⁵⁵ The anti-Tübingen forces turned their attention to finding as many parallels and allusions between Paul and Jesus as possible. The "champion" far and away in this endeavor was Arnold Resch. His findings in summary form include:⁵⁶

	Numbers of Parallels to the Synoptics		Parallels to the Agrapha
In	1 Thessalonians	63	8
	2 Thessalonians	25	1
	1 Corinthians	214	21
	2 Corinthians	99	9
	Galatians	88	11
	Romans	270	35
	Colossians	81	4
	Ephesians	127	14
	Philemon	10	—
	Philippians	58	4
	Acts	61	3
		1096	110

Resch evidently went to the extreme in finding as many places as he did of Pauline echos (or parallels) to the words of

Jesus in the Gospels. V. P. Furnish says that "Resch long ago proved that, with imagination and patience, the possibilities can be multiplied like loaves and fishes."⁵⁷ Furnish himself says that the total number of "really convincing instances are fewer than a dozen," and he rejects the idea that the main source of Paul's ethical teaching is "a collection of dominical *Logia*."⁵⁸

The caution by Samuel Sandmel against exaggeration in terms of parallels and source derivation certainly applies to the work of Resch.⁵⁹ This does not mean, however, that Resch's work did not have some validity, for he certainly did point out numbers of genuine parallels between Paul's message and Jesus' words.

Wilhelm Heitmüller's views on Jesus and Paul especially influenced Rudolf Bultmann. Heitmüller argued that Paul's theology derived from the fact that he had been converted by a branch of the Hellenistic church which had little concern for the life and sayings of the historical Jesus.⁶⁰

Bultmann argues that Paul, after his conversion, made no effort to contact leaders of the Jerusalem church for information about Jesus and his ministry. In Galatians 1—2, Paul stoutly maintains his independence of them. Bultmann holds that "his letters barely show traces of the influence of Palestinian tradition concerning the history and preaching of Jesus." According to Bultmann, all that was important for Paul concerning Jesus was that he was born a Jew, lived under the law, and was crucified. When Paul does use Christ as an example, he does not refer to the historical Jesus, but rather to the pre-existent Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:5ff.; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Romans 15:3). Bultmann does allow that there are "possible echoes of words of the Lord" in the Pauline parenesis (cf. Romans 12:14 and Matthew 5:44; Romans 13:9f. and Mark 12:31; Romans 16:19 and Matthew 10:16; 1 Corinthians 13:2 and Mark 11:23).⁶¹

The key point of the analysis of Bultmann is that "Paul's theology . . . is not at all a recapitulation of Jesus' own preaching nor a further development of it." Thus in Bultmann's judgment, Paul's theology is not built on that of Jesus and is a "new structure" which Paul erected on the foundations

of Hellenistic Christianity."⁶²

In a new direction, seeking a solution to the Jesus-Paul question, the Uppsala School of Anton Fridrichsen and his students have stressed the close relationship of Paul and the Jerusalem leaders. According to this approach the gospel traditions were passed on, not by the early church, as the form critics argued, but by a highly trained group of leaders, including Paul, who handed on the chain of carefully memorized and carefully preserved tradition which originated with Jesus himself.⁶³ With the Uppsala School approach, the connecting links between Paul and Jesus are very close.

After his detailed and helpful survey of material on the Jesus-Paul debate, Furnish came to several conclusions. First, the Pauline letters contain only sketchy information about the life and teaching of Jesus. Second, the Jesus-Paul debate will not be moved forward or solved by locating parallel passages in Paul and the Gospels. This is so because of the problem in identifying the "ipsissima verba Jesu," and also because such parallels do not prove genetic dependence. Third, the problem is much broader than the relationship of the individual, Jesus of Nazareth, to the individual, Paul of Tarsus. Bultmann and others, Furnish says, have recognized that the problem involves to a great extent the relationship of Jesus to the earliest kerygma.⁶⁴

With regard to the future work on the Jesus-Paul debate, Furnish acknowledged that "scholars must concentrate not on what or how much Paul knew about the historical Jesus, but rather on the way he employed and applied the knowledge he did have, and what place the Jesus of history had in relation to the heart and centre of his preaching."⁶⁵

Whether on purpose or not, David Dungan in his special study entitled *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* did what Furnish suggested by studying *how* two sayings of Jesus (1 Corinthians 9:14 and 7:10) function in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Dungan concludes in general that "Paul stands squarely within the tradition that led to the Synoptic gospels, and is of one mind with the editors of those gospels, not only in the way he understands what Jesus (the Lord) was actually commanding in the sayings themselves but also in the way he

prefigured the Synoptic editors' use of them."⁶⁶

Paul's method in using sayings of the Lord is not to quote directly the sayings of the Lord, but to use them indirectly. This indirect approach is, Dungan says, a *major aspect* of his use of the sayings of the Lord.⁶⁷ This indirectness may help account for the many parallels and allusions to Jesus' words and for the very few explicit references to them. Dungan says that "the amount of Synoptic tradition current among the Pauline congregations and known to Paul could have been far higher than the number of times he openly refers to sayings of the Lord."⁶⁸

Donald Joseph Selby had already before Dungan observed the curious manner in which Paul uses the words of Jesus without identifying them as such. Selby notes that Paul usually parallels more closely the Synoptic Gospels (when he does not explicitly refer to sayings of the Lord) than he does those places in which he is expressly citing words as being from Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:14 with Matthew 10:10).⁶⁹

Survey of Jesus' Sayings in 1 Corinthians

Depending on who is doing the counting, more references to the words of Jesus are found in 1 Corinthians (and Romans) than in any other of Paul's Epistles.⁷⁰ H. A. A. Kennedy has argued that the nature of 1 Corinthians in which Paul deals with questions raised by his converts accounts for the numerous sayings of Jesus found in it. As he says, "If more of such inquiries had been preserved in documents . . . it is almost certain that we should have found numerous additional references to definite instructions of Jesus."⁷¹

The most solidly recognizable references to the Lord's sayings in 1 Corinthians are those where Paul directly cites the words as being from the Lord. In 7:10, Paul speaking to the married says, not on his authority but the Lord's *ouk ego alla ho kurios*,⁷² that a woman is not to separate (*chorizo*) from her husband. Here *chorizo* possibly is a technical term meaning "divorce." The verse reflects the teaching of Jesus found in Mark 10:11, 12 concerning his prohibition on divorce and remarriage. It is certainly possible that the additional statement in verse 10 that she is not to remarry if she divorces is a paren-

thetical statement of the Lord himself which Paul includes.

In 9:14, in the context of the rights of ministers to receive support for their labor, Paul gives the "command of the Lord" on the matter which states that those who proclaim the gospel are to get their living from it. The thought resembles the words of Jesus found in Luke 10:7, "The laborer deserves his wages," and Matthew 10:10, "The laborer deserves his food." In 1 Timothy 5:18, the author⁷³ uses the same text from Deuteronomy 25:4 to support his argument as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 9:9-14 and follows up with "the laborer deserves his wages." Paul's expansion of the Synoptic account in "midrashic" form is very common.

Paul states in 11:23 that he received the tradition of the Lord's Supper which he was giving to the Corinthians *apo tou kuriou*. This may mean that the tradition he had passed on to him by other church leaders actually originated with the Lord, or it may mean that he received it from the Lord directly in a vision. The traditional language leaves this writer leaning toward the first option. It is noteworthy that Paul declares himself to be a link in the chain of tradition he has received.⁷⁴ Evidently, Paul wants to stress that the eucharistic words go back to Jesus himself.⁷⁵

Once these three passages mentioned above are left, the footing becomes much more uncertain as to what parallels and allusions are to be regarded as genuinely those of the historical Jesus. This is not to say that literary and theological correspondences do not abound, but due caution must temper such findings.

Conclusion

It goes without saying that Paul was indebted to the early church for the tradition which he received of the sayings of Jesus. Whether this involved a collection of Jesus' words in an oral or written form is really beside the point. The point is that Paul seems heavily debted to the thought of the historical Jesus for his own teaching and theology. The words of Johannes Weiss express well what is involved in the Jesus-Paul debate: "It is one of the strangest theological blunders to assume that, among all the early preachers of Christianity,

Paul alone refrained from the use of the means of presenting his message which lay in the rehearsal of narratives of the life of Jesus, that he did not know, or did not wish to know, anything about these."⁷⁶

Evidently, Paul knew not only the main lines of the life of Jesus, but attributed the greatest of importance to this and other aspects of the historical Jesus who became his risen Lord.

RESURRECTION

The centrality of resurrection in the New Testament is evident. C. F. Evans states that "Christianity—at least the Christianity of the New Testament—is a religion of resurrection; and it is this to a greater extent than is any other religion."⁷⁷ The Gospels would not be the Gospels without the resurrection, for it is this thought which permeates them. The same is true for the rest of the New Testament with few exceptions. Only 2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, 3 John, 2 Peter, James, and Jude omit any reference to resurrection.⁷⁸ In the preaching of the early church, resurrection stands out above every other doctrine. Evans is certainly correct in his observation that the *kerygma* ("message") of the early disciples stood or fell on the basis of the events concerning the resurrection.⁷⁹

Old Testament Background

In the Old Testament thought, man is not viewed as body and soul, or body, soul, and spirit. At death man's *nepesh* leaves, but not in the sense of the "soul" leaving the body. Man, in effect, ceases to be an active personality. What continues to exist in Sheol is not man's soul but his "shade," which is a pale copy of the once living person.⁸⁰

Sheol. The dead, who were all considered conscious after death, went to Sheol. In general, this place is pictured in unattractive terms and as a place of unrelieved misery. Many Old Testament passages describe it as being completely isolated from God.⁸¹

During the intertestamental period, the concept of Sheol underwent considerable development. One change is that the dead are no longer called "shades" but "souls" or "spirits"

which survive as conscious beings. Not only is there consciousness as in the older period, but a new aspect appears in that there is a continuity between life on earth and "life" in Sheol. In the Old Testament, personality is wholly dependent on the body for its existence, but now personality can be expressed in terms of a soul which is able to live in isolation from the body.⁸²

Another change is in the area of moral distinctions, since previously only social differences were recognizable in Sheol. Furthermore, Sheol becomes regarded as the place where the souls of men await the resurrection and final judgment. As a result, it becomes a place of preliminary rewards and punishments.⁸³ Significantly, Sheol is divided up into several compartments corresponding to the spiritual condition of the souls that go there.⁸⁴

Resurrection in the Old Testament. For the most part, Old Testament Jews did not stress resurrection, but were largely satisfied with the concept of Sheol where all the dead went.⁸⁵ Despite the general lack of interest in the resurrection in the Old Testament, a few places do reflect such a concern. Hosea 6:2 contains the words, "After two days he will revive us: on the third day he will raise us up, and we will live before him." This verse along with Ezekiel's "Valley of Dry Bones" possibly gave rise to the idea of individual resurrection, but the original idea of the prophets in each case was the revival of the nation after the Exile.⁸⁶ Job 19:25ff. is a much debated passage which apparently means that the individual would be vindicated after death.⁸⁷ A sharper view of resurrection is found in Isaiah 26:19 where the idea is expressed that "the dead shall live." The most clear and undisputed reference in the Old Testament to resurrection, however, is in Daniel 12:2.⁸⁸

Resurrection in the Intertestamental Period

The nature of the resurrection body in the intertestamental literature depends on the type of kingdom to which it goes. If an earthly kingdom is envisioned, then a physical body is needed, but if a heavenly kingdom, then a "spiritual body" is called for. In the Sibylline Oracles IV, it is stated that "all who are godly shall live again on the earth" (187). Second Maccabees 7:11 and 14:46 also furnish good examples of belief in the

physical body being raised.⁸⁹

In some apocalyptic literature of this period, the destiny of men is thought not to be one earth, but to be in some heavenly realm. Man goes either directly to heaven at death or else the earthly kingdom where he is to abide only lasts for a time, giving way to the age to come. As Russell notes, "the physical body is no longer required; men are raised up in 'spiritual' bodies which correspond to their heavenly environment."⁹⁰

The spiritual bodies are often described under the figure of "garments of light" or "garments of glory." In 2 Enoch the righteous dead are raised in "spiritual" or "heavenly" bodies to Paradise where all corruption passes away.⁹¹

Little is said about the characteristics of the "spiritual body" and its relationship to the physical body. At times it is simply described as a "transformed physical body."⁹² In 2 Baruch the resurrection body is identical in appearance to the physical body. It is only after the Judgment that the bodies which have been raised are transformed into the splendor of angels.⁹³ In the Apocalypse of Moses, the "spiritual body" in the heavenly Paradise is regarded as the counterpart of the physical body in the earthly Paradise.⁹⁴

The "spiritual body" has characteristics which are different from the physical body, yet it shares with it the same substructure. Russell maintains that "however spiritualized the concept may be, it is still 'body' and is to be clearly distinguished from the quite different concept of disembodied spirit or disembodied soul."⁹⁵

In the interest of preciseness, it should be observed that there is no such thing as "the Jewish view" of the resurrection in the intertestamental period, since there is so much variation.⁹⁶

Resurrection in the New Testament

Some argue that the doctrine of resurrection in the New Testament did not develop from reflection on the Old Testament texts alone. Rather, the Old Testament plus the apocryphal books of an apocalyptic nature furnished the New Testament background for the motif of resurrection.⁹⁷ Although this view is very debatable, it is evident throughout the New

Testament that the resurrection of Jesus was the foundation of all its preaching.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3, Paul undergirds his exposition of the resurrection belief with a traditional piece of material containing the phrase "according to the Scriptures." The fact is that Old Testament Scriptures are scanty on the resurrection. In contrast to the passion narratives which are heavily supported by Old Testament references, the resurrection narratives are almost totally free of Old Testament attestation. Yet in spite of this, the view of Evans is rejected that, "those Old Testament passages which came to be used . . . are plainly being forced into service, and are made to bear a sense other than the original."⁹⁸ While ancient Christian writers did go about interpreting the Old Testament texts with different methods from modern scholars, this is not to argue that they were "forcing" Scriptures to mean anything they chose.

Jesus assumed there would be a resurrection of the dead. In Mark 12:25, the statement is made that at the raising of the dead there is neither marriage, or giving in marriage, but people are as angels in heaven. Some have concluded by this that Jesus denied the idea of a resurrection of the physical body. He certainly suggests that the normal relations of human life are not continued into the hereafter, and his thought vastly differs from the Old Testament conception of the continuance of material conditions after a physical resurrection.⁹⁹

Although resurrection in the fourth Gospel is for the most part "present" or "realized" (cf. John 11:25, 26; 5:24), there is still a futuristic strain. The belief in a resurrection "at the last day" is expressed by Martha (John 11:24) when she meets Jesus. However, this is somewhat blunted by Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection and the life." Earlier, in John 6:40, the futurist element was expressed by the words that the believer would have eternal life and be raised up "at the last day," and in John 5:25 the "dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." A general resurrection is pointed to in John 5:28ff. when it says that "all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice and shall come forth." There is another reference to a future judgment in 12:48, where Christ's word judges the

man who rejects him "in the last day."

There is no hint in Paul's letters as to whether he actually thought of a universal resurrection or not. In meeting the problems of specific groups of Christians, he apparently taught only a resurrection of dead Christians. He says little about the ultimate fate of non-Christians.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps this is due to the occasional nature of his Epistles and the specific topics at hand. Apparently, he knew of the idea of a general resurrection for Christians and non-Christians steeped as he was in the message of Jesus and the early church.

The belief in a future resurrection and judgment by God was part of the early Palestinian teaching. Revelation, however, is unique in speaking of two resurrections. According to H. A. Guy, the first resurrection is of the Christian martyrs who reign with Christ for one thousand years. After the millennium, there is the final assault of the enemies of God, and then another resurrection which is apparently thought of as a resurrection of the physical body, for not only "death and Hades" deliver up their dead, but also the sea (Revelation 20:13). Guy questions whether or not the second resurrection includes those who were in the first resurrection.¹⁰¹ It should be noted, however, that the second resurrection is only implied, and even if two resurrections are in view, this does not mean that John had in mind a literal thousand-year reign of Christians. (See especially the work of Foy E. Wallace on this issue.)

The fact of the resurrection is assumed by New Testament writers. However, many questions are raised by the concept. What is the nature of the resurrection? Is there separation of the body and soul at death followed by a reunion at the resurrection? Is there an intermediate state? What is the fate of the righteous and of the evil after the resurrection?

The Nature of the Resurrection. According to Roy A. Harrisville, 1 Corinthians 15, in which Paul has an extended discussion of resurrection, is the hub of the letter from which everything has gone out, connecting in some way or another.¹⁰² But the question is why Paul has to elaborate on resurrection as he does. In the face of this, various proposals have been made as to the nature of the problem he faced in Corinth concerning the

resurrection.

Gordon D. Fee conveniently summarizes the main positions that have emerged about the Corinthian situation in chapter 15.¹⁰³ (1) The opponents were Jews with a Sadducean theology that totally rejected resurrection. (2) The Corinthians had adopted the Greek philosophical view of the immortality of the soul while rejecting the resurrection of the body. (3) The opponents had adopted Gnostic views and denied the resurrection of Christ. (4) The Corinthians held to an "over-realized" eschatology such as was held by Hymanaeus and Philetus in 2 Timothy 2:17, 18 maintaining that in the spiritual sense the resurrection had already happened. (5) The opponents thought that by being baptized with Christ and by taking the Lord's Supper they had received present immortality and what they denied was the possibility of death itself.

To Fee's list should be added the contention of A. J. M. Wedderburn that in 1 Corinthians 15:12 Paul accurately quotes the Corinthians but does not understand their views correctly. At first glance, it looks as if they deny any future life at all (cf. Paul's argument in verses 19 and 32 especially).¹⁰⁴ As Wedderburn sees it, the Corinthians had, under Hellenistic influence, gradually spiritualized the resurrection as they had perhaps sought to reconcile their Hellenistic or Gnostic repulsion of the body with the Christian view of a bodily resurrection.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the Corinthians saw the body as inferior and Christian resurrection for them meant a restoration of this body whereas in their thinking resurrection meant a restoration of this body since in their view resurrection only involved the "self" (= soul?) and only it would survive death.¹⁰⁶

Wedderburn argues that the Corinthians *did* believe in the afterlife and that in 1 Corinthians 15:12 Paul misrepresents and misunderstands them. They do believe in the resurrection of the "self," but because Paul is so blinded by the Jewish idea of a bodily resurrection, he thinks that since they do not accept that, they also reject any kind of resurrection.¹⁰⁷

The problem with Wedderburn and others¹⁰⁸ who argue that Paul either misunderstood or misrepresented (or both) the Corinthians' view, is that they too narrowly construe Paul's argument and miss his point. In 1 Corinthians 15:12, "there is

no resurrection of the dead" means "no resurrection of dead bodies," and not that Paul fails to understand the problem. Furthermore, it may be that the opponents say: There is no resurrection of dead bodies *in the future*.¹⁰⁹ For some, the idea may have been that the resurrection in some "spiritualized" way had already happened. For them to say that it had already happened was in Paul's view, a denial of resurrection. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 15:35 Paul clarifies his argument and discusses directly the problem of the opponents: What kind of resurrection body will there be?

Evidently the opponents in chapter 15, as Fee shows, were those who thought that by the gift of tongues they had already arrived at the time spiritually to be (1 Corinthians 4:8) and had already begun a form of angelic existence (1 Corinthians 13:1; cf. 4:9; 7:1-7) in which the body was unwanted or unneeded. Therefore, life in the spirit denigrated things of the body which itself was inferior. And, for it to be raised was anathema. Also, they may have thought that by baptism and the Lord's Supper they had a "magical" way to obtain this "spirituality." This may explain why they practiced baptism for the dead. By it they too, although dead, could have a similar spiritual experience to theirs, not that the opponents believed, however, that the dead bodies of their friends and relatives would be raised. As Fee says, Paul was correcting "bad theology" which was based on a radical pneumaticism that denied the value of the body and manifested itself in an over-realized or spiritualized eschatology.¹¹⁰

Paul's argument on chapter 15 begins with tradition material likely known throughout the church (vv. 1-11). He emphasizes that a dead body was buried and raised, and not some spiritual entity (vv. 3-5). The catalogue of post-resurrection appearances also emphasizes the bodily resurrection in that it was a real body people saw and not a spiritual vision (vv. 5-7).¹¹¹

Chapter 15 is divided into two main sections: vv. 12-34 and vv. 35-58. Both major sections end with an ethical appeal (vv. 33, 34 and v. 58). It is possible that he has three groups in mind in chapter 15: (1) vv. 1-11: those who accept Paul's view of resurrection; (2) vv. 12-34: those who deny any kind of resur-

rection, bodily or spiritual; (3) vv. 35-58: those who deny the bodily resurrection. However, it is most likely that he is dealing with only one set of opponents in Corinth.

In vv. 12-34, Paul's argument has two components: (1) vv. 12-28: he shows how illogical it is for them not to believe in his view of the resurrection (which is both bodily and future); and (2) vv. 29-34: in an *ad hominem* appeal, he further shows the practical absurdity in their daily lives of failure to accept the resurrection.

In vv. 35-58, the argument moves in three steps: (1) vv. 36-44: he prepares the way for the idea of a spiritual body by reference to seeds and different animal bodies; (2) vv. 45-49: he illustrates by reference to the Adam/Christ analogy, picked up from verses 21 and 22, that we have the characteristics of both the first and second Adam; (3) vv. 50-57: Paul points out the absolute necessity for a changed body in order to gain the heavenly existence.¹¹²

The Corinthians thought they had already gained spiritual, heavenly existence and all they needed was to cast off the body at death and thereby gain ultimate spirituality. Paul rejects this totally, realizing that at stake was the doctrine of creation. God created all things good, but due to the Fall the creation came under the curse. For Paul, the material universe must also experience the redemptive side of Christ's work (cf. Romans 8:18ff.). Thus the physical body must be transformed so that the corruptible puts on the incorruption at the Eschaton.¹¹³

Conclusion

Speaking uncritically, one might argue that the type of resurrection pictured in the Gospels is based on the more physical, fleshly type found in some intertestamental literature, while the Pauline type (except for 1 Thessalonians) is founded on the more spiritualized kind of resurrection found in other intertestamental material. This dichotomy is resolved by Paul, if it was ever in his mind, by his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15. In one breath, he can talk of the physical body, and in the other he can speak of the raised "spiritual body" which in itself seems almost to be a contradiction in

terms. To say the least, for Paul the resurrection body will be a transformed one, and although in some way the physical body is raised, it will not enter the heavenly sphere in that mode of existence, but will be changed. These kinds of details he does not work out.

NOTES

¹"Die Christuspartie in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der alten Kirche der apostle Petrus in Rom," *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie*, 4 (1831): 61-206. Also see in the same periodical for 1836, no. 4, "Einige weitere Bemerkungen über die Christuspartie in Corinth." Cited in Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), 135, note 1.

²Nils A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21," in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1967), 314.

³T. W. Manson, *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles*, ed. Matthew Black (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1962), 193.

⁴R. St. John Parry, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1916), xxxiii.

⁵Ibid., xxvii.

⁶W. O. Fitch, "Paul, Apollos, Cephas, Christ," *Theology* 74 (January 1971): 24.

⁷Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistische mysterienreligionen*, cited in John Howard Schutz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1975), 188.

⁸Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1971), 114.

⁹Some scholars find a continuation of the disputes in 2 Corinthians.

¹⁰Parry, *Corinthians*, xxvii.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 37.

¹³Munck, *Paul*, 167.

¹⁴See the analysis by Dahl, "Paul," 314.

¹⁵C. K. Barrett, "Cephas and Corinth," in *Abraham Unser Vater*, ed. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel, and Peter Schmidt (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1963), 1.

¹⁶Ibid., 2.

¹⁷Christian Maurer, "schisma," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 7:963-64. (Hereafter cited as TDNT.)

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Barrett, "Cephas," 2.

²⁰Munck, *Paul*, 136.

²¹Ibid., 138.

²²The word "party" is used in this lesson not to indicate actual splits at Corinth, but to designate quarreling opinion centers.

²³Munck, *Paul*, 150-52.

²⁴Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975), 34.

²⁵Dahl, "Paul," 323-26.

²⁶Vincent P. Branick, "Source and Redaction Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1-3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (June 1982): 268-69.

²⁷E. Peterson, "1 Korinther 1, 18f. und die Thematik des jüdischen Busstages," *Biblica* 32 (1951): 97-103.

²⁸L. L. Welborn, "On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient Politics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (March 1987): 86.

²⁹Ibid., 89-90.

³⁰C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2d ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), 43. In antiquity ancient political parties formed around personalities and took on the name of those individuals whose interests they served. In antiquity the political parties did not take on names such as "Republican," "Democrat," or "Labor." See Welborn, "Discord," 90.

³¹Ibid. Welborn, "Discord," 102 notes that ancient writers considered rhetoric to lie at the root of all discord in ancient city-states.

³²Parry, *Corinthians*, xxxii.

³³When Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 attacked false wisdom, he possibly adopts the vocabulary of his opponents. Wilckens argues that the use of wisdom characterized Paul's opponents who were Jewish Gnostics. See Ulrich Wilckens, "sophia," TDNT, 7:465-526. Welborn, "Discord," 102 argues that often Paul uses *sophia* in 1 Corinthians to refer to nothing but rhetoric.

³⁴Parry, *Corinthians*, xxx.

³⁵Winfred Knox, *Paul* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1932), 91.

³⁶Barrett, *Corinthians*, 44. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 57 says that nothing in 1 Corinthians suggests a Judaizing faction.

³⁷Parry, *Corinthians*, xxxiv.

³⁸Barrett, *Corinthians*, 45. Roy A. Harrisville, *1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 35 takes it as a real party reflecting an orientation to the risen Lord with little interest in the crucified Jesus. They had a magical view of baptism and were split over who baptized them. Therefore, Paul downplays his role in baptizing at Corinth.

³⁹F. Godet, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 1, trans. A. Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 71. See his excellent survey of the problem in the older works.

⁴⁰H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3d rev. ed. (London: Methuen & Co., 1911), xxi.

⁴¹S. F. G. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: S.P.C.K., 1957), 139.

⁴²Manson, *Studies*, 207.

⁴³The presence of Jews in Corinth is attested to by an inscription from their synagogue. See Barrett, *Corinthians*, 2. Also Acts 18:4 refers to a Jewish synagogue in Corinth.

⁴⁴Victor Paul Furnish, "The Jesus-Paul Debate: From Baur to Bultmann," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 47 (1964-65): 372-73.

⁴⁵J. G. Machen, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (Reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 147.

⁴⁶David Wenham, "Paul's Use of the Jesus Tradition: Three Samples," in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1984), 29. Also see S. G. Wilson, "From Jesus to Paul: The Contours and Consequences of a Debate," in *From Jesus to Paul: Studies in Honour of Francis Wright Beare*, eds. Peter Richardson and John C. Hurd (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), 8.

⁴⁷A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Paul and Jesus: The Problem of Continuity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 38 (1985): 190-91.

⁴⁸Furnish, "Jesus-Paul Debate," 373.

⁴⁹David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1971), xviii.

⁵⁰Ibid., xix.

⁵¹William Wrede, *Paulus*, cited by Johannes Weiss, *Jesus and Paul*, trans. H. J. Chator (London: Harper & Brothers, 1909), 2.

⁵²Wrede, cited by Dungan, *Sayings*, xx.

⁵³Dungan, *Sayings*, xxiv-xxv.

⁵⁴Ibid., xxv.

⁵⁵Ibid., xxii.

⁵⁶Arnold Resch, *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu*, 1904, cited by W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 3d ed. (London: S.P.C.K., 1970), 137. See also B. Fjarstedt, *Synoptic Traditions in 1 Corinthians. Themes and Clusters of Theme Words in 1 Corinthians 1-4 and 9* (Uppsala, Sweden: Theologiska Institutionen, 1974). See

also the list of allusions compiled by Peter Richardson and Peter Gooch, "Logia of Jesus in 1 Corinthians," in *The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels*, Gospel Perspectives vol. 5, ed. David Wenham (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1984), 45-50.

⁵⁷Victor Paul Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 59.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Samuel Sandmel, "Parallellomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (March 1962): 1-13.

⁶⁰Dungan, *Sayings*, xxi.

⁶¹Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, vol. 1 (London: SCM Press, 1971), 187-88.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 189.

⁶³Dungan, *Sayings*, xxvi-xxvii.

⁶⁴Furnish, "Jesu-Paul Debate," 372-74.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 381.

⁶⁶Dungan, *Sayings*, 139.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 146.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 147.

⁶⁹Donald Joseph Selby, *Toward the Understanding of St. Paul* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), 306.

⁷⁰For example, see Davies, *Paul*, 141 and Furnish, *Theology*, 53.

⁷¹H. A. A. Kennedy, *The Theology of the Pauline Epistles*, 103, cited by A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors*, new rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1961), 51.

⁷²Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 120 says that this regulation given by the historical Jesus is also that of the exalted Lord. It is, he says, a "supratemporal command."

⁷³Pauline authorship of the Pastorals is assumed.

⁷⁴Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 196.

⁷⁵Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (London: SCM Press, 1964), 202-3.

⁷⁶Johanes Weiss, *Unchristentum*, 167, cited in Charles A. Anderson Scott, *Christianity According to St. Paul* (Cambridge, England: At the University Press, 1932), 13.

⁷⁷C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1970), 1.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM Press, 1971), 353.

⁸¹H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 158.

⁸²Russell, *Method*, 357-59.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 360-61.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 364.

⁸⁵Evans, *Resurrection*, 11.

⁸⁶Rowley, *Faith*, 164.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 167. See also Psalm 16:10; 31:5; 49:14, 15; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Isaiah 25:8.

⁸⁹Russell, *Method*, 376.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 377.

⁹¹*Ibid.*

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³*Ibid.*, 378.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 379.

⁹⁶H. C. C. Cavallin, *Life After Death* (Lund, Sweden: CWR Gleerup, 1974), 17.

⁹⁷Evans, *Resurrection*, 14.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁹H. A. Guy, *The New Testament Doctrine of the "Last Things"* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 52-53.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 150.

¹⁰²Harrisville, *1 Corinthians*, 247.

¹⁰³Fee, *Corinthians*, 715, note 6. See also the survey by A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Problem of the Denial of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians XV," *Novum Testamentum* 23 (July 1981): 229-33. See also John Howard Schutz, "Apostolic Authority and the Control of Tradition: 1 Cor. XV," *New Testament Studies* 15 (July 1969): 440 and Bernardin Schneider, "The Corporate Meaning and Background of 1 Cor. 15. 45b— 'O Eschatos Adam Eis Pneuma Zoi Opoioun,'" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (July 1967): 144-61.

¹⁰⁴Wedderburn, "The Problem of Denial," 229.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 239.

¹⁰⁷See John Ruef, *Paul's First Letter to Corinth*, Pelican New Testament Commentaries (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1971), 163.

¹⁰⁸Christopher L. Mearns, "Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of 1 Corinthians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22 (October 1984): 26.

¹⁰⁹Fee, *Corinthians*, 715-16. Also see E. Earle Ellis, "Soma in First Corinthians," *Interpretation* 44 (April 1990): 41.

¹¹⁰Fee, *Corinthians*, 718.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 775-78. On v. 50 see especially Joachim Jeremias, "Flesh and Blood Cannot Inherit the Kingdom of God," *New Testament Studies* 2 (February 1956), 154.

¹¹²Fee, *Corinthians*, 778.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

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BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND CORINTH

JACK P. LEWIS

Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey following his visit of limited evangelistic success in Athens (Acts 17:34). After his preaching to the Jews in the synagogue was rejected, he turned to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). While in Corinth, he had a vision urging him to continue his evangelism: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9, 10). He remained in Corinth until Gallio came to proconsulship (Acts 18:12). Later he wrote the Corinthians a letter which we no longer have (1 Corinthians 5:9), he wrote the first Corinthians letter during his stay in Ephesus on the third journey, and later he visited Corinth again while on that third journey. He likely wrote the Roman letter from there.

Paul, upon arriving in Corinth on the second journey, was associated with a Jew of Pontus named Aquila who, with his wife Priscilla, had recently come from Rome because Claudius had ordered Jews to leave Rome (Acts 18:2). It is assumed that this decree of Claudius is that reported by Suetonius in his life of Claudius: "Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (*impulsore Chresto*) he expelled them from Rome."¹ The same decree is also mentioned in the fifth century by Orosius who is dependent on Suetonius.²

The date of Paul's first visit to Corinth has been established by a fragmentary inscription found in the excavations of Delphi in 1905 which deals with the proconsulship of Gallio.³ Jews accused Paul before Gallio of "persuading men to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13); but Gallio refused to accept jurisdiction (Acts 18:15). Since the proconsulship was a one-

year appointment beginning on July 1, it is likely that Paul arrived in Corinth somewhere about A.D. 49 and was there until A.D. 51. The chronology of Paul's life is calculated backward and forward from this point.⁴ The inscription establishes that Gallio was proconsul of Achaia in the first half of A.D. 52. He must have entered that office in the summer of A.D. 51. Paul's stay in Corinth of a year and six months seems to have been largely past before Gallio arrived (cf. Acts 18:18); hence, Paul's arrival may be dated A.D. 49/50. Paul would likely have arrived in Ephesus on the third journey in A.D. 52, and his two years and six months visit there (cf. Acts 20:31), including the writing of the first Corinthian letter, would extend to A.D. 54. He would then be in Corinth the second time for three months in the winter of A.D. 54/55.

Ancient inscriptional evidence unearthed in Corinth attests a severe famine in Corinth in A.D. 51 which by our chronology would be while Paul was there. Paul speaks metaphorically of the need of sowing bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6). Evidence of some wealth among the Corinthians may be read into their willingness to aid Paul (2 Corinthians 11:7, 8), though he refused the offer. Also he could call on the Corinthians to aid in the contribution for Jerusalem with his hint that they are better off than the Macedonians who gave out of poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1-7).

MATERIALS FOR THE TEXT OF 1 CORINTHIANS

The text of Paul's Corinthian letter is represented in the five major Greek codices: Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Beza, and Ephraem. But of more interest for the twentieth century has been the recovery of the Chester Beatty Papyri which date in the beginning of the third century. In that collection p⁴⁵ is the oldest extant copy of 1 Corinthians; but other papyrus witnesses include p¹¹, p¹⁴, p¹⁵, p³⁴, p⁶¹, p⁶⁸. The dates of these manuscripts, their content, and their present place of deposit can be seen in the table in the back of the Nestle Greek text. The uncial and cursive witnesses to the text are listed in the table of the Introduction, p. 51.

THE CITY

While the remains found in Corinth show scattered settlements in the area going back to the fourth millennium B.C., the city became significant in the seventh century. Then the city went into a decline with the rise in power of Athens in the sixth century B.C. It fought with the rest of the Greeks against the Persians. After Greece lost its independence to the Macedonians in the time of Philip II and Alexander, Corinth became the head of the Hellenic League. Ancient Corinth was destroyed by the Roman commander Mummius in 146 B.C.; the men were killed and the women and children taken into slavery. Corinth lay in ruins for a hundred years until rebuilt in 44 B.C. by Julius Caesar who supplied the area with veterans and emancipated Greeks from Rome as new colonists. He named the city *Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis*.⁵ In 27 B.C. Corinth became the capital of Achaia and was reconstituted as a senatorial province by Claudius in A.D. 44. Corinth was a Roman city only about a hundred years old in Paul's time, and a large part of the inscriptions found in the excavations are in Latin as also are the legends on the coins found. The official language was Latin, but the common speech of the populace was probably Greek. The city was still in the midst of its rebirth at the time of Paul. Reconstruction was under way, and that fact gives substance to his admonition about spiritual building (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

Strabo in 29 B.C., three-quarters of a century before Paul, made his second visit to Corinth and left a description.⁶ Pausanias, a century after Paul, visited Corinth and described the sights to be seen there.

The archaeological excavation of the site of Corinth was made possible through a devastating earthquake of 1856. The old site was abandoned in favor of a new one about four miles to the northeast where the modern city stands some fifty-three miles from Athens. Only a few houses of a small village occupy the ancient site. Early excavations were begun by Dörpfeld in 1886, and more was done by Skial in 1892. Then beginning in 1896, work on the site has been carried on for many years by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens. Over the

one hundred years of excavation, Corinth has become one of the most excavated places in the world.⁷ The excavation has revealed occupation levels back to the fourth millennium B.C., long before the time of Paul; but the early city is outside our present purview. A small but good museum has been built on the site, and it houses the outstanding finds which have been made.

Corinth has the good fortune of having an extremely favorable location. Since it dominates the land neck joining the peninsula with the Greek mainland, it has control of north-south land trade. The Saronic Gulf of the Aegean Sea is seven miles away on the east, and the Gulf of Corinth of the Ionian Sea is two miles away on the west. Corinth was master of two harbors.⁸ The less than four miles wide isthmus of Corinth joined the Peloponnese to the main part of Achaia; but it also offered an alternative to the dangerous two hundred-mile voyage around Cape Malea. Strabo said, "When you double Malea, forget your home."⁹ Merchants found it advantageous to off-load merchandise at Lechaëum on the west, haul it across the isthmus, and reload at Cenchreae on the east. Small ships were hauled across the isthmus on the *doilcos* and relaunched on the other side.¹⁰ Excavation of this curbed flagstone road suggests that it was first built before 600 B.C.¹¹ Already in antiquity, Nero dreamed of a canal across the isthmus and, using 6,000 slaves as labor, began digging in A.D. 67; but it was not until 1893 that the dream was realized in the completion of the Corinthian Canal by Lesseps. The commercial location and the Isthmian games brought all sorts of people, including Jews and pagans, to Corinth.

The area around Corinth is agriculturally rich and is commented on by classical writers.¹² Its products have contributed to English the word "current" which is a medieval corruption of Corinth.¹³ Paul uses agricultural terminology in 1 Corinthians 9 when he argues from Deuteronomy 25:4, "You shall not muzzle an ox which is treading out the grain" (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:9-11).

The seven of the original thirty-eight fluted, standing Doric columns of the temple commonly called that of Apollo built in the sixth century B.C. reflect some of the grandeur of the

ancient city. The columns are twenty-four feet high and six in diameter. Each is of one stone rather than being of stacked drums as most columns in Greece were. The temple is mentioned by Pausanias who visited Corinth in the second century A.D.

Towering over the city is the 1,886-foot high Acrocorinthus where the temple of Aphrodite once stood. Today there are remnants of Venetian and Turkish walls around it still visible. The city walls descending from the acropolis and surrounding the city are described by Strabo.¹⁴ Both Strabo and Pausanias mention the Temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinthus summit.¹⁵

The fountain of Peirene where in mythology Bellerophon with the aid of Athena captured Pegasus the flying horse still has its main water-conduit in use. The fountains were fed by miles of conduits dug in clay to collect water from a stratum of porous rock. The flying horse became a city emblem and was used on the coins of the city.

The Glauke fountain was unearthed by archaeologists with its marble lion-headed spouts still in place. The fountain is named for a princess in Corinthian mythology and is a mass of rock with four reservoirs. The surrounding rock has been quarried away leaving the sacred place to the height of the original surface.

Excavations along the Lechaëum road (which led from the port two miles away southward into the Agora) uncovered a road twenty to twenty-five feet wide paved with limestone and lined with colonnades and shops. Remains of various workshops open onto the road. In a similar workshop Paul labored with Aquila and Priscilla in tent-making.

A long block of stone (eighteen inches long) with crude lettering (averaging about three inches in height) was found in 1898 at the foot of the steps of the Propyleia. The eight letters were restored to read "Synagogue of the Hebrews." Adolf Deissmann dated the inscription between 100 B.C. and A.D. 200 and thought its poor workmanship might illustrate the low social strata from which Paul's converts came.¹⁶ Philo speaks of Jews in Corinth.¹⁷ While it is now thought the inscription likely dates later than the time of Paul, it is a

reminder of the Jewish community in Corinth and that Paul did preach in the synagogue (Acts 18:4). Whatever its date, the inscription uses "Hebrews" as Paul does (2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:5) rather than "Jews." A stone of the fifth century A.D. which was once the top of a pillar is decorated with three examples of the seven-branched candelabra. There are also palm branches and citron in the decoration.

The Lechaëum road led to a broad staircase of the Propyleia (entrance) which would have had a monumental gate opening into the Agora. In ancient times this gateway was surmounted by two four-horse chariots of gilded bronze. In one chariot rode Helios the Sun-God and in the other his son Phaëthon. The Agora was the center of life of a Greek city, and there Paul could have encountered crowds of people. The Agora at Corinth has been carefully uncovered and studied by archaeologists. It was paved with marble and was six hundred feet long and three hundred feet wide.

The north side of the Agora has a row of shops of Roman date with an earlier colonnaded stoa back of it.

The south stoa of the Agora was reconstructed in the Roman period with thirty-three shops each of which except two had a well sunk to connect it with the tunnel leading to the reservoir, Peirene. In addition to giving a supply of fresh water, the well could be used for cooling purposes to preserve perishable commodities. A door jamb of one of the shops had scratched in graffiti the inscription "Lucius the Butcher" (*Lucius lanus*). Ancient markets tended to group together shops of like goods. A Latin inscription contained the word *macellum* which is the word used by Paul to describe the market in Corinth (1 Corinthians 10:25; *makellon*).¹⁸

On the south side of the Agora was a colonnade more than five hundred feet long of Doric columns forming one of the largest buildings in Greece. A mosaic on the floor of a large room depicted a nude victor of an athletic contest (likely at Isthmia) with a leafy crown and holding a palm branch as the emblem of his victory. He stands before the seated figure of the goddess Eutychia (Good Fortune) whom he had come to thank for his victory. Behind this south stoa was a basilica, and on the east side was another of identical plan and dimension which is

called the Julian Basilica. Within it were found statues of several members of the Roman family. The road to Cenchreae led off from the east side of the Agora. Paul, coming to Corinth from Athens, would most likely have come to the Agora by this road.

The large Agora in two levels was open to the sky, its southern half eight feet higher than the northern half. A row of buildings separated them. In the lower level to the north was found an elevated platform or *bema* (judgment seat or speaker's platform) rising eight feet above its surroundings. If the structure is properly identified, it becomes a candidate for the *bema* where Paul was taken by the Jews of Corinth to be judged by Gallio, proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12-17). Before it also the mob beat Sosthenes, the chief of the synagogue, while Gallio ignored the action. Later Christians built over the place a church building which flourished in the tenth century. A Corinthian Latin inscription reads "from the *rostra*." Latin *rostra* corresponds with Greek *bema* and was used for any raised platform.

The theater was built in the fourth century B.C. but was later reconstructed (including in the Roman period) for various purposes. Seating eighteen thousand, it served for presentation of dramas and for public assemblies of various sorts. At a time later than Paul, a high wall of the theater was painted with the scene of Androcles removing the thorn from the lion's paw. In the northwest of Corinth and in the vicinity of the ruined theater, a paving block reused in the second century A.D. was found in 1929 with a Greek inscription. It stated that the pavement was the work of Erastus, who, as *aedilis* or Commissioner of Public Works, laid the pavement at his own expense.¹⁹ This official is generally identified with the Erastus who was associated with Paul and who, in the Roman letter (Romans 16:23 cf. Acts 19:22; 2 Timothy 4:20), is called the city treasurer (*oikonomos*). There is also on the stage of the theater a portion of a column which has the name Sosthenes (cf. Acts 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:1). A fourth-century B.C. theater inscription had "belonging to the girls" which suggests that a section was reserved for the prostitutes of Aphrodite. Respectable women did not attend the theater.

The Odeion at Corinth was built in the first century B.C. to accommodate audiences interested in plays and music.

The amphitheater which was three-quarters of a mile to the east from the civic center was the only Roman amphitheater in Greece and was used for gladiatorial shows.

The temple of Asklepios, the god of healing, had a dining room, stone beds, bedside tables, and stone pillows. A small room in the Corinth museum has pottery models of various parts of the body healed by the god which are thought to have been votive offerings. The temple had its box to receive offerings for its upkeep.

Corinth was a significant center for the making of pottery. An extensive potters' quarters was located just inside the west wall of the city. Quantities of vases either broken or discarded were found. The museum has a collection of vases manufactured about Corinth at various periods. Paul in writing to the Romans (Romans 9:21) used the figure of the potter and the clay. Its source is likely Jeremiah 18:1-10; but it also fits the trade of Corinth, especially in the light of Paul's image for the gospel as a treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Archaeological evidence of a Christian community in Corinth is much later than Paul. There are gravestones from the fourth century A.D. The earliest basilica dates from the end of the fourth century.²⁰

ISTHMIA

In evaluating Paul's relation to Corinth, one must also consider Isthmia which lay ten miles away near the east end of what later became the canal. The isthmus was the site of the famous Isthmian games under the direction of the Corinthians in honor of Poseidon, the god of the sea, which were only second in importance to the Olympian games. While Scripture has no account of Paul's ever having been in Isthmia, it is inconceivable that he knew nothing of it. In fact, some scholars conjecture that his imagery of the games (1 Corinthians 9:24-27) came from that area.²¹

Pausanias says,

Worth seeing here are a theater and a white-marble

race-course. Within the sanctuary of the god stand on one side portrait statues of athletes who have won victories at the Isthmian games, on the other side pine trees growing in a row, the greater number of them rising up strait. On the temple, which is not very large, stand bronze Tritons. In the fore-temple are images, two of Poseidon, a third of Amphitrite, and a Sea, which also is of bronze. The offerings inside were dedicated in our time by Herodes the Athenian, four horses, gilded except for the hoofs, which are ivory, and two gold Tritons, beside the horses, with parts below the waist of ivory. On the car stand Amphitrite and Poseidon, and there is the boy Palaemon upright upon a dolphin.²²

The stadium and the theater of Isthmia have always been visible above ground, but the location of the sanctuary to Poseidon and Palaemon were unknown before 1952 when they began to be excavated by a University of Chicago expedition. The temple to Poseidon, which went back to the seventh century, underwent destructions and reconstructions one of which was 390 B.C. It remained standing until the sixth century A.D.

Fifty yards from the sanctuary to Poseidon was the theater built in the fifth or fourth century B.C. but which was reconstructed at various times down to the time of Nero. In A.D. 66 Nero made his proclamation of freedom and Roman citizenship for the province in the theater, and at that time he broke ground with a golden spade for the Corinthian canal.²³ In the Isthmian competition, he was awarded first prize in musical composition and in heralding; however, some manipulation of the judges seems to have taken place.

There were two stadiums in Isthmia about three hundred yards apart from each other. Multitudes of delegates, athletes, vendors, and entertainers came for the games held every two years. Tents would have been needed for the crowds, and Paul was a tentmaker. An amphora found at Isthmia shows four runners competing (nude as Greeks did) in a race. The winners in the games received a coveted perishable wreath from the umpire. Some wreaths were of pine

and some of withered wild celery.²⁴ Paul asks,

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable (1 Corinthians 9:24, 25).

Dio Chrysostom of Prusa describes the Isthmian festival.²⁵ Among other events, boxers engaged each other with the knuckles strapped with leather thongs to render blows more effective. Paul says, "I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:26). Paul uses the word *pykteuein* which occurs in an epitaph of a second-century gladiator Danaos: "Having been in combat nine times, he went to Hades."²⁶

CENCHREAE

A third site of interest for Paul's relation with the Christians is Cenchreae (today Kenchreai) which was the Aegean (eastern) seaport on the Saronic Gulf seven miles from Corinth. It was here on the second mission journey in the company of Aquila and Priscilla that Paul cut his hair because he had a vow before he sailed for Syria and came to Ephesus on the way (Acts 18:18). Here Phoebe for whom Paul wrote a letter of introduction to the Roman Christians had been a servant of the church (Romans 16:1, 2). Paul would have sailed from here to Syria on his third journey had not a plot of the Jews made it expedient for him to return through Macedonia (Acts 20:3).

Cenchreae is located seven kilometers from the Corinthian Canal. Excavations were first undertaken by the American School of Classical Studies supported by the University of Chicago and Indiana University in 1963.²⁷ The underwater survey traced out foundation remains of buildings. Many unbroken cooking pots and large amphorae were found as though dropped overboard from ships. Trenches were dug alongside the north and south Moles and the south Pier. The finds are important for the history of the site and the tech-

niques used are important for excavating other like sites, but are not directly related to specific biblical questions. Over 1,500 coins were recovered, nearly all of them bronze or copper, and most parallel Corinthian coins.²⁸

Pausanias said that on the road from the isthmus to Cenchreae stood a temple and an ancient image of Aphrodite:

In Cenchreae are a temple and a stone statue for Aphrodite, after it on the mole running into the sea a bronze image of Poseidon, and at the other end of the harbour sanctuaries of Asclepius and of Isis. Right opposite Cenchreae is Helen's Bath. It is a large stream of salt, tepid water, flowing from a rock into the sea.²⁹

CULT

Much of the classical cult continued in Corinth in Paul's day. The impressive temple to Apollo speaks for itself. A shrine to Athena celebrated Athena's aid to Bellerophon in taming the horse Pegasus. She was depicted on coins as the Horse-Tamer. Poseidon, the god of the sea and of the earthquakes of which Corinth was a center, had a shrine in the Agora though the chief center of his worship was at Isthmia. The fountain of Glauke was the center of worship of a princess of that name. Hera had a shrine nearby. Outside the civic center was the temple to Asklepios, the god of healing, and to his daughter Hygieia which continued to function until the end of paganism. The spring Lerna supplied water. A large building had compartments about an open court some of which were dining rooms. It was a sort of pagan hospital.

On the Acrocorinthus was the temple to the goddess Aphrodite with practices which no doubt contributed to the need of Paul to warn the Corinthians about sex morals. Aphrodite was represented in the armor of Ares (Mars). His shield served as a mirror and his helmet as a foot rest. Smaller gods such as Isis and Serapis had shrines along the way to the Acrocorinthus. Marble heads of Serapis have been found in the excavations. Jews also had a synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:4-8).³⁰

LETTERS

Paul repeatedly alludes to the custom of writing letters. He has written a letter to the Corinthians which we no longer have (1 Corinthians 5:9). He expects the Corinthians to accredit by letters their own messenger for carrying the collection (1 Corinthians 16:3). The papyri of Egypt furnish a wealth of information on letter writing customs and style for the New Testament period.³¹ Paul follows the style of good Greek letter writing in his giving thanks to God (1 Corinthians 1:4). A papyrus letter reads, "I thank the lord Serapis that. . . ." ³² Paul's statement, "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand" (1 Corinthians 16:21; cf. Colossians 4:18), suggests that someone else has written the body of the letter (see Romans 16:22; 2 Thessalonians 3:17, 18). It was a common practice. A papyrus letter of A.D. 16 from a certain Ptolemaeus has a note appended, "Marion his secretary wrote for him because he writes slowly." Ptolemaeus then appends his own signature.³³ A papyrus of A.D. 343 from Theadelphia has "I, Aurelius Zoilos, have presented this petition. I . . . wrote for him since he is illiterate."³⁴

As one dictating, Paul can qualify something he has just said: "I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any one else" (1 Corinthians 1:16). Dictation was common in letter writing. Paul has the churches of Asia send greetings (*aspazesthai*; 1 Corinthians 16:19) which follows common practice in Greek letters. A second-century letter from Apion has "Salute Capito."³⁵

Paul insists that he does not need a letter of recommendation from the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 3:1), but he suggests that the Corinthians commend their messenger by letters (1 Corinthians 16:3). Egypt has furnished papyrus examples of such letters of commendation.³⁶

OBJECTS

Paul speaks to the Corinthians of seeing in a mirror dimly (1 Corinthians 13:13) and of "beholding the glory of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). The mirror (*esoptron*; cf. James 1:23) of the New Testament world was likely similar to the bronze

mirrors which have been found in excavations in Palestine which reflected less accurately than those we know made of glass. Josephus in describing the gates of the temple in Jerusalem speaks of the quality of Corinthian bronze.³⁷ Excavations of the spring of Pirene turned up an oven for heating bronze and a bench for working it. Also a bronze mirror made in a Corinthian shop has been found. The handle is in the form of a girl (*kore*) and shows the skill of the workman.³⁸

Paul uses the mirror (*esoptron*) as a figure of indirect knowledge: "For now we see in a mirror dimly" (1 Corinthians 13:12; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18). The Epistle of James also speaks of seeing one's face in a mirror (James 1:23). In addition to the examples of ancient mirrors found about the Mediterranean world, mirrors are alluded to in votive inscriptions and papyrus documents. A mirror is dedicated to Amphitrite, and there are other dedications. A fourth century A.D. letter says, "as through a mirror you have seen my implanted affection and love for you ever fresh" which is the only known metaphorical reference to mirrors in documentary sources. This letter also provides a verb form to compare with *katoptrizomenoi* (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:18) which is translated: "beholding [or reflecting] the glory of the Lord."³⁹

Paul alludes to "sounding brass" (*chalkos echon*; RSV; "noisy gong"). It is of interest to remember that Corinth was a center for bronze workmanship famous over the Mediterranean.⁴⁰ Most of the classical descriptions speak of conditions before the Roman destruction of Corinth. The industry continued, however, in the Roman city with high prices charged and select pieces from earlier times being collector's items.⁴¹ Pausanias reports that the metal, when red-hot, was tempered by the waters of the Peirene spring.⁴² Bronze was used for making figurines. Working the metal must have made a significant contribution to the economy of Corinth.⁴³

CUSTOMS

Synagogue Matters

After having been rejected by the synagogue and turning to the Gentiles in Corinth, Paul went into the house of Titius

Justus who is described as "a worshiper of God" (*sebomenou ton theon*; Acts 18:7). An Ephesus inscription of the imperial period speaks of one being pious (*eusebon*) toward the goddess Artemis.⁴⁴ Particularly exciting at this period in history is the distinction made in an Aphrodisias inscription between Jews, proselytes, and God-fearers. Scholars have long argued over whether or not there was a special group of Jewish sympathizers who had not yet accepted circumcision and become proselytes. The Book of Acts uses the descriptions "man who feared [*phoboumenos*] God" (Acts 10:2; cf. 13:16, 26) and "devout [*sebomenon*] Greeks" (Acts 17:4). There is also the accusation that Paul teaches men to worship God (*sebesthai ton theon*) contrary to the law (Acts 17:13).

There has never been a dispute that these terms could be used for Jews; but how about sympathetic outsiders? An inscription in the theater of Miletus reserves seats for "Jews who are also called God-fearing" (*theosebion*).⁴⁵ At Aphrodisias there are Jews and "God-fearers" (*theosebeis*) for whom there are fifty-four Gentile names. In addition, there is an inscription from the Odeum which speaks of "the place of those who are complete Hebrews."⁴⁶ While *theosebes* is in the New Testament only in John 9:31 and *theosebeia* only in 1 Timothy 2:10, the evidence seems persuasive that there was such a group about the synagogue. Their number and extent across the Roman world we do not yet have evidence to calculate.

In Corinth, Crispus the ruler of the synagogue (*archisynagogos*; Acts 18:8) believed. When the Jews attempted to arraign Paul before Gallio and were spurned, they spent their wrath in beating Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue (*archisynagogos*; Acts 18:17). A synagogue inscription found on the Ophel Hill in Jerusalem in 1914 speaks of three successive generations who have held this position. A marble portion of a plaque from the imperial period found on the Acrocorinthus has an inscription which has been reconstructed by its editor to read "teacher and arch[isynagog]os of the [synagogue of Corinth]." Since only five of the letters of the crucial term are readable, the validity of the reconstruction is quite doubtful. Horsley gives a list of known documentary occurrences of the noun in the imperial period and also gives a discussion of the

position of this leader of the synagogue. He notices that there are no known occurrences in the papyri. He thinks the title was both functional and honorific; that there may have been more than one in a community; and that in rare cases the position was held by females. Later Christian Ebionites used the title for elders of their congregations.⁴⁷

Slave Redemption

Paul speaks of "a freeman of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:22) and says, "You were bought with a price, do not become slaves of men" (1 Corinthians 7:23). Deissmann points out that for the slaves in the Corinthian congregation Paul could not have found a more popular illustration.⁴⁸ Paul frequently uses the expression *doulos christou* ("slave of Christ") and also speaks of *apeleutheroi kuriou* ("freedman of the Lord"; 1 Corinthians 7:22). A Latin inscription speaks of "freedman of the god Aesculapius."⁴⁹ Paul, in speaking of a man's staying in the condition in which he was called, uses the phrase "remain with God" (1 Corinthians 7:24). Documents speak of the freed slave "let Clinus abide with Euphronius . . . behaving decently."⁵⁰ At Delphi inscriptions tell of slaves bought from their masters in the name of Apollo and regarded then as his slaves.⁵¹ A freedman dedicated an inscription to his patroness in the second-third century which suggests that he stayed on in her employ as a manager. It shows something of the deterioration of the social standing of freedmen.⁵²

WORDS

The major contribution archaeology has made to the study of 1 Corinthians is in added understanding of the grammar and vocabulary used by the writer. New illustrations from the papyri continue to be published. At the same time this contribution is most difficult to share with the person who is not trained in Greek studies, for Greek phenomena have to be discussed. One is, therefore, in the position Keeble described when he asked, "Why should I preach Greek to these people who do not know any Greek?" The contribution has influenced the twentieth-century Bible translations and in some instances explains their departures from the older translations.

Despite the difficulties, we must make the effort, and we will leave it to the student to form his own opinion of how successful the effort has been. Grammatical structures, major words, and miscellaneous words will be looked at. The classification is arbitrary; and we can only give selected examples from the wealth.

Grammatical Structures

A first-century papyrus of unknown provenance opens with "concerning the things about which you asked." While similar, the wording is not exactly parallel to that used by Paul, for the papyrus begins *huper hon* instead of *peri de*.⁵³

Paul asks if he should come with a rod (*en hradbo*; 1 Corinthians 4:21) using the preposition *en* with the dative which previously was cited by scholars as an example of Semitic *beth* for instrument. While there are numerous occurrences of *en hradbo* in the Septuagint, Deissmann found Paul conforming this phrase to the following one which is translated "in a spirit of meekness" more than his reflecting the Septuagint usage.⁵⁴ Though Paul speaks figuratively, an inscription of uncertain date from Beroia mentions the *hrabdos* as a means of punishment.⁵⁵

Paul writes that each wife is to have her own (*idios*) husband where he has used *heautos* in the same sentence for the husband's having his own wife (1 Corinthians 7:2). Deissmann finds parallel uses of *idios* in late Greek writers but affirms that in 1 Corinthians 7:2 Paul is using *idios* purposefully and that it is an exact equivalent to *heautos*.⁵⁶ The word *idios* (cf. Job 7:10; Matthew 22:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:14) occurs in a second century B.C. letter in a statement which can be translated, "Take care of yourself."⁵⁷

The *ei meti an* ("except perhaps") Paul used in 1 Corinthians 7:5 has been much discussed with one theory suggesting that *an* is functioning as *ean* in this case. However, Deissmann, on papyri evidence, finds it functioning exactly as if it occurred after a hypothetical relative with the meaning "unless in a given case," or "unless perhaps."⁵⁸

The *ei tis de* ("but if anyone") of 1 Corinthians 8:2 has its parallels in Greek inscriptions: "but if anyone shall attempt to

take away. . . ."⁵⁹ The double negative is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:13: "I will never [*ou me*] eat meat" (cf. Galatians 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 5:3). A boy writes his father, "I won't [*ou me*] write you a letter. . . ."⁶⁰

Deissmann finds a parallel to Paul's use of *enochos* ("guilty") followed by the genitive (1 Corinthians 11:27) in a Greek inscription "Let them be sinners [*harmartoloi*] before all the gods" which uses the genitive.⁶¹

The idiom *hos ean* with a verb (1 Corinthians 11:34) translated "when I come" (cf. Joshua 2:14; Philippians 2:23) occurs in a first-century letter: "as soon as you discover the price"⁶²

Paul uses the phrases "unless someone interprets" (*ektos ei me*; 1 Corinthians 14:5) and "unless you believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:2). The Greek phrase is recognized as a jumbled phrase; but an example has been identified in an inscription of the imperial period of an uncertain date in Mopsuestia in Cilicia.⁶³

Paul speaks of a collection "for the saints" (*eis tous hagious*; 1 Corinthians 16:1). Using *eis* in this way had already been done in the Septuagint. In the papyri, *eis* is used to specify various purposes of the items in an account.⁶⁴

The structure *ne* (1 Corinthians 15:31; "by [my pride]") for an adjuration occurs only once in the New Testament but occurs in a letter to Flavianus of the fourth century.⁶⁵

Paul says, "I had rather speak five words . . . than ten thousand words in a tongue" (*thelo . . . e*; 1 Corinthians 14:19) which is a structure used in a second-century Greek letter: "I had rather be a cripple than be conscious that. . . ."⁶⁶

Major Words

Paul speaks of one's having a grievance (*pragma echon*) against another going to a pagan court (1 Corinthians 6:1). This phrase occurs in the early second century as one woman lodges a complaint against another for assault and robbery. She says, "although she had absolutely no ground of complaint [*meden echousa pragma*] against me."⁶⁷ Deissmann points out that the term is frequently used in the papyri in the sense of a lawsuit. The term *kriterion* (1 Corinthians 6:2, 4) for lawsuit or

legal action is illustrated by a funerary epigram: "Alas for the random judgments of Fate."⁶⁸ Paul admonishes the Corinthians to be defrauded (*apostereisthai*; 1 Corinthians 6:7, 8) rather than go to pagan courts. A second-century petition charges that certain ones in the administration are defrauding.⁶⁹ Paul's instruction is the better understood when it is remembered that Romans had granted Jews the right to be tried in Jewish courts.

Paul tells us "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and for whom we all exist" (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6). A papyrus letter contains the following invitation: "Antonius, son of Ptolemaeus, invites you to dine with him at the table of the lord Serapis in the house of Claudius Serapion on the 16th at 9 o'clock."⁷⁰ A prodigal son in the second century writes to his mother claiming "Supplication on your behalf I direct each day to the lord Serapis."⁷¹

Paul affirms that no one can confess that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Spirit. The word *kurios* ("lord") is worthy of a great deal of study. It was used in polite address as a letter of the fourth century illustrates: "For your own safety, my lord."⁷² A soldier Apion writes his father in the second century addressing him as "father and lord" and thanking the lord Serapis that he, himself, was saved from danger in the sea.⁷³ This letter illustrates its wide use for the deity in the mystery cults. Use of the term *kurios* in the emperor cult became common after the time of Nero; however, there is a lawsuit of A.D. 49 which is dated by the year of Tiberius Claudius Caesar the lord.⁷⁴ Also a register of paupers of A.D. 149 is dated by the reign of "Antoninus Caesar the lord."⁷⁵ In the second century Polycarp went to martyrdom rather than swear by the genius of Caesar, that is, to say "Lord Caesar."⁷⁶

In speaking of the "Lord's table," Paul uses an adjective *kuriakos* which occurs in the New Testament only twice (1 Corinthians 11:20; Revelation 1:10). Scholars formerly assumed that Paul coined the term. It is now known that the word was used in Egypt and the East to mean "pertaining to the

Emperor" as Lord. There are occurrences of "the Lord's treasury" and "the Lord's service." The term occurs in an inscription of the Prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Julius Alexander, which dates A.D. 68. There are also other occurrences. Paul was using the current vocabulary of the time.⁷⁷

While there is a parallel to the concept of God having a table in the Greek Old Testament (Ezekiel 39:20; 44:16; Malachi 1:7, 12 [*trapeza kurios*]), special interest must be drawn to Paul's contrast between the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21) by the two occurrences of "the table [*kline*] of the Lord Sarapis" in two letters of invitation from the second century A.D. from Oxyrhynchus. Deissmann thought Paul's phrase parallel to, rather than derived from, pagan usage.⁷⁸ A table for demons is suggested in the Greek of Isaiah 65:11.

In speaking of the testimony of Christ being "confirmed among you" and of Christ "who will sustain you to the end" (1 Corinthians 1:6, 8), Paul uses the verb *bebaioun* which occurs in eight New Testament passages. The derived noun *bebaiosis* occurs only in Philippians 1:7 and Hebrews 6:16. This word occurs in a papyrus dating A.D. 78 for a lease remaining guaranteed for a period of five years and in another of A.D. 266: "I will further guarantee the property always against all claims with every guarantee."⁷⁹ Deissmann pointed out that in the papyri this noun had come to mean a legal guarantee or a safeguarding of a bargain. Hence, he proposes that we think in these passages of legally guaranteed security.⁸⁰

The daily aspect of Paul's phrase "I die every day" (1 Corinthians 15:31) may be seen in a papyrus letter probably of the time of Hadrian from a slave to her sick master. She says, "I beseech you, lord, if you think it right, to send to us, if not, we die, because we do not see you daily."⁸¹

The collection for the saints (*logeia*; 1 Corinthians 16:1) puzzled older scholars who found this term only in the church fathers and who explained it as coming from the verb *lego* ("to speak"). But now it is identified as being used in Egypt from at least the second century B.C. There, a collection taken by members of an embalming guild is called a *logeia*. It also

occurs in taxation rolls in the sense of a "tax." An ostrakon from Egypt dating A.D. 63 speaks of "the collection of Isis on behalf of public works." The etymology of the word would now be traced back to *logeuo* meaning "to collect." The Majority Text has dropped out an *epsilon* in 1 Corinthians 16:1 and merely has *logia*.⁸²

Miscellaneous Words

Paul affirms, "For since [*epeide gar*] in the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:21) and "For [*epeide*] Jews demand signs" (1 Corinthians 1:22). The term occurs on an ostrakon of about A.D. 600: "Seeing we have requested. . . ." ⁸³ Christ is spoken of as the wisdom of God (*theou sophian*; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; cf. 12:8). An epitaph of Eumeneia of the third century reads, "God reigning in heaven gave you wisdom."⁸⁴ This same verse of Corinthians is alluded to in an inscription (*sophia is chs*) of a funerary chapel of Alexandria in the third or fourth century.⁸⁵

Paul speaks of what is "despised in the world" (*ta agene tou kosmou*; 1 Corinthians 1:28). This word *agenes* occurs in a letter of Antoninos to Gonatas in which he speaks of a "base runaway" and a "base fellow" reflecting that it is a status word.⁸⁶

A limestone stele of the fourth century from Ezana, Ethiopia, speaks of "faith" and of the "power of God" in ways comparable to Paul's phrases in 1 Corinthians 2:5.⁸⁷

The word *anthropinos* ("human") is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:13 and 10:13 in contrasting human wisdom with truths taught by the Spirit and in describing human temptations. This word is identified in a papyrus letter in the phrase "calamity which is man's lot."⁸⁸ It also occurs in an imperial appeal for reconciliation of A.D. 174/75: "join with the Athenians in their enjoyment of religious and secular matters [*kai ta anthropina*]."⁸⁹

A very fragmentary homily or commentary of unknown provenance using allegorical interpretation quotes 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.⁹⁰ Paul speaks of souls implanted in the body by God: "the spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16). An epigram of the second century reads "but our divinely-sent souls have departed on that voyage common [to all] below the

earth."⁹¹ Paul affirms that we are God's fellow workers (*synergoi*; 1 Corinthians 3:9; cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:2). *Synergoi* occurs but in a sense quite distinct from the semi-specialized meaning attached to it in New Testament Epistles.⁹²

Paul speaks of Apollos watering (1 Corinthians 3:6-8) using the verb *potizein* which in Latin is *rigare* and was used in Genesis 13:10 for watering the Jordan region that Lot chose. A first-century letter exhorts, "Hurry on the flooding of all the oliveyards . . . and water the row of trees in 'the prophet.'" ⁹³ Paul describes the apostles as "exhibited" (1 Corinthians 4:9; *apodeiknynai*). This word occurs in a personal letter in the phrase "exhibit as perfect your kindness."⁹⁴ Paul speaks of himself as being a skilled masterbuilder (*architekton*; 1 Corinthians 3:10).⁹⁵ The papyrus and inscriptional occurrences of the word show that it is wider in meaning than our word "architect." Paul informs the Corinthians that he has sent (*epempsa*) Timothy (1 Corinthians 4:17) using what grammarians call the epistolary aorist tense. A parallel is found in a papyrus letter of A.D. 50 from one Mysterion who writes, "I have sent unto you my Blastus."⁹⁶ Paul also speaks of beloved children (*tekna agapeta*; 1 Corinthians 4:14, 17; cf. Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 1:2). A related usage "beloved brothers" (*agape-toi adelphoi*) occurs in a fourth- to fifth-century letter from Egypt.⁹⁷ Paul speaks of a "spirit of gentleness" (*prautes*; 1 Corinthians 4:21; Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:25) which is an attribute of those with authority.⁹⁸

Paul speaks of "Moreover [*hodi loipon*] it is required in stewards" (1 Corinthians 4:2). A boy writes his father in the second or third century, "I won't take your hand or greet you again henceforth [*chairō se lupōn* (for *loipon*)]."⁹⁹ Paul speaks of the Corinthians reigning (*basileuein*; 1 Corinthians 4:8; cf. Matthew 2:22; Romans 5:14, 17, 21; 6:12). An Oxyrhynchus saying of Jesus says, "Having been amazed, he shall reign, and having reigned he shall rest."¹⁰⁰ Paul affirms, "We are fools for Christ's sake" (*dia christou*; 1 Corinthians 4:10). This structure finds its parallel in an ancient letter in *dia ton kurion* in the statement "But for the Lord's sake delay not to forgive me."¹⁰¹

Paul writes, "But I will come soon if the Lord wills" (1 Corinthians 4:19; cf. Acts 18:21; James 4:15). A soldier speaks of

"if the gods will."¹⁰² The formula "if God wills" had become common even among the lower strata of pagan society. From the Fayyum comes a second-century soldier's letter to his father and other private letters. There is not only the use of *thelo* (1 Corinthians 12:18; 15:38), but also "if the Lord permits" (*ho kurios epitrepse*; 1 Corinthians 16:7).¹⁰³ A letter from Rome in the second century which may be a Christian letter used *hos ho theos ethelen*.¹⁰⁴

Paul speaks of delivering the sinful man to Satan for the destruction (*plethros*) of the flesh (1 Corinthians 5:5). A magical formula of the third century says, "Come forth; O demon . . . and I will give you over to black chaos in utter destruction [*apoliais*]." ¹⁰⁵ Deissmann explains Paul's instructions about this man in sin with his stepmother in the light of the custom of devoting a person to the gods of the lower world. The phrase "deliver unto Satan" (1 Corinthians 5:4, 5; cf. 1 Timothy 1:20) is comparable to one in a London Magical Papyrus: "Daemon of the dead, . . . I deliver unto thee N. N., in order that. . . ." Deissmann further points out that the preposition *syn* in the statement "with the power of our Lord Jesus" meaning "in fellowship with" occurs in a parallel in a Paris Magical Papyrus from the third century B.C.: "I will bind her . . . in fellowship with Hecate, who is below the earth."¹⁰⁶ There is an epitaph of the imperial period which reads, "I hand him [*paradi-domi*] over to the infernal gods."¹⁰⁷

Paul in describing the sins of Corinth uses the term *malakos* (1 Corinthians 6:9) which the KJV translated as "effeminate" but which the RSV combines with the following Greek word to get "homosexuals." The NIV translates the word "male prostitutes" and the NRSV as "boy prostitutes." The word *malakos* occurs in the New Testament elsewhere only in Matthew 11:8 and Luke 7:25 where it is translated "soft clothing." An Egyptian papyrus letter about 245 B.C. has the statement, "And send us also Zenobius the effeminate [*malakon*] with tabret, and cymbals, and rattles. For the women have need of him at the sacrifice." Paul uses the word *kymbalon* ("cymbal" which occurs in this letter in 1 Corinthians 13:1).¹⁰⁸

Counters used in ancient games had numbers on one side but had on the other lists of virtues and vices which supply popular

names for them. Though "covetous" and "idolaters" are not included in pagan lists, the other words in a list like that of 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 would all occur. These show that the vices Paul condemned and the virtues he praised were also recognized as such by the best ethical minds in paganism.¹⁰⁹

In connection with sex behavior, Paul calls on the Corinthians to remember that they were bought with a price and should serve God in their bodies (1 Corinthians 6:20). He further affirmed that a slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman (1 Corinthians 7:22). Manumission documents speak of a slave "sold to the Pythian Apollo . . . for freedom."¹¹⁰ "Freedman of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:22) would correspond to "freedman of the emperor."¹¹¹ The term *apeleutheros* which Paul uses for the freedman occurs for freed persons in an A.D. 48 census return from Oxyrhynchus.¹¹²

A number of words used by Paul in his discussion of marriage problems in Corinth have illustration in the papyri. The term "unmarried" (*agamos*; 1 Corinthians 7:8, 11, 32, 34) occurs in an epitaph from Aboda in Palestine.¹¹³ An epitaph for a lady Eupraxia states that she died at age forty after twenty-two years of marriage "not having another husband." Here is a case of a widow not remarrying.¹¹⁴ A dedicatory inscription to a goddess has "In accordance with [her] injunction [*kat' epitage(n)*]" which illustrates the usage of the phrase of a divinely ordained injunction. There are other examples all of which support the contention that in Paul's usage *epitage* (1 Corinthians 7:6, 25; cf. Romans 16:26; 1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:3) has divine involvement.¹¹⁵ Paul's term *ek symphonou* ("by agreement"; 1 Corinthians 7:5) occurs in papyrus documents of the second century.¹¹⁶ A first-century document reads, "In accordance with what was agreed upon between me and Antiphanes," and a second-century one reads, "We are at harmony with each other."¹¹⁷ *Chorizomai* (RSV: "separate"; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 15) occurs as a technical expression for divorce in Fayyum papyri in the first and second centuries. Marriage contracts state conditions for a possible separation. The verb *gameo* is used for the marriage and *chorizomai* for the possible divorce.¹¹⁸ The term "command of God" (*entole theou*; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Revelation 12:7; 14:12) is in a document which

refers to imperial ordinances as "divine commandments."¹¹⁹ The term *pistos* ("faithful") which Paul uses for himself (1 Corinthians 7:25; and elsewhere) was used in epitaph inscriptions from Tyre. About one in six of those concerned are Christians. The inscriptions do not support the contention that Paul uses the term for Jewish Christians.¹²⁰ The term "virgin" (*parthenos*) occurs in an epitaph for a Jewish girl Theodosia: "Theodosia, aged eighteen, his only child and virgin."¹²¹ The crisp interrogatives Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 7:27, 28 for concise conditional mechanism would be paralleled in a letter which can be translated, "If you wish to sell it, sell it; if you wish to let your daughter have it, let her have it."¹²² Paul urges slaves to avail themselves of the opportunity to be free (*chresthai*; 1 Corinthians 7:21) but then, using the same verb, speaks of those who deal with the world as those who had no dealings with it (1 Corinthians 7:31). An infant's epitaph of the imperial period says, "I died after enjoying [*chresamene*] the light of eleven months."¹²³ Paul speaks of time being very short (*to loipon*; 1 Corinthians 7:29; cf. Acts 27:20; 2 Timothy 4:8). The adverbial use of this term is in the report of Bishop Phileas in Egypt during the persecution.¹²⁴ Paul speaks of the "form of this world" (*schema*; 1 Corinthians 7:31). This word occurs in a phrase "righteous bearing" (*schema dikaiosynes*).¹²⁵ Paul wants the Corinthians *amerimnos* ("free from anxiety"; 1 Corinthians 7:32). Family letters illustrate this term: "I became less anxious."¹²⁶ Paul seeks the undivided devotion (*aperispastos*) of the Corinthians for the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:35; cf. Luke 10:40). A letter from Memphis using this term speaks of "something more pressing occupies you."¹²⁷ Paul uses "having no necessity" (*me echon anagken*; 1 Corinthians 7:37; cf. 9:16). The term *anagken echein* occurs when referring to orders received.¹²⁸ Paul speaks of the bond of the wife while her husband lives (*eph' hoson chronon ze ho aner autes*; 1 Corinthians 7:39). A Tebtunis will of the second century uses the same phrase, "as long as her mother Thoenis lives. . . ."¹²⁹

Paul speaks of one being seen "at table in an idol's temple" (1 Corinthians 8:10). Invitations to a banquet involving the god Sarapis have been found:

Nikephros asks you to dine at a banquet of the Lord Sarapis in the Birth-House on the 23rd, from the ninth hour.

Herais asks you to dine in the (dining-) room of the Sarapeion at a banquet of the Lord Sarapis tomorrow, namely the 11th, from the ninth hour.

The god calls you to a banquet being held in the Thoreion tomorrow from the ninth hour.

There is a total of eleven known examples of this type of invitation which come from diverse areas. These texts use the word *kline* ("recline") whereas Paul uses *katakeisthai*. The word "invite" (*kalei*; 1 Corinthians 10:27) also is used. The invitations may also be relevant to illustrate meal customs in Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).¹³⁰ A fourth-century B.C. inscription gives a sacrificial calendar, occasionally using the word *trapeza* ("table") in a cultic setting. Paul warns that Corinthians cannot eat at the table of the Lord and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Paul asks, "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" (*opsonion*; 1 Corinthians 9:7; cf. Luke 3:14; 2 Corinthians 11:8). A soldier in the first century B.C. writes his wife using this term, "As soon as we receive wages [*opsonion labomen*], I will send them to you."¹³¹ Paul uses the term "gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:12). The verb *euangelizein* occurs in a second-century papyrus announcing the good news of a wedding. A study of *euangel* in documentary sources suggests that the New Testament usage, while distinctive, cannot be divorced from the wider koine usage.¹³² "Serve [*paredreuein*; 1 Corinthians 9:13] at the altar" which is in the New Testament only once occurs in the phrase "I concern myself with the course of the sun."¹³³ The Kallistos inscription of the third-fourth century is more general in speaking of "attending the gymnasium."¹³⁴ The verb *symmerizein* ("share in"; 1 Corinthians 9:13), previously found only here, is not found in a fragmentary set of agricultural accounts: "having a share of the reeds."¹³⁵ Paul says, "I am entrusted [*pepisteumai*] with a commission" (1 Corinthians 9:17; cf. Galatians 2:7; 1 Thessalo-

nians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:11; Titus 1:3). This term was used for the imperial secretary for Greek correspondence.¹³⁶

Paul affirms that he "became all things to all men, that I might by all means [*pantos*] save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). This word occurs in a strong affirmation "but at any rate [*pantos*] [send them]." ¹³⁷ Paul uses "crown" (*stephanos*) as an image from athletic contests (1 Corinthians 9:25; cf. 2 Timothy 2:5). Tombs at Rhodes know of posthumous crowns awarded to citizens.¹³⁸ Paul uses "disqualified" (*adokimos*; 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Corinthians 13:5-7; Titus 1:16). In a papyrus letter it occurs as "Greet as from me my lord the *parepositus*, together with all his [family] by name, from him as far as the disqualified [?] together with all their [families] by name." It seems to mean in this setting "from the most important to the least."¹³⁹ Paul speaks of bringing his body into subjection (*doulagogo*; 1 Corinthians 9:27). The term occurs in a first-century petition to an official in which the plaintiff complains of an opponent seeking to carry off his son into slavery (*doulagogia[n]*).¹⁴⁰

A fifth- to sixth-century Epiphany hymn fragment has the Jordan baptism incident on the *recto* while it has Mariam's song on the *verso* suggesting a connection between the two. Paul mentions the Red Sea event as a type of baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2).¹⁴¹

The word *poma* (1 Corinthians 10:4; 12:13) is used mainly of "spiritual drink." The word occurs in a funerary epigram.¹⁴² The word *epithymetai* meaning "on the other hand" (RSV: "not to desire evil"; 1 Corinthians 10:6) was used by the Greeks in a good sense but also is found in a Fayyum document in a bad sense.¹⁴³ Paul uses the word "murmur" (*gongyzein*; 1 Corinthians 10:10) in an allusion to the Greek of Numbers 14:27. This word occurs in the Septuagint, the Synoptic Gospels, and the Gospel of John, but is also used in a third century B.C. papyrus.¹⁴⁴ Paul speaks of being able to endure (*hupenegkein*) temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). A certain Dioskoros, speaking of an acquaintance, says, "We cannot endure the man."¹⁴⁵

A third-century epitaph with a cross from north Phrygia of a Christian butcher reads: "Monument of Aurelios Eustathianos, butcher." The butcher inscriptions are significant since most meat reached the table by way of pagan ritual ceremo-

nies and sacrifice (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:20-29). There are five other epitaphs for Christian butchers.¹⁴⁶ Paul speaks of consideration of the one who informed (*menyein*; 1 Corinthians 10:28; cf. Luke 20:37) you that food has been sacrificed to idols. The word occurs: "Certainly Marcus has informed you by letter of my lack of time."¹⁴⁷

A Syrian inscription of Kasr ibn Wardan dating A.D. 564 quotes in Greek Paul's phrase "all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).¹⁴⁸ "Give no offence" (*aproskopos*) has a moral force (1 Corinthians 10:32; Acts 24:16; Philippians 1:10). In a papyrus letter one assures the recipient, "I am all right" (*aproskopos imin*) using the term for physical well-being.¹⁴⁹

Paul urges the Corinthians to be (*ginou*) imitators of him (1 Corinthians 11:1; cf. 14:20; Matthew 6:16; 10:16; Galatians 4:12). This word occurs in an inscription of the third century B.C. which gives maxims of the ages of man: "While a child [try to] be well-behaved."¹⁵⁰

Paul commends the Corinthians by saying "you remember me" (1 Corinthians 11:2; cf. Luke 23:42; Hebrews 2:6, 13), using the verb *mimnesko* with the genitive of person. A papyrus letter of the first or second century states, "You make mention of us on each occasion by letter."¹⁵¹

Paul's instruction about women's hair (1 Corinthians 11:4-7) may be illuminated by a third century B.C. inscription from Lykosura in Arkadia which speaks of entering the sanctuary of the goddess: "Nor [let it be permissible to enter] for women with their hair braided, nor for men with their heads covered."¹⁵²

Paul speaks of "those who are genuine" (*ho dokimos*; 1 Corinthians 11:19). This term occurs in a third-century inscription in honor of Artemis praising "Priscus, a man very well thought of."¹⁵³ The word *kuriakos* which occurs in connection with the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) has been identified in a pilgrim's graffito in Sinai as a name (*Abraamis Kur[ia]kos Chr[isto]s*).¹⁵⁴ Paul instructs the hungry Corinthians to eat at home (*en oiko*; 1 Corinthians 11:34) and tells women to ask their husbands "at home" (1 Corinthians 14:35). A greeting at the end of a letter speaks of "and all those at home [*kai tous en oiko pantas*]."¹⁵⁵

Some in Corinth because of abuses of the Lord's Supper were sick (*arrostos*; 1 Corinthians 11:30). This word occurs in the sense of "care for the sick" or "attention to the sick."¹⁵⁶ A second-century prodigal son writes his mother, "Punished [*paideuein*] I have been in any case," using the same term Paul used in 1 Corinthians 11:32: "When we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened [*paideuein*] so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (cf. Psalm 6:2; 2 Corinthians 6:9).¹⁵⁷

Spiritual Gifts

Paul says the spiritual gifts are given "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7; cf. Hebrews 12:10, *pros to sympheron*). A certain Chairemon writes to his brother about his sister, "And write back to me with regard to what is fitting."¹⁵⁸ Paul speaks of the gift of healing (*charismata iamatōn*; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30). *Iama* occurs on an inscription from Epidauros listing cures affected by Apollo and Asklepios, but is also on the verso of a papyrus "To come to the church of St. Elias and [get] healing for Isak son of holy James and for his good health."¹⁵⁹ A mid-fourth century request for healing reads, "I ask . . . that you request for me [help?] from Christ that I may receive healing."¹⁶⁰

The sole occurrence of *aschemon* ("less honorable"; 1 Corinthians 12:23) in the New Testament has a parallel but in a different context in a papyrus.¹⁶¹ Paul wants no discord (*schismata*; 1 Corinthians 12:25) in the body. He uses the verb *laleo* ("speak"; 1 Corinthians 14:34) when forbidding women to speak in church. Both of these words occur in a first century B.C. papyrus possibly from the Fayyum.¹⁶² The word "help" (*antilempsis*; 1 Corinthians 12:28) is used in the Septuagint and apocryphal books. It also occurs in official language of the Ptolemaic period. It then acquired a religious connotation.¹⁶³

Paul speaks of bestowing all his goods (*ta hyparchonta*) to feed the poor (1 Corinthians 13:3; cf. Matthew 19:21; Acts 4:32). This word occurs in a marriage contract of the second century which speaks of "all that belongs to him," that is, to the husband.¹⁶⁴ The Pauline words "faith," "hope," and "love" occur with other words in an Egyptian list of virtues from Taphis.¹⁶⁵

The word *paramythia* ("consolation"; 1 Corinthians 14:3) occurs only once in the New Testament, but there are papyrus occurrences as well as an occurrence in an honorific inscription. In an epitaph the widow speaks of the deceased as "a consolation of our life together."¹⁶⁶ The word is also found at Rhodes in an inscription of the imperial period where a man has provided for his parents.¹⁶⁷ Paul also speaks of distinctiveness of musical notation (*diastole*; 1 Corinthians 14:7) which has no known papyrus parallel though the word *diastole* does occur.¹⁶⁸ Paul speaks of the "voice of a trumpet" (*phone salpiggos*; 1 Corinthians 14:8; cf. Revelation 1:10; 4:1; 8:13). This term occurs in an epitaph of the imperial period for the gladiator Melonippos: "No longer do I hear the sound of the beaten-bronze trumpet."¹⁶⁹

In discussing tongues, Paul says, "I thank God" (*eucharisto to theo*; 1 Corinthians 14:18; cf. 1:4), an expression paralleled in an inscription from Ephesus of the imperial period: "I give thanks to you, lady Artemis."¹⁷⁰ Paul suggests that things in the congregational service should be done decently and in order (*taxis*; 1 Corinthians 14:40; cf. Colossians 2:5). This term occurs in an inscription from Athens in the sense of "proper order" or "arrangement."¹⁷¹ Paul declares that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (1 Corinthians 14:32; cf. Luke 10:17, 20). A parallel use of subject is found in Paris Magical Papyri: "And there shall be subject unto thee every spirit and daemon, whatsoever he be."¹⁷²

The Resurrection of Christ and of the Dead

Manifestations of the deity (though not resurrection) were rather commonplace in ancient folklore, and they were received as sufficient ground for confirming faith. The epithet *epiphanestate* ("manifest") occurs for Artemis. The idea of manifestation, though not the word, is found in the appearances of Jesus in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (cf. John 20:24-29).¹⁷³ The formula of quotation "according to the scriptures" (*kata tas graphas*; 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4) occurs in a second-century document of legal language with reference to laws.¹⁷⁴ A Christian amulet of the sixth century states, "Christ suffered; Christ died; Christ was raised; Christ was taken up; Christ reigns

...¹⁷⁵ Paul describes himself as one "untimely born" (*to ektromati*; 1 Corinthians 15:8). The verb of this root is not found in the New Testament. The noun occurs with the meaning "miscarriage" as well as "induced abortion." The concept is found in a papyrus in a setting where a pregnant woman is injured and her fetus is in danger of dying.¹⁷⁶ A number of pilgrim graffiti in the Sinai have *theou charis* ("grace of God") which Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 15:10.¹⁷⁷ Paul describes those who have died as having "fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:18; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:14). This usage is not distinctly Christian. Examples from epitaphs in Egypt date from the fifth to sixth centuries.¹⁷⁸ Paul speaks of "belonging to Christ" (1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:23; 15:23) using the genitive *christou* which has its parallel in "belonging to the Emperor" which is attested in papyri of the reign of Augustus and in inscriptions from the reign of Hadrian and later.¹⁷⁹

Paul uses the terms "rule, authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). An inscription over the heads of angels in the Koimensis church has in Greek "principalities, powers, authority, and authorities." Their exact significance is not clear, but the words are surely drawn from Paul's Epistles where two or more of these words are linked in reference to spiritual and sometimes temporal powers (cf. Ephesians 3:10; Colossians 1:16; 2:15; Titus 3:1).¹⁸⁰ The implicit concept of God's/Christ's reigning (*basileuein*) in heaven (1 Corinthians 15:25; cf. Luke 1:33; Revelation 11:15, 17; 19:6) is illustrated by a third-century epitaph at Eumeneia: "God reigning in heaven gave you wisdom."¹⁸¹

Paul asks, "Why am I in jeopardy [*kindyneueim*; 1 Corinthians 15:30] every hour?" A papyrus letter of the mid-third century using this word speaks of "When my mother was in danger."¹⁸² Paul, without giving the source, quotes Menander, "Bad company ruins good morals" (1 Corinthians 15:33). A private letter in Latin from Oxyrhynchus during the principate of Augustus has a number of clichés: "Do not allow your own ruin because of those fellows"; "Believe me, too much kindness brings calamity of the greatest kind upon men"; and "He who makes so large a profit from such a petty amount is willing to kill his master."¹⁸³

Paul speaks of a "secret [*en mysterio*] and hidden wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:7) as well as using the word *mysterion* ("mystery"; 1 Corinthians 15:51; cf. Romans 11:25) in connection with the resurrection. This term has a wide cultic use, but also occurs in a non-cultic use as with Paul: "I am an initiate of life's bitterness." There is also a funerary inscription of the third or fourth century from Rome reading: "Before I had any acquaintance with evil."¹⁸⁴

Paul, with an allusion to Hosea 13:14, speaks of death's sting (*kentron*; 1 Corinthians 15:55). An epitaph for an elementary teacher uses this word in an elliptical example also carrying a figurative meaning: "He has an unceasing 'sting' for your sweet soul."¹⁸⁵ Paul, the artisan, speaks of himself as a laborer (1 Corinthians 4:12) and as having labored (*kopian*) more abundantly than others (1 Corinthians 15:10). He assures the Corinthians that their labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58) and speaks of his fellow workmen as laborers (1 Corinthians 16:16). A Roman lady at a later date in a cemetery inscription praises her husband, "who labored much for me."¹⁸⁶

Paul tells the Corinthians, "Perhaps [*tuchon*] I may stay with you" (1 Corinthians 16:6). The colloquial use of this term has its parallel in a fourth century B.C. letter which states, "Upon occasion I will return them."¹⁸⁷

The name Crispus (1 Corinthians 1:14; Acts 8:18) occurs on an ostrakon from Thebes of the second century A.D.¹⁸⁸ Among the people included in greetings in the first Corinthian letter would be Fortunatus (1 Corinthians 16:17). This name occurs in a second-century letter reconstructed in the form Fortu(nata).¹⁸⁹

In Paul's closing remarks to the Corinthian letter, he uses the curse *anathema Marana Tha* (1 Corinthians 16:22). An epitaph from Halicarnassus reads: "But if any one shall attempt to take away a stone . . . let him be accursed [*anathema*]."¹⁹⁰ A Christian epitaph of the fourth or fifth century from the island of Salamis reads, "If anyone buries others in our grave, 'let him give account to God and let him be 'anathema' Maran atha.'"¹⁹¹

The closing blessing of the letter, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" (1 Corinthians 16:23) which is fre-

quently used in New Testament letters, is found in a fourth-century Christian letter of unknown provenance.¹⁹²

These selected examples of the illumination of the vocabulary of the New Testament by archaeological discoveries form only a small portion of the material. To look at the whole would be to go word by word through the book consulting the lexicons, in particular that of Moulton and Milligan, and considering all the finds since those tools were completed. Some finds are more striking than others; but any light cast on God's Word, however insignificant, is a valuable one.

NOTES

¹Suetonius *Claudius* 25.

²Orosius, *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1964), 7.6.15-16.

³Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), nos. 497-506.

⁴Adolf Deissmann, *Paul, A Study in Social and Religious History* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 261-86.

⁵Oscar Broneer, "Colonia Laus Julia Corinthiensis," *Hesperia* 10 (1941): 388-90.

⁶Strabo *Geography* 8.6.21. Classical texts dealing with Corinth are collected by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Good News Studies 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983), 192 pp.

⁷Victor Paul Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 14 (May/June 1988): 15.

⁸Strabo *Geography* 8.6.20a.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 4.10; Suetonius *Julius Caesar* 44.3; *Gaius Caligula* 21; *Nero* 19.2; 37.3.

¹¹The description of Corinth is dependent on W. A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands. Part III—Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 5 (September 1942): 36-48; Oscar Broneer, "Corinth. Center of St. Paul's Missionary Work in Greece," *Biblical Archaeologist* 14 (December 1951): 78-96; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Corinth that Saint Paul Saw," *Biblical Archaeologist* 47 (September 1984): 147-59.

¹²Cicero *On Agrarian Laws* 1.5; 2.51.

¹³Furnish, "Corinth," 7.

¹⁴Strabo *Geography* 8.6.21.

¹⁵*Ibid.*; Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.5.1.

¹⁶Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, 2d ed., trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), 13-14.

¹⁷Philo *de legat.* 281.

¹⁸H. J. Cadbury, "The Macellum of Corinth," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 53 (1934): 134-41.

¹⁹H. J. Cadbury, "Erastus of Corinth," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 50 (1931): 43-58; C. C. McCowan, review of *Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Backgrounds of the Hebrew-Christian Religion*, by Jack Finegan, in *American Journal of Archaeology* 50 (1946): 426.

²⁰Furnish, "Corinth," 26.

²¹Oscar Broneer, "The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games," *Biblical Archaeologist* 25 (February 1962): 1-31.

²²Pausanias *Description of Greece* 1.1.7-8.

²³Suetonius *Nero* 23-24.

²⁴Oscar Broneer, "The Isthmian Victory Crown," *American Journal of Archaeology* 66 (July 1962): 259-63.

²⁵Chrysostom *Discourse* 8.6, 9, 11; 9.10-22.

²⁶G. H. R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* 4, no. 4 (1987): 18-19.

²⁷J. W. Shaw, "Shallow-water Excavation at Kenchreai," *American Journal of Archaeology* 71 (July 1967): 223-31; J. W. Shaw, "Shallow-water Excavation at Kenchreai: II," *American Journal of Archaeology* 74 (April 1970): 179-80.

²⁸Horsley, *New Documents* 3, no. 20 (1983): 60.

²⁹Pausanias *Description of Greece* 2.2.3. (Loeb ed., vol. 1).

³⁰Oscar Broneer, "Twenty-Five Years Ago," *Biblical Archaeologist* 39 (December 1976): 158-59.

³¹John L. White, "New Testament Epistolary Literature in the Framework of Ancient Epistolography," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 25:2:1730-56.

³²Deissmann, *Light*, 169.

³³George Milligan, *Here & There Among the Papyri* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1922), 39-40; Deissmann, *Light*, 158.

³⁴Horsley, *New Documents* 3, no. 11 (1983): 149-50.

³⁵Deissmann, *Light*, 170.

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- ⁴⁴Horsley, *New Documents* 4, no. 28 (1987): 128.
- ⁴⁵Deissmann, *Light*, 441.
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- ⁴⁸Deissmann, *Light*, 333.
- ⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 329-30, 382.
- ⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 330.
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- ⁵⁹Deissmann, *Light*, 94, n. 4.
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- ⁶²Milligan, *Selections*, no. 24:16 (67).
- ⁶³Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 118.
- ⁶⁴*Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵Milligan, *Selections*, no. 53:20 (129); Deissmann, *Light*, 177, 179.
- ⁶⁶Milligan, *Selections*, no. 37:15 (94-95).
- ⁶⁷*Ibid.*, no. 29:8 (74); Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, 233.
- ⁶⁸Horsley, *New Documents* 4, no. 65 (1987): 157.
- ⁶⁹Milligan, *Selections*, no. 5:34 (17).
- ⁷⁰Milligan, *Selections*, no. 39 (97); *Here & There*, 101-2; Deissmann, *Light*, 355.
- ⁷¹Milligan, *Selections*, no. 37 (93).
- ⁷²*Ibid.*, no. 53:20 (129).
- ⁷³*Ibid.*, no. 36:6 (90-91).
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- ⁷⁶Polycarp *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 8-9.
- ⁷⁷Adolf Deissmann, *New Light on the New Testament*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 82; Deissmann, *Light*, 355-62.
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COMMUNITY ISSUES IN 1 CORINTHIANS

JAMES HINKLE

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian commitment is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of Jesus, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.¹

The title of this lecture comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthians and will serve as an introduction to the study of "Community Issues in 1 Corinthians."

The Greek word *sumphero* is used by Paul several times in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. King James translators chose to translate it "perfect" because its literal meaning is to bring together. It has the expanded meaning of "that which edifies the community."²

The particular use of this word right at the beginning of his discussion of spiritual gifts is significant to the understanding of Paul's approach to the seventeen problems of the church in Corinth.

Both J. B. Phillips and the New International translators render this phrase *pros to sumpheron* as "for the common good." Conzelmann thinks that the passage is "with the view to what is best" with "for the church" understood.³

Paul's use of *sumphero* elsewhere in the Epistle is also enlightening. In 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul uses the word to indicate what is an expedient (best) action for him in light of membership in the community of Christ. Even enslavement to eating or sexual appetites is to be considered in light of what is

best for the common good.

This becomes even clearer as 1 Corinthians 10:23 is placed alongside. "There are lots of things I can do but not everything is for the common good" (my translation). Paul further elaborates on this with the statement using the same words in the first phrase and *oikodomei* ("edifies") in the second. All things are possible but "not everything builds up the church" (Conybeare), "but does everything help the building of the community?" (NEB).

Paul ends this section in chapter 10 where he has begun: "Not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many" (v. 33). I would translate this simply "not seeking what's good for me but what's good for the community." (The sense of *ton pollon* with the article can be used collectively.) As he has commanded that "nobody seek his own good but the good of others," he now uses himself as an example and model for the church.

Since it is the argument of this writer that the whole Epistle of 1 Corinthians is an argument for community, one should be able to find this in every chapter of the book. It is not just in worship but in every facet of life that Christians in Corinth are told to consider the common good. Any pneumatic zeal that fails to build up community and any choices between meat eaters and vegetarians must consider the good of the community. Any "I have no need of you" flies like a kite on a windless day in the face of what is for the common good. First Corinthians 13 is not just a neat poem in the middle of a controversial book. It is the heart and soul of the book!

In addition to *sumphero*, Paul chooses a number of other words carefully in attempting to get the individualistic Corinthians to consider the common good. It is not within the scope of this lesson to trace all of these words, but there are three other words that, if traced through the book, will establish the theses of this lesson.

Koinonia

Koinonia is a word designating community. It is not something one does by himself. Ten years ago Tim Woodroof and I began our ministry in the "Living in Harmony" seminars. Our

first seminar was scheduled in Kansas, and we sent the church the subjects of each session and the overall title of the seminar. We wanted to call it "Living in Harmony: The Church as Community."

The church contacted us and explained that they did not want to use the phrase "the church as community" because "nobody understands what it means." Nearly ten years have passed and still only a few understand what community is. I suppose we should not feel too badly that no one understands what the phrase "the church as community" means. The people at Corinth had a bit of a problem with the concept as well.

Paul lays the foundation of the Epistle in verses 4 through 9. Before he discusses the threats to the *koinonia* that he had learned from Chloe's household and the letter he had received, he wants to make a statement for community. Division in the community is wrong because God has called you into *koinonia* with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). If we are all in Christ's community, whence come these rumblings of "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ."

Later Paul will bring this important concept to bear on the self-centered, individualistic approach to the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:16). The recognized significance of the Lord's Supper as a communal act⁴ should eliminate the tendency to individualize it too much. The communion in the body of Christ leads naturally into the one body concept (1 Corinthians 10:17). When we partake of the one loaf, we are all one body.

From here it is easy for Paul to lay down the rule that "any one who eats and drinks without discerning (*diakrino*) the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment (*krima*) to himself. There is little wonder why many among the community of Christ in Corinth were weak, sick, and dying spiritually (1 Corinthians 11:30). The one Spirit by which they had been baptized into one body was being quenched because they were not interested in the common good.

Oikodome

Paul has a way of sometimes rapidly changing figures of speech. After he has discussed the subject of him planting and

Apollos watering with God giving the increase, he leaves the subject of God's garden and says, "You are God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

I often challenge my students with the old question, "Is the church a building?" The immediate answer is, "No!" I then have them turn to 1 Corinthians 3:9 and read what the Bible says about the subject. They then begin to backpaddle and say, "But it's not made of wood and things like that." I suggest that they read on: "Gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, straw"—these are building materials.

I have never thought my students were slow, so they quickly get the picture. The church is a building. But the Corinthians were thinking that the church was only individuals, not community.

Now think about it for a moment. When does a building exist? If the truck drives up and unloads all the materials necessary for constructing a building, is it a building? All of the ingredients are there, but it is not a building. It becomes a building only when the materials take on a relationship with each other.

The Corinthians with their individualized approach were just a pile of bricks and mortar waiting to be made into a building. They had yet to recognize the building. If they were going to be an *oikodome*, they were going to have to change their focus.

When Paul gets to the subject of spiritual gifts and their value in Christianity, he again reminds them that it is what they do for the community that makes them valuable. In 1 Corinthians 14:3 he notes the value of preaching over other gifts because "he who preaches to men speaks edification, encouragement, and comfort." The church, as the New Testament shows, was from the beginning a community based on shared beliefs, shared morals, and concern for the hurting. Spiritual gifts only find their value in their use for the common good: "That the church may be built up" (1 Corinthians 14:5). "Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12). (*Pros ten oikodome* is similar in construction to the aforementioned *pros to sumpheron*.) No matter what you bring to the assembly,

you must ask the question, "How can it help the community?" "All of these should be done to the strengthening [*oikodome*] of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:26).

Soma

The most often used word (forty-seven times) by Paul in 1 Corinthians is *soma*—"body." Since this is also the most often used word in our discussion of unity, I will not spend time traversing paths that most of you have already crossed.

Suppose we go into a pathologist's lab. On one wall he has lined up various body parts. There are eyes, ears, skulls, hands, feet, intestines, bones, etc. Now I know this is "gross" but please answer this question. If you have all the parts of a body, do you have a body? *Parts do not a body make!*

It is in 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 that Paul gives us such a clear study of the common good. "The body is a body though it has many members" (v. 12; my translation). The body is not parts, but a body. What is it that makes parts a body? Is it not the same thing that makes a building a building? A pile of bricks is not a building until the bricks are placed in relationship to each other. The body parts are not a body until they are in relationship. "But God has placed the parts, each one of them, in the body just as he wished" (1 Corinthians 12:18; my translation). "God has tempered the body together" ("*Sugkerannumi*—composed the body by unifying its members so as to form one organism"; 1 Corinthians 12:24).

Only as each member reflects on his or her relationship to others in the body can there be real community. Any time individual Christians march to their own drummers without regarding the common good, the communion dies and God's church is shattered. "Let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Romans 14:19).

Let me illustrate this by using a story in a book on this subject by Tim Woodroof and myself:

To better understand Paul's analogy, consider this. Most of us think nothing of chewing nervously on a fingernail. We all know a few confirmed nail-biters. Though it is not a habit to be proud of, it is not something we view with disgust or revulsion. But take that same fingernail,

clip it from the finger, and *then* chew on it—the thought makes us queasy.

Why the change of attitude? It is the same fingernail, the same mouth, the same taste and consistency. The only difference is our perception of ownership. So long as the fingernail is attached to our finger, it is a part of our body, an extension of ourselves. As Paul wrote, "After all, no one ever hated his own body" (Ephesians 5:29).

But as soon as a fingernail is clipped, it becomes something alien to our bodies. No longer a part of ourselves, it does not belong to us as it did just seconds before. And because it is something "other" than us, our attitude toward it alters radically. We no longer manicure it or paint it or chew it affectionately. It is no longer a part of us and is fit only for the nearest garbage can.

When Paul called the church of Jesus a "body," it makes you wonder if he did not have a similar idea in mind. So long as members consider each other a part of the body, there is *ownership*. We take care of each other and consider each other an extension of ourselves. We may even chew on each other, but it is with gentleness and affection.

The moment we clip other Christians away from the body, however, they become alien and strange. Since they no longer belong to us, our attitudes toward them alter radically. We do not feel responsible to take care of them and protect them. When former brothers and sisters become so many clippings, we feel justified in throwing them away.⁶

The basic issue in 1 Corinthians is whether or not each member of the church is going to refocus on the cross of Jesus (vertical relationship) and relate to his brother (horizontal relationship). Only as they were able to redirect their lives for the common good would there be any success in this "heart of pagan influence."

The seventeen problems dealt with by Paul in 1 Corinthians were all a result of an individualism that is not unlike our world today.

In their book *Habits of the Heart*, Robert Bellah and other social scientists wrote,

Individualism lies at the very core of American culture We believe in dignity, indeed the sacredness of the individual. Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious.⁷

As much as we want and need community, there is a tug away from the common good to, "What's in it for me? Don't I have some right? When do I get my turn?" It is not that Christian community should stifle independence, initiative, and individual thinking, but that Christians should find their most meaningful lives in community for the common good.

Every human dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.⁸

FACTIONS AND COMMUNITY?

The Christian really has a double task. He has to practice both God's holiness and God's love. The Christian is to exhibit that God exists as the infinite-personal God; and then he is to exhibit simultaneously God's character of holiness and love. Not his holiness without this love: That is only harshness. Not his love without his holiness: That is only compromise. Anything that an individual Christian or Christian group does that fails to show the simultaneous balance of the holiness of God and the love of God presents to a watching world not a demonstration of the God who exists but a caricature of the God who exists.⁹

Threats to community must always be met head-on. It is not enough for the church to talk unity; it must be an actual

practicer of community if the world is going to believe that God has sent Christ (John 17:21).

The Corinthians were divided when they should have been united and united when they should have been divided. In the case of the observance of the Supper, they were divided while they were "communing." The words are a contradiction, but these proud and boastful Corinthians could not discern the difference.

When it came to the incestuous man (chap. 5), the church should have taken a stand, and yet they were united when they should have been divided. I believe that in this principle is found the heart of the Corinthian problem. This lesson and the one that follows will attempt to flesh out this subject and help the modern church deal with its own problems in a similar fashion.

Chloe's people had brought a report to Paul that problems in interpersonal relationships were disturbing the harmony in the local church. The fruit of this attitude was "envy and strife" (1 Corinthians 3:3). The continued pouting, quarreling, and jealousy were taking their toll in discouraging earnest seekers to grow. They were remaining infants in need of "milk and not solid food" (1 Corinthians 3:2).

Paul quickly states that there must be no tears (*schisma*) in the community (1 Corinthians 1:10). Chloe's people had given Paul "an earful as to the real situation."¹⁰ There were quarrels that could lead to factions and parties and eventual outright sectarianism in Corinth.

It needs to be said rather early that Paul is not assuming this deeply troubled church is already past salvaging. It is his hope that they can refocus and get on with community living. "The split into groups has not yet led to the dissolution of the community; they celebrate the Lord's supper together (11:17f.), and Paul can address his letter to the whole community."¹¹

I suggest Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*¹² which notes that socially denominations are formed in four steps: (1) period of the man; (2) period of the message; (3) period of the movement; and (4) period of the monument. It seems evident that Paul was attempting to "head the Corinthians off at the pass" before they united behind a peculiar message "from" or

"as from" one of their respected leaders. Before "Cephasians" could become a movement, Paul wants the Corinthians to be "perfected together through their opinion and its expression."¹³ Paul does not want to snuff out discussion and diversity but only an unbrotherly attitude. Diversity that has not become boastful is no threat to the community. Uniformity in regard to the fundamental nature of the gospel¹⁴ is necessary, but there is plenty of room for diversity as chapter 12 argues.

On the basis of a thorough study of 1 Corinthians, few would argue that God wants a homogenized church where everyone is a clone of everyone else. If that is our vision, we will forever be frustrated.

Whatever else the followers of Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ were, they had not yet become parties. There were differences, but their message was essentially the same. There were ample evidences of wrong attitude rather than wrong doctrine. (I do recognize that chapter 15 presents a real doctrinal problem.) These wrong attitudes did sometimes result in wrong practice, but it had not progressed to the point where Paul erred when he addressed these Christians as "the church of God in Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

When Do We Divide?

One of the crucial issues facing the church today is this: When do we stay in community, and when do we leave? Put another way: When has community ceased?

Paul does give some help in the critical community issue facing us today. "What happens when we must differ with other brothers in Christ because of the need also to show forth God's holiness either in doctrine or in life?"¹⁵ It is no easy question posed by Schaeffer. We still wrestle with the dilemma in the church as we face the twenty-first century.

The Bible does give some guidelines, and I would like to suggest some at the risk of being subject to careful scrutiny by others who have studied the subject.

There is little doubt that where blatant immorality exists (chap. 5) there is a necessity for God's holiness to be the determining factor in separating from the guilty man. I do recognize the fact that some Christians, like the Corinthians, are

"proud and not filled with grief" and have continued fellowship with such a man. In fact, a year ago I was teaching this chapter in a class at York College and one of the students remarked that he did not think it was right to withdraw fellowship from anyone. My answer was simply, "You are disagreeing with Paul. He said to 'get rid of the old yeast that you may have a new batch without yeast'" (1 Corinthians 5:2, 7).

It is a community issue when a member persists in open sin, and the community must take a stand. Christians are to take a stand on the holiness of God and never cater to the cultural qualms of individuals within the community. This is not to say that the community is sinless while the one withdrawn from is sinful.

Distinguishing between the "holy" church and the "unholy" church is impossible. It will always be an unreal distinction (James 3:2; 1 John 1:8). Yet, certain kinds of open, habitual sin can so contaminate the body, as yeast working through a whole batch of dough, that it no longer can be identified as a pure loaf. What one Christian does openly and blatantly will touch every part of the community and must be treated accordingly.

The individual Christian never acts solely to his advantage or disadvantage. His actions, whether good or evil, are those of a fully responsible member of the church. In actual and real terms there is no ideal church floating above the human world. There is no such thing as a church without members, a fellowship of believers without believers, a people of God but no people, a spiritual building with no building, a disembodied body of Christ.¹⁶

It is because we are community that we can expel a member from community. "By your behavior—as a community—you betray yourselves."¹⁷ It is against the community that Paul's criticism is directed. In the case of the incestuous man of chapter 5, we must say that division is right.

(Note: There are other areas where division of community could be right. Since the scope of this lesson is 1 Corinthians, I feel the need to stay with this book. Suffice it to say that when it is clear that there is true heresy that would destroy the church

or violate the Christian's conscience, the community must act.)

When Is Division Wrong?

Paul's willingness to accept diversity is far greater than most of the modern church. First Corinthians is a study of community issues that must be faced, but once you leave chapter 5, there is no hint of any attempt by Paul to get the church to withdraw community from any member. That leads us to conclude that we are not to divide the church when there is no clear heresy that would destroy the church or violate the Christian's conscience. When the problem is attitude and not doctrinal, there is no clear mandate to divide the community. We must be careful to allow the natural processes of growth to occur.

To demand that each member of the community have the same level of understanding will wreak havoc in any church as it assimilates new members. A case in point happened a few years ago. We met a fine, open-minded couple in our work at a fair booth. They were happy to study, and the week before Thanksgiving they put on Jesus in baptism.

Their enthusiasm was a sight to behold. The Sunday after Thanksgiving they were in services bubbling with enthusiasm for their newfound faith. After services they were telling several members how they were so excited about the approaching season. "For the first time in our lives we will be able to really celebrate Christmas!"

Before I could head her off, a well-meaning sister stuffed a T-bone steak about "Christmas" down their precious throats. Of course they choked on it because they needed milk, not solid food. What a tragedy that the normal process of growth is not allowed in some churches!

Further, I believe that when the difference among brethren is opinion and not conviction, there should be no divisions. Where there is no leeway for diversity of opinions, a cultic Christianity results.

We have failed to notice that Paul did not say, "Withdraw from those people who say I am of Paul or I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas or I am of Christ." These factions were not highly developed to the point where they had formed into a movement

that would require breaking up the community.

If we are to avoid the current mania of "divide and conquer," we must go back and study carefully Paul's approach to factions and community.

As we refocus on the cross of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18—2:5), it will be easier for us to develop the openness of attitude that allows diversity of opinions that will not threaten the harmony of the local church. "But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:15).

There is still integrity in the statement: "This is what I believe, but I may be wrong." It is a sense of pride that would not permit the attitude of "I may be wrong."

If the Corinthians will refocus on the cross, they will "not take pride in one man over against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6b), and factions will melt under the warm sunshine of God's love.

As the Corinthians removed their focus from the cross and focused on themselves, they broke the harmony of their community. Their individualistic approach to Christianity was devastating the garden of God in Corinth as they "became arrogant" (1 Corinthians 4:18). Conzelmann expresses it in these words: "They are giving themselves airs."¹⁸

Pride and arrogance go out the window when the church returns to its prime focus. Only under the umbrella of God's love could the fangs of factions be removed and the poison to the community be eliminated.

When the Christians in Corinth recognized that Paul and Apollos were simply pipes through which the water of life flowed, they would stop saying, "Look what great pipes are these," and say, "Thank God for the living water!" (1 Corinthians 3:5-9).

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY (1 Corinthians 8—10)

For most of human history, people had thought that life was hard, brutal, and tragic. But the baby boom's early affluence developed in it what Daniel Yankelovich has

called "the psychology of entitlement". What other generations have thought privileges, the baby boomers thought were rights.¹⁹

Several years ago I had the opportunity of studying 1 Corinthians under Dr. Russ Spittler of Fuller Seminary. When Dr. Spittler got to chapters 8 through 10, he gave them a simple title: "Rights." He further divided these chapters into three divisions: (1) Chapter 8: Theory of Rights; (2) Chapter 9: Giving Up Rights; and (3) Chapter 10: Standing by Rights.

Harold Mare in the *Expositors Bible Commentary* calls this section "Instructions Concerning Christian Freedom: Its Privileges and Responsibilities."²⁰ He then divides these chapters: (1) Chapter 8: Eating meat sacrificed to idols²¹; (2) Chapter 9: Paul: On giving up his rights as an apostle²²; and (3) Chapter 10: Warning against Israel's lack of self-restraint.²³

My favorite description of these chapters and one that fits best into "Community Issues in 1 Corinthians" is Peter Wagner's. He entitles chapter 6 of his book "The Yes, No, and Maybe of Christian Behavior."²⁴

Moral and immoral behavior has much to do with the state of the community. (See the preceding section.) Yet amoral problems can be a source of constant frustration in the local church. As a preacher, I would estimate that about 90 per cent of the conflicts that arise in the local church are amoral in nature.

Most Christian people have little difficulty distinguishing between moral and immoral. Love is a moral responsibility. Adultery is immoral and must be avoided. Few problems are raised between clearly black and white issues. It is this "slippery no-man's land of doubtful issues"²⁵ that agitates folks and threatens community.

To eat or not to eat was an often discussed issue in Corinth of old. It was of such a nature that the Corinthians had written Paul for a response.²⁶ If allowed to go unchecked, it would divide the community. Paul, therefore, addresses the issue and lays down rules "for the common good."

Keep in mind that Paul has already identified the real problem as lack of focus on the cross of Christ that has dwarfed

their spiritual growth (1 Corinthians 1:18—2:5; 3:1-4). Their lack of spiritual growth caused continual friction over peripheral issues. They were proverbially "straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel." The more excellent way (1 Corinthians 13) was lost from their view as they argued and fought over little things, unable, like the glossolalia of 1 Corinthians 14:7, to give a certain sound.

In regard to helping others in the local community reach their potential, David Augsburger suggests that we need to develop a way of interacting that will set another free to be what God has called him or her to be. He may be echoing Paul's discussion of the subject as he gives this list:

- A context of caring must come before confrontation.
- A sense of support must be present before criticism.
- An experience of empathy must precede evaluation.
- A basis of trust must be laid before one risks advising.
- A floor of affirmation must undergird any assertiveness.
- A gift of understanding opens the way to disagreeing.
- An awareness of love sets us free to level with each other.²⁷

Theory of Rights

If differences among members of the body are going to be managed, the "to eat or not to eat" question must be carefully understood. Paul knew that the only hope for this church to dwell together in unity would be spiritual growth that centered on Jesus and respect for one another. They must value one another as human beings, put forth the effort required to understand opposing points of view, and mutually agree that the good of the community is paramount.²⁸ How could the "teetotaler" ever exist alongside the insightful Christian? Can there be a church that can incorporate such diverse beliefs and remain intact? Could the Christian who eats everything not look down on him who refuses to eat meat? Is it possible for the Christian who refuses to eat meat not to condemn the man who does? (See Romans 14:3.)

Paul is certainly logical in his approach to the issue of eating and not eating: "We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and that there is no God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4);

"Some people are so accustomed to idols that when they eat such meat they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol" (1 Corinthians 8:7); "Food does not bring us to God; we are no worse if we do not eat and no better if we do" (1 Corinthians 8:8).

If logic could have done it, everything could have come out peachy. But people in ancient times are not so different from the Smiths and Jones in twentieth-century churches. We react more to others on the basis of emotions than logic. It is in this area that Paul uses his strongest weapon.

"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (Here we see the use of *oikodome*, v.1.) Only by focusing on individuals could one become puffed up. "The cross is the power and wisdom of God." When you become proud and arrogant, you have lost your focus. "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Love flowing from the heart of God on a tree will cause people to bind in community. Differences will not be forgotten, but fellow Christians, weak or strong, teetotalers and eaters, will not sin against their brothers because that would be sinning against Christ (1 Corinthians 8:13). First Corinthians 13 was intended to help the Corinthians deal with the diversity of spiritual gifts. "The more excellent way" is the only way for community to exist and thrive.

Paul's theory is that it is often necessary to give up your rights for the good of community. People in families are willing to do this. If we really look at the local church as *oikos*, we will be willing to refrain from any actions or speech that would be detrimental to the *koinonia* of the local church. "Therefore if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again" (1 Corinthians 8:13).

Giving Up Rights

If chapter 8 is theory of rights, then chapter 9 is an example of giving up rights for the good of the church. Paul serves as an example of what the Christians in Corinth should be doing. He has used logic. He has pointed them to the cross and begged them to consider their action in light of the common good. Now he gives them his own life as an example. His example is a

positive way of dealing with amoral issues.

First, Paul mentions *his right to marry*. "Don't we have a *right* [*exousia*—power, authority, right] to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5; emphasis mine). Place this statement over against the Corinthians who were so aggressive that they were grinding their weaker brothers into the ground. "I am all powerful; I have knowledge; I have wisdom. If you knew what I know, you wouldn't be so fanatical. You are so negative, I cannot tolerate your behavior. The church would be better off without you. You are no more than my little pinky."

Their lack of concern for the community of believers caused them to abuse their freedom, and like a tank on a freeway, they demanded their proper territory and place in the traffic lanes of Corinth.

Paul had a right to marry. His love for God and needs of his brothers required that he give up that right. He gave because he had developed the nature of his giving Father.

Second, Paul mentions *his right to be paid*.

Who serves as a soldier at his own expenses? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends the flock and does not drink of the milk? (1 Corinthians 9:7).

Do not muzzle the ox when it is treading out the grain (1 Corinthians 9:9).

The plowman plows and the thresher threshes; they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest (1 Corinthians 9:10).

If others have the *right* of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this *right*: on the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:12; emphasis mine).

Paul had the *right*, but for the sake of his brethren he gave it up. What a powerful example to the Corinthians and to us today! If the Corinthians could not understand the logic and go back to the cross, Paul was going to make them see his own example as a model for their lives together in community.

Third, Paul speaks of *his right to live out his heritage*. He was a Jew, a Pharisee, a law-keeper. He knew that the Jewish code was nailed to the cross and that it was not effective in dealing with the real issues of salvation. Yet time and time again he lived the law blamelessly so that he might let his Jewish brother know that God had called the Jew first to salvation's community. "To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews" (1 Corinthians 9:20).

Fourth, Paul deals with *his right to leave his heritage*. I do not know if he ever ate a ham sandwich or not. If he did, I could imagine how difficult it must have been. "As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself" (Romans 14:14). His logic would tell him one thing, his heritage another. His emotions that were a product of years of training would be difficult to overcome. Yet, he could declare, "Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions" (1 Corinthians 10:25).

It was no easy task for this born-and-bred Pharisee to leave his heritage. "To those not having the law I become like one not having the law" (1 Corinthians 9:21). His example of giving up his rights for the sake of the church ought to motivate the Corinthians to look again at the way they are interacting with their brethren. (Have you noticed how many times Paul uses this term "brother" in 1 Corinthians? Read Romans 14, and count the times there as well.)

Standing by Rights

Chapter 10 is a warning. It is often the case that when you begin giving up your opinions that there is a danger of giving up more than opinions. A liberal attitude in regard to opinions is commendable. A liberal attitude in regard to truth is damnable.

The examples Paul used in chapter 10 are intended to keep the Corinthians and us from going too far. The ancient Israelites did not just eat idol's meat, they set their hearts on evil things and became idolaters (1 Corinthians 10:6, 7). They bought into the advice of Balaam and ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality (Revelation 2:14).

The Corinthians are warned in chapter 10 about the same

problems of chapter 5. Going into the corrupt society and participating in their activities always should be done with care. Israel of old not only looked, they touched (1 Corinthians 10:8).

Forever, Paul's warning must be heeded. "Let him who thinks he is standing, take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We must always be aware that the danger of sin is always present. There must be constant diligence if we are to "stand by our rights."

The answer to the community problems of Corinth is knowledge controlled by love. The list of doubtful activities that could be called amoral is a continuing problem for today's church. Using the principles set forth by Paul will help us to meet and overcome the forces of evil.

In all our work and play, worship and Christian living, 1 Corinthians asks: "What does it do to the body? What is for the building up of the community? Let it be for the common good."

NOTES

¹Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 21.

²Konrad Weiss, "sumphero, sumphors," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 9:76.

³Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975), 208.

⁴Ibid., 171.

⁵Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 78.

⁶James Hinkle and Tim Woodroof, *Among Friends: How to Make Your Church a Warmer Place* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Navpress, 1989), 44-45.

⁷Robert Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 142.

⁸Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 27.

⁹Francis Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1970), 142-43.

¹⁰Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New

International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 54.

¹¹Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 32.

¹²Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row 1951).

¹³F. W. Groschiede, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), 34.

¹⁴Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 53.

¹⁵Schaeffer, *The Church*, 146.

¹⁶Hans Küng, *The Church* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 415-16.

¹⁷Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 95.

¹⁸Ibid., 93.

¹⁹Landon Jones, "The Baby Boomers," *Money*, March 1983, 58.

²⁰Harold Mare, *1 Corinthians*, Expositors Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 237.

²¹Ibid., 238.

²²Ibid., 241.

²³Ibid., 248.

²⁴Peter Wagner, *Effective Body Building* (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, 1982), 79.

²⁵Ibid., 27.

²⁶Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 115.

²⁷David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Confront* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1981), 52.

²⁸Kenneth Haugh, *Antagonists in the Church* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 36.

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MARRIAGE AND 1 CORINTHIANS

JACK P. LEWIS

A New Testament letter assumes a background of knowledge common to the writer and the recipient which is not detailed in the letter. Our sources do not permit us to determine how much instruction Paul had given the Corinthians on marriage matters in the process of teaching them the gospel. We do know that prior to the writing of the letter we call 1 Corinthians, Paul had written to the Corinthians cautioning them not to associate with immoral people (1 Corinthians 5:9; *pornoi*).

Both Jews and Gentiles would have come to the gospel with marriage customs derived from their respective cultures. Though all Jewish marriage relations were not so idealistic, out of the Jewish background would come an admirable couple like Aquila and Priscilla who had left Rome and had come to Corinth because of the decree of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome on account of disputes over *Chrestus*.¹ Despite the spelling of the title, it is widely assumed that this was a Jewish-Christian quarrel. Since Paul does not list this couple among his first converts in Achaia, it may be conjectured that they were already Christians. Paul labored with them because they also were tentmakers (Acts 18:2).

When Paul traveled to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla went with him and remained there when he went on (Acts 18:18, 19). There in Ephesus they took Apollos aside and taught him the way of the Lord more accurately (Acts 18:26). Paul sends greetings from them and the church in their house as he wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19). Still later when Paul wrote to Rome, they had returned there, and he describes the debt the whole church owed them. He greets the

church that is in their house (Romans 16:3-5). Paul also sends greetings to this couple without stating where they were in his second letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:19).

Here we have in walking flesh marriage as God intended it to be. Wherever we meet this couple who got around a great deal, their home is a center of Christian fellowship. They were working together instructing those who needed it; they were risking their lives when that was needed. Aquila was not going to his church while Priscilla went to hers and the children (if there were any) went to the dogs. Here we have one of the nearest New Testament approaches to that ideal Clement of Alexandria described so eloquently when he asked, "Where are the two or three gathered together in the name of Christ in whose midst is the Lord? Are they not man, wife, and child because man and wife are joined by God?"² A like apt description was given to his wife by Tertullian:

Whence are we to find (words) enough fully to tell the happiness of that marriage which the Church cements, and the oblation confirms, and the benediction signs and seals; (which) angels carry back the news of (to heaven), (which) the Father holds for ratified? For even on earth children do not rightfully and lawfully wed without their fathers' consent. What kind of yoke is that of two believers (partakers) of one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both (are) brethren, both are fellow servants, no difference of spirit or of flesh; nay, (they are) truly "two in one flesh." Where the flesh is one, one is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally (are they) both (found) in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides (ought) from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. The sick is visited, the indigent relieved, with freedom. Alms (are given) without (danger of ensuing) torment; sacrifices (attended) without scruple; daily diligence (discharged) without impediment: (there is) no

stealthy signing, no trembling greeting, no mute benediction. Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they mutually challenge each other which shall better chant to their Lord. Such things when Christ sees and hears, He joys. To these He sends his own peace. Where two (are), there withal (is) He Himself. Where He (is), there the Evil One is not.³

Our information is not so detailed about the household of Stephanas which Paul baptized (1 Corinthians 1:16). He describes them as the first converts in Achaia and as being those who devoted themselves to the service of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be subject to such people (*tois toioutois*) and to every fellow worker and laborer. Here also we have a Christian family, not at cross purposes but working together for the advancement of the Lord's kingdom. We have no information about the families of the other Corinthian Christians who are mentioned by name.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Though Paul does not go into any details, to be assumed in any discussion of marriage in his letters is the Old Testament teaching on the subject. To overlook that background is like beginning a novel at the last chapter or turning the television on in the middle of a show. One knows the ending, but he does not know the plot.

Marriage as God intended it is set forth in the creation narrative. Observing that there was no suitable helper for man among the animals, God brought sleep upon the man and took one of his ribs and made (*banah*) a woman whom he brought to the man. The rule was stated, "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Genesis 1 summarizes,

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the

air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth" (Genesis 1:27, 28).

It is to this ideal of one man for one woman for their lives that all later discussion of marriage appeals. Deviations from it begin with Lamech's multiple wives (Genesis 4:23). This pattern is followed by numerous Old Testament characters. Homosexual acts are first reported at Sodom (Genesis 19:5), incest with Lot's daughters (Genesis 19:30-38), forcible rape with Shechem against Dinah (Genesis 34:2), and incest with a father's wife in the case of Reuben and Bilhah (Genesis 35:22; 49:4).

By the time of Moses, the Lord found it necessary to rule "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18; cf. Leviticus 18:20; 20:10-21). Adultery carried the death penalty (Deuteronomy 22:22). The law prohibited sex within certain degrees of kinship (Leviticus 18:6-18), homosexual acts (Leviticus 18:22), and bestiality (Leviticus 18:23). Making one's daughter to be a harlot was forbidden (Leviticus 19:29). The daughter of a priest who became a harlot was burned with fire (Leviticus 21:9), and the bride proved not to be a virgin was executed by stoning (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). Sex with a betrothed woman carried the death penalty for the man if it occurred in the country and for both parties if in the city (Deuteronomy 22:23-27). Sex with an unbetrothed virgin carried a fine of fifty silver shekels; the man had to marry the girl, and he forfeited the right ever to divorce her (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29). Sex with a father's wife is specifically prohibited (Deuteronomy 22:30; cf. Leviticus 18:8; 20:11).

The origin of divorce is lost in history. Rather than instituting divorce, the law of Moses in a law of multiple conditions prohibits remarriage to a prior husband after a second marriage has taken place (Deuteronomy 24:1-4; cf. Jeremiah 3:1). In this law, if the woman has been divorced, has received the certificate of divorce, and has been married to another man, if the second man either divorces her or dies, she cannot go back to the first husband.⁴

Intermarriage with the seven Canaanite nations was forbidden (Deuteronomy 7:1-3). Marriages with foreign women

were broken up by Ezra and Nehemiah when they returned from exile (Ezra 9:2; 10:14-44; Nehemiah 13:23-27). We have no information about what happened to either the Israelite men or the women after these marriages were dissolved.

Remarriage is mentioned only a few times in the Old Testament. The Deuteronomy law (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) assumes remarriage after divorce; but in most other cases remarriage is only after the death of a spouse. The priest was forbidden to marry a harlot, a woman defiled, or a woman divorced from her husband (Leviticus 21:7). The Book of Ezekiel permits a priest to marry the widow of a priest (Ezekiel 44:22). The chief priest could only marry a virgin. The widow, the divorcée, the woman defiled, and the harlot were forbidden him (Leviticus 21:13, 14).

The Old Testament assumes that the widow will remarry. In the levirate marriage custom, Tamar is taken by her deceased husband's brother (Genesis 38:7-11). The levirate marriage law (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; cf. Matthew 22:23-33) provides for the surviving brother to take the widow when brothers live together. Naomi assumes that Ruth and Orpah will find husbands among their own people (Ruth 1:9, 13); but Ruth rejected that possibility, went with her mother-in-law, and later was taken by Boaz (Ruth 4:13). David married Abigail after the death of her husband Nabal (1 Samuel 25:39-42), and he married Bathsheba with whom he had already had an affair after the death of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11:26, 17).

An insight into the post-exilic marriage situation is given by the prophet Malachi. The Lord's altar was covered with the tears of divorced women (Malachi 2:12-16). Judah had married (after the divorce, no doubt) the daughter of a foreign god (Malachi 2:11). In the clearest statement of the Old Testament, the Lord says, "I hate divorce." But the passage also gives insights into marriage and God's intent for it. God is a witness to the covenant made by the two marrying parties. Their vows are not solely a promise they are making to each other. Furthermore, God in this marriage relationship desires godly children. As seen by the prophet, the home is the place of the production of children, but also is the place for the training of

children in the service of God. Divorce makes these goals unreachable for the parties involved. The prophet calls upon the people not to be faithless to the wife of their youth.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

Not only does Paul's teaching presuppose an Old Testament background, but there is also the teaching of Jesus which had gone before. There one not only finds the repetition of "You shall not commit adultery," but also the caution that a man who looks on a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matthew 5:27, 28). There is the call to remove the member causing temptation. Then in two passages, Jesus stated, "Every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). While the exception clause in these two passages is unique to the Gospel of Matthew, judged on the basis of the manuscripts of Matthew, it is not a textual variant. There is no ground for ignoring the exception.

PERVERSIONS IN CORINTH

Paul is duly aware of the laxity of sexual morals in the Gentile world. Along with a caution about other sins, Paul warns the Corinthians that the immoral, adulterers, and those engaging in homosexual acts will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). However, Paul had no list of unpardonable sins. Those who had come out of such a background were not in a hopeless condition: "And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). In other words, Paul took people where they were. But there was no encouragement to them to continue in their sinful deeds. Using what appears to be a gutter proverb which seems to have been picked up from the streets of Corinth, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," Paul argues that the body was not meant for immorality (1 Corinthians 6:13). Sex is not as neutral morally as going to the table.

Some in Corinth, claiming freedom, seem to have had a motto, "All things are lawful for me," which the apostle also picks up (1 Corinthians 6:12). This freedom included freedom to have relations with a harlot. Paul argues to the contrary that the Christian's body is a part of Christ and must not be made one with a harlot. Going back to Genesis, Paul notes that "the two shall become one." Rather than being a morally innocent act, sex involves a person at the deepest level of personality. One cannot be one with Christ and be one with a harlot. The one who commits fornication sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). The Christian's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He was bought with a price and should glorify God in his body (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE IN THE PAULINE WORLD

Beyond looking at other scriptural teaching on marriage and divorce, to understand Paul one must consider marriage and divorce as practiced in the actual Pauline world. For the majority of Jews, marriage was a religious obligation not to be shunned. The command to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28) was considered to be the first commandment binding on both men and women, but especially on men.⁵ While one group of Essenes married,⁶ in general the Qumran sect,⁷ the Essenes,⁸ and the Therapeutae⁹ (who may not have been Jews) were ascetics; however, there is no evidence of their having contact with Corinth.

The Jewish husband could divorce his wife, but not the wife her husband.¹⁰ The divorce could be for any cause¹¹ and gave the divorced freedom to marry another man. In fact, the wording of the divorce decree (the *get*) stated, "You are free to marry any Jewish man," as is attested both in the Mishna and in the divorce decrees of the third century from Murabba'at.¹²

In addition to the evidence of laxity in morals described in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, Roman culture in general also had abundant marriage and easy divorce. The description of Seneca from the first century is the most often cited evidence: "Is there any woman that blushes at divorce now that certain

illustrious and noble ladies reckon their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands, and leave home in order to marry, and marry in order to be divorced."¹³

The emancipated of Corinth should not be forgotten—those who were saying, "All things are lawful for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

But quite the converse of the above trends was also the ascetic element in the culture.¹⁴ Paul in other letters speaks of those who forbid marriage (1 Timothy 4:3); he may allude to ascetic attitudes in 1 Corinthians 7:25; and he urges the Colossians not to submit to ascetic demands (Colossians 2:20-23). Evidence for specific contemporary movements in Corinth, apart from Paul's correspondence, is hard to come by; and description comes from reading between the lines of his letters. Though the Gospel of Matthew had not been written when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, oral transmission of Jesus' teaching about eunuchs (Matthew 19:10-12) and about the resurrection life (with there being neither marrying nor giving in marriage, Matthew 22:30, 31) can well have suggested to some Corinthians that a life apart from sex should already be lived in this life, and all the more in the expectation of the speedy return of the Lord. In a lax atmosphere like Corinth, would the Christian not safeguard himself by refraining from sex activity altogether, by asceticism in marriage, or by dissolving the marriage? While the reconstruction is hypothetical, it does supply a background against which the discussion of 1 Corinthians 7 fits.

THE QUESTIONS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 7

Paul is not writing a theological treatise on marriage and divorce but is answering questions which had been put to him, particularly by the ascetics.¹⁵ The Corinthians had written Paul about marriage problems (1 Corinthians 7:1). Other topics in the letter beginning "Now concerning" (*peri de*) including the unmarried (7:25), food sacrificed to idols (8:1), spiritual gifts (12:1), and the contribution (16:1) are also thought to answer questions the Corinthians have raised. But about mar-

riage problems, Paul specifically mentions their writing, and in 1 Corinthians 7 he answers a series of questions.

Should Married People Practice Sexual Abstinence?

Paul begins by stating that it is good (*kalon*) for a man not to touch a woman. With that statement begins the problems of the chapter. Though traditionally taken to be a statement of Paul's attitude toward marriage, the Greek text without punctuation does not supply data by which it can be conclusively determined whether this statement is one of the Corinthians or one that states the position of Paul.

The text allows either of two different interpretations. The first considers the statement, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," to be a statement of Paul's position made, not as a general and universal evaluation of marriage, but made in the light of the Corinthian situation. Paul can hardly legitimately be interpreted to say that it is good not to marry when the Lord said that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), when Paul uses marriage to illustrate the relation between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:21-32), and when he used "forbidding to marry" (1 Timothy 4:3) as a sign of apostasy. The writer of Hebrews declares that marriage is honorable (Hebrews 13:4).

For Jerome, the statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:1 became a chief proof passage for the idea that celibacy was better in the sight of God than marriage. He reasoned that the opposite of goodness is badness and concluded what Paul never said—that it is bad to touch a woman.¹⁶

However, elsewhere Paul has echoed what seems to be summary statements of the Corinthians: "All things are lawful for me" (1 Corinthians 6:12), "all of us possess knowledge" (1 Corinthians 8:1), and "all things are lawful" (1 Corinthians 10:23). Origen in the third century suggested that the statement in 1 Corinthians 7:1 is that of the Corinthians.¹⁷ The TEV paraphrases, "A man does well not to marry." How one interprets this statement is crucial in reconstructing Paul's attitude toward marriage.

The term "good" (*kalon*) is also used in Matthew 17:4; 18:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 5:6; 7:8, 26; 9:15; and Galatians 4:18. It was

earlier used in the Septuagint in Genesis 2:18, "It is not good for man to be alone" (cf. Jonah 4: 3; 8). Among many possible meanings of *kalon*,¹⁸ advisability rather than moral good, may be implied.

In this chapter, *gameo* is the verb for marriage. "Touch" has several possibilities as seen in the prohibition "touch nothing unclean" (2 Corinthians 6:17), but should not here be interpreted as a prohibition of touching the hand or skin of a woman. The expression "touch a woman" (*haptesthai* with a woman as object) is not used in biblical Greek to mean marriage, but is used euphemistically for sexual intercourse. The examples include that Abimelech had not touched Sarah (Genesis 20:4, 6), and one should not touch a neighbor's wife (Proverbs 6:29).¹⁹ The statement in 1 Corinthians uses the generic word *anthropos* rather than *aner* which is the usual Greek word for male and husband. F. F. Bruce suggests that *anthropos* is here equivalent to the indefinite pronoun "one."²⁰

Recognizing sexual temptation which could lead to fornication (*porneia*; cf. Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3), Paul provides that each man have (*echein*; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1) his own wife and each woman her own husband. This idiom also refers, in some settings, to intercourse between the sexes (Exodus 2:1, 2; Deuteronomy 28:30; Isaiah 13:16). *Echein* is not the equivalent of *gamein*. Paul is not discussing here who has a right to marry whom but rather whether sexual intercourse should continue in marriage. To make this passage a proof text in the debate over the right of divorced people to remarry (as some have done) is to twist Scripture. The idioms used make clear that Paul is not discussing at this point whether or not a Christian should marry. Stress is upon "his own [*heatou*] wife" and "her own [*idion*] husband"; that is, on the exclusivity of relations against the laxity of Corinth. Polygamy or visits to the harlot are excluded.

Using a chiasmus in Greek (v. 3) with the sequence husband, wife and wife, husband, Paul makes the marriage relationship one of mutual obligation. The woman is to give (*apodidonai*; cf. Matthew 22:21) the husband his due (*opheile*) and the husband the wife her due. The KJV used "due benevolence" and the NKJV "the affection due" rendering the poorer *Textus Receptus*

tus (*opheilomenen eunoian*). The term *opheile* is used elsewhere in debt situations (Matthew 18:32; Romans 13:7); that is, Paul is saying that in marriage one incurs a debt to the spouse which must be paid.²¹ Under the law of Moses, a man was required to give to a slave wife food, clothing, and sexual gratification (Exodus 21:10). If he failed to do these three things, she went free without payment of money.

A person may do with his body as he pleases; but according to Paul, once married, he or she does not have complete disposal (*exousiazein*; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:12) of his or her own body to use it completely as one wills. The verb is that used for governors ruling (cf. Luke 22:25). The two "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:16). The body of each partner in the marriage belongs not to one's self but to the other (1 Corinthians 7:4). That being true, neither is to refuse the right of the other. The object of marriage relations is not self-gratification but the fulfillment of a duty one owes to the other. In fornication, seeking one's own pleasure, one uses the other person for his or her self-gratification.

However, one exception is stated. There may be a mutual agreement (*sumphonos*) of abstinence for a time (*pros chairon*) that they may give (*scholazein*) themselves to prayer. That marital relations might be interrupted by illness, grief, or calamity is known to all but does not come under purview here. The KJV used "defraud" (*apostereite*; cf. 1 Corinthians 6:7) from the idea of withholding what is due; but here there are no legal implications. The term *sumphonos* does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; but the related verb occurs (Matthew 18:19; 20:2; Luke 5:36; Acts 5:9; 15:15). Ananias and Sapphira had agreed on their deception. Paul is not talking about a unilateral decision. Abstinence is to be limited in time and for religious purposes. The critical text does not justify the insertion of "fasting" from the Byzantine text which the KJV and NKJV have followed. The Old Testament recognizes abstinence for participation in religious acts (Exodus 19:15; 1 Samuel 21:5; Ecclesiastes 3:5; Joel 2:16; Zechariah 12:12-14). A like concept is expressed in the Pseudepigrapha: "There is a time for having intercourse with one's wife, and a time to abstain for the purpose of prayer."²² After the limited period of

abstinence, the couple are to resume their relationship (*epi to auto ete*) so that Satan not gain the upper hand through their incontinence.

The antecedent of the pronoun "this" (*touto*; 1 Corinthians 7:6) in the advice is uncertain. It could be only the exception stated (v. 5) or could be the entire instruction in which case the relations spoken of are permissive and not commanded. This program is advanced by Paul as "advice" (*kata suggnomen*), not as a commandment (*kat' epitagen*; cf. 2 Corinthians 8:8). One would search long in Paul's letters to find like distinctions to those made in this chapter. About the instruction of 1 Corinthians 14 (tongues and women's silence in the church), Paul affirmed that what he wrote was a command (*entole*) of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Paul does not command every man and every woman to marry. He expresses the wish that all were as he. Evidently, the single life gave Paul no problem; but he recognized that the Lord gave different gifts (*charisma*; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7; 12:4) to different people. One had one sort and the other another. Jesus taught that his saying about eunuchs was for those who could receive it (Matthew 19:11).²³

Paul is not suggesting that marriage is license. His words should be considered by the man who is making unreasonable demands. Peter elaborates, "Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

Paul's teaching has something to say to the person in a marriage who unilaterally decides that there is to be no more sexual relations in that marriage. Today there is much talk about "the innocent party" in discussing the divorce problem. The person who has exposed his or her spouse to temptation by a denial of marital rights, though not adulterous, is hardly an innocent party should a divorce result. Furthermore, if sexual intercourse in a marriage is a debt to be mutually paid, then sex is not a device for manipulation of the other person so that one would bargain, "I will if you will grant such and such a favor." Paul does not deal with the question as though sex were the husband's privilege and the wife's obligation. The person

spoke well who said, "Sex is not what a man does to a woman. It is something a husband and wife do together."

The Unmarried Persons and Widows

Paul states that it is well (*kalon*; cf. v. 1) for the unmarried males (*tois agamois*) and widows (*cherais*) to remain single as he remains single (1 Corinthians 7:8). The prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36) would have been a widow who abstained from remarriage. Those who have never been married are discussed in verses 25 through 35. *Agamos* ("unmarried") occurs in 1 Corinthians 7:11, 32, and 34 but nowhere else in the New Testament. The term *cheros* ("widower") is never used in the Septuagint or the New Testament. If *agamois* here means widowers, the term balances "widows"; but the term may not be so limited and may include both sexes. In this case, one would interpret the conjunction "and" (*kai*) to mean "especially." A contrast with the "married" of verse 10 may be intended. Paul enjoins neither asceticism nor marriage. If the unmarried have difficulty in exercising self-control (*egkra-teuontai*), it is better that they marry than be aflame with passion (*pyrousthai*).²⁴ The KJV in verse 9 has "burn," leaving the reader to define the meaning. The term is here used figuratively for sexual desire such as described in Matthew 5:28, and the NKJV supplies "with passion." Jerome gave a most graphic description of his own struggles when an ascetic in the desert: "I often found myself amid bevvies of girls. My face was pale and my frame chilled with fasting, yet my mind was burning with desire, and the fires of lust kept bubbling up before me when my flesh was as good as dead."²⁵ Paul in the Pastorals suggests that young widows marry (1 Timothy 5:14).

Much of the space of the chapter is devoted to the question of remaining in the condition in which one became a Christian.

Married Persons

When dealing with married people, Paul makes clear that he is no longer dealing with his opinions; it is not merely good (*kalon*); but he is giving instruction (*parangello*; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:2, 11) from the Lord. Words of the Lord are appealed to in 1 Corinthians 9:14; 11:23ff.; and 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Here the actual word alluded to is not specifically quoted.

Though according to our accepted chronology, the Gospels had not yet been written, Jesus had made specific statements about marriage (Mark 10:11, 12; Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3-12; Luke 16:18) setting forth that marriage is not to be dissolved by the will of the parties involved or by human authority. Paul's statement here is the only instance of "command" in the entire chapter of Corinthians.²⁶ The wife should not separate (*choristhenai*) from her husband, and the husband should not divorce (*aphienai*)²⁷ his wife. Before one makes too much of the alternation of verbs, he should notice that these verbs reverse in the later discussion (1 Corinthians 7:13-15) suggesting equal standing as already noted in verse 2. *Choristhenai* is used in the papyri of divorce.²⁸ Pagan laws allowed a woman to divorce her husband, and both Jewish and pagan laws permitted a husband to divorce his wife. Though Paul does not cite it here, Jesus had said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:9). Problems of incompatibility of disposition, cruelty, disease, deception, and the like are not specifically considered in any biblical passage.

If, despite the Lord's command, and in violation of it, a separation does take place (with or without just cause), Paul offers the estranged wife two options. Marriage with a divorced wife is forbidden (Luke 16:18). The woman who has left her husband may remain single or she should be reconciled (*katallageto*; Romans 5:10) to her husband.²⁹ Paul nowhere reflects a knowledge of the exception clause in Jesus' statements reported in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. Paul's teaching has something to say to the person who has convinced himself that as long as he does not marry someone else he has not done anything wrong in breaking up his or her marriage. Paul lends no encouragement to the modern short step between "I do" and "Adieu." The major consideration about marriage in our culture—love for one another—is not under discussion in this chapter at all. In fact, *eros* is not a New Testament word; it does occur in the Septuagint for the harlot's invitation (Proverbs 7:18) and for "love of a woman" (Proverbs 30:16). *Agape* is used in the New Testament for spouses (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19), for Jesus (John 14:15), for brothers (1 John 2:10), and for enemies (Matthew 5:44).

Luther in this case gave the abandoned mate the right to remarry but denied it to the one who refused to be reconciled.³⁰ Paul never made such provisions.

*Can the Christian Married to the Unbeliever (apiston)
Continue in the Marriage?*

Having spoken of duties in marriage, of the unmarried, and of those married to Christians, Paul addressing "the rest" (*hoi loipoi*; cf. Ephesians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 5:6; that is, those in mixed marriages), discusses the situation of the Christian married to an unbeliever from both sides of the question—the man married to an unbelieving wife and the woman married to an unbelieving husband.

It is agreed that Paul is here (vv. 12-16) discussing the problem in which one party in a marriage has become a Christian and the other has not, not the problem in which a Christian decides to marry a non-Christian. Justin Martyr in the second century gives a graphic description of the problems of the Christian woman in a mixed marriage.³¹ Jesus likely said nothing on this subject; hence, Paul has no word of the Lord on the question. In the Gospel of Luke, "wife" is included to be hated if one is to be a disciple (Luke 14:26), and Jesus spoke of bringing turmoil into families (Matthew 10:35). However, marriage is older than the gospel, and obedience to the gospel does not nullify a marriage.

Ordinarily in Jewish thought, the holy coming into contact with the unholy was contaminated as Haggai makes clear (Haggai 2:10-14). In a connection with a harlot, the harlot becomes the preponderant element, and the member of Christ becomes unholy (1 Corinthians 6:15, 16). The members of Christ should not be members of a harlot. But Paul reverses the consequences in this situation of the unbelieving husband or wife. The family in Jewish thought came under the covenant of the father. Ruth passed into the community of Boaz. The sanctifying influence of the mother (cf. 2 Timothy 1:5) is recognized in this Christian community. A marriage with an unbeliever is a marriage. Paul uses an *ad hominem*. The Corinthians considered their children holy and would not have granted that they were unholy even if from a mixed marriage.

"Unclean" (*akathartos*) is the opposite of "holy" (*hagai*; cf. 1 Timothy 4:5). The statement has nothing to say about infant baptism or infant church membership. It does not mean that the children will go to heaven.

If the unbeliever is willing to continue the marriage (*syneudokei oikein*), then the Christian is not to divorce (*aphieto*) the unbeliever. *Aphiemi* is a legal, technical term for divorce.

The law of Moses prohibited marriages with seven specified nations (Exodus 34:11-16; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4). The marriages broken up by Ezra (Ezra 9:1-3) and Nehemiah (Nehemiah 9:2; 13:23-28) were transgressions of these prohibitions. The Christian widow is advised to marry a Christian (1 Corinthians 7:39); and in the second letter Paul urges not to be mismatched with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14). It is usually assumed that the marriages considered in this section of 1 Corinthians 7 were formed before the conversion of the Christian.

If the unbeliever is not willing to continue the marriage, let him separate (*chorizestho*). One has to ask if there is any identifiable difference in meaning between *aphienai* and *choizein*. As has been noticed, they have been used each with the opposite sex as subject in verses 10 and 11. Paul can only speak to the believer; he has no control over the unbeliever (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:12). The Christian is not obligated to give up his faith to save a marriage.

The crucial question of the whole section is the statement "not bound" (*dedoulontai*) which applies to either the brother or sister. The verb means "to be enslaved." It is a different verb from that used for the widow (*dedetai*; 1 Corinthians 7:39). The Christian has not lost all freedom of action. His or her independence still survives.

Chrysostom, Ambrosiaster, and Roman Catholic theologians, under what has theologically come to be known as "the Pauline privilege," contend that the Christian is free to contract another marriage. Luther also argued for freedom to remarry. In fact, he granted the right to a series of remarriages without waiting for the unbelieving spouses to die. He also extended the privilege to the one married to a false Christian who was trying to force his mate to do wrong and to the victim of abandonment.³² One could hardly agree with such

reasoning. I have expressed the opinion elsewhere that people are reading an answer they have already accepted into their exegesis of this passage because they are asking a question Paul was not answering. He does not say what is to happen after the unbeliever departs.³³

A second reason for letting the unbeliever depart is given. Rather than continuing a marriage where there is bitter fighting to the end. Paul affirms that God called us in peace (*en eirene*). There is not to be recrimination and anger. One is not to harass, cajole, or harangue the unbeliever thus driving him further from the faith. Jesus promised, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). Peace is one of the great characteristics of the Christian life. The Christian has peace with God (Romans 5:1) and should be at peace with others (Romans 12:18). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

Paul then in rhetorical questions reminds both wives and husbands that they may not now know how (*ti gar oidas*) their marriage may be the means of the salvation of their spouse (cf. 1 Peter 3:1). On the other hand, Nicholas of Lyra in the fourteenth century presenting a different view argued that continuing to insist on marriage rights with an unwilling, unbelieving spouse was an attempt at compulsion that could hardly result in salvation of the unbeliever. Carrying this case further, it would mean that to refuse the divorce would be to have no peace. The chance of converting the unbeliever is too small a compensation for a strained disturbed life.

SERVE AS YOU ARE

Paul insists that it is his rule (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:34) in all the churches (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17; 11:16; 14:33), not just in the Corinthian case, for people to live (*peripatein*) without concern for the social situation in which they were called (cf. vv. 8, 10, 12, 13). He has mentioned God's call in verse 15. The principle Paul now states seems equivalent to the modern proverb, "Bloom where you are planted." Stations are assigned (*emerisen*) by the Lord. The call into the church is from God (Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 1 Thessalonians 4:7;

2 Timothy 1:9). Christianity does not demand any outward social status changes. The marriage status would be included. Paul does not discuss here whether there are certain occupations a Christian can engage in and certain ones that he must abandon.

Paul's first illustration is circumcision. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any importance; but keeping God's commands (which either condition can do) is the significant thing (cf. Romans 2:25, 29; Galatians 5:6; 6:15). One should not seek circumcision (cf. Galatians 5:2, 3), nor should he seek to remove the sign of circumcision. Neither condition affects one's relation to God. The pressure of the Judaizers to enforce circumcision on Gentile Christians is reflected in Acts 15:1-5 and 21:21 and in Paul's Galatian letter. On the other hand, ancient writers knew of surgical operations to attempt to hide circumcision (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:15).³⁴ In the gymnasium and bath, such people would not then be recognized as Jews.

The second illustration of staying in the condition in which one was called (became a Christian) is slavery. No doubt many slaves were in the Corinthian church. Paul does not preach social revolution. The slave should not be concerned about his status; he can be a good slave as a Christian (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22; Titus 2:9). But if he can gain his freedom, Paul advises him to take the freedom. The phrase *all' ei kai . . . mallon chresai* (KJV: "use it rather"; RSV: "avail yourself of the opportunity") in the passage is difficult of interpretation for Paul nowhere else (if here) advises slaves to seek freedom. Some think Paul is saying that the slave should use (*chresthai*; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:12, 15) his position as a slave rather than the opportunity for freedom. The slavery translations in their text include the NAB and NRSV, but the freedom ones include (RSV, TEV, NEB, NASV, NKJV, and REB). The translations give the alternate in their notes. The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman, and the free person who is called is the slave of Christ. "In the Lord" occurs later in verse 39. One's worldly position is not the important thing. The Christian was bought with a price (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18, 19), is a slave of Christ (Ephesians 6:6, 9), and they (the form is

plural) should not become slaves of man (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:20). The Christian is free from the slavery to sin (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1), from the penalty of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), and from Satan and his kingdom (Colossians 1:13), but he must obey Christ. Peter, Paul, James, and Jude all speak of themselves as slaves of Christ. The whole argument is summarized in an address to brethren (*adelphoi*), "in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God [*para theo*]."

1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-27

Again using the formula "now concerning" (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1) which suggests a topic the Corinthians had written about, Paul moves to discuss the unmarried women (*parthenoi*; vv. 34, 36, 37). He states that he has no command (*epitage*; cf. vv. 6, 10, 12; 2 Corinthians 8:8) of the Lord. That is, in no preserved gospel statement (oral or written) did Jesus specifically discuss this situation. Paul's opinion (*gnomen*; Latin: *consilium*; cf. v. 40; 1 Corinthians 7:10, 12; 2 Corinthians 8:10; Philemon 14) is of one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy (*pistos*; cf. 1 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Timothy 1:12; 4:9). Paul was ever mindful that the wresting him from his persecuting course had been by God's mercy (1 Timothy 1:12-17; cf. 1 Peter 2:10). Ananias informed Saul in Damascus that the Lord had appointed him to know his will (Acts 22:14). Paul insists in 2 Corinthians that he does not tamper with God's Word (2 Corinthians 4:2). He is not creating ad hoc sayings of Jesus to fit the life situation of the church. His gospel is divinely given (Galatians 1:11, 12).

Paul thinks (*nomizo*; cf. v. 36; 1 Timothy 6:5; Latin: *existimare*) that in view of the impending distress (*enestosan anagken*; Latin: *instantem necessitatem*; KJV, TEV, and NASV: "present distress"; ASV: "distress that is upon us"; NIV: "present crisis"; NAB: "present time of stress"; NEB: "a time of stress like the present") certain behavior is proper. The perfect participle of *enestosan* can mean either "to be present" or "to be near" (Luke 21:23; Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 3:22; Galatians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Here we are confronted with the most puzzling term of the chapter for

which there is unlimited speculation but no really solid information. A like phrase is found in 3 Maccabees 1:16. *Anagken* occurs in Luke 21:23; 1 Corinthians 7:37; 9:16; 2 Corinthians 6:4; 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:7; and elsewhere. Writers generally understand Paul's instruction in the light of eschatology; but it fits equally well in the light of impending death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Whatever definition is given to that term, Paul finds it well (*kalon*; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1, 8) for all to keep their present social status. Here again expediency rather than moral good is the topic. The one bound (*dedesai*; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:39) to a wife should not seek to be free (*lysin*). The term does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. The one free (*lelytai*) from a wife should not seek marriage (*gynaika*). The use of the perfect tense may suggest being freed by her death. However, Paul is explicit that the one who marries does not sin which likely the rigorists in Corinth were insisting on. The girl (*parthenos*) who marries does not sin. Marriage and no marriage are not questions of right and wrong. Jesus warned that his disciples would have tribulation (Luke 23:29). Here, there will be (*hexousin*) worldly troubles (*thlipsin te sarki*) for those who marry, and Paul would spare (*pheidomai*) the Corinthians that. *Thlipsis* may mean trouble without reference to the last days, but often means suffering of the end times (Matthew 24:9, 21, 29; Mark 13:19, 24; Romans 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:6; Revelation 1:9; 2:9, 10, 22; 7:14). The later discussion by Paul shows that "worldly troubles" means earthly cares.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31

Paul addresses (*touto do phemi*; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:50) brothers (*adelphoi*) which is a term for all Christians here and in verse 24. He changes his verb from *lego* (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 6:5; 7:6) to *phemi* and may express the seriousness of the charge. The appointed time has grown very short (*ho kairos synestalmenos estin*). *Kairos* can designate the time before the Advent (cf. Romans 13:11; Hebrews 9:9; etc.) but is not always used in this technical sense (Mark 13:33; Luke 21:8; 1 Peter 4:17; etc.). Because of shortness, for the remainder of the time

(*to loipon*) Christians are to be independent of (rather than trapped by or absorbed in) normal life activities. The Old Testament student will immediately be reminded that when Jerusalem was in danger, the Lord commanded Jeremiah not to marry, not to have sons or daughters, not to go to houses of feasting or to places of mourning (Jeremiah 16:1-9) as a warning to the people about what would happen with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. However, for Paul to be telling the people literally to abandon the activities he lists would be to contradict what he has already said about continuing marriage relationships in the earlier parts of the chapter. They should realize that they live in the end times, marriage relations (cf. Matthew 22:30) and asceticism will become meaningless, and they should act accordingly centering their energies on the service of the Lord. The Christian's treasure is not to be on earth (Matthew 6:20). Affections should be on things above, not on things on earth (Colossians 3:2). Those who had wives should live as though they had none (*hos me echontes*; "keeping fast hold upon"), those mourning as not mourning, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, those who buy as though they had no goods, and those dealing with (*chromenoi*) the world as though they had no dealings with (*katachromenoi*) it (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:10). The form (*schema*) of this world is passing away (*paragein*; cf. 1 John 2:17). The verb is used for changing scenes in the theater or for the passing by of an army.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:32-35

In this section, Paul, starting with "I want" (*thelo*) gives a third reason for the instruction he has given. He wants the Corinthians to be free from the anxiety (*amerimnous*)³⁵ connected with married life. The Greek word occurs only twice in the New Testament with the other occurrence being where the chief priests promise to protect the guard at the tomb from concern (Matthew 28:14). The noun *merimna* occurs for the cares of the world (Matthew 13:22), the cares of this life (Luke 21:34), the care of the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28), and for anxieties to be cast on the Lord (1 Peter 5:7). The verb *merimnan* (Latin: *solicitum esse*) which is four times in verses 32

through 34 is of frequent occurrence beginning with worry about food, drink, and clothing (Matthew 6:25-38). Jesus taught that anxieties choke the Word (Mark 4:19). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns against care (Matthew 6:25f.) as did Paul in the Philippian letter (Philippians 4:6); however, *merimnan* may also be used positively (1 Corinthians 12:25; Philippians 2:20). Here in 1 Corinthians 7, it does not have a pejorative sense but alludes to legitimate concerns, whether the "things of the Lord" or the "things of the world." There is a parallel between "please the Lord" and "please a wife."

Rather than being for the purpose of putting a restraint (*brochos*) upon the Corinthians, the instruction is for their benefit (*symphoron*; Latin: *utilitas*) to promote good order (*euschemon*) and to secure their undivided devotion (*euparedron . . . aperispastos*) to the Lord. Paul has no ulterior motive. *Brochos* (Latin: *lagueus*; RSV: "restraint") occurs in the New Testament only here and suggests a halter or lasso. *Symphoron* occurs elsewhere only in 1 Corinthians 10:33 for Paul's own benefit. *Euschemon* is five times (Mark 15:43; Acts 13:50; 17:12; 1 Corinthians 7:35; 12:34) and in Latin is *honestus* except in Mark 15:43 where it is *nobilis*. *Euparedron* ("devotion") is nowhere else in the LXX or the New Testament. *Aperispastos* ("undivided") is only here in the New Testament but in Latin becomes *sine impedimento*.

Paul explains that the unmarried man can focus on the affairs of the Lord centering attention on how to please the Lord. The married man has to give thought to his wife's desires, he has to provide a living, and he has to protect. His interests are divided (*merizein*; Latin: *dividere*; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:13). The statement is a comparative one, not one which says that the party is wholly centered in either condition. "To please" (*areskein*; Latin: *placere*) is frequent in the New Testament beginning with Salome's dancing to please Herod (Matthew 14:6) and also includes the soldier pleasing the one who enrolled him (2 Timothy 2:4). Pleasing Christ is a stressed Pauline theme (Romans 8:8; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; 4:1). *Merizein* is also frequent in the New Testament beginning with the kingdom divided against itself

(Matthew 12:25). The KJV, RV, and NKJV (following a different text) take this last statement with verse 34 rather than with verse 33, make it part of what is said about woman, and make a distinction in what is said between a wife and a virgin. This interpretation is rejected by the twentieth-century translations except the NKJV. Paul is saying that the married man has a split loyalty; he is divided in his interests. He is serving two masters (cf. Matthew 6:24).

While no explicit definition of "the impending distress" (v. 25) can be conclusively established, any person can see that a division of interests exists. If the mixed marriage is considered, the clash of interests becomes obvious. In the modern world, thousands have discovered that the spouse wished to use the Lord's Day for recreation rather than for worship. Social obligations also bring clashes in mores. In the marriage where both parties are trying to please the Lord, the divided interest may be more difficult to see. However, if one reminds himself that the one who does not provide for his own relatives (an obligation from which the unmarried also would not be free) has denied the faith and is worse than the unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8) and that in the modern world most of a man's waking hours are spent in material pursuits, then the meaning becomes clearer. Further, if one projects a persecution situation where one must sacrifice to the Emperor or die, the problem of the single person is quite different from that of the married person who leaves behind a widow and orphans in a world without social security benefits. By throwing a few grains of incense on the sacrifice and saying, "Lord Caesar," one can live and take care of his loved ones; if he refuses to do it, he goes to death.³⁶

Making a close parallel even in words used, Paul discusses the question from the concerns of the female also. The unmarried woman (*he gune he agamos*) and the girl (*parthenos*) have concerns of how to please the Lord by being holy (*hagia*) in body and spirit. The married woman has concerns of the world—how to please her husband. Body and spirit together designate the whole person (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

HIS VIRGIN

Among the most puzzling of Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians is that about virgins (*parthenoi*; vv. 36-38). Luther called these verses "a strange text."³⁷ The first problem centers on identifying the unexpressed antecedent of the pronouns used. Paul starts out with an unexplained *tis* ("anyone"). The English versions have not been much help, for they divide into three interpretations each of which has its difficulties. William Barclay translated verse 36 successively three ways to reflect these interpretations.³⁸ The ASV and NASV interpret that instruction is being given to a father about his unmarried daughter. The KJV and NKJV do not give an antecedent to the pronoun, leaving the reader to wrestle with the problem, but likely follow this same line. The RSV, TEV, NIV, and NRSV interpret that the action of a man and the woman to whom he is engaged is under discussion. The NIV gives the father/daughter interpretation as a marginal option. The NEB interprets that the instruction is to a man who is in a spiritual marriage with a virgin, using the phrases "if a man has a partner in celibacy" (v. 36) and "to preserve his partner in her virginity" (v. 37). The father/daughter option was suggested in the margin. The REB revision moves from this interpretation to "the girl to whom he is betrothed."

The passage has an interesting history. Wycliffe did not give antecedents to the pronouns "if any man," "he," and "them"; nor did other English Bibles prior to the ASV. The Rheims differs from the others in its rendering "He sinneth not if she marie"; others had "Let them marry" since the subject included in the Greek verb is plural. The KJV supplied and italicized "man," "he," and "her" (v. 36), "his" and "he" (v. 37), and "her" twice (v. 38). Present KJV printings drop the italicization of "man" and "he" (v. 36) and "his" and "he" (v. 38) while retaining them in other cases. The NKJV follows the italics practice of current printings of the KJV rather than that of 1611. It has "her youth" (v. 36), "gives her," and "not give her" (v. 38). The RV and ASV supplied "daughter" italicized in verses 36, 37, and 38. The NASV follows the same practice while by a tour de force having (as the Rheims) "let her

marry"; however, "them" is noted in the margin as literal.

The traditional interpretation of father/daughter is as old as the time of John Chrysostom³⁹ and was held until the beginning of the twentieth century. It has as its strong point the use of the verb *gamizein* twice in verse 38. Elsewhere in the New Testament, men marry and women are given in marriage using this same verb. However, the interpretation bristles with problems the first of which is the use of "his virgin" (*parthenos autou*; v. 36) and "his own virgin" (*parthenos heautou*; v. 38). *Parthenos* has been used by Paul in verses 25, 28, and 34, and in the New Testament describes unmarried women except in those places where it is used figuratively for faithful Christians (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 14:4). There has been no hint to prepare the reader for a discussion of the rights of a father with a daughter. One grants that with Jews and Greeks the father had the power of disposal of daughters in the family. He could give them in marriage or keep them single.

The word *hyperakmos* is applied to a woman to suggest her being past maturity; however, here again the English versions divide with numerous ones (RSV, TEV, NEB, NRSV) seeing in this word which does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament a description of the passion of the man. Assuming that the word describes the age of the daughter (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASV, NIV), why should failing to behave properly (*aschemonein*) suddenly be negated at this late hour? Why should the father suddenly cease to impose virginity upon the girl?

The supporters of this interpretation assume that it is denial of marriage rather than moral behavior that is implied in *aschemonein*. Among Jews, to have no marriage song was calamity (Psalm 78:63). The cares of a father over daughters is well described by the author of Ecclesiasticus: "Do you have daughters? Be concerned for their chastity, and do not show yourself too indulgent with them. Give a daughter in marriage; you will have finished a great task. But give her to a man of understanding."⁴⁰ In another setting he said,

A daughter keeps her father secretly wakeful, and worry over her robs him of sleep; when she is young, lest she do

not marry, or if married, lest she be hated; while a virgin, lest she be defiled or become pregnant in her father's house; or having a husband, lest she prove unfaithful, or though married, lest she be barren. Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, lest she make you a laughingstock to your enemies, a byword in the city and notorious among the people, and put to shame before the great multitude.⁴¹

The early church does not know the condition of a father vowing celibacy for a daughter; hence, the idea that the father might sin in doing so is strange. The daughter, not the father, has the full burden of the sacrifice. Paul in other letters urges fathers not to be overbearing with their children (Colossians 3:21; cf. Ephesians 6:4).

A further difficulty in the father/daughter interpretation is that no antecedent has been mentioned for the plural "let them marry." In this interpretation, only father and daughter have been mentioned; yet no one would foolishly contend that father and daughter are to marry. The plural verb seems to mean the engaged couple.

The interpretation adopted in the NEB (mentioned above) is that in Corinth men and women were living together in spiritual marriages with a pledge of celibacy to each other. The REB turns to "a man" and "the girl to whom he is betrothed" while giving the father/daughter and the partner in celibacy options in the notes. While the NAB and NABR are not so explicit, the note accompanying the verse does suggest that celibacy is one of the two possible interpretations. When monasticism began to develop in the church, there were spiritual marriages.⁴² Though the custom is not attested in the first century outside of the passage we are studying, some have seen it described in the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Hermas is invited to pass the night with the virgins who say, "You shall sleep with us as a brother and not as a husband, for you are our brother and from now on we are going to lie with you, for we love you very much."⁴³ However, the practice of spiritual marriage is of a much later date than Hermas.⁴⁴ Evidence for such being in the church as early as the time of 1 Corinthians is lacking.

A more persuasive way of dealing with the passage is to consider that it discusses the matter of a man and his fiancée. The section begins with a conditional sentence with a double protasis: If one thinks he is behaving improperly and if someone (he or she) be *hyperakmos* and thinks it ought to be, then let him do what he wishes. The explanatory addition is this: "It is no sin; let them marry." The expositor has to wrestle with what constitutes *achemonein* (RSV: "not behaving properly"). The word occurs only twice in the New Testament. The other occurrence is in 1 Corinthians 13:5 which the KJV translated "doth not behave itself unseemly," but the RSV has "Love is not arrogant or rude." There is also the problem of *hyperakmos* which the Latin rendered *superadulta*, but which is otherwise unknown in Greek. As said above, in this interpretation, it is understood of the passion of the man. In this case, there is no problem of the subject of the verb "let them marry." It speaks of the man and the girl who are in love, and their marrying is no sin, the contentions of the ascetics in Corinth notwithstanding.

Having made that declaration, Paul used four phrases to describe the man's position who decides not to marry the girl. He is firmly established in his heart, he is under no necessity, he has his desire under control (*exousia*), and he has determined in his heart to keep her as his betrothed. "Necessity" (*anagken*) is the same word used in verse 26; but here it has no eschatological import. External pressure may be suggested. He is compelled neither by the case made by the ascetics nor by his own lack of continence. Such a man does well (*kalos*). *Kalos* is an adverbial form of the same root with which the chapter began and which occurs in verse 26. It has already been pointed out that it does not carry moral overtones. The conclusion of the argument is introduced with *hoste*. Here the contrast is between "well" (*kalos*) and "better" (*kreisson*). Likely the conditions already discussed in the chapter determine that under the conditions the single life is preferable. A rule for all Christian history is not being announced.

The major difficulty with this interpretation is the meanings of the verbs *gamein* and *gamizein*. If the suggestion made in Moulton and Milligan that the distinction between the *eo*

and *izo* verbs broke down in Koine Greek is valid,⁴⁵ then *gami-zein* in this passage can mean "marry" and not "given in marriage" as it otherwise does in the New Testament (Matthew 22:30; 24:38).

Marriage of Widows

Paul affirms that the wife is bound (*dedetai*) to her husband as long as he lives (1 Corinthians 7:39). He has earlier said that the wife is not to separate herself from her husband (1 Corinthians 7:10). He later states to the Romans, "A married woman is bound [*dedetai*] by law to her husband while he lives" (Romans 7:2). The statement of Genesis is "cleave to his wife" (Genesis 2:24). Death of her husband frees a woman to be married to another man (Romans 7:3, 4). In fact, in the first letter to Timothy, Paul advises young widows to marry (1 Timothy 5:14, 15). Paul in this section of 1 Corinthians 7 uses the euphemism "fallen asleep" (*koimethe*; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15) which is common.

The unique thing about the Corinthian letter is Paul's restriction that the marriage of a widow is to be "in the Lord." The crucial phrase is *monon en kurio* (1 Corinthians 7:39) for which the English translation from Wycliffe through the NRSV has been literal: "only in the Lord"; but the NIV paraphrases, "but he must belong to the Lord." What is to be understood by *en kurio*? Some of our brothers have argued that it means only that the marriage must be of a Christian nature. It seems to me, however, that this position in essence has Paul make a superfluous statement, since all that a Christian does whether marriage or anything else should be in keeping with Christ's teaching. Others have wanted to argue from Ephesians 6:1 where some texts admonish children to obey their "parents in the Lord." They ask if non-Christian parents are to be obeyed. Since *en kurio* in Ephesians 6:1 is a textual variant given only a C-rating of probability for inclusion in the textual commentary, an argument based on it is weak, and the meaning of 1 Corinthians 7:39 should be determined apart from Ephesians 6:1. Some have argued that *en to kurio* is used adverbially and have seen an analogy in Romans 16:2, 22: "As becomes those who are in the Lord."

The phrase "in the Lord" (*en kurio*) is a distinctive, frequently used Pauline phrase which was the object of an extensive study by Adolf Deissmann. While the details cannot be traced out here, the phrase means "in the Christian fellowship" as the REB has paraphrased it. Paul seems to be advising against a mixed marriage. It is puzzling that at no place did Paul ever state a comparable limitation on the man whose wife has died. It is by logical deduction that we arrive at the opinion that what is stated for the woman also holds for the man. In the second letter, Paul warns against being mismated with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14).

At the same time, Paul would see the widow happier (*maka-riotera*) if a second marriage did not take place. This position would follow from what is said in verses 32 through 35 about the anxieties of the married and the unmarried. For this opinion about the widow, he states that he thinks (*doko*) that he, too, has the Spirit of God. Some think the statement is ironical, meaning that Paul, too, has the Spirit as some opposing Corinthians are claiming for themselves (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 2:6).

NOTES

¹Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4.

²Clement *Strom.* 3.12.84.

³Tertullian *To His Wife* 2.8 (The Ante-Nicene Fathers 4.48; hereafter cited as ANF).

⁴See Jack P. Lewis, "'When a Man . . .'" (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)," chap. in *Exegesis of Difficult Passages* (Searcy, Ark.: Resource Publications, 1988), 13-32.

⁵Mishnah *Yebamoth* 6:6; "A man who takes no part in procreation must be regarded as one who sheds human blood" (*T.B. Yebamoth* 63b).

⁶Josephus *War* 2.8.13 (160-61).

⁷1QS 1:9-12.

⁸Josephus *War* 2.8.2 (120); *Antiquities* 18.1.5 (21).

⁹Philo *De vita contemplativa* 18, 32, 68.

¹⁰Mishnah *Yebamoth* 14:1; Josephus *Antiquities* 15.7.10 (259).

¹¹Sirach 25:26; Philo *The Special Laws* 3.30-31; Josephus *Life* 75 (415, 426); *Antiquities* 4.8.22 (253).

¹²Mishnah *Gittin* 9:3; Number 19 in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert II. Les Grottes de Murabb'at*, ed. P. Benoit, J. T. Milik, and R.

de Vaux (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 104-6.

¹³Seneca *De beneficiis* 3.16.2; Loeb ed., 3:155.

¹⁴A. Oepke, "gunē," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:776-89 (hereafter cited as *TDNT*).

¹⁵H. Chadwick, "All Things to All Men (1 Cor. ix. 22)," *New Testament Studies* 1 (May 1955): 261-75.

¹⁶Jerome *Adv. Iovinianum* 1.7 (The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers [2nd series] 6:350; hereafter cited as *NPNF*²).

¹⁷"Origen on 1 Corinthians," par. 121, ed. C. Jenkins, *Journal of Theological Studies* 9 (July 1908): 500-501.

¹⁸Walter Grundmann, "kalos," in *TDNT*, 3:548.

¹⁹See also Josephus *Antiquities* 1.8.1 (163).

²⁰F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 66.

²¹Ignatius *To Polycarp* 5.1 admonishes wives to be content with their husbands and husbands to love their wives.

²²Testament of Naphtali 8:8; cf. Mishnah *Ketuboth* 5:6.

²³Ignatius *To Polycarp* 5:2 states, "If any man can remain in continence to the honor of the flesh of the Lord, let him do it without boasting."

²⁴F. Lang, "puroō," in *TDNT*, 6:948-51.

²⁵Jerome *Letter 22. To Eustochium* 7 (*NPNF*² 6:25).

²⁶O. Schmidt, "parangello," in *TDNT*, 5:761-65.

²⁷Herodotus *History* 5:39.

²⁸Adolf Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, trans. Alexander Grieve (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1901), 247.

²⁹See Jack P. Lewis, "'Putting Away' and Divorce," chap. in *Exegesis of Difficult Passages* (Searcy, Ark.: Resource Publications, 1988), 169-73.

³⁰*Luther's Works*, ed. H. C. Oswald, vol. 28, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 7, trans. Edward Sittler (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 32.

³¹Justin Martyr *Apol.* 2.2 (*ANF* 1:188).

³²*Luther's Works*, 36.

³³See Jack P. Lewis, "Remarriage (1 Corinthians 7)," chap. in *Exegesis of Difficult Passages* (Searcy, Ark.: Resource Publications, 1988), 123-27.

³⁴Josephus *Antiquities* 12.5.1 (241); Assumption of Moses 8:3.

³⁵The KJV word "carefulness" is archaic and meant "anxiety."

³⁶"A Christian is always under the threat of persecution for the sake of the Gospel, living in constant danger of losing his goods, his friends, and his life, and facing exile and execution." *Luther's Works*, ed. H. C. Oswald, vol. 28, *The Seventh Chapter of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. Edward Sittler (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1973), 49.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 54.

³⁸William Barclay, *The New Testament* (London: Collins, 1969), 2:47.

³⁹Migue *P.L.* 17.225 A, B.

⁴⁰Sirach 7:24-25.

⁴¹Sirach 42:9-11.

⁴²H. Achelis, "Agapetae" in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1926; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), 1:177.

⁴³*The Shepherd of Hermas*, *Sim.* 9.11.

⁴⁴Graydon F. Snyder, *The Apostolic Fathers VI. The Shepherd of Hermas* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968), 138-39.

⁴⁵James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1930; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), 121.

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TEXTUAL STUDIES

THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

CLAY HUMPHREYS

The church in Corinth was in sad shape. It was plagued by every type of problem, struggle, and sin imaginable—disunity, division, jealousy, backbiting, immorality, instability, and selfishness—just to name a few. These conflicts were caused by man's pursuit of wisdom, his desire to become as wise and knowledgeable as God. Charles Swindoll has described this futile pursuit: "In the beginning God created man in His own image. The competition began when man insisted on returning the compliment."¹ The results were obvious—a church that was paralyzed and could not glorify its God or serve its Savior. This struggle really has not improved during the last nineteen hundred years.

Paul, in his first letter to this church, quickly condemned their pursuit of "human wisdom" and stated that the answer to man's struggle to find wisdom is the cross of Calvary. He proclaimed, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). It was not that Paul had preached through all his sermon outlines but that he had not exhausted this subject. He knew that the cross of Christ is the antidote to our worldliness, pride, and search for human wisdom.

Prior to this statement, in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul described the human reactions to the message of the cross. Two reactions are negative, while the third one is positive.

SOME STUMBLE

To the Jews, the message of the cross was a stumbling block, a scandal. It was beyond their wildest imagination that the

Messiah, God's Anointed One, could be crucified on a cross. Throughout their history, since the end of the United Kingdom, the children of Israel were searching for a Messiah of power and glory. They yearned for a king who would march into Jerusalem, powerfully destroy the hated Roman occupation army, and restore Israel to its past glory.

Sadly, Israel was aware of the prophecies about the suffering Messiah (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). They knew from the Old Testament prophets, and from Jesus himself, that the Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of his people. Yet they continued to hold to their traditional belief in a glorious earthly king.

Jesus rebuked their blindness: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life" (John 5:39, 40). These Jews knew the smallest details about the Scriptures and the Messiah and took extreme pride in their scriptural knowledge. Yet they missed the Messiah.

Paul also stated that the "Jews demanded miraculous signs" (1 Corinthians 1:22). Jesus constantly faced this conflict during his ministry. In Matthew 12:38 the Pharisees asked to see a miraculous sign from Jesus proving his Messiahship. How many miraculous signs did they need to see? Jesus had already healed a paralytic before their very eyes, raised the daughter of a synagogue ruler from the dead, and fed over five thousand people with a handful of food. If they had not believed these signs, would they have believed one more, or two more? More than likely they would not have because Jesus did not fit their idea of the Messiah. They had made up their minds and would not be confused by the facts about Jesus.

Religion that "diligently searches the Scriptures" often misses the Messiah.

SOME LAUGH

To the Greeks (Gentiles) the message of the cross was foolishness. The Holy Spirit used the Greek word *moria* from which we obtain the English words "moron" and "moronic."

God being crucified on a Roman cross was silly, stupid, moronic, and pure folly to them.

The Greek mind was dominated by the pursuit of human wisdom. When Paul arrived in Athens, he found men who spent their leisure time discussing and listening to "new things," especially new religions (Acts 17:16ff.). These men would debate and discuss any subject for hours and even days. They referred to these discussions as philosophy, "the science which considers truth." Newspaper columnist Franklin P. Adams once defined philosophy as "unintelligible answers to insoluble problems."² Whatever philosophy is, it was important to the Greeks of Corinth.

Two of the major foundational elements of Christianity, the incarnation and the crucifixion, were beyond comprehension to most Greeks. In the Greek mind, God could not and would not come down to man. Instead, it was man's responsibility to attempt to elevate himself to God. From the beginning, Jesus' divine humanity ("The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us," John 1:14) was extremely difficult for them to accept. If we add to this the reality that this same God was crucified on a Roman cross outside of Jerusalem, we need not wonder why these Greeks laughed at Christianity. It was a brand new and very difficult philosophy for them to accept.

Religion to a Greek was encompassed in the pursuit of wisdom—logic coupled with persuasion. Logic involved their ability to think through a problem, idea, or dilemma. Persuasion was their ability to convince others that their logic or way of thinking was correct. Thus, their religion became their ability to elevate themselves to the highest plane.

Therefore, the Greeks laughed at the cross. In reality, mankind has not changed that much. Shirley MacLaine, a major influence in the New Age Movement, once stated: "We already know everything. The knowingness of our divinity is the highest intelligence. And to be what we already know is the free will. Free will is simply the enactment of the realization you are God, a realization that you are divine."³ Many still laugh today, and through their search for human wisdom they, too, miss the Messiah.

SOME BELIEVE

To those who believe, the message of the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The cross provides what the Jews were searching for, power, and what the Greeks were striving for, wisdom. Yet both missed the message of the cross because of their self-centered blindness. Both power and wisdom come from God and not from man.

The message of the cross is first the power of God. This could easily be translated the "dynamite" of God (from the Greek *dunamis*). As dynamite is used to destroy and break through barriers, the power of God is able to destroy the hold that sin has on a person's life and break through the barrier of selfishness. Once the power of God explodes within our hearts, we are never the same again, but have been radically transformed into the likeness of Jesus. Paul effectively describes this point to both the Jews and Greeks in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Second, the message of the cross is the wisdom of God. Man has always attempted to find God his way, to analyze and discover exactly God's method of operation, or to accomplish God's mission through his own knowledge or abilities. Yet every time man fails. "It is not in man to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). It is not in man to analyze God as he would a machine. It is not man's purpose to design a better plan. Man cannot use his abilities to save himself. It is man's design and purpose to respond to the message of the cross with faith.

The cross is God's wisdom because it destroys any and every attempt by man to boast of his own salvation. It focuses all the glory on God because only God would choose to save man through a crucified Christ.

CONCLUSION

The message of the cross is a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. It is totally illogical to human wisdom, but that is why we sing "Amazing Grace" and not "Amazing Logic."

NOTES

¹Charles Swindoll, *Strong Reproofs for a Scandalous Church* (Fullerton, Calif.: Insight for Living, 1988), 25.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Daring* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1988), 50.

³As quoted by Douglas R. Groothuis in *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 26.

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NO OTHER FOUNDATION (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

GAYLON LAMB

THE BACKGROUND

Corinth's location between two seaports and its status as a Roman colony caused the city to become a cosmopolitan metropolis by the first century. Corinth portrayed the vices of the pagan world in bolder relief than perhaps any other city of its day. The city's wealth produced a "boom town" environment characterized by "luxury, display, sensuality, and sport." Its immorality was proverbial. "To live as a Corinthian" was a phrase used to describe the vilest of lifestyles.¹

Corinth was a Greek city which also loved intellectual pursuits and prided herself in her artistic sense. This latter penchant was reflected in her beautiful temples. Corinth hosted the Isthmian athletic games which were held every other spring. Corinth's intellectual curiosity coupled with an intense sense of rivalry generated by her athletic contests gave birth to a distinct party spirit among her populace.² A citizen would single out a philosopher who appealed to him because of his particular worldview, personality, or eloquence and would exalt this philosopher above the others and give him his allegiance. This was also a familiar practice in Corinth's pagan religion. "In some of the mystery cults the priest who performed the rites was looked upon as the father of the initiates" and would thus receive their homage.³

This mindset spilled over into the young church which Paul established in this pagan environment. Some who were converted through the preaching of Paul believed that they owed their allegiance to him. When Apollos later worked with the church, some who were impressed by his eloquence or his

particular approach to the work, began championing him as their "favorite preacher." Others chose Peter and even Christ as their "party leader."

THE CONTEXT

These factions were causing quarrels and division in the church. Paul devotes 1 Corinthians 1-4 to presenting a solution to their divisiveness. First, he downplays his role in their conversion in order to elevate Christ. In the form of rhetorical questions, he reminds them that he was not crucified for them nor were they baptized into his name (1 Corinthians 1:13). Then Paul contrasts the Corinthians' pride in men with the wisdom of God which has "made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). In chapter 2, Paul tries to persuade them to place their confidence in God's power revealed by the Holy Spirit rather than in the wisdom of men (vv. 4, 5).

In chapter 3, Paul points out that their jealousy and strife over party leaders is a sign of spiritual immaturity and worldly thinking (vv. 1-4). He reminds them that he and Apollos are only servants through whom they came to believe (v. 5). This was implying that they should be honoring the Lord rather than the servants who led them to the Lord. Paul planted, Apollos watered, but it was God who gave the increase (v. 6), implying that the Corinthians had been following the gardeners rather than the One who makes the garden grow. In verse 8, Paul states that the planter and the waterer work together as one; thus they are not rivals.

In verse 9, Paul changes his figure of speech from gardening to an architectural one: "... you are ... God's building." This sets the stage for the passage, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, which deals with the responsibility of each teacher or preacher to build properly on the true foundation of Christ.

EXEGESIS

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it (v. 10).

Paul makes it clear that credit for laying the foundation belongs to God, not himself. God's grace given to Paul enabled him to establish the church in Corinth. Initially, it was by God's grace that Paul had been commissioned as apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Ephesians 3:8). More specifically, Paul was commissioned as a "wise master builder." The word "wise" (*sophos*) was used in the Septuagint to describe the workmen who received understanding and skill from God to build the tabernacle (Exodus 35:10; 36:1). "Master builder" (*architecton*) carries the idea of an architect or one who superintends the construction of a building. The actual foundation which Paul laid as a result of God's grace, presence, and protection (Acts 18:9, 10) was Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). The crucified Christ was at the heart of Paul's preaching at Corinth (1 Corinthians 2:2). The emphasis in verse 10 is on God's commissioning the laying of the foundation, not on Paul himself.

A word of caution is sounded to anyone who builds on the foundation: "But let each man be careful how he builds" (1 Corinthians 3:10b). The quarreling factions in the church indicated that some were not building on the foundation as they should. Paul's reference to "each man" emphasizes the individual responsibility of each one to build properly. In the absence of Paul and Apollos who were at Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:12), the members of the Corinthian congregation would have to assume the responsibility for building the superstructure.⁴ The action involved in building upon the foundation probably refers to "increasing the outward number and the inward faith of the congregation."⁵

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (v. 11).

This is the anchor point of Paul's thorough discussion of how to handle Corinth's "celebrity syndrome." The only solid basis for faith is found in Jesus Christ himself and not in a particular teacher who is admired for his special qualities. No human being can lay the foundation for faith. Only God can do that, and he has done it through the person and work of Christ and the preaching of the gospel. The church of Christ rests on the

bedrock foundation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 16:16-18). The fact that salvation can be found only in the name of Christ points to the essentiality and exclusiveness of the foundation (Acts 4:12). Loyalty to a certain party jeopardizes one's commitment to Christ.⁶ All that men can do is build the superstructure upon the foundation of Christ which has been laid by God. Building on the foundation is man's special task which carries grave responsibility.

Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw (v. 12).

This verse names the materials which God's servants use in building on the foundation. The main emphasis is on the *quality* of the materials used. A contrast is given between the materials which are permanent and valuable (gold, silver, precious stones) and those which are temporary and worthless (wood, hay, straw). The building materials seem to be the kind of teaching done by the workers and/or the methods employed in their work.

Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work (v. 13).

Both references to "each man's work" seem to refer to the kind of teaching done (which is represented by the various building materials in verse 12) rather than a direct reference to members of the church at Corinth. This conclusion is borne out by the use of the verb *katakaio* ("to burn up completely") in verse 15 which refers to the teacher's work which was of poor quality.⁷ If "each man's work" refers to Christians, it would mean that each Christian who was the product of poor quality teaching would be completely destroyed on the Day of Judgment. Such a view does not harmonize with Scripture. It would place all the responsibility on the teacher for the Christian's being lost while the teacher himself is saved. Such a view does not fit the context either. Rather than pointing out the destiny of the ones taught, Paul refers directly to the quality of each teacher's work.

Paul assures the Corinthians that the quality of each

teacher's work will be tested. The time of testing is referred to as "the day." Some scholars see this as a reference to a day of testing which persecution brings, or as a reference to time in general as in the expression: "Time will tell whether or not the work is permanent." Others see "the day" as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem which would test the permanency of one's work. "The day" seems more likely, however, to be a reference to the Day of Judgment when Christ returns. The reference to the teacher's being "saved" in verse 15 places this passage in an eschatological setting. A direct reference to the final judgment is made in 1 Corinthians 4:5 in connection with members who had been judging Paul as an apostle. Understanding "the day" to refer to the Judgment Day certainly fits the immediate context.

Fire is associated with the Judgment at the end of time (1 Thessalonians 1:7, 8; 1 Peter 1:7; 2 Peter 3:7, 10, 11). This harmonizes with viewing the time of testing as the final judgment. The NASV reads: "For the day . . . is to be revealed with fire" (i.e., the day of testing will be made known by fire). Fire is frequently used in Scripture to represent God's activity among men (Exodus 3:2; 13:21; 19:18; Acts 2:3).⁸ Fire illuminates as well as destroys (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Fire represents the judgment of God which will take place on the Day of Judgment, and it will show each man's work for what it is. The fire will destroy the works which were neither permanent nor productive (v. 15). At the same time, those works which were truly worthy will be preserved through the fire, having passed the test (v. 14; Job 23:10; Psalm 66:10; 1 Peter 1:7).

If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire (vv. 14, 15).

Verses 14 and 15 tell us the results of divine judgment. The one whose work passes the test and remains will be rewarded. Part of the reward is the joy of seeing the abiding, eternal nature of one's work (1 Thessalonians 2:19; Philippians 2:6). The parable in Luke 19:11-27 suggests that opportunities of

higher service may be part of the worker's reward. The Lord rewards "to every man according to what he has done" (Revelation 22:12).

The work to be burned up is not false doctrine which would have undermined the foundation of Christ. If this were the case, then the teacher would not be saved (Galatians 1:8, 9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3). All this passage reveals concerning the nature of the work to be burned is that it is of poor quality; therefore, we cannot be certain as to the exact nature of the teaching. Paul tells Timothy to pay no attention to "myths and endless genealogies which give rise to speculation rather than furthering the administration which is by faith" (1 Timothy 1:4). Perhaps the reference in verse 15 is to a similar type of instruction which is unfruitful. Lenski says that the reference may be to "human notions added to the gospel."⁹ The teacher may be of good character, but due to a lack of knowledge or ability, his work may be of poor quality. Although the message may be true, it may be partial or unbalanced. One's methods can be faulty. He may fail to consider the background of those he teaches. He may use overly emotional appeals or pressure tactics or be manipulative to the extent that his work does not last. As previously noted, we can only speculate as to the exact nature of the teaching since we are not told. In any case, the work spoken of here will never survive the judgment of fire. Lenski says, "This burning up denotes the complete rejection of the work of the unwise builders, their teaching, and all they thought they had accomplished in men's hearts through it."¹⁰

We are amazed to read that such a worker will himself be saved. This must be because he at least tried to accomplish something for Christ and he did at least build something on the foundation, unprofitable or unworthy as it was. Although the unwise builder is refused the glory and reward of the wise builder, he is allowed to escape "yet so as through fire." The figure of speech here indicates a narrow escape. Lenski says, "The picture seems to be somewhat on this order: this builder stands in the house of his work, and when the judgment-fire strikes and devours it, he rushes out. Who wants to spend all his life in the ministry and then end in such a way?"¹¹

The distinction in verses 14 and 15 is not between those who

will be lost and those who will be saved. Rather both verses distinguish between saved individuals who have built well and saved individuals who have built poorly.¹² Each will be rewarded or suffer loss according to the verdict of divine judgment. Poor workmanship "will be destroyed, but the teacher will be saved despite the destruction of his work. Grace is here operative."¹³ This helps us to see that "salvation is a gift and not a reward."¹⁴ Such a teacher "will be saved as a steward who has lost the things of his stewardship . . . or as a contractor whose structure has gone up in flames."¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Robertson summarizes Paul's words in this passage as follows: "I have laid the only possible foundation. Let those who build on it remember that their work will be severely tested on the Last Day."¹⁶ Paul emphasizes the personal accountability of the teachers for the quality of their work so that the Corinthian church will stop judging these teachers themselves by pitting them against each other. Judging the teachers is God's business. "To his own master he stands or falls. . . ." (Romans 14:4). This is the principle. The final proof of a teacher's work is not in how popular a following he had, but in the durability of his work. The Corinthian Christians must, therefore, refrain from building rival factions around their favorite teachers. This creates rifts within the body which can destroy a local church. Thus the warning is given against destroying "the temple of God" by a divisive spirit (1 Corinthians 3:17). How could the church of God at Corinth reach out to a pagan world with the message of reconciliation while they themselves were warring factions?

This passage has some vital applications to the church of God today. How many local congregations have divided by polarizing around a certain teacher or preacher who champions a particular opinion which is not a foundational, doctrinal matter at all? We must learn how to bind together on the foundation which was placed under us upon becoming Christians. Progress can be made as we focus less on our differences of opinion and more on the "equipping of the saints for the

work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). If this is our emphasis, it will promote the kind of unity from within that makes believers in an unbelieving world (John 17:21-23).

This passage has something to say about how we should deal with teachers in the church whose opinions do differ from ours. We must not overstep our bounds by judging them. Labeling and "writing up" brethren whose opinions differ from ours is wrong. We must be extremely careful about accusing brethren of teaching false doctrine. The New Testament labels as false teachers those who either knowingly, deceitfully, or from impure motives taught error (Matthew 15:3-9; 23:2-33; John 10:12, 13; Acts 20:29, 30). They were often morally corrupt (2 Peter 2:1-23; Jude 4, 8, 11, 12, 18, 19). Certainly those teaching false doctrine must be instructed, reprovved, refuted, even avoided in the case of "those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh" (1 Timothy 1:3, 4; Titus 1:9-14; 2 John 10, 11). But vicious attacks on the integrity of brethren who differ on matters of opinion is unwarranted, arrogant, and unloving. One can be guilty of condemning one whom God will save (1 Corinthians 3:15).

The responsibility for building properly on the foundation of Christ forces preachers and teachers to diligently seek to understand New Testament teaching in light of the context and background in which it was written so he can properly apply these truths to real-life situations today. We must not feel bound to rely on Restoration theology as the touchstone for an orthodox interpretation of the Scriptures. To do so is to be guilty of the same problem Paul was trying to correct at Corinth—that of elevating men above their rightful places as God's servants. Neither must we elevate time-honored traditions to the status of the doctrine of Christ. The standard by which all work undertaken upon the foundation must be gauged is whether or not the teaching has Christ's authority behind it (Acts 4:12; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9). The reality of denominationalism in the religious world can be attributed to a failure to build on the foundation of Christ. Basically, it is a failure to accept Christ's terms of entrance into his kingdom (John 3:3-5). No one can possibly build on the foundation of

Christ until he first comes into Christ (Galatians 3:26-29). Building properly on the foundation also involves the rejection of any teaching originating with man rather than with Christ (Matthew 15:9). Seeking to build on the foundation only that which Christ clearly authorizes, motivated by love on our part, provides the proper framework for building unity in the church (Ephesians 4:11-16). This approach can also draw other spiritually-minded people and can encourage them to build on the one true foundation which is Jesus Christ.

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HOW OUR PERSPECTIVE OF MINISTRY AFFECTS CHRISTIAN UNITY

(1 Corinthians 4, 5)

TOM ALEXANDER

Recently the editor of a popular religious journal insightfully assessed the state of churches of Christ:

I speak as one brought up by Christian parents, who was baptized into Christ at the age of eleven, who attended schools operated by our brethren from the age of sixteen until graduation from college, and one who has been active in the church from teenage years; yet, never have I seen a time when there was more suspicion, fragmentation, and criticism among brethren than now. At a time when the world is perishing without the gospel, and when churches of Christ have ceased to evangelize as they once did, we scarcely think about trying to baptize alien sinners because we are too busy picking at one another. Surely there is a way that we can engage in self-criticism when needed, and expose error in the church, without rendering asunder the body of Christ and alienating brethren into separate, warring camps and cliques.¹

My own experience confirms that editor's observation. Churches with which I have had close association have not escaped the horrors of division. I occasionally ask students in my university classes if they are aware of churches plagued by discord and strife. I have never had a class in which there was not a significant number of students to answer positively. We all know of new congregations formed, not because of a concern to plant the seed of the kingdom in a new area, but because brethren in another church have had a falling out. We know of churches whose attendance figures have grown, not

because its members have gathered the fields that are "white for harvest," but because they have picked up people who have parted the way with brethren in another congregation. Indeed, one of the greatest paradoxes of our religious heritage is that a people who historically have affirmed a plea for unity have so often experienced division!

However, in order to redress the problem of division among members of the household of God, we must do more than merely decry it and denounce it as sinful. When an air liner goes down taking scores of passengers to their deaths, the media report the tragedy, sometimes ad nauseam. But the Federal Aviation Administration immediately begins to search for causes. Simply to talk and write about how horrible an airplane crash is will not keep another from occurring. Only by determining the cause of a given accident and taking steps to eliminate that cause as much as possible from other flights will the safety of air travel be improved. Similarly, church division is only the fruit of something that goes deeper into the spiritual root systems of both individual Christians and congregations. Unless the roots are doctored, the bad fruit will continue to be produced.

The New Testament letter we know as 1 Corinthians provides a biblical setting in which to address the issue of discord among Christians, for in it Paul writes extensively and pointedly on the theme. This letter has a special appeal because the apostle's counsel comes to us by way of his directives to a church that was experiencing the very problem strangling so many of our congregations. Certainly we can say with Paul, "... it has been reported to [us] . . . that there is quarreling among you, my brethren" (1 Corinthians 1:11).

Each of us probably has his or her opinions as to why churches experience division. In this series of lessons, we must avoid the temptation to search for the plethora of possible causes of congregational strife. Instead, we must allow the factors Paul understood to be working at Corinth to focus the investigation of our modern frailties, then formulate our response in the terms of his solutions. We begin by seeking to understand the problem that Paul addressed.

THE FACE OF THE PROBLEM OF QUARRELING AT CORINTH

Paul ministered in Corinth for 1½ years after he planted the gospel there in A.D. 50 or 51 (Acts 18:1-18). Following his return to Antioch of Syria, Paul made his way across Asia Minor to Ephesus where he stayed for three years (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31). While at Ephesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:8), Paul kept in touch with the church in Corinth. The ease of travel in the ancient Mediterranean world made it possible for individuals from Corinth to make their way to Ephesus, and from them Paul learned of the state of affairs in their church back home.

Among a number of difficulties reported to Paul by a delegation from one Chloe was the problem of quarreling among Christian brothers (1 Corinthians 1:11). Paul takes up the issue in the first long section of the letter (1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21).

There was quarreling (*erides*) among brethren at Corinth. Paul uses the plural of the Greek word *eris*, a term that basically means strife, discord, or contention. That this was a serious matter is clear when we recognize that elsewhere Paul includes *eris* among vices characteristic of pagans (Romans 1:29), those who pursue the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:20), and the heretics who threatened Timothy and the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 6:4). This flaw also motivated certain proclaimers of the gospel who sought to exacerbate the affliction of the imprisoned Paul (Philippians 1:15-17). Paul states that by acting in such contentious fashion, the Corinthians were behaving like unregenerate humanity (1 Corinthians 3:3). In 1 Corinthians 3:3, Paul brings alongside the sin of strife, jealousy (*zelos*), a disposition that also finds place in the vice lists of the New Testament (cf. Romans 13:13; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20).

While the terms "strife" and "jealousy" make us immediately aware of the gravity of the situation, the expressions themselves do not clarify how the contentions were being manifested. Thus, we must look to Paul's description of the situation at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:12: "What I mean is that each one of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,'

or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.'" These slogans suggest that at Corinth "there was a tendency to form parties and claim the leadership of various outstanding men."² First Corinthians 4:6 indicates that each party thought its champion was to be preferred over the others.

No evidence exists that the individuals whose names were being bannered over the respective groups were responsible for the cliquishness. Paul disclaims any personal responsibility for the state of affairs (1 Corinthians 1:13-17; 2:1-5). Far from speaking of Apollos, Cephas, and himself as rivals, Paul goes to great lengths to affirm their solidarity in ministry (1 Corinthians 3:5-9, 21, 22; 4:6). As we shall see, the fragmentation at Corinth was due to wrong thinking on the part of the Corinthians themselves.

Nor is there evidence that the situation Paul describes had actually resulted in outright division within the Corinthian church. Paul addresses "the church of God which is at Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2) with the assumption that they would come together in assembly (1 Corinthians 5:4; 11:17, 33; 14:26) and all receive his communication. Although Paul warns against divisions (*schismata*) in 1 Corinthians 1:10, he "does not say that the community was already torn into pieces; he asks that this may not be allowed to happen, . . ."³ Nevertheless, the situation was volatile. Although actual schisms had not yet appeared, "if the quarrelling and party-spirit described in the following sentences were allowed to develop unchecked, outright division might be the result."⁴

When we try to determine the contours of each of the parties mentioned by Paul, we face some difficulties. Paul and the Corinthians knew the situation, and he could assume their common knowledge when he wrote the letter. This naturally leaves us in the dark at certain points. It might be that people were gravitating toward the teacher who had baptized them (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:14, 15). It is understandable that some would be especially fond of Paul whose ministry in Corinth had yielded the initial fruits of the gospel in Achaia. On the other hand, some scholars detect in Paul's words an indication that some at Corinth stood in actual opposition to Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, 18-21).⁵ However, whatever opposition to

Paul there was, it was not as intense as it would become (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:1ff.; 10:1ff.).

It is frequently suggested that some at Corinth were drawn to the eloquent Apollos (cf. Acts 18:24) because of his rhetorical skill. C. K. Barrett has illuminated this possibility by stating:

It is easy to understand that, in a church where gifts of the tongue were rated high (i. 5; xii. 8, 28; xiv. 26), the appearance of a particularly eloquent preacher could awaken partisanship, and some contempt for the founder, who was despised as a speaker (2 Cor. x. 10), and himself acknowledged his failings in this respect (2 Cor. xi. 6).⁶

Paul's disclaimer of using "lofty words or wisdom" in his proclamation of the testimony of God (1 Corinthians 2:1ff.) may imply that at least some of the Corinthians were placing too much stock in rhetorical eloquence.

We have no record that Peter ever visited Corinth, although nothing stands in the way of the possibility that he did. However, the presence of a group claiming allegiance to Cephas (Aramaic for "Peter") reflects his influence there. The best guess is that this party was composed of Jewish Christians. Later discussion in 1 Corinthians (cf. 8:1ff.) reveals some Jew/Gentile tension in the church at Corinth. Could it be that Christians of Jewish background found greater kinship to Peter, whose primary sphere of ministry was among the Jews, than they did to Paul, who worked more among the Gentiles (cf. Galatians 2:6-9)? The particulars of the tie to Peter must remain speculative.

The most perplexing of the parties is the one claiming the name of Christ. In light of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 1:13, we can conclude that one is right to devote himself to the person who was crucified for him and the one in whose name he had been baptized. Thus, nominally the claim "I belong to Christ" is not wrong (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:23; 2 Corinthians 10:7). Some interpreters have viewed this statement in a positive light and have regarded it as Paul's counter to the wrong-headed allegiances to himself, Apollos, and Cephas. However, the parallel grammatical structure of 1 Corinthians 1:12 and

the pointed rhetorical question of verse 13, "Is Christ divided?" suggest that all four of the parties come under Paul's censure. Even though "I belong to Christ" is a good formulation, those who heralded it were motivated by the same spirit of strife and jealousy that prompted the others. There is no sure means of delineating the character of the "Christ" party. But when we recognize that there is no indication that the emergence of these groups was due to any doctrinal differences, the exclusive and divisive use of the name of Christ appears all the more reprehensible!

Paul perceived that the church at Corinth was on the verge of division. The special interest groups that were lining up against each other were straining the internal fiber of the body of Christ at Corinth to the point of tearing apart. His urgent appeal in 1 Corinthians 1:10—4:21 is designed to head off the split that seemed inevitable.

As we follow Paul's discussion, we gain further insight into the undergirdings of the problem, and we learn what change in thinking would be necessary in order for the Corinthians to put an end to their quarreling and bring cohesiveness back into their fellowship.

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM OF QUARRELING AT CORINTH

We have already noted in passing some aspects of Paul's response to the quarreling at Corinth. He has stated that his intentions are in earnest. The entire section is bracketed by verbs that draw attention to the urgency of Paul's pleading (*parakalo*, 1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:16; *noutheto[n]*, 1 Corinthians 4:14). The solemnity of the appeal is heightened in 1 Corinthians 1:10 by the phrase "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." He makes it plain that the immature conduct of the Corinthians is more in line with what the unregenerate would do than with what Christians should do (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). When we add his explicit warning that God will destroy whomever destroys his (God's) temple (the church) by engendering discord (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17), we cannot escape the somber tone of his response. But if Paul's tone is somber, it is nonetheless

tender. The Corinthians are his brethren (1 Corinthians 1:10, 11, 26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6), and he admonishes them as his beloved children (1 Corinthians 4:14).

Instead of advising the Corinthians to divide, Paul holds before them the goal of agreement. Literally, he urges them all "to speak the same thing" and to be "united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). This should not be understood as Paul's urging them to have identical opinions on every conceivable issue. As a matter of fact, Paul will later give the Corinthians directives on co-existence among brothers who hold differing opinions (cf. 1 Corinthians 8—10). Rather, we should regard 1 Corinthians 1:10 as an admonition to be united in a common allegiance and not fragmented as verse 12 indicates they were. Their personal prejudices and preferences must give way to a shared commitment to the cross-centered gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17, 18, 23; 2:2).

Paul next disclaims any personal complicity in the bickering at Corinth. First, Paul had not intentionally baptized only a few individuals at Corinth, but in retrospect he is glad he had not baptized more "lest any one should say that you were baptized in my name" (1 Corinthians 1:15). Most of us can remember the person who baptized us. We likely regard the relationship with that person in a special way. But of greater importance than the person who baptized us is the crucified Christ to whom our baptism was a saving response. No one should think that Paul had attempted to bind converts to himself personally. Instead, he pointed them to Christ.⁷

This does not mean that the relationship Paul shared with the Corinthians should be taken lightly. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 4:14-16, Paul reminds his readers of the familial tie they have to him because he had become their "father in Christ Jesus through the gospel." Consequently, they should imitate him. However, note that Paul is calling them not to line up with him against another teacher, but rather to have the harmonious disposition he had manifested toward his fellow ministers (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5—4:13).

Paul continues to disclaim responsibility for the strife at Corinth by affirming that his method of preaching was consistent with the nature of the message of the crucified Christ

and pointed people away from himself to God. He moves into this part of his disclaimer by saying that Christ sent him "to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul contends that the message of "Christ crucified" that so offended the preconceived notions of both Jews and Gentiles had been intentionally devised by God to upstage human ingenuity. In line with the Old Testament that affirms that God will destroy the wisdom of the wise and thwart the cleverness of the clever (v. 19; cf. Isaiah 29:14), Paul argues that the gospel he preached points up the fact that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (v. 25).

He presses on in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 to argue from the Corinthians' own experience that the gospel exhibits God's wisdom. A message conjured up in the counsels of the human mind would have catered to the wise, the powerful, and those of noble birth. However, the majority of Corinthian Christians did not fit into these categories, a fact which indicates that God has implemented his plans "so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (v. 29). The focus is taken off of humanity and turned toward God and Christ Jesus, whom God has made the source of spiritual life (1 Corinthians 1:30). This also is in continuity with Old Testament Scripture: "As it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 1:30; cf. Jeremiah 9:23, 24).

In the early verses of chapter 2, Paul picks up the topic of his method of preaching that was introduced at 1:17 and makes a more forceful statement of its design. His proclamation among the Corinthians had not been dominated by elaborate oratory that could attest his persuasive powers ("lofty words or wisdom," v. 1; "plausible words of wisdom," v. 4). To the contrary, his presence in Corinth was marked by personal weakness (v. 4). Paul's preaching at Corinth had taken the form of a straightforward presentation of the message of "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (v. 2). The effects it had were not due to any skill of Paul's own, but to the Spirit's power that was inherent in the message itself (v. 4).

In spite of the criticism of some that Paul was unskilled as a

speaker (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:10; 11:6), analysis of Paul's letters reveals that he was not aware of, nor did he fail to employ legitimate rhetorical devices. In 1 Corinthians, "Paul does not deny having rhetorical ability, he only denies using it."⁸ It may be that Paul could have been more eloquent than he was, but he had chosen to be modest in his preaching in order to achieve a more substantial response from his hearers, as suggested in 1 Corinthians 2:5: "That your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

All this disowning of eloquent wisdom does not mean that Paul could not impart wisdom. Indeed, as he argues in 1 Corinthians 2:6—3:4, Paul did impart wisdom. It was, as suggested by another Old Testament statement (1 Corinthians 2:9; cf. Isaiah 64:4), a wisdom incapable of human conception. Instead, it was spawned in the mind of God and revealed by the Spirit to Paul and other inspired spokesmen (vv. 10-12). Paul and his fellow "holy apostles and prophets" (cf. Ephesians 3:5) imparted this revealed message to others "in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit" (v. 13).

However, in order to appreciate the message fully, hearers must be spiritual (*pneumatikos*, v. 15) and not unspiritual or natural (*psychikos*, v. 14). In the light of Paul's later use of these same two terms (1 Corinthians 15:44, 46), it appears that in verses 14ff. he is contrasting a person who is open to the divine dimension and, consequently, is willing to give ear to a divinely revealed message, with "one whose outlook is essentially earthly; his outlook in no sense reaches beyond the human dimension; he lives totally oblivious to God; no divine horizon ever opens up to him."⁹

When Paul was initially in Corinth and ministered to the Corinthians after their conversion, he could not address them as spiritual persons (*pneumatikoi*, 3:1). They were in their Christian infancy, and, as babes (*napios*, v. 1) in Christ, they were yet dominated by too many fleshly concerns. They were carnal (*sarkinois*, v. 1). Understanding that, Paul appropriately fed them with milk because they were not ready for solid food (3:2). The tragedy that Paul confronts as he writes 1 Corinthians is that the people are still dominated by fleshly interests (*sarkikoi*, 3:3), and are still not ready for solid food

(vv. 2, 3). And the irony of all this is that at least some of them were claiming that they were spiritual (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37)!

It becomes apparent, as we work through Paul's fairly elaborate discussion of the lameness of human wisdom and the strength of the divine wisdom of the gospel, that at the core of the quarreling among the Corinthians was their immature tendency to evaluate their teachers or influential preachers on the basis of purely human standards and to exalt those who "measured up" better than others and satisfied their inflated egos. Their fellowship was infected with jealousy and strife (1 Corinthians 3:3) as in their pride they were "puffed up in favor of one against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6). They were behaving like "ordinary men" (1 Corinthians 3:3), that is, individuals who, bound in the shackles of this age, would not receive the spiritual wisdom of God. Leon Morris has captured the essence of the problem: "Thus while the Corinthians might perhaps be able to justify what they were doing by the arguments of the world, it was utterly alien to the spirit of the gospel. Their divisions were a standing witness to their worldly mentality, not to their spiritual perception."¹⁰

Having recognized the cause of the strife at Corinth, it now remains for us to investigate some solutions to the problem put forward by Paul.

PAUL'S SOLUTION: A REORIENTATION OF THEIR PERSPECTIVE OF MINISTRY

In 1 Corinthians 3:5—4:13, Paul uses Apollos and himself to demonstrate the implications of the scriptural principles that undergird his discussion of the superiority of divine wisdom over human wisdom. We should recall the appeals that Paul has already made to the Old Testament, each introduced by the expression "it is written" (*gegraptai*, 1 Corinthians 1:19, 31; 2:9), as well as note for the first time his allusion to what is written (*gegraptai*) in Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11 (1 Corinthians 3:19, 20). In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul gives the rationale for his use of himself and Apollos: "I have applied all this to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brethren, that you may learn by

us not to go beyond that which is written [*gegraptai*], that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another." In other words, the solution to the prideful exaltation of teachers is to be found in the perspective Paul had of himself and Apollos.

The questions, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul?" (1 Corinthians 3:5), invite the answer that Paul supplies in verses 5 through 9. By the use of an agricultural metaphor, Paul stresses that they are servants (*diakonoi*) who merely perform the different tasks assigned to each by the Lord. Paul and Apollos had come among the Corinthians in chronological sequence, thus Paul's work of planting came prior to the watering done by Apollos. This, however, did not make either superior to the other since it was God who gave the growth. Without God the human servants are nothing. Since they share this human nothingness, they are equal. Instead of Paul and Apollos being unequal rivals due to some disparity of human prowess, they are God's fellow workers (*sunergoi*). In verse 9, by placing the noun "God" three times in an emphatic position, Paul pointedly directs attention to the one who should receive the accolades in ministry. Paul and Apollos are "God's fellow workers," and the people to whom they minister are "God's field" and "God's building."

This last expression, "God's building," introduces an architectural metaphor which Paul elaborates on in 1 Corinthians 3:10-17. Acknowledging the grace of God as the true source of his work, Paul points out that he had laid a Christ-centered foundation at Corinth. He further warns that while a Christ-centered superstructure erected on the foundation makes for a secure building (gold, silver, precious stones), a man-centered superstructure produces an unstable edifice (wood, hay, straw). The idea of the church as God's building continues into verses 16 and 17 where the building becomes God's temple in which God's Spirit dwells, and Paul warns against destroying it. "Because it is God's temple the man who fails to react rightly towards [*sic*] it is guilty of no light sin. . . . To engage in divisions is to 'destroy' the divine society, and consequently to invite God to 'destroy' the sinner."¹¹

Since the misplaced allegiance to various teachers at Cor-

inth was due primarily to the Corinthians' inordinate estimation of human wisdom, Paul counsels that they should sublimate their penchant for worldly wisdom so they might be truly wise. By recognizing the futility of human wisdom, as it is written (*gegraptai*) in Scripture (1 Corinthians 3:19, 20; cf. Job 5:13; Psalm 94:11), one is prompted to exalt God and not to boast of men (1 Corinthians 1:21; cf. 1:29, 31). To persist in the preference of one teacher above another on the basis of human criteria deprives Christians of the fullness of blessing to which we are entitled. All teachers, whether Paul, Apollos, or Cephas (1 Corinthians 3:22), are for the church's consumption and benefit.

Chapter 4 begins literally, "Thus let a person think of us," indicating that "Paul is drawing, from what he has already said, conclusions about the proper attitude of Christians to their ministers."¹² Paul says they should be regarded as "servants [*huperetas*] of Christ" (v. 1). This term for "servant" underscores the concept of subordination. Rather than being viewed as persons of authority in their own right holding a status of superiority, Paul and Apollos should be regarded as underlings "whose work is both authorized and defined by Christ."¹³

In addition, they are to be regarded as "stewards [*oikonomos*] of the mysteries of God" (v. 1). Like the word "servants," the term "steward" implies subordination, but it also carries the idea of one who has received a trust. Not only is the steward subordinate to a superior, he is also responsible for a valuable trust left in his charge. In this case the trust is "the mysteries of God," a phrase meaning the Christ-centered gospel that has been revealed by God (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13; Ephesians 3:1ff.). What is most important is not the exalted praise of men based upon the standards of human judgment (v. 3), but faithfulness to the entrusted gospel (v. 2) which will be rewarded with commendation from God at the coming of the Lord (vv. 4b, 5). Human judgment is too often blinded by personal preferences and prejudices and is incapable of fully discerning the motives of the heart. Thus the ultimate commendation must come from the One who is able to "disclose the purposes of the heart" (v. 5).

Paul's discussion shows that he and his fellow ministers had no sense of their individual rank. They regarded themselves as men who, dependent on God's grace and his power working through them, were concerned only to be faithful to the charge of proclaiming the gospel and nurturing Christians to their own reliance on divine grace (cf. v. 7) and a humble acceptance of their collective identity as God's church. It is this perspective that Paul exhorts the Corinthians to imitate (v. 16). It is a perspective that can significantly contribute to the unity of the church of God today.

SOME APPLICATIONS FOR THE MODERN CHURCH

As we think about ways in which Paul's counsel to the Corinthians can benefit us modern Christians, we must recognize that while the New Testament clearly supports the idea of a non-clerical ministry or the mutual ministry of all Christians (cf. 1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 4:10, 11; Ephesians 4:12), it still suggests that there are some whose niche of ministry makes them more visible as opinion leaders in the church (cf. Acts 13:1; Ephesians 4:11; Philippians 1:1; James 3:1). Whereas Paul's instructions can have significant implications for the attitude any of us should have toward our personal ministry and toward the service of other individual Christians in general, they have special relevance to our perception of individuals who are recognized in a more visible way as ministers in the church, and to the self-perception of these ministers.

Like Paul, we who are public servants of the church must not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We must recognize that the power of our ministry does not lie in our own abilities, or in a particular method we find most useful, but in God who by his grace has called us to ministry and who by his power sustains us in our task.

In an age that is saturated by sleek advertising and drunk on entertainment, we must not allow ourselves to conceive of our task as one of trying to outdo the secular professionals. This does not mean that preachers should not be concerned to communicate the biblical message in an effective and relevant

manner. But it is easy to cross the line of propriety and gain the attention of a secularly-oriented audience by entertaining them with an interesting but trivial presentation. The late Reuel Lemmons wrote insightfully of the problem that we must redress:

The ministry likewise has undergone a profound change. Whereas the preacher once was God's anointed to proclaim the glad tidings of good things, he has become a professional staff manager and counselor. He often is an actor, concerned more with his role, his manners, and his polished delivery than with the possibility of his lips being touched with a live coal from the altar.¹⁴

The preacher who leaves his hearers with a more vivid remembrance of his anecdotes and flashy delivery than of the Christ whom he is supposed to be proclaiming has prostituted his calling! Preachers must be men of integrity, and a significant aspect of that integrity is the refusal to empty the cross of Christ of its power by placing an inordinate emphasis on our rhetorical skill.

However, preachers are not the only ones at fault here. While ministers may lose their perspective, we who hear them too often determine their worth on the basis of the external dimensions of their presentation rather than on the content of their message. We allow human standards to dictate our preference rather than whether a particular preacher brings to us a true word from God. When this orientation pervades a congregation, its members become content with superficial ear-tickling that feeds spiritual immaturity and does not challenge them to grow into the likeness of God and the Savior. Their faith can easily become preacher-centered rather than Christ-centered.

Another dimension of this tendency may be seen in a situation in which preachers are not guilty of exaggerating their eloquence, but simply differ in their methods of presentation. It is plain from 1 Corinthians that not all ministers carry out their work in similar fashion. Paul and Apollos were different, just as any cross-section of ministers today is marked by variety. Just as it is natural for ministers to have their strengths

and weaknesses, their likes and dislikes, it is equally normal for us as church members to have our personal preferences. Does he use too little Scripture or too much Scripture? Does he quote the Bible or read from the Bible? Does he use the version of the Bible you use or some other translation? Does he use too many illustrations or too few? Is his voice too loud or too soft? Does he preach too long, or are his short presentations not really worthy to be called sermons? Does he end each sermon with an evangelistic invitation, or do some of his sermons close without one? The questions could go on, but these are sufficient to make us realize how different we are. Too, this is the way it must inevitably be, since God has not cloned preachers and since he allows us all freedom of opinion. Sin enters the picture, however, when I as a preacher conceive of my approach to ministry as best and exalt myself above those who are different, and a church lays a foundation for division when its members allow their preferences concerning a preacher's personality and method to become their point of identity. Preachers are *God's* fellow workers, and the church is *God's* field. We all find our identity in him.

Preachers must quickly recognize the vulnerability of our personal egos that are so often stroked, sometimes by well-meaning brothers, but at other times by flatterers and opportunists. We must never seek personal glory in our work, only that our labor may lead those whom we reach to boast in the Lord. We must not be guilty of building a personal following, nor must we ever allow ourselves to play into the hands of brethren who would domesticate us in order to feed their own pride. We must, like Paul, be able successfully to disclaim any willful complicity in discord that might arise in churches where we work. We must model an approach to ministry that recognizes the value of others and our collective dependence on God.

As a church, may we not demand of our ministers the impossible task of beating the world at its own game and then line up behind those who appear to be more successful at it than others. Instead, let us insist that those who preach the gospel be faithful to their charge as stewards of the mysteries of God, and that they keep constantly before us the wisdom of God that

has been revealed in the word of the cross. May we be spiritual men and women who are able to receive the solid food of the Word of God that will nourish us to maturity, to a mindset that never insists on our own preferences to the destruction of the unity of the church.

Certainly several factors contribute to discord among brethren. However, the state of affairs described by the editor early in our discussion¹⁵ is due in great degree to wounded egos, our inability to distinguish our own personal prejudices from the demands of the gospel, and the apparent conviction that the churches in which we serve are in some way our possessions with which we can do as we please. May God's direction that comes through Paul's counsel to the Corinthians help us to recognize how woefully wrong these perspectives are and lead us to recapture the passionate concern to preserve the unity of the church that belongs to God.

NOTES

¹Alan E. Highers, "Needed: A Kinder and Gentler Brotherhood," *The Spiritual Sword* 21, no. 2 (January 1990): 1.

²F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, The New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 32.

³C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 42.

⁴Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 32.

⁵Barrett, *First Epistle*, 12; Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 50.

⁶Barrett, *First Epistle*, 44.

⁷Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 42.

⁸Carl R. Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Living Word Commentary, ed. Everett Ferguson (Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979), 40.

⁹*Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁰Morris, *First Epistle*, 64.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 70.

¹²Barrett, *First Epistle*, 99.

¹³Holladay, *First Letter*, 58.

¹⁴Reuel Lemmons, foreword to *The Worldly Church: A Call for Biblical Renewal* by C. Leonard Allen, Richard T. Hughes, and Michael Weed (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1988), xii.

¹⁵Highers, "Needed," 1.

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CHURCH DISCIPLINE, THEN AND NOW

(1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

ROBERT USREY

In my assigned topic, "Church Discipline, Then and Now (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)," the "then" refers to Paul's mid-first-century church discipline *everywhere*, but mainly at Corinth. The "now" refers to discipline in churches of Christ in the twentieth century—mainly in mid-America, where the Restoration Movement has had its greatest impact. I sincerely believe in the goals of the Restoration Movement but also sincerely believe that it has not given due attention to the restoration of *complete* church discipline, consisting of *teaching, reproving, and correcting* all saints. Discipline is *incomplete* because we have not taught "the whole counsel of God," and because we have only *partially* reprovved and corrected sinning saints. As a result, many saints remain weak and unfruitful. Many stray from the flock without the loving discipline needed to save their souls. (See 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Acts 20:27, 28.)

As the basic text for this study, 1 Corinthians 5 is especially significant in that it has become rather stereotyped as the "church discipline" chapter in Paul's so-called "church discipline" epistle. Actually, these are no more important as *church discipline* texts than are other Scriptures commanding faithful *discipleship* in Christ's church. But chapter 5 is unique in showing how Paul rebuked "puffed-up" saints and commanded them to "deliver" stubborn sinners "unto Satan"; to "purge out" *all* sin; to "have no company" with "such" habitual sinners; to "judge" such sinners in *church* disciplinary meetings rather than in civil courts; finally, to "put away the wicked man from among yourselves." These commands have been so debated and neglected that many saints practically

ignore the text. They are pessimistic about our ability either to understand or to do the commands.

An example of such pessimism is that of some elders who asked a teacher of an adult class to skip 1 Corinthians 5 and to go to easier chapters. Most class members yielded, but some protested, causing strife and tragic grief.

This true episode may seem to be so exceptional that it is not worth mentioning. But I believe it reflects the feelings of many church leaders. Most would say these elders were unwise. But perhaps they were wiser than those who study the text, agree that it commands *complete* church discipline, yet neglect to do what it says do. In failing to do what they *know* they *should* do, they may be more accountable to God than are those who honestly believe that *nobody* knows how to discipline. In one big church beset with discipline problems, a vexed elder said, "Everybody knows we ought to improve church discipline, but nobody seems to know where to begin and how to do it." Nearby, a beloved preacher said that in his fifty years of ministry he had not participated in even *one* case of complete discipline, although he had often seen the need. A colleague agreed, but sought to *justify* area leaders by saying they were probably doing the best they knew how to do. Maybe this was true. But why did they *not know* how to do more? Long experience convinces me that relatively *few really try to know much more about the process*. One of the most fearful facts of world history is that man again and again has destroyed himself through *ignorance*—as in Noah's day, as in Jesus' day, and as it will be "in the last days" (Matthew 24:38, 39; 1 Corinthians 2:8; 2 Peter 3:3-5).

Vivid proof of lack of interest in church discipline is seen in the Ernest and Glenda Clevenger sixty-year *Gospel Advocate* index showing fewer than a dozen essays on the subject were published. Why was this the case? Writers and readers were interested in other things.

Ironically, one *big* reason why church discipline studies are sadly neglected may well be that the term "church discipline" is not found in current Bible versions. Consequently, our restoration plea that we "speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent" has been more legalis-

tically than thoughtfully observed. For example, many have failed to see the scope of Paul's statement, "Hold fast the form of sound words [*logos*], which thou hast heard of me in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13; KJV). They distort the meaning in parroting: "Call Bible things by Bible names," thus speaking as the "oracles of God." If this meant what some suppose it means, we would be wrong in ever using the term "church discipline." But it is not wrong, because the church discipline *idea* permeates the Bible. For example, the idea inheres in "disciple," the root word for "discipline." To be truly a *disciple* of Jesus is to be a truly disciplined follower. Jesus said,

If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32, 32).

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another (John 13:35).

Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33).

This is another way of saying that to be a genuine Christian, each person must so discipline himself that he will not let any earthly possessions keep him from following Christ. Paul described *discipleship* as a *disciplined life* like that of a highly motivated runner:

Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore run as not uncertainly; . . . But I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

Even undisciplined fans understand and admire athletes and their coaches who rigorously discipline. Even unruly spectators expect competing athletes to abide by the rules. If

not thus disciplined, they lose public respect and support. The same is true of all worthy institutions—homes, businesses, schools, churches, etc. Even undisciplined observers of such expect these institutions to discipline themselves by generally agreed ethical standards, deviation from which, even in a few points can, provoke much criticism and rejection.

DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH

The same is especially true of the church, partly because it proposes to be the supreme model of integrity. But *today* the church sends such mixed signals that it is often hard to ascertain its main goal, whether it be trying to save people from their sins (as did Jesus, Matthew 1:21), or whether it be trying to save people *in* their sins (the latter being so often emphasized that most professed believers nowadays seem to see themselves as *sinners*, not as *saints*). Our failure to see ourselves as *saintly* people correlates with our failure to see ourselves as a “church-disciplined” people. This is evident in public prayers, in which prayer leaders are given to praying God to forgive our *abstract* sins but not given to praying God to forgive *specific* sins and to enable us to overcome specific sins. Godly humility rightly causes us to pray forgiveness for abstract sins committed *ignorantly*; but we must confess and repent of sins we *know* we commit. In so doing, we will see changed lives and a changed church in which we discipline ourselves to live righteously as *saints*, not *sinners*. This is both scripturally and psychologically important. Accordingly, Paul addressed the Corinthians as God’s church, “. . . sanctified in Christ Jesus, called . . . saints. Grace be unto you, . . . from the Lord . . . who shall . . . confirm you unto the end, that ye may be unreprouvable in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:1-8). *Paul prayed God’s grace to enable discipline that would purify and make them “unreprouvable” when judged in “the day of the Lord.”* He makes it clear than even *weak saints* should see themselves primarily as *saints*, who can be perfected in the church and made heaven-ready by complete discipline.

Today’s church lacks the intense discipline required to deal

with the moral crises evident in homes, schools, businesses, governmental agencies, etc. In fact, we should all be alarmed at sexual corruption, at covetousness causing social corruption and our fearful national debt, at crime and drug problems, etc. Most of us *are concerned, even alarmed*, but we feel powerless to do much about it. We send money to our political leaders who promise reform. We send to various lobby groups who promise to put political pressure at right places. But we underestimate the power of the best source of influence, the church. *The church is having all too little influence on the total culture because it is not united and is not highly disciplined to be “blameless and harmless children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom ye are seen as light in the world” (Philippians 2:15; emphasis mine).*

To be “blameless and harmless children of God” is a much needed goal for motivating interest in church discipline. *Unless we truly try to be God’s blameless beloved children in his church family, we will fail to discipline each other as we should. Therefore, we should begin with the Greek word *país*, the root word for *paideia*, meaning “the whole training and education of children (which relates to the cultivation of mind and morals and employs for this purpose now commands and admonitions, now reproof and punishment).”*¹

Accordingly, we should think of church discipline as our heavenly Father’s loving discipline of his children in his church family (1 Timothy 3:14, 15; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 4:1-5). If we lack responsible family fellowship and mutual family discipline, we lack the love that proves us to be God’s children.

HEBREWS 12:1-23

This is the central truth of the most vivid *paideia* discipline Bible text—one made doubly vivid by combining “disciplined runner” imagery and “disciplined child” imagery, as if the runner is both *protégé* and *child* of the coach. Also the *paideia* idea is made more vivid by *repetition*, which is highlighted by *my italics* for emphasis:

... let us throw off everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance

the race that is set before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, . . . who endured the cross, scorning the shame, . . . Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful man, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted unto the point of shedding your blood. And ye have forgotten the word of encouragement that addressed you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's *discipline*, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord *disciplines* those whom he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a son.

Endure hardship as *discipline*; God is treating you as sons. . . . If you are not *disciplined*, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all human fathers who *disciplined* us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers *disciplined* us for a little while as they thought best, but God *disciplines* us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. . . .

Make every effort to live in peace with all men, and to be Holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and to defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, . . .

You have come to . . . the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, . . . (Hebrews 12:1-23; NIV). (Emphasis mine.)

This text makes it clear that God's *child* discipline is God's *church* family discipline, Jesus being "the firstborn" exemplar (v. 23). Although our names are written in heaven, they will be erased if we fail to "make every effort to live in peace with all men, and to be holy" (v. 14). Also we are responsible for *complete* discipline of each other—that "no one misses the grace of God"; "that no one is sexually immoral"; etc. It is, therefore, clear that "no one" is to remain undisciplined and that *no sin* is to be ignored, lest "any bitter root . . . defile many." This, therefore, warns against *all* sin in the way Paul warned the

Corinthians: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out . . . the old leaven, . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7). Purify the church! Cleanse it of *all* sin! This is God's disciplinary decree *universal*! I ask you, Do you see evidence of this decree in the church where you worship?

The reply usually is *no*! But why? The answer: *Complete* church discipline is a tough process. Again and again we should read Hebrews 12 and really realize how tough it may be as disciplined disciples to imitate Jesus, shedding our very blood if necessary in our "struggle against sin" (v. 4), strengthening our "feeble arms and weak knees" (v. 12). Instead of feeling responsible for thus struggling against sin as Jesus, most Christians seem to believe that Jesus did all of the struggling and made the cross our excuse for not needing to struggle. *Deluded moderns stress God's grace to forgive sin but largely ignore God's grace to enable us to discipline against sin.*

To ameliorate the *painful* idea of how *hard* complete discipline may be, the writer of Hebrews stressed *love*. Verses 6 through 11 show that discipline is a measure of our *love*. We deceive ourselves if we think we love each other enough if we fail to completely discipline. Logic should lead us to know that we really do not love our brothers and sisters as we should if we allow any to be lost without doing all we can to save them. *But that is more than logic. This is God's law! May we fear and tremble at the thought of being judged by it!*

This *love* factor reminds us again of the basic meaning of discipline—of *paideia*, complete *child* discipline. The Hebrews passage correlates *love* and *family discipline* in the *ideal* tradition of parent/child love. Ideally, parents truly *love* their children, rewarding and punishing them accordingly. But many parents abuse their children while thinking they love them. In Hebrews 12:10, the writer implies that even loving fathers may make mistakes, even when intending to discipline right; but God our heavenly Father makes no mistakes in *his* discipline when rightly administered. (Read Hebrews 12:9-14.)

Because we humans *do* make mistakes, sometimes failing to discipline and sometimes failing to love truly when we do discipline, *we must learn thoroughly how to love and how to be*

sure that we do not attempt discipline for the wrong motives. This centers attention on our assigned text, 1 Corinthians 5, which seems *loveless* if separated from the last verses of chapter 4. We should see how Paul tempers his extreme discipline commands by using loving father/child imagery which connotes the *paideia* concept, even when not using the word *paideia* itself. (Read Hebrews 12:14-21.)

Although *paideia* is not the specific word used, the *paideia* (parent/child complete discipline) *idea* pervades Hebrews 12:14-21: "my beloved children" (v. 14); "I begat you. . ." (v. 15); "Be ye imitators of me." This is saying, "Be *disciplined* by imitating me, your spiritual father, even as I discipline myself by imitating Jesus" (v. 16; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). He then warns some who might be "puffed up" and unresponsive to his fatherly gentleness that, if necessary, he will come "with a rod" (v. 21). He is referring *figuratively* to the historic custom of whipping a rebellious child. *Paul is speaking figuratively because there is absolutely no evidence of corporal punishment of any kind in New Testament church discipline.* That love is the very essence of discipline is vividly shown in the fact that the Bible's greatest essay on love is the centerpiece of this disciplinary epistle, where most needed to temper harsh instincts of all who discipline. (See 1 Corinthians 13.)

Christians were warned to *endure* corporal punishment if need be, but *never* to *inflict* corporal punishment. A Christian's only tool either for discipline or defense was "the sword of the Spirit," "the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). The use of the Word was always to be peaceable and gentle, even in reproving and rebuking hardened sinners. (See Romans 12:12-21.) The great church apostasy, from which we have not recovered, was especially characterized by efforts of church leaders to discipline by force, by authority, and by vengeance instead of by gentleness as servants of God, who alone must avenge. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11 and later history of church bishops who sought to discipline violently.)²

On the necessity of man's being gentle, while leaving disciplinary vengeance to God, the Book of Acts is revealing. Peter was gentle but *firm* with Ananias and Sapphira, leaving vengeance to God (Acts 5:1-11). Here we derive one of the most

needed church discipline lessons: All of us are but a heartbeat away from eternity and should not assume that we can repent at our own leisure. God's judgment may come before our brethren can give us help. I should apply this to myself first and get right with God and with my brethren. At the same time, I should fear for all others whom I know to be sinners. Why did not God send Ananias and Sapphira through a complete corrective disciplinary process such as Matthew 18:15-17 and give us a clear precedent to follow in saving such souls? We dare not presume to fully answer this hard question. But we can be sure that God knew their hearts to be hardened beyond repentance; for "God is longsuffering . . . , not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 18:14). *Peter warned especially against willful sin, the kind of sin that undoubtedly had hardened the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira.* God warns us to discipline today, so that delay will not allow anyone to "be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). *Let each saint fear so that he will not harden his own heart by the inconspicuous sin of habitually neglecting to discipline saints with conspicuous sins—whether they be big sins or seemingly small sins. All habitual and willful, unrepented sins are deadly (e.g., Eve's "little sin").*

DISCIPLINING IN 1 CORINTHIANS

1 Corinthians 5:1

Applying this to the Corinthians, Paul did not wait for a "convenient season" to discipline the saints. Action was urgent. On the basis of *confirmed* news of the sinfulness of the weak saints, Paul made those same weaklings immediately responsible for discipline. That the news was *confirmed* is important, a fact implied in the statement: "It is actually [*holos*, wholly, altogether] reported that there is fornication among you, . . ." (1 Corinthians 5:1). This implies a case history based on *more* than superficial gossip. The whole case history implies that some sincere saints had tried to cause the fornicator to repent, perhaps using the steps of Matthew 18:15-17, but without success. Otherwise, Paul would not have commanded

delivering the sinner to Satan as if such were a first step. It is obvious that some saints were faithful enough to care and to seek help (perhaps Chloe, Stephanas, and others: 1 Corinthians 1:11; 16:15-17). *This discipline was evidently a carefully structured, fact-confirmed effort to be processed by a mixture of strong and weak saints.* Accordingly, even weak churches can discipline themselves, provided they have due respect for "every" God-inspired Scripture profitable for teaching, reproof, and correction, "for instruction [*paideia*] which is in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Therefore, the first lessons from 1 Corinthians 5 are these: (1) For godly discipline we must be motivated by a love of truth, both by God's truth commanding discipline and by *confirmed* truth about the ones needing our help. (2) We must become personally responsible.

To be responsible, each saint must feel responsible not only for himself, but for *all* saints (1 Corinthians 12:26, 27). Paul did not write just to the fornicator but to *all* saints, warning all about "fornication among you." This is our great need *now*, when we either ignore sin "among" us or else restively murmur that "somebody ought to discipline," while refusing to become the somebody to do his part of the job.

A saint in a small church said, "We have some problems requiring discipline, but we don't have elders. Therefore, we can't do anything about it." This is probably a prevailing attitude, made even more ironic by the fact that churches *with* elders are saying the same thing. Again we should stress that biblical discipline *must* be done by *Christ's authority, not by elders' authority* because elders themselves sometimes need disciplining (1 Timothy 5:19, 20). *Discipline is a must in every church, with or without elders.* Evidently, Corinth had no elders. Otherwise, Paul would have addressed them. Moreover, he would have told all saints to be in subjection to the elders. But he said, "Be in subjection unto such" as the household of Stephanas, whose work and service had made them worthy of such respect, rather than having such by official title (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16). The *servant spirit* personified in Stephanas is a first essential of church discipline, a spirit activated by the warning, "There is fornication among you."

Who is "you"? *All* of you "called saints" and servants of Christ. All of you who love enough to be concerned about the wholly confirmed truth that you have a sinning saint who needs your help. Be his servant now! These are vital truths of 1 Corinthians 5:1.

1 Corinthians 5:2

Verse 2 says, "And ye are puffed up, and did not rather mourn." Paul's first priority was not really the fornicator, but the fornicator-tolerators who were evidently blind to their own sin of neglecting corrective discipline. We need not assume that they were puffed up as approvers of the fornicator because *some* evidently disapproved enough to complain to Paul. Besides, no proof exists that they actually defended the sin. Probably some were "puffed up" out of contempt for a lowbrow saint—a sort of social disgust rather than sorrow that a soul was being lost and that the church was being defamed. *The "puffed up" saints were shock-proofed against sin.* This *may* well be our greatest problem today, a fact aggravated by an exposure to movies, television, and daily news that treats sin and crime as mere facts of life, rather than as sin. Subconsciously, we take sin for granted and believe that not even a fellow saint has the right to persuade right or wrong conduct. This view prevails so much that a highly respected psychiatrist, Karl Menninger, wrote a major book to warn of the dire results of our failing to feel guilt for sin and urge that we discipline ourselves to feel genuine sorrow leading to repentance. (See the bibliography.)

Menninger is an exception to the psychologists who have overdone the "positive thinking" and the "self-esteem" philosophies. Instead of urging people to feel guilty of sin, they try to compensate by focusing on people's virtues, thereby eclipsing their sins. Even weak saints who habitually confess themselves to be sinners seem to do so without guilt enough to cause repentance. We need thorough teaching about the sinfulness of sin and about the tenderheartedness we need in order to discipline ourselves as individuals and as churches. We all may be more "puffed up" and less given to mourning than we should be!

As a first principle for *complete* discipline, each babe in Christ should be taught in the simple courtesy of saying, "I am sorry," when making any kind of mistake, big or little. In daily social etiquette, this is essential for anyone who makes friends and wins respect. It is even more important in the fellowship of saints, in which the honor code is the highest. With salvation from sin as our reason for being a church, why should anyone wait to be corrected? He should initiate his own correction, promptly saying, "I am sorry," before someone else has to rebuke him. Yet, many sinners refuse to do so, requiring others to reprove, rebuke, and correct. All saints should be faithful and ready, therefore, to discipline. *If they do not, they too are sinners with the ones they fail to correct, similar to the "puffed up" weaklings at Corinth.* We must instill these truths into babes in Christ, even as a good mother or teacher instills life rules into children.

1 Corinthians 5:3

The next verse says, "I verily, being absent in body but present in spirit, have . . . judged him that hath so wrought this thing." *Paul did not hesitate to judge the fornicator guilty on the basis of confirmed evidence.* In completing the discipline, he naturally required every saint to concur in his judgment. He, therefore, rebukes the many soft saints who refuse to reprove and correct by misapplying Christ's command: "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). They hear only *part* of Jesus' total command, which actually says *we should not judge others until we have first judged ourselves to be spiritually capable to judge others.* Having thus qualified ourselves to judge, we can "see clearly" how to judge others (Matthew 7:1-5). Jesus then warns:

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before the swine lest haply they trample them under their feet and turn and rend you. . . . Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them (Matthew 7:6, 15, 16).

These verses warn of the urgent necessity of judging daily.

Jesus said, "Judge . . . righteous judgment" (John 7:24).

"Righteous judgment" consisted of discerning both good and evil in people, preparatory to teaching, reproof, and correcting as needed. All who discipline must judge the people they serve. John judged Herod and Herodias to be adulterers, even as Paul judged *one* Corinthian to be, while judging others to be "puffed up." *We must judge each other, not only to rebuke evil, but also to approve good.* We should consistently do *both*.

The "judge not" philosophy has caused us to exaggerate the passion for "freedom" to do as we please. Libertarians have united to gain their "rights" to do their own things immune from anybody's judgment. This spirit is contaminating homes, schools, churches, and all society. Paul ends the chapter by warning of the necessity of judging "within" the church as a judicial body that ideally should settle differences, rather than to take them into civil courts. In chapter 6 he firmly continues the warning, leaving us no excuse to be indifferent to this much abused matter besetting us.

Instead of churches judging such matters consistently and routinely, they have become so negligent and inconsistent that they fear to judge and to discipline completely. Consequently, when a church tries to do so, the effort is regarded as being "oppression" or "invasion of privacy" that causes the accused sinner to sue in civil courts—as did one Christian in Collinsville, Oklahoma. Even if we grant that the church *possibly* made minor mistakes in methods, the main reason they lost the case was that they were trying scriptural proceedings that have been so neglected that they and civil judges had no precedents for fair judgments. We face a crisis in church/state relationships. Civil libertarians are much more militant in depriving us of the right to discipline than we are to retain the right. May God give us the courage not to be deterred by their threats, so we do not use them for excuses to discipline even less. May we cry as did Peter: "We cannot but speak the things" of God, in defiance of civil courts (Acts 4:19, 20).

1 Corinthians 5:4

Verse 4 says, "In the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus."

Paul echoes Peter's idea of Christ's supreme authority in *all* things—the ultimate reason for obeying *any* command. The biggest reason discipline is so lax is that we are not *deeply* imbued with the concept of Christ's *lordship*. We too much think of his commands as mere optional suggestions, rather than as absolute commands. Paul's first priority in disciplining the weak Corinthians was to remind them over and over that Christ is *Lord*. In this one verse, he repeated the phrase "Lord Jesus," obviously for the same purpose he repeated the name and the title of the *Lord* Jesus Christ *six times* in the first ten verses of chapter 1. Each word "Lord" should remind us we *must* obey Christ's commands as *commands*, not as mere *suggestions*. We should see church discipline commands as being commands of our Lord and Judge, Jesus Christ, who is still asking us, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). This is the first vital truth of 1 Corinthians 5:4.

A second vital truth is seen in "Ye being gathered together, and my spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus." "Being gathered together" indicates the *unity* essential for effective church discipline. Lack of this unity is a curse in today's church, not only in the failure of different churches to have uniform policies and procedures by which to assist each other and to reflect Paul's discipline which he taught "everywhere in every church," but also in the failure of the local church to be "gathered together" and unified by complete teaching and mutual understanding of the what and the how of church discipline. We do not gather together even to *learn* about it thoroughly, much less to *discipline* thoroughly. (See 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1:10; 4:17.)

To be "gathered together" in unity for church discipline was one of the main things Jesus stressed in his famous corrective discipline discourse of Matthew 18:15-20. There he stressed the Lordship of his Father, who will have "bound in heaven" any disciplinary laws we can successfully use, with suitable prayer and deliberation by which to "agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask. . . . For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Cf. "gathered together" in the Lord's name here and

1 Corinthians 5:4.) Being "gathered together" to "agree" and act in unity are *musts* for effective church discipline.

Such unity is possible only to the degree that we exalt Christ as Lord and submit to him and to each other with deep resolve to learn and to teach the whole truth, something we have not been doing. Most people seem to doubt the possibility of unity, especially in church discipline. They do not want to stay with the subject until they have mastered the process. They do not realize the necessity of teaching every babe in Christ how to be responsible for unity of thought and action. *This indifference to agreement and unity is painful for me in trying to teach the subject. Instead of trying to unify an entire church by study and action, most church elders make "church discipline" an optional study.* As a result, relatively few members choose to enroll in a class devoted to the subject. Most members opt for more popular teachers of more popular subjects. They *never* study church discipline enough to become responsible participants, as all saints should be. *As a result, we who are convinced of its importance are seen as hobbyists. For church discipline to be effective, leaders must devise ways to teach every member, both young and old, and to make them responsible and ready to participate in any case of discipline.* Otherwise, if we teach only the special few, they will not be able to discipline completely because most saints will think church discipline is none of their business. Disunity and misunderstanding will result, even if peace and well-being *seem* to prevail. For example, the Laodicean church thought it had "need of nothing." But it was blind to its true condition—undisciplined and undone! We need to believe we *can* achieve unity, can agree, even in *hard* disciplinary cases. One of my greatest sorrows has been to be resisted by church leaders who reject obvious truth by saying, "That is just your opinion."

1 Corinthians 5:5

Note how *opinion* can be silenced by *fact* in applying verse 5: to "deliver . . . to Satan" a sinner so his "spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." *Opinion* has led many to suppose this calls for cruel treatment, a historical fact that space here prevents documenting. In contrast, truth and love lead us to

know that cruel treatment was never a part of corrective discipline in Jesus' name. Kindness, love, and mercy are consistently warned in case after case relating to corrective discipline. For example, the last seven verses of chapter 4 should be a part of chapter 5. They show the motive of love and *paideia* discipline with which Paul disciplined the Corinthians and by which he commanded them to discipline themselves, the epitome of that love expressed in chapter 13. This should remind us that complete discipline is the greatest possible proof of our love. Conversely, our tragic neglect of discipline proves how little we love. Ponder the love-tones of Paul's preface to the "deliver unto Satan" mandate.³ Finally, delivering the sinner "unto Satan" may sound like a harsh, unloving act. But by the consistently compassionate spirit Paul exemplified, both in moral integrity and in being "gentle. . . as a nurse cherisheth her children," we know he was not cruel or vengeful. Moreover, the saints were to deliver sinners unto Satan to *save* them, not to damn them (1 Corinthians 5:5). Paul delivered two sinners unto Satan to teach them "not to blaspheme" (1 Timothy 1:20). Regardless of how strange this process may sound to us, we can agree that it does not mean that we are to become satanic in our own methods, but rather that we reluctantly concede that a saint has chosen to serve Satan rather than Christ. In this case, we leave matters to God and to Satan to contest for the soul of the one we still love and hope will repent. Mysterious though it be, even Satan can be God's agent for man's ultimate good (e.g., Job) (Job 1:1-12; Matthew 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Paul's commanding the Corinthians to deliver the fornicator unto Satan was undoubtedly the consummation of prior patient, loving actions not detailed here, but probably performed by such faithful ones as Chloe and Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:11; 16:15-18). It is likely that they had done as Christ commanded in Matthew 18:15-17. Their gathering together and agreeing to deliver the sinner to Satan was only *part* of their ongoing soul-saving efforts requiring teaching, testifying, praying, etc., gently, lovingly, persistently with all possible wisdom by God's grace. *We should experiment in such procedures, trying all possible saving methods and holding fast*

to the ones that work (2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22).

In reasonable time, if all patient efforts have been fruitless, we must *not* cast our "pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6). We dare not carelessly let one soul be lost, but neither dare we allow a devil-driven soul distract us from doing other more productive work. Let us *try* our best to *agree* on procedures for *complete* discipline to keep souls safe and growing, so we can truly be "the light of the world."

1 Corinthians 5:6, 7

Verses 6 and 7 include, ". . . A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump." To "purge" is to purify. Here it is to purify the church by corrective discipline. Leaven symbolized sin, and the purging here alluded to the Jews' preparing for the Passover by removing leavened bread so carefully that even if a mouse ran across the floor with a crumb of bread, "they considered the whole house as polluted, and began their purification afresh."⁴ Paul made no concession for sin, even in the corrupt Corinthian church. Never did he compromise the ideal of perfection for Christ's church, ideally "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). The church must make us holy, Christlike, and heaven-ready. There is no purgatory to prepare us for heaven.

When Christ returns, his prepared saints "shall be like him . . . And every one who hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3). John had already made clear *how* Christ is "faithful. . . to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:5-10; 2:1-6). Such cleansing is possible only for ones who yearn to be sin-free and will discipline themselves by repenting of specific sins, by *correcting* them—not by just *confessing* them as being mere "human weaknesses" that God will not see.

Consistent with the perfect-correction ideal, there is no evidence whatever that the apostles ever encouraged anyone to tolerate *any* sin, either big or seemingly small. For a seemingly small sin, Peter rebuked Simon the sorcerer, whose

willingness to pay for a spiritual gift might seem like virtue, rather than vice (Acts 8:13-25). Simon's main sin seemed to be *covetousness*, one of the sins Paul warned the Corinthians against. Paul actually devoted more space to covetousness in our text than he did to fornication (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:1-10). It is fitting that we generate proportionate fear of the sin of *covetousness*, a most common, deceptive, and deadly sin that requires great faith and wisdom to discipline against.

Covetousness is delusive because it has many forms, a fact evident in its being the longest command in Moses' Decalogue: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," wife, servant, ox, ass, or "anything" (Exodus 20:17). Likewise, Paul evidenced the many forms of covetousness in the sins he warned against in our text: fornication, covetousness, idolatry, extortion, drunkenness, litigation, fraud, and thievery. These are all in some ways manifestations of *one* pervasive sin—*covetousness*.

It has an element of lawlessness, and is sinful because contrary to the command, "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5), because it leads to "trust in uncertain riches," to love of the world, to forgetfulness of God, and is idolatry (Col. 3:5), setting up wealth instead of God. It ranks with the worst sins (Mark 7:22; Rom. 1:29). Our Lord especially warns against it (Luke 12:15), as does St. Paul (Eph. 5:3, etc.). A man may be *covetous*, eager to obtain money, and not *avaricious* or *penurious*, i.e., unwilling to part with money, or *sordid* and *niggardly*, i.e., mean in his dealings. He may or may not be miserly.⁵

Covetous men will commit about any kind of sin to gratify fleshly appetites. In fighting fornication, drunkenness, etc., we must not forget that we *may* be actually fighting the underlying sin of *covetousness*. We must be patient, compassionate, and thorough in helping one another combat this subtle sin.

Covetousness may be the hardest single sin for us to resist. We, therefore, need to teach better than we have ever taught. History shows that greed (covetousness) has caused terrible wars and has wasted peacetime resources under the guise of preventing war. Too, a feverish struggle for material things motivates most of our occupations. Consequently, both private and public debts

are bankrupting our society. This drives wives to work outside the home, leaving child-care to worldly guardians who are often more motivated by money than by love for children's souls. The social implications of covetousness are so many and so complex that we tend to sympathize with covetous people and to praise them as success-oriented "go-getters" rather than as sinners. Paul sternly warned against various kinds of coveters and classified them as "such like," along with fornicators, thieves, etc. The weak Corinthians were commanded to "purge out" all such sins. We normally have thought of ourselves as being stronger than were these weak Corinthians, but we should re-evaluate and rededicate ourselves to become truly disciplined saints.

Covetousness *may* ensnare more souls than does any other sin, particularly among those who desert the church because being faithful requires giving of self and of possessions. Yet, we neglect to warn against covetousness almost as much as we neglect *complete* church discipline. This shows how imperative is *complete* church discipline. Paul's famous final message to Timothy was that he be a complete man of God, "furnished completely unto every good work." I might add, especially the good work of *complete* church discipline.

Evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings [*gramma*: the rudimentary Scriptures that small children can understand] which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every Scripture [*graphe*: all canonical Scriptures, including those above a babe's comprehension, but comprehensible to the "man of God"] inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction [*paideia*: complete child discipline] which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:13-17).

Again, *paideia* discipline (v. 16) is the key concept. It is God's

complete family discipline, consisting of *teaching, reproving, and correcting*. Consisting of three parts, it is *incomplete* and defective if *any* one part is neglected.

We are obviously *incomplete* even in our initial *teaching* on such subjects as covetousness and church discipline. Also, we are *incomplete* in our *reproving and correcting*. "With fear and trembling," let us repent and *truly* begin to "work out our salvation" as the New Testament warns (Philippians 2:1-15; Hebrews 12:1-29).

1 Corinthians 5:11-13

Next, verses 11 through 13 say, "I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be . . . [an obvious sinner], with such a one no, not to eat. . . . Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." Paul clarifies at least *part* of what goes into delivering a sinning saint "unto Satan." Some call it "withdrawing fellowship," some "excommunication," etc. Space now forbids deserved study and discussion, which I urge all to do at length. But I *now* urge all to ponder how *important* it is for saints to "*keep company*" and to "*not to keep company*," that is, to *fellowship* and to *withdraw fellowship* in Christ's church. (See Acts 2:42-27; Philippians 2:1-4.)

If we fail to foster loving fellowship for *all* saints, we cannot hope to discipline well—either by *teaching, reproving, or correcting*. If we have not lovingly *fellowshipped* a saint *before* delivering "such a one unto Satan," a formal "withdrawing fellowship" is unlikely to help. *But it did help the Corinthian fornicator because he had been fellowshipped enough to feel the sting of rejection* (2 Corinthians 2:5-10; 7:8-12). Therefore, there are many important implications in having fellowship and in withdrawing fellowship. On this, see Jimmy Jividen's *Koinonia*. (See the bibliography.)

Above all, remember this: *New Testament church fellowship, with attendant church discipline, required obedient faith in Christ who commands all saints to "love one another from the heart fervently"* (1 Peter 1:21, 22). This love required a sense of *belonging* and *loyalty* to a local church. Paul addressed his Epistle to God's church "at Corinth" as a pattern "everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 1:1; 4:17).

Therefore, every saint should be a loyal and loving member of a local church whose members are mutually responsible for each other's loving care. Such can be fairly easy in small churches like those that met in private homes (Romans 16:3-5; Philemon 2). But in big churches it is less easy. Jerusalem had problems, but they solved them (Acts 6:1-5). Even in complicated blends of Jews and pagans, as at Ephesus where Paul had found the work hard to do, he still commanded the elders to care for "all the flock" (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17). A baby lamb in a flock may be somewhat excused for not knowing how to love and to be loyal in the flock. But a mature elder is far less excused, having been made an elder because of his prior proven ability to watch, to teach, and to discipline fully his own family (1 Timothy 3). Yet, some elders do not even know for sure who are in the flock, though they are commanded to "take heed" to themselves "and to all the flock" (Acts 20:28). Amazingly, they do not seem to understand the necessity of an "all-the-flock" roll of all sheep for whom God holds them accountable!

In conclusion, beware of dismissing these last remarks on congregational identity and loyalty as if they were digressions from our assigned text (1 Corinthians 5). Though they are inferences, they are *necessary* inferences inherent in "fellowship" and "withdrawing fellowship," both being obvious ideas in this text. If we omit loving membership and fellowship, we omit the main meaning and purpose of this text. Accordingly, for any church to discipline effectively, and for any shepherds to shepherd effectively, they must teach every *sheep* and *lamb*, so that all can be mutually responsive and can help each other to be happy, hopeful, and heaven-ready!

NOTES

¹C. G. Wilke and Wilibald Grimm, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, trans. and rev. Joseph H. Thayer (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1901; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977), 3809.

²George Fisher, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 133.

³See 1 Corinthians 4:14-21 and cf. the "gentleness" texts of Galatians 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:24-26, both pertaining to corrective discipline.

⁴Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible With a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 1, *Genesis to Deuteronomy* (New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 354.

⁵Merrill F. Unger, "Covetousness," *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1971), 225.

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CONFLICTS AMONG BRETHREN

(1 Corinthians 6:1-8)

DAVID HAMILTON

Currently, I labor with a congregation of the Lord's people that works together with a spirit of love and harmony. I am not, however, so naive as to think that every congregation of the Lord's people experiences such harmony, nor am I so naive as to think that conflict could not arise among the brethren with whom I labor. Because conflicts among brethren can and do arise, it is of the utmost importance that we, as the Lord's body, address this issue of brother taking brother to court.

THE UNDERLYING REASONS

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, was dealing with a problem that was probably an extensive one. David Prior, author of the book entitled *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, says, "This practice of Christians taking one another to court had probably become a regular habit in Corinth. One or two examples would hardly have aroused Paul's ire so forcefully."¹

This problem of brother taking brother to court before unbelievers existed to the extent that it did in Corinth for two reasons. The first reason behind the problem can be seen in their lack of spiritual maturity. Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul said concerning their lack of spiritual maturity,

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; NASV).

Their lack of maturity which stemmed from feelings of jealousy and strife caused not only the problem at hand, but also a myriad of other problems such as division, the prideful acceptance of sexual immorality, misunderstandings concerning spiritual gifts, and abuses concerning the Lord's Supper.

The other reason behind the problem of brother taking brother to court before unbelievers can be seen in examining the cultural atmosphere of Corinth at that time. Without question, the Greeks were fond of going to court. Raymond Bryan Brown tells us, "The Greeks were famous for their fondness for going to court. The Athenians developed a highly complex judicial system involving sometimes as many as six thousand citizens on a jury."² Along this same line, David Prior quotes William Barclay as saying, "The Greeks were naturally and characteristically a litigious people. The law-courts were in fact one of their chief amusements and entertainments. . . ."³ The brethren at Corinth, because of their lack of spiritual maturity, had allowed the love of litigation that was prevalent in their culture to influence the church.

Let us not think that we are immune to the possibility of this ever happening to us. This problem could occur today as easily as it did in Corinth in the first century. The two elements that contributed to the problem in the church at Corinth exist, at least to some degree, today.

Now that we have examined the underlying reasons why this particular problem was such an extensive one, let us take notice of how Paul addressed this problem.

PAUL'S RESPONSE

Before examining *what* Paul had to say in response to the problem under consideration, we will examine *how* he responded. In reading 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, we can see that Paul responded to the problem of brother taking brother to court with fervor and firmness. What is not so clear, though, is the reason why Paul might have responded in this way. Perhaps he responded in this manner because he was shocked that the brethren at Corinth had no apparent problem in taking a brother to court before unbelievers. This kind of mindset was

foreign to anything he had ever been taught. Paul was raised a Jew, and Jews held the position that they should take care of their own problems. Raymond Bryan Brown writes, "The rabbis held that it was unlawful for a Jew to carry a case before a pagan judge for adjudication. It was Jewish custom to appoint three judges to handle cases among the Jews."⁴ In continuing this thought, F. F. Bruce writes, "Every Jewish community throughout the Roman Empire and beyond its frontiers had its own bet-din, its own competent machinery for the administration of civil justice within its own membership. . . ."⁵ It is in understanding Paul's heritage that we come to appreciate his response.

After seeing the manner in which Paul responded to the problem, we will notice the message contained within his response. Paul's response to the problem at hand can be broken down into these four divisions: (1) Paul rebukes those involved (1 Corinthians 6:1). (2) Paul reminds the brethren of their position (1 Corinthians 6:2-4). (3) Paul challenges the brethren to use their resources (1 Corinthians 6:5, 6). (4) Paul closes with another rebuke (1 Corinthians 6:7, 8).

Paul began his response using strong and forceful language. He wanted the brethren at Corinth to know that he was not pleased with their willingness to air their "dirty laundry" in public. Once Paul got their attention, he was able to remind them of their position as children of God. He brought this into focus by reminding them that they would judge the world (1 Corinthians 6:2) and also angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). After reminding them of their position, Paul challenged the brethren to use their resources (men of wisdom) to solve their own disputes. Paul concluded his response to the brethren at Corinth by again rebuking them for their behavior. In verses 7 and 8, Paul rebuked them for seeking to wrong and defraud those of their own number. In looking at the total response given by Paul, we can see that he used a balanced approach in dealing with this problem. He did so by both rebuking and encouraging the brethren at Corinth.

THE REMEDY

We can do some things to help prevent this problem of brother taking brother to court from becoming a widespread one.

First, we can focus on our responsibilities instead of our rights. Christians who are bent on maintaining their rights will frequently forget their responsibilities. This task of learning to focus on our responsibilities, however, is not always an easy one to accomplish. We live in a free society, a society in which the demanding of one's rights is very common. We must remember, though, as Christians we should always be seeking to fulfill our responsibility of being devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Second, we can focus on what is best for the church instead of focusing on what is best for self. What we may believe is best for us is not necessarily what is best for the Lord's church. Since we are a part of his body, we have a responsibility to consider first what is best for the church. An attitude that focuses primarily on what is best for self can indeed bring harm to the church.

Third, we can stress the need for all to gain spiritual maturity. We must seek to put away our fleshly desires so that we can focus on the task of developing ourselves into spiritually-minded people.

Fourth, we can keep the world out of the church. Too often we allow the world to influence how we think and act. We are God's people, and as God's people we must think and act according to the standard he has established for us in his Word.

CONCLUSION

The Lord's church at Corinth had a problem with brother taking brother to court before unbelievers. This problem stemmed from two sources: a lack of spiritual maturity and an unhealthy willingness to allow the world to influence the church. Paul addressed this problem with intense emotion and firmness. He did so because of the harm that would come by allowing the practice to continue. Thanks be to God that Chris-

tians can try to prevent such a problem from ever becoming a widespread one. May God bless us as we seek to glorify his name.

NOTES

¹David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 106.

²Raymond Bryan Brown, *The Broadman Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1970), 322.

³Prior, *Message of 1 Corinthians*, 106.

⁴Brown, *Broadman Bible Commentary*, 322.

⁵F. F. Bruce, *I and II Corinthians*, *The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 59.

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SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

DAVID SPILLMAN

I recently read a statement that we can be at the very gates of heaven and yet still gain entrance into hell. At first I was puzzled by this remark, but after thinking about it, all I had to do was go to Jesus' inner circle of twelve disciples to see the truth of this statement borne out in the life of Judas Iscariot. He had spent three years in close contact with Jesus—eating, sleeping, talking, listening to his teachings, and seeing his miracles. He was at the very gates of heaven but gaining entrance into hell because of his stubborn refusal to give all that he was in return for all that Jesus is.

The reverse of that statement is the Good News of Jesus. An individual can be at the very gates of hell, but because of the saving blood of Jesus, can and will gain entrance into heaven. Consider Matthew, a low-down, lying, cheating, greed-driven, money-hungry traitor to his own people. He was at the very gates of hell, but because of his willingness to give up all that he was in return for all that Jesus is, he will gain entrance into heaven. The woman at the well (John 4), the woman taken in adultery (John 8), Zacchaeus (Luke 19), the demon-possessed man (Mark 5), the Corinthians, and you and I were at the gates of hell but can go to heaven. Such were some of you.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you

were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Corinth was a major urban center. Because of its location, Corinth was a wealthy city with a lot of people out to make a lot of money fast! With a highly restless and mobile population, prostitution ran rampant, along with homosexuality and crooked business deals. People were out to get all that they could get for themselves with little or no concern for anyone else. In this type of society, the church in Corinth was born. Its membership was made up of individuals whose lives had been characterized by the sins which Paul listed here. They were at the very gates of hell, but because of the cleansing blood of Jesus, had access into the very presence of God in heaven. "And that is what some of you were," lost and hopeless, but because of Jesus your life is now brought into focus. You are justified, just as if you had never sinned. What a contrast because of Jesus—from the gates of hell to the gates of heaven.

But how can I stay in the "and that is what some of you were" category and not be swallowed up by those sins again? In Matthew 5:6 Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." This is a promise from Jesus! Another version says, "They shall be satisfied." When you are filled, you are satisfied! When I am satisfied, I have no desire at all to return to the way that I was. This is a challenge for God's people today—to be able to say that I am "filled with God." This challenge depends on no one but myself because Jesus says that whoever hungers and thirsts for his righteousness will be filled.

Once a month, our congregation has a big celebration to honor those people having a birthday or anniversary for that month. To keep things fresh, we do something different each month. Recently, we men did all the cooking. As soon as those announcements started being made, my reaction along with almost everyone else's was "Ugh!" After it was over, a sister was joking with me about whether I had enough to eat or did I have to stop by McDonald's on the way home! I had not thought about it that much, but when I did, I said, "No, I was full." And I was. Then she replied that I must have been very hungry to

have "pigged out" on our cooking! I was hungry, I ate, and I was very satisfied when I left.

It is that way with God's Word. When we have a genuine hunger for his Word and cannot do without it, we will find ourselves satisfied and staying in the category of "that is what some of you were." When one is first baptized, there is a newness about him, a great intensity! He cannot get enough Bible study and anything else that he might read or listen to that will help him to be filled up with God. But it seems the longer one goes, the less he finds himself watering at the mouth to get at God's Word as if it were a T-bone steak or a plate of chocolate chip cookies. In reality, as we get older and taste how good God is the opposite should be true. Our hunger and thirst for him should intensify as we find out more and more about his goodness and greatness.

Let us read Philippians 3:2-11. Paul said in verse 3 that he put no confidence in the flesh. When we put confidence in ourselves and what we can accomplish or have accomplished, we are saying, "I will not be filled with God." This can be unintentional and almost unknowing on my part, but the truth remains that I cannot be satisfied and filled with God if even an ounce of self is left in me.

I believe Paul touches on another reason why some of us cannot be filled. We cannot consider things in the past a loss. We keep trying to move our past with us. I hope my wife, Sherri, and I never move again! I was in the basement garage of our house trying to find something, and I have never seen so much junk in all my life! It is either reproducing itself or our neighbors are hauling their junk and storing it in our basement while we are asleep at night! The real problem is that even with all the yard sales and trashing we have done, we have a hard time letting go of a lot of junk! Many of us do the same thing spiritually. We keep moving our past with us. When we do, we can never truly be free to become all God wants and needs us to be! We must learn to consider the past as loss, garbage, nothing compared to simply knowing Christ! Everything—valuable or not—must be considered as loss so that I can be filled with his righteousness.

Consider Jesus' words in John 17:3. He says that eternal life

is simply "*knowing* the Father and his Son Jesus Christ." (Emphasis mine.) Jesus did not say that eternal life is doing this and that! It is *knowing* him! "Knowing" him conveys more than just knowing facts about the Father and his Son. It is having a personal relationship with God and his Son. This can only come by being nourished by God's Word! Naturally whatever we fill ourselves with will come out. We will naturally act, do, and live as Jesus Christ!

"And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

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WEAK AND STRONG BROTHERS

(1 Corinthians 8)

CARL MITCHELL

The central thread of both the Old and the New Testaments is the emphasis upon placing God and others above self. When Jesus was approached by the Pharisee lawyer and asked, "Which is the greatest commandment in the law?" he drew from the writings of Moses when he stated that the greatest commandments were to love the Lord with all of one's heart, soul, and mind, and to love one's neighbor as one's self (Matthew 22:34-40, quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18). Christ's claim that the whole dispensation of God rests upon these two great teachings is certainly intended to be normative for us today. It is in the spirit of these commandments that Paul in 1 Corinthians 8 underscores the consideration that the stronger believer must hold for the weaker believer. He is consistent in this insistence with the same emphasis that is found in Romans 14. The enduring principle of this passage, drawing upon what Christ emphasizes as the second greatest commandment, is that in non-principle areas, the spiritual well-being of a fellow Christian ranks above one's personal freedom or liberty to choose and to act.

In order to understand the significance of the question raised by the "more spiritually mature" Corinthian brethren relative to attitudes about meat offered to idols, some understanding of the historical backgrounds is necessary.

The idolatry of the Greco-Roman world was far more than a religion, extending itself into all aspects of human life, whether family, political, business, recreation, or entertainment. The Corinthian Christian was, in fact, confronted by a surrounding milieu that was so totally flavored by idolatry, that it was virtually impossible to disassociate oneself totally

from the realities of that tainted system. Consequently, it may have appeared that one must realistically come to terms with an environment so permeated by idolatrous practices that it was not a question of whether or not one would in some way cooperate with such a belief system, but rather a question of degree. Willis in his important work entitled *Idol Meat in Corinth*, documents the reality that almost all services offered by a restaurant today, were in ancient Corinth supplied by the temple of a pagan deity, or at least the flavor of that deity would be present even if the ceremony occurred within a private home. He shows that virtually all social gatherings, including weddings, birthdays, celebrations of civic life, or ordinary parties, were included in these pagan religious festivals. Two of the pagan deities worshiped in Corinth were Sarapis and Isis who were actually of Egyptian origin. Egyptian papyri have been discovered which illustrate the wide number of social occasions which were undertaken in acknowledgment of the participants' faith in and dependency upon these gods. These invitations are similar to practices which we know occurred in Corinth. Willis included a number of these in his book:¹

Chaeremon requests your company at dinner at the table of the Lord Sarapis in the Sarapaeum tomorrow, the 15th at 9 o'clock.

Apollonius requests you to dine at the table of the Lord Sarapis on the occasion of the coming of age of his brothers in the temple of Theoris.

Deiogenes invites you to dinner for the first birthday of his daughter in the Sarapaeum tomorrow which is Pachon 26, from the eighth hour onward.

Sarapion, X-Gymnasiarch requests you to dine at his house on the occasion of the lectisterinum of the Lord Sarapis which is the 15th at the eighth hour.

Willis makes a summary statement relative to the nature of these invitations:

First, the variety of locations for the meals associated

with Sarapis suggest a very loose connection if at all, with the cults' liturgy. Not only were these meals held in the temple of another deity, but even in private homes. It has even been suggested that the temple might have operated as an adjunct restaurant. Second, the informal character of these invitations implies, although does not prove, they are not special occasions, except for the host and his guests.²

In a similar vein, Shepherd (in his notes and comments added to the commentary on 1 Corinthians written by David Lipscomb), states:

At this day we can scarcely realize how closely this question [of eating meat sacrificed to idols] affected the whole life of the early Christians. For not only was the worship of the Gentiles sacrificial, but this worship was not confined to the temple precincts, but extended itself to their social gatherings, and even domestic meals.³

As Carl Holladay has observed,

There were at least two contexts in which a converted pagan would be confronted with "meat offered to idols," one public, the other private. Although one could refuse to worship at a pagan temple, it would have been more difficult to stay away entirely. Social obligation, such as attending marriages or honoring the dead, often required one not only to attend a pagan temple or shrine but also to take part in a meal there. The food would almost certainly include "holy meat" or from Jewish perspective "meat offered to idols," i.e., meat which had been used in a pagan sacrifice. Or, in more private settings one could be invited to dine with a host in a private home or perhaps at a meeting of a guild or small club. A sacrifice might be performed in connection with a meal, and the likelihood was great that one would be served meat which had, at some point, been used in pagan worship.⁴

When a sacrifice was, in fact, burned to an idol, only a small portion of the victim was so offered. According to Willis, a

second and much larger portion was allocated to a special table dedicated to the god in question. In theory it was for the pagan deity to consume, but in actual practice it was consumed in part by the cult officials, and in part may have been sold in the local markets. A third portion was for the faithful who had made the original offering, and it was their practice to consume it with their friends. Any portion which may have been left over might also have been sold in the markets. Consequently, not only did the Corinthian Christian have to consider the religious implication of a good portion of contemporary social life, but he also must consider the implications of a local food supply which was in large measure derived from the temple offerings. It was difficult to ever know if the food purchased in the local market was tainted or untainted in this regard.⁵

The situation was further complicated by the fact that there was a very pervasive belief in demons and devils whose main preoccupation was to find some way of entry into human bodies. The aftermath of such entry was believed to have always been negative, resulting in actions which would be damaging if not destructive either to self or to others. Barclay observes:

One of the special ways in which these spirits did gain an entry was through food; they settled on the food as a man ate and so got inside him. One of the ways of avoiding that was to dedicate the meat to some good god; and the presence of the good god in the meat put up a barrier against the evil spirit. For that reason, nearly all animals were dedicated to a god before being slaughtered; and, if that was not done, meat was blessed in the name of a god before it was eaten as a defence. It therefore followed that a man could hardly eat meat at all which was not in some way connected with a heathen god.⁶

The situation may have been further complicated by the fact that given the reality that a large portion of converts in the early church were from the lower classes, these special social occasions featuring meat offered to idols, may have been the only opportunities in the course of the year that such individu-

als had to eat meat. Therefore, it would have been easy for them to rationalize, pushed by their craving for meat, that since an idol has no real identity, the Christian armed with such knowledge would run no risk by eating this religiously contaminated meat.⁷

There were two currents of thought among the Corinthian Christians relative to the question of eating meat offered to idols. This is what occasions Paul's discussion of the matter in 1 Corinthians 8. Some Christians were pleading their case that on the basis of their superior knowledge they were immune to any sin or contamination which may have been associated with the local pagan festivals, and, therefore, could participate, even to the point of sitting at table in the idols' temples. (Fee believes that sitting at meat at the idol's table [see 8:10 and 10:21] was the real issue.⁸) Another group was spiritually offended and endangered by the attitude of the first group. As a result, the controversy had brought about the inclusion of this problem as one of the questions referred for arbitration to Paul.

The identity of this second (weaker) group has been a matter of considerable discussion. Some have taken the position that it regarded the Jewish Christians. It was especially the Jewish Christian for whom the local pagan customs would have been particularly troublesome. The Jewish believer came from a tradition which would prohibit involvement in pagan festival, and as Barrett has written,

Such food was prohibited to Jews on three grounds: (a) it was tainted with idolatry; (b) it could not be supposed that the heathen would have paid the tithe on it; (c) if it was meat, it could not be supposed that it had been slaughtered in a proper way. No doubt there were in Corinth local or travelling Jews who urged the same prohibition as binding on the church.⁹

However, it seems obvious that this was at least predominately a Gentile group, as they had formerly entered into such idolatrous practices, and now found it difficult to disassociate eating this contaminated meat from idol worship.

Bultmann believes that the "superior" faction in Corinth

was composed of Christian Gnostics. He states,

This consciousness flaunted itself not only in the phenomena of enthusiasm and ecstasy (14, 3) within the meeting of the congregation but also and especially in the genuinely Gnostic claim to have "liberty" and "authority," on the strength of which the "man of the spirit" disdained to be bound to the concrete ecclesiastical fellowship (1 Cor. 8:1ff.) and also made light of being bound morally—"all things are lawful to me." (1 Cor. 6:12ff.; cf. 10:23).¹⁰

Whether or not the Corinthian element pushing for greater freedom of action in relationship to participation in the eating of foods offered to idols were actually Gnostics, it is possible that the biblical emphasis upon faith based upon and directed by knowledge (John 8:32; Romans 10:17), could through improper emphasis leave the Corinthian Christians susceptible to some forms of Gnostic heresy. The Gnostics had literally deified knowledge making salvation possible on the basis of knowledge, thus divorcing salvation from both faith and obedience. We get some of the flavor of these heretical conclusions in John's statements in 1 John 2:3-5 where he says anyone who claims to know the Lord (*gnosis*) but does not obey him, is a liar and the truth is not in him. It is clear in this context from Paul's statements, that the Corinthians who were claiming immunity on the basis of their knowledge, were prideful, and certainly uncaring of the spiritual well-being of those who were being damaged by their actions and by their conclusions.

It is a matter of interest as to why Paul did not settle the issues by appealing to the decree given by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-31). Lipscomb supposes that the Jerusalem decree was intended as a temporary expedient until the Gentiles had become more mature spiritually, at which point that decree would no longer apply.¹¹ Holladay suggests that there is a possibility that the Jerusalem designation was intended for the areas of Syria and Cilicia and perhaps was either inapplicable or unenforceable outside of these areas.¹² Hodge raises the possibility that what Paul writes to the Corinthians is a commentary on Acts 15, which edict referred specifically to eating meat offered to idols while sit-

ting at the idol's table.¹³ Whatever may have been his reason, we know Paul makes no reference to the Jerusalem meeting. It appears clear that this problem had arisen after his departure, and it would seem that during the extensive period that Paul remained at Corinth, he would have taught on this subject. It is, therefore, possible that he had earlier shared the Jerusalem decision, and that what is written in 1 Corinthians 8:1—11:1 is indeed commentary.

A BRIEF COMMENTARY ON 1 CORINTHIANS 8

A brief commentary of the content of 1 Corinthians 8 will now be given associating it also with the larger context which continues through chapters 9 and 10 and includes verse 1 of chapter 11. Quotations will be given from the NASV. I will conclude by drawing pertinent lessons from these indications given by the Holy Spirit through Paul to the church at Corinth.

"Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant but love edifies" (v. 1). It is generally accepted that Paul in 1 Corinthians answers a list of questions from the church in Corinth perhaps brought to him by the delegation mentioned in 16:17, 18. His statement at the beginning of this verse is similar to expressions found in 1 Corinthians 7:1; 7:25; 12:1; and 16:1. In each of these passages, Paul is giving attention to issues that were raised by the Corinthian church. In this instance, Paul's answer seems to indicate that the question was essentially multi-pronged. The broader issue of whether or not Christians can participate in eating food that has been offered to idols appears to involve three problems: buying contaminated meat in the marketplace (1 Corinthians 10:25), eating meat which may have been previously offered to an idol while a guest in a private home (1 Corinthians 10:27), and actually going into a pagan temple to eat meat at an idol's table (1 Corinthians 10:19-21). Those who considered themselves to be the "stronger brethren" were apparently claiming that their greater knowledge made all three of these practices acceptable.

Paul is probably quoting from their letter when he states

that "we know that we all have knowledge." Some translators actually put this expression in quotation marks. The other alternative is either that Paul is identifying with that segment which "has knowledge" or is speaking in irony. In verse 7 he states that not all do possess this knowledge which is precisely the problem. It may also be that a distinction can be made between a knowledge that is both intellectual and emotional, and a knowledge that is only intellectual. In the latter case, the Christian who ate meat offered to an idol would do so realizing that the idol had no substance and yet emotionally feeling that he was returning to a pagan practice of the past, thus violating his conscience and sinning against the Lord. This was precisely the problem which occasioned the raising of this question. Paul, in a forthright manner, declares that a careless use of knowledge leads to arrogance and a sense of superiority and thus becomes destructive, while love edifies. The Corinthians had a severe attitudinal problem centered upon a spirit of pride. Paul treats this in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and 5:7 and now returns to touch once more on this negative quality. The particular term which he uses, "arrogant" (puffed up) is one used only by Paul in the New Testament, and is found seven times in his writings, six of which are in 1 Corinthians.¹⁴ This term brings to mind a big toad swollen out of proportion to its normal size with air which has been ingested. What truly has substance and reality is *agape* love which implicitly directs and conditions the application of knowledge. Love has the quality to build up, to construct, to preserve and will eliminate the improper use of knowledge by which either power or destructive ends are sought. (See 1 Corinthians 13:1-8.)

"If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know" (v. 2). According to Willis, the Greek term for "knowledge" is used twenty-nine times in the New Testament, with Paul appropriating the word twenty-one times, sixteen of which are in 1 Corinthians, with five references occurring in chapter 8.¹⁵ In the face of the popular conviction that knowledge (*gnosis*) is ultimate, Paul touches on the great limitation which is the natural condition of all "human knowing." Mankind is limited in his possibilities to know by (1) the natural limitations of native intelligence; (2) the

opportunities that are presented for learning; and (3) the intrinsic difficulties involved in attempting to encompass an infinite God and ultimate truth with a finite mind. The Bible is the perfect and complete revealed Word of God to mankind (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Mankind has the capacity to understand it in order to be saved and to be directed by it in order that submitted lives can be useful to the Master. However, the very nature of God's ultimate truth places it beyond the ability of any human mind to totally fathom. For this reason, the more an individual becomes a student of sacred Scripture the more that individual realizes the challenge of learning. It is truly the individual whose exposure to the word is cursory who would dare claim, "I have all knowledge." For these reasons the Spirit directed Paul to say that if anyone labors under the misconception that his knowledge is exhaustive and complete, that God's analysis of that person is that he has not yet understood anything at all about the nature of truth.

"But if anyone loves God, he is known by Him" (v. 3). One would expect a different conclusion from the logic presented in verses 2 and 3. It would seem more consistent for Paul to write that those who love God, by that love obtain or demonstrate true knowledge. However, his emphasis shifts to stress God's knowledge of the individual rather than the Christian's knowledge of God. It appears that he is emphasizing that the important issue is that those who love God (and by implication, their neighbor) are recognized by Him. In the final analysis, it is God's recognition of an individual, his acknowledgment that that individual pertains to him, that is critical. Our love for him is a natural response to the knowledge that God has first loved us (1 John 4:19).

"Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world and that there is no God but one" (v. 4). In this passage, Paul introduces the real issue involved, which has to do with the eating of meat or food which is offered to idols. It is probable that the phrases, "there is no such thing as an idol in the world," and "there is no God but one," are direct quotes from the letter sent by the Corinthians. Actually, it is a matter of indifference whether Paul is indeed quoting the Corinthians or is stating

truths inspired by the Holy Spirit. The conclusion is the same: The idols are not real. They represent false gods because there is only one true God, Jehovah.

"For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we exist through Him" (vv. 5, 6). It is, however, true, Paul asserts, that in the minds of the pagan believers the heavens and the earth are indeed filled with gods and with lords. Beyond this, it must be admitted that there is a demonic force under the leadership of Satan that does exist and is very active in the world. In a very real way, the true nature of pagan idolatrous worship is the fact that it is inspired and directed by Satan. (See 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; Ephesians 6:11, 12; Matthew 25:41.) The Christian, of course, knows that there is but one true God, our heavenly Father who has created everything, and we (as does all his creation) exist to glorify him and to serve Him. It is equally certain that there is but one Lord who is the means by which all things were created (John 1:1-3, 10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1, 2), and our very existence, our very acceptance before God depends upon our being in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 3:8-11; Galatians 3:27-29).

"However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled" (v. 7). All do not possess this knowledge, that is, have not laid to rest the convictions and experiences of the past—they have scruples which make them incapable of achieving such discernments. Consequently, if they overrode these scruples and ate idol meat, they would sin against their own moral nature. (See Romans 14:23). According to the New Testament, sin occurs through violating a commandment (1 John 3:4), through failing to do the good one knows to do (James 4:17), and by violating one's own conscience (Romans 14:23). Intellectually, the weaker Christians could admit that idols were nothing and meat offered to idols was still just meat. Emotionally, and in their consciences, they could not disassociate themselves from the idea that they were, in fact, worshipping the idol god.

"But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat nor the better if we do eat" (v. 8). Paul agrees with the position of the "knowledge" faction in Corinth, that with God, eating food per se is an inconsequential matter. Christ had declared all food clean (Mark 7:19). No one was to be judged on the basis of food (Colossians 2:16). Commanding to abstain from meat was, in fact, a demonic doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-4). On the basis of this conclusion, Paul specifies that it is legitimate to purchase and eat all food sold in the marketplace, even that previously offered to an idol (1 Corinthians 10:25). Christians could also eat without questioning whatever was set before them as guests in a private house, unless attention was specifically called to the fact that the food had previously been offered to an idol. In this case, a Christian should refuse to eat, not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of others (1 Corinthians 10:27, 28).

"But take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak" (v. 9). Here Paul emphasizes one of the two great lessons he is underscoring in this sequence of passages. The one enduring debt that every Christian has to fellow Christians is love (Romans 13:8). Love demands great care and concern for the spiritual well-being of a brother or a sister in Christ. To use one's Christian liberty carelessly and thus risk damaging a fellow believer was not consistent with the principle of love. It also placed the stronger brother at great risk (Mark 9:42; Luke 17:1, 2; Romans 14:13). Love demanded that one be willing to sacrifice personal freedom whenever it was more expedient to do so. Paul (chap. 9) uses his own record as an example.

"For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?" (v. 10). The third great issue which appears to have been raised by the Corinthians had to do with actually sitting and eating at an idol's table in a pagan temple. Two problems were involved. Paul here treats the first—the impact such action has on the "weaker" Christian. The risk is great! Even though the person of greater understanding might be able to accept an invitation to enter a pagan temple and eat at an idol's table without contaminating

his own conscience, concern for the "weaker" Christians forbade that. The "weaker" Christians, thus encouraged by the example of the "more enlightened," perhaps under the conviction that they would be spiritually strengthened by so doing; instead ended up, not just eating food, but rather in their weakened conscience, eating food that had a spiritual significance. In their hearts, they had returned to their former worship practices.

However, Paul will stress later (1 Corinthians 10:14-24) a second part of the problem. The "stronger" Christians' conclusions were too refined! The whole scenario was so pagan and so laden with idolatrous meaning that there was no way to be an "innocent" actor in this scene. A Christian could not sit at both the Lord's table and a demon's table. Those who attempted to do so were in great personal danger. (See 1 Corinthians 10:12.)

"For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died" (v. 11). By this careless use of "superior knowledge," the weaker Christians were being destroyed (the present tense indicates a condition already occurring). The implication is frightening! Through the encouragement of the stronger Christians, the death of Christ was being neutralized (made of no effect) for these weaker Christians. They, rather than becoming spiritually stronger, were being destroyed.

"And thus, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (v. 12). Ultimately, therefore, the perverse action of those who consider themselves stronger, was more than a sin against a brother or a sister. In reality, it was a sin against Christ, a sin of the most horrendous implication, since they were neutralizing (setting at naught) the sacrifice of Christ in behalf of the weaker brethren.

"Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again that I may not cause my brother to stumble" (v. 13). This conclusion is a natural one in the light of Paul's reasoning. The spiritual well-being of a brother or a sister in Christ is vastly superior to the right of individual liberty or freedom in non-principle areas. As Paul illustrates in chapter 9, he was willing to forgo even much of his rights as an apostle

in the interest of what was best for fellow Christians. As regards meat, he would be perfectly willing to never eat meat again if by so doing he could improve the spiritual standing of brothers and sisters in Christ.

LESSONS AND APPLICATIONS

Much may be learned as to how the Christian should go about dealing with others when controversial questions arise. Paul was courteous with his adversaries. He represents fairly the case they have made in the interest of their Christian liberty. He agrees with the portion of their argument with which he can honestly agree. However, he does not hesitate to correct the errors and their conclusions in the strongest of terms.

In contradiction with popular sentiment in the United States today, Paul values the family and corporate emphasis over the individual emphasis. While we are saved as individuals, we become part of a family where we share with each other in a most intimate way . . . accepting suffering and honor with each other (1 Corinthians 12:26). On the basis of love, we all become our "brother's keeper." What is best for fellow family members becomes a matter of intense concern and importance. The Christian, following the example of Christ (Romans 15:1-3), and of Paul (9:4; 11:1), is willing to put aside what may be preferred or convenient for self in the interest of what is best for others. However, care must be exercised not to deduce from Paul's writing more than is intended. In this case, he is dealing with a condition that involved the real possibility that weaker Christians would actually be condemned because they were violating their consciences as they followed the examples of the stronger brethren. Paul is in no way arranging a situation which will permit one person or a few persons to enact a dictatorial power over the congregation just by saying that something is "offensive" to them. The context is not dealing with actions that someone may just disagree with, or dislike, but rather with situations where there is a danger that the weak will be "drawn in" to practices that will be eternally spiritually damaging to them.

All moral, ethical, and religious obligation precedes from the reality that there is only one God (vv. 4, 6) and one Lord (v. 6). There is, therefore, neither room nor need for a syncretistic approach to religion. All belief and function, related to idol worship, lacks reality. Idols are nothing. Christians live neither in belief in nor in fear of their power. The fact that there is only one God and one Lord brings all of mankind under the authority and judgment of God. All other belief systems and all other worships are vain.

In a certain sense, knowledge is a two-edged sword. While it is true that God appeals to humankind on the basis of knowledge, knowledge alone does not save. The risk, as here illustrated, is that knowledge become an end within itself. There is grave danger in unbridled knowledge. It tends to an inflated ego, a sense of superiority, a judgmental spirit, a sense of personal "God-ness" and power, and to a terrible superficiality. It is superficial because the deification of knowledge leads to the assumption that it is human knowledge that is divine . . . to the incorrect assumption that the infinite can be captured and exhausted by the finite human mind. It also breeds a dangerous confidence in personal infallibility and invulnerability that sets the Christian up for falling into grievous sin (1 Corinthians 2:11, 12). (See also 1 Corinthians 10:12. In this latter setting, it is implied that the "stronger" were in danger on the basis of their supposed greater knowledge, of becoming involved in immorality [10:8], and idolatry [10:14].)

Unconditioned knowledge may lead to practices that destroy others, setting up stumbling blocks for the weak (v. 9), encouraging the violation of conscience (v. 10), destroying the weak brother or sister (v. 11), inflicting wounds on the weakened conscience (v. 12), leading fellow believers to fall into sin (v. 13), and ultimately, sinning against both one's brothers and against Christ (vv. 1, 12). In order for knowledge to fulfill its proper use, it must be conditioned by love and by humility. Love guarantees that the application of knowledge be for the edification (the building up) of others (v. 1). Love will make it possible for the stronger to forgo personal freedom in the interest of the spiritual well-being of others. Most importantly, it is those who love who are known of God (v. 3). Love is,

in fact, the only acceptable motivation for obedience (John 14:15, 23, 24; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Humility will serve to keep knowledge in proper perspective, even those who have the greatest knowledge will by that very fact consider themselves beginners in their understanding of the infinite God and his infinite truth (v. 2).

Finally, the question of sin is much more complex than many think. It goes far beyond the overt violation of the law. In this context, great emphasis is given to the significance of conscience in the matter of sin. While conscience alone is not a safe guide, it is never safe to violate one's conscience. Those who violate their consciences wound them (v. 12) and are ruined (v. 11). This sequence of reasoning also suggests that something may be sinful for one and not sinful for another, all because of a matter of conscience. It is indeed sobering to the "stronger" to consider that there is a distinct possibility that one may become guilty (through the thoughtless use of personal liberty) of "innocently" sinning against a brother or a sister and against Christ (vv. 11, 12).

NOTES

¹Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1985), 40-41.

²*Ibid.*, 43.

³David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, vol. 2, *First Corinthians*, ed. J. W. Shepherd (Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Co., 1935; reprint, 1957), 118.

⁴Carl Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1979), 107.

⁵Willis, *Idol Meat*, 16-17.

⁶William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1954), 80-81.

⁷Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), 123-24.

⁸Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 357-60.

⁹C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Black's New Testament Commentaries (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 188.

¹⁰Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York:

Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 180.

¹¹Lipscomb, *Commentary*, 117-18.

¹²Holladay, *First Letter*, 107.

¹³Charles Hodge, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857), 135.

¹⁴Morris, *First Epistle*, 78.

¹⁵Willis, *Idol Meat*, 71-72.

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I MAY BY ALL MEANS SAVE SOME

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

JAMES A. GENTRY

Without a doubt the servant lifestyle is the spiritual maxim for being a true follower of Christ. Jesus humbled himself and became a servant in order to provide for the needs of others (Philippians 2:4-8). The servant heart and life are the results of a deep affection for the Son of God and a willingness to walk in his footsteps. It is not an easy road to travel. Yet it is the only road for the true disciple of Christ.

One cannot help but see the servant heart of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. A multitude of tangible and intangible elements need to be present to aid in developing a caring and serving spirit, and few loom as large as the willingness to sacrifice self for the good of others. How one regards others may go a long way in determining the extent to which one may extend himself on behalf of others, but how one regards himself defines the depth.

How I see myself in relation to others becomes all-important if I seek to be a servant like Jesus and Paul. In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul describes how he performs his ministry. What the Corinthians expect is not what they get, but what they get is what they need. What the body of Christ needs and what the world needs are men and women who are devoted to the servant lifestyle.

FREE TO SERVE

People do peculiar things with power and position. For some, having power and position provides an opportunity to run roughshod over people and circumstances. Every right and privilege that belonged to an apostle could have been

utilized by Paul while laboring with the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:5). Paul refused to use his position to be served and in the true spirit of Christ wrapped a towel around himself and served them (1 Corinthians 9:15). In Christ, Paul is free, but he knew that responsibility came with that freedom. Concerned that the ministry and the gospel never be maligned, Paul made himself a slave to the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 9:19). Paul was not out to win what they had materially but what they were spiritually (2 Corinthians 12:14). He wanted them for Christ, and the way to do that was to serve them (1 Corinthians 9:19).

We must resolve in our own lives that following Jesus means (always means) a life of servitude. Servants are highly esteemed in very few societies. Yet when it comes down to the life of the church or winning some soul for Christ, it is the pinnacle of strategy and position. The approach for winning people to Christ is service first and last (John 13:1-17).

FREE TO BECOME

There is an old saying that necessity is the mother of invention, and such is true when it comes to many aspects in life. Our ability to adapt to situations may determine whether or not we survive or fail, win or lose.

Paul knew well that in order to effectively serve a man he must share his life with him (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). Evangelism will never be all that it should be if it is done aloof from the people and their circumstances. If a man has reservations about sharing life with someone, it is unlikely that he will take the time and effort to befriend him. Paul felt free to share life and thoughts with a man, be he Jew or Gentile, without law or weak (1 Corinthians 9:20-22).

A genuine love and concern for others demands that one take his relationship with anyone beyond the boundaries of casual acquaintance into some level of identification. How much identification is appropriate? Paul emphatically states that though he seeks identification with all, it is governed by his loyalty to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). Never can he compromise or break a law of God for the sake of winning others.

Above the fact that he feels himself the slave of men, he is the slave of God, and that means more to him than everything else. How far Christians go in trying to win others to Christ must always be governed by God's Word, but where identification involves no specific law of God we must become all men to win them. I should never allow the color of my skin, where I was born, my educational opportunities, or anything else keep any man from sensing that I have become his friend. In the church we could very well tear down any feelings of division or strife by practicing this wonderful concept. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, the Christian maxim is that we are important in God's sight whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free. None are ever to feel superior or that others are inferior to them in any way. If Paul had felt superior to others, he would never have allowed himself to know others.

As Christians under law to Christ, we are free to share life with others in the hope that they want to share life with Christ. Wherever the Christian is, whomever he is with, that is his culture, his fellowman.

May God help us to learn this lesson and learn it well. May we first sympathize before we antagonize.

TO SAVE A SOUL

The souls of men are of invaluable worth. Christ left his heavenly home in order to redeem us. Since he loved us enough to come, we should love others enough to win them for him. Salvation is worth the effort both in our own lives and in the lives of others. When I feel the security of my salvation through Christ's redeeming me on the cross and through his ensuring me that no good thing will be withheld, my heart runs wild with excitement. I want everyone to know this.

All men will not be saved. This is sobering as we understand that despite the efforts being made from time to time some will not heed God's Word. The ratio for positive response and negative response may fall woefully too large on the negative side. Yet we must make the effort to serve time and time again that we might win some. Ultimately, it is up to the individuals whether or not they want heaven to be theirs.

TO SHARE IN ITS BLESSING

Paul believed every measure he took and every sacrifice he made for Christ and the gospel was worth it (1 Corinthians 9:23). It brought such joy to Paul when he heard that the things he taught, the principles laid down, were having an impact on the lives of those whom he served. He rejoiced when, having sent Titus to Corinth for a visit, upon Titus' return he learned that the church in Corinth had a great zeal for right (2 Corinthians 7:8-13). It brought Paul no small joy to know that the servant heart and life at times yields that great fruit of righteousness in those served. If my being a servant will so impact the life of one man as to make him firmer in his faith and hope in Christ, then I really do share with him in the blessings of the gospel. I hope to play a part in many being saved. Do you not want to be a part of someone's salvation and be able to rejoice with him in heaven?

MAKE ME A SERVANT

Something went through me every time we sang "Make Me a Servant" during chapel at Harding. It made me think of all that I needed to become in order to serve as Jesus served. I sincerely hope that in an age and time where self-gratification is the norm, and even expected, our hearts will be singing, "Lord, make me a servant; make me like You." A family member, a brother or sister in Christ, a lost soul may hang in the balance.

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THE ROLE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TODAY

(1 Corinthians 10:1-13)

JOHN DAVID FORTNER

First Corinthians 10:1-13 has been noted well and long as a significant text for understanding the function of the Old Testament in Paul's thought and ministry.¹ Among principal treatments of Paul's use of the Old Testament and his exegetical method, see Henry St. John Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1900); Otto Michel, *Paulus und seine Bibel*, *BFTh.* 2, 18 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1929); Joseph Bonsirven, *Exegese rabbinique et exegese paulinienne* (Paris: Beauchesne et ses fils, 1939); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957); and W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1980). Note should also be taken of Anthony T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 136-224; and Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 104-32.

This passage is a seminal example of how Paul and later interpreters of the Old Testament could and did draw upon the Scriptures in an effort to reform the lives of church members. Before turning to an explication of it, it is first necessary to consider something of the historical milieu which the Epistle of 1 Corinthians presents to us and to note the function of 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 in its immediate literary context as well as its function in the letter as a whole.²

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13 AND THE IMMEDIATE LITERARY CONTEXT

First Corinthians 8:1—11:1 comprises the immediate literary context for 10:1-13. There is an essential unity and integrity with regard to these chapters.³ The basic structure to these chapters is as follows. First Corinthians 8:1-13 carries a response to the Corinthians' questions regarding an insistence upon eating food sacrificed to idols in a pagan cultic setting. In 1 Corinthians 9:1-23, Paul defends his own behavior with regard to eating food sacrificed to idols and upholds himself as an example of one who forfeits "rights" for the sake of the gospel. At 1 Corinthians 9:24—10:22, Paul sets forth his own argument, principally from Scripture, against the eating of food in the presence of a pagan "god" and concludes this argument with a prohibition and trifold application. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1, the apostle discusses personal freedom, conscience, and the consumption of food sacrificed to idols in non-cultic settings. The view that 1 Corinthians 10:1-10/11 represents a reworking or adaptation of a previously constructed Jewish or Christian scribal discourse, homily, or midrash as proposed by Hans Conzelmann, Wayne A. Meeks, and others is not only unnecessary, but also, as will be shown below, fails to penetrate the richness and appositeness of Paul's use of Scripture in the light of the Corinthian situation.⁴

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13 IN THE LIGHT OF THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH SITUATION

Paul himself seems to have been the source of a polarity among some in the Corinthian church who wished to distance themselves "spiritually," theologically, and ethically from him. (See especially 1 Corinthians 4:3-8, 14-16; 9:1-27; 14:37, 38.) Nils A. Dahl has proposed that it was the dispatching of the delegation comprised of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, presumably carrying a letter seeking the apostle's opinion on a number of matters, which fomented the quarrelling of which Paul learned orally from Chloe's people. Dahl suggests that some in the Corinthian church had objected to the idea of seeking Paul's advice.⁵ Another contributing factor

to the tensions within the Corinthian church was the apparent disparity of social status. Though, no doubt, an undercurrent present throughout the Epistle, this factor seems especially prominent in the discussions of idol food (1 Corinthians 8:1—11:1) and of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).⁶

It seems best to understand 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 to be referring to the eating of food sacrificed to idols in a cultic setting and to take 1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1 to refer to its consumption by Christians at table in their own homes or in pagan homes.⁷ It is just possible that 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 concerns itself with an individual Christian's participation in the eating of idol food at a pagan cultic site and the horizontal implications of so doing with regard to one's Christian brother of lesser sophistication, while 10:1-22 treats such eating at pagan cultic sites by a Christian gathering—the church assembled—with special emphasis on the vertical ramifications, that is, "Who is Lord of the feast?"⁸

Apparently in the Corinthian church, misunderstandings or at least faulty implications drawn from the experience of baptism, the reception of the *charismata*, and the fellowship of the Lord's Supper were also contributing factors in the strife, jealousy, and sectarianism of various kinds.⁹ All these phenomena signified the blessings of the end-time anticipated in the now. Despite or perhaps because of the reception of divine blessings and spiritual provisions and gifts, there existed among some in the Corinthian church a pervasively narcissistic mindset which produced arrogance, insensitivity, a false sense of security and invincibility, and a "hierarchy" of spiritual distinctions (1 Corinthians 1—4; 9:11; 10:3, 4; 11:17—14:40; 15:44-46).¹⁰ Near to the heart of the Corinthians' self-assessment as sophisticated, mature, and self-sufficient was an aberrant eschatology which could be characterized as "over-realized" (1 Corinthians 4:8-21; 15:12-58).¹¹

The fundamentally erroneous mindset and accompanying misapprehended ecclesiology and eschatology to which Paul addresses himself at the outset of the Epistle (chaps. 1—4) had profound impact upon the Corinthian church's failing spiritual health and languishing relationships—both in their vertical and horizontal dimensions. All these anomalies are met

with again in Paul's argumentation against and prohibition of attendance at pagan cult meals in 1 Corinthians 8:1—10:22. Some in the church are sure in their "knowledge" (8:1-6), and they are keen on clinging to and flaunting their "freedom" (8:9). They are confident that they are "standing firm," but in actuality they are close to falling away and perishing (10:12). Their experience of the Spirit and sharing in the blessings of baptism and the Lord's Supper have engendered in them a sense of eschatological fulfillment and spiritual invincibility. This mindset could have been encouraged among them by some of their own "wise ones," "scholars," and "philosophers" who fancied themselves able interpreters of Scripture (1 Corinthians 1:20; 4:6-21).¹²

As Paul now takes up his own argument against sharing in pagan cult meals (1 Corinthians 9:24—10:22), he is wanting the Corinthians who are insisting on this "right" to realize that their knowledge, sophistication, and freedom have not rendered them eschatologically fulfilled or ecclesiologically correct.¹³ There is yet a race for which to train and in which to run. There is yet an eschatological prize to win (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). The Corinthian Christian community is endangered by the reckless behavior of some who are exercising their "knowledge" and "rights." The issue at stake as far as Paul is concerned is the imminent danger of idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14) vis-a-vis the brother "for whom Christ died" who does not "have knowledge" regarding idols (1 Corinthians 8:7-13) and vis-a-vis the exclusivity of allegiance implicit in fellowship at the Lord's table (1 Corinthians 10:14-22).

There is a close unity of thought and argumentation presented in 1 Corinthians 9:24—10:22 which is not always recognized. However, when observed, it leaves the impression that at this juncture Paul enlarges his concern beyond the individual Corinthian's participation in the eating of idol food with its horizontal implications toward the brother "for whom Christ died" who does not "have knowledge" (1 Corinthians 8:1-13). Now, the apostle rivets his focus as well upon church gatherings in such pagan cultic settings, where in rooms adjoining the pagan altar, Christians might meet to eat idol food and in the same context share in the Lord's Supper. The vertical

ramifications of such behavior are to Paul tantamount to idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14), for it brings into sharp resolution the question: "Who is Lord of the feast?"¹⁴ The corporate setting of these verses embraces both the vertical and the horizontal aspects of church life. Verse 16 displays both, while giving the vertical relationship priority and thus uniquely depicts the fellowship of the cup before that of the bread.¹⁵

In as powerful a manner as possible, Paul turns the Corinthians' attention to Scripture—specifically to the Exodus and wilderness traditions—to drive home with authority the theological, ecclesiological, and eschatological dangers of their behavior. The apostle wishes to make clear that God's people are always a pilgrim people enroute toward eschatological fulfillment, daily in need of guidance, provision, and providence from the Lord, and ever in danger of apostasy, forfeiture of the promise, and death (1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:6-10). Paul is determined to shake some in the Corinthian church from their superficial and naive conceptions of Christian knowledge, freedom, and spiritual privilege—divorced as their conceptions seem to be from the issues of ethical vigilance, ecclesiological responsibilities, and sensitivity to the exclusivity of allegiance which derives from fellowship at the Lord's table.

THE STRUCTURE AND EXPOSITION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

This passage is tied syntactically to what precedes (*gar*, v. 1) and to what follows (note the strong inferential conjunction, *dioper*, in 10:14). As will be shown below, verses 1 through 22 must be studied together. Further, this entire block of text sets the stage in a material way for the discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. There is much in the language, thought, and motif of verses 1 through 22 which is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32 and Psalms 78 and 106 (LXX 77 and 105). Each of these passages is itself a midrash of sorts on the events of the Exodus and the wilderness recorded in Exodus and Numbers.¹⁶ In verses 1 through 22, these biblical traditions are once more taken up, interpreted, and pressed into service, in midrashic style.

The stage is set in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 for Paul's midrash or "actualization" of the Old Testament traditions in a contemporary setting in verses 1 through 13 by the drawing of contrast between the "all" who compete in the race and the "one" who receives the prize. In verses 1 through 4, a similar contrast is presented between "all the fathers" who were participants in the blessings of liberation, salvation, and providence and the implicitly stated very few (two, in fact) whose bodies escaped destruction in the desert. Not only is there present here a contrast between the "all" and the implicit "few" (vv. 1-5), but also there exists the strikingly explicit contrast between the "all" (six times in vv. 1-5) and the "some" (four times in vv. 7-10). The reckless and rash behavior of "some" of the ancients in the days of the wilderness led ultimately to the forfeiture of the eschatological prize by virtually "all."

Furthermore, to a church which is predominantly Gentile, Paul insists that these ancients were "our fathers." Paul, of course, perceives and teaches a theological and historical continuity of the people of God, then and now.¹⁷ This is true because the God who was active in the Exodus and the wilderness trek with Canaan in view is now seeking to warn and thereby save and sustain his people who have had the ultimate eschatological prize placed before them. For Paul, as well as for the primitive church, the historical and spiritual reality of the incarnate suffering and dying Jesus of Nazareth, the resurrected Christ, and (especially as regards Saul of Tarsus) the experience of the exalted Lord became the historical and spiritual given which informs every other historical revelation and spiritual truth, past, present, and future. In Paul's thought, all God-superintended history and revelation have their goal, purpose, and fulfillment in Christ. He is the subject and object of all of Scripture. Christ is at once the source of life and the destiny of the people of God (Romans 1:1, 2; 3:21; 4:23, 24; 15:3-8; 16:25-27; 2 Corinthians 1:20; 3:14-17; 6:2).¹⁸

All that has occurred to the people of God in the past may now be seen and utilized in the eyes and at the hands of New Testament apostles, prophets, and evangelists as potential adumbration of the experience of the people of God in the

Messianic age "upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (v. 11). This is especially true of the traditions of the Exodus and the wilderness which long prior had themselves been taken up and "actualized" or made contemporary, chiefly by Isaiah (see Isaiah 35; 40—55), in order to speak a message of comfort, hope, and fulfillment to the remnant people of God in exile. All that was recorded in Scripture of the experience of the ancient people of God was written with a view toward instructing the end-time church of the Messiah to encourage them in their pilgrimage (Romans 15:4). This is the essential meaning of Paul's statements in our text at verses 6 and 11. Here *tupoi* and *tupikos* are best understood with the meaning "warning examples." They are not to be rendered "type" and "typologically" as strictly hermeneutical terms having the sense of "advance presentation."¹⁹ If one is to insist on the use of the term "typological" in these passages, it seems best to understand this in the sense of analogy or "similar situation" typology.²⁰

Paul is fraught with concern that the catastrophic wrath of the covenant God which had decimated the one-time people of God would now once more be unleashed in the midst of the Corinthian church. This concern is fully justified in his mind because he has observed in the Corinthian Christians attitudes and actions which parallel those of ancient Israel in the wilderness. All their fathers received the benefits of divine deliverance and were all brought into covenant relationship with God (vv. 1, 2). The divine providence was displayed in the provisions of food and drink (vv. 3, 4a). All of this, of course, reflects the Corinthian situation as well, as mentioned above. Paul points out in verse 4b that the fathers were sustained in the wilderness and that the food and drink are termed "spiritual" because all life-sustaining nourishment in the profoundest sense for the people of God came and comes from Christ. In the fathers' case, Christ was (*en*) the "spiritually accompanying rock." In the case of the Corinthian church, Christ is the Lord of all life whom they are in danger of provoking (1 Corinthians 10:22). The pilgrim people of God must ever deal with the "real presence" of Christ.²¹ For the rabbinic tradition of the well or stream in the shape of a rock which

followed the Israelite wanderers, one should consult Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*.²² If Ellis is correct that in the first century this legend had not developed beyond the motif of the following stream of water, then there is little if any contact here by Paul with this rabbinic tradition.²³ It is more likely that Paul has constructed his own midrash on Old Testament texts such as Deuteronomy 32:13 and Psalms 78 (77) and 106 (105) where the "Lord" (*kurios*) is depicted as providing food and drink for the Israelites and where, in the Massoretic text, God/the Lord is identified with the rock (Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 31, 37; Psalm 78:35).²⁴

Beginning with verse 6b, Paul introduces a series of Old Testament allusions to the fate of the wilderness Israelites with most of whom "God was not pleased" (v. 5). In each instance, the text or texts alluded to depict what happened to the Israelite fathers when "some" of them desired or lusted after or craved evil (v. 6b). This chain of allusions to the wilderness experience presented in rabbinic style is unified thematically by the dissatisfaction of the ancient fathers with the presence or absence of food and/or drink in the wilderness.²⁵ In each episode, there is an implicit if not outright rejection of the Lord (*kurios*) by "some" who experience the mortal consequences of the folly of their protest and deviant behavior.

The texts alluded to are: (1) Numbers 11:4-35 (v. 6b); (2) Exodus 32:6 which with its explicit quotation at verse 7 directs the reader into the heart of the pericope of the golden calf; (3) Numbers 25:1-9 (v. 8), which along with Exodus 32:6 sets forth an explicitly idolatrous situation precipitated by eating in the presence of a pagan "god"; (4) Numbers 21:4-9 and apparently also Exodus 17:1-7 (v. 9, where the preferred reading would appear to be *Christon*);²⁶ and (5) Numbers 14:1-38 (v. 10). These Old Testament wilderness examples of "craving [*hepithumeo*] other food," which resulted in explicit idolatry in two instances and ensuing death in each episode, were carefully selected by the apostle because of their direct bearing upon the Corinthian "idol meat" problem.²⁷ Apparently, "some" in the Corinthian church are jeopardizing "all," includ-

ing themselves, though they are denying it, by creating for the church gathering an ambiguous and compromising context in which the Lord's Supper is observed (1 Corinthians 10:16-21).²⁸ In so doing, they are "testing Christ" just as "some" of the ancients did (v. 9), and thus they are giving every appearance of provoking the Lord (*kurios*) to jealousy (1 Corinthians 10:21). Can it be that the "some" are going to persist in what amounts to a direct confrontation with Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:22; 11:20).

No amount of participation in the blessings of the end-time renders one impervious to the theological, ecclesiological, and ethical demands of the Christian pilgrimage in their vertical and horizontal dimensions. These demands are epitomized in a proper observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). There are "some" at Corinth who indeed believe that they stand (*hestanai*) secure and mature as they attempt to "drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons" and "share in the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21). However, Paul has directed their attention to the consequences of their actions (v. 7). Their fathers sat in the presence of a pagan "god" to feast, and stood (*hanestesan*) only to fall beyond reprieve (Exodus 32:6).²⁹ The Corinthians are not being enticed to sin by the Lord (*peirasthenai*, v. 13). They themselves are testing him (*hekpeiradzomen*, v. 9). The perilous nature of their condition is of completely human origin—it is of themselves! (*hanthropinos*, v. 13). God will and can provide the only way of escape from their weak, sick, and even dead condition (1 Corinthians 11:30)—"Flee from idolatry!" (1 Corinthians 10:14).³⁰

CONCLUSION

What can be distilled from the employment of the Scriptures in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 which informs us regarding the role of the Old Testament today? It is true for Paul that "Christ is the end [*telos*] of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4), and that God "cancelled the written code, with its regulation [*cheirographon tois dogmasin*] that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he

took it away, nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). These texts, unfortunately, have been misinterpreted so as to infer that what the Christian world designates as the Old Testament is now diminished in its relevance and authority. This is in no way the case. Circumcision and ritual and cultic regulations have indeed been eclipsed by the work of God in Christ. The result is that God is at work in the cosmos through the gospel creating one new man. Christ himself is our peace, and there is no longer a dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14, 15).

The same apostle Paul wrote the following to Timothy:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, we have observed Paul working out in a practical and powerful manner the truth of this confession. Paul understood that there was an historical and theological continuity for the people of God chosen by his grace through all the ages. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ was the God who called Abraham out of Ur and Israel out of Egypt. He arrived at this conclusion through his experience of Christ as the resurrected and exalted Lord. Once Paul understood that Christ was indeed the destiny (*telos*) of the law, that is, that he was and is the ultimate historical and theological truth which informs all other historical contexts and fulfills all other revelation, then the Scriptures became luminous for him. The veil was taken away for him in Christ: "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18).

NOTES

¹F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), 34-35.

²For the most comprehensive discussion of these issues up to 1965, note John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965; reprint, Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983).

³Hurd, *Origin*, 128-42; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 441-42; and Wendell Lee Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10*, SBL Dissertation Series 68 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 268-75.

⁴Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1975), 165; Wayne A. Meeks, "'And Rose Up to Play': Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22," *JSNT* 16 (1982): 64-78. See Fee, *First Epistle*, 442, n. 2 who rightly asks why Paul could not have composed such a "midrash" ad hoc.

⁵Nils A. Dahl, "Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21," in *Christian History of Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*, ed. W. R. Farmer, F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 321-25.

⁶See on social stratification and its bearing on social and theological tensions in the Christian community at Corinth, Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1982), 69-143; and Abraham J. Malherbe's appreciative assessment, critique, and qualification of Theissen's work, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1983), 60-91, 119-21.

⁷Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121-22; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 258-261; and Fee, *First Epistle*, 441, 476-78.

⁸This is the view cogently argued by Charles Perrot, "Les exemples du désert (I Cor. 10:6-11)," *NTS* 29 (1983): 437-52, who urges that the study of 10:1-22 must bear in mind the material of 11:17-34.

⁹Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 117-20.

¹⁰Cf. Richard A. Horsley, "Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status Among the Corinthians," *HTR* 69 (July-Oct. 1976), 269-88.

¹¹Dahl, "Paul," 332.

¹²*Ibid.*, 328-33; Fee, *First Epistle*, 443; cf. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1931), 260.

¹³For the social importance of cult meals and private and fraternal banquets held under the aegis of a patron deity at the temple *temenos* or environs in the Hellenistic world, see Willis, *Idol Meat*, 7-64.

¹⁴For this interpretation of the setting of 10:1-22, see Perrot, "Les exemples," 446-48, n. 39 and the literature cited there for Corinthian archaeological evidence in support of this possibility.

¹⁵Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 467-70.

¹⁶See Jacob Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1987), 7-30.

¹⁷Bruce, *New Testament Development*, 51-67.

¹⁸Cf. E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), 147-49.

¹⁹This appears to be correct when judged from the context of 10:1-13, notwithstanding Leonhard Goppelt, "tupos," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), 8:251-52 and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. revised by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 829-30.

²⁰R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959), 79.

²¹See Anthony T. Hanson, *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965), 7, 13.

²²Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München, Germany: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1926), 3:406-8.

²³Ellis, *Paul's Use*, 67-68.

²⁴Bruce, *New Testament Development*, 35-36; cf. Andrew J. Bandstra, "Interpretation in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11," *CTJ* 6 (1971): 9-14.

²⁵In the discussion which follows, the interpretation of these Old Testament allusions by Perrot, "Les exemples," 437-43 is being utilized in its general outline.

²⁶Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the UBS*, 3d ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 560; Carroll D. Osburn, "The Text of 1 Corinthians 10:9," in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis; Essays in Honor of Bruce Metzger*, eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 201-12.

²⁷Fee, *First Epistle*, 453-58.

²⁸See Perrot, "exemples," 444-49.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 441.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 445.

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FOR CONSCIENCE' SAKE (1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1)

MIKE SUITER

Our appreciation and understanding of Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1 cannot be complete without reading the context in verses 14 through 21.

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (NASV).¹

Paul was a soul-conscious man. Everything he did and every word he wrote or spoke was done with his awareness of man's need for salvation. The gospel was his motivation (1 Corinthians 9:23). His awareness of the Christian's struggle for survival in a pagan world enhanced all his writings as the Holy Spirit directed him in composing his Epistles. Paul's writings are truly the operations manual for the soul, the rule book for life eternal, the road map to heaven.

Since Christians are often ignorant of the world's many snares, it was only natural for Paul to turn his attention to any place they could stumble or cause others to find reason to

discredit the Christian way. The marketplace ("shambles," KJV) of Corinth was the central gathering place of the people, much like our coffee shops and shopping centers are today.

At the head of the Lechaëum Road, leading directly to the center of Corinth, stood the Agora, or marketplace, surrounded by shops and the Basilica,² where the Romans held court and the general public could conduct meetings. The Agora was the civic center in which people gathered for recreation (Matthew 11:16, 17), where the unemployed loafed (Matthew 20:3, 6), and where the proud paraded (Mark 12:38; Luke 11:43). It was a courtroom (Acts 16:19) and also a forum (Acts 17:17). From a corner shop, the market developed into a great urban multi-purpose center.³ In verse 25, Paul refers to the "meat market." J. W. McGarvey observes, "Meat sold in the public market might be bought and used by the Christian without stopping to make investigation or to consult his conscience, for when thus sold it was wholly disassociated from the rites of idolatrous sacrifice, and one so using it could not be suspected of doing so as an act of worship. Moreover, all meat was pure, since it had come from the Lord. Being part of the furniture of the earth, it was to be eaten without scruple—Romans 14:14, 20; I Timothy 4:4, 5; Acts 10:15."⁴

Adam Clarke, whose commentaries are replete with references to extra-biblical history, observed that, in Paul's day, a tremendous amount of controversy surrounded the question of eating meat once offered in heathen sacrifices. The tension at Corinth was between Jewish converts and Gentile (heathen) converts and their opposing attitudes toward eating things sacrificed to idols. To the Jewish converts it was an abomination; to the Gentile Christians, convinced and convicted that idols were nothing, there was no sin in eating such meat.⁵

Paul's desire was to see harmony in the Corinthian church, an apparent cross-cultural melting pot of Jews and Gentiles, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the spiritual giants and the milk-hungry babes. In our text, Paul presents three points of view, three perspectives of the problem: (1) his personal opinion (10:23-25); (2) the unbeliever's (10:26-30); and (3) Christ's attitude (10:31-11:1).

PAUL'S OPINION (1 Corinthians 10:23-25)

Paul's observation that "all things are lawful" (i.e., "permissible") shows his understanding and appreciation of the struggle in the Corinthian church. Key questions must be asked concerning this or any other problem which might arise within a congregation of such variation. Is it profitable for all? Does it edify (v. 23)? Does it seek the good of my neighbors (v. 24)?

Clarke further observed,

One part of the sacrifice was consumed on the altar of the idol; a second part was dressed and eaten by the sacrificer; and a third belonged to the priest and was often sold in the shambles. . . . as to the third share, the apostle leaves them at liberty either to eat of it or forbear; except that, by eating, their weak brethren should be offended; in that case, though the thing was lawful, it was their duty to abstain.⁶

The inspired Paul summed up his opinion this way: "Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience' sake" (v. 25). With reference to his ministry and apostleship, he wrote, "But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Corinthians 4:2).

THE UNBELIEVER'S VIEWPOINT (1 Corinthians 10:26-30)

Taking the unbeliever's point of view into consideration, Paul stated, "If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake" (v. 27) or, literally, you can eat with a clear conscience (i.e., "our own"). He then made an exception to this rule: "Do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake" (v. 28), and he elaborated in verse 29: "I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's;

for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?"

In verse 30, Paul made it clear that, with God's blessing as he gave thanks, he was not sinning if he partook of meat sacrificed to idols: "If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?"

THE CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDE

(1 Corinthians 10:1—11:1)

Next Paul cut to the heart of the matter, the importance of possessing a Christ-like attitude in all things:

Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ (10:31—11:1).

The violation of conscience in this passage is a critical issue because it is a critical issue in any generation. It goes much deeper than just the eating of meat. If I am trying to convert a Jew to Christianity, I will not invite him to my home and serve ham, for this would offend his conscience. If I am trying to convert a hunter, I will not speak scornfully about hunting. The summation of Paul's plea is in verse 31: *aproskopoï*.⁷ "Give none offence" (KJV); "Give no offence" (NAS); "Do not cause anyone to stumble" (NIV); "Give no occasion of stumbling" (ASV); "Something which leads others into error or sin."⁸

Paul the preacher revealed things to seek in this beautiful text on soul-seeking and personal spiritual growth. We are to seek the good of others (vv. 23, 24), the goal of selflessness (vv. 25-30), and the glory of God (10:31—11:1).

He urged the Corinthians and all Christians to develop self-awareness of the image we project in the pagan world surrounding us. We are forced to develop the proper attitude toward personal freedom, weighed in the balance with the needs of the lost, so that we will not be found wanting.

We are temporary guests on this earth. We must sojourn

here carefully. "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17; NKJV).

The soul-conscious Christian cannot afford to blend in with the pagan world. There must be an obvious difference! "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being" (1 Corinthians 10:24; NKJV). The saint who spends his time in being contentious for the faith has no time or energy left for leading souls to Christ. We can have the last word in an argument—and be in the right—but lose a soul! Tact is the key! "But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless" (Titus 3:9). The brother who holds himself aloof from the ungodly because he is repulsed by the sinner needs to take a closer look at the meaning and context surrounding the word "conscience." You will never offend a sinner by being courteous and respectful. You can easily alienate him by offending his conscience with a negative attitude on your part.

Putting Christ first, sinners second, and yourself last will keep you busy in the Lord's service. All that the pagans revere, "... the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life" (1 John 2:16), must be kept in check in the Christian's life as you hold yourself up as an example to the ungodly.

The beliefs and the consciences of others must always be considered in your influence on their conversion. Romans 14:12-21 is an excellent commentary of our study and an excellent way to bring this study to a close:

So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do

not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. Do not tear down the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are clean, but they are evil for the man who eats and gives offense. It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles.

The marketplace is the Christian's proving ground, battlefield, and first line of defense in the pagan world. Let us never underestimate its potential as a gold mine of lost souls.

NOTES

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quoted comes from the NASV.

²Charles F. Pfeiffer, ed., *The Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1976), 173.

³Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 511.

⁴J. W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans*, The Standard Bible Commentary (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, n.d.), 106.

⁵Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible With a Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 6, *Romans to Revelation* (New York: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 281-82.

⁶*Ibid.*, 247-48.

⁷*Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), 505.

⁸W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), 3:129.

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CULTURE OR BINDING PRINCIPLE— A STUDY OF HEAD COVERINGS, HAIRSTYLES, ETC.

(1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

RICHARD E. OSTER, JR.

AN INTRODUCTION

False Assumptions

While it is always true that interpreters of the Scriptures bring with them certain assumptions and presuppositions, *few passages have been more controlled by assumptions than the text of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16*. However, one can hardly complain about a neglect of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in recent years. Because of the social concerns that lie behind much of contemporary exegesis and theology, this section of 1 Corinthians has been a rich vein from which to quarry resources for current social and theological discussions. While it should be acknowledged that this text is indeed a rich resource for discussion of women's issues in the church today, some of the previous interpretations have not been based upon adequate homework in the area of general assumptions about this section of verses.

This first topic that must be broached is found in our title. The issue is namely the contrast between the two ideas of "Culture" and "Binding Principle." One possible misunderstanding which someone might take from our title is that somehow the labeling of a biblical practice or teaching as "cultural" means that it is not a "binding principle" or "binding practice." A possible problem with this approach is that if used unreflectively it might leave one with the impression that Paul and the others virtually used asterisks in the Greek manuscripts to denote teachings and practices which were to be understood as "only cultural." This, of course, was not the case. When we label something as "cultural," it is crucial that we realize that this label is our own and cannot be supported

by a "thus saith the Lord." While virtually every church and theologian has used the term "cultural" to dismiss the binding nature of biblical material, the use of a label such as "cultural" often reflects one's own cultural values and hermeneutic, and does not necessarily reflect a straightforward reading of the Scripture.

From one perspective, everything in the Scriptures reflects culture. Whether it be holy kisses, water immersions, or crucifixions, these doctrines and practices were expressed in and through various cultures and the languages of various cultures. As such, it is inappropriate to pit "cultural" against "binding" or "eternal," since some of the most fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures have "cultural dimensions." The point of this is neither to say that nothing in the New Testament Scriptures is permanent nor to say that everything in the New Testament Scriptures is permanent. Rather, my point is that the most appropriate way to distinguish between what is binding and what is not binding for today from the New Testament is not on the basis of a dichotomy between truth and culture. Since all biblical truth comes clothed in the garb of its culture, one would be better off, it seems, to realize that what we might identify as culture may, in fact, still be binding in the modern world.

Is there, then, any merit to studying 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in its cultural context? Absolutely! In the first instance, since language is itself a phenomenon of culture, one ought to familiarize himself with the philological issues involved in the text and translation of this passage. Sometimes interpreters have made important decisions in the interpretation of this passage based upon an inadequately informed view about the philological and linguistic context of these verses. Second, study of the cultural context of this section should provide insight into questions such as, "When and why did men wear head coverings?"; "When and why did women wear head coverings?"; "Why does Paul argue on the basis of nature and shame?"; and "What constitutes shame in ancient Corinth?" A study of the cultural matrix at Corinth helps one understand how Paul's advice would have been received and interpreted by his readers at Corinth. That is, would Paul's commandments have

seemed to be in step with much of their culture, part of their culture, or none of their culture? As one addresses these and other similar questions, evidence begins to surface which, in my judgment, provides raw materials for a more thoughtful decision about the "binding" or "non-binding" consequences of these ancient instructions for the contemporary church at the threshold of the twenty-first century.

*A common idea that has served as a presupposition to many exegetes of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is that the passage is filled with hypothetical allusions. An extreme example is found in a work of the evangelical author Susan T. Foh who suggests that "any wrongs in verses 3-16 could be hypothetical. The possibility that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 was not intended to correct an actual wrong must be noted. . . . In addition, the cultural explanation for coverings may be weakened since the passage would not be viewed as righting a specific Corinthian practice."*¹

Normally, however, scholars find two prominent hypothetical references in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. The first of these is Paul's correction of male practices and misunderstandings. Specifically, many well-known commentators do not think that Paul was trying to correct any inappropriate behavior among the male believers at Corinth, even though an explicit reference to a problem with men wearing veils is found in 1 Corinthians 11:4. The following are three examples of what seems to be a denial of the plain meaning of the text.

There is no reason for supposing that men at Corinth had been making this mistake in the congregation. The conduct which would be improper for men is mentioned in order to give point to the censure on women, who in this matter had been acting as men.²

The thing to be corrected was women appearing in public assemblies unveiled. . . . Men are mentioned only for the sake of illustrating the principle.³

It is improbable that Christian men were actually veiling their heads in Corinth; the reference to their (hypothetically) doing so is necessary to complete the argument.⁴

Notwithstanding the reputation and erudition of the above mentioned scholars, I find it difficult to ignore the clear evidence from Paul himself when he arranges in parallel structure his directives both toward men and women in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

- 11:4 Every man
- 11:7 A man
- 11:14 A man
- 11:5 Every woman
- 11:10 A woman
- 11:15 A woman

I suspect that the tendency to ignore Paul's correction of the men at Corinth in this text while at the same time highlighting Paul's correction of the women has arisen from centuries of male interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

A second component of the "hypothetical approach" to Paul's instruction that some interpreters have brought to the text is that the reference to praying and prophesying (v. 5) is hypothetical. This attempt to make the praying and prophesying by women hypothetical is usually arrived at through the back door of 1 Corinthians 14:35. Unlike the first hypothetical assumption, this is an effort, too facile at times, to harmonize two teachings by basically eliminating one of them. A general weakness of this particular type of harmonization is that one often selects which text to eliminate based upon one's previous doctrinal convictions. While the general goal of harmonization of different verses within 1 Corinthians is appropriate, this form of surgery is more radical than necessary to solve the problem.

Another effort to make parts of the situation in verses 4 and 5 hypothetical is found in an important article on the topic by J. W. Roberts, who, until his death, was Professor of Greek and New Testament at Abilene Christian College.⁵ Regarding the Greek of verse 4 in the apostle's discussion of the male practice, Roberts wrote,

The participles "praying" and "prophesying" express circumstantial ideas, probably conditional in sense, equal-

ling "if he prays or prophesies." These participles would then equal potential hypotheses, *ean* with the subjunctive. Paul means that if a man *should* do these things with a veil on (not that any had done so),⁶

While this argument is cogent to some, its Achilles' heel is that the decision to make the participles of verses 4 and 5 equal to "*ean* with the subjunctive" is somewhat tendentious.

Another misunderstanding often brought to this text regards the notion that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 was intended to serve as a general dress code for Christian women. This view typically leaves the impression that these verses belong to the genre of Christian etiquette or that Paul was a first-century prototype of "Miss Manners." This approach often argues from analogies about how prostitutes, wild women, and devotees of the ancient wine god acted and dressed in classical times. Paul's concern, the argument goes, was that he did not want Christian women to be falsely associated with these other types of women. While Paul would surely not have wanted Christian women to dress inappropriately, there is no indication in the text (unlike 1 Timothy 2:8-10) that this was his concern in this passage. In fact, the theological foundation that he gives in 1 Corinthians 11:3 for his subsequent admonitions in verses 4 through 16 has nothing to do with the idea of "Christian influence," of sexual immorality, of being a stumbling block, or of looking like a female devotee of a pagan deity.

Closely related to this dress code misconception is another which asserts that Paul was speaking about a devotional head covering for church services.⁷ Stemming from this belief is the practice of women wearing hats (of various kinds) or head scarves into church buildings and worship services. This practice is usually found only among older women or as an idiosyncratic practice of smaller congregations, at least in churches of Christ.

Both of these attempts to apply Paul's teaching to either everyday life or to church attendance fall short of Paul's specific instructions in one important regard. Paul's instructions are explicit about the occasion in which the Christian men *are not to wear head veils* and in which Christian women *are to*

wear head veils. The opportunity to obey the apostle's instruction, while admittedly in a worship setting, was not open to everyone in attendance at worship, nor did Paul's injunctions apply to each and every phase of the worship service. Specifically, Paul states that it is during the act of *praying* and/or during the act of *prophesying* that men should not be veiled and women should be veiled. Moreover, the necessity of women wearing a head veil is not mentioned in regard to the time of someone else's prayer or prophecy. Rather, the head covering is only required for a woman when *she herself* is praying or prophesying. A man is told to be uncovered only when *he himself* is praying or prophesying.

A final presupposition is one which argues that since Paul is himself Jewish and that since Acts 18 mentions the origins of the Corinthian church in the synagogue, one ought to presuppose a Jewish cultural context for the issues mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. While we cannot know the ethnic and cultural background of every Corinthian Christian, we can, I believe, reconstruct the religious and ethnic background of the Corinthian problems which Paul addressed in 1 Corinthians. With increased conviction, scholars are recognizing that the force of the evidence argues for a pagan background to most of the Corinthian problems. First, there is the apostle's reference to the Corinthians' previous lifestyles (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Terms such as idolaters, sexual perverts, and revelers hardly bring to mind Diaspora Jews. Equally telling in favor of a prominent Gentile audience converted from paganism is the number of extended discussions in the letter of 1 Corinthians which are better understood against a pagan background. This would include, for example, the issue of incest (1 Corinthians 5:1-8); the matter of arguing for prostitution from an antinomian perspective (1 Corinthians 6:9-20); the acknowledgment of polytheism among the converts (1 Corinthians 8:7) in the context of meals in pagan temples (1 Corinthians 8:10); the disorders at the Christians' communal meal (1 Corinthians 11:17-34); the reference to former idol worship in the introduction to the treatment of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40); and the denial of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). Accordingly, as Gordon Fee correctly observed about 1 Corin-

thians, "very little in the letter suggests a Jewish background."⁸ This means, consequently, that irrespective of what one thinks of Paul's Jewishness, one must still thoroughly investigate the world of the pagan converts if one wishes to understand the mores and religious practices which they brought with them into the Christian churches.

Accordingly, one must approach 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 with a mind open to the real possibility that this issue of head covering arose from a pagan matrix rather than from a Jewish one. Paganism, of course, was not monolithic. Since Corinth was a culturally heterogeneous urban center, one must be prepared to look into disparate cultural backgrounds. Even though Corinth was geographically located in Greece, it must not be forgotten that it was founded in 44 B.C., shortly before the assassination of Julius Caesar, as a Roman colony. Since the issue of the Roman character of Corinth will be dealt with later, it is enough to conclude that the head covering issue comes from a pagan rather than a Jewish background.

Matters of Greek

Man/Woman or Husband/Wife. The Greek term *gune* ("woman/wife") occurs sixteen times in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (11:3, 5, 6 [two times], 7, 8 [two times], 9 [two times], 10, 11 [two times], 12 [two times], 13, 15), while the Greek term *aner* ("man") occurs fourteen times (11:3 [two times], 4, 7 [two times], 8 [two times], 9 [two times], 11 [two times], 12 [two times], 14). The significance of these Greek words is evident when one runs through the text of verses 2 through 16 and tries to decide if Paul is speaking about the relationship between men and women in general or only between husbands and wives. Translations such as the KJV and the NIV translate the respective terms consistently throughout this section. The RSV (second edition) and NRSV (1990) are somewhat confusing because they translate *aner* consistently as "man" except in verse 3 where it reads "the head of a woman is her husband." I suspect that this decision was based in part on an attempt to reconcile it with the language of Ephesians 5:21ff. where the term *kephale* ("head"; 1 Corinthians 11:3) is used of the relationship between men and women in general. In addition,

when *aner* is employed in 1 Corinthians 14:35, it is usually translated by the term "husband" (KJV; NIV). The RSV's and NRSV's translation of *aner* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 as "husband" rather than "man" may have also been a concession to emerging feminist views which would have accepted the *kephale* ("head") designation for husband but not for men in general. Given the use of *gune* and *aner* in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and its subsequent use in Paul's recounting of the Genesis creation story (vv. 8, 9, 12), there can be little doubt that throughout the section Paul is discussing men and women in general and has no special interest in this context in discussing husbands and wives.

Head and Headship. The Greek word *kephale* which is rendered "head" plays an extremely important role in this section of 1 Corinthians. In fact, the word *kephale* occurs nine times in verses 2 through 16 (11:3 [three times], 4 [two times], 5 [two times], 7, 10), as many as in the remainder of the collection of Paul's writings. Scholars are still debating the meaning of this term and whether its meaning would be synonymous with the idea of "source" as in the English word "headwaters," or whether it means something like authority or ruler and implies subordination. Few, if any scholars, would suggest that it was synonymous with the pejorative idea of the word "boss." Since the term *kephale* is used to describe the relationship between God and Christ (v. 3), Paul hardly means it to be a term of derision or denigration. In other places where Paul used *kephale* for the relationship between husbands and wives, he makes it clear that this term is compatible with the idea of mutuality of submission between spouses (Ephesians 5:21ff.; cf. a mutuality of authority [*exousiazō*] in regard to conjugal sexuality, 1 Corinthians 7:4). This text, while explicitly referring to marriage, surely supplies some insight into the nature of a relationship defined in part by the term *kephale*.

A related interpretive issue in this context is the question. When does Paul use the term *kephale* in a literal sense to refer to the body part, and when does he use it in a metaphorical sense? Most would agree that the term "head" is used metaphorically in verse 3 and literally in verses 4, 7, and 10. The text whose meaning is disputed is verse 5. Some interpreters

believe that the phrase "dishonors her head" refers to a woman dishonoring her husband (head). While this imagery might fit nicely into Ephesians 5:21ff., this is improbable here since this section, as noted above, is not dealing with husbands and wives but with men and women in general. Accordingly, it seems more likely that based upon the context, verse 5 means that when a woman is praying or is prophesying without a veil on her (literal) head, she is dishonoring her (literal) head.

Given the fact that the immediate context of verses 2 through 16 is a liturgical setting, one must exercise caution in trying to apply the doctrine of *kephale* used here to contexts outside of worship. Nothing in the philology or use of *kephale* in these verses implies silence in the worship, nor is there a shred of exegetical evidence that Paul intended to instruct believers about the relationship between men and women in the work-a-day world of ancient Corinth. Finally, those wanting to focus on Pauline instructions about husbands, wives, and marriage relationships would do better to camp on Ephesians 5:21ff. and give wide berth to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

Head Coverings and Veils. Some exegetes have attempted to turn Paul's instruction on its head by arguing that Paul did *not* want the women to wear veils. In fact, some recent feminist scholars have argued that Paul *forbade* Christian women to wear head coverings. One argument for this erroneous position is that one particular Greek word for "veil," namely *kalumma*, is not used by Paul in this section. While that is true, what this school of interpretation has failed to deal with is that the Greek idiom which Paul uses in verse 4, *kata kephales echon*, is used in ancient Greek to describe individuals who were wearing head coverings.

Another argument that is sometimes employed is that Paul teaches that a woman's natural (God-given) hair serves as the covering, thereby negating the need for a cloth covering. This approach is based upon a questionable interpretation of verse 15 ("Her hair is given to her for a covering," RSV; "Long hair is given to her as a covering," NIV). A *prima facie* problem with the "hair in place of veil" interpretation is, "Why would Paul have argued at length for a veil, only to dismiss his own arguments by replacing the veil with hair?" Those who favor the

"hair in place of veil" exegesis also attempt to support it by reference to Paul's use of the Greek preposition *anti* in verse 15. Bauer's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* notes on verse 15 that this phrase means "hair as a covering" and not "hair as a replacement for the veil." Paul is not, it seems, arguing in this subsection that God has given women long hair so that they need not wear a veil when praying and prophesying. Rather, the apostle reasons that the Corinthians should consent to his position on the necessity of the veil, since even nature attests, by the relative length of male and female hair, the propriety of more covering on the head of a woman than on the head of a man (vv. 13-15).

Roman Corinth

A final introductory matter which must be dealt with before launching into the cursory exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is the matter of the culture of Roman Corinth. Until quite recently, New Testament scholars have been remiss in their attention to the presence of Roman culture in first-century Corinth. It would be hard to overestimate the significance of the fact that Paul's Corinth was a Roman colony (*Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthensis*). In this matter, we would do well to keep in mind that typically colonies accomplished several goals, not the least of which were the spread of Roman culture, religion, language, and political systems. As one ancient Latin author observed, Roman colonies

did not come into citizenship from without, nor grow from roots of their own but they are as it were transplanted from the State and have all the laws and institutions of the Roman people, not those of their own choice. This condition, although it is more exposed to control and less free, is nevertheless thought preferable and superior because of the greatness and majesty of the Roman people, of which those colonies seem to be miniatures, as it were, and in a way copies.⁹

This is not to suggest that Corinth was culturally monolithic. On the contrary, it possessed residents from Italy, Egypt, Asia Minor, other parts of Greece, and Palestine, and each of

its residents brought various parts of his or her culture and language. I would argue, however, that there was far more "Roman spirit" in Corinth than most interpreters of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 have assumed and more of this "Roman spirit" than in most Greek cities in Roman Achaia. While language is not the only barometer to the cultural climate of a region, it must be weighed among the evidence. In his important work on Corinthian inscriptions, J. H. Kent observed, "It will be noted that of the 103 texts that are prior to the reign of Hadrian, 101 are in Latin and only three are Greek, a virtual monopoly of the Latin language."¹⁰ Moreover, testimony from ancient Corinthian coins demonstrates that "Latin was the official language as late as A.D. 69."¹¹

This means then that the historian and interpreter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians must seriously engage the evidence for Roman as well as Greek culture in the Corinth of Paul's day. This will include ancient secular literature, ancient inscriptions, ancient coins, and ancient buildings and art work. It is no longer acceptable to dismiss the Roman and Latin evidence by merely referring to the fact that Paul wrote to the Corinthians in Greek. The same can be said of his letter to the Romans, and that letter was patently addressed to a city permeated with Roman culture. Once the significance of the Roman cultural heritage for Corinth is seen, then historical facts such as Roman mores regarding head coverings in their worship services become quite exciting for the student of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

We have now looked briefly at three levels of introductory matters. These have included the issues related to incorrect presuppositions which have at times been brought to the study of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. The second level of introductory matters focused on important Greek terms and phrases employed by Paul in this section. The final level dealt with the importance of the Roman cultural matrix as a possible background in which to place Paul's treatment of liturgical head coverings. This introduction will hopefully make our ensuing investigation of "Culture or Binding Principle—A Study of Head Coverings, Hairstyles, Etc." more profitable and, most importantly, more accurate than it otherwise would be.

RECONSTRUCTING THE SITUATION

The immediate context for this passage is 1 Corinthians 11:2-34. This section encompasses Paul's treatment of two issues, both of which occurred during Christian worship. The first issue relates to head covering during worship and is introduced by the words, "I commend you because. . . ." (v. 2) while the second issue relates to abuses at the eating of the Lord's Supper and is introduced by the contrasting words, "But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because. . . ." (v. 17). The broader context runs through 1 Corinthians 12-14 which also deals with abuses in Christian worship.

Let us observe three facts about 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. First, certain practices related to the human head evoked Paul's discussion in this section. Second, the word "head" occurs with unusual frequency in this section (nine times). Third, the theological statement of verse 3, which is universally acknowledged as providing the basis for Paul's argumentation in verses 4 through 16, is itself unusually dominated by the term "head." In light of these facts, it does not seem improbable that Paul formulates his argument backwards from the specific head problems to the theological statement in verse 3 and not the other way around. This method of analyzing the flow of Paul's reasoning and the reverse construction of his argument is not without precedent in the Pauline letters. For example, the reconstruction of Paul's flow of thought in Colossians is best understood when one first reads about the practical problems in Colossians 2:8-23 and then sees how Paul anticipates treating these problems with his Christological formulations in Colossians 1:15-20. A similar dynamic is at work in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. Paul first states his theology in verse 3, anticipating what words and categories he will need and knowing full well that if his doctrinal premise of verse 3 is granted, he can present a cogent defense of his own position.

This awareness of how Paul formulates his doctrinal statement sheds important light on the nature of his argument and how we should interpret it. For example, this awareness

means that one should recognize that Paul had not been carrying around the exact wording of verse 3 for years waiting to use it, but rather that the wording reflects a doctrinal statement formulated in response to a specific problem. This contingent nature of Paul's thoughts in verse 3 obviously does not diminish their divine authority (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37, 38). Nor does it mean that Paul had not thought about gender issues prior to this. He, of course, had thought about gender issues before and after 1 Corinthians 11 (e.g., 1 Corinthians 14), but he had never before addressed the *specific issues* of verses 2 through 16 nor used his terms in exactly the same way. The significance of this is that both one's interpretation and one's application of this section must take into consideration the specific components and limits of the issue Paul was addressing.

As one casts his net about in the ancient world to find precedent for the individual problems referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:4, 5, many possibilities present themselves. One of the frequent problems that beset studies on this topic is that scholars are not discriminating in their use of secular sources from antiquity. By this, I mean, certain writers do not recognize the significance of geography and chronology in employing ancient sources. For example, it should not be assumed that all people of antiquity were the same regardless of time and location. The so-called "ancient world" represented, in fact, many different languages, religions, mores, and cultures.

One would hope that later historians and archaeologists will not assume that everyone's beliefs and values in twentieth-century North America were the same. On any given day there can be considerable difference in the United States between the views of those in San Francisco, Atlanta, Boston, Memphis, and Miami, to mention only urban areas. When one adds views prevalent in smaller towns such as Searcy, Arkansas; Dime Box, Texas; Oshkosh, Wisconsin; Summerville, Georgia; etc., the diversity of American culture is only heightened.

In addition, as most school age children know, time makes a difference in cultural values, religious outlook, and societal

mores. What school age child does not know that pictures of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson reveal that a different style of dress and coiffure were in vogue in that century? Students of Restoration history who have seen pictures of James A. Harding and David Lipscomb know that beards were viewed differently in the era of those men than in the 1950s. In fact, in the period of 1950 to the present, these two notable patriarchs of the Restoration Movement would not be allowed to teach at some Christian universities or serve at the Lord's table in certain congregations without first shaving off their facial hair.

Paul's first explicit reference to problems with head coverings within our section occurs in verse 4 when he states that (some) men at Corinth are praying and/or prophesying with their heads covered. Unlike many studies done in the past, I take this statement at face value. Others have found this more difficult. Gordon Fee, for example, has written in this regard, "There is almost no evidence (paintings, reliefs, statuary, etc.) that men in any of the cultures (Greek, Roman, Jew) covered their heads. . . . In the final analysis, however, it is hypothetical whatever it was."¹² This view is unfortunate since it denies the evidence of a host of ancient documents, both literary and archaeological.

When a scholar of Professor Fee's stature is unfamiliar with the extant evidence, then we would do well to rehearse some of it at this point.¹³ The integration of ancient secular sources will not only contribute to a more accurate exegesis of the text of 1 Corinthians, but will also, I believe, supply important additional perspectives for the later hermeneutical task of asking whether, in our opinion, Paul's insights and instructions here are of a temporary or permanent nature.

Roman culture seems to provide the best solution to the question of the cultural origin of the covering of men and women during prophecy, prayer, and worship. At the outset it is worthwhile to remember that Roman mores were more focused upon "correct" clothing than were mores of either Jews or Greeks. The attire of Greeks was basically pragmatic, while the Romans used clothing to distinguish social rank (e.g., purple), age, occupation, sex, and liturgical events. The

issue of proper attire at Roman worship is not only an ancient phenomenon recognized by modern Roman historians to have existed, but also one commented upon by the ancients themselves. The Greek author Plutarch, for example, was puzzled as to why the Roman men wore a head covering when they worshiped.

While this custom appeared strange to the Greeks of antiquity, the Romans of the first and second centuries knew why they did it. They did it because the patriarchs of Roman religion and culture had always worshiped with their heads covered, and they themselves had always done it that way. It was, much like temple attendance and circumcision for Jewish Christians in the Jerusalem church (Acts 21), an ancestral law which was not to be jettisoned. Even when Romans worshiped Greek gods such as Asclepius, they would often incorporate this Roman liturgical law into the worship of the deities of other cultures.

This Roman religious tradition consisted of wearing a head, not facial, covering. It was denoted by the Latin phrase *capite velato* ("with the head covered") and was accomplished by pulling part of the toga over the back of the head and forward until it covered the ears. This liturgical dress code was pervasive throughout Roman civilization. It was employed by Roman rulers and city magistrates when they functioned in sacerdotal situations and officiated at sacrifices. The clergy of the various Roman religions also naturally covered their heads when they performed prayers, prophecies, or sacrifices. Most important, however, for our interest is the fact that Roman laity also kept this divine practice. While it is surely possible that some of the Corinthian Christians were local political officials (e.g., Erastus, the city treasurer, Romans 16:23) and that even some of them had held clerical positions in pagan cults prior to their conversion, it is most important to reconstruct the use of the head covering by the rank-and-file Roman, the laity, since it was from this group that the greatest number of Romans would have been converted to the gospel.

The Roman Epicurean philosopher Lucretius wrote with biting satire against Roman religious practices of his day, the first century B.C. In one section of his magnum opus entitled

Concerning the Nature of Things, he wrote that it was no true sign of piety to approach a stone altar, *with head veiled*, and fall prostrate on the ground.¹⁴ The premiere Roman poet Virgil mentions that the Roman custom at sacrifice was to cover one's hair when worshipping deities. He continues by noting that "this mode of sacrifice" was required of the founders of Rome as well as their children's children.¹⁵

Roman women also utilized this devotional gesture. Authors whose dates range from the second century B.C. to the second century A.D. include references to women likewise wearing this liturgical head covering. Plautus (second century B.C.) refers to a woman wearing a head covering when she prayed to the gods for help during the delivery of her child. Juvenal (second century A.D.) refers to a Roman woman who offered an animal sacrifice on an altar while she had her head veiled.¹⁶

Attestation to this Roman gesture of piety is not limited only to literature. Numerous examples are on Roman coins from both the Roman Republic and Roman Empire that depict Roman individuals dressed *capite velato* while engaged in worship. Large architectural structures were also used to portray this devotional gesture. The extremely important and famous Roman monument known as the Altar of Peace (*Ara Pacis*) shows several individuals (life-size) dressed this way for worship. Statues from several different generations also portray men as well as women dressed for either prayer, prophecy, or sacrifice with the backs of their togas pulled forward over their heads. This liturgical dress style was so well-known in antiquity and so widespread throughout the Mediterranean Basin, wherever Rome had gone, that almost any modern introductory book on ancient Roman art will contain at least one example of this in its section on Roman portraiture or Roman religion. One can even see an example of this devotional wardrobe in the archaeological museum on the site of ancient Corinth. A sculpture of the emperor Augustus from first century A.D. is on display there which employs this pious gesture of the liturgical head covering.¹⁷

What, then, does one do with all of this cultural information about Roman practices concerning religious head coverings? In the first place, if one adopts the Roman material as the

appropriate background to the initial problem of verse 4, this need not lead one to believe that Paul is only adapting pagan ideas. Of course, there are areas where certain pagan notions do overlap with Christian thinking and vice versa. In 1 Corinthians, for example, the apostle readily acknowledges that the Christian abhorrence of incest is shared by the pagan world (1 Corinthians 5:1b). I myself do not conclude from the use of this background material that Paul is merely advocating pagan traditions or ideology. It does mean, however, that one ought not to draw too many conclusions from this Corinthian text without first having a well-informed idea about what kinds of practices Paul was dealing with and attempting to regulate.

I would reconstruct the Corinthian situation and Paul's response to it in the following way. The congregations at Corinth were made up of individuals from numerous cultural and religious backgrounds. Many of the problems which Paul deals with in 1 Corinthians stem from the various pagan practices and worldviews which these converts bring with them from their pre-Christian cultural heritage. In some cases at Corinth, numerous Christians were involved in a particular problem that Paul addressed (e.g., chaps. 1—4), while in other cases, perhaps as few as one or two persons were responsible for the problem (e.g., incest, 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2). The tone of Paul's admonitions varies throughout 1 Corinthians. Sometimes he is livid (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2); at other times he is conciliatory (1 Corinthians 15). When contrasting the tone of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 ("But in the following instructions I do not commend you. . . lest you come together to be condemned") with the tone of verses 2 through 16 ("I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions . . . we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God"), there is no doubt that Paul is relatively tranquil about the issue of the head coverings.

I assume that believers from both Greek and Roman backgrounds were in the Corinthian assemblies. Consequently, there would be some men veiled (Roman) when performing prayer and prophecy and some men unveiled (non-Roman). There would have been some women veiled (Roman) when

performing prayer and prophecy and some women unveiled (non-Roman). Since Roman women had been covering their heads during prayer, prophecy, and sacrifice centuries before the advent of the gospel in Corinth, they were, albeit for the wrong reasons, already complying externally with Paul's wishes. Greek men, who for centuries had been worshiping with their heads uncovered, were also complying with Paul's wishes. In light of the above, it seems imprudent to view the problem at Corinth as revealing an outbreak of "uppity" and domineering women who were suffering from gender confusion or a case of "wimpy" and effeminate men who were trying to dress unisex in worship. Do not forget that even the most brutal generals who ever controlled the Roman war machine also wore head veils when they prayed, prophesied, or offered sacrifices (e.g., the Trajan Column). In a similar vein, there is no textual foundation for the idea that Paul was against the practices mentioned in verses 4 and 5 because they were a continuation of pagan customs. If that were Paul's objection, his argument in verses 2 through 16 is exceedingly opaque. In addition, it is begging the question to assume that it was the apostle's regular strategy to require pagan converts to automatically jettison all vestiges of their culture.

If this historical reconstruction is correct, then what is Paul saying, and why is he saying it? Our first need is to notice the terms through which Paul makes his argumentation. Given the doctrinal construction of verse 3 and the vocabulary in verses 4 through 16, Paul's arguments are supported by his understanding of the categories of "disgraceful" (v. 6), "dishonor" (vv. 4, 5), "propriety" (v. 13), "nature" (v. 14), and "degradation" (v. 14) as they all relate to gestures and body language of the human head of men and women, *in the specific context of worship*.

Concerns about the attire of the human body are not new with Paul. It is well-known that the Old Testament Scriptures already remark on the sense of "shame" that could be attached to the nakedness of the human body (Genesis 2:25), presumably referring to the reproductive organs. Similar thoughts of "shame" are present behind the language of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:23 when he refers to the sexual organs as "less

honorable" and "unpresentable." In general, this Jewish outlook was at odds with the indifferent attitude toward human nakedness exhibited in the Greek gymnasiums of the Hellenistic-Roman world and at times exalted through the use of phallic symbols in pagan religious festivals and processions.

Paul's views on hair, head coverings, and hair length found in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 are not, however, at total odds with all of his non-Judeo-Christian contemporaries. As mentioned above, some Corinthians would have already been veiling or unveiling themselves in a way which externally looked like Christian deportment, even before Paul's arrival in Corinth. Certain contemporary pagan philosophers agreed with Paul that nature taught that men and women should be distinguishable by their hair length and that it was providential that nature arranged it so that men, and not women, had beards.

Virtually every interpreter acknowledges that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is replete with difficulties and enigmas. It is important, in light of our interests, that we not lose sight of the forest because of the trees. Most of the argumentation of this section is just that, various types of arguments to support the apostle's one basic concern. These verses include a cluster of arguments, one based upon selected concepts of shame and dishonor, another from the order of creation, another from what nature teaches, and another from the worldwide practices of all of "the churches of God." To go deeper into the doctrine that Paul gives us here, it is imperative that we be able to distinguish between his fundamental concern on the one hand and his supporting arguments on the other hand.

In this light one sees that Paul is not having a lot of trouble with inappropriate haircuts among his converts. He is not combating women who have shaved their heads or teen-age boys who have hair hanging down to their shoulders. These points are only there as supporting arguments to buttress, in an *ad hominem* way, his theological position of verse 3, a position which in turn was constructed to oppose the practices of verses 4 and 5. The apostle, of course, believed in all the arguments he used, but they were only there to uphold his primary concern.

I would suggest that Paul's real concern in verses 2 through

16 is what we might call his fear of unisex comportment in the worship service, a comportment (i.e., improper head coverings) which blurred certain divine distinctions between the sexes. In my judgment, this and this alone is the historical occasion for this section of chapter 11. Even though the apostle affirmed that there is a reciprocal dependence between men and women (v. 11), he nevertheless, clearly believes that if women did these things unveiled that this would be a violation of a specific facet of the relationship between men and women. The facet of their relationship which he has in mind is one he denominates with the word *kephale* ("head") and which was already attested to by Scripture in the narration of Eve's creation.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

An Historical Overview

In the earlier generations of the American Restoration Movement, there was sporadic discussion of women's issues. Today when the conversation turns in the direction of women's issues in the church, it usually refers to women's roles in church life and participation in worship services. In previous generations, women's issues often, but not exclusively, focused on the question of veils for women, jewelry for women, and hair length of women. The work by Lipscomb and Sewell entitled *Questions Answered* is instructive in this regard. Both Lipscomb and Sewell believed that the wearing of braided hair and gold by women was sinful. After quoting 1 Timothy 2:9, 10 and 1 Peter 3:1-4, Sewell writes,

I do not see how language could be plainer or stronger on any subject than the above language is regarding the wearing of gold, plaiting the hair, or any sort of extravagance in dress to make a show or display before the eyes of the world. . . . I do not know how to modify this language so as to make it mean any less than it expresses; in fact, I am afraid to try. . . .

And yet there are people today that would be horrified at the idea of refusing or speaking lightly of baptism who will wear gold and pearls and diamonds without the least

apparent compunction of conscience. But who will try to show that baptism is any more *positively required* than gold and pearls and costly array *are forbidden*? I am sure I will not; I am afraid to do so. I have heard and seen so much disregard of positive declarations of the word of God that I shudder for the result to those who do it.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Lipscomb concluded that, "I do not see how anyone can fail to see that wearing gold as an ornament is forbidden. I do not know how nor do I have any desire to explain the prohibition away. . . . But when used as an ornament, it [i.e., gold] is a sin, because it violates the law of God."¹⁹

In a similar atmosphere, these earlier generations of the American Restoration were also accustomed to hearing, varying from region to region and from urban to rural areas, that women should wear head coverings to worship and should not have bobbed (short) hair. Even in more recent decades, one finds booklets by preachers such as G. C. Brewer with titles such as "Customs and Christianity, With a Special Discussion of Bobbed Hair." Brewer thought it was necessary to defend, against detractors, the practice of bobbed hair worn by women. This was acceptable he taught, as long as it was not indicative of immoral living, masculinity, or a lack of submission of wives to husbands.

Others were not so keen on embracing the new trends of American, particularly urban, culture. Tracts and pamphlets by men such as Wayne Jackson, Frank Rester, and Leslie G. Thomas espoused the view that the explicit instructions of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 were just as binding today as they were in Paul's own time. In the early 1960s, for example, Chester Baker taught in a tract entitled, "The Proper Length of Hair for Christians," that unscriptural hair length was a damnable offense in the eyes of the Almighty. Toward the end of the tract, he records an imaginary vignette of a conversation in hell between the devil and two young women sent there because of their egregious sins. One of the girls admits that she was there because of "short hair." When one of these girls was asked, "Didn't your mother ever warn you about this place?" she replied,

"Yes she did. She showed us the place in the Bible where it was wrong for women to have short hair. And we tried it for a year or two. However, our friends made so much fun of us and called us chicken that we just decided to have our hair cut and go along with the crowd." The devil said, "Well you will have to stand it down here. Because this is the place of no return. You understand that you will be here forever and that you will never see your mother again."²⁰

The vignette ends with the devil's taunt to the girls that they should have listened to their mother's "Just Say No" campaign against the wickedness of short hair. Toward the end of the tract, the author acknowledges that his own wife and daughters have short hair and implores the sympathetic readers of the tract to write to his wife and daughters and try to snatch them from the fires of hell.²¹

Since in recent years the Restoration Movement has steered a course for itself that is somewhat to the left of Holiness Fundamentalism, it has not been for the most part overly concerned with the issue of head coverings. There are, however, some exceptions to this. In a recent issue of the magazine *Contending for the Faith*²² the editor (I. Y. Rice, Jr.) raised the issue of head coverings. His stand against the necessity of head coverings seems, however, to be only a pretext to oppose a former colleague, Wayne Jackson, who almost twenty years ago wrote advocating the necessity of head coverings for women (a tract entitled *A Sign of Authority*). Among those churches that use only "one cup" at the Lord's table and among those who eschew extra-ecclesiastical institutions, this concern for head covering is still found from time to time.

The disparate views on this issue within the American Restoration Movement have been conveniently summarized by J. W. Roberts.²³ According to Roberts, there have been four views maintained in the churches of Christ. To quote from him at length:

1. That the covering of 1 Corinthians 11:2ff. is only the natural covering of the hair and that no artificial covering is involved.

2. That there are two coverings involved and that Paul binds at least one of them—either the hair as a covering or a veil.

3. That the requirement laid down by Paul is that of a general requirement of "some sign of authority" which might have been a veil or some other head covering at the time, but which may vary in time and place and which may be satisfied today by e.g., a hat. It is maintained that the stipulation to have some such covering is continually binding upon churches.

4. That the wearing of the veil was a social practice that had by long usage fastened itself upon the people. The violation of this custom placed the woman who was a Christian in an unfavorable light and thus brought the church into disfavor and that this is the reason for Paul's instruction. This would mean that while the principles behind the instruction—that of the women's subjection to her husband and the modesty which will not flaunt convention—are universal, the actual proscription based here on the social practice of the day is not applicable today.

Today's Situation

Both the clear decline in recent years of women wearing hats in churches and the increase in the hair length of boys and men may explain why an extended section of verses such as 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 can go virtually untreated in modern times. Since the whole topic could turn into a veritable Pandora's box for a people with a patternistic or blueprint hermeneutic, preachers and scholars in the churches of Christ have, I believe, as in their avoidance of the Apocalypse of John, "let sleeping dogs lie."

Irrespective of what one thinks about the recent changes in American society since World War II, few would deny that there have been attitudinal shifts toward relative hair length of males and females among members and preachers in the churches of Christ. One might want to argue that the church should not be impacted by culture, but it is patently clear that the cultural earthquake of the 1960s-70s that so traumatized

the United States has, though perhaps as an aftershock, impacted the churches of Christ as well. Some would suggest that this is a sign of worshiping at the altar of modernity, while others see it as a harbinger of apostasy.

Abiding Principles

In a brief concluding section to this three-part lesson, I will focus not on current trends within the churches of Christ, but ask how we might use 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 in today's North American situation and mention why I believe that it can be used that way.

I would suggest that the doctrinal statement of 1 Corinthians 11:3 is the foundation of Paul's religious instruction and appears to be rooted in the very nature of the Godhead and the ontological relationship between God and Christ from eternity, and the ontological relationship between the personalities of the Godhead and their creation of men and women with the respective natures of their personhoods. It is, in my judgment, this part of this Scripture which is most overtly serviceable to us today, though of course all Scripture contains valuable religious instruction (2 Timothy 3:15, 16).

Beyond that, I believe that many of the particular details and arguments of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 are of less immediate value. Thus, the application of 1 Corinthians 11:3 that is spelled out in response to the concrete issue of liturgical head coverings is, I believe, part and parcel of ancient cultural values about shame, dishonor, body language, etc. As such, these are only binding to the extent that they function similarly in one's own culture. These should be transferred into a particular culture today only when appropriate study and wisdom indicate that there is a demonstrable homogeneity between the cultural atmosphere that Paul breathed and the atmosphere of the contemporary church and its members. I do not mean by this that one ought to surrender to cultural relativity in making decisions for the church regarding gender issues or that one ought to bow at the shrine of modernity. The church that marries the "spirit of the age" is soon left a widow. It does mean, however, that one should not *a priori* canonize the cultural setting of the *customs* (1 Corinthians 11:16) of the

apostolic church. The evangelistic trail of the church is strewn with the corpses of efforts that failed because well-meaning, but unthoughtful, representatives of God attempted in an imperialistic fashion to impose cultural presuppositions and norms that were neither necessary nor natural for the planting of the seed of the gospel.

Lest this hermeneutical suggestion sound too glib and cavalier, let me illustrate what I mean with an analogous interpretation of a text of Scripture. Analogies, of course, prove nothing, but they demonstrate the unknown in terms of the known and new ideas in terms of well-established ideas. In 1 Peter 3:1-6, the author writes,

Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children if you do right and let nothing terrify you (RSV).

Christian wedding ceremonies today often include in the vows of the woman "to honor and *obey*" their husbands because of sections of Scripture like 1 Peter 3:1-6. Have you noticed, however, that while 1 Peter 3:6a (as Sarah *obeyed* Abraham) is highlighted as a godly paradigm, few mention the next portion of the verse that teaches that Sarah also called Abraham "lord." Even when the Greek word *kyrios* which is translated in this text as "lord" is rendered less offensively as "sir," it still reflects a verbal social custom and cultural norm that is not found among North American Christians. Apparently, Peter thought that being a "daughter of Sarah" included not only eschewing expensive clothes, ornamental gold, and beautifying coiffures, but also included a style of obedience and sub-

mission to one's husband for which the use of the term "sir" was appropriate.

Even though there is considerable doctrinal diversity within churches of Christ today, I do not believe that even the most conservative congregations promulgate the notion that marriages are sounder when the wives call their husbands "sir." In our culture today, soldiers say "sir," children say "sir," and occasionally someone will say "sir" to a significantly older male. But in neither America nor the church do women say "sir" to their husbands. As far as I know, we do not even have a modern Christian verbal substitute for this idea of Sarah calling Abraham "sir." The fact that we neither practice nor advocate this particular verbal term signifying obedience and submission indicates that we have made a cross-cultural adaptation and interpretation of this text of Scripture which has not only dropped the word "sir," but has, more significantly, stripped away the entire cultural notion of signifying respect, obedience, and submission to husbands through linguistic terms of respect.

In a similar vein, children's reverence toward parents will look different in different cultures. As a young child I was taught to use "Yes, sir," "No, sir," "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am" as phrases of respect to older men and women. I was surprised in later years to learn from a Christian from eastern Canada that in her upbringing the word "ma'am" was a term of disrespect. Thus, when she and her family moved to the South, it took her children a while to adjust from never saying "Yes, ma'am" to an adult woman to always saying, "Yes, ma'am" to adult women. When I was a child I was taught that as a child I was *never* to address adults outside the family (e.g., a schoolteacher) by their first names. Use of first names indicated equal rank. When a child addressed an adult, it was always Mr. plus the man's last name or Mrs. plus the woman's last name. Where I now live in Memphis, it seems that in society as well as at church this is not taught to the same degree. My children are learning that they can use the adult's first name as long as it is in conjunction with Mr. or Miss. Thus, Mr. David or Miss Jane are acceptable terms of respect in modern Memphis, but would not have been in the days of my

youth in the 1950s. Examples like this could be multiplied, but I hope that I have illustrated the point.

What I am pointing out, then, is that in regard to 1 Corinthians 11:4-16 I am only preaching what we in churches of Christ already practice in regard to 1 Peter 3:1-6 and see at work in our culture at large. Namely, we should begin by looking for the doctrinal intent and foundation of a practice and not the particular details of how that doctrine was enacted in a different culture when the whole enterprise is labeled as "custom" (1 Corinthians 11:16). While John Calvin rightly noted on this text that one should avoid "all those who destroy good and useful customs where there is no need to do so,"²⁴ it is also worth reminding ourselves that it is an odious and lamentable situation when those who speak on God's behalf "teach as truth the customs of men" (Mark 7:7).

NOTES

¹Susan T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1979), 106.

²Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 229.

³Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1857; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), 207-8.

⁴F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1971), 104.

⁵J. W. Roberts, "The Veils in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *Restoration Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1959): 183-204.

⁶*Ibid.*, 186.

⁷Leslie G. Thomas, "Women and Their Veils" (Austin, Tex.: Firm Foundation Publishing House, n.d.) (Pamphlet).

⁸Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 4.

⁹Aulus Gellius, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3: 16.13.9.

¹⁰John H. Kent, *Corinth: The Inscriptions 1926-1950* (Princeton, N.J.: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966), 31.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 32.

¹²Fee, *First Epistle*, 507-8.

¹³See especially Cynthia L. Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits From Roman Corinth," *Biblical*

Archaeologist 51 (1988): 99-115; Richard E. Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11:4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 481-505.

¹⁴Lucretius *Concerning the Nature of Things* 5.1198-1200.

¹⁵Virgil *Aeneid* 3.403-9.

¹⁶Juvenal *Satires* 6.390-92.

¹⁷B. S. Ridgway, "Sculpture From Corinth," *Hesperia* 50 (1981): 432-33.

¹⁸David Lipscomb and E. G. Sewell, *Questions Answered*, ed. M. C. Kurfees (Nashville, Tenn.: McQuiddy Printing Co., 1921), 275-76.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 278-79.

²⁰Chester Baker, "The Proper Length of Hair for Christians" (1961), 29-31 (Tract).

²¹*Ibid.*, 33.

²²Ira Y. Rice, Jr., "A Sign of Authority," *Contending for the Faith* 20, no. 1 (1989): 1-14.

²³Roberts, "The Veils," 183.

²⁴John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. J. W. Fraser (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), 235.

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THE LORD'S SUPPER— THEN AND NOW (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

JAMES E. PRIEST

The love, grace, and faithfulness of God lie at the foundation of the Lord's Supper. A study of this subject affords an opportunity to peer into the annals of recorded history and see the infinite providence of a benevolent Father who has supplied the means of redemption to a lost humanity. At the Lord's Supper we may see, in faith, the gates of heaven opening and the gates of hell closing. We listen and hear a bleeding, but victorious Savior saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

This examination of the Lord's Supper will probe three distinct eras of its history. First, we will go to the distant past and trace the origins and significance of the Passover out of which the Lord's Supper emerges. Then, we will examine the establishment of the Lord's Supper by Jesus and look at some New Testament texts relating to its practice in the early church. Our third study will deal with the Lord's Supper and the church at Corinth.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: ITS BACKGROUND AND THE PASSOVER

The place to begin an analysis of the Passover (*pesah*) is in Exodus 12:1-14. After we have read this passage, it is profitable to note two linguistic points:

First, "Passover" (*pesah*) is from the verb *pasah*. However, it is difficult to know whether the verb *pasah* means "to leap over" (Exodus 12:13) or "to be lame, limp" (2 Samuel 4:4). Both meanings are derived from the same root consonants. If it means "to limp," like the limping prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21, 26), then perhaps God could be thought of as having

"skipped by" the homes of the ancient Hebrews in Egypt (Exodus 12).

Second, regardless of the exact meaning of the verb form, the noun *pesah*, which is derived from it, will always be *Pass-over*. This is in spite of the fact that some scholars think the verb *pasah* should be rendered "defend, protect." In fact, the NEB actually gives an alternate reading for Exodus 12:13: "When I see the blood I will *stand guard over* you" instead of the traditional rendering, "I will *pass over* you." (Emphasis mine.) This is also the NEB translation of this verb form in Isaiah 31:5, where God is pictured as a bird shielding and *standing over* Jerusalem.¹

After the institution of the Passover as described in Exodus 12 and 13, the Hebrew Scriptures show the Israelites' concern for its observance through the centuries. This may be noted as follows:

1. *Numbers 9:1-14* describes the observance of Passover by God's people during the second year of their Exodus.

2. *Joshua 5:10-12* speaks of the Passover observance as performed at Gilgal near Jericho and the eating of unleavened bread and parched grain the following day.

3. *2 Kings 23:21ff.* and *2 Chronicles 35:1-19* (the parallel passage) speak of a Passover observed during the great reform movement of King Josiah. The Passover was so extensively prepared and carried out that the historians state that there had never been one like it since the days of the judges and Samuel the prophet. This, of course, implies that the Passover was being kept during the era of the judges.

4. *2 Chronicles 8:12, 13* also mentions that King Solomon kept the three annual feasts, which, of course, included the Passover, followed immediately by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

5. *2 Chronicles 30* records what is perhaps the most astonishing Passover of all, with but one exception. King Hezekiah was in the midst of his great reforms. He and his counselors decided that the Passover must be kept even though many of the priests were unclean and the people were not coming to Jerusalem for the feast as the law required. The king, therefore, postponed the observance until the fourteenth day of the

second month, instead of keeping it on the fourteenth day of the first month of Abib/Nisan as the law stipulated. This postponement was so all could be made ready. The response to the call for purification and attendance was so overwhelming that after Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread had been kept, it was decided to keep the feast for another seven days! That was as unique as would be the observing of the Lord's Supper for fifteen days in a row!

6. *Ezra 6:19-22* says that "on the fourteenth day of the first month the returned exiles kept the Passover" (v. 19). This was followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 22).²

Thus, throughout Bible history the Israelites were called upon to keep their oldest festival—the Passover—followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We have traced this continuous practice from its inception in Egypt. We noted its observance in the Sinai, in Canaan during the days of Joshua, in the days of the judges, during Solomon's time, in the reform movements of King Hezekiah and King Josiah, and finally, during the restoration under Zerubbabel.

About ninety years after the second temple was finished (ca. 515 B.C.) and the Passover was once again observed in Judea, there is evidence that a colony of Jews on the Nile River island of Elephantine in Egypt were keeping the Passover. This evidence comes from an edict issued by the Persian king Darius II in about 419 B.C.³

The late Rabbi Isidore Epstein, Jewish theologian and scholar of considerable renown, sees this event as illustrative of the steadfast practice of the Jews in the dispersion to keep the Passover. He affirms this fellowship of the scattered Jews created a spiritual unity which "remained unimpaired even after the breaking-up of the unity of the political world of which the Jews were a part, with the destruction of the empire of Alexander the Great about 300 B.C."⁴

We have traced some highlights in the history of the Passover from the time of its first observance by the Hebrews in Egypt until the days of Alexander the Great near the close of the fourth century B.C.

Then came the breaking up of the old order and the rise of the Jewish sects beginning about the middle of the second

century B.C., the Pharisees and Sadducees being the most prominent.⁵ Oral tradition developed rapidly and with considerable controversy. Jewish religious life became more and more legalistic under the influence of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. The Sadducees were the "conservatives," holding to the written Torah only as authoritative; the Pharisees were "liberals" who embraced both oral tradition and Scripture as binding.

The religious climate produced by this pluralistic and controversial society tended to cause the leading religious figures to be defensive and protective of their own beliefs. One technique for preserving cherished concepts is to set them in ritual form. This happened to the Passover.

Early documentary evidence of this is found in the Mishna. This work consisted of a topical arrangement of the deliberations of the rabbis concerning the interpretation and development of the Torah. Although originally transmitted orally, eventually large portions of the written Torah, its oral interpretations, and expansions were set to writing at about the beginning of the third century A.D. In the second division of the Mishna, Moed, the tractate Pesahim contains, in the argumentatively style of the rabbis, and in great detail, how one should prepare for, partake of, and depart from the Passover feast.⁶

In spite of this early record of Passover observance, the picture is not entirely clear. Opposing schools of thought, such as those of Shammai and Hillel, are often given without a resolution of the disagreement. However, aside from a few obscure particulars, the following description is adduced from the ancient Pesahim of the Mishna.

On the night before Passover, the family home was searched to remove all forms of *hametz* (leavened items) to ensure compliance with the scriptural mandate found in Exodus 12:15. On Passover day, the father of the household brought a selected lamb to the temple for sacrifice. He slaughtered the animal, and the priest received its blood and dashed it against the base of the altar of sacrifice. The parts of the animal to be burned (Leviticus 3:3, 4) were given to the priest for burning. The sacrifice was then taken home and roasted for eating.

What followed was "a specific family celebration, truly a Lord's Supper, dedicated to Him on the eve of the holiday. It is based on the family gathering preceding the Exodus (Exodus 12:1-14) when God passed over (hence the name of Passover) the house of the Israelites while punishing the Egyptians."⁷ This was the *seder* (order). It was the most memorable and significant religious family affair of the year. Fortunately, for our understanding, "the *seder* customs had stylized to some extent by the Second Temple period."⁸

As the *seder* was observed in each house on Passover evening, Pesachim indicates the following: (1) The cup of *Kiddush* ("sanctification") was passed containing wine mixed with warm water. (2) A "benediction" for the cup and for the day was said. (3) Vegetables, with lettuce, were eaten. (4) Then bitter herbs were eaten. (5) Unleavened bread was broken. Lettuce was dipped in *haroseth* (crushed nuts and fruit mixed in vinegar), and all were eaten. (6) Portions of the paschal lamb were eaten as part of the meal. (7) The cup of *Haggadah* ("explanation") was passed. (8) Children asked questions, starting with, "Why is this night different from other nights?" The father answered them, telling the full story of the first Passover, the deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and freedom of God's people. (9) Songs were sung, probably the first part of the Hallel (Psalms 113-118). (10) A cup of blessing was passed. (11) A "benediction" over the meal was offered. (12) The consummation cup was passed. (13) The remainder of the Hallel was sung. (14) Benediction was said after the Hallel.

We have traced the origin, history, and significance of the Passover out of which the Lord's Supper emerged. We have seen that it came in Abib, later called Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew religious year. This corresponded to our March/April season. It was truly a time of new life. It was "a twofold reminder of the advent of the springtide and of the liberation of Israel from Egypt, and bright with promise of the deliverance which in the future await[ed] Israel and all mankind."⁹

Passover was the first, and chief, of the Hebrew festivals because it represented the first, and greatest, liberating experience of the Hebrew people. It was a time of rejoicing, freedom, redemption, and commitment. It was all of this, and

more, because the Passover was a time of *remembering*. Without remembering, those precious, providential events could not have remained real to them. And because one cannot remember what one does not know, the very observance of the Passover was a time of teaching the young (Exodus 12:26, 27; 13:8, 14ff.).

This accounts for the questions asked by the children in the *seder* and the telling of the redemption story by the Father. This is why, in the Passover *seder*, the bitter herbs reminded them of bitter experiences in Egypt. The *haroseth* reminded them of the mortar for bricklaying while in slavery. This is why the unleavened bread reminded them of their exodus from Egypt, and the paschal lamb reminded them of God's preservation of each Hebrew family who took refuge under its blood.

As we look back on all of these distant but meaningful historical events and experiences of the Hebrews, we are made vividly aware of how central to their lives was the observance of the Passover. Therefore, how laden with deep significance is a little passage tucked away in Matthew, which reads:

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the passover?" He said, "Go into the city to such a one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples."'" And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover (Matthew 26:17-19).

THE LORD'S SUPPER: ITS INSTITUTION AND CENTRALITY

When one turns to the New Testament, one finds further evidence of how the Jews were conscious of the sacredness of the Passover. The Hebrew for Passover, *Pesah*, is found some two dozen times in the New Testament as *Pascha*.¹⁰

Something that may have escaped our attention before must now be recognized. In the New Testament, the Passover Feast and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which immediately fol-

lowed is now often spoken of interchangeably. This means that for all practical purposes they are considered as one (i.e., the Passover is spoken of as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread is spoken of as the Passover). Josephus, the notable Jewish historian of the first century A.D., explains the phenomenon. He wrote, "The feast of unleavened bread was celebrated, which we call the passover. . . ;" and again, "Now, upon the approach of that feast of unleavened bread . . . which feast is called the Passover, and is a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt. . . ." ¹¹ A good New Testament example showing how first-century A.D. Jews often saw these two feasts as a unity is seen in Luke 22:1: "Now the feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, *which is called the Passover.*" (Emphasis mine.) A more careful rendering is found in Mark, the early Gospel: "It was now two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread" (Mark 14:1).

In the New Testament, the life and work of Jesus becomes increasingly focused around the Passover. This is an extensive and intricate theme. For sake of brevity, we will illustrate it from the Gospel of John. In this Gospel we find that the ministry of Jesus is measured in terms of Passovers. Thus, early on we see, "The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (John 2:13). While in Jerusalem he cleansed the temple. Could this have been done in preparation for the Passover? Later, while Jesus is involved in strenuous ministry around the Sea of Galilee, John seems to interrupt his account of Jesus' work in Galilee to state, "Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand" (John 6:4). Why? Perhaps the answer is to be found in what immediately follows. Jesus feeds the five thousand, which is followed the next day by his deeply moving teaching about himself: "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Is John showing his readers a preview of the role Jesus will fill in connection with the Passover in the near future? Is he trying to convey to his readers the spiritual significance of a very early proclamation about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)?

John's next mention of a Passover is in chapters 12 and 13.

This, of course, was the last Passover that Jesus kept during his ministry. Occasionally one finds a Bible scholar who maintains that the account of John 13, which describes the meal that Jesus and his disciples ate, is not a Passover Feast.¹² This is usually on the grounds that John later records that Jesus' crucifixion was on "the day of preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14, 31). Thus, the argument goes, it could not have been on Passover day if it was the day of preparation for the Passover. It could be that the expression "the day of Preparation of the Passover" (John 19:14) referred to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We have already seen that by the first century A.D. these terms were often used interchangeably. Thus, if "the day of Preparation of the Passover" refers to the entire paschal season, the day intended by John would be Friday. This is, in fact, the position of the NIV, which reads at John 19:14, "It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week" This is also inferred by the NEB translation of John 13:29, where Jesus tells Judas "to buy what was needed for the festival." (Emphasis mine.)¹³

We have mentioned three Passovers in our survey. Perhaps the feast mentioned in John 5:1 is also a reference to Passover. This would make four. If so, the ministry of Jesus lasted over three years; if not, his ministry was something over two years. John, it seems, is not only measuring Jesus' ministry by Passovers, but he is also emphasizing highlights of his work and teaching connected with the Passover (e.g., the cleansing of the temple and his "bread of life" teaching).

We now turn to the most astounding Passover of all. It is specifically called "Passover" in Matthew 26:2, 17-19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; and Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 13, 15. Each of these accounts varies slightly in some of the details, but they all present the reason why this was the most momentous Passover ever participated in by any of the Jewish people. Matthew describes the entire event in 26:17-30.

An amazing *seder*! Something new and marvelous was announced. One may sense the astonishment of the disciples. The unleavened bread was supposed to represent the hardships and deprivation of Egyptian slavery. Now, the Master is saying, as he takes, blesses, and breaks the bread, "Take, eat,

this is my body!" What is he doing now? He has taken the cup, offered thanks, and said to us, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins!" The wine has always been a reminder of the blood of the sacrificed lamb placed on the doorposts to ward off certain death in Egypt. What is he saying now? What does he mean, "The bread is my body; the cup is my blood"?

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the modern-day reader to feel the impact of this announcement by Jesus. It is doubtful if Jesus' own apostles grasped the profound truth of his startling words at that time. Subsequent events would help them to discern more clearly. They would soon stand at the foot of a cross (Luke 23:49; John 19:26) and see the pierced body of Jesus (John 19:34) hanging suspended on nails through his hands and feet (John 20:24-28). Perhaps he was partly supported by a *sedille*, "a small seat attached to the front of the cross, about halfway down."¹⁴ If so, this would simply prolong the agony before death. Did his apostles recall Jesus' Passover announcement? Did they wonder, "Is this the body Jesus spoke of when he broke the bread? Is the blood trickling down the face and flowing from the side of Jesus what he had in mind when he passed the cup among us?"

If there was bewilderment mixed with their grief at that dark hour, it is understandable. Later, the empty tomb added to their perplexity (Luke 24:1-12). Even a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his apostles was an occasion of incredibility mixed with joy (Luke 24:36-43). Indeed, in the very act of worshipping him, some doubted (Matthew 28:16, 17). However, as time passed, the unbelievable became believable. Jesus "opened their minds" (Luke 24:45) and encouraged them. He commissioned them (Matthew 28:19, 20) and promised them saying, "I send the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They received that power when they received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' resurrection (Acts 1:7, 8; 2:1-4), which came fifty days after Passover.

The church was launched by Spirit-guided apostles. Their shock was gone. Their minds were clear. They preached the gospel with great force, "and the Lord added to their number

day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:27). The new age had dawned. A new message was proclaimed which centered on Jesus. Something else was new—a new dimension of relationship and worship. Those converted "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). J. W. McGarvey says, "The breaking of bread and the prayers, in which they also steadfastly continued, are the breaking of the emblematic loaf, or the observance of the Lord's supper, and the public prayers in the congregation."¹⁵ Also, F. F. Bruce says concerning this text, "The 'breaking of bread' here denotes something more than the ordinary partaking of food together; the regular observance of the Lord's Supper is no doubt indicated."¹⁶ Others see the "Lord's Supper interpretation" as a possibility, but not a necessity.¹⁷ Still others see verse 42 as depicting merely the characteristics of the early church, including "common meals."¹⁸

Now, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles partook of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. They also taught their Jewish brothers and sisters in Christ the new significance of those elements in the Passover. For well over a thousand years, the Israelites had regularly recalled a great deliverance by the hand of Yahweh. At the Passover, with its *seder* meal, the unleavened bread and the cup of wine had special significance, reminding them of their escape from death and Egypt. Now, they saw in those items the sacrificed body and blood of their Messiah, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). They, too, had taken refuge under that shed blood; they, too, had made the great escape from the bondage of sin made possible by that sacrifice. One can appreciate the fact that they continued "steadfastly" in "the breaking of bread." It would always be a reminder of God's great mercy and grace. They would, with thankful hearts, regularly be impressed that their God "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Thus, as soon as the infant church had begun, one of its major characteristics was keeping the memorial feast in commemoration of the saving sacrifice of Christ.

As one contemplates this record of events, it is easy to forget that we have not, in all probability, been dealing with the oldest New Testament documents on the subject. One must keep in mind that the order of the New Testament books, as we have them in our Bibles today, is not the chronological order in which they were written. This is not to say that *anyone* knows the order of the New Testament documents in the absolute sense. However, only one major point needs to be made here. There is a fairly well-established concession across a great spectrum of scholars of the Bible that Paul's Corinthian correspondence was written before any of the Gospels or Acts.¹⁹ If this is true, and I believe it is, this means that we find in 1 Corinthians the first explicit New Testament written statements about the Lord's Supper.

It is safe to say that 1 Corinthians was written somewhere in the mid-50s of the first century A.D. This reasonably assured date can be fixed because of Paul's appearance before Gallio while he was proconsul in Achaia (Acts 18:12). This overlapping of Paul's ministry in Corinth and Gallio's proconsulate there "is the lynch-pin of Pauline chronology. It is the one link between the Apostle's career and general history that is accepted by all scholars."²⁰

The writing of 1 Corinthians in approximately A.D. 55 was about twenty-five years after the church was established in Jerusalem. It may strike us as strange that a subject so central to Christianity and Christian worship as the Lord's Supper was not addressed in writing for a quarter of a century. Furthermore, it may be startling to note that the discussions were a series of polemics due to the dire spiritual state of the Corinthians, instead of a majestic treatise on the subject.

Before getting to the longest discussion about the Lord's Supper in the correspondence, let us consider two introductory points that Paul makes which illustrate the central place of Jesus as the paschal lamb of God in the life of the church. The first point is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. Paul is concerned about a case of immorality found in the church that was so infamous that even the pagans did not practice it. A man was living with his father's wife. We do not know the exact nature of the relationship. Suffice it to say that the affair was

absolutely intolerable. The issue was compounded by the arrogant pride of the Christian community. They should have mourned. Paul flatly states, "Let him who has done this be removed from among you."

Having outlined the situation and prescribed the remedy (1 Corinthians 5:3-5), Paul draws a generalization for their benefit. This teaching will be especially meaningful for us in light of earlier discussion about the Passover. Using the Passover observance allegorically, he urged them to remove all the old leaven that they may be a new lump. Barclay paraphrases this section: "Do you not know that a little evil influence can corrupt a whole society? Cleanse out the old evil influence that you may make a clean fresh start. . . ."²¹

Paul goes on to say, ". . . you really are unleavened. *For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed*" (1 Corinthians 5:7b; emphasis mine). They had experienced redemption by the blood of Christ as baptized believers. Now they are called to act accordingly.

Thus, Paul shows the ultimate solution for immorality in the church. Those not participating in the immorality must not have a misguided tolerance toward it. The immoral Christian must be disciplined in order that he might escape Satan's clutches. This leaves the church clean, refreshed (unleavened = no impurities, no admixtures within), and ready to resume productive lives and service in "sincerity and truth."

Paul predicates his rebukes and instructions on one central theological foundation; the church of Jesus Christ will not condone or practice immorality because "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed." By using Passover imagery in this allegory, Paul is showing that the sacrificed Christ, who is central to our Sunday memorial feast, is also central to our moral lives. One cannot partake of Christ's supper discerning his body, while at the same time remembering that he has given his body, not in surrender to Christ, but in unholy surrender to another.

The second point is about idolatry. This was an issue of grave concern to the Corinthian Christians. They had written to Paul asking for information concerning food offered to idols (1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1). Paul's extensive response (1 Corinthians 8)

points out that since an idol is in actuality a non-entity, nothing is wrong, in principle, for a Christian who is aware of that, to eat meat that had been offered as sacrifice to an idol.

However, Paul cautions that not all Christians are aware of the actual non-existent nature of idols. Therefore, their weak conscience would be defiled if they ate meat which had been sacrificed to what they consider to be some kind of god. Furthermore, the knowledgeable Christian must be alert and sensitive to the weak Christian's dilemma. He must refrain from participating in the practice, if by so doing he would cause his brother to "stumble."

Later in chapter 10, Paul turns to the subject of idol worship and addresses it "head-on." One finds in 1 Corinthians 10:6-12 a parenthetical passage including a solemn warning against overconfidence, since that often comes before a fall. He begins his list of exhortations in the passage by saying, "Do not be idolators, . . . We must not indulge in immorality, . . ." We have already seen in our first point that the church's solution to the sin of immorality centered around the sacrificed Lamb of God. Now we will see the same principle applied to idolatry.

First Corinthians 10:14-21 is the passage where Paul instructs against the pagan practice of offering sacrifices to idols because they are actually offering sacrifices to demons. Although Paul has said an idol is not anything, *demons* are very real. The pagans participated in this worship sacrifice to demons by eating portions of the slaughtered animal. The eating of sacrificed meat, per se, was not strange to Paul. He reminded his readers that worship in ancient Israel allowed the priest to eat of animals sacrificed to God (Exodus 29:26-28; Leviticus 10:14, 15; etc.). But eating animals sacrificed by pagans to demons is what Paul is forbidding. Why? *We* may think of several reasons, but the reason Paul gives is at the core of our investigation.

To enter into pagan worship by eating sacrificed animals is to strike up a partnership with *demons*. The analogy strikes deeply; it is again the Lord's Supper that Paul turns to. In partaking of the bread and the cup, we are participating in (communing with) the body and blood of Jesus. We reach fellowship (partnership) with Christ in the partaking. When

this is done in concert, "we who are many are one body." Therefore, Paul affirms, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons" (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Thus, we have learned that immorality and idolatry are not acceptable as a Christian lifestyle. But we already knew that, did we not? We have learned Paul's teaching in Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, . . . and those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But had we noticed that Paul's major corrective for eliminating immorality and idolatry from the body of Christ, the church, is teaching concerning the supreme place and profound meaning of the Lord's Supper and the Christian's worshipful participation in it?

THE LORD'S SUPPER: AN ABUSE AND SOME CORRECTIVES

The first and only extensive description in the New Testament of a group of Christians partaking of the Lord's Supper is found in 1 Corinthians 11. This is an ironic picture because the church is not actually observing the memorial in a legitimate way. However, this passage is a helpful section for us because it contains a lengthy teaching about the meaning of the Lord's Supper and what is involved when the church truly participates in it.

This is also the only place in the New Testament where this observance is specifically called the "Lord's Supper [*kuriakon deipnon*]," although 1 Corinthians 10:21 does speak of "the table of the Lord." This teaching has echoes which need to be traced for possible implications in the Corinthian church setting. John's Gospel refers to the last Passover Jesus kept with his disciples as "supper" or "the supper" (John 13:2, 4; 21:20). This supper consisted of special food and drink to remind them of the hardship of bondage and the historical Passover when they escaped death and made their exodus because of the blood of the sacrificed lamb on their doorposts. Vegetables and meat of the sacrifice, along with wine, comprised an ordinary meal

which was eaten with great joy and praise. Out of this setting, Jesus gave special significance to the unleavened bread and the cup.

Shortly afterward, the church came into being, and the early Christians began to keep, not the Passover supper, but the Lord's Supper. The first example of this in Acts says, "They devoted themselves . . . to the breaking of bread. . . ." (Acts 2:42). Alexander Campbell quotes Hackett with approval concerning this phrase. He says, "*Te klasei tou artou* denotes the breaking of the bread, as performed at the Lord's Supper." Campbell then says,

The expression itself may designate an ordinary meal, as in Luke 24:35; but that here would be an unmeaning notice. There can be no doubt that the Eucharist, at this period, was *preceded uniformly by a common repast*, as was the case when the ordinance was instituted. Most scholars hold that this was the prevailing usage in the first centuries after Christ. *We have traces of that practice in 1 Corinthians 11:20. . . .*²² (Emphasis mine.)

Others maintain slightly different views. For example, F. F. Bruce says, with reference to Acts 2:42, that the Lord's Supper appears to have *formed part of an ordinary meal* with emphasis on the act of breaking the bread. He also makes a similar observation about Acts 20:7,²³ where one finds the only mention in the New Testament of Christians meeting on the first day of the week to "break bread."²⁴

Christians were not, of course, attempting to eat a Passover meal. The Lord had instituted his Supper from elements of the Passover Feast. Therefore, the unleavened bread and the cup remained, while the other food items were eliminated. However, as we have seen, a meal was eaten in some relation with the Lord's Supper. It may have been before, during, or after the Lord's Supper. The picture is not clear enough to speak dogmatically about the order of eating in relationship to the Lord's Supper, per se. It is logical to assume the Passover order, as described earlier, was the general model; that is, after preliminaries, there was the breaking of bread which signified Jesus' body, *the common meal was eaten*, then the

"blessing cup" of the Passover became the cup signifying Jesus' blood. The *common meal ended* with songs of praise and the "consummation cup" with a blessing.

This common meal, held in some relation with the Lord's Supper, was called the "love feast" (*agape*). It is specifically attested in the New Testament at Jude 12 and probably at 2 Peter 2:13.²⁵ The "love feast" served as an occasion of table fellowship; it provided for expressions of brotherhood. Since it was a charity feast, it provided an excellent opportunity for the well-to-do to share their hospitality and food with the "have not's."²⁶

This characteristic sharing (*koinonia*) in table fellowship was, no doubt, often a house church arrangement. The New Testament frequently speaks of Christians meeting in houses (Romans 16:23; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2; Acts 2:46; 12:12). "A typical Christian cell was normally small, limited by the physical capacity of the house in which it met. The owner of the house functioned as host or patron."²⁷

Let us imagine the church at Corinth as we come to the "Lord's Supper" passage in 1 Corinthians 11. Gaius is likely the host when "the whole church" (1 Corinthians 14:23) comes together. Archaeology has shown that the typical house of the well-to-do at Corinth would have a courtyard (atrium) and a dining room (triclinium) available to accommodate guests. Together, the two rooms could hold about fifty people with necessary separation into two rooms. The cliques present in the Corinthian church would find an atmosphere to flourish in such an arrangement. It would foster groupings around common loyalties and also on economic grounds. The more private and formal dining room would attract the wealthy, where they could recline while eating. The remainder ate sitting in the atrium. Roman social customs also allowed distinctions in the quality and amount of the food for guests of different economic status.²⁸ This brings us to 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 with background which should help us analyze it accurately.

This passage logically divides into four parts:²⁹ (1) 11:17-22 describes a situation within the church at Corinth which made it impossible for them to eat the Lord's Supper; (2) 11:23-26 gives Paul's teaching concerning the true significance and

fellowship (*koinonia* = communion) involved in the proper observance of the feast; (3) 11:27-32 emphasizes instructions and warnings designed to help them partake acceptably; (4) 11:33, 34 adds a major instructive guideline the Corinthians badly needed, with a final note alerting them about more instructions, possibly on other matters, when he sees them.

It is difficult to keep a proper balance in the exegesis of this entire passage for two major reasons: (1) A knowledge of the context is invaluable. Without it we would be handicapped. (We have spoken extensively of the probable context for this passage.) (2) In our weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, we have been repeatedly impressed at the Lord's table with Paul's description of Jesus' inaugurating his Supper. This is in order. However, verses 23 through 26 stand within the heart of our passage under study. If we allow it to stand alone, we tend to forget Paul's motive for delivering it. With these preliminary observations before us, we now turn to the first division.

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

In the larger context of chapter 11, Paul is discussing abuses in the Corinthian worship.³⁰ This, then, is the "umbrella" under which Paul discusses the Lord's Supper in this section; and, as we see, Paul is certainly not offering a commendation to the Corinthians (v. 17a). In fact, the conditions under which they held their assembly and partook of the Lord's Supper resulted in their being in a worse condition than before (v. 17b). But why? Because their assemblies were divided assemblies. Paul knew about some of their divisions. They showed evidence of loyalties to men above their message, since it is inconceivable to view Paul, Peter, and Apollos preaching different gospels (1 Corinthians 1:10-17). However, the divisions Paul is presently addressing have to do with when they assemble as a church (*ekklesia*) (v. 18). Paul's knowledge of these divisions seems not to come from the report of "Chloe's people" (1 Corinthians 1:11). He speaks of his information in this case as "hearsay" (v. 18), which he obviously does not reject. Neither would the arrival of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus to see Paul in Ephesus have been the source of his information, since their coming brought him joy and refresh-

ment (1 Corinthians 16:17, 18). A conjecture is that Paul heard this news "on the side" from one of Chloe's people (a slave?) who had suffered from the type of division which existed in the assembly at Corinth. Paul then makes the generalization that factions have a way of eventually identifying the genuine as opposed to the false (v. 19).³¹

Then Paul strikes hard. "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (v. 20). Note that Paul is not speaking of their intentions. "The Christians intended to be eating *the Lord's Supper*; Paul's complaint is that their malpractice renders what they do something other than their intentions."³²

Here we have the beginning of a sad commentary on what had happened to their love feast and the Lord's Supper kept in conjunction with it. Keep in mind the scenario of the house church meeting which we drew earlier and Paul's mention of Gaius, "who is host to me and the whole church," when he writes to the church at Rome from Corinth (Romans 16:23). Verse 21 describes the insensitivity and utter selfishness of the "have's" toward the "have not's." "They do not wait for late-comers (e.g., slaves) nor share what they have. Each is interested only in *his own* (emphatic) supper, not the Lord's. The divisions of v. 18 are obviously based on money and class."³³ These divisions do not reflect the "I am of Paul" or "I am of Apollos" sentiments. They grow out of the Roman culture of the times. They are counter to the Christian spirit of compassion which marked so well the early church (Galatians 2:10; Acts 2:42; 4:32-37; 6:1-6; etc.). Being a gathering marked by worldly, instead of godly actions and appetites, it had degenerated into a spectacle of disgrace. Those who had nothing, except for the unleavened bread and wine, were left hungry; those who had food brought it or were provided some by the host. They overindulged. They were so disrespectful of the poor, they did not wait for them to arrive at the "so-called" *agape* feast.

Verse 22 consists of a series of rhetorical questions. The strong implication is they were addressed primarily to those who had plenty of food and drink and were not hungry. The answers are obvious. If their motive in coming to the feast is to

gorge and drink to surfeit, they should eat at home. By making a distinction among members of the church, they were making a mockery of the very body of Christ. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Their sectarian spirit demonstrated that they despised (*kataphroneo*) God's church (an "inward" disposition) and humiliated (*kataischuno*) the unfortunate ones (an "outward" demonstration). The *inclusio* reflected in verses 17 and 22, "I do not commend you, . . . Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not," indicates the strong negative thrust of everything he has said. This concludes the first part.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The second part, verses 23 through 26, is so familiar to us from repeated exposure that we must struggle to grasp and retain its solemnity, dignity, beauty, and crucial significance for our lives. There is a startling irony in human nature that often causes us to think of trivial things while surrounded by the deeply profound. The Corinthians had fully trivialized the Lord's Supper. That was bad enough, but the ultimate tragedy was that they did not know it. We see in verse 23a that Paul is motivated to give the first written account to a congregation which had desecrated the Supper of how it was instituted, what it means, and the proclamation involved. "Whether this teaching came to Paul directly (by a vision; cf. Gal. 1:12) or indirectly (by men; 1 Cor. 15:1-[7]), it came with the Lord's authority."³⁴

On that betrayal night (Matthew 26:20-25 and parallels) Jesus took bread. Scenes of Passover and the paschal lamb come to mind. Verse 24 says, "When he had given thanks and broke the bread [*eucharistesas, eucharisteo*]." (This feature of "giving thanks" was stressed in later times to such an extent that it gave rise to the popular appellation "eucharist" for the Supper.) Jesus' breaking of the bread would have been early in the context of the *seder* that we have studied. Since it was the *seder* out of which these events arose of which Paul speaks, we know the bread was unleavened. Paul does not say so here.

After breaking the bread Jesus said, "This is my body which

is for you." The literature on this sentence is immense. This is due to the evolutionary development of eucharistic theology through the centuries. It does not fall within the scope of this study to attempt a history of the theology of the Lord's Supper. We simply quote Fee as follows:

The identification of the bread with the body is semitic imagery in its heightened form. As in all such identifications, he means "this signifies/represents my body." It lies quite beyond Jesus' intent and the framework within which he and his disciples lived to imagine that some actual change took place, or was intended to take place, in the bread itself. Such a view could only have arisen in the church at a much later stage when Greek modes of thinking had rather thoroughly replaced semitic ones.³⁵

"Do this in remembrance of me [*eis ten emen anamnesin*]," Jesus said. This seems so straightforward. But is it? Does Jesus mean to eat the bread, remembering him? If so, why did he not say so? He said, "Do," not "Eat"; he said "this," not "bread." He said, "*Do this* 'in remembrance' of me." Note that "remembrance" is not a verb. "Remember" is a verb; "remembrance" is a noun. Jesus did not say, "Eat bread while remembering me." He said, "*Do this* in remembrance of me." The verb "do" suggests more than merely eating. "Remembrance" suggests a certain state of being, not action, per se. (An analogy may illustrate this. One may say, "Marrying is an exciting experience." "Marriage," though, may have its dull moments. "Marrying" is performing an act, while "marriage" is a state of being.) "Remembering" is performing a (mental) act, while "remembrance" is a state of being. Therefore, it is quite possible that Jesus meant, by what he said, for them to keep the entire supper, including assembling, prayer of thanksgiving, breaking, passing, and eating the bread—all in a state of remembrance. This state of remembrance would certainly not be some kind of fleeting thought or momentary vague impression or feeling aroused at the single moment of ingesting the bread. Wallace speaks to this point: "The Passover 'remembrance' is intended to reactualize what is remembered. In the same way, to celebrate the Lord's Supper in 'remembrance' of

Christ means to seek fresh communion with Him. . . ."³⁶

In verse 25 the subject shifts to the cup. The "cup" is an obvious metonymy for the contents of the cup. In the Passover meal the "cup(s)" was wine mixed with warm water. The Gospel of Luke reflects the *seder* order more clearly than do Matthew and Mark. He seems to speak of the introductory "cup of sanctification" (Luke 22:17, 18), which Jesus used to emphasize the finality of this supper with them before the kingdom of God should come. Also, according to some manuscripts,³⁷ Luke has closer affinities with Paul than do the other Gospels. In both Luke and Paul's writings, Jesus says, "This is my body which is [given] for you," and "Do this in remembrance of me." Both Luke and Paul speak of Jesus taking the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. . . ." (Luke 22:20). In *seder* order this would be the "cup of blessing" after the normal Passover meal.

Jesus identifies this cup as the new covenant (*he kaine diatheke*) in his blood, which is poured out for many (Mark 14:24). In other words, the fruit of the vine stands for Jesus' blood shed in death, which ratified the new covenant. The parallel is seen in Exodus 24:8 where the agreement between God and his people was sealed with the sprinkling of the blood of sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ, with his blood, ratified the new covenant, the "last will" as *diatheke* originally meant.³⁸

The phrase "as often as you drink it" necessitates repeated observance. We know that at Troas the church met specifically on Sunday to keep this feast (Acts 20:7), and the churches of Galatia and Corinth, too, met on the first day of the week for other purposes as well (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). The Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10) was indeed a special day when Christians had the sacred privilege of communing with their sacrificed, victorious Lord. At the close of verse 25, Paul has concluded his presentation of what he had previously received and delivered (*paredoka*) to them, that is, the "tradition" (*paradosis*) about the Lord's Supper (cf. also 1 Corinthians 11:2).

At verse 26, he stresses that every time they take the Lord's Supper they "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." He is not saying that each partaking is an eternal proclamation; rather, each Lord's Supper is an attestation of the Lord's

sacrificial death, memorialized in the emblems, until he, as the one who lives eternally, makes his return (*parousia*). The proclamation is continuous; the observance is periodic. However, the dynamic faith of the participants, intensified in a "state of remembrance," sees the partaking in an eschatological context. The death of Christ is not the end. It is the beginning of the "end of days" (Daniel 12:13). Each partaking ("as often as," all through time) is of eternal significance, as is the unity of the worldwide community which partakes. The fraternal brotherhood, in unison, proclaims the unity of the faithful by meeting around the Lord's table. "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). Of course, verses 23 through 26 contain Paul's teaching concerning the true significance and fellowship involved in the proper observance of the feast.

Unfortunately, however, this is exactly what the Corinthians had disregarded. "When you meet together," Paul says, "it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (1 Corinthians 11:20). They did not fail because they did not intend to eat the Lord's Supper. No, they failed because their actions showed they were still in the (Roman) world. They were governed by its mores and motivated by its goals. Each gathering was a "proclamation" that they had lost the true meaning of the Supper. As a result, their selfishness and callousness created a tragic schism in the body between those who "had" and those who were hungry. And they went away from this "worship" thinking they had "done their duty"!

1 Corinthians 11:27-32

The next part of our text, verses 27 through 32, definitely teaches them they have no grounds for feeling smug or pious. Verse 27 begins with "Therefore" (RSV), "Wherefore" (KJV), "It follows that" (NEB). The word is *hoste*, used as an illative, signifying the primary idea of "consequently." Thus, Paul means that in view of what he has delivered to them about the Lord's Supper (vv. 23-26), the following consequences (vv. 27-32) hold true. When Paul warns about eating the Supper in an "unworthy manner" he has the Corinthian situation pri-

marily in mind. After all, he is writing to the Corinthian church. Evidence that they were partaking in an unworthy manner is seen in two major areas: (1) They exhibited, if not a total misconception, at least a defective conception, of real gratitude for and true understanding of the Lord's Supper, *per se*. (2) Many of them showed a lack of regard for their brothers and sisters. These two outstanding defects were made vividly real by their segregations, insensitivity, selfishness, and drunkenness. The "unworthy manner" which they exhibited had its impact in two directions, vertically and horizontally. Vertically, they were out of favor with God, since they were "guilty of profaning [RSV; "sinning against," NIV] the body and blood of the Lord." Horizontally, they were creating havoc, divisions, and ill will within the (one) body of Christ. In view of these things, it is not surprising Paul said, "It is not the Lord's Supper that you eat" (1 Corinthians 11:20).

It is an understatement to say that the situation at Corinth called for each Christian to submit to a rigid self-examination. The examination required in verse 28 was, primarily, intended to move the Corinthians to a true understanding of the Supper and their participation in it. If done properly, this would result in a true vertical relationship with God and a true horizontal relationship with their fellow Christians. This reminds us of the "state of remembrance" stressed earlier. It is not merely a fleeting moment of remembering. No, indeed. The Corinthians thought they were observing the Supper, but their scandalous "state of remembrance" nullified their purpose. Thus, self-examination applies to more than the moment or manner of partaking. It applies to the life and attitudes of the partaker as well.

The consequences of not following Paul's instructions would carry grave results. Verse 29 says that a man (*anthropos*) partaking of the Supper "without discerning the body [KJV; RSV] eats and drinks judgment upon himself." One of the guiding principles of exegesis is to know the context of a passage and keep it in mind when interpreting. We have stressed the context enough. Now, let us keep it in mind when we consider the phrase "discerning the body."

It seems almost unnecessary to stress that the direct

meaning is the primary meaning. The NIV puts it squarely: "recognizing the body of the Lord." If the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup do not activate our faculties to recognize the "body of the Lord," we bring judgment upon ourselves. But what does "recognizing the body" mean? The term for "body" here is *soma*. Schweizer states, "The body and blood of the Lord, then, are the act of the Lord sacrificing Himself for the brother. The same applies to v. 29, where *soma* is a brief term for the reconciling sacrifice of Christ which in the Lord's Supper is proffered to the participant."³⁹ Surely, then, "discerning the body" does not mean to see in the emblems merely a lifeless corpse. No, in discerning the body we recognize the significance of the sacrificed body of Christ, which, as Paul says, is represented by both the bread *and* the cup. The significance of the sacrificed body of Jesus is compounded in one word: "gospel." "Nothing could be clearer than that the gospel, focused in the Lord's Supper, is a gospel of God's final and effective and infinitely sacrificial and costly dealing with sin: a gospel of obedience to the will of God achieved within man, sin's entail met in man by maintaining perfect obedience in the face of the worst that man's sin could do."⁴⁰

On the other hand, another dimension of discernment inevitably arises. We have considered the vertical significance of the body of Christ sacrificed on the cross. Additionally, if we are cognizant of the full meaning of the body of Christ, we are aware of our horizontal relationship with others who are members of that one body. Here we speak of that one body as the church with each Christian being a member. Paul says in Colossians 1:18 that Christ "is the head of the body, the church; . . ." Here "*soma(tos)*," meaning body, and "*ekklesia(s)*," meaning assembly, church, are used in apposition, which indicates they mean the same thing.⁴¹

Whether Paul also had this facet in mind is a matter of debate. What cannot be controverted is that the Corinthians were starkly derelict in this regard. What a blessing it would have been for each Corinthian if he could have said in partaking of the Supper,

In my associates I behold One who is in them, even as He is in me, who imparts Himself to them as He does to me, who loves them as He does me, and who is beloved by them as He is beloved by me. Thus, all sense of estrangedness is removed, and a feeling of true brotherhood is awakened, and a communion established wherein we freely share with each other what we have received from Christ.⁴²

Verse 30 states that the Corinthians are suffering the consequences of their "fleshly" minds and inordinate behavior. Gluttony and drunkenness displayed so blatantly among them were symptoms of the far deeper malady that Paul has been addressing. Paul does not hesitate to draw a correlation between sinful behavior and its dire consequences. Some are weak and sick; some have died.

In verses 31 and 32, Paul points out the role and purpose of temporal judgment, that is, the need to be discerning in such situations as the Corinthians now find themselves. If they will profit from Paul's teaching, if they will measure themselves on the scales of truth, and repent, they may in the future avoid the unpleasant chastening judgment of the Lord. He has already chastened some severely, apparently to no avail. Paul urges his present readers to apply holy self-discipline; otherwise, they will receive God's discipline. Here, Paul speaks of a principle of God's chastening which is found elsewhere. "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19). Unless the Corinthians turn, they stand condemned with the world.

1 Corinthians 11:33, 34

The last section, verses 33 and 34, begins with "hoste," as did the previous section (vv. 27-32). There, the "consequently" referred back to what he had said in the entire second section (vv. 23-26). Here, the "consequently" refers back to the first section (vv. 17-22). Hence, we make full circle and realize we have a great teaching on the Lord's Supper that is structurally tightly knit and logically developed. We can be thankful for that because that is not characteristic of Paul's writing. We find in 2 Peter something about the letters of "our beloved

brother Paul." "There are some things in them hard to understand. . . ." (2 Peter 3:15, 16). The logical structure has been a help in our probe of this section.

At verse 33 Paul gives his Corinthian brethren some practical advice. Paul never disdains practical approaches for the cultivating of spiritual lives. Here, he is evidently referring primarily to those who are well-off materially. Instead of quickly devouring the food that the early ones either brought or were given by their host, they were to wait for (*ekdechomai* = receive, expect, look for, wait for) those arriving later. The fellowship meal (*agape*), which was eaten in conjunction with the Lord's Supper, is under consideration here. Paul, nevertheless, tells them to practice decorum. It is not to be like a pagan gorge-feast. Paul says if anyone is hungry, he should eat at home (v. 34). Of course, this has to refer to the "have not's." ". . . they have to do simple, ordinary things, like waiting for one another (v. 33), and having a snack before the liturgical assembly if the pangs of hunger are too sharp (v. 34). They must translate love into such mundane gestures if they are to avoid the condemnation that will fall on the self-centered (v. 32)."⁴³ Paul is reaching back to tie in this closing statement with what he had said in the beginning section. In other words, if they will follow his teachings and accept his rebukes, their assemblies will edify rather than bring them into judgment. Other directions are pending, but Paul will deliver them when he arrives in Corinth.

NOTES

¹M. R. Wilson, "Passover," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 3:675-76.

²For additional details, cf. Jeremiah Unterman, "The Passover," in *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1985), 753-55.

³H. L. Ginsberg's English translation of the Aramaic text may be found in "The Passover Papyrus," in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2d ed., ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955), 491.

⁴Isidore Epstein, *Judaism: A Historical Presentation* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1959), 86.

⁵D. S. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1960), 48-57.

⁶*The Mishnah*, trans. Herbert Danby (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 136-51.

⁷Leo Trepp, *Judaism: Development and Life* (Belmont, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Co., 1966), 178.

⁸Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, trans. Chaya Galai (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), 123.

⁹Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947), 131.

¹⁰Cf. Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 638-39 for extensive particulars.

¹¹Josephus *Antiquities* 14.2.1; 17.9.3.

¹²E.g., C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction With Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), 39, 453-54.

¹³An excellent discussion of the subject may be found in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 774-86.

¹⁴Cf. Vassilios Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11, no. 1 (Jan./Feb., 1985), 44-53, esp. 49.

¹⁵J. W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles* (Des Moines, Iowa: Eugene S. Smith, 1892), 47.

¹⁶F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), 79.

¹⁷E.g., David John Williams, *Acts*, Good News Commentary (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1985), 39.

¹⁸For example, Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 22.

¹⁹Cf. e.g., David L. Barr, *New Testament Story, An Introduction* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing, 1987), xvii-xviii; Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 128; James L. Price, *The New Testament: Its History and Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 16-17.

²⁰Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, Good News Studies, 6 (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1983), 141.

²¹William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1956), 48.

²²Alexander Campbell, *Acts of the Apostles With Translation From*

the Great and Complete Notes on the Text (New York: American Bible Union, 1858), 18.

²³Bruce, *Book of the Acts*, 79, 408.

²⁴The NEB translates "on the Saturday night," a phrase which has not been well received by those who see it as an ill-advised use of a "dynamic equivalent."

²⁵For the latter, cf. Bo Reicke, *The Epistles of James, Peter and Jude*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 168, 184, 206-7, 218.

²⁶Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Early Christians Speak* (Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Co., 1971), 129-36 for a brief discussion of primary sources on the subject, which he tempers by saying, "It is only at the end of the second century that we get detailed descriptions of what was done at a Christian love feast."

²⁷Wayne A. Meeks, ed., *Library of Early Christianity*, (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1986), vol. 2, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, by John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, 55.

²⁸Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 153-61, where he says "... no scenario has been suggested which so well explains the details of I Cor. 11:17-34. . . ."

²⁹Cf. major translations such as RSV and NIV, which indicate divisions of this passage with paragraphs.

³⁰Cf. e.g., Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "I Corinthians," in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco, Calif.: Harper & Row, 1988), 1183 when she says, "The whole section 11:2-14:40 . . . begins and ends with a discussion of women's behavior in the worship assembly of the community." (Emphasis mine.)

³¹Cf. this principle also mentioned in Matthew 10:34-39 and 1 John 2:18, 19.

³²William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 266.

³³Norman Hillyer, "I Corinthians," in *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, ed. D. Guthrie, J. A. Motyer, A. M. Stibbs, and D. J. Wiseman (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), 1066.

³⁴David K. Lowery, "I Corinthians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1983), 531.

³⁵Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 550.

³⁶R. S. Wallace, "Lord's Supper," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 3:170.

³⁷Cf. NIV *contra* RSV.

³⁸Clarence Tucker Craig, "I Corinthians," in *The Interpreters Bible*,

ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), 10:138-39.

³⁹Eduard Schweizer and Friedrich Baumgartel, "Soma, Somatikos, Sussomos" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), 7:1068.

⁴⁰C. F. D. Moule, *The Sacrifice of Christ*, Biblical Series 12 (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1964), 36.

⁴¹Cf. Thomas Sheldon Green, *A Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., n.d.), 56.

⁴²Christian Friedrich Kling, *Corinthians*, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 241.

⁴³Wilfrid Harrington and Donald Senior, eds., *New Testament Message* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1979), vol. 10, *I Corinthians*, by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 114-15.

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SPIRITUAL GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12—14)

JIMMY JIVIDEN

NEW TESTAMENT GIFTS

The topic "Spiritual Gifts" is not an affirmation of miraculous gifts for the world today. It is rather a discussion of the New Testament spiritual gifts and how they are to be understood.

I have divided my classes into three divisions. First, I will examine the scriptural evidences concerning spiritual gifts. Second, I will examine the evidences for false claims of miracles in both the New Testament and first-century historical documents. Third, I will offer suggestions on how one is to respond to the claims of miraculous spiritual gifts today.

Definitions

There are nine Greek terms that can be translated "gifts," but the basic one involved in our study is *charisma*. It is used at least seventeen times. Often, but not always, it is used in the context of miraculous spiritual gifts possessed by certain New Testament Christians. This accounts for the way our current word "charismatic" is used. One is called "charismatic" because he believes that he possesses the miraculous *charisma* gifts of the New Testament.

There are some exceptions. *Doma* and *dorea* are used in Ephesians 4:7, 8 with reference to gifts that were given by Jesus when he "led captivity captive." *Merismos* (with the idea of distribution) is used in Hebrews 2:4 as one of the ways that God confirmed the message of Jesus with signs, wonders, and "gifts" of the Holy Spirit.

The basic meaning of *charisma* is to be found in *charis*—grace. The word denotes a "grace gift." It means a gift

received without merit—one that has not been earned. God freely gives *charisma* to certain individuals, at certain times, and for certain purposes.

Another word involved in this study is *pneumatikos*. It is translated "spiritual." It is used with *charisma* in Romans 1:11 and is translated "spiritual gifts." It is used without *charisma* in 1 Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1 with reference to spiritual gifts.

Both *charisma* and *pneumatikos* are general words and not limited to those miraculous, confirming, grace gifts which were possessed by some of the New Testament Christians.

Evidence

The study of spiritual gifts centers around four New Testament passages. The first passage is Romans 12:3-8, which is a discussion focusing on unity and diversity within the church. The second passage is 1 Corinthians 12—14, which is a discussion of the abuse of spiritual gifts and an affirmation of their genuine purpose. The third passage is Ephesians 4:7-16, which is a discussion of the edifying nature of spiritual gifts. The fourth passage is 1 Peter 4:10, 11, which is a discussion of how the individual is to use good stewardship in the use of spiritual gifts.

Romans 12:3-8 shows that spiritual gifts should not make one feel superior. One is "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think." God has "allotted to each a measure of faith" which is different from that possessed by others (Romans 12:3). These spiritual gifts are *charisma*—grace gifts—and are to be used for the good of the total body.

It should be noted that there is no reference to the Holy Spirit in this passage. It should be noted that none of the seven kinds of gifts mentioned are uniquely miraculous in their nature. It should be noted that there is no evidence that an apostle had been to Rome at this time. There had been no opportunity for the Roman Christians to receive the "laying on of the apostles' hands." In fact, this was one of the motivating purposes that Paul had for coming to Rome. "For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established" (Romans 1:11).

Ephesians 4:7-16 also shows that the "gifts" (*doma*) that the

Ephesians received were grace gifts (Ephesians 4:7). The source of the gifts was from Christ instead of God as in Romans 12:3 and instead of the Holy Spirit as in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11. The purposes of the gifts are stated.

... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

Gifts of spiritual leadership—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teaching pastors—are mentioned. These leadership gifts would bring the church to spiritual maturity, stabilize her faith, and unify her into a self-edifying fellowship.

It should be noted that there is a textual problem in verse 8. Both the Massoretic text and the Septuagint have Psalm 68:18 saying: "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive Thy captives; Thou hast received gifts among men."

This Old Testament Psalm pictures a leader of a victorious army returning home from battle with a host of captives in his company and *receiving* gifts.

The quotation in Ephesians 4:8 varies from this understanding. It pictures Jesus leading the devil captive and *giving* gifts to his followers.

It should be noted that these gifts were given by Christ "until we all attain" the following: (1) to the unity of the faith and to the knowledge of the Son of God, (2) to the mature (*telion*) man, and (3) to the measure of the stature which belongs to the followers of Christ. All of these concepts reflect a progression toward maturity. There can only be unity of the faith when it has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). There can only be a knowledge of the Son of God when inspired men have written about his life, teachings, and miracles (John 20:30, 31; Luke 1:1-4). There can only be spiritual maturity when the oracles of God are studied and practiced (Hebrews 4:12-14). There can only be an attainment to the measure of the stature which belongs to Christ when one comes to understand the message and model of Jesus as revealed in the Scripture.

First Corinthians 12—14 is the largest body of Scripture which discusses spiritual gifts.

The context is the abuse of spiritual gifts at Corinth. Some were exercising the gift of miraculous speaking in foreign languages. Others did not understand what they were saying (1 Corinthians 14:14-16). The results were mindless worship of God and irrational speech to the unlearned.

This was causing a lot of confusion. Those who had the spiritual gifts thought that they did not need the rest of the church (1 Corinthians 12:21). Those who had no gift at all considered themselves inferior and not worthy of being a part of the body (1 Corinthians 12:15). When the church assembled, everyone spoke at once in whatever language their gift dictated. This nullified worship, made unbelievers think Christians were mad, and allowed women to dominate the assembly.

Chapter 12 shows that the possession of spiritual gifts does not make one spiritually superior. Chapter 13 shows that spiritual gifts are in the process of passing away and are worth nothing unless used with love. Chapter 14 shows that prophecy is superior to tongues and gives specific instructions on the use of these miraculous spiritual gifts in the assembly.

First Peter 4:10, 11 contains a brief reference to spiritual gifts also. It shows that such gifts do not come for personal merit but are received as grace gifts from God. Since they have been received by grace, they should not be used for selfish advantage. One is to become "a good steward of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

Brief references to spiritual gifts are to be found in several other passages. The Corinthians were not lacking in any gift (1 Corinthians 1:7). Paul speaks of his ability to remain unmarried as a grace gift from God (1 Corinthians 7:7). Paul speaks of how Timothy received a spiritual gift with (*meta*) "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Timothy 4:14). Paul also speaks of how Timothy possessed the gift of God, which came through (*dia*) "the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6). Reference is made to gifts (distributions) of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 2:4. This passage has reference to the miraculous spiritual gifts possessed by some of the New Testament Christians.

Source

The source of receiving spiritual gifts was from God. It is interesting to note that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all the giver of spiritual gifts. God is the giver in Romans 12:3. Christ is the giver in Ephesians 4:7. The Holy Spirit is the giver in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Spiritual gifts did not come from personal merit but were grace gifts from God. It was, perhaps, because some were boasting about their gifts that Paul gave the Corinthians this admonition: "For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7).

Grace gifts are from God and are to be used for the common good of the church. The right use of these gifts was to bring about unity and growth in the body of Christ. "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

The means of receiving spiritual gifts was through the laying on of the apostles' hands. Several passages show that miraculous powers came through this practice. The apostles laid hands on the seven men chosen to care for the Grecian widows. Two of them, Philip and Stephen, were able to work miracles (Acts 6:8; 8:6). The twelve men at Ephesus who received the laying on of the apostle Paul's hands were able to speak in tongues and prophecy (Acts 19:7). It plainly states that Timothy received the "gift of God" through the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Timothy 1:6). Perhaps this practice is reflected in what Paul called the "signs" of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Perhaps the clearest statement of this power being given through the laying on of the apostles' hands is connected with the Samaritan Christians. They had already been baptized, but Luke said the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them (Acts 8:16). The apostles came from Jerusalem and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon saw what happened and wanted this power to do the same thing.

Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered

them money, saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:18, 19).

Incidental reference confirms this as the means of obtaining spiritual gifts. Paul's purpose in coming to Rome was to bestow spiritual gifts: "For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established" (Romans 1:11). Paul indicated that the church at Corinth did not need spiritual gifts: ". . . that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, . . . so that you are not lacking in any gift. . . ." (1 Corinthians 1:5, 7a). The difference was that an apostle had not yet been at Rome. Paul, an apostle, wanted to come that he might bestow spiritual gifts. Paul had already been in Corinth for more than a year (Acts 18:11) and had ample opportunity to lay hands on many Christians. They were not lacking in any gift.

Miraculous power was not limited to these spiritual gifts bestowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands. The seventy sent out by Jesus had such power (Luke 10:9, 17). The apostles possessed such power (Acts 5:12-15). Some miracles came as a direct act from God such as the events on Pentecost and the miracles connected with Cornelius' conversion. New Testament spiritual gifts involved supernatural power, but it appears that their purposes were somewhat different from the other miracles.

Purposes

Two purposes are given for the miracles of the New Testament—confirmation and edification.

The purpose of confirmation is dominant in the Gospels and in Acts. God used the miracles to confirm a man and/or his message. This purpose is shown in the following two passages:

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30, 31).

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Hebrews 2:3b, 4).

The purpose of edification is dominant in the Epistles. Spiritual gifts at Corinth were to be used for the "common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). Spiritual gifts at Ephesus were to be used for the "equipping of the saints" and the "building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Spiritual gifts at Rome were to be unselfishly used for the good of the one body (Romans 12:4, 5). Peter instructed Christians in Asia to "serve one another" in the exercise of their *charisma* gifts (1 Peter 4:10).

At a time in which the "once for all" faith was still in the process of being delivered, spiritual gifts were needed to reveal, to discern, and to confirm the oracles of God. Spiritual gifts had a practical value in the church when there was no New Testament. Individuals depended upon inspired prophets, teachers, and evangelists to know the will of God. They could be assured that the message was true because it was confirmed by miraculous signs. Spiritual gifts were needed in the New Testament church.

CONTEMPORARY CLAIMS

Both ancient and contemporary miraculous claims need to be contrasted with the genuine spiritual gifts possessed by certain New Testament Christians. They must not be confused. One is true, and the other is fake. One is a miracle from God, and the other is a deception from man. Confusion between the two has been the source of all kinds of religious errors.

False Signs Predicted

Numerous passages show that there were those who made miraculous claims in apostolic times. Both a study of these examples and a historical review of some of the pagan wonder workers are helpful in understanding contemporary miraculous claims. The following chart shows New Testament refer-

ences of false signs from false apostles.

Matthew 2:24; Mark 13:22	False prophets and false signs
2 Corinthians 11:13-15	Deceitful workers
Galatians 1:6-9	Teaching another gospel
Colossians 2:18, 19	False teachers claiming visions
2 Thessalonians 2:8-12	Signs to deceive
1 Timothy 4:1-3	Deceitful spirits
2 Timothy 3:13	Impostors who deceive
Titus 3:13	Men who deceive for gain
Revelation 13:11-14	Beast deceives men with signs
Revelation 16:12-16	Unclean spirits perform signs
Revelation 19:19, 20	False prophet who deceives

This chart of miracles in the Epistles lists twelve passages in which the New Testament warns of deceitful wonder workers and false signs. It should be observed that any time the Epistles speak of signs in the latter times, it refers to false signs from false prophets.

Jesus warned that false prophets with great signs would lead many astray (Matthew 24:24). He said not to believe them. The apostle John warns against believing just anybody who claims to have the Spirit of God: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). There are unholy spirits just as there is the Holy Spirit. One must not allow a false prophet to counterfeit that which is holy.

Some characteristics of these false prophets who work signs are shown in the Scriptures. First, they disguise themselves as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:13-15). Second, they preach another gospel (Galatians 1:6-8). Third, they work false wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9). Fourth, they deceive for gain (Titus 1:10). Fifth, they teach false doctrine (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Sixth, they claim to have visions (Colossians 2:18, 19).

In Revelation, signs are worked by the beast, unclean spir-

its, and false prophets. All of these work in opposition to Christ. The ultimate end of these false sign workers is the lake of fire (Revelation 19:19, 20).

Jesus himself predicted that there would be those who profess to be his followers who would claim to do mighty works in his name. He refused to acknowledge them as his disciples.

Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; *depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness* (Matthew 7:22, 23; emphasis mine).

What Jesus predicted took place in the first century and has continued to take place in every generation since then. Contemporary claims of miraculous signs are not new.

For these reasons one should not give passive tolerance to such claims or excuse them as merely being pious fantasies. It is wrong to claim the name of Christ as the authority for psychosomatic cures or paranormal happenings. Contemporary frauds claiming to be miracles cast doubts on the genuine miracles of the New Testament in the minds of the people who witness them.

Questioning the miraculous claims of contemporary religion is not a sign of weak faith; it is rather a sign of a mature faith. The New Testament warnings about false prophets and lying wonders must be heeded today.

New Testament Evidence

From the New Testament itself, one is able to discover much information about the pagan miracles of the first century.

One of the most notable pagan wonder workers in the New Testament is Simon the magician. Luke describes him thus:

Now there was a certain man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city, and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great; and they all, from the smallest to the greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called Great Power of God." And they were giving him attention

because he had for a long time astonished them with the magic arts (Acts 8:9, 10).

The miracles of Philip were so much greater than Simon's magic that he was converted (Acts 8:13). He had a hard time giving up his old ways. He wanted the power that the apostles had of laying hands on individuals to give the Holy Spirit. Peter rebuked him and demanded that he repent. Luke does not finish the story as to whether or not he repented. He does, however, show that money and miracles go together in the minds of those with bad hearts. Ecclesiastical tradition has Simon becoming a false teacher in the early church. Eusebius said that he was the author of all heresy.

Elymas Bar-Jesus was another magician confronted by Paul and Barnabas. Luke describes him as a false prophet who was in company with Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Salamis. He opposed Barnabas and Saul and tried to turn the proconsul away from their teaching. He was resisted by Paul and struck blind. Paul's rebuke tells something of him: "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). Paul had no hesitancy in exposing one who by deceit and fraud turned people away from the truth.

An unnamed damsel at Philippi had a spirit of divination which she used to tell fortunes (Acts 16:16-23). When Paul arrived at Philippi, she began to follow him saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." Paul cast the evil spirit out of her. Her masters were angry because they saw that their hope of profit was gone. They put Paul and Silas in prison.

If there were ever a time to compromise with a false religion, it would appear to be here. After all, she was speaking the truth when she identified Paul and Silas as servants of the Most High God. Religious toleration would have been satisfied if Paul and Silas had left things as they were. Certainly they would not have been jailed if they had not confronted the false religion. This incident shows that followers of Jesus Christ do not give sanction to or compromise with those who teach or

practice a false doctrine. Resisting evil or false spirits is just as much a part of evangelism as is the affirmation of the true gospel.

The seven sons of Sceva were Jewish exorcists who were operating in Ephesus during Paul's stay there.

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches." And the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:13-16).

Exorcism was very common in the first century. The Paris Magical Papyrus is an example of the formula which was used to supposedly cast out demons. The Papyrus is dated about A.D. 300 but reflects times much earlier.

I adjure thee by the god of the Hebrews Jesu, Jaba, Jae, Abraoth, Aia, Thoth, Ele, Aeo, Eu, Jiibaech, Abarmas, Jabarau, Abelbel, Lona, Abra, Maroia, Arm, thou that appearest in fire, thou that art in the midst of earth and snow and vapor, Tannetis: let thy angel descend, the implacable one, and let him draw into captivity the demon as he flieth in his holy paradise.¹

It is easy to see the Jewish and the Christian influence on the exorcist's formula. Any name that might help their magic was welcomed. It must not have been uncommon for Jews to take up this practice. Such was the case in the Ephesus incident. Jesus refers to the practice of exorcism associated with such an orthodox body as the Pharisees. He responded to their accusation that Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebub by asking, "By whom do your sons cast them out?" (Matthew 12:27).

Again this passage shows the incompatibility of those who follow Jesus and those who work wonders by pagan standard.

A classic example of the effect of the gospel on those who practice the magic arts is found in another incident in the city of Ephesus: "And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together, and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19). Christians at Ephesus who formerly practiced magic demonstrated their repentance by destroying their books of magic. They burned their bridges behind them when they became Christians and removed from themselves the temptation to return to their old pagan ways. Again this incident affirms that Christianity is incompatible with the practice of magic, deceitful signs, and false wonders.

Paul makes reference to pagan worship practices in correcting the abuse of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian correspondence: "You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led" (1 Corinthians 12:2). It would appear from the context that the abuse of the miraculous gift of speaking in languages was not unlike pagan ecstasy. In pagan worship people were "led astray" because they surrendered their will to an experience. In this experience they cared little for rational understanding and often acted irrationally. Particularly was this true in the Greek Mystery Religions. What the Corinthian Christians were doing looked much like these pagan practices. They were speaking in foreign languages which neither they nor the people who were listening could understand. They were doing it all at the same time. No one was translating the language into rational meaning so that the assembly could be edified. The confusion resembled the irrational ecstasy of the pagan mysteries.

It is no wonder that Paul begins his correction of the abuse of spiritual gifts by suggesting that what they were doing was more pagan than Christian. Such irrational experiential behavior is incompatible with the real power of the Holy Spirit and the rational meaning that came from the right use of the gifts.

First-Century Wonder-Working

The Jews of Jesus' day had a rich background in the miracu-

lous. The Old Testament Scriptures contain the miracles of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha and random signs scattered throughout their history. Most of the miracles occurred during the time of special revelation and served to confirm the prophet and his prophecy as being from God. The miraculous was involved in the ministries of Moses, Daniel, Isaiah, and others. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. God also confirmed their message with signs.

Besides the Old Testament miracles, there were many claims of the miraculous in Jewish history. The Apocrypha speaks of all kinds of miracles being done by Jewish heroes.

An example of this is found in Tobit. When Tobias and his company came to the Tigris River, "a fish leaped up from the river and would have swallowed the young man. . . ." The fish was caught and eaten. The heart, liver, and gall of the fish were saved. It was to be carried on their journey. The angel Azarias was asked what it was to be used for. His reply inferred that it was to cure blindness and drive away demons.

He replied, As for the heart and the liver, if a demon or evil spirit gives trouble to any one, you make a smoke from these before the man or woman, and that person will never be troubled again. And as for the gall, anoint with it a man who has white films in his eyes, and he will be cured (Tobit 6:7, 8).

The Jews of Jesus' day had a background both in true and false wonders. With such a background, no wonder Paul said that "for indeed Jews ask for signs. . . ." (1 Corinthians 1:22).

The Roman culture of the first century was diverse in the way they regarded claims of the miraculous.

On one extreme there were men like Cicero who denounced divination as a superstition. He claimed that such claims took advantage of human weakness to cast a spell over the mind of man.

To the other extreme there were miracle stories surrounding the Roman emperors. Tacitus writes of Vespasian being connected with healing a blind man in Alexandria. He put spittle in his eyes, and they were healed. He also healed a man with a crippled hand by walking on it. These miracles were

associated with his visit to the Sarapion. According to Tacitus, this shows that Sarapius gave divine approval to Vespasian.

The Greek world of the first century was dualistic. There was the world of matter and the world of the spirit. Man was both mind (*neus*) and body (*physis*). The mind was trapped in the body which was material, nonessential, and passing away. This dualism was to present major problems in the church under the guise of what would later be called Gnosticism. This dualistic view of nature and man along with the nature of the Greek gods made miracles the expected thing.

Devotees of the mystery religions expected the supernatural to seize them in the religious rituals. Miraculous stories were told about their heroes. Healing shrines and oracle shrines were popular. Priests were skilled in producing experiences by psychological manipulation. Bloody sacrifices, sacred snakes, mysterious language, mood-changing music, and sacred rituals all combined to make their religion very experiential.

The miracle of inspiration was common. The gods spoke through the oracles. Oracle shrines were common. Slaves and emperors visited these shrines to learn the will of the gods and discover the future. E. R. Dodds writes of the oracles at Delphi:

At Delphi, and apparently at most of his oracles, Apollo relied, not on visions . . . but on "enthusiasm" in its original and literal sense. The Pythis became *enteos*, *plena deo*: the god entered into her and used her vocal organs as if they were his own. . . .²

The miracle of healing was also common. Esklepiions were scattered throughout the Greek world. Healing was a combination of psyche suggestions, religious ritual, drugs, and physical therapy. Modern medicine traces some of its roots back to some medical skills which came from this cult. A number of the museums today have on display many of the artifacts which one time filled these shrines. They reflect healings of all kinds of illnesses and injuries.

It was into such a wonder-working world that Jesus came. There were claims from Greeks, Romans, and Jews. The whole

culture had in its psyche the direct intervention of the gods into the affairs of men. Jesus was to bring in a different kind of miracle. It would be real, not just a pious priestly fraud. It would be factual, not exaggerated fantasy. It would be indisputable even from his enemies.

Jesus' miracles and those of the apostolic company were unique. They were of a different nature, different source, and had a different purpose from contemporary miraculous claims. Contemporary miraculous claims can best be compared to what are called "false signs" and "lying wonders" in the New Testament and the pagan wonders of the first century.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS TODAY

Do spiritual gifts still exist? I could say both "yes" and "no" to such a question.

In one sense, spiritual gifts do still exist. If one understands them to be God's nonmiraculous grace gifts with which men are blessed, such gifts are still to be found in Christians and are to be used for the good of the church. The ones who possess them are stewards of God's manifold blessings. This is the way *charisma* is used in Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10, 11.

In another sense, spiritual gifts do not exist if one understands spiritual gifts to be those special miraculous powers God gave to confirm his message and edify the New Testament church. This appears to be the way *charisma* is used in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4:7-16.

Neither understanding of the spiritual *charisma* is to be associated with the contemporary claims of miraculous powers. Such claims are also found in the New Testament but never in association with God's people. These claims were made by false prophets who worked false signs to enhance their own power and wealth.

Such claims can be found in abundance among pagan religions of the first century. Ancient pagans as well as contemporary charismatics claimed power to speak in a different language, heal the sick, cast out demons, and also predict the future.

Pagan Miracles and Contemporary Claims

There is a strong similarity between pagan miracles and the contemporary claims of miraculous spiritual gifts. The difference that does exist is not in content, but only form.

What is claimed as divine language is nothing more than the common psychological phenomena of ecstatic utterance. What is claimed as divine healing is nothing more than carefully staged performances by actors and/or temporary relief from psychosomatic illnesses. What is claimed as exorcism is merely the psychological manipulation and paranormal conduct in a religious environment. What is claimed as a message from God is nothing more than intuitive guesses given in symbolic language so as to be interpreted in different ways.

Strong similarities exist between pagan miracles and contemporary claims of miraculous spiritual gifts. Both, however, are radically different from the genuine miracles contained in the New Testament. Notice these four ways.

First, the environment in which the miracle takes place is different. The environment of the New Testament miracles was not an atmosphere created to manipulate the psyche to receive an experience through the use of ritual, drugs, and drama. Second, the success rate was different. There was only one temporary failure to cure a man by the apostles, and that was due to their lack of faith (Matthew 17:19). Most of the people who desire to be healed both at ancient pagan shrines and in contemporary healing campaigns go away disappointed. Third, the purpose was different. New Testament miracles were to confirm the man and/or the message and to edify the church. Pagan miracles and contemporary miraculous claims make the miracle an end within itself. Fourth, the believability is different. It is easy to discern the psychological factors involved in the healing at pagan shrines and at contemporary healing meetings. There is the power of suggestion, the psychosomatic nature of many illnesses, and an emotionally charged environment connected with false signs. Genuine miracles in the New Testament were acknowledged even by those who opposed the gospel.

It is not sufficient to show the marked differences between the genuine and the counterfeit. Contemporary claims must

be rejected. They are false. They undermine faith in Jesus and compromise the teaching of the Scripture.

No Evidence

Claims of miraculous spiritual gifts must be rejected because there is no objective evidence that they do occur.

One must not confuse a natural event with a miracle. One must not be deceived by supposing that the odd, the rare, or the paranormal is a miracle. One must not be taken in by psychic phenomena, clever tricks, or pious frauds. One must not be so gullible as to receive subjective testimony of unusual events happening to unknown people in distant places as a basis for a miraculous claim. One must not be so full of expectation of divine intervention that he will identify anything that he does not understand as a miraculous act of God.

If indeed a miracle occurs, where is the proof? One can investigate claim after claim after claim, and all he ends up with is subjective material. There are personal subjective testimonies. There are hypothetical illnesses. There are emotional and ecstatic experiences. There are changes in feelings and lifestyles. There are experiential interpretations of some natural phenomena as being a sign from God. The burden of proof rests on those who make the claim of miracles. Let genuine objective evidence be brought forth if such claims of miracles be true.

No Purpose

Claims of miraculous spiritual gifts must be rejected because there is no valid scriptural purpose today. It has already been shown that there are two purposes of the New Testament miracles. First, there was the purpose to confirm that a man and/or a message was from God. Second, there was the purpose of edifying the church before the full revelation of God was revealed in the New Testament.

Miracles will be needed again when there is a new Messiah or a new revelation from God. Since Jesus is the "once for all" sacrifice for sins, men do not need another Savior (Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 26). Since the faith which was delivered to the saints in the apostolic age was "once for all," there will never be a need for another faith. The purposes for miracles have been

accomplished. They are no longer needed.

The Jews in Jesus' times sought signs. They wanted Jesus to work signs so that they might, like Israel under Moses, have bread without working for it (John 6:26, 30). They wanted a sign to validate Jesus' cleansing the temple (John 2:18). They wanted another sign after they saw Jesus cast a demon out of a blind and dumb demoniac (Matthew 12:38). His answer was plain to those sign seekers: "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39).

The purpose of signs was not for curiosity, power, or material gain. The New Testament miracles have already confirmed Jesus and his message. Those who seek them for other purposes stand just as much condemned as the unbelieving Jews.

No Qualified Miracle Worker

Claims of miraculous spiritual gifts must be rejected because there are no living persons who are qualified to work miracles.

In the New Testament period several groups of individuals had miraculous powers.

Jesus, the Twelve, and the Seventy worked miracles during Jesus' personal ministry (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:1-20). The apostles were able to work signs. This was a confirmation of their apostolic office (2 Corinthians 12:12). The Twelve and the Seventy were able to work signs because Jesus had given them authority to do so.

Those upon whom the apostles laid their hands possessed miraculous powers (Acts 8:18). Two of the seven men upon whom the apostles laid their hands in Acts 6 were able to work miracles at a later time (Acts 6:8; 8:6). The twelve men Paul converted at Ephesus could miraculously speak in other languages and prophesy after Paul laid his hands on them (Acts 19:1-7). Timothy received a grace gift from the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Timothy 1:6). Numerous individuals at Corinth had received miraculous powers. They possessed spiritual gifts to do many kinds of miraculous things (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Nowhere does it say that they received these powers

through the laying on of the apostles' hands, but such could well have been the case. Paul had been at Corinth for more than a year and had plenty of time and opportunity to lay hands on the Christians there in order that they might work miracles. After he was there, he wrote them that "you are not lacking in any gift" (1 Corinthians 1:7).

Cornelius and his household received miraculous power to speak in other languages and prophesy. This was much like that which happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18).

The power to work miracles was not distributed in a chaotic manner. Jesus and his apostles were those who were most prominent in working miracles. After them came those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and those who had received the laying on of the apostles' hands.

There are no individuals in these categories who are living today. The result is that there are no miracles today.

No Authority

Claims of miraculous spiritual gifts must be rejected because there is no scriptural authority to suggest that they were to continue beyond the apostolic age.

Some would suggest that Jesus promised that miraculous spiritual gifts would continue. To support this claim they would refer to the statement Jesus made after giving the great commission, "These signs shall accompany them that believe" (Mark 16:17).

The text does not say, "These signs *shall be worked* by those who believe." The promise is rather, "These signs *shall accompany* them that believe." There is a difference. Signs can accompany the preaching of the gospel directly as was done in the lives of the apostles. Signs can also accompany the preaching of the gospel through the Scriptures which record the signs (John 20:30, 31).

The New Testament itself predicts the passing of the miraculous. There was a decrease in the miraculous activities from the Gospels to Acts. There is an even greater decline from Acts to the Epistles. There is even a decline from the earlier to the later Epistles. All of this reflects the passing of the miraculous

in the apostolic age.

This does not mean that God has ceased his work in the world. This does not infer that Jesus has gone to heaven and is unconcerned with his followers on the earth. This certainly does not suggest that the Holy Spirit is not working in the midst of the church today. God is alive and working in today's world. The Holy Spirit still dwells in every Christian. Jesus still works in the lives of individual men and rules the nations.

The question is not "whether God works in the world," but "how God works in the world." To deny contemporary miraculous claims does not in any way nullify one's faith in the present work of God. Such is an affirmation that God is working in the world but according to his will in revelation and creation.

The Scriptures themselves show that the miraculous was to pass away. One cannot place an exact date on its passing. One cannot know with certainty when the last miracle was performed. He can only believe the promise that miracles would cease. Paul speaks of this in writing the Corinthians who gloried in the miraculous element of their gifts:

Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part; and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

This passage does not identify with clarity what the "perfect" is. It does state that the spiritual gifts will pass when the perfect shall come. It does not state the time that these gifts shall pass. This passage does, however, clearly teach that the spiritual gifts like prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will "cease" or "pass away." They were temporary, inferior, and passing away. Those who seek after such miraculous signs today should understand that Paul predicted their passing.

The miraculous gifts were temporary. They had an end-time. What evidence is there to suggest that this end-time has not already come? No Scripture promises the continuation of the miraculous gifts. There is no evidence that they still exist. There are no persons living who fit the New Testament pat-

tern of miracle workers. There is no reason for such to continue to exist. Both faith and reason demand that the contemporary claims of miracles be rejected.

NOTES

¹C. K. Barrett, *The New Testament Background: Selected Documents* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1956), 32.

²E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1957), 70-71.

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THE GRACE OF GIVING

(1 Corinthians 16:1-9)

BILL LAIRD

In today's world, nothing is probably more frustrating than working with a person who is a thief. It just does not seem right when one person takes possession of something which actually does not belong to him. The only thing worse than stealing, is to steal from our Creator.

The prophet Malachi said it was possible for a man or woman to rob God. His words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, were,

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse: for you have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring you all the tithes into the storehouses, that there may be meat in my own house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Malachi 3:8-10).

Our text of study has been given the title, "The Grace of Giving." Probably, the most common definition of grace is to receive something one does not deserve. Grace is a gift, and giving is a command. How are these two thoughts related? Hopefully, this introductory passage will help get us on the right track.

In the Old Testament God's children were commanded to give 10 per cent of their first fruits, etc. However, as the Israelites proved their servitude by giving, as God desired, they were in turn rewarded by both physical and spiritual blessings.

In the above passage of Scripture, Malachi is reminding God's people of the impossibility of outgiving the one who set forth the command to give.

The Bible teaches that God sends rain on both the just and the unjust. But this same inspired Word also teaches that the Lord abundantly blesses his children in ways unknown to those who refuse to accept his teachings.

The passage which we are studying was written specifically to those who had decided to follow the Lord. It was understood that part of this following included giving. Paul now declares to this church God's command as to when and how this giving should take place. These instructions should be studied alongside of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 and part of Romans 15. Even in these related Scriptures, we see a relationship between God's command to give and his grace which is extended in this giving.

Paul first shows us the right to give. The right was given to the churches of the Lord. He earlier had instructed those churches in Galatians, and now he instructs the church in Corinth. This right was not given to those who either refused to believe in Christ or refused to accept his words. God has not always accepted gifts from just everybody. None of us are so good that we are chosen to give to the Lord, but because we are his children, we have been given the opportunity to give.

According to Jimmy Allen in his commentary on 1 Corinthians, this giving was to be placed into a common treasury. Paul's words were to "let every one of you lay by him in store." The "every one of you" is limited to Christians only. Not every person has been given that opportunity.

Second, we are given the reason to give. It is always hard to get a person to give if there is not a good reason to do so. Christians all over this country were recently given a reason to give because of the recent happenings in Eastern Europe. In Corinth the church also had a special reason to give. They had brothers and sisters in Christ suffering in Jerusalem. Where there is a need, there is also a reason to give. As long as there are poor Christians and souls lost in sin, there is a need to give. According to Romans 15:26, this contribution was to help the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Third, there will also be a responsibility to give. Even though God's children are special, and therefore, the grace of giving is extended to them, it is also a command and not something to be taken lightly. Paul does not use the word "beseech" or "exhort" but uses a form of the military word "command." That, then removes all possible doubt as to whether or not he should give. Paul had commanded others, and now he commands the church in this city.

When there is no longer a right or a reason to give, there will no longer be a responsibility. According to verses 6 through 9, Paul still planned to go on to other places to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul had a responsibility to preach, and the church had a responsibility to aid him in his preaching. Hopefully, this congregation helped Paul share this gospel with others. Surely we, the church today, will accept this same responsibility and give as though we only had been given the opportunity to share in this great work.

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PREACHING AND 1 CORINTHIANS

EXPOSITORY PREACHING FROM 1 CORINTHIANS

C. PHILIP SLATE

Before considering the specifics of preaching expositively the message of 1 Corinthians, it is necessary to get straight the concept of expository preaching itself, especially since some preaching is called "expository" when it is not. I shall set out these points in numbered fashion.

1. In both practice and formal definition, expository preaching has at times been conceived as chiefly "explanation of the text." But there is a difference between lecture and sermon. Mere explanation is lecture; expository sermon consists of both explanation and application to the hearers.

2. It is possible for one to do a lot of applying without the necessary explanation of the Word of God, especially if one does much topical or subject preaching. Topical or subject preaching is acceptable in evangelism, especially if people are not very familiar with Scripture and our references to book, chapter, and verse. But when preaching to the church, which is supposed to accept and feed upon the Word of God, the situation is different. Expounding a section of Scripture to the church has both real and symbolic value. The real value is that the church is actually fed on the Word of God, a definable section of Scripture which is explained and applied in a meaningful way. It has symbolic value in that the people of the book should be seen as feeding upon the book. It is true that the book points beyond itself to Christ as the object of faith, as we often sing: "Beyond the sacred page, we seek thee, Lord." But only in Scripture do we have the explicit statements from God.

3. A necessary presupposition to expository preaching is that one must responsibly understand the passage to be preached. In the sixty-six books of Scripture, God has spoken

in many and various ways (Hebrews 1:1, 2). The various modes of communication (prophetic material, parables, apocalyptic, and narratives) are important as means of getting the message across. The mode of communication has something to do with the message itself. The lawsuit of Micah has its own force. It is one thing to say, "God will forgive you," but it is another thing to embody that concept in the parable of the lost boy (Luke 15:11-32). The impact is different in the case of 1 Corinthians, where we are dealing with the epistolary form which has certain well-defined characteristics. By considering relevant sections of Fee and Stuart,¹ and Greidanus,² one can pick up at a fairly popular level the characteristics of an Epistle. Those characteristics enable one to get a better handle on the actual message of the book.

4. Expository sermons must have minimal earmarks of a sermon. Just because one is expounding the Word directly does not mean one can avoid attention to those elements of sermons which make them hearable and profitable. I would advocate that in each major heading, section, or, to use the terminology of Buttrick,³ "Moves," one should have the elements of (1) explaining the text, (2) making legitimate applications of the principles of the text to the people who hear, with (3) some type of developmental (often referred to as illustrative) material. To keep one on track, it may be useful to use in each major heading or point of the sermon an internal structure that calls attention to exposition, application, and illustration. Alternatively, one may have a "then" and "now" structure, forcing one to explain what was going on when the biblical document was written, and then forcing oneself to answer the fundamental question for the hearers, What does it matter? In other words, if one is going to expound the message of God, one should capitalize on all possible homiletical insight to make that exposition hearable and meaningful to those present. Details of word studies, fine points of grammar, theological insight, geographical matters, and relationships to contemporary people may all be useful and even interesting to the speaker; but if they are not made applicable to the man who operates the service station, the woman who is a "keeper at home," the Christian physician, the "big time" farmer, the

single man who works for minimal wages, and others who may not spend a lot of time with heavy ideas during the week, then one will miss the mark considerably. In a sense, proclaimers of the Word are to be bridge builders to specific audiences. If one has not done so, one would do very well to work through some of the contemporary books on the structuring of sermons and relating both themselves and their sermons to those who come Sunday after Sunday to be fed on something worthwhile.⁴

CHARACTERISTICS OF EPISTLES

While one may gain the information from more technical works, Fee has pointed out that New Testament Epistles characteristically have six parts:⁵ (1) name of the writer; (2) name of the recipient(s); (3) greeting; (4) prayer wish or thanksgiving; (5) main body of the Epistle; and (6) final greeting and farewell. While all of these elements are important in their own way, I care to comment on three of them.

The named recipient(s) of the Epistle is an important item since all Epistles are occasional. That is, they were all written to specific individuals or churches who were in some circumstance which evoked the Epistle. It is very important to notice the occasional and circumstantial nature of the Epistles if one wishes to understand the document and to disentangle the purely local from the more permanent features of the Christian system. The second characteristic which is important beyond what we normally realize is that of the prayer wish or thanksgiving. It has been shown in a number of scholarly studies that while a thanksgiving is a way of establishing or maintaining rapport with the recipients, the prayer wish or prayer requests are literary vehicles for underlining the items of chief concern to the writer. To put it another way, a reader of epistolary-type materials in the first century of the Christian era would have understood that prayer wishes are ways of saying, "This is a priority item." Finally, the body of the Epistle contains the main cluster of messages which are directed to the recipients. Obviously, most sermon material would come from that section, but the body is to be understood in terms of the other elements of the Epistle.

In some respects, the Epistles are the easiest type material to preach to a Christian audience since they are documents written by and to Christians in the first instance. One is dealing with the same covenant regulations, and a great deal of the material is straightforward exhortation to do some things and not to do other things. But that does not mean one can simply make 100 per cent transfer from first-century situations to the present. To my knowledge, no one applies to a contemporary church *all* of the commandments found in the Epistles, and certainly all of the examples are not transferred. But leaving some things behind and insisting on others cannot be an arbitrary arrangement. The holy kiss, wearing veils, using cloaks, drinking wine for the stomach's sake, elders in every church, shaking the dust off one's feet against resistant hearers, enrolling widows as a charge of the church, church collections for the poor, active apostles, and other points of dispute are all found in the Epistles. No one retains them all; no one discards them all. This very situation calls attention to the importance of hermeneutics in expository preaching. So, although the Epistles lend themselves to direct application to contemporary Christian audiences, one must still study and think carefully when one presumes to speak for God from the Epistles.

SEED IDEAS FOR SERMONS

It is not useless to mention that one should have an understanding of the overall thrust of an Epistle before one begins to formulate sermons. In the Restoration Movement, as long ago as the time of Alexander Campbell's *The Christian System*, it has been emphasized that words have meanings in sentences, sentences in paragraphs, and paragraphs in larger literary units. "Context" we call it. Before one begins to put sermons together on any one chapter, it is best to safeguard the meaning of that sermon by understanding the thrust of the whole book. Indeed, it is important to map out the contents of that book in what we might call an outline. In that manner one should be able to see the relationships between the larger sections of the book. Only then is one in a fair position to

understand an individual paragraph in a section, because each paragraph usually has a purpose in the overall thrust of the book.

While in the case of 1 Corinthians one can go to a number of New Testament introductions, Bible encyclopedias or handbooks, and the introductory section to good commentaries on 1 Corinthians for longer and shorter outlines to the book, there is absolutely no substitute for reading the book through, preferably at one sitting, several times before one begins to put down outlines. Obviously, impressions will arise in the mind, and it is a good idea to record those. But regardless of the number of outlines one may consult in other sources, one should learn to feel the thrust of thought in the Epistle by prolonged acquaintance with it. Interesting things happen when people sit down and read a book through at one sitting. We should certainly learn what we can from others, but intimate acquaintance with a literary document comes only through prolonged association with it. For many years G. Campbell Morgan, British expositor of an earlier generation, habitually read an entire document through thirty or forty times before he began jotting down sermon outlines.

Upon hearing this kind of emphasis, one may very well recoil from exposition in favor of "good ol' topical sermons." Shame on you! A man really forfeits his right to preach topically unless he has first studied in context all the separate passages he intends to use in his topical sermon, and that is the preparation one makes for expository preaching. To do otherwise means that one runs a strong risk of speaking falsely for God, of using passages in senses not intended by the authors, and consequently misleading people to greater or lesser degrees. That was one element of the tomfoolery called preaching that caused Alexander Campbell to react so strongly against it.⁶ Therefore, whether he engages in expository or topical preaching, a proclaimer of the Word of God is obligated to study every passage in its context. To admit the lack of it is a serious indictment.

It is not difficult to map out the main subject divisions in the body of 1 Corinthians.

- I. Division in the church (1:10—4:21)
- II. Moral concerns in the church (5, 6)
- III. Marriage (7)
- IV. Meat sacrificed to idols (8—10)
- V. Disorder in public worship (11—14)
- VI. The resurrection (15)

Introductory and concluding matters are quite important for understanding the situation and thrust of the Epistle, but the bulk of the material in the Epistle can be grouped under these six headings.

In seeking an overall orientation to the Epistle, we are fortunate in 1 Corinthians to have the occurrence in 1:10 of an important word: *parakalo*. That word occurs just over twenty times in the New Testament, and it has a very familiar pattern to it. The word itself is usually translated by "I urge," "I exhort," or "I appeal," but that is not really the important thing. Usually the word is preceded by a statement which is a kind of background for the exhortation. In this case, the background for the exhortation is a thanksgiving (1:4-9) to the effect that they were the recipients of God's grace, numerous spiritual gifts, and the assurance that God could sustain them. A reader of Greek literature in the first century would have understood by the word *parakalo* that the author was introducing the main concern of his or her writing. In this case, Paul's appeal to the Corinthians was for them to function in a united manner. In the very next verse he indicates that he had received information from some of the Corinthians themselves to the effect that there was abundant quarreling and dissension among them. Thus, it makes a lot of sense to interpret the main body of 1 Corinthians along the lines of Paul's exhortation for them to be united in basic belief and in their attitudes toward each other. In 7:1, Paul mentions, "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote." There he is clearly responding to some document which he had received from Corinth, and it is quite possible that the further occurrences of *peri di*

("now concerning") (7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1) are further references to questions which had been asked Paul by the Corinthians. Whatever its source, it was evidently different from the report he had heard from just a household (1:11).

While one could make a long list of advantages in preaching from 1 Corinthians, two things stand out as important in my thinking at this point. First, we have in 1 Corinthians evidence of the kind of things that went on in congregations which were predominantly Gentile, formed mostly of people who had little or no background in Judaism. Perhaps it is to the disgrace of the church today that it does not find itself dealing with some of these same problems, chiefly because it is not winning a large number of out-and-out pagans to Jesus Christ. But where the church does that, the church will have some of the struggles of the kingdom mentioned here—immorality, misunderstanding the nature of worship, unwholesome relationships, misunderstanding of fundamental doctrines, and failure to grasp the riches that are available in Christ. It is interesting to me that, as bad as Corinth was—I have never seen a church in as bad a shape along the same lines—Paul referred to them as "the church of God" and "saints" (1:2), "brethren" (1:26), "God's temple" (3:16), and the "body of Christ" (12:13, 27). Paul's perspective on what could become of people who were recent converts from paganism is salutary for people who are intent upon evangelizing today.

Second, although Paul's main purpose was to get the Corinthian Christians to relate appropriately to each other in morals, belief, and behavior, his communication furnishes us a great deal of information on fundamental Christian doctrines. Usually, no one section of teaching, not even that long section on the resurrection in chapter 15, gives all the New Testament says about the doctrine. One should strive in the first instance to understand what Paul was saying about the doctrine in the Corinthian situation.

With the hope of learning something from Paul's perspective on people who have recently been converted from paganism and his fairly extensive discussion of certain Christian doctrines, I am now ready to present select seeds for sermons. My list will not be complete because of time and

space limitations. But I shall furnish a sufficient number to illustrate the way in which one goes about putting together a series of sermons through which one can expound the message of 1 Corinthians in meaningful relationship to contemporary hearers.

"What To Do About a Naughty Church"
(1:1-9)

Although no church in the New Testament is portrayed with as many serious problems as Corinth, Paul was thankful for them (1:4-9); he had hope for them and believed they were capable of becoming much better. Very often, in a series of sermons on an entire book, the first lesson is the most difficult to present. One should avoid merely presenting introductory material (author, origin of the church, circumstance, and overview of the Epistle); one must also promise some value in the forthcoming series and state on the front end what people are likely to get from the series of lessons. One might bring the audience into the material by asking pointed questions like, "If you had two teen-age children and moved to a new city where the church was similar to Corinth, would you place membership there?"; "Have you ever been tempted to give up on yourself when you weren't nearly as bad as the people at Corinth?" Thus, what one should seek to do in such an introductory sermon is to get the situation before the people while tantalizing them with the possibilities of further lessons.

"You Must Be One!" (1:10-17)

The clear purpose of this passage is to introduce Paul's main concern for the Corinthians as demonstrated by his use of *parakalo* (v. 10). One may discuss this material under two basic headings:

- A. The folly of division over preachers (1:12-17)
- B. The drive to be united (1:11)

"The Word of the Cross . . . Is Folly?" (1:18-31)

A conceivable reason why certain Christians rallied around Paul, Apollos, and others (v. 12) was the way they preached. Rather than capitalizing upon the favorable feeling toward him by a segment of the church, Paul disavows his intention to preach with "eloquent wisdom" (v. 17) lest people focus on rhetoric rather than on the message of the cross. This section could be discussed usefully under two headings:

- A. The foolishness of God . . . to others (1:18-25)
- B. The foolishness of God . . . to you (1:26-31)

"Do Holy Joe's Have the Edge?" (2:1-16)

In this section Paul shows that his message was not in "lofty words of wisdom" (v. 1) but "in demonstrations of the Spirit and of power" (v. 4) because what he taught was the wisdom of God (v. 7), revealed by Him (v. 10) and taught by the Spirit (v. 13). It is important to grapple with verses 14 through 16 since they have been commonly abused.

- A. A message presented with demonstration (2:1-5)
- B. A message of secret wisdom (2:6-13)
- C. A message of Christ's mind (2:14-16)

"Behaving Like Ordinary Men" (3:1-4)

One could conceivably use this entire chapter in order to show why some of the Corinthians were behaving like ordinary men in attaching themselves first to one preacher and then another. But one may also make the chief point of contrast between babes and men by using only the first four verses. One may do this as long as one retains a sense of the place of these four verses in Paul's flow of thought. The division over preachers surfaces again at 3:4, and Paul declares it to be evident that they were still "men of flesh, babes in Christ" (v.

1). But allegiance to Christ is eventually to cause one to live above the level of ordinary men and women. One may use two major headings to cover this concern:

- A. Faction evidence of ordinariness (3:3, 4)
- B. A higher nature (3:1, 2)

"The Low Position of Men With
A High Message" (3:5—4:5)

In this section Paul is giving a disclaimer about both himself and the other workers at Corinth. His point is that not a one of them is an appropriate object of the Corinthians' divisive adulation. At best they are stewards who are used by God to accomplish his own work. In the process of downplaying the human importance of God's messengers, Paul constructs powerful statements of what they accomplish in God's hands:

- A. Preachers and servants (3:5-9)
- B. Preachers as builders (3:10-17)
- C. Preachers as benefactors (3:18-23)
- D. Preachers as judged by God (4:5-5)

"Fools for Christ's Sake" (4:6-21)

With this section, Paul brings to a close his comments on preachers, God's messengers, including comments on his own position. If the apostles and other messengers did not compete for position, then why should those whom they had taught do so?

- A. Paul as a fool (4:8-13)
- B. Apostles as fathers (4:14-21)

"Tough Love" (5)

In this section, Paul begins to deal with matters reported to exist in the young Gentile church. The issue here is how a congregation should treat a man whose sexual mores were more libertine than those of the pagans. For some reason the church was actually arrogant or boastful about it (v. 2), but Paul points out guidelines for tough love in dealing with a man who had made a commitment to Christ.

- A. A strange response to an erring brother (5:1, 2, 6-8)
- B. The correct response urged (5:3-5, 9-13)

"A Church Trial?" (6:1-8)

It is not so strange to find new converts from paganism in litigation, even with each other. But Paul said that was a poor thing to do before unbelievers (vv. 4, 6). What is strange to us is that he should direct them to bring the dispute before a wise man in the church! Is that not still a preferred course of action for Christians?

- A. The craziness of lawsuits (6:1, 7, 8)
- B. A constructive approach to disagreement (6:2, 3, 5)

"Dealing With Zip Code Sins" (6:9-20)

In verses 9 through 20, Paul treats Christian morals in a pagan society. One may preach a single message or two on this section.

- A. The Corinthians' relationship to prevailing sins (6:9-11)
 - 1. Sins which bar inheritance into the kingdom (6:9, 10)
 - 2. The Corinthians threefold relationship to their past (6:11)
- B. The case against fornication (6:12-20)
 - 1. Rationalizing sin forbidden (6:12, 13)

2. A sin against the body (6:14-17)
3. The role of the Holy Spirit (6:18-20)

"Marriage Problems—Back Then?" (7)

The *peri de* ("now concerning," v. 1) appears several times hereafter (8:1, 25; 12:1; 16:1), and in all cases may refer, as here, to questions they had written to Paul. Their questions dictate his agenda. While one would not answer all of peoples' questions on this chapter by preaching a whole series of sermons, one can get the thrust of the passage over by using four major headings.:

- A. Husband and wife relationships (7:1-7)
- B. The unmarried, the widowed, and the married (7:8-11)
- C. The mixed marriages (7:12-16)
- D. Regulations in view of the "present distress" (7:25-40)

Several problems are found in this section, viz., how to translate verses 25, 28, 36, re: "virgins"; "only in the Lord" (v. 39).

"Eat an Idol's Food?" (8)

In chapters 8 through 10, Paul discusses the circumstances under which Christians should and should not eat food sacrificed to idols, an activity which was quite common in Corinth. One could conceivably preach one's sermon on the gist of these three chapters, or, as here, divide the material into more than one sermon:

- A. The freedom of Christian knowledge (8:1-6)
- B. The restraints on Christian freedom (8:7-13)

"The Bigness of Self-Limitation" (9)

In this chapter, Paul uses the example of his own behavior as

a means of urging Christian restraint in eating meat sacrificed to idols. Paul's behavior may be used as a paradigm for Christians to follow in many cases where there is the possibility of causing sin in others.

- A. The freedom to act (9:1-14)
- B. Restraining one's freedom (9:15-18)
- C. Limiting freedom for a greater good (9:19-17)

"The Pull of the Old Life" (10:1—11:1)

Both the Old and the New Testaments record the human tendency to return to the previous way of life. The annals of modern mission work in Third World countries portray the modern versions of the same thing. There was real danger that the Corinthians, in exercising their Christian freedom, would actually end up practicing the idolatry they had previously left. Any time modern pagans turn to Christ, they can find a similar pull to return to the old way. Paul warns against it.

- A. The example of the overconfident Israelites (10:1-13)
- B. Idolatry as a persistent evil (10:14-22)
- C. Guidelines for holiness in pagan territory (10:23—11:1)

"An Issue Bigger Than Hats!" (11:2-16)

With 11:2, Paul begins a long section (chaps. 11—14) in which he deals with items concerning public worship, the Christian assembly. While 11:2-16 has generated controversy over women wearing a covering in public worship, the issue is more fundamental. Evidently,⁷ there was a tendency among the Corinthian Christians either to bring into the Christian assembly various pagan practices, or to abandon propriety under the banner of Christian liberty. At any rate, Paul instructs men and women to behave themselves appropriately. It is a perennial and universal question among Chris-

tians whether and how much they can use for Christian purposes, practices, and behaviors which otherwise are associated with alien beliefs: evergreen trees, December 25, musical tunes, etc.

- A. The proper behavior for women (various verses)
- B. The proper behavior for men (appropriate verses)

"The Tragedy of the Profaned Supper" (11:17-34)

Although in 10:16-22 Paul discusses the inconsistency of partaking of both the table of the Lord and the table of demons, it is here that he discusses the Lord's Supper more positively. As the Corinthians were treating it, it was not possible for the Supper to serve its intended purposes. The section is filled with both rebukes and positive guidelines, most of which are appropriate today.

- A. The defeated Supper (11:17-22)
- B. Guidelines for spiritual help (11:23-34)

"God's Help for an Early Church" (12)

While chapters 12 through 14 hang together by a common thread, it would seem appropriate to show how the variety of God's gifts were necessary for spiritual purposes and did not militate against a basic unity and purpose among the Christians. While in chapter 11 Paul does not hint at the duration of such gifts, one can glean from them the kind of purposes God wants served in his church. Evidently, Paul is maintaining his emphasis on unity.

- A. Differing gifts from one Spirit (12:1-11)
- B. Unity illustrated by the human body (12:12-21)

"The Highway of Love" (13)

Often preached out of context, this chapter is related primarily to the way in which Corinthians used their varying gifts to minister to one another. It may be preached as the way in which Christians should relate to each other.

- A. The priority of love (13:1-3)
- B. The behavior of love (13:4-13)

"The Goals of the Gifts" (14)

While a big part of Paul's purpose in writing this chapter was to correct the Corinthian abuses of the gifts, vis., giving undue priority to tongues and inappropriate behavior of the women, he does state throughout the section the objectives of those gifts. The word for "building up" or "edifying" occurs some seven times in the chapter.

- A. Prophecy is superior to tongues (14:1-24)
- B. Practical regulations (14:25-33)
- C. The behavior of the women (14:34-36)
- D. The conclusion of the matter (14:37-40)

"Resurrection: The Cornerstone Of Christian Doctrine" (15)

One could conceivably preach several sermons from this longest discussion of the resurrection in the New Testament. Some of the Corinthians were denying that there was a resurrection at all (v. 12), so Paul felt called upon to state the fundamental significance of the resurrection for the Christian's faith. One could conveniently preach the message of this chapter under the following headings:

- A. Resurrection and the gospel (15:1-11)

- B. The results of denying the resurrection (15:12-19)
- C. The results of Christ's resurrection (15:20-28)
- D. Arguments from human experience (15:29-34)
- E. Arguments for a resurrection body (15:35-49)
- F. The conquest of death (15:50-58)

REFINING

Seed ideas should be reworked, developed, and refined during the months prior to preaching them. The titles, and especially the main divisions, will likely be revised considerably to render them more accurate and more memorable.

The hermeneutical issues must be dealt with eventually, especially when one is deciding what one is going to *urge* in the lesson. It is one thing to explain what is going on in chapter 5; it is another thing to say what the church ought to do today, but both activities must be done.

1. Direct application. There is no problem in several cases since one feels very comfortable in saying, "God still wants his people to . . ." flee fornication and avoid lawsuits (chap. 6), behave properly in the Lord's Supper (chap. 11), and yield to revelation rather than human wisdom (chaps. 1 and 2).

2. Extension of a principle. Although North Americans do not have a problem of eating meat sacrificed to idols and thus causing others to sin, it appears that we should extend to our situation the *principle* involved in the meat-eating passages, or would one contend it is forbidden to destroy someone spiritually by eating meat, but not forbidden to destroy them by some other means? Several sections of 1 Corinthians fall into this category: the principles behind the use of gifts (chap. 14), differences in ministry endowments (chap. 12), and the teaching work of apostles (chaps. 3, 4, 9).

3. Parallel behavior. At times one finds in the biblical materials a case of human behavior which *reflects* contemporary behavior on another matter. The tendency to hold to or return to an older way of life is seen—but rebuked—throughout 1 Corinthians, and that tendency still operates in Chris-

tians who are former Hindus, pagans, and sophisticated materialists.

By making applications along these lines, one is still preaching authoritatively. But if one merely jumps without warrant to modern situations or makes unsubstantiated connections between 1 Corinthians and today (e.g., making a veil a hat, transferring an apostolic prerogative to a preacher, etc.), there is no real authority of truth in the sermon.

Preaching is risky but necessary, scary but exciting, humbling but rewarding! One wants to say both, "Who is sufficient for these things?" and, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel."

NOTES

¹Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), ch. 3.

²Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), ch. 12.

³David Buttrick, *Homiletics: Moves and Structures* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1987).

⁴Written from different perspectives. See Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1980); Thomas G. Long, *The Senses of Preaching* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1988); Fred B. Craddock, *Preaching* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1985).

⁵Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible*, 44ff.

⁶Throughout *The Christian Baptist*. See especially "Texts and Textuary Divines," *The Christian Baptist* 2, no. 10 (2 May 1825): 189ff.; and "The Third Epistle of Peter," *The Christian Baptist* 2, no. 12 (4 July 1825): 243-47.

⁷For a technical study on what was happening, see Richard E. Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11:4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 481-505.

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PREACHING THEMES IN 1 CORINTHIANS

ALLEN BLACK

Although I do not preach every week at the present time, I recall vividly my years of producing two sermons each week. Every Monday one faces again the awesome responsibility of presenting two more fragments of the will of God on the next Sunday. Every week the preacher steps again into the gap between the ancient text and modern society, and sets out to build another bridge. Prayerfully, he asks God's help to fulfill numerous goals that often seem to stand in tension with one another. He seeks to be relevant and appealing, but also faithful and forthright. He strives constantly for a spiritually healthy balance in meeting these goals.

Like many others, I found it helpful to plan ahead, to preach expository sermons, and to select particular books of Scripture as focus points for several weeks or months. First Corinthians was one of my favorite focal points. It was easy to see how faithful exposition of what Paul had to say to the ancient Corinthians could readily be applied to a church struggling with modern society in Atlanta, Georgia. So much has changed on the surface, and yet the underlying issues of the struggle between the church and culture remain the same. Here I felt I could stand in the gap and build a solid bridge, achieving both faithfulness and relevance.

It is difficult to know what preachers who turn to a chapter on "Preaching Themes in 1 Corinthians" may expect to find. My goal is to provide an orientation to a few of the major themes in 1 Corinthians as a sort of preface to preaching those themes. I would also refer the reader to the other articles on preaching in this lectureship book and to the book's second article, which provides a general introduction to the letter.¹

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

It is not possible to speak of preaching the themes of 1 Corinthians without speaking first and foremost about "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul makes it clear that this was *the* theme of his preaching at Corinth. It is certainly a theme we need to hear again and again from our pulpits. In his recent book, *The Cruciform Church*, Leonard Allen presents evidence indicating a tendency to displace the cross from its central position and suggests that "The most pressing questions facing the Churches of Christ today is the question, Can we recover the 'word of the cross' in its biblical fullness?"² In every generation we must strive to put the cross back in its rightful place at the center of our theology and life.

First Corinthians 1, 2, and 15 clarify the place of the cross in Christian preaching. In chapter 1, the word of the cross is identified as "the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, 24) and "the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). In chapter 2, Paul declares that his policy was "to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).³ As in chapter 1, this message is described as a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power . . . the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). In chapter 15, he reminds the Corinthians of the message he delivered "as of first importance"; which is that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared. . . ." (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). There can be no question where the center of Paul's preaching lay.

We should ask ourselves whether we have remained true to this emphasis. We cannot justify a departure from it on the basis that we preach primarily to those who *allegedly* are already well-versed in this foundational message. Certainly all evangelistic preaching must return again and again to the cross. The church will be built up as well by solid preaching of Christ crucified, even when it is aimed primarily at the non-Christians in the midst of our assemblies, but the cross must also occupy a central place when we are preaching primarily

to the church.

We would do well to follow the example of Paul's letters, all of which are, of course, written to Christians. Using 1 Corinthians as an example, we find Paul constantly referring to the implications of the cross for the Christian. References to the cross rise naturally to the surface again and again as Paul goes about troubleshooting the problems at Corinth.

In the first few chapters, the word of the cross is fundamental in Paul's approach to the dissensions at Corinth. He argues that the Corinthians' allegiance to various preachers is based on pride in human wisdom, which can only arise because they fail to see the implications of the cross (especially 1 Corinthians 1:17—2:5). The crucifixion is foolishness from the standpoint of human wisdom. Those who accept the word of the cross as the power of God thereby acknowledge the failure of human wisdom and should take pride in it no longer. This is the essence of Paul's argument in the first four chapters.

In chapter 5, the word of the cross arises in dealing with a sexually immoral Christian who needs to be withdrawn from. Using Passover imagery, Paul argues that since the church's paschal lamb has been sacrificed, it must maintain its purity as unleavened bread by cleansing out this leaven of evil (vv. 6-8). In chapter 6, the terrible price paid at the cross arises in rebuking those who involved themselves with prostitutes: "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (vv. 19, 20).

The same slave market imagery is used in an interesting way in 1 Corinthians 7:22, 23 to discuss how the Christian should look at his or her slavery or freedom. "You were bought with a price" here appears to have a dual application. For slaves it means that one is now "a freedman of the Lord" (v. 22). For one who is free it means he is "a slave of Christ" (v. 22). In either case, it means that Christians must not "become slaves of men" (v. 23). In this last verse, the slavery envisioned is metaphorical. Whether slave or free, the Christian's spiritual life must be directed by his or her spiritual owner.

The word of the cross appears again in chapters 8 through 10 as Paul argues that the strong must surrender their liberties for the sake of the weak. To insist on one's rights could

result in a situation in which a "weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ" (1 Corinthians 8:11, 12). Note how natural it is for Paul to think of the cross as the defining principle of the Christian life. Christians are those "for whom Christ died," and so to sin against them is to sin against Christ.

In the same context, when discussing participation in pagan sacrificial meals, the death of Christ arises again. Since the Lord's Supper is a participation in the blood and body of Christ crucified, how can the Corinthians also eat cultic meals which involve participation with demons (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)?

The Lord's Supper is itself the focus of the latter half of chapter 11. Paul is amazed at what appears to be a socio-economic division in the church highlighted in an abuse of the Supper. The abuse is so bad as to make the term "Lord's Supper" a misnomer. The rich were eating and drinking to excess, while the poor were left humiliated in their hunger. The apostle reminds them that this meal was established as a memorial and proclamation of the Lord's death. Their perversion of the Supper renders them guilty of profaning Christ's death, which is such a serious matter that it has resulted in many being weak and ill and some even dying.

In chapter 15, the death of Christ arises in connection with Paul's thoughts about the resurrection. Here it is clear that preaching Christ crucified includes preaching the resurrection (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2 and 3:3-5). Some of the Corinthians were denying the resurrection of the dead, but Paul says this implies denial of Christ's resurrection, which in turn implies that Christian faith is futile and we are still in our sins (vv. 12-19). Christ's resurrection, a necessary complement to his crucifixion, guarantees the resurrection of all.

This survey of Paul's references to the cross in connection with troubleshooting various problems in the church at Corinth demonstrates the centrality of the word of the cross in his thinking. Whether he is dealing with quarreling, church discipline, sexual immorality, slavery, idolatry, or worship, he is likely to bring the word of the cross to bear. Jesus Christ and him crucified is the foundation of Christian purity, humility,

unity, love, and freedom. There is no more powerful way to appeal to Christians than on the basis of the cross. The local preacher cannot focus exclusively on the cross every Sunday, but if he follows Paul's way of thinking his sermons will frequently refer to the central event in Christian faith. There is no more powerful or persuasive theme.

THE WORD OF THE SPIRIT

Closely associated with (or more accurately, a part of) the word of the cross is the indwelling of the Spirit in the church and in individual Christians. The close integration of the word of the cross and the word of the Spirit is demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. Here the RSV translates: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." On the other hand, the NASB takes the phrase "... and that you are not your own?" as the conclusion to the sentence about the indwelling Spirit rather than the beginning of the sentence about the cross. The ambiguity of the sentence structure points to the close tie between the two concepts. When a man is ransomed by the cross, he belongs to God and receives God's Spirit.

Although they are less frequent, Paul's references to the indwelling of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians are similar to his references to the cross in that they arise frequently and naturally in connection with various subjects.

In dealing with the Corinthians' quarreling over preachers, Paul appeals to their reception of the Spirit at two points in his argument. The first is in connection with his argument that the word of the cross brings to nought all human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5). In 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, Paul says that there is, nevertheless, a true and spiritual wisdom. Apparently, he means a wisdom seen in the preaching of Christ crucified, which he has already identified as "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). This wisdom, however, is only fully understood by those who have received the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). The things that come from the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned and

appear to be foolishness to those who have not received the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14). Even though the Corinthian Christians had received the Spirit, they behaved as if they had not (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Paul rebukes them for their lack of understanding and encourages them to become spiritual men as they ought to be. This is one of several occasions when he appeals to them to become what they are. Those who have received the Spirit ought to be spiritual men. They ought to understand the divine wisdom revealed in Christ and care little for pride in human wisdom.

The second time the indwelling Spirit arises in connection with the quarreling at Corinth is in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17. Here it is a further expansion of the building metaphor introduced in 1 Corinthians 3:9. Having identified the church as God's building, he goes on to describe this building as a temple in which God's Spirit dwells (v. 16). Unlike his later use of the temple metaphor, this time it is apparent from the context that he is using it to describe the church as a corporate body. The church is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Those who would destroy it through their bickering should note that they are destroying the holy habitation of God. God will destroy them in return.

Another use of the temple metaphor as a means of discussing the indwelling Spirit is in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. Paul is rebuking Corinthian Christians who actually hired local prostitutes. One of his key arguments is that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. How then could one possibly defile it with sexual immorality? Probably the phrase "you are not your own" concludes the sentence about the indwelling Spirit. The dwelling place of God belongs to God.

In chapter 12, Paul refers to the indwelling Spirit to promote harmony in the church despite divergent spiritual gifts. Verses 7 through 13 repeatedly refer to "the one Spirit" or "the same Spirit," as Paul emphasizes that the variety of spiritual gifts all stem from one source. There is thus a unity underlying the diversity of gifts, which the Corinthians have failed to grasp. They all receive their various gifts from one and the same Spirit.

Only one of these problems at Corinth—the last—would

seem to *necessitate* some reference to the activity of the Spirit in the life of the individual or the church. The other three demonstrate that, like the word of the cross, the word of the Spirit was always close at hand in Paul's mind and arose naturally when dealing with a variety of situations.

Unfortunately, this is probably not true in many pulpits among churches of Christ. Our polemical stance against Pentecostalism and Calvinism has resulted in an unhealthy avoidance and, even in some cases, denial of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in our lives. We need to restore this theme to its proper place near the heart of our preaching.

THE PROBLEM OF PRIDE

The problem of pride is a pervasive theme in 1 Corinthians because it lies at the heart of many of the issues facing the church. This is especially true of those issues which seem to divide the church into groups or create tensions between individuals.

Pride in human wisdom is the root of the "preacheritis" quarreling which is the focus of the first four chapters. The reason the Corinthians were proclaiming allegiance to different preachers is that they were boasting in human wisdom. In their clamor for wisdom they had lost the perspective that "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth" (1 Corinthians 3:7). Preachers are not to be viewed as great wise men or debaters (1 Corinthians 1:20), but "as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1; cf. 3:5).

Paul attacks this problem by going to the heart of the matter. The Corinthians do not understand the implications of the cross. The word of the cross stands against all worldly boasting, including boasting in the wisdom of great preachers. The word of the cross receives its power from God and preachers are merely servants through whom God works.

At the beginning of chapter 5, Paul refers to the Corinthians' pride in connection with his discussion of their need to discipline a sexually immoral member. His remark in verse 2 about their arrogance may connect in a general way with his

comments in 1 Corinthians 4:18, 19 about arrogance at Corinth. On the other hand, some understand 1 Corinthians 5:2 to indicate that the Corinthians were proud of their incestuous member. Perhaps they would invoke their defense of engaging local prostitutes, "All things are lawful" (1 Corinthians 6:12). In either case, Paul says, "Your boasting is not good" (1 Corinthians 5:6). At best their pride has led them to overlook a disastrous situation in their midst. At worst it has even led them to encourage it.

In chapters 8 through 10, pride lies at the root of the church's conflict over eating meat offered to idols. Apparently, it is the "strong" who have written to Paul, arguing that "all of us possess knowledge" (1 Corinthians 8:1) that "an idol has no real existence" and "there is no God but one" (1 Corinthians 8:4). These "in-the-know" brothers want to press on in the matter of eating meat offered to idols, acting on their knowledge. Although Paul concedes their basic point in every situation except cultic meals at pagan temples (1 Corinthians 10:14-22), he attacks the pride which surfaces in their desire to forge ahead without considering the disastrous effects their behavior might have on the weak.

He argues that "Knowledge puffs up" and that "If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:1, 2). The Corinthians need to lay aside their pride in knowledge and replace it with love. They need to be willing to forego their liberty for the sake of those for whom Christ died. Furthermore, their puffed up knowledge has also led them even to participation in cultic meals, which is involvement in idolatry. In this connection, Paul reminds them of the idolatry of their Israelite fathers, pointing out that in spite of their great privileges they proved unfaithful and fell under the wrath of God (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). "Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Once again, Paul sees pride as a root of the problem.

Another situation involving pride arises in chapter 11, this time pride in socio-economic status. When Paul says that in their mockery of the Lord's Supper "one is hungry and another is drunk" and rebukes those who gorge themselves for despis-

ing the church and "humiliating" those who have nothing (1 Corinthians 11:21, 22), he is probably reflecting a situation in which the rich humiliate the poor. Several ancient authors describe a practice which seems to be reflected here, including the following experience of Pliny the Younger:

I happened to be dining with a man, though no particular friend of his, whose elegant economy, as he called it, seemed to me a sort of stingy extravagance. The best dishes were set in front of himself and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into tiny little flasks, divided into three categories, not with the idea of giving his guests the opportunity of choosing, but to make it impossible for them to refuse what they were given. One lot was intended for himself and for us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded), and the third for his and our freedmen.⁴

The Corinthians were probably using similar practices in connection with the Lord's Supper, with the result that the poor were humiliated. Through the pride and selfishness of the rich, the Lord's Supper was being profaned.

One other problem at Corinth which had pride at its center, was the attitudes toward spiritual gifts (chaps. 12–14). Chapter 12 indicates that the Corinthians were boasting over the value of particular gifts. Paul argues that all of the gifts have the same source (vv. 4–11) and that they all work together like parts of the human body (vv. 12–21). In fact, as in the case of the physical body, those parts which seem inferior should be given the greater honor, so there may be no discord (vv. 22–26).

More important than all the spiritual gifts is love. Without love—which eliminates pride (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5)—none of our so-called accomplishments mean anything (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). As in chapter 8, love is highlighted as the antidote to pride.

It appears from chapter 14 that the Corinthians took special pride in tongue-speaking. Paul says it would be better for them to strive for prophecy since it is more useful for building up the church.

The problem of pride, then, surfaces over and over in 1 Corinthians. It undergirds their quarreling over preachers, their overlooking or even bragging about an incestuous brother, the insensitivities of the strong on the matter of meat offered to idols, the abuse of the Lord's Supper by the rich, and the misuse of the gifts of the Spirit.

Paul's repeated attacks against the pride of these first-century Christians needs to be heard anew in every generation—especially our own. It is unlikely that there could ever be a generation or culture in which pride was not the root of a multitude of evils. Certainly twentieth-century America with its hyper-emphasis on individualism, personal freedom, materialism, technology, and success is a culture where pride runs rampant and unchecked. As we seek to address this problem in our preaching, let us not forsake Paul's emphasis on the other two themes highlighted in this essay, the word of the cross and the word of the Spirit. No other word we could say is more powerful for putting human pride in perspective.

NOTES

¹Other useful resources can be found in the sketches of themes from 1 Corinthians in the following: William Baird, *The Corinthian Church—A Biblical Approach to Urban Culture* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1964); Ralph Martin, *1, 2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas, Tex.: Word Publishing, 1988); *Interpretation* 13, no. 4 (October 1959); *Review and Expositor* 80, no. 3 (Summer 1983).

²C. Leonard Allen, *The Cruciform Church: Becoming a Cross-Shaped People in a Secular World* (Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1990), 113ff.

³This is not a new policy developed in response to the poor reception Paul received in Athens.

⁴Pliny the Younger *Letters* 2:6. Cf. Martial *Epigrams* 3:60.

PREACHING FROM 1 CORINTHIANS

AVON MALONE

Paul's Corinthian correspondence provides the preacher with a rich reservoir of homiletic possibilities. Great themes abound in 1 Corinthians. The centrality of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:2), the supremacy of love (1 Corinthians 13:1-13), the crucial nature of Christ's resurrection and its relationship to the future resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-20)—these and other great themes call out to the perceptive preacher.

First Corinthians also presents a broad survey of practical problems which may invade a congregation. It is significant that underlying all the specific problems in Corinth is a pride problem (1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:4, 5). The solution—the panacea—for the Corinthian problems is love. *Agape* love strikes at the root of all the other Corinthian problems (1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 14:1).

This great letter speaks with special relevance for our day. The decadent moral climate that pervaded Corinth (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) is not unlike the world in which we live. Many contemporary cities and congregations are possessed by some very Corinthian characteristics. The Corinthian correspondence may well be the handbook for evangelism and edification in the teeming urban centers of our world.

This discussion will be focused in two major areas: (1) the word of the cross—"Christ and him crucified," and (2) love—the "more excellent way."

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

The word of the cross (or "the preaching of the cross") is a redemptive message (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). In truth it is the

one message that can redeem man from his spiritual and moral ruin.

A Redemptive Message

The divided condition in Corinth calls forth Paul's most eloquent statement concerning the cross as the ultimate expression of saving wisdom and power:

For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

When Paul speaks of "the foolishness of the preaching," he is not referring to the method of communication. The expression "the preaching" in the passage in which Paul affirms "it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21) appears as the "thing preached" in the marginal reading of the ASV. The "thing preached" is "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23). This is a "scandal" to the Jews (from *skandalon*; a snare or trap) and sheer folly, utter foolishness, to the philosophical Greeks. But it is *the* redemptive message. As Paul asserts in the close of the chapter, "... Christ Jesus, who was made unto us... redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Paul elaborates on this truth later in the letter as he spells out its practical implications: "And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a

price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19b, 20; cf. Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-20). "Christ crucified" is the message that transformed twisted and tormented lives in Corinth. Out of the dregs of apparent human driftwood, God fashioned his church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2) through the power of the cross.

Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Paul's life and preaching was dominated by this one foundational truth. In light of the remarkable transformation effected in Corinth, we can well understand why the apostle would cry, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

A Revealed Message

The word of the cross is a revealed message. Notice with care Paul's statement concerning the necessity of divine revelation and of the nature of the revealed message:

But as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with

spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:9-13).

Without a revelation from God it is impossible to know the will of God. "The things of God none knoweth. . . ." (1 Corinthians 2:11) is a statement which makes apparent the necessity of revelation from God. Human philosophy, unaided by revelation, can never probe its way to the will of the Almighty. Man's intellect, his intuitive processes, are not sufficient to determine the divine will. It must be revealed. While God's existence and power can be seen in "the things made" (Romans 1:20), God's mind and his will for man can only be known on the basis of a revelation from God. The word of the cross is such a message. Revealed through the Spirit to inspired men ("holy apostles and prophets"; cf. Ephesians 3:3-5) and communication in words "which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Corinthians 2:13), the very nature of the message commands reverential regard.

Because Christianity is revealed religion, it is, of necessity, a taught religion. We will never find Christians where the word of the cross, the gospel of the Christ, has not gone. Since the message is a revealed message, it is inexpressibly urgent that it be taken to every creature on earth (Mark 16:15f.).

A Relevant Message

The word of the cross is a relevant message. That becomes immediately apparent when the accomplished work of the Savior's sacrifice is seen clearly (1 Corinthians 1:18-24). Notice the results effected by the cross: (1) remission of sins (1 Corinthians 1:30 [cf. 1:18-24]; Ephesians 1:7; Matthew 26:28; Revelation 1:5; 7:13, 14); (2) reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:16); and (3) redemption (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-20).

Do these benefits speak with pertinence and relevance to an age which boasts 90 per cent of all the scientists who have ever lived? Could a message based upon historical events that transpired almost two thousand years ago be relevant to our technologically advanced age? Can this "word of the cross," rooted as it is in the places and pages of the past, really be relevant to a world about to move into the twenty-first century?

Carl Jung has said that "all the old primitive sins are still

there lurking in the darkened recesses of our modern minds." Despite his technological accomplishments, modern man is plagued by a persistent, pervasive sense of guilt. The competent counselor sees evidence of this continually. Alienation from God, from his fellowman, often from his mate, and from his own higher self (2 Timothy 2:24, 25) is characteristic of man today. The need for forgiveness, for reconciliation, for wholeness is met by the cross. In truth, it is only his sacrifice that can produce pardon, peace, and resultant power in the human heart. "The word of the cross" is the most relevant message in the world. The truth, obscure and unseen to many now, will be apparent to all in judgment.

Carl Sandburg told the story of a chameleon (the little lizard-like creature that can change color to match its surroundings) who did quite well adjusting to its immediate situation until it found itself crossing a Scotch plaid, and "it died at the crossroads heroically trying to relate to everything at once." We stand at the crossroads of human history with both immense possibilities and peril before us. God forbid that we die at the crossroads trying to relate to everything at once when we have the one thing the world needs so desperately—the word of the cross, the redemptive, revealed, and relevant message.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY—AGAPE

A number of problems are crowded into the pages of 1 Corinthians, but underlying all of them is one basic problem. The Corinthians had a severe pride problem (1 Corinthians 1:29, 31; 4:7; 5:2; 8:1).

Paul's powerful stress on the cross early in the letter paves the way for puncturing of Corinthian pride that comes later. After stressing the cross and the nature of the Christian's calling, Paul concludes "that no flesh should glory before God" (1 Corinthians 1:29) and, quoting Jeremiah, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

In commenting on 1 Corinthians 1:29, Jim McGuiggan strikes a telling blow against this problem:

No flesh is all of mankind! It includes the church. Let

your light shine that they will *glorify your Father*, is what Jesus said. The church must stop parading itself, it must stop strutting. . . . and if indeed, "in Christ" we have our all (1:30), how can we glory "in ourselves"? . . . Christ is the wisdom of God which we beggars gratefully embrace.¹

The only right response to the cross is the love Paul describes later in the letter. The cross crushes pride and self-sufficiency, and love rushes in to fill the heart that has been emptied of arrogance and pride.

The beautiful "love hymn" of chapter 13 is not an isolated oasis unrelated to the context and problems throughout the letter. Coming in the immediate context of Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12–14) and in the larger context of the entire letter, chapter 13 reaches to the heart of the basic problem in Corinth. *Agape* love is the antithesis of and the antidote for the deadly pride problem. Augustine may well have been right in seeing human pride as the center and cause of all sin. The self-sufficiency and self-will born of pride lie at the heart of the sin problem. Love as defined in chapter 13 holds the answer both to the Corinthian problems and our complex, contemporary problems.

First, notice some of the pride-prompted problems in Corinth: their divisions and their partisan spirit (chaps. 1–4); their apparent disenchantment with the preaching of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18–25, 29, 31); their immorality and their neglect of needed discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 6:12–20); the lawsuits and litigation among believers before unbelievers (1 Corinthians 6:1–8); the flaunting of their rights in eating sacrificial meat, etc., before the weak (chaps. 8–10); prideful, disorderly conduct in the assembly (chaps. 11–14); and the fascination with the more spectacular gifts and the misuse of the gifts generally (chaps. 12–14). Even the doctrinal denial of the future resurrection may have grown out of the pride that made them susceptible to Greek philosophy and skepticism (chap. 15).

The Necessity of Love

Paul makes love the great essential. All other gifts and

endowments are empty when employed lovelessly.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Great gifts, then and now, are unavailing if love is lacking. Miraculous spiritual gifts (extant in the first century but limited to the apostolic age; cf. v. 10; 2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 8:16-18), no matter how impressive or spectacular, were as empty as a noisy gong—a clanging cymbal—if exercised without love. Great natural endowments today—eloquence, knowledge of Scripture, a gifted pen—when used lovelessly profit nothing. That one who so uses his gifts knows in his heart of hearts that “I am nothing.”

William Barclay has said of the beginning verses of chapter 13: “Hardly any passage in scripture demands such self-examination from the good man as this.”²

The Nature of Love

Paul proceeds to break down love into component parts giving its great characteristics.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Love is patient. It suffers long. Henry Drummond in his *The Greatest Thing in the World* calls this quality “love passive.” God in his relationship with Israel illustrates the amazing endurance of that love that “never faileth.” Hosea, the prophet, in his relationship with Gomer demonstrates an unbelievable

capacity to keep on loving the unlovable.

Love is kind. Drummond called this “love active.” Jesus, who is love incarnate, love personified, went about “doing good.” Origen said that this means love is “sweet to all.” Not a pseudo and saccharine “sweetness” but genuine, active good will toward all is here intended.

Love is without envy. The “green-eyed monster” cannot enter the love-filled heart. King Saul allowed his insane jealousy for David to destroy him. Love averts such disaster and wills the best for all.

Love does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up. Paul here strikes at the basic problem which underlies the many and diverse difficulties in Corinth. Paul is saying, “Love is no braggart. Love is not inflated with its own importance.” Arrogance and egocentricity are the ugly opposites of *agape*.

Love does not behave itself unseemly. That is, love is not discourteous. “Love does not behave itself gracelessly.”³ The heart of real courtesy is genuine concern for the other person. The harsh, abrasive professed Christian is a poor representative of his Lord. We can identify with the youngster who prayed: “Make the bad people good and the good people nice.”

Love seeks not its own. Volumes have been written about love, but the Spirit through Paul gives the best definition: “Love is not self-seeking; love is unselfish.” In our day the word “love” covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8) in a way never intended by Peter. All kinds of selfishness, carnality, adultery, and even perversion are justified by the words, “We are in love.” However, “in lust” would, in many cases, be much more honest and accurate. Between real love (*agape*) and lust there is “a great gulf fixed.” Wendell Broom has suggested that *eros* love is often a kind of “strawberry shortcake love” which simply (and selfishly) consumes the object of its ardor. *Agape*, brother Broom suggests, is “sun and/or rain on the just and unjust” kind of love (Matthew 5:43-48)—that is, like our Father, *agape* wills the best for every man.

This characteristic of love has been expressed in the words, “Love does not insist upon its rights.” Paul elaborates this principle clearly and emphatically in 1 Corinthians 8—10.

Love is not provoked. That is, “love never flies into a temper.”

Drummond calls irritability the "vice of the virtuous"—that symptom that bubbles to the surface showing the weakness and selfishness that lies below.

Love takes no account of evil. Love keeps no ledger sheet of grudges and wrongs. A small, daily pinch of arsenic taken into the physical system would hardly do more harm to the hater than the continual harboring of a grudge. Love has learned the lesson of forgiving and forgetting.

Love rejoices not in iniquity (unrighteousness). Love finds no pleasure in evil-doing or in anything that is wrong. Love takes no perverse, malicious delight in the fall of another.

Love rejoices in (or "with") the truth. Sometimes truth is the last thing some men want. Some spend their lives running from reality and evading needful truth. Love has no desire to veil truth. It has nothing to conceal, and so love rejoices when truth prevails.

Love bears all things. There is no limit to love's endurance. Love can bear any insult, any injury. The strength and stamina of love far exceed usual human endurance.

Love believes all things. While love is not blindly gullible, love is not suspicious. Love trusts God implicitly. Also, amazingly, love has a remarkable faculty for trusting one's fellow-man.

Love hopes all things. Love's capacity for hope is inexhaustible. Browning's words describe this facet of love:

One who never turned his back but
marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight
better,

Sleep to wake.⁴

Love endures all things. That is, love bears all with "triumphant fortitude." The verb here (*hupomenein*) means much more than a passive, stoic-like resignation. It means "constancy under trial." It connotes, as already suggested, "triumphant fortitude"—that unconquerable stamina that gratefully

and joyfully perseveres to the point of ultimate victory.

Aristides wrote the emperor Hadrian saying of early Christians that "there is something of the divine in them." That divine quality in early Christians is love (*agape*)—that love that partakes of the very nature of God (1 John 4:8, 16; Matthew 5:45; Romans 5:5). The cross of Christ and the *agape* love that responds to that sacrifice has the power to resolve the problems of the Corinthian church and the contemporary church. With Paul may we pray that "your love may abound yet more and more. . . ."

NOTES

¹Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of 1 Corinthians* (Lubbock, Tex.: Montex Publishing Co., 1984), 36-37.

²William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1975), 119.

³*Ibid.*, 121.

⁴Augustine Birrell, ed., *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Browning* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), 1317.

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PAUL AND APOLLOS: ROLE OF PREACHERS TODAY

CHARLES B. HODGE, JR.

I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such (1 Corinthians 16:17, 18).

But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him: but conduct him forth in peace, that he may come unto me: for I look for him with the brethren. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time (1 Corinthians 16:8-12).

LOCAL PREACHERS

Re-read our text. Familiar Scripture must be read more closely. Paul started the church in Corinth (Acts 18). He was followed there by Apollos (Acts 19). Apollos was "taught the word more perfectly" in Ephesus. Then Paul came to Ephesus to "re-baptize" those disciplined by Apollos! So much is "written between the lines."

This is a local work! It is where "the rubber meets the road." The "war is won in the trenches" in local work. I am a local preacher in local work. This is "where it is." Churches have a problem with "preacheritis," preachers in competition. Paul

started the Corinthian church; Apollos followed. Paul knew *both* were servants (1 Corinthians 3). There was no competition. He never blamed Apollos for any "preacheritis" at Corinth. There was no rivalry. Paul knew the church belonged to Jesus, not Paul or Apollos. Corinth did not fully accept Paul . . . never. He was accused of being a "poor preacher," even preaching for pay! Things became so "sticky" Paul "wrote" rather than "visited." This had to have profoundly hurt Paul.

Corinth loved Apollos! He was "eloquent." They wanted him back as their preacher! Paul could have resented this! He did not! This was the "bigness" of Paul. He encouraged Apollos to return! Notice! He did not command (apostolic authority). Apollos said, "No." He was still part of the Corinthian problem (1 Corinthians 1:12). There is a time to return; there is a time not to. Although the popularity of Apollos was a threat to Paul, it was not a threat to the church.

Corinth! Corinth is always "open." No preacher wished to go to Corinth! Yet *both* Paul and Apollos preached there! Do not be "too good" to go to Corinth! *Local work!* The most difficult task upon earth! Few can do it! Too many today want all the glory in preaching without any of the problems! People are problems with problems! We are here to live with and serve people!

Back to our text. Paul also told Corinth how to treat Timothy. We need to learn the lessons in our text. Preachers must lead the way and set the example. Preachers must learn how to work together and to get along. We need staff. Staff must be loyal; preachers must protect staff. Read between the lines in our text. It is hard to forget personal feelings. It is hard not to be blind in prejudice. Paul promoted Apollos.

Elders do not run local churches. The ones they "listen to" run the church. They must not listen to the rich, powerful, and popular. Paul listened to Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11). The name, Chloe, was named (his name was not kept in deep, dark secrecy). Listen to the spiritually matured. Keep your hand on the pulse beat of the local church.

Corinthians is simply "local church work." Look up and listen!

GOSPEL PREACHING

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17. Paul was sent to "preach," not baptize. We *must* learn this! Paul understood consecrated negligence. He knew his mission—gospel preaching. He would not let others make his agenda for him. Paul believed in baptism, but this was not his assignment.

Notice some things:

1. Paul preached the gospel in Athens (Acts 17) and in Corinth (Acts 18). Paul did not attack idolatry in Acts 17; he did not attack immorality in Acts 18! He proclaimed the gospel (what God did in Christ). Tell men what God did before you tell men what to do. Paul went to Jewish synagogues to preach Jesus, not attack Judaism! This is the Great Commission. Lift Jesus up! This is our job! Preach the gospel!

2. The glory is in teaching (fathering), not baptismal administration! Paul could not remember those he had baptized! He did "father" them (1 Corinthians 4:14-16). We brag about whom we baptize! Paul preached the gospel. When the gospel is not popular is just the reason to preach it. It is not our task to make the gospel acceptable; it is our job to make it available.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-4. Paul wanted to go to Athens. He wanted to show the philosopher the greatness of Jesus. Perhaps he did some "soul searching" (profound thinking) during that long walk from Athens to Corinth. Paul never wanted to go or remain at Corinth. He renewed his commitment in 1 Corinthians 2. His commitment was to the gospel and Jesus Christ crucified. There was no deceit, manipulation, or fancy stuff! *Gospel preaching!* This is our primary task.

4. Read 1 Corinthians 9:16. Paul is not talking about duty! Paul is not talking about doctrinal accuracy! Paul is talking about "pure gospel." The glory is to God! Paul is marveling in the scope of the gospel's greatness. God saved us at the cross! This is Paul's heart, his life, his obsession, his calling, his job.

5. Will it "fly in Peoria"? is our political question. Will the gospel "save in Corinth"? is our church question. There is no sinner too bad for Jesus to save; there is no Christian he

cannot make better. All any sinner needs is the gospel! The power is in the message, not the method. The gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16)—even at Corinth. Never be tempted to doubt or discount the gospel. We read of "the church of God at Corinth."

PREACHERITIS

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 carefully. Since this was the first problem introduced, many conclude it was number one. Yes, there was "preacheritis." Yes, there was "pedestalitis." But there were not *four* big divisions! This issue was not pursued throughout the Epistle! We are in Greece. Wisdom teachers, itinerant philosophers traveled through. The Grecian mind had to place even "gospel preachers" in this category. Paul stressed the gospel, not philosophy. He hit the "very idea" of a "new philosophy" head-on. Immediately! Paul was emphasizing the gospel more than profound division.

Notice:

1. Paul did not blame the preachers. They had not sponsored this. It is a subtle temptation in preaching. Preachers like it. We like being "experts," "sophists," and "sound." Preachers cannot control their fans, their friends. "I can handle my enemies; it is my friends that I cannot handle." Paul did not defend himself as innocent! Gospel preachers must be gospel preachers!

2. All *four* groups were wrong! Even those who claimed to follow Christ were sectarian. We need to re-study sectarianism. Only members of a group can be sectarian.

3. Church problems are attached to people, to groups. Preachers are always pressured to join groups. Stay away from labels and party spirits. A preacher who can be labeled is no longer a preacher. This is frightening! Do not encourage "preacheritis" in any way, shape, form, or fashion. Flattery is like perfume; it may be smelled but never swallowed.

4. The "bigness" (magnanimity) of Paul was expressed in the opening chapter.

THE CROSS

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. The power, the wisdom of the cross! It is difficult for us to understand the stigma, the stumbling block of the cross. To us, it is the power, the wisdom of God! But to the Jew it was a stumbling block, to the Greek foolishness. The cross was the focus of Paul's preaching; the cross is the focus of our lives.

1. The cross is not philosophy, education, psychology, ethics, morality! The cross is not "another religion in a pluralism of religions." God the Creator, out there, came in Jesus Christ, down here, and on stage, in history, during time, he died for our sins. The gospel is proclaimed, preached. We are not salesmen. We are not promoters. We do not "market Jesus." Jesus is not merely "The Greatest Teacher," a wonderful man! Jesus Christ is the Savior! Jesus is the "only one of a kind." "We must never confuse our desire for people to accept the gospel by creating a gospel that is acceptable to people."

2. The cross is for sinners. We are not preaching "the gospel." We are studying issues, isolated doctrines. That is Mistake Number One. We do not have enough sinners! Read 1 Corinthians 6:6-11! What a motley crowd! They were "dirty-dog sinners," the worst kinds! The Corinthian church was composed of "saved sinners." They were sinners that would shock us! We are "trying to purify the church"! Paul was inviting all kinds of sinners!

3. The cross confronts sin! The closer one gets to the cross, the more he senses his sin, his need. Christianity, spirituality, is dependency. We need God! We confess Jesus as Lord! You cannot come to the cross, hold on to the cross—and hate, cuss, worry, cheat, be bigoted, lie, gossip. The cross literally "cleans house." The cross will get the job done! The cross will never split a church! The cross will never make Christians mean! The power of a preacher is not in *politics* but in the *pulpit*—preaching the cross. The cross is the most powerful thing on earth. Paul built the church on the cross. Bring men to the cross; keep men at the cross. There is no sin that the cross cannot cure. There is no vice that "God and I" cannot handle.

4. Sin down at church must be seen, admitted, and cor-

rected by the cross. We usually deny the need. Then we try to ignore the fact. Then we "politic" to cover it up and perfume it. Then we wonder why there is little integrity down at church! Paul says sin is corrected at the cross, only at the cross. No sin down at church is corrected until the cross corrects it!

Paul corrected "preacheritis" with the cross (1 Corinthians 1). He corrected immorality with the cross (1 Corinthians 6). He corrected resurrection heresies with the cross (1 Corinthians 15). Preachers are always tempted to correct problems with "quick fixes," short cuts. This will not work. Take all problems to the cross.

5. Preach more sermons on the cross! We must turn this over to others. Our job is not to teach "distinctive church doctrines"; our job is to "hide behind the cross." "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14).

NEGLECTED APOLLOS

Read Acts 18:24f. Apollos was a Jew born at Alexandria, the library city of learning. Education does not ruin men. Men are ruined before they are educated. He was "Hellenistic" (Greek culture). He was eloquent. Paul could have been jealous, for this compliment was not given him. In fact, this seemingly was a weakness. There is unity in diversity. We need Paul; we need Apollos. We need someone who can start a church; we need someone who can build upon another man's foundation. God can use eloquence but not ignorance. We need more talented men. Apollos was "in the Word." We need competent men in Scripture. Sheep must not "starve at the Master's table." Exegesis, hermeneutics! We need mighty men of God. He was also fervent in spirit. Too many are fervent—without biblical knowledge . . . or "dead" in scholarship.

Yet, the glory of Apollos is that he could be taught; he could be changed by "parishioners." Aquila and Priscilla did not call him down at church. They did not yell at him in the foyer. They did not "write him up" in a gospel paper. They, graciously, taught him more perfectly.

Yet this situation bothers us! We hear great evangelistic sermons on Samaria, the eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, the jailer, etc. We know little and say nothing about Apollos! We skip Apollos. Was he "re-baptized"? Is this bothering us? Do we try to make the Bible fit our schemes?

Apollos wielded a great influence both in Achaia and Corinth. He is last mentioned with a lawyer in Titus 3:13. Some "tongue-in-cheek" say preachers need lawyers. Paul deeply respected Apollos, encouraged Apollos, advised Apollos. Yet they were different.

Read between the lines! Paul wrote the most Epistles. Apollos was eloquent, yet never had a sermon printed. Apollos was zealous, yet was never mentioned further. He has no Epistle (unless he wrote Hebrews). We need different men to do different things. "Bloom where you are planted." "Make do with what you have." Let us have some "Apollos classes." Let us name some of our sons "Apollos."

PAUL'S PHILOSOPHY OF PREACHING

Read 1 Corinthians 9:16-27. The way Hodge says this is: "Preach the most gospel . . . to the most people . . . in the best ways . . . in the shortest time."

"Preach the most gospel." Time has already been given to the primacy of the gospel. This consumed Paul. When visitors leave our worship services and Bible classes of all the things they must know . . . *God loves them! Jesus died for them!* We are servants of the gospel. First, last, always—be a gospel preacher!

"To the most people." We have already observed that we have too few sinners! We must become big enough to go to sinners, accept sinners, save sinners. Sinners must know they can be treated rightly by us.

"In the best ways." No two sinners can be approached the same way. No one sheet fits all the beds. Evangelism is a message, a ministry—not a method! You cannot save Greeks like Jews. There are four Gospel accounts. To the weak we must become weak. We must not make men come up to our standard before we can teach them. Men must not "suit us"

before they are allowed to serve God. Methods must never become traditions. Our loyalty must be to the gospel, not our methods. Men "fish" on the terms of the fish.

"In the shortest time." We stood amazed in late 1989 as Eastern Europe changed politically. We must step through these God-opened doors with Bibles and Jesus! Time is of the essence. We become all things to all men to save some.

Now the fishhook! The issue is self. In trying to save the world we must not forget Priority Number One—self! We must keep our batteries charged and our motives right. We must never lose our integrity. "Discipline begins at home." In evangelism Paul never forgot the evangelist. We must first be and do what we would will in others.

The result? When Christ is preached, his church is: (1) biblical in content; (2) genuine in character; (3) gracious in nature; and (4) relevant in method.

REAL EVANGELISM

Read 1 Corinthians 3:4-9. This is a familiar yet misunderstood passage. Paul was simply a servant; Apollos was simply a servant. Preachers tend to forget this. *Servants!* Servants of the gospel, Jesus, the church.

1. Unity/diversity. Paul did one thing, Apollos another. One plants; another waters. We need a broader, deeper, better spectrum in evangelism. Evangelism is far more than a one shot, "quickie," "Cold Turkey Door-Knocking." Door-knocking beats nothing, but that is all it beats! "White fields" (John 4) are not accidents. Jesus said we enter into previous labors. Some can plant; some can water. Thank God for both.

2. No rivalry. "Churchworkers" sometimes clash, saying, "I am more important than you." Shame on us. Some evangelize; others edify! We must have both! Some can preach for two to three hundred! A few can preach for one thousand! We need to recognize this. Some leaders can only take a congregation so far! Paul was great; Apollos was great; why compete? Paul recognized this. Moses got Israel out; Joshua got Israel in! We need *both!* Why compete?

3. *Pow!* God is the glory! We are not here to succeed! We are

not here "to look good." We are here to plant and water. God is the Lord of harvest! Leave the increase to God! Do not try to do God's work! Do not fret or worry about God's work! How much could be done if we did not worry over who gets the credit!

4. Paul called the Corinthians to *four* great commitments! (1) To have an unreserved commitment to Jesus. We are saved by faith, not bias. (2) To be full of the Holy Spirit. Early church preachers and leaders were full of the Spirit. Heaven's work cannot be done by human power. (3) To utilize their God-given ministry gift. God has set all of us in the body to use our gifts for the body. (4) To serve the community. Jesus served as a servant. We must be a "towel church." The church must involve itself in its community.

5. Christians are "co-workers" with God. What a privilege! What a blessing! What a power! Now read 1 Corinthians 4:1-7. We are stewards of God. We are to be faithful, not successful. Our "boss" is God, not man! Preachers need to remember whom they work for! *God!* Not *man!* Do not answer to men! Do not trust men! Do not promote men! Men are only men!

The unique temptation of the pulpit is to "play God." Do not do it! The world is not on our shoulders! We are not responsible for the church! Read 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1. Paul tells all, "Be like me!" These are the leaders we need! We need men who stand up and lead, saying, "Be like me!" Within five years a congregation will be like its preacher; it will be like its preacher's heart! This is real evangelism.

Now read Acts 27-28. Read, carefully, the "shipwreck" account. Someone said, "It does not do any good to feed (help) anyone unless he is baptized." *Blasphemy!* When Jesus is preached, God is glorified—even if no one obeys the gospel! All now have a Savior whether they confess him or not!

Read Acts 27-28 more closely! The captain of the ship was not in charge. The captain of the soldiers was not in charge. Paul was in charge! Angels were in charge! Paul had the truth. All worked out as he said! He saved the people aboard the ship. Were any baptized? Do we preach great evangelistic sermons from Acts 27-28?

Again, the viper did not harm Paul. He healed Publius and others on Melita. They were hospitable, accepting, and grate-

ful! But were any baptized? They honored Paul, but was the church established? There must be a broader base for evangelism!

MEMBERS WHO SPOIL PREACHERS ROTTEN

Read 1 Corinthians 16 in its entirety. Then re-read verses 6, 7, 10-12, 15, 17-20. We need each other. We need special people in our ministry.

Remember Number One: The power of the ministry is in the message, the gospel. This is our purpose, our power.

Remember Number Two: Ministry is to the glory of God *totally!* "That no flesh should glory before God" (1 Corinthians 1:29). Grace is of God. We are saved by grace through faith.

Remember Number Three: Leaders are builders. Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-17. We are God's workers. There are *six* elements as a result—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, stubble. This is *sobering!* What are we producing? There is, *notice*, a reward! But the workers are not lost if their converts do not remain faithful! We preach; we gospel; we minister; we build—but we "do not play God."

Remember Number Four: There are no "Lone Ranger Christians." Paul, then Apollos, plus Timothy, plus Stephanas, etc. The only time Paul was really down was when Paul was alone! We cannot do it or go it alone. I need you; you need me.

1. We need a Stephanas: "...addicted to the church." These are quiet, behind-the-scenes, always, there, faithful people. *Addicts!*

2. We need Aquila and Priscilla. They worked with Paul at Corinth. They converted Apollos at Ephesus. We need members who "spoil preachers." One preacher has in his church contract, "I need a party a year." We are human. Church work is the most difficult, the most humbling work on earth. All local preachers fail or live with daily failure! There is always that one not baptized, that one now lost, that one dying! Those multiply in time. The task is impossible. We, too, are human. We, too, are weak. We, too, need encouragement. A preacher cannot "buddy" with one elder; that would only cause problems with other elders. Elders cannot, really, encourage

preachers! They are afraid they will lose control. They will be accused of being "rubber stamps" for the preacher. Besides, the preacher might wish a raise. Preachers cannot be in a small clique. They cannot be owned by one group! What do they need? Some special families and members who "spoil them." Cook them chocolate pies; remember their birthdays; send them love-notes! Read Romans 16 about Paul's "special brethren." Every church I have served blessed me with these special friends. May their tribe increase!

Preachers need fellow-preachers as special friends—preachers who will make them accountable! We are people in the people business. Two magicians practiced magic. One became great, the other failed. The simple explanation. The one who succeeded loved his audience. He thought, "I am lucky that people would come to see me perform." He was always humble and grateful. He enjoyed his audience as they enjoyed him. The failure considered audiences "a bunch of suckers." He looked down on them. He neither liked nor enjoyed them. What kind of leader am I?

In preaching and serving we must always remember the "people areas" . . . family, work, self-image, the future, our human failures, and frustrations. We must example this to our brethren. We must show them what it is like to be faithful and obedient to God in these areas. (1 Corinthians 16:13: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.")

Re-read 1 Corinthians!

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WORLD EVANGELISM AND 1 CORINTHIANS

MISSION METHODS IN CORINTH

DANIEL C. HARDIN

OUR PLACE IN THE BODY (1 Corinthians 12:18)

To set the stage for a brief discussion of the Lord's body and our place in it, allow me to lay some important groundwork. First, let me give a brief survey of the Gospel of Mark and second, a look at God's plans and man's plans, set in a parable.

A Survey

Mark opens his Gospel with a prophecy of Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist. Following a brief introduction to Jesus with mention of his baptism and temptation, Mark quotes Jesus as saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; . . ."

It should not be surprising that James, John, Simon, and others were soon to be counted among his disciples. What excitement must have filled their hearts. They were in the presence of a man with a power that could only come from God, a man who preached Good News of the kingdom. How they must have trembled with excitement at being in the presence of the Messiah of prophecy.

They could truly believe that the hated Roman occupational forces would soon be driven from the land. Israel would be free again, free to expand its borders as in the days of David. Israel would conquer the world, for the prophet had said, "The mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all nations will stream to it" (Isaiah 2:2).

As Jewish boys, they had heard the scrolls read and dreamed of being with David and his mighty men as they

marched Israel of old into prominence among the nations of the world. Now history was to be repeated. The Messiah was here. He had only to unite the people who, with God's power, would march to victory. Surely, his closest followers would be counted among his own mighty men and go down in history along with Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah (2 Samuel 23).

Some of them could even expect to sit at Jesus' right and left hands. Then, when alone with Jesus on the mountain, they were among the favored Twelve chosen to be apostles. It must have seemed to them that their dreams had come true. After over four hundred years of silence, God was once again speaking in Israel. History was being made, and they were a part of it.

Of course, things were not exactly as they had imagined because Jesus did not seem to be raising an army. Perhaps that would come later. They seem to have been temporarily content with his powerful preaching and miracle-working. Add to that the power he gave them. When they were sent out to the towns and villages of Israel, they were able to drive out demons and heal the sick.

Though he had not made any further moves to recruit an army, the potential was there. They saw their own fame reach right into the highest levels of government. Herod was startled by the surge of public excitement. He even imagined that John the Baptist had returned from the dead (Mark 6).

When the Master tried to take them for a quiet retreat near the lake, thousands of men come out, perhaps ready to turn their plows and pruning hooks into swords and spears. Still, the Master did not organize an army but, rather, sent the Twelve away across the sea and dispersed the five thousand (Mark 6).

Strangest of all, when the people would have made him king, he refused (John 6:15). If he intended to re-establish the kingdom of David, why not accept the mandate of the people? Instead, he began to talk of taking up one's cross and of one losing his life to save it. When he plainly stated that he must suffer and die, Peter took him aside and rebuked him for such ideas. Rather than thanking Peter for his concern, Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8).

Peter, James, and John must have wondered whether the kingdom would ever be re-established with Jesus speaking so plainly of his impending death. Then they had their dreams confirmed when they heard him say that some of them would not die before the kingdom came with power (Mark 9). He even explained to them that those who followed him would receive a hundred times more than they had given up—relatives, houses, and farms. They must have pondered this and perhaps saw in it the plunder awarded the victors following world conquest. Then they saw Jesus transfigured and were awed and encouraged by the experience.

Jesus' words about the kingdom may have been exciting and in line with his followers' expectations, but his continuing talk of suffering and death disturbed them. When James and John asked to sit at his side in the kingdom, he rebuked them, not for asking for the position, but because of his preoccupation with servanthood. These who were to receive a hundredfold were now told that if they wished to be first they must become slaves of all (Mark 10).

Though he used his great powers to confirm his message, he refused to feed the people to lure them to his side. When his critics asked for a sign, he refused to give them one. His followers were perplexed because his behavior was not what they thought Messiah-like behavior would be. Also, he continued to focus his attention and teaching on suffering and death.

A casual remark about the beauty and grandeur of the temple (Mark 13:1) led to a harangue about the very destruction of the temple. They knew that the prophet had said that in the new kingdom the nations would seek the Lord in Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:21, 22). Yet Jesus was adamant that the temple itself would be destroyed. They must have wondered what the nations would find in Jerusalem with the temple destroyed.

The Twelve were told that they would be flogged in the synagogues (Mark 13:9). In the midst of this confusing message, they were told that they must preach the Good News to all the nations! They must have thought, "What good news?" They may have wondered under what circumstances they

would be preaching this news. Would they be preaching the Good News during the establishment of Israel as the queen among nations? According to Jesus, they would preach as they were being arrested. He spoke of brother killing brother and of people hating them (Mark 13)!

Then he spoke of his return at the end of time and they had a glimpse of glory, but glory growing out of great sorrow and suffering. Following a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus sequestered himself with the Twelve in an upper room. He spoke convincingly of suffering and servanthood and then went out to the garden called Gethsemane. The perplexed apostles witnessed the soldiers, the betrayal, and the mockery of a trial (Mark 14).

With fear and disappointment in their hearts, they were but observers during their Lord's time of need. They did not even stay to watch. They ran away. Even he whom Jesus loved, ran away, leaving him alone.

Staggered by the crucifixion event, his closest followers would not believe that he had arisen, even when they heard it from fellow disciples. When Jesus finally appeared to all of them, it was to reproach them for their hardness of heart (Mark 16:14).

Today we may ponder what went through the heart and mind of the risen Savior when, just moments before he ascended to the Father, they asked him, "Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" It would not have been surprising to us if in the next verse Mark wrote, "And Jesus wept!"

We know, of course, that he did not weep because he knew that the seed had been sown and that they would soon come to understand all the glorious things he had been teaching them. This brief survey does, however, illustrate how difficult Jesus' task was. His disciples had their own agenda, an earthly kingdom, and Jesus had a spiritual kingdom in mind.

It might seem to you and to me that from our position in time we are not like those apostles of old. We understand. We have been taught that the kingdom, the church, is a spiritual body. We may even look back at those apostles and give them a patronizing smile as we ponder their lack of understanding.

But, for now let us press on to the second part of this groundwork, the parable.

A Parable

The time is shortly before the birth of Jesus and the setting is heaven. The whole creation was groaning in travail, and the angelic host was stirred by a feeling of expectation that swelled and receded among those myriads of myriads as they surrounded the throne of God.

The fullness of time had come upon the universe! Plans laid before the foundation of the world were about to be realized. Thousands of prophecies were nearing fulfillment, and yet God, on his throne, waited. The patience that had spared a rebellious creation for thousands of years was not easily tried. There would be time for all things, and all things would come to pass at their own appointed time.

The myriads of myriads were restless. The rustle of a million wings filled heaven with a flurry of sound that pulsated and grew until it seemed as though heaven would burst apart from its very magnitude.

Then there appeared before the throne of God a mighty angel who had just come from walking to and fro on the face of the earth. He prostrated himself before the Lord of hosts, and the glory of the throne was darkened by the forward surge of the winged multitude that pressed closer in eager anticipation.

The mighty angel slowly raised himself from the sea of glass before the throne of God and, from a golden belt around his waist, withdrew a scroll sealed with earthly seals. Hardly pausing to allow the one seated on the throne to acknowledge the message from below, the mighty angel broke the seals and unrolled the Epistle. There was silence in mid-heaven. Not a feather moved, not a breath was released, as the heavenly host awaited the reading of the scroll.

With a voice like the rushing of a great torrent, the messenger read aloud the words, written by men to the Father of light. The usual things were read: a prayer request for the sick, three new additions to the membership of the synagogue, the death of a prominent elder, even an outing planned for the

following week.

Then the voice paused, and the multitude moved imperceptibly closer. The mighty angel momentarily lifted his eyes to the Lord on high and then read again with guarded precision: "We are looking for a missionary. We want someone to preach your message with power and enthusiasm. He will not be expected to fill a local pulpit or reach people close to home. No, Lord, we can guarantee him an exotic field far from home where the masses are hungering for the gospel.

"Ours is a friendly synagogue filled with liberal givers. We have exceeded our budget for the last three years in spite of the fact that the bonded indebtedness for our new building runs into six digits. Thus, we are prepared to pay a stipend on a level comparable to that of the local Roman proconsul. We also provide transportation (on Israel Galley Lines, where one can earn Advantage Leagues good for any port in the empire), housing (utilities paid), a chariot with a full team of matched bays (with full maintenance), a working fund, and an educational fund for all minor children. In addition, there is a fine package of benefits, including: Social Security, and health and medical insurance for the entire family.

"We are sure applicants will be happy to learn that we believe in fully paid furloughs biannually and have a complete relocation and retirement plan after only five years on the field. Please apply in writing, and include a recent portrait (sketched by a reputable artist) and two references."

Here, the voice of the angel faded, and all eyes focused on the figure seated above the throne. Massive shoulders dropped slightly, and the eyes were touched with a look of understanding disappointment. Then he turned to his Son and slowly shook his head. They both settled back to await a final message from another town, a village actually, named Bethlehem.

The Lesson

Our individual Christian responsibility, whether at home or abroad, is a calling, not an option. As Paul was called to preach and felt compelled to do so (1 Corinthians 9:16, 17), each Christian should realize that he or she has been placed in the body (the church) by God (1 Corinthians 12:18) for God's intended

purpose. The Christian who realizes this great truth will approach life in an entirely different manner than his unenlightened brother.

Too often the Christian enters into the work of the church as though he were a consumer looking for the best deal. This, in turn, has led the local congregation to assume the role of entrepreneur, packaging its product to lure the discriminating buyer. The truth of this indictment can be seen in those common calls for more meaningful worship by disgruntled members who claim that the church has little to offer them. It is not uncommon for members to say, "I just don't get much from the worship."

God never intended for us to be entertained and coddled by the church. We are the church. We have been called to serve. We are not playing "Let's Make a Deal." Our card reads: "Have Basin and Towel, Will Travel." The church will recognize her full potential only when each Christian turns to God in prayer and humbly asks, "Where, O Lord, do you want me to serve in your kingdom?"

Whether foreign missionary or local evangelist, elder or deacon, man or woman, we have been placed in the body by God. We have been placed just where he wants us. Our responsibility is to find out where that place is and then fill it to the best of our ability. Our decisions are not made because of what we can get but what we can give. As Christian doctors, educators, typists, or auto mechanics, we do not necessarily go where the pay is good and the benefits attractive. We go where God needs us, for we are his body.

KINGDOM DECISIONS (1 Corinthians 9:16, 17)

I will never forget walking down the hall at a summer mission training program and hearing a group of students talking. I heard only a part of the conversation, but it went something like this: "Hey, John, you really need to think about joining our team. We're going to Hawaii. Man, it's really great. And we've got a blonde that is really something. You need to meet her. She's single and everything."

Then there was the time I took a group of students to the World Mission Workshop. On the way back to Lubbock, one young man who had never before considered mission work said he thought he would go to Africa. When I asked him about his decision, he said that he had been walking down a hall at the workshop and accidentally walked into the wrong room. Once there, he hated to walk out, so he stayed for the presentation. The presenter had a captivating presence, and the slide show was organized. This student made up his mind, then and there, to be a missionary to Africa.

Of course, teaching at a Christian university presents me with many opportunities to hear students discuss their career decisions. Never having considered flat, treeless Lubbock a vacation paradise, I am always a bit surprised at the number of students who, having lived there for four or more years of college, want to stay. Following graduation, many students opt for jobs in Lubbock. I am sure it is because Lubbock has become home to them and they have friends there.

There are those who send out resumés and take the jobs with the highest beginning salaries. Some look to areas that offer good skiing, fishing, or hunting. Others want to live in big cities or in small towns. Generally, the future is seen as an opportunity for some form of self-gratification. Why not? We live in a consumer society where we are the customers and every business tries to lure us. That we are Christians means little to our society. To those around us, we are merely consumers like everyone else.

These students I have mentioned are not unusual. They are merely doing what they have seen everyone else doing, including their Christian peers and role models. Generally speaking, we have not been taught to think about our calling as Christians. After all, we live our lives as best we can and go to church regularly if we are numbered among the faithful.

Even the churches fall into the general pattern of seeking members by following the lead of secular businesses. We visit those who move into our communities and do our best to convince them that they should attend our congregation. As newcomers to an area, we visit the local congregations and select the one that seems to meet our needs. We do this much in the

same manner that we selected our place of employment, our home, or our long distance phone company.

Suppose Paul Were Here Today

For the sake of putting this in perspective, let us suppose that Paul were here today. Let us say that he is a new freshman enrolling in Anytown Christian University. He cannot decide on a major because his parents want him to be a doctor, lawyer, or businessman while he seems to like teaching, preaching, or perhaps counseling. Why do you suppose his parents have set their sights on business or one of the other two professions of choice? Is it possible that these very religious people are somewhat materialistic in their outlook?

Consider poor Paul. He seems to have a way with people and recognizes that he would do well in a service profession. Still, he is torn between doing what he believes he would like to do and what his parents want him to do. How does the poor young chap make up his mind? He has several options. He can enroll in the Liberal Arts or General Studies Departments with other undecided's. Or, he can enroll in any one of the other professions he and his parents have in mind and then, perhaps, switch majors later.

Simply for the sake of illustration, suppose he takes the pre-med option and graduates with a degree in biology, enrolls in and graduates from a medical college, finishes his internship, and faces his immediate future. What does he do, or where does he go? The same decision would face him if he chose preaching, graduated with honors, completed a master's program, and then had to decide where to preach.

We can visualize Dr. Paul sending out resumes to hospitals or doctors, receiving invitations, and visiting various hospitals or clinics. Much in the same manner, we might see brother Paul contacting preaching friends for information on vacant pulpits, attending lectureships to make contacts, or placing a resumé in a church paper. In either case, once a contact has been made, there would be the discussion of salary, benefits, job description, etc.

The Paul of the New Testament

The problem is that this view of Paul would not fit the Paul

of the New Testament. It might have fitted Saul before his call, but not Paul. Paul did not determine his ministry solely based on benefits, salary, or working conditions. I use the word "solely" because Paul was not insensitive to creature comforts and personal responsibility.

Paul thanked the people of Philippi (Philippians 4:10-18) for their help over the years. It is obvious from this passage that although he does not complain, he appreciates the help that they have sent in the past and that they have now renewed.

Also, Paul realizes that his situation differs from that of others. He is single and not responsible for a family, but he knows that the married man has a responsibility to his wife (1 Corinthians 7:33). Thus, it can be concluded that Paul might have approached his ministry somewhat differently had he been a family man.

Even considering Paul's unique circumstances, he still sets us an example that we would be well-advised to consider seriously. Paul recognized that he had been called to preach (1 Corinthians 1:1; 9:16, 17). As he explained to the saints in Corinth why he took no support from them, he strongly emphasized the seriousness with which he accepted his calling.

Paul's call came while he was still in his mother's womb (Galatians 1:15). This does not mean that Paul's was a special case, that is, whereas the rest of us decide what we are to do, Paul's life was predestined by God. Paul, himself made it clear that God's predestination is based on his foreknowledge (Romans 8:29) of what men will themselves to do, not on the overriding of their wills.

Christians are referred to as the "called" in several passages (i.e., Romans 1:6, 7; 8:28ff.; 1 Corinthians 1; 7; Hebrews 9:15; 1 Peter 2:2). We "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that [we] may proclaim the excellencies of him who has called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). God has called us, and we are his possessions. Having been called, we have a responsibility to proclaim his excellencies.

How are we to fulfill this obligation to proclaim Christ? That is up to him. He has placed us in the body, his church, just

where he wants us (1 Corinthians 12:18). Our responsibility is to function according to that placement. If he wants us to be Christian lawyers, teachers, or preachers, then we must be such to his glory. Whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, we must do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If the church is to be all that it can be, we must be those who make kingdom decisions. That is, we must always put the kingdom first. Remember Jesus' words, which he spoke on the mount: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you." He knows that we have personal and family needs, and he has promised to meet them. However, he asks that we put him first.

Paul made kingdom decisions. He went to Macedonia, not because of the salary or benefits but because of a call (Acts 16). Were this same man to enroll in a Christian university today, he would not struggle alone with his decision about a major. He would go to God in prayer and ask, "Lord, what would you have me do in your kingdom?" This is the manner in which kingdom decisions are made.

I long to see the day when every Christian who graduates will kneel before God and ask, "Father, where do you want me to serve?" When we make kingdom decisions, we push selfish ambition to the background, and God is in control.

I have a friend who has just completed his residency at a hospital. For the last year he has been traveling to various cities interviewing. What draws him to some cities and not to others? He has a desire to lead people to Jesus, and he will only interview with doctors or hospitals in places where his evangelistic talents can be used by the local church. I believe he is making kingdom decisions.

Strategy for Finding a Field

To those young people who are considering mission work, let me suggest a strategy for finding a field. Though stumbling into a slide presentation might get you into a rewarding mission experience, a prayerful, systematic study of the fields of the world might be even more rewarding. The cute blonde may be going to Hawaii and you might do a good work there yourself, but prayer and study might give God greater free-

dom to open your eyes to the place to which he wants to send you.

Kingdom decision-makers will approach all decisions based on what those decisions will mean to the church. They may attend smaller churches to help strengthen them. They may take jobs in places where the church is weak and needs their help. Those who make kingdom decisions are all missionaries, be they fully paid evangelists or vocational missionaries at home or abroad. In this way, all Christians become missionaries wherever they are.

There are other advantages for those who make kingdom decisions. Learning to make kingdom decisions not only places one's life more directly in God's hands, but also takes away much of the anguish associated with making decisions.

About three years ago, a man I know decided to sell a successful accounting business, go to law school, and then try to get into international law so that he could become a vocational missionary. Following graduation, he sent out resumé's to many firms. As the weeks went by and he interviewed with various firms and individuals, he narrowed his options to two openings, one involving a semi-private law practice with a Christian businessman and the other an international accounting firm.

Both of these openings were in large metropolitan areas with many strong churches. He might have worried that people would think he was opting for a comfortable church home far from the mission field. That the accounting firm is large might lead some to think that he was out for the money. He finally settled on the accounting firm and noted that he had just gone through three years of expensive humiliation only to take a job that paid 40 per cent less than he had been making when he was his own boss.

All these factors could cause a person a certain amount of discomfort and second thoughts. However, since this had been a kingdom decision, he had no concern for what people might think or guilt for ending up in a large, church city. Nor was he overly concerned about his income because he had placed his future in God's hands.

He was willing to go anywhere. He made every effort to find

an international position. If God wanted him in a foreign country, the firm would send him. If not, then God must have a work for him where he is.

When we make decisions on our own, we may wrestle with our decisions and wonder if we have done the right thing. When God has been an integral part of the decision-making process, we can accept any outcome with confidence. Thus, kingdom decisions can relieve us of considerable anxiety.

Most of us have heard of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that is, safety, security, belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Sometimes Christians make light of this hierarchy, especially the last element, self-actualization. They believe that it is a bit presumptuous to believe that within every man is that one potential that he should realize. Considering the kingdom, perhaps we should take a second look at that hierarchy.

Consider a brain surgeon during a tornado that destroys his city. His first thought will be for safety. If he survives, his next need will be for clothing, shelter, and food. Third, he will need to belong, so he will search for friends and relatives. Next, he will want to be involved in the rebuilding. He may become a truck driver hauling away rubble or may work in a hastily constructed clinic caring for bruises and broken bones. Such work is important and timely, and he can have self-esteem because he is doing something significant. However, some day he will likely resume his role as brain surgeon because that is his profession. This is self-actualization, to do that for which we are destined by talent and training.

If God is our Creator, should he not know us better than we know ourselves? If he has placed us in the body just where he wants us, should this not be where we can find self-actualization? Making kingdom decisions places us in the hands of God. So placed we should be exactly what we were created to be.

Of course, few of us have been as observant and prayerful as we should have been. All of us have done things our own way and are not exactly where God wants us. Are we total failures? What are we to do? We should start where we are and, with God's help, make the best of our circumstances.

Paul tells those that have been called to begin where they are and to go on from there (1 Corinthians 7:17ff.). God likely

spends a great deal more time working through those who have gotten themselves into awkward circumstances than working with those who have followed his lead consistently. One only needs to read of the faithful in the Old Testament to find that nearly all made serious errors. Consider Abraham's son by Hagar, David's sin with Bathsheba, Jonah's flight, Samson's disregard for the Nazirite's lifestyle, and many more. Also consider how much smoother things would have gone if these men had made kingdom decisions rather than purely personal ones.

Where has God placed me in the body? If every church member asked himself that question and seriously sought the answer, how different the world might be today. More parents might want their children to be servants. More students would study to be preachers and missionaries. Weak congregations would be strengthened by strong members coming to help. Every Christian in an area where the church is weak would become a vocational missionary.

Other problems would be solved too. For example, we hear a great deal about missionary and preacher burnout, and we ask, "Why did Paul not burn out?" He was beaten, stoned, and threatened by Jew and Gentile, yet he never quit preaching the gospel. The answer is simple. God called Paul to preach, and Paul knew it. Perhaps those who burn out were never called. Or if they received a call, maybe they never quite understood it.

There may be preachers preaching or missionaries on the field who could have done more for the kingdom in other capacities, but with God's help they will still do good work for the kingdom. On the other hand, how many entrepreneurs, doctors, lawyers, or bankers could have made a more profound impact on God's kingdom had they answered the call to preach the gospel?

This does not mean that one is lost if he or she has made decisions without considering the kingdom. God can and will use each of us wherever we are. However, the mistakes of the past must not be passed on to future generations. We can and must model the making of kingdom decisions. We must teach the youth of the church to make kingdom decisions. How much

better off the kingdom would be if all of us had been making such decisions all of our lives. The past is past, but the future is ours. Let us begin making kingdom decisions today.

THE MIND OF CHRIST (1 Corinthians 1:23)

Paul preached Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24). It sounds rather simple, and in a way, it is. On the other hand, it is also very profound and ever complex. Paul was the master missionary. He set an example for all future missionaries to follow, and in this first letter to the church in Corinth we can find that pattern.

Have the Mind of Christ

Paul concludes chapter 2 with the words, "But we have the mind of Christ." A prerequisite to effective evangelism is having the mind of Christ. This, I believe, is a call to wisdom.

I am reminded of a gentle old man whose name I wear. My uncle Dan Brown was a pioneer. He came to New Mexico by covered wagon and homesteaded on the plains near Tucumcari. When my grandparents died just after the turn of the century, Dan, who had never married, reared the younger children. From New Mexico he went to Oregon and, hired by the forest service, blazed many of the trails that crisscross the Cascade Mountains.

He loved children and over the years took many of us for hikes among the tall trees. He had an uncanny sense of direction and always knew where he was in those dense and confusing woods. He would stuff his pockets with raisins and crackers and, with nieces and nephews at his heels, set out for a day's walk. The pattern seldom varied. His pace was rather slow, or so it seemed to us children.

We were anxious to run ahead and see things and had little patience for old Uncle Dan who seemed to plod along. He used to smile and say that young people wanted to get there all at once. However, toward noon our legs would begin to tire, and we would fall in step with him and help him nibble on crackers and raisins. By late afternoon we were not only lost but struggling to keep up with Uncle Dan. By evening the woods

pressed in, and the only thing that kept us from fear and panic was Uncle Dan's reassuring smile. Then, when it was just turning dark, he would lead us to the clearing where our parents were waiting, and we would go home, exhausted.

As children we were not very wise. In our youthful enthusiasm we ran ahead, paying little attention to direction or our own limited energy. We even poked fun at Uncle Dan's ridiculously slow pace. In the end, however, we were awed at his stamina. He never seemed to tire, and I later learned that he could walk that way for days. Uncle Dan was a woodsman. The forest was his home, and he knew it, loved it, and respected it.

I think of Uncle Dan and those walks in the woods when I see young missionaries anxious to get to the field or young preachers who brag about how young they were when they began to preach. Jesus was thirty before he began his public ministry, and Paul was even older when he accepted the call to preach. Even then, Paul spent three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17, 18) learning the basics and at least another nine years¹ quietly preaching near his hometown before beginning his mission work.

I can easily name a dozen men who went to the mission field filled with excitement and enthusiasm only to return home so frustrated and embittered that they are no longer faithful to the Lord. They went out to show others the way and in the process lost their own way. We must ask, "How can this be?" The answer, I believe, is that they never had the mind of Christ. They were like those young children who dashed off into the woods without any understanding of where they were going or how they should pace themselves to get there. As Uncle Dan would say, "They want to get there all at once."

Too many young men and women want to be missionaries but see no reason to waste their time studying the Word. I see them on the campus every year. They love devotionals, organize groups, sing the latest religious songs, but have little interest in Bible classes, especially the demanding ones. To them, Christianity is an emotional high punctuated with dreams of reaching the world all at once.

Paul spent the time necessary to learn the woods. When he wrote 1 Corinthians 2, he revealed a depth of understanding

and humility that is astounding. Paul was no starry-eyed innocent, running on enthusiasm and emotion. He was a trained professional who had paid his dues and was at home with his message.

Paul had the mind of Christ because he had come to think like Christ. He had asked all the tough questions and carefully considered the answers. The world offered Paul few surprises. He had counted the cost and made up his mind to conform to Jesus.

Were you called to be a missionary, an evangelist, a teacher of the Word? Then you must have the mind of Christ. Remember that God's own Son prepared himself until he was thirty before he began his mission. Like Paul, spend your nine years in preparation. Then remember Paul's words, "But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Become All Things to All Men

Paul not only had the mind of Christ, but he also understood the minds of men. Anyone who has trained missionaries understands the awesomeness of Paul's claim that he had become all things to all men that he might, by all means save some of them (1 Corinthians 9:22). I have watched mission students gag at the sight of sardines or the mention of eating pickled pig's feet. What will they do when faced with the foods of other cultures? The very least of becoming all things to all people involves eating their foods.

Taste is learned and a taste for new and unusual foods can be developed. Food is just one of many elements of a culture that the missionary must learn to accept. One of the most difficult things to learn will be a new language. Though missionaries have had some success preaching through interpreters, it is generally accepted that the missionary must talk to the people in the language closest to their hearts.

A few years ago, a mission team went to the Giriama of Kenya. Though they could have made some headway speaking Swahili, the trade language of Kenya, they elected to study Kigiriama. The results were amazing. Again and again people

expressed to them their sincere appreciation for their willingness to learn Kigiriama. They were told that they were the first white men in many years to learn this language. It was not easy, but it was their way of becoming all things to the Giriama that they might win some of them.

One must not only be able to eat and talk with the local people but think like they think. This is what Paul meant when he spoke of becoming all things to all men. He says that he made himself a slave to all. He makes it clear that although he was always under the law of Christ, while among Jews he became a Jew, and while among Gentiles he became a Gentile. If you would be a missionary, you must be willing to pay the price in time, study, and self-discipline to become all things to all men.

Avoid Idolatry and Immorality

Paul explains how the Israelites drank from Christ, the spiritual rock, in the desert. He then notes that although they had such an intimate relationship with the Lord, they turned to idols and immorality (1 Corinthians 10). He then says that they are examples for us, that we should not crave evil things (v. 6).

About two years ago, I had an opportunity to meet for a weekend with denominational preachers from large congregations across the United States. I was somewhat surprised to learn that the two sins that recurred most frequently in their discussions were immorality and materialism. They prayed about this and expressed their own personal struggles. The fact that two of TV's top religious show hosts were devastated by sex and the misuse of money simply lends more credibility to their concerns.

Such sins are not reserved for denominational preachers whose doctrines we challenge. Too often, we hear of preachers, deacons, or elders running off with "that other woman." Living in a pagan society, we are constantly bombarded with sex, alcohol, and pagan lifestyles. We first tolerate, then accept, then participate. I recall a group of young men who, hoping to be missionaries, had just returned from a survey trip to Asia. While showing slides of the trip, they laughed and winked at

their wives as they showed several pictures of attractive stewardesses.

These young men were not womanizers, nor did they try to cover up flirtatious behavior. They were just having a little fun. An older and wiser retired military man was watching the slide presentation and, at this point, spent a good while lecturing the boys on their behavior. He had watched too many well-intentioned young men fall into the trap of immorality. Their giggles and smiles, as they showed these slides, indicated to him that they were well aware of the attraction of the girls and the sexual implications of several good-looking guys and girls being alone in a foreign country.

He accused them of nothing beyond poor judgment, but wanted them to understand that no step toward an unhealthy relationship is worth the risk. He told them that Christians, especially in this permissive society, must avoid even joking about immorality. Perhaps it was under similar circumstances that Paul warned Timothy to flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22).

Paul, who lived in a pagan society, was especially concerned that Christians flee from fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18). He also warned against other moral sins, including greed which he calls idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Greed is an especially insidious evil that threatens the Christian in America. With the immeasurably high standard of living that surrounds us, it is only natural that we become materialistic and demanding.

To want more things is the nature of man. James warns that this wanting, if not checked, will lead to friendship with the world and enmity with God (James 4:1-4). The preacher of the gospel can enjoy whatever salary and benefits he receives, but must never allow these material things to direct the course of his ministry. Called to preach, we must preach regardless of the circumstances.

Edify

Paul concludes his first letter to Corinth with a focus on the message of the gospel. As he discusses the miraculous signs of the apostolic church, he makes it clear that edification is superior to emotion, even the emotion stimulated by the direct

working of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:1-19). He then reviews the gospel message as he had preached it to them (chap. 16).

Paul was deeply concerned that the church be edified. He was equally concerned that edification be done with accuracy. He admonished Timothy to diligently and speedily develop expertise in handling God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). As we have moved away from a rather simplistic proof-text approach to Bible study, we have often abandoned Bible study altogether. Of course, we go through the motions in Bible classes but, as often as not, our classes are built around popular films and books rather than God's Word.

Much of the preaching we hear is shallow and more in tune to modern psychology than the text of the Bible. This is not surprising because such preaching is easy and it pleases the hearers. One can continually hear the Word superficially and even inaccurately taught and then note how the hearers respond with enthusiastic words of praise and encouragement.

Clever speech, smooth rhetoric, and calculated emotion can sway and move people, but only the Word of God can edify. We are becoming a people who do not know what we believe because we do not know how to properly handle the Word. The preacher, missionary, elder, or teacher must know the Word.

Unfortunately, the one who preaches the Word may find himself rather unpopular with his hearers. Paul knew this and explained to Timothy that he must preach the truth in spite of the consequences.

I recall hearing a preacher deliver a series of excellent lessons from one of the books of the Bible. I was impressed because his sermons indicated careful study of the text and a remarkable insight into the needs of the congregation. I was then shocked when several elders lamented that they had never heard this preacher preach the gospel. I finally discovered that, to them, the gospel meant only "the plan of salvation."

They had been hearing the gospel preached powerfully for weeks but did not recognize it for what it was. It is this lack of understanding on the part of many of us that reinforces medi-

ocrity in preaching and teaching. The minister of the Word would do well to listen carefully to Paul's instructions to Timothy:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desire; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

NOTE

¹I arrive at nine years by subtracting the three years in Arabia, one year in Antioch (Acts 11:26), and one year on the first missionary journey (Acts 13).

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MISSIONARY THEMES IN 1 CORINTHIANS

EARL D. EDWARDS

GOD ASSISTS AND PROTECTS HIS WORKERS (The Background to the Founding of The Corinthian Church in Acts 18:1-17)

Corinth was a commercial city of great significance when Paul arrived there about the middle of the first century A.D. It was situated just south and west of the little tongue of land called the isthmus of Corinth which ties the Peloponnese with northern Greece. It was significant commercially because it was at the junction of east-west sea routes and north-south land routes. For many years it rivaled Athens until it was destroyed in 146 B.C. by the Roman general Leucius Mummius. It was rebuilt in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar and given the status of a Roman colony. In 27 B.C., Corinth became the capital of Achaia, the Roman province which occupied what we now call southern Greece. The city soon regained its commercial fame and with that came a certain moral looseness also. In classical Greek, *korinthiazō* ("act the Corinthian") meant to practice fornication. Even today one can visit the ruins of the temple to Aphrodite on the Acropolis near the ruins of Corinth, and it is a known fact that the priestesses of that temple gave religious approval to this kind of conduct. The effect of such thinking on the young church at Corinth is seen in Paul's first letter to the Christians there. The apostle had to admonish the male Christians to refrain from joining themselves "to a harlot" because the Christian's body "is a temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:16-19).¹

To Paul, though it probably would not have been his favorite place to live, it was a major population center in need of God's

light. He was a "fool for Christ's sake" (1 Corinthians 4:10); he went where Christ needed him. He, therefore, went to Corinth and spent eighteen months there before departing.

Paul Testifies to the Jews

Paul's normal policy was to go to the Jews first as he went out to preach (Acts 3:5, 14; 14:1; etc.). He does that very thing here. He supported himself by "tentmaking" (Acts 18:3) which probably should be translated a "leather-worker."² He worked with Priscilla and Aquila who had "recently come from Italy . . . because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2). As noted, he first worked with the Jews, "reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks" (Acts 18:4). An inscription has been found which is believed to be evidence of a synagogue at Corinth in A.D. 100-200.³ Paul evidently worked at his trade the other days of the week, but the text says he went to the synagogue "every Sabbath." There he was found "reasoning" and "trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." Paul will later write that because he knew "the fear of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). The "Greeks" he persuaded were undoubtedly "God-fearers." These "God-fearers" were Gentiles who had become interested in the Jewish religion (and Jehovah God) and were frequently found at the synagogues with the Jews (cf. Acts 10:1, 2; 17:17). It is clear that Paul reasoned with these "God-fearers" in the synagogue, but it is just as clear that he gave the first opportunity to hear to the Jews.

Luke then notes that "when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word" (Acts 18:5). Paul had earlier sent these two brethren to check on the Thessalonians, and they are now returning with rather good news about the faithfulness of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:6-8). They probably are the ones who also brought him some financial help from the Philippians (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:8, 9; Philippians 4:15). This assistance enabled him to begin "devoting himself completely to the word" insisting to the Jews that "Jesus was the Christ" or the Messiah (Acts 18:5). Christ was the one all the Jewish prophets had

foretold would come as a deliverer. The Jews "resisted" his message and "blasphemed."⁴ Paul then "shook out his garments" (Acts 18:6). His action is a protest against their unrighteous conduct as well as a renunciation of further communication with them (cf. Nehemiah 5:13; Acts 13:51). Evidently, one very prominent Jew did accept Paul's message as did his "household." It was Crispus, one of the few Corinthians that Paul personally baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14). Paul must have been grateful for this victory, but to the others who refused Christ, he spoke plainly: "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Paul was making it plain that the full responsibility for their rejection of Christ was upon them because they had heard the message and refused it (cf. Ezekiel 3:16-21). The clear implication is, however, that had Paul not gone, their blood might have been on his head (cf. Romans 1:14).

Paul Testifies to the Gentiles

Paul had promised to go to the Gentiles, and he began with one whose "house was next to the synagogue," Titius Justus (Acts 18:7). Since the text calls him a "God-fearer" we can be relatively certain that Paul had encountered him at the synagogue, and when the Jews of the synagogue refused the message, he invited Paul to use his house for preaching and as a meeting place (cf. Acts 19:9). From the moment Paul began to direct his work toward the Gentiles, he began to have significant results. In addition to Crispus and his household which, so far as we know, was the only Jewish family to obey there during the early part of Paul's stay, "many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized." The results are significant and encouraging. The fact that the Jews, who were so hostile to Paul, had their meeting place next door seems to have contributed to an uneasiness and even a "fear" on Paul's part (cf. Acts 18:9). Paul seems to have feared for himself and his co-workers to the point of desiring to leave Corinth (cf. Acts 18:9-11).

God Reassures Paul

To help overcome this fear, God gave Paul a "vision" which came "in the night" (Acts 18:9). A vision is a revelation which

God causes one to receive through the medium of his sight. In this revelation which Paul received, he was assured by God that he should "not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you" (RSV). If Paul was about to give up and leave the city, it was probably because he was experiencing the same feelings other missionaries have felt in strange and hostile lands. I have known several who have fled because of hostilities similar to that which Paul experienced at Corinth. Jeremiah, at one time, proposed to let people be disobedient and to cease preaching about the dangers of disobedience, but he could not do as he had thought because God's Word was like "a burning fire" shut up in his bones (Jeremiah 20:9). His conscience forced him to speak out!

After telling Paul not to "fear," God told him why he did not need to fear: "For I am with you" (Acts 18:10). This promise is frequently given to God's servants in the Scriptures (cf. Exodus 3:12; Matthew 28:20; etc.). The specific meaning of God's promise is given in this context: "No man will attack you in order to harm you." God is not promising Paul that no man will try to attack him, but he is promising that any such attack will not be successful in harming him while he preaches in Corinth. However strong even the authorities were, God was (and is now) even stronger. Then God goes ahead to tell Paul why he wants him to stay: "I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:10). The original term for "people" is, in Greek, *laos* and is sometimes used for Israel in the Scriptures. Here, it refers to people in Corinth who have not yet heard the gospel but would eventually obey when they heard. It refers to those who were "potentially" God's, and there were "many."

Thus Paul is reassured by God in this critical moment of his ministry as he was to be in at least two other such moments, when he was in prison at Jerusalem (Acts 23:11) and when he was in a violent storm at sea (Acts 27:23-26). God always reassured him when he most needed it.

Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Rather, he "settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). It should be noticed that he did not just stay—he was continually "teaching the word of God."

There was continual communication of the divine message. A bit later in this passage, we see the Jews accuse him of teaching men "to worship God contrary to the law" (Acts 18:13). Certainly Paul did not ever deny that the law of Moses had been God's law and that its prophecies, etc., were to be fulfilled. However, he did teach that the old law was to be supplanted by what James calls the "perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1:25) because by the old law of Moses "no flesh could be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

God Keeps His Promise

The rest of this passage shows that God kept his promise to protect and assist Paul by working through a certain Gallio, "proconsul of Achaia" (Acts 18:12), who according to documents found by archaeologists must have served as the Roman proconsul at Corinth between A.D. 50-52. The Jewish religion was recognized by the Romans as a *religio licita* ("legal religion"), but the Jews drag Paul before Gallio's "judgment seat" with the accusation that what Paul taught was "contrary to the law" (and therefore, not covered by the legal recognition given to Judaism). Had this Roman official decided that these Jews were correct in their argument, it would probably have formed a precedent for other Roman judges and Christianity's spread would have been greatly hindered. Instead, God be thanked that Gallio decided that the Jews were just fighting over details of interpretation of their own law and were "picky" and "cantankerous" and so he "drove them away" (Acts 18:16) and even allowed the Gentile observers to beat those Jews who had accused Paul while he closed an eye to what was going on (Acts 18:17). As a result of this decision of Gallio's, Christianity was allowed free course in the Mediterranean Basin for another ten years (approximately A.D. 52-62) before Nero married a Jewess named Poppea Sabina and began to turn the legal tide against Christians. This tendency toward fairness on the part of the Roman officials probably influenced Paul to appeal to Caesar in his legal difficulties in about A.D. 61 (cf. Acts 25:11).

Conclusion

Paul "remained many days longer" (Acts 18:18) to preach

the Word in Corinth as a result of God's assurance that he would care for him and protect him. In fact, as noted above, he remained a total of eighteen months (Acts 18:11). Many more were converted, and it is possible that among them was a certain "Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue" who had led in accusing Paul before Gallio (Acts 18:17; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1). If this is the same Sosthenes, it means Paul had helped to bring two synagogue rulers of the Corinthian synagogue to obedience in his eighteen months in that city.

It was Paul's habit to return to Antioch of Syria to report to his supporting congregation (cf. Acts 14:27). He evidently did that again at the end of this second missionary journey (Acts 18:22).

Present-Day Application

1. We need to preach in the major population centers even when they are characterized by immorality and even if our personal preference would be to live elsewhere (cf. Corinth).
2. If we cannot find full support, some of us may have to support ourselves to be able to preach where the Word needs to be taught (Acts 18:3).
3. We should go where we find people who are interested in religion, even if it is a distorted religion, and try to persuade those people to conform to God's teachings (cf. Paul in the synagogue; Acts 18:4).
4. When people reject God's message, there comes a point at which we should warn them of the consequences of such a rejection and go on to work with people who are more receptive (Acts 18:6). However, sometimes we find some who reject and others who accept in the same city (cf. Corinth).
5. We should remember that when we refuse to do our part to take/send the gospel to others who need it, their "blood" will be "upon us" (the implication of Acts 18:6; cf. Ezekiel 3:16-21).
6. Though he will not give us such assurance by a miraculous vision today, God does assure his workers of his assistance and help in difficult situations, and his workers who are mature enough to understand this will be willing to stay even where danger is present in order to preach his Word to those who need it.

7. God may sometimes work through non-Christians (like Gallio) to protect his servants. In the period 1950-60, he protected some of his servants in Italy by using Communist judges.

8. God's workers should keep their supporting congregations informed about the work they are helping to support (Acts 14:27; 18:22).

THE CONTENT OF OUR MESSAGE

(1 Corinthians 1:18—2:5; 15:1-8, 17)

When missionaries go out to teach others about God and his will for them, a prime consideration should be, "What, precisely, should be preached to those who are willing to listen?" Before we make our decision on this matter, it is imperative that we ask ourselves what the inspired apostles taught. Paul clearly stated that the message he preached was viewed as "foolishness" by the "world" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Indeed, to many of that day (and this), the idea that the *death* of a Palestinian peasant could give them (us) *life* seemed (seems) at best naive, and at worst, utter "foolishness." But what seems right is not always right. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12). In fact, to many today, it may seem best to hire the most entertaining preacher we can find, but that is not true either. Paul tells us in this Epistle what the message we share *is not* and what *it is* in reality.

What the Content of Our Message Is Not

Paul says he did not arrive at Corinth "with superiority of speech or of wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:1). That is, it was not his purpose to catch their attention by the excellency of his diction or by his reasoning power or by his personal eloquence. His purpose was to hide his own cleverness or accomplishments and put forth Christ and his message. That is, he did not use skillful words that tend to brainwash a person without giving him any substance. He goes on to say that his "message" and his "preaching" were "not in persuasive words of wisdom." Paul was not contrary to the use of proper means for persuading men. That is, he was not opposed to organizing and illus-

trating a sermon well so as to make it more persuasive, for he says elsewhere that he, "knowing the fear of the Lord," tried to "persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). What he is condemning here is emptying the message of its real content. He was showing the foolishness of using lots of long words and high-sounding philosophy like the Greek rhetoricians did without giving any real substance. As he says just a bit later, such "words" are "taught by human wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:13), not by God's wisdom.

As I meditate on Paul's admonition here, I am reminded of my recent experience of hearing one who called himself a gospel preacher and possessed a doctor's degree, speak about "God's Plan for the Family" for three full-length lessons without once mentioning even one of the passages in God's Word (e.g., Genesis 2; Matthew 19:9ff.; 1 Corinthians 7:1ff.; Ephesians 5:22ff.; 6:1-4) which teach us about God's will regarding the family. He did tell a lot of human interest stories, but his approach was a great deal different than Paul's who preached nothing among the Corinthians "except Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:2). I do not take this to mean that Paul refrained from mentioning contemporary writers or current events (cf. Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33), but I do understand it to mean that they were mentioned by him only when they related in a vital way to something that was a part of Christ's message.

What the Content of Our Message Really Is

Paul first calls it "the word of the cross" (1 Corinthians 1:18). That is, it is a word about a cross (and a person who died on it). It is a word about being saved through a crucified redeemer who died in our stead. Later Paul will write, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). On down, in the text of 1 Corinthians he sums up the content of his message in a similar way by saying he preaches "Christ crucified" (1 Corinthians 1:23). But as is obvious when one reads all that Paul wrote about his message, "Christ crucified" does not exclude his burial and his resurrection. In fact, later in this same Epistle, he gives more detail as to what he means by "Christ crucified." "For I delivered to you as of first impor-

tance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). "Christ crucified" is not just Christ put to death, it is Christ who was raised and who was as Paul says in Romans 1:4, thus "declared [to be] the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." "Christ crucified" includes his resurrection which also establishes him as the Son of God and qualifies him to be our Savior. Later in this same fifteenth chapter, Paul says if Christ "has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins" (v. 17). This is what Paul means by "Christ crucified." In fact, as one analyzes Paul's sermons, he finds that they frequently contain these vital elements (cf. Acts 13:26-39; 17:30, 31; 26:22, 23). These are, as Paul says in our text, "words" which were "taught by the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:13). Christ had promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to "guide" his apostles "into all the truth" (John 16:13), and Paul says in this Epistle that the things he writes are "the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14:37). Let us, therefore, take note of what the crux of the gospel is and be sure we follow Paul's guidelines so as to be sure that we are speaking "God's wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:7) rather than a wisdom which is of men.

Conclusion

Unless the content of our message is correct, Jesus says we wind up preaching "as doctrines the precepts of men," and even our worship is "vain" (Matthew 15:9). God help us to avoid this tragic pitfall. Instead, let us be careful to preach "Christ crucified" so that we can truly be "God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

THE NECESSITY OF SHARING THE MESSAGE

(1 Corinthians 9:16-27)

Many people in our world have no knowledge of Jesus Christ our Savior. In fact, one estimate indicates that far more people in our world recognize the name "Coca-Cola" than recognize the name "Jesus Christ"! Paul treats the necessity of sharing

the good news about Jesus in this text.

Woe Is Me if I Do Not Preach/Share the Message

In verse 16 Paul says, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel." What is Paul saying? Aside from the question of whether he is paid, it is rather clear that his thought is that he is under a moral obligation to preach the message, and he will be guilty of negligence if he does not. But the Christian who is not a public proclaimer of the gospel is tempted to think that such an obligation rests on only preachers in the sense of public proclaimers. But the term which is translated "preach" is *evangelizomai* in the Greek language and is not limited to just public preaching. It is a broader term which includes "announcing" of any kind, even privately in one-on-one situations (cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:6).⁶ Thus the kind of obligation to share the message which Paul feels is not limited just to those who have the ability to proclaim publicly, it is an obligation of all who can "announce" the good news to others. From whence does such an obligation come? Paul tells us elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence: "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15). That love Paul had felt so strongly "controlled" his actions and caused him to make himself more and more a "slave of righteousness" (Romans 6:18) which is what all of us as Christians promised when we obeyed "that form of teaching" (Romans 6:17). Thus to refuse to share the gospel with those who have not heard it is to "go back on" a promise we made when we became Christians. No wonder Paul says "woe is me" if I do this! He had made himself a slave to all (1 Corinthians 9:19), and he was obligated (as we are) to carry through with what he had promised.

We Share the Message in Order to Win More

There is then an obligation on the Christian's part to share the message, but for what motive must this be done? Paul responds in verse 19: "I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more." He knew that Jesus had taught that one soul is worth more than the whole world (Matthew 16:26), and

so he was interested in the souls of all men. His overriding, all-encompassing motive was that he might "by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). In fact, he did "all things for the sake of the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:23). His highest priority was to promote the gospel. It came before personal property, personal comforts, and even eventual family relationships. Indeed, he made himself a "eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (cf. Matthew 19:12). The more each of us matures, the more we will each give up in order to share the gospel with others. To some, Paul's life may sound dull, but he found great joy in his sacrifices when he thought of those he had helped to bring to Christ: "My beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown" (Philippians 4:1). Further, his prospect was a joyous one when he approached death as a martyr: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7, 8). This is the joy of those who share the message in order to "win the more."

To Better Share the Message We Must Become Like Those We Wish to Influence

But how did Paul go about achieving his success in bringing people to Christ? His "secret" was fitting in with the people he was trying to influence: To the Jews he "became as a Jew," to those without law (the Gentiles) he "became as without law," and to the weak he "became as weak," because he wanted "by all means to save some" (1 Corinthians 9:20-22). For the Jews he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), when speaking to the Gentiles in Athens, he forgot his Jewishness (Acts 17), when dealing with the weak he refused to eat meats when it would offend (1 Corinthians 8:13). But in all of this "fitting in" with others he was careful never to compromise the doctrine of his Lord. For example, he refused to allow the Jewish Christians to force circumcision on the Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:3-5). But in everything where he could do so without compromise, he became like the people he was trying to influence.

In keeping with this principle of the gospel which Paul practiced, we should as we reach out to others: (1) learn their language if they speak another; and (2) observe their customs

where such is possible without compromise (i.e., eat their food, observe their holidays, read their newspapers, attend their sports activities, etc.).

Conclusion

It is imperative for the salvation of others and the glory of our God (Romans 15:8, 9) that we share the good news of salvation in Christ. What a blessed privilege it is to share a message which may result in the eternal salvation of our neighbors and friends. What a joy to be able to be "God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9). But it should also be remembered that unless others hear this good news they cannot be saved, for Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). It is necessary that others hear this "truth."

NOTES

¹Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quoted comes from the NASV.

²F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 367.

³Adolf Deissmann, *Light From the Ancient East*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), 16.

⁴The RSV says "reviled him."

⁵The Greek for "judgment seat" is *bema*, and archaeologists have found the *bema* in Corinth.

⁶Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, rev. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 317.

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CULTURE, CORINTH, AND THE MISSIONARY

VAN TATE

CULTURE AND CONTEXT IN CORINTH

The major objective in section one is to show the importance of *cultural understanding* for proper exegesis and application of biblical principles. The Bible is a theological document, but it is couched in cultural contexts. We must understand those contexts before we can exegete properly. In essence, exegesis is theological and application is anthropological, and both are important in our communicating the message of God clearly.

We live in an age of *specialization*. A farmer who insists on using tools and methods of the nineteenth century cannot compete with modern farmers. A medical doctor who knows only tools and techniques of just a few years ago cannot give the best treatment to his patients. The preacher or missionary must also be abreast the most recent advances in the science of *cross-cultural communication*. We have many tools to aid us in communicating the message of Christ. Proper exegesis of a text requires knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the letter. Proper application requires knowledge of the context in which we wish to implant the gospel. This means we must focus on cultural understanding which is best achieved in the field of cultural anthropology.

The Value of Anthropology

Anthropology is the science of culture, often called the missionary science. It basically refers to the "study of man" and can help us in the critical task of exegesis and application. When we speak of culture, we are referring to that which is learned, patterned, and integrated in the makeup of society. Therefore, we speak of the "way of life of a people." A culture is

like the human body with a complex integrated system. If we do something to the body to upset its integrated system this threatens the very survival of the person. Similarly, when we do something to a culture which upsets the system, we threaten the survival of the society. Paul was aware of this as he came into Corinth. In various ways which we will examine, he sought to bring change in a way that would fit into the culture and be accepted.

Studies in the area of cross-cultural communications help us in understanding the original text which is a part of the focus of this entire lectureship. It is imperative that we understand the original text, but that understanding is possible to the extent that we have a clear understanding of the cultural milieu in which the writing occurred. The Bible is tied to culture. Therefore, we must examine the circumstances of the text. Only after we have examined the Bible in its cultural context and determined the meaning of the text in the first century will we be able to make the proper application today. A missionary is a cultural surgeon, cutting into a culture and attending to the needs of that culture to give it true health. His preparation for that work should be as thorough as that of a medical doctor.

All this implies specific training. I do not believe we can overemphasize the importance of training in relationship to biblical study and application. This is doubly important for the missionary as he struggles to understand the original culture, the culture in which he has grown up, and the culture in which he seeks to implant the gospel.

The medical model of a delicate operation illustrates what we are talking about. Before a major operation, a number of specific things must be done. Let us explore what must be done in a major operation such as an organ transplant. First, the *donor* himself must be prepared. Specific physical and psychological preparation is made prior to the operation. Second, a *qualified doctor* is secured, one who is specifically prepared to do the operation needed. Third, a *proper environment* is needed. That is, the operation must be done in a germ-free environment. Fourth, a *match* of donor and recipient must be obtained to secure acceptance of the foreign organ to be trans-

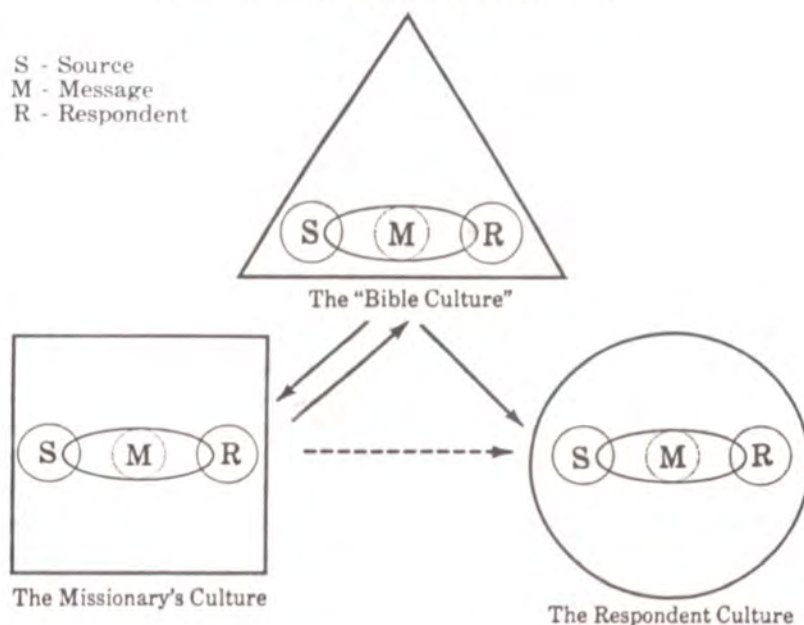
planted. The body has defense mechanisms which normally fight any foreign object. The closer the match, the easier it will be for the body to accept the new organ. To aid in the acceptance, a fifth step is taken, that of *giving immuno-suppressants* to the recipient which reduces the body's defense mechanisms set to reject foreign objects. Finally, after the operation and gentle care, over time *the body gradually accepts* the new organ. In fact, new cells replace old ones in the implant, and gradually it becomes a part of the body.

These steps must be followed in seeking to bring the gospel into a culture. The gospel is foreign to a pagan culture, and normal cultural resistances to its introduction occur. Paul entered into an intensely pagan culture with many different forms of idolatry and immorality. Paul expressed serious concern as he came into that society. In looking at the steps, we can certainly say Paul was prepared for the task. Not only was he prepared spiritually but also socially, for he was especially prepared by God. He grew up within both Jewish and Gentile cultures and could identify with either. It may be that the environment at Corinth was also prepared, for at the time Paul entered that culture there had arisen serious misgivings about their local gods. A moral God whom the Greeks could respect and honor had drawn many "God-fearers" such as Cornelius (Acts 10). The Jews in the community may have waited in anticipation of the Messiah of which their prophets had spoken. It is clear in Paul's teachings that he sought to match the gospel message with what they understood. This is especially seen in his references to the temple. The church became God's alternative to the pagan temples. He furthermore sought to reduce the threat of opposition by identifying with each community, trying to show that the gospel was relevant to their individual needs. Over time, with his presence in the community for 1½ years, and afterward by sending Timothy to minister to them and then by writing letters, he sought to lead the people to gradually replace their old allegiances with the new.

The three-culture model sometimes seen in mission literature gives a view of the complexity of the problem. The model looks something like this:

A THREE-CULTURE MODEL OF MISSIONARY COMMUNICATION

S - Source
M - Message
R - Respondent



Eugene Nida of the American Bible Society has made significant contributions toward our understanding of the problems of communication across culture.¹ As a communicator, the missionary stands on middle ground looking in two directions as noted in the model. Obviously, he must look at the Bible culture and exegete the message properly. Second, he must look at his own culture, realizing that the application of biblical teaching has been influenced by that culture. Third, he must look at the target culture, where he wants to plant the church. Finally, he must be able to analyze that culture and introduce a gospel message which will fit in that culture, resulting in the planting of an indigenous church.

Culture

The job of cross-cultural communication requires significant cultural awareness on which we are focusing. "Culture"

defined simply is the "way of life of a people." Culture is much more than the sum of its parts. A Thanksgiving meal is much more than the food on the table, and a ritual such as marriage is much more than the ceremony performed. Even so, any given behavior in a cultural setting carries with it deeper meaning than what is generally observed. We do not always understand our own culture. Such things as modest dress, behavior in cultural rituals, etc., take on a variety of meanings from culture to culture.

Corinth was a multiracial society, and it is evident that Paul recognized this. This is seen in his speaking of Jews and Greeks, the weak and the strong, the wise and the foolish. In seeking to communicate within such an environment, one must understand the multicultural situation seen in the model above. Some actions which may seem innocent in our society, such as keeping a cat or having baby food on hand for a child, may present real cultural misunderstanding. One missionary kept a cat but found it difficult to win friends in a society. Only later did she learn the reason. In the host culture only those who were thought to be witches kept cats. On another occasion, a young couple in a remote area presented a deep puzzle to the local people. They were observed eating food in cans with labels illustrating the content. Sometimes it was corn or beans which the people knew. However, the couple had a baby who was fed the contents of a can with a picture of a baby on it. Were they feeding their own child human flesh? The conclusion the people drew shows how easily we can miscommunicate in a cross-cultural situation.

Even words like "Father" or "Shepherd" may conjure up in the mind of the hearer a far different message than we intend. God as Father in some societies where the fathers are seen as abusive, immoral, and irresponsible may not be the first message we wish to give. Jesus as the Shepherd may not be a good example of his care in a society where only senile old men or small boys have the job of caring for the sheep.

Behavior is generally wrapped up in what is often referred to as the "world-view" of a people, that is, how they view the inner-workings of their world such as beliefs, values, behavior, etc. World-view is a deep-rooted map of reality as a people

see the world about them. As "the central control box" of a culture, the world-view may perform the following functions: (1) It explains how and why things got to be as they are and how and why they continue or change. (2) It validates the basic institutions, values, and goals of a society. (3) It provides psychological reinforcement for the group. (4) It integrates the society, systematizing and ordering the culture's perceptions of reality into an overall design. (5) It provides, within its conservatism, opportunities for perceptual shifts and alterations in conceptual structuring.² This must be analyzed in the culture of the first-century documents then applied in the context of modern cultures.

The Cultural Situation in Corinth

Possibly no city in the Greco-Roman world had a greater cultural diversity than Corinth. It was a major seaport city drawing trade from every direction. People came with their vices and with their gods. The Greeks worshiped Aphrodite, and just on the outskirts of Corinth rose Acrocorinthus, that mountain on which a temple in her honor and for her worship stood and was served by a thousand temple prostitutes. In the city itself stood the great temple to Apollo. In fact, the idolatry of the city was much like that in her sister city, Athens, located just a few miles away. The problems of idolatry are clearly reflected in this first letter to the church there.

The proverbial *immorality* characterizing seaport cities was certainly there. So degraded, low, and immoral had the people become that the very word *korinthiazesthai*, meaning "to live like a Corinthian," referred to living a drunken and immoral life.

Women apparently enjoyed a freedom which presented some real problems in the young church in Corinth. This cultural situation gives a better understanding of Paul's discussions of women's behavior in this book.

The *division* which was threatening the church probably had its roots in the cultural diversity of the city also. People coming from diverse religious cults focusing on specific hero leaders would foster a similar attraction to a specific leader. Diverse cultural lifestyles would also encourage following

men who were "like them." Probably it was the *Greeks* who were inclined to the Alexandrian scholar, Apollos, because of their love of eloquence, wisdom, and philosophy. In contrast, the *Jews* would prefer Cephas, the rugged simple fisherman from Galilee.

The Task of Cross-Cultural Advocacy

You should recognize by this that it is not a simple task to understand what is written. Once one has made a proper exegesis of the text, there remains the complex problem of applying that text to a cultural situation which may be foreign to the teacher.

When one seeks to teach a specific message in a cross-cultural setting, there are at least three possible results. (1) The message may be *accepted* in total and integrated into the culture. (2) The message may be *rejected* outright, and therefore, it "finds no root" in the hearts of the people. (3) The message may be *modified* so that it can fit into the culture, meeting their needs but taking a form that will be culturally acceptable.

Paul seemed to be uneasy as he came into Corinth. He had just experienced widescale rejection in Athens. Corinth culturally was much like Athens, so he had reason to be concerned. Perhaps his effort to identify closely with the people, or as he said "to the Jew I became a Jew and to the Greek I became a Greek" (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), was a conscious effort to win their acceptance. This is a recognized missiological principle and must be followed seriously if one is to gain acceptance in a new culture.

Acceptance comes primarily when the gospel really is "good news" to the people. In other words, the gospel must address real felt needs of the people. People will not leave their traditional religions unless they are convinced that Christ is indeed a more powerful and yet caring God than what they have known. Unless they can see solutions to their problems which have not been found in the old religions, they will not turn. Therefore, it becomes a real problem for any teacher, but especially the teacher faced with a cross-cultural situation, to understand what the Bible teaches and how to apply that to the

specific needs of a culture. People want power to overcome evil. They want guilt removed. They want the truly abundant life.

Rejection is a real possibility. Some cultures are closed to change. To these the principle used by the early disciples, to shake the dust off the feet as a testimony against them (Mark 6:11), may be a guideline even today. However, even in difficult cultures, pockets of people may be open to change. Our task is to find those pockets, then to understand their culture so well that we can mold the message so that it will meet their needs. If the message comes in a foreign form, does not seem relevant, or is not understood, they are not likely to accept it. If it requires them to give up some cultural practice which is so ingrained that they cannot imagine life without it, such as the case of circumcision with the Jews, they will likely turn away. This requires that we know the difference between *cultural* and *supracultural* matters. Often we have gone into a new culture and imposed what is nothing more than a cultural tradition.

We can at least expect *modification* of what we advocate. This requires a certain recognition of relativity. That is, we understand that Christians may express themselves in life and worship in a variety of ways and be acceptable to God. Daily behavior in terms of work, dress, and celebration of rituals take many forms within the will of God. Worship may be under a tree or in a building, the worshiper may sing different types of songs and vary the aspects of worship and be within the will of God. But we want to be sure our behavior is within the will of God. Thus, we face the problem of exegesis and application. If we understand the cultural dimension of a specific text and the place of tradition in its application and if we are culturally sensitive to the target culture, we should be able to do exactly what God wants. That is, we should be able to plant and nurture churches of Christ speaking literally thousands of languages and worshiping as a part of the one true body of Christ, honoring him in word and deed. Paul was able to accomplish this task in Corinth, and the challenge is before us to go and do likewise.

PRINCIPLES PAUL USED

The objective in section two is to examine *principles* which suggest model behavior for us. Often in Paul's writing, he appeals to the people to follow his example (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1), and we speak of the importance of apostolic example. We are here examining the behavior of Paul in his ministry in Corinth. His behavior and teaching within that context of establishing the church in the great city of Corinth becomes a model for our own ministry today.

The Core of the Gospel

Paul makes it clear in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians that his focus is on *Jesus Christ*. A single *principle* in Paul's ministry seemed to have caused him to focus on *this message*. To him, Christ was the Lord of his own life and of all that he was to do or to be. Everything in the life of the individual, of the family, of the church, and even the community should constantly be lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the people to know clearly that the one and only true foundation on which they must build was Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). This message of the gospel of Christ was in the position of what Paul said was of *first importance* (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). Under that heading of pre-eminence stood the foundation facts that Christ *died* for our sins, that he was *buried*, that he was *raised*, and that he *appeared* to many witnesses after the resurrection. On those basic facts rested the whole of the message that Paul taught the Corinthians. This principle we must never forget.

You will notice in the beginning of chapter 2 that Paul said that when he came it was not with eloquence or with superior wisdom but with the simple message of Christ and him crucified. However, it was not an empty message, but one which was a demonstration of *the Spirit's power* and of *God's power*. The principle that we find is that our message should be focusing on Jesus Christ and him crucified. It is common for preachers today to call attention to themselves rather than to the cross. Perhaps they do not do it intentionally, but nevertheless, this is a common problem in our culture. I believe it becomes a common problem for missionaries as they go

around the world with the intention of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Too often we make the people dependent upon us or a system which we introduce, rather than upon God. Too often our message is focusing on traditions of our own culture as we have interpreted the gospel and developed our response to it within our own society. God is not just an American God. Christ is not just an American Savior. The church is not just an American church. God is the God of the universe, and Christ is the Savior of men and women in hundreds of cultures scattered around the world. The church must grow up within the framework of those cultures and address the needs and the problems that are faced by each of those peoples. That can best be done when the foundation is Jesus Christ.

Power

As Paul had said to the Romans, the gospel was the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). So he says to the Corinthians that he came to preach the gospel not with words of human wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its *power* (1 Corinthians 1:17). The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

I sense a real fear among many of speaking of the power of the gospel of Christ. I perceive that this fear is born out of a misunderstanding of what power really is and our falsely equating this in some way with Pentecostalism. I do not believe that what is claimed by Pentecostals is in any way akin to the power that we read of in the New Testament, but I do believe that there is a power in the gospel of Christ that is greater than we have commonly understood.

God is at work in the hearts and lives of men as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 3:6 when he said that in the process of evangelizing some men plant and others water, but it is *God* who *gives* the *increase*. This, too, is a principle we must not forget! Let us recognize that it is the power of God and not within our own eloquence, cleverness or methods that we are able to reach the hearts of sinful men and women.

It is likely that Paul was emphasizing the power of Christ to the Corinthian brethren because they faced a direct confron-

tation with the priests and gods whom they had worshiped for centuries, many of whom were housed in temples scattered throughout the city. As was indicated earlier, a message which does not focus on the real needs of people will be rejected. Paul focused on the gospel as a gospel of power because the people needed that. In my years of preaching in Africa, I found one of the most powerful truths that would bring change in the hearts of men and women whose lives were in constant fear and who were guided by superstition was the simple message that was stated clearly in 1 John 4:4, "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." I have watched men taking that verse and supporting verses emphasizing that truth, and challenging their pagan traditions of superstition, witchcraft, and sorcery and finding great victory.

God is in control of his world. In the context of separating a people for himself, God called Abraham and said to him, "I am God Almighty" (Genesis 17:1). Believing men knew that was true. We have throughout the Old Testament stories of men and women who marched forward in victory because they marched under the banner of God Almighty (cf. Hebrews 11). We can march under that same banner today and so marching will be victorious. Carrying that kind of faith and power into the communities of sinful men and women will give them also this power to defeat all evil.

Purity

A major threat had come to the young church in Corinth as immorality had crept into the body (chap. 5). For years those pagan Corinthians had visited the temple prostitutes. To break from such a fleshly lifestyle is difficult, but God does not tolerate immorality. It was a terrible thing, but it was not unexpected because as he says in 6:9ff., "Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what *some of you were*. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (Emphasis mine.) It was the cleansing of the blood of Christ that had made them

one in Christ and brought them together.

The major threat was a *threat to the group*. The vision of God for his people assembled together as a body is that they strengthen one another. This sin was threatening to destroy the group as Paul said, "As a little leaven leavens the whole lump." It is difficult for us in the United States to understand the power of *group loyalty*. There was a time many years ago when we could have understood it better, but our culture has led us into intense individualism. Power is perceived to be in the person rather than the group. Our heroes have been those individuals who have lifted themselves out of the depths of poverty or social backwardness and have doggedly climbed the ladder to success. However, the hero in God's eyes is the man or woman who stands loyal to his family, to his tribe, to his group. I learned this best in ministry in an intensely tribal culture. The group is of supreme importance in tribal societies and anyone who would do anything that would threaten the group would immediately be ostracized. It is that consciousness of group loyalty that Paul was trying to bring in the hearts of the Corinthians.

Even in our own society we are reminded that "the family that prays together stays together." We are reminded that mothers and fathers who take time to be with their children and model proper behavior for those children will be blessed by good and obedient children. There is little danger of immorality, rebellion, or abuse of drugs and other such things when the ties of family are strong. So it is in the church. There is little danger of immorality, abuse, and sin which would threaten the family of God as long as brethren love each other and care for one another and are tightly knit as a group. This is a major problem in our society, for our families are fragmented and our lives are fragmented and churches become spiritual feeding stations for an hour on Sunday morning just like our families become physical feeding stations as we move through our daily activities. We must call our people back to community. We must call for purity, help them cope within an immoral culture, and deal with the threat immorality brings to the body.

Identification

No doubt Paul recognized when he entered the city of Corinth that he was faced with a very serious problem because of the *diversity* of the social, ethnic, and religious makeup of the population. How could he bridge that gap? Reaching the heart of the Jew whose allegiance stretched back over the hundreds of years to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose life was ruled by daily rituals and in whose flesh there was carried the visible sign of the covenant of God.

In contrast to the Jew stood the Greek whose gods were housed in temples that were to be seen on every street throughout the city of Corinth, a people whose lives were ruled by passions of the flesh, who knew very little of family solidarity, whose homes were constantly threatened by unfaithfulness, adultery, and abuse. They despised the Jews who would mutilate their flesh in an act of circumcision and who were so arrogant that they could not be at peace with anyone who was not a Jew.

Might there be some way that Paul could reach into the hearts of these people? In 1 Corinthians 9:19ff., he tells us what his intention was in reaching those people. First of all, he perceived himself as a *servant* or slave. He did not seek and establish himself as someone that they should depend on or follow, rather he came to serve them. To do that, he made physical identification and cultural identification by living as they lived. In doing that, when he sought to minister to Jews he behaved as much as possible as a Jew should behave. That was not difficult for him to do because he was racially a Jew, but it meant that he needed to meet with the Jews in their synagogue and to worship with them within that context. He needed to address his teaching to the Jews out of the context of the Old Testament. His messages when he spoke to the Jews were often tied to culturally familiar people such as their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The messages were often tied to their beliefs as related to the prophets, priests, and the Law. Yet he had to challenge them to the universality of the gospel when they threatened to set up cultural barriers to impose on the Gentiles. The confrontation grows in his ministry, comes to a head in the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15), and

is followed in letters to churches where the problem persisted (e.g., Galatians).

To the Gentiles. Paul taught that his God also dwelt in a temple, something they would understand, but he was Creator of the world and Ruler of all powers. He showed the folly of human wisdom, which the Gentiles took pride in, and turned their focus to the true power. The world crucified the Son of God (1 Corinthians 2:8-10), but the true power, seen in the gospel (chap. 15) brought the Lord to life which was witnessed by many. A living, powerful God could not be defeated by the mute and immoral gods of the Greeks.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

The primary objective in this section is to examine *specific problems* encountered at Corinth and to determine how Paul dealt with them. This examination should be of help to us in establishing guidelines for approaching problems which we may encounter today.

Worldliness

It becomes very clear as we begin reading this first Corinthian letter that the people who had become Christians in Corinth were still troubled greatly with the problem of worldliness. Earlier we spoke of establishing the historical context in which the letter was written and pointed out that the people recently coming out of a pagan world were still enmeshed in a world-view that was limiting their growth in Christ. It is difficult for those of us who live in the Western world to understand the pressure bearing upon the people who are seeking to break out of a pagan world-view. This movement requires the development of a completely new view of the world and this is most difficult to achieve. When one is struggling with people who are emerging from a pagan world-view, he must exercise great patience and love to help move them in a different direction.

The problem at Corinth seems especially to relate to the Greek segment of the society which was focusing almost entirely on what Paul speaks of as *worldly wisdom* (1 Corinthians 1:22). Other such references as the term, "scholar" and

"philosophy" in 1 Corinthians 1:20 relate to the high regard that the Greek held for worldly wisdom. It is significant to note that the word "wisdom" is used twenty-six times in chapters 1 through 3 and only eighteen times in all of Paul's other writings. The frequent mention of this word in this context is an indication that the Greek perception of wisdom was a major problem.

The problem associated with this focus was that it emptied the gospel of its power (1 Corinthians 1:17). It is also a problem which plagues modern man, for we seek to develop programs and gimmicks in various ways to manipulate people to change their behavior.

An inner spiritual strength must be developed if we are to understand God, and the Corinthians did not have this. Here we need to examine closely the text in 1 Corinthians 2:6ff. Following that, in 1 Corinthians 3:1ff., Paul explains why they are having difficulty in understanding. The term "spiritual" in chapter 3 relates to an interpretive power, an insight only spiritual people have. If we do not have a discerning power that is focused in a spiritual direction, then we cannot understand the divine revelation of God.

Many mistakes and false conclusions are drawn by peoples coming out of denominational and/or pagan world-views because they have not developed this sense of spiritual discernment. It is our responsibility to help them bridge the gap as Paul was trying to do in this first Corinthian letter. For us today, this problem has been addressed in a recent book called *The Worldly Church*. In the foreword it is stated that religion today is no longer a passion, but a pastime. Within a single lifetime, religion has been reduced to a leisure time commitment which no longer elicits the conviction of anything sinful. The rapid secularization and trivialization of our society is said to bring one of the most serious challenges facing us today, i.e., the secularization of the church. A secularized world-view makes it difficult for us to understand and appreciate what God has planned. The book has been criticized, but it is difficult to deny that we are facing a serious problem of secularization in the church today, much like that in first-century Corinth.

Division

One of the fruits growing out of the worldliness discussed above is the division which had fragmented the infant church at Corinth. God has made it clear in his teachings that he hates division. This is probably one of the major works of Satan, i.e., to bring division into our families, communities, and churches. The reason why it is such a serious problem is connected with the fact that it breaks community. This division is seen at least in the following areas:

1. Racial. The conflict between Jews and Greeks is established clearly in chapter 1. The division lies at a deep level of divergent world-views. The Greeks focused closely on philosophy and wisdom. The Greek Christians in the Corinthian church seemed to be equating their new Christian way with a new divine wisdom. Because of this, they seemed to be evaluating leaders in that movement by this measure (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-12; 3:4-9). A certain segment seemed to be favoring Apollos who was known for his great speaking ability. This seemed to stand in contrast with Paul whom the Corinthians seemed to despise because he did not demonstrate any ability in terms of eloquence of superior wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). This is probably one of the primary reasons Paul is addressing so seriously this matter of wisdom at this point.

Paul seeks to change the thinking of the Gentile community by showing the contrast between what they refer to as wisdom and the true wisdom of God. Actually, Paul said that God was setting aside the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:18-22, 27, 28). God did this through the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). This was something that the worldly wisdom of the Gentiles could not understand. God also did this by his choice of true believers, finding them among the poor rather than the noble and educated classes (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

Paul wanted the people to understand that true power bypasses the world's way. He wanted them to understand that true wisdom comes through spiritual discernment rather than worldly wisdom. He wanted them to understand that he and Apollos worked for a common purpose (1 Corinthians 3:10). Their work was also in recognition of the presence of God who brought true growth. He wanted them further to understand

that all Christians are a part of God's holy temple.

2. Economic division. The church at Corinth was not a socially homogeneous group. There are several indications of class differences. Aquila and Priscilla apparently were of middle class background, owning a business and a home and of an educational level to allow them to teach the highly educated Apollos (Acts 18). Crispus (1 Corinthians 1:14) was a ruler of the synagogue and such men were usually wealthy. Gaius is thought to be Paul's personal host and also host of the whole church, implying wealth (cf. Romans 16:23). Others appear to have been men of high social or political position.

At the same time, many of the believers were not educated, influential, or of noble birth (1 Corinthians 1:26).

The problem of litigation (chap. 6) suggests wealth. It is the more wealthy and articulate who find it easy to use the judicial system. The issue of dispute related to *biotikos*, i.e., everyday matters of material interest.

Even in chapter 7 where the focus is on marriage, Paul refers to the issue of social status (vv. 20-22), implying this should not be a matter of acceptance or rejection. Social differences seem also to be a part of the problem surrounding the abuse of the Lord's Supper (chap. 11). Some had an abundance of food while others had little or none at all.

3. Sexual immorality (chap. 5). This man who had been with his father's wife was severely condemned. In spite of all of the sin problems plaguing the church at Corinth, this problem of sexual immorality brings Paul to discipline the man by removing him from the community. The reason for this severe discipline was because his behavior was a threat of the disintegration of the entire community. Such a sin might spread throughout the community as Paul says "like leaven leavens the whole lump" and, therefore, affects the entire community. Immorality of this nature is so wrong because it *breaks unity*. More will be said about this later, but it should be observed at this point that the great section on Christian unity in chapter 12 is given in contrast with these threats to disintegration. The unity of the body is to be desired. The church is the body of believers, it is the community of God and every member should be a living, serving, united part of that one body.

Idolatry

While division was a threat to the entire community, idolatry was related to a threat to their pure worship. Idolatry was an ancient as well as a modern problem. God called Abraham out of an idolatrous people to establish a nation who would honor him as God Almighty.

As we observed earlier, idolatry was a visible presence everywhere the eye could see in ancient Corinth. People had brought their gods with them from all directions and established temples and memorials for many causes. Into this world, Paul came speaking of another God. Paul's God was unknown to the Corinthians, just as he was unknown to the Athenians (Acts 17).

Paul sought to move the people from allegiance to gods made by mens' hands and from pursuing gods whose temples were places of constant sexual immorality. The Christians who had recently come out of idol worship were still struggling with behavior associated with that lifestyle. Chapter 8 particularly deals with an issue where some of the Christians wanted to eat meat that was sold in the market which had been offered to idols. There were some Christians who thought that this behavior was equal to idol worship and, therefore, were being tempted to revert to idol worship themselves. While Paul pointed out that meat was meat and there was nothing wrong with eating this meat per se, if it caused a brother to stumble then that behavior was wrong.

Several times throughout this book, Paul speaks of the church as the temple of God. Paul is here making a cultural tie that would help the people understand what a relationship to God should be. The church then is God's alternative to the idol temple and Paul seeks to bring them into this new community of believers. As they come into that community, the loving fellowship that he emphasizes in chapter 13 tends to break down the causes of division and deepens their relationship to one another and to God.

Immorality

The world-view associated with idol worship and worldly wisdom does not carry with it an ethical lifestyle. Life was

lived more on a level of basic philosophy and very often was lived out in pursuing personal pleasure. The practice of immorality, therefore, as addressed in 1 Corinthians 5 becomes a *personal thing* as well as affecting the larger community. Sexual immorality affects each person so intensely that it has stood universally condemned. In the Old Testament, idolatry was classified as adultery. It is breaking of covenant which is the ultimate threat to the primary family as well as to the larger community. Because of its serious destructive character at every level of life, it brings specific disciplinary action.

Cultural Differences

We have pointed out several times the various cultural differences that were present at Corinth and that are currently observable in today's world. Cultural differences bring to our attention a problem that is generally spoken of as "cultural relativity." Some believe so strongly in the importance of a specific culture that they define as right (or acceptable to God) whatever is so defined in that culture. Others, on the other end of the spectrum, believe that God has spoken so clearly that the obedience to his commands must be uniformly conformed to regardless of any cultural differences that men may have. I believe that *God is the source* for defining what is right or wrong. Culture must not be the determining factor of proper behavior, but it must also be recognized that God has not always specified what behavior he expects. This then leaves the student of Bible and culture with the problem of interpretation and application.

In seeking to deal with this problem, some suggest what has come to be known as the "supracultural and cultural approach" to determining behavior. For example, we can say that supraculturally, idolatry is always wrong. However, we sometimes have to struggle with the problem of what idolatry really is. For example, the Amish people believe that even having a picture is not appropriate because that would be an idol. We might ask whether the images that are often used in the Roman Catholic church are to be classified as idols. Associated with idolatry is the problem of ancestry worship. This is an ongoing debate as to whether people worship their ances-

tors or simply honor them. Some of the things used as "proof" of ancestor "worship" are strikingly like what we do in using tombstones, flowers on graves, and even days when people come together to remember the family. Another problem of serious dimensions is that of sexual immorality. As far as I know, everyone understands that adultery is wrong, and in that regard we would say that that is a supracultural matter. However, defining "adultery" may be a problem.

Abraham was married to Sarah, a relationship blessed by God. But the familiar story of his taking Hagar clouds the issue of sexual propriety. What he did was culturally appropriate. Did he commit adultery in this case? He is not so charged. King David, a man after God's own heart, was severely rebuked for taking Bathsheba, yet apparently possessed a number of wives with God's blessing (2 Samuel 11; 12).

In our efforts to exegete a passage, we must be aware of the two dimensions, cultural and supracultural. It is generally easy to establish what is supracultural because this is associated with specific commands or apostolic examples. It is more difficult to deal with cultural issues which vary from time to time and place to place.

CONCLUSION

We must seek to discover those messages which are revealed and understand they are supracultural. At the same time, we must recognize that God has given some freedom for cultural decisions. It is the responsibility of each of us to approach the Word of God with absolute respect, study it within its historical context so that we can know exactly *what it meant* to the people who received the message, and also be *culturally sensitive* so that we can apply that teaching to modern societies. We must be sure that we can make a distinction between what is the supracultural expectation of God and the teachings of fallible men who may be influenced by personal and cultural biases and traditions. Let us trust in the power of God, build on the only foundation which is Jesus Christ, and encourage the healthy growth of the community of God.

NOTES

¹Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

²John R. Stott, and Robert Coote, *Down to Earth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 155.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CORINTH AND TODAY

JOYCE HARDIN

WOMEN'S CLASSES

has been active in the church as a mission-
worker, elder's wife, Christian college pro-
fessor, speaker, and writer. I have often
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IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

was a modern one. It was faced by women in
the same way. In Corinth, for example, Paul
and the church were also struggling with new-found
freedom today, a time of change. The Hellenistic
world had new values for women. There was no
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THE ROLE OF WOMEN AT CORINTH AND TODAY

JOYCE HARDIN

Not long ago, a young Christian woman came to me with a dilemma. In her own words, she was frustrated. She felt that God had blessed her with talents and abilities as well as opportunities for growth and development. However, she also felt strongly that she was unable to use those gifts in the kingdom. Instead she found herself relegated to a teacher of small children (which was not one of her talents) and/or cook and dishwasher (which she could do but did not particularly enjoy). Her question was one that I have heard frequently in the last several years: "Why has God given me talents if I cannot use them to his glory?"

As a woman who has been active in the church as a missionary, Bible school teacher, elder's wife, Christian college professor and administrator, speaker, and writer, I have often struggled with the same question. Exactly what is God's will for me in each of these areas. I do not want to do that which might be wrong, and yet I feel that God has given me certain talents and abilities that he expects me to use.

WOMEN IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

This problem is not a modern one. It was faced by women in New Testament times as well. In Corinth, for example, Paul addresses women who were also struggling with new-found freedom. It was, like today, a time of change. The Hellenistic movement had opened new vistas for women. There was no longer the strict government of the city-states. Instead, women were given the right to vote and help govern themselves. For the Jews, Christianity had taken women out of the lofts in

which they had been merely observers into congregations in which they could worship freely and openly. The homogeneous nature of the church (neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female) suggested an equality that had not previously existed.

In an attempt to use their new liberty, the Corinthian women went beyond what was intended. They demonstrated their freedom by seeking the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of God (chap. 1), by redefining their roles in the marriage relationship (chap. 7), by accepting and participating in immorality (chap. 5), by using their gifts to meet their own needs (chap. 12), and finally, by refusing to accept the authority and order mandated by God (chaps. 11 and 14). The result was a church that had been blessed by many spiritual gifts but which was characterized by Paul as being still preoccupied with the flesh, unable to eat solid food and torn by division and strife (1 Corinthians 3:2, 3).

THE ROLE OF WOMEN TODAY

Today, the tremendous changes in modern society have also brought about changes in the role of women. There is a strong tendency to look again to the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of God. The modern marriage, for example, has undergone tremendous changes as more women have become educated and are now wage earners outside the home. Immorality, whether in the bedroom or on the television set, has become more acceptable. The possibilities for women to use their talents in the secular world seem unlimited as women have served as astronauts, corporation chief executive officers, and heads of state.

In the church, however, the role of the woman has changed very little. Thus far, Christian women of today have not yet refused to accept God's order and authority, but there are multitudes of talented, educated, and deeply spiritual women who want to be used and who find that the church offers no opportunity for that to happen. The woman, for example, who solves complicated career problems and makes decisions that affect many others during the week is no longer content to

serve merely in the accepted and traditional ways in the church. The church must find ways to use the gifts of such women in the context which God intended.

Whenever there is a need for change, there are reactions to that change. The role of women in the church is no different. Reactions range from the ultra-conservative, which says, "Ban everything" (meaning that women should be absolutely silent and in complete submission to men even to the point of not having a secular job with authority over men), to the ultra-liberal, which says, "Everything goes" (which would include women preachers and women elders), an assumption that comes from the world and not from any biblical basis and results in an appeal for freedom and liberty that becomes a demand for rights and privileges.

AN ALTERNATIVE POSITION

Instead, I would like to suggest an alternative position based on the following premises:

First, there is no *one* model for a Christian woman, although those in the church often speak as if there is. God gave each of us unique talents, abilities, aptitudes, and gifts (Romans 12), and he expects each of us, male and female, to use those gifts as a living sacrifice to him.

Second, God does not play games with us. That is, he does not give us talents and then not allow us to use them in his kingdom.

Third, God expects each of us to be all that we can be within his framework. Concerning the role of women in the church, this would be a "Christian feminist" viewpoint. That is, the Christian woman should be able to use her talents and abilities in his service and within the parameters set by God.

In order for this alternative position to work, it is necessary to look for a biblical view, to let the Scriptures speak to us, recognizing that God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Both men and women must struggle with the issues facing them and look to God's Word for guidelines that will help them find their place in his kingdom.

Beginning with the Old Testament, we find that man and

woman were both created in God's image. They were not, however, created alike. From the very beginning, there is distinctiveness between man and woman and in their relationship with God. Even in the fall, woman was deceived, but man seems to have sinned with his eyes open. As a result, God punished man and woman differently. Man was told that he must toil the rest of his life and woman was to have the pain of childbirth multiplied.

The Old Testament times can best be described as patriarchal. As far as it can be determined, there has never been a true matriarchal society in the history of the world. God placed the responsibility of home, religion, and even country directly in the hands of men. Even though there were some strong Old Testament women such as Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, and Ruth, these were the exceptions and not the rule. For example, when Miriam, along with Aaron, tried to usurp Moses' authority, it was Miriam who received the harshest punishment. Although she had played an important role in the exodus of God's people, it was not her place to make religious or political decisions (Numbers 12).

The Mosaic law, as outlined in the Scriptures, protected women and gave importance to their roles as wives and mothers. However, man's interpretation of the law put women behind veils and in lofts to worship and made them second-class citizens. The worthy woman of Proverbs 31 is a portrait of a woman who was a businesswoman as well as a homemaker and who possessed strength, dignity, and wisdom. However, her praise came not from these secular attributes but from the fact that she feared the Lord.

Jesus, the Messiah, was born of a woman, and throughout his ministry he lifted women up, socially and spiritually—the woman taken in adultery, the woman with an issue of blood, the Greek woman, the woman at the well, Mary Magdalene, and Mary and Martha. He saw women, not as second-class citizens, but as hearts and souls. However, there were no women numbered among the twelve apostles, which did not make women *less* but simply different. It is also good to remember that the good news of Jesus' resurrection was preached first to a woman and in turn first proclaimed to

others by her (Mark 16).

When studying the writings of Paul and others in the New Testament, it is important to remember that these writings were to the church and, therefore, critical for us today. However, at the same time, it is important to differentiate between those areas that are cultural, determined by society, and those that are supracultural, God's will for all time. Some comments on key Scriptures that relate to the role of women are as follows:

Galatians 3:27-29. When Paul writes that there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or freeman, male or female, he is reinforcing what God has said from the beginning: that all are equal in God's sight. Both men and women are united by baptism with Christ and are, therefore, children of God. This Scripture does not, however, imply that the responsibilities of male and female are the same any more than those of the slave and freeman.

1 Corinthians 7. This passage speaks of the marriage relationship, and it is evident that the roles of the man and the woman are equally important but are different in function.

Ephesians 5:21-33. Here the emphasis is on the importance of marriage, and Paul is careful to speak both to the responsibilities of the husband and of the wife. Hers is to submit and to be subject to her husband as the church is to Christ. His is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, willing to give himself up for her. This is not a picture of a domineering husband and a brow-beaten wife but rather of a relationship built on subjection to one another in the fear of Christ (v. 21).

1 Corinthians 11. This passage speaks of authority, telling us that Christ is the head of man, man of woman, and God the head of Christ. In this passage, both men and women are prophesying and praying. In verse 12, we are told that they are interdependent. However, women are to pray covered. This is not simply a problem of a covering on the head, but a problem of the place of woman in relation to the man in God's economy. It was the custom in Corinth that a woman should have an adequate covering on her head as a sign of her subjection to the man in that society. The women were rebelling against that subjection and using head coverings as a means of throwing

2. *Fulfill the role that God intended for women.* Christian women need to re-examine the roles that are uniquely theirs—wife, mother, sister, daughter. Secular society has placed an increasingly insignificant value to these roles, and yet without them, society and the church would be lost.

3. *Teach younger women.* The commandment in Titus 2:3 has never truly been a part of the church theology. If all women, regardless of age, saw as part of their Christian responsibility the teaching of other women, there would be no lack of areas in which to serve.

4. *Evangelism.* The commandment "go into all the world" was made not just to men. Women need to learn how to reach out to others in one-on-one Bible studies and in group studies.

5. *Prayer.* Although women may be prohibited from leading prayer in a public assembly, prayer should be a vital part of every Christian woman's ministry.

6. *Community involvement.* Women can build relationships that become the cornerstone for outreach and church growth.

7. *Involvement with visitors.* Many congregations have no formal way to respond to visitors either during services or afterwards. Women can meet this need in a very effective way.

8. *Hospitality.* Hospitality is becoming a lost art, and yet it is one that is important to the growth of the local congregation. Opening her home to others is a way that almost every woman can serve.

9. *Peer counseling.* Some women have a special sensitivity to people with problems. Opportunities should be made available so that they can use this gift to serve a troubled society.

10. *Meeting each other's needs.* In a society in which the individual is becoming increasingly more isolated, there must be opportunities to develop relationships that are caring and sharing. Groups, led by women for women, can help meet this need.

11. *Ministry system.* The recent move in many congregations to the ministry system has opened many doors of service to women. The emphasis is on service rather than an office. Women need to look at their gifts and find a ministry in which to use those gifts. These might include working with teenagers, teaching children, working with the budget committee,

writing curriculum, serving on a preacher search committee, etc.

12. *Full-time ministry (full-time servants).* The time has perhaps come to use women's talents as paid servants. While it is recognized that women cannot be preachers or elders, there is nothing in the Scriptures to suggest that a congregation could not hire a woman to work full-time with women or with children, to coordinate visitation, to work as a counselor, or to serve as a missionary.

13. *Writing, speaking, singing.* Women need to be encouraged to develop themselves as writers, speakers, and musicians. Too often such activities are afforded only to preachers' or elders' wives, and the opportunities to exercise such gifts are severely limited.

14. *Giving.* As more women enter the working world, they need to be encouraged to become more liberal in their giving.

15. *Worship.* Ecclesiastes tells us that worshiping God and keeping his commandments is the whole duty of man (or woman). That has not changed. Women need to offer their bodies as living sacrifices.

In summary, it seems to me that God deals with man and woman consistently. He is a God of order. We may not understand God's purpose, but we can accept it. The time has come to quit looking at those things women cannot do and emphasize instead those areas in which she can serve. The church must provide manifold opportunities for women to use the talents that God has given them to his glory. When this happens, not only will Christian women grow, but the church will as well.

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SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

JEANENE REESE

Make me a servant, Lord, make me like you.
For you are a servant, make me one, too.
Make me a servant, do what you must do.
To make me a servant, make me like you.

We were singing these words zealously in worship on a recent Sunday morning. Because the congregation is well-attended by college students, the singing is always magnificent. Besides, this particular song is a kind of theme song for our church and our family—we usually sing it with much feeling.

For some reason, I found myself pausing on the words, "Do what you must do." I had to ask: "Do I really understand the full impact of these words? Am I willing for God to do whatever it takes to make me his servant? How deep is my desire to be like my Lord? Am I not already fully a servant to him?"

Unfortunately, my attitudes are probably similar to those of many Christians. I vacillate between two extremes—from not asking such questions at all to assuming that I live a life full of Christian service.

In this regard, the Christians at Corinth seem to be no different than Christians today. Their concerns over Christian service, however, are not immediately apparent when reading 1 Corinthians.

In fact, they seem to be a church so riddled with difficulties that issues such as servanthood would seem to be secondary. Yet as Paul begins his admonition to the Corinthian church, he soon makes it clear that their attitudes toward Christian service are problematic.

His thanksgiving sets the agenda for the rest of the letter:

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).

Paul is thankful for God's grace given to them through Christ Jesus, for their gift of speech and knowledge, for the abundance of their spiritual gifts. He reminds them of God's faithfulness in seeing them through to the end.

Some of the very characteristics Paul initially cherished in his relationship with the Corinthians are now being misappropriated and even abused:

1. Instead of remembering the gift of God's grace through Jesus Christ, the Corinthians are in the midst of division over the work of certain disciples (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The quarreling is their own and does not belong to the leaders (1 Corinthians 3:4-9).

2. Whereas they once possessed enrichment of speech and language, they now seem to idolize the eloquence and knowledge of certain teachers and to exalt these characteristics (which unfortunately Paul does not possess). Paul is not only criticized, but his leadership is threatened and he must defend himself (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:1-5; 3:1-3, 10; 4:14-21).

3. Although wisdom is not specifically addressed in Paul's prayer of thanksgiving, it seems to play a special role in the Corinthian church. The word group *sophia/sophos* appears twenty-six times in the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians.

4. Instead of properly exercising their spiritual gifts for mutual edification, the Corinthians seem to think that they have reached some special level of spiritual maturity (1 Corinthians 1:26, 27; 2:14—3:3, 18-20). They become obviously more self-centered than God-centered. Arrogance is a problem.

Paul refers to their "boasting" (1 Corinthians 1:29-31; 3:21; 4:7) and their being "puffed up" (1 Corinthians 4:6, 18, 19; 13:4).

These misguided divisions, misplaced priorities, and immature responses not only disrupt life in the Corinthian church, they hinder the spreading of the gospel in that pagan setting. The church has grown lax with their morality and social structure (chaps. 5-7). They are careless with their spiritual freedoms (chaps. 8-10). They lack decorum in their worship (chap. 11). And finally, they misuse their spiritual gifts (chaps. 12-14).

Throughout this Epistle to the Corinthian church, Paul sets out not only to correct their abuses but to call them back gently (or he says, if necessary, "with a rod," 1 Corinthians 4:21) into a right relationship with God. He calls them back to a Christ-centered life of service by proclaiming the folly of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-31), by reminding them of his own service among them (1 Corinthians 2:1-13; 3:6-11; 4:1-21), by seeking the good of one's neighbor (1 Corinthians 10:23, 24), by exercising their spiritual gifts properly, and by practicing the highest spiritual gift of love.

LIVING UNDER THE CROSS (1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21)

As Paul begins an apologetic of his own work among them, he claims that his sole task is to simply preach the gospel. He does so faithfully without eloquence or apparent wisdom, "lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1:17).

The real implication of these words is that the Corinthians are in danger of losing the power of the cross. They have turned their attention from the centrality of the cross to human beings and ideas of far less significance.

Paul, however, preaches the cross to them again. He stresses its utter foolishness and scandal. For the Corinthians who idolize eloquence, wisdom, and knowledge, these words must have been like the stinging blows of a whip.

"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor-

inthians 1:18). Paul still counts the Corinthian Christians with himself among the saved, but he also is subtly asking them to choose that salvation again so they will not perish.

He challenges them on several points which have possibly led to their shift from the cross to their present disillusionment:

1. Christians, Paul asserts, must not pay homage to other human beings. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of the age?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Basically he is asking where are those around whom the Corinthians have rallied. He answers his own question with a question, "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Later Paul urges them to leave their "jealousy and strife" (1 Corinthians 3:3, 4) and to stop being divisive.

2. Christians must not glorify ideas or issues instead of Christ. Paul reiterates his desire to preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews who seek signs and to Gentiles who seek wisdom. Rather Paul issues a call for both Jew and Gentile to follow Christ, "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). He declares that he imparts "a secret and hidden wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 2:7) which "God has revealed to us through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:10). He once again focuses on the absolute perfection and completeness of the cross for all people at all times.

3. Christians must never forget their call or who they were when God called them. Paul reminds the Corinthians that not many of them were wise or powerful or of noble birth, "but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world . . . so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."

4. Christians are to be servants following the example of the cross and of the apostles. Paul reminds the Corinthians of how he and Apollos functioned as co-workers in teaching them (1 Corinthians 3:1-8; 4:6, 7). Using the analogy of building on the foundation he has already laid, Paul exhorts, "... each one take care how he builds upon it" (1 Corinthians 3:10). All of our "work will become manifest for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what

sort of work each one has done" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

5. Finally, Christians must realize that they "are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in [them]. . . . If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy. . . ." (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). It is tempting to confuse this passage with 1 Corinthians 6:19 where Paul tells the individual Christian that his or her body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should not be joined to a prostitute. The "you" in chapter 3, however, is plural and refers to the holiness and sanctity of the church as a corporate body.

Throughout his teaching, Paul is modeling Christian servanthood for the Corinthians and for all believers. He makes it clear that to live under the cross is to be humble like Christ in his obedient death and like Paul has been to the Corinthian church.

Boasting or conceit are completely foreign to the true servant. This individual stands fully surrendered, claiming nothing as his or her own. The word translated "boast" in chapter 1 has several possible meanings. It could mean "to take pride in" or "to glory in." Either definition would seem to do justice to Paul's teaching. Or it could be translated "to trust" or "to put confidence in." At first glance, this might seem to be a moot point, but it is not.

Paul is asking the Christian not only to be humble and not boastful; he is asking the believer to be absolutely God-confident. This message comes through clearly in the last few sentences of his thanksgiving for the Corinthians as they "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:7-9). Or consider Paul's injunction, "Let anyone who boasts [trusts], boast of [put confidence in] the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

The true servant is also to be hard-working and trustworthy. As Paul depicts the work that he and Apollos have done at Corinth, he uses images of planting and building (1 Corinthians 3:5-10). He makes it clear that the normal course of any Christian life is to work in the kingdom. In fact, Paul stresses that each Christian will be judged for the work

that he or she does (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

As "stewards of the mysteries of God . . . it is required . . . that they be found trustworthy" (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). Paul is again defending his work among the Corinthians. He declares to them that his work, his Christian service, will ultimately be judged by no one—not the Corinthians or Paul himself, but by God alone. He applies the same teaching to the Corinthians and asks them to imitate his behavior (1 Corinthians 4:14-16).

Throughout the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul is consistently correcting the faults he finds in the church there, defending his leadership and service among them, and encouraging them to more closely follow Christ and himself in living out their Christian service. Although at first blush 1 Corinthians does not seem to be a letter specifically addressing Christians as servants in the kingdom, it is actually full of very important teachings on the nature of Christian service.

SEEKING THE GOOD OF MY NEIGHBOR (1 Corinthians 8:1—11:1)

Paul now turns his attention and correction from general abuses among the Christians at Corinth to specific ones. He is shocked by their flagrant wrongdoing and disregard for Christ and his church.

Paul notes that the incest he has heard practiced among them is "not found even among the pagans" (1 Corinthians 5:1). He takes issue with their practice of taking a brother to court. He asks, "[Do you] dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?" (1 Corinthians 6:1).

The apostle commands the Corinthians to "shun immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). He then sets forth Christian principles regarding marriage, divorce, and singleness (1 Corinthians 7:1-40).

What follows these extreme examples of misconduct may seem at first glance to be less significant, but it is not. Paul continues to correct and instruct the Corinthians, but now the issues focus on Christian liberty.

His summarizing statement tells us why a closer look at these teachings is important to our understanding of Christian

servanthood. " 'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but *the good of his neighbor*" (1 Corinthians 10:23, 24; emphasis mine).

As Paul has emphasized the absolute centrality of the cross to the Corinthians (chaps. 1—4), it almost seems that he is stressing the first and greatest commandment of the law, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37, 38). With his shift to a discussion of Christian liberty (chaps. 8—11), Paul seems to highlight the second commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Although the difficulties found in the Corinthian church are often culturally bound, Paul gives Christians sound principles that must be faithfully exercised today. In his discussion on the eating of food sacrificed to idols, Paul leaves the decision to the conscience of the individual Christian. His warning, however, is one that must be heeded: "Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Corinthians 8:9).

As Paul examines his rights as an apostle (and makes a defense of them), he acknowledges that he has a right to food and drink, a right to be accompanied by a wife, a right to earn a living or to benefit from his Christian labors (1 Corinthians 9:3-12). Yet neither Barnabas nor Paul makes use of their rights.

Rather they "endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:12). In fact, they take this idea to such an extreme that they surrender all of their rights to enhance the spread of the gospel:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. To

the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Paul also practices the strictest form of self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27) that he may not only teach others, but that his own life will serve as a model. He encourages the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1).

Using the familiar story of Moses and the Israelites in the wilderness wandering, Paul gives his final warning to Christians. He notes how both the children of Israel and the believers at Corinth easily fall prey to idolatry. His instruction is to "shun the worship of idols" (1 Corinthians 10:14). He also promises God's help in overcoming such temptations (1 Corinthians 9:13).

Paul is teaching the Corinthians and Christians today five important principles for Christian service that must be applied even in the most difficult of circumstances: (1) Christians should be careful never to be a stumbling block to the weak. (2) As important as Christian rights and freedom may be, they should never serve as an obstacle to the teaching of the gospel. (3) In fact, Christians should go to great extremes (becoming all things to all people) in order to serve others. (4) Christians should be self-disciplined so their lives will be a model for others to follow. (5) Idolatry is an ever-present danger and should be constantly and consistently avoided.

USING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

(1 Corinthians 11:2—14:40)

Interestingly, this section of 1 Corinthians on the use of spiritual gifts begins and ends with Paul correcting the actions of some of the women in the church. Although the breadth of this class series is not specifically designed to scrutinize the instructions to women, we must extract certain principles from these passages to better understand Christian service.

First, it is obvious that Christian women played a vital role in the life of the early church. They are praying and prophesy-

ing (1 Corinthians 11:2-16) in the presence of others. Paul does not withdraw their right to participate in these activities but instructs them to do so in a manner suitable to their culture. His basic concern seems to be that no reproach be placed on the church which would render it unacceptable to the unbelievers (1 Corinthians 14:22-25).

In his later teaching, Paul seems to contradict himself since he appears to utterly silence the women (1 Corinthians 14:35, 36). The question, however, is which women is he addressing and why? Is his teaching in this context to be considered normative for the church or corrective of a particular problem?

Paul begins the argument by encouraging each one to bring a hymn, a lesson, a tongue, or an interpretation when they come together. He exhorts the Corinthians to "let all things be done for edification" (1 Corinthians 14:26). He then addresses a situation which has obviously led to an atmosphere of confusion and chaos (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40) where few of the Christians are being edified.

Previously he has given extensive instruction to the use of tongue-speaking in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:1-23). This teaching naturally leads to his discussion on prophesy since he considers it to be a greater spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 14:1, 24).

In the overall context of Paul's instruction on the gift of prophecy, it is very possible that the women Paul is addressing are the wives of the prophets. They are disrupting the assembly by publicly questioning their husbands. Or another possibility, although less likely, is that the women are prophetesses who are causing considerable disharmony within the church.

Read in this light, Paul's message is consistent with what he has said throughout his letter. He calls these women to a posture of service for the good of the group and the advancement of the kingdom. His teachings in these difficult passages is also in perfect harmony with what he says in the chapters in between.

Paul clearly indicates that all Christians are endowed with spiritual gifts. He stresses that while there are many varieties of gifts, they are given by the same Lord (1 Corinthians 12:5).

Each gift is a manifestation of God's Spirit and is given according to his will (1 Corinthians 12:4, 7, 8, 11). He emphasizes that all gifts are "for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Using the analogy of the church as a body, Paul emphasizes the intricate interrelationship of each member to another (1 Corinthians 12:12, 14). He stresses the importance of the proper functioning of every organ to promote bodily growth and health (1 Corinthians 12:18-25). He exhorts the church that "if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Paul calls all Christians to desire and to practice the ultimate spiritual gift—love. His famous thirteenth chapter dispels all of the dissension and difficulties the Corinthians have faced and puts them in their proper perspective. There is finally no room for the exaltation of any person, any idea, any relationship, or any spiritual gift when they are placed in the light of love.

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WOMEN IN WORLD EVANGELISM

MONA MOBLEY

If the kingdom is ever to come to our Lord—and come it will—it will never come through a few ministers, missionaries, or evangelists preaching the gospel. It must come through every one of you preaching it in the shop and by the fireside, when walking abroad and when sitting in the chamber. You must, all of you, be always endeavoring to save some. . . .

—Charles H. Spurgeon

Would you like to make a difference in this world? The Lord wants you to make a difference in this world! How do we know? Jesus told us to be the "salt" of the world (Matthew 5:13). We know the importance of salt today, but it was even more important to those listening to Jesus as he spoke on the mountainside in Galilee. The Romans of that day said nothing was more valuable than sun and salt. Some countries paid their soldiers with blocks of salt, thus the origin of our word "salary." One reason salt was so valuable was its power to preserve food. It is hard for those of us reared in the era of canning and freezing to understand how important salt preservation was. Several years ago, Harold and I visited the Holy Lands. Our Jordanian guide was a Bedouin. One morning he brought our group some Bedouin cheese for breakfast. I took one bite and was sick the rest of the day. That one bite must have had at least two teaspoons of salt added to it! While living in tents, moving here and there in the desert, the Bedouins must "salt down" their cheeses to conserve them.

I once heard a story of a king who asked his three daughters how much they loved him. The oldest daughter answered, "I

love you more than all the gold in the world." The second daughter answered, "I love you more than all the silver in the world." The third and youngest daughter said, "I love you more than all the salt in the world." This answer displeased the king. The castle chef heard how displeased the king was with his little daughter's statement. One morning the chef brought the king a well-prepared, pleasing-to-the-eye breakfast. The king complimented the chef until he took his first few bites. "What's the matter with this food?" he asked. "How could you prepare such a feast and it taste so bad!" The chef smiled and answered, "I left out the salt." The king, reflecting on what his daughter had said, understood just how much she really did love him—truly more than gold and silver! Jesus knew the crowd seated around him would understand and could make the application to their lives—that they were to make a difference in the world.

Jesus also told the same people gathered around him that they were the "light" of the world (Matthew 5:14). Oh, what a difference light makes in our everyday lives! Those of you who have children know how important daybreak is! Harold and I have four children. They are all grown and away from home, but we can still remember many of the night hours spent rocking and walking a colicky baby and sitting by the bed of a sick one tossing with pain or fever. These same events suffered through the night hours never seemed quite so bad during the daytime hours. What about lying in bed during the darkness of night and hearing a strange noise inside the house? Your heart pounds, your imagination runs wild, and how you long for light. It just seems everything is going to be all right as long as there is light. Today we have light that those people listening to Jesus never imagined. They were thinking of the light of small oil lamps, candles, or the light of day and darkness of night. However, again they understood what Jesus was telling them—they were to make a difference in the world!

Ladies, we have been *commissioned* to make a difference—to leave our mark—in the world. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew

28:19, 20). That commission is to tell *everyone* we can, *everywhere* we can, that the answer to life and all it encompasses is *Jesus!*

Jesus is near—just inside the door—to give meaning and purpose to: (1) The elderly. He can comfort and strengthen during pain, illness, and loneliness. He gives hope of a future in a much better place, heaven. (2) Parents. Jesus helps make the right decision and turns wrong decisions into opportunities for growth. He will help train children and grandchildren. He helps in coping with all problems and helps solve them. (3) Teen-agers. Jesus helps deal with peer pressure and helps keep temptation away. He helps in making important decisions about school, college, and marriage. He gives strength and courage to face life as apron strings are severed. (4) Children. Children gain a sense of stability and comfort from knowing Jesus is always near and loves them no matter what. Jesus is for mankind everywhere regardless of age, race, or position in life. Henry Ward Beecher wrote, "Only when there are no men in trouble and need help; no men who are oppressed and need release; no men who are hungry and need food; no men who are sinning and need mercy; no men who are lost and need salvation will there be no need for Jesus." Because of the great need for Jesus in our neighborhoods, in our cities, in our country, and in all countries of the world, we must be about our Father's business—evangelism!

Recently, I read of a poem entitled, "A Wooden Christ on a Wooden Cross." Deep in the hearts of too many people there is a wooden Jesus on a wooden cross—still, silent, and cold. These people must be taught and shown the living Christ—a *Christ who is real*—who is powerful enough to meet the needs of mankind.

Women should feel honored to be included in the Great Commission. Some women have said to me, "There isn't much a woman is allowed to do in the church of Christ." And we must admit this has been the case in many congregations. They have been allowed to teach children, attend the nursery, cook meals, wash baptismal garments, arrange flowers, and wash communion cups. In some places, men are still not too sure the women should be allowed to fill the cups, so they do it. But

evangelism is *every* Christian's responsibility. It is not an option for any Christian; it is a command!

Evangelism literally means making known the Good News. It is the "outpouring" or "gushing forth" of a heart filled with Jesus—his love and concern for the salvation of all people. Evangelism is being "gospel gossipers" (the literal translation of "preached" in Acts 8:4). Evangelism is being active in "sharing," "reasoning," "explaining," and "proving" that Jesus is Lord, that he came, he died, and he rose from the dead that man might live eternally.

The aim of evangelism is twofold: saving the unsaved and saving the saved. We usually give more time and effort to the "converting" process than we give to the "growth" process of the converted ones. In these two areas of evangelism every Christian can utilize his God-given gifts. One might say, "I cannot deal effectively with people in door-to-door situations." That is okay. There are those who plant and those who water, those who lay foundations and those who build upon them. There are multiple ways to evangelize and multiple places to evangelize. When the first Christians were being scattered all over Judea, Samaria, and beyond because of persecution, they preached wherever they went. We can do the same. We can evangelize in the supermarket, on the job, in the hospital, at school, at a ball game, standing in line—anywhere. Our Lord has sounded the charge, the same charge he sounded two thousand years ago.

At different times we have heard statistics regarding what percentage of new members of the church came from relatives, friends, Bible correspondence courses, drop-ins, etc. The highest percentage usually comes from relatives and the next highest from friends.¹

Why not begin your own OUTREACH program by making new friends to influence for Christ, or make a new start by being more diligent in influencing your present friends in a greater way for the Lord.

Maybe you have surrounded yourself with friendships formed exclusively within your church, but because of your desire to reach out, would like to make friends outside the congregation you attend. If this is your wish, here are some

important things to think about initially.

1. Are you willing to make the effort? Cultivating friendships takes time and energy. I know of no "instant" prescription for developing meaningful friendships.

2. Are you willing to share your life? Friendship means opening the doors of your soul—becoming vulnerable, having someone see your bad side as well as your good side.

3. Are you willing to make a *conscious* effort to show your friends that Jesus is Lord of all, and is a real and powerful source in your life? "Having a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, a hand through which Christ helps" certainly is not easy, but because of what He has done for us, we keep trying to influence those around us. Christ's love should find expression through us each and every day of our lives.

"How do I go about making friends of acquaintances?" This is where many people stop. We are too busy to make friends of our acquaintances. But if you are seriously wanting to begin a friendship, the first step is *be yourself*. Do not pretend to be something you're not. The next thing is to show a sincere interest in the other person. Ask questions about hobbies, children, etc., but do not get too personal at this point. Invite them into your home for coffee. Go from there.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIPS

1. Give of your time. Be a good listener, go shopping together, go to a movie, flea market, lecture, opera, class, work on a project together, etc.

2. Share books (preferably inspirational), magazines, food, little "I thought of you" surprises, and "I care" notes. . . .

3. Do not wear your welcome out by constant phoning and/or visiting. Read Proverbs 25:17.

4. Be sensitive to the different moods and changes in friends.

5. Do not push your opinions or religious views. There will always be a right time and a wrong time in which to speak. Read 2 Timothy 2:23-26.

6. Be interested in your friend's family.
7. Open your home to her.
8. When the time is right, ask if she would like to study the Bible or be interested in a Bible correspondence course.
9. Watch for ways to be of service in sickness, deaths, etc.
10. Be positive about life and what Christianity means to you.
11. Be careful of criticism in any form or fashion.
12. Do not be afraid or self-conscious in talking about the Bible. Be honest though. If you do not know the answer to a question or do not understand some Scripture, say so and go about finding out what it is you need to know.
13. Do not get involved in the little "spats" between your children and the children of your friend.
14. Learn to say, "I'm sorry," "I'm so glad you're my friend," "You mean so much to me," etc. Tell her now; do not wait for birthdays, etc.
15. Compliment and encourage her.
16. Include her in church activities, church services, seminars, ladies' day, ladies' night out, church picnics, etc. Let her see Christian fellowship in a congregational setting.
17. Guard your words as well as the tone of your voice.
 "Be careful of the words you speak,
 and keep them soft and sweet.
 You never know from day to day,
 which ones you'll have to eat!"
18. Remember, "A friend loves at all times" (Proverbs 17:17).
19. Do not be afraid to bare your inner feelings, fears and concerns.
20. Also remember if you share Christ with your friends, God will give the increase.²

In his unfathomable wisdom, the Lord knew how important evangelism would be, not only to the unbeliever and weak Christian but also to the one evangelizing. Someone said, "A religion that has lost its heart is a religion that has lost its mission." A child of God who is not striving daily to influence, teach, and encourage others has certainly lost the heart of his religion and his spiritual lifeline in the Vine—Jesus (John

15:1-8). To remain in Jesus, we *must* bear fruit! We cannot live in the Vine without living for others! We "must become all things to all men so that by all possible means we might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

When I look for biblical examples of women involved in evangelism, Priscilla immediately comes to mind. What a wonderful example she is! I wish there were more specifics mentioned about her life. We can know a number of things about her for sure and can assume some others by what is recorded. We can know Priscilla unselfishly used her home to God's glory. She cared for Paul, Silas, and Timothy while they preached the Word in Corinth. Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, put their own lives in danger for the safety of Paul. The church in Ephesus met in their home, as did the church in Rome. While in Ephesus she and her husband took Apollos into their home and taught him "more perfectly." How she must have loved the Lord and his family! It seems she was willing to go wherever she could be of more service in the kingdom. In my mind's eye, I can see her talking about Jesus to her friends as they drew water. I see her talking daily to the shopkeepers as she bought oil for her lamps, oil and grain for breadmaking, or while choosing the best-looking clusters of grapes. I also see her nurturing new converts, teaching the women to love their husbands and be keepers at home, to be adding the fruits of the Spirit to their lives, and teaching them to be teachers of the gospel as well. Priscilla's story ignites a flame in my heart! She certainly made a difference in her world and continues to make a difference in the lives of those of us who are still inspired by her example.

WHAT KEEPS US FROM BEING EVANGELISTIC?

Because the impact of making a difference in this world for God's glory is so great, Satan uses every force available to him to keep us from making that difference.

Apathy

I believe his greatest force is "apathy" or "just not interested." He makes us think more about "earth-bound things" than "spiritual things." In the January/February 1990 issue of

World Evangelism, Betty Choate wrote an excellent article on "Oh, I Don't Have Time for That. . . ." She told the story of Anita. "She wasn't lazy. . . ." begins the article. It tells how Anita's house looked like something right out of "House Beautiful" magazine. Her yard was always the envy of the neighborhood. She planted a huge garden, hoed and picked, shelled, froze, and canned. Her mothering was at the 150% level. As a wife, she was second to none. She developed her skills by attending painting lessons and craft lessons of all kinds. Anita felt she had it all—"the good life." But teach a Bible class? "Oh, I don't have time for that." Using that beautiful home for hospitality, bearing fruit for God? "Oh, I don't have time for that." Setting up home Bible studies with those who are not Christians? "Oh, I don't have time for that." Getting involved with non-Christians in the community who have problems and need spiritual, emotional, physical, or financial help? "Oh, I don't have time for that." Visiting the sick or unfaithful, looking for ways to help them? "Oh, I don't have time for that." No, there is nothing wrong with being a good wife and mother and homemaker. In fact, these things are good, and we must fulfill our responsibilities in these areas. But the dangerous thing is that our very existence can be "eaten up" with these physical things that are good and right, so that we literally do not have time for the spiritual commitments we made when we became Christians. Because our busyness is morally right, we may never hear a warning bell going off in our heads. In fact, we may blindly go on feeling very good about ourselves and the use of our time. But Christianity was not designed to be first of all a self-serving life. If we use it simply as an asset to ourselves, to round out our own already full life, we are misusing it. Jesus set the example for us: He came, not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). His brethren are instructed, "Through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13). Probably this good life, this attitude of being busy about "good" things, this lack of setting the right priorities for the use of our time, talents, influence, and money is one of Satan's most powerful tools. Let us be careful. Admittedly, he is out to get us with whatever works most effectively on us. Maybe it is just being "busy." The majority of Anita's abilities were materially

based. Her focus was certainly not making a difference spiritually.

Fear of Rejection

Satan unleashes another great force which keeps us from being evangelistic—fear of rejection. Yes, I too have had doors closed in my face. I too have been told, "Let's not talk about religion"; "We're all going to the same place, just taking different roads"; etc. We take personally the rejection of our attempts to evangelize. It is not easy to rationalize the fact that people are not rejecting us, but are rejecting God's Word. I try thinking about that in this way: I am not taking Christ to them as much as Christ is taking me to them so they may know him and his will for them. The only thing the Lord expects us to do is make the effort. He will give the increase in due season.

"I Don't Know Enough"

"I don't know enough about the Bible to evangelize," is another of Satan's forces which keeps us from carrying out our commission. Do you ever make that statement? Do you ever think it? If so, how long have you been a Christian? Fifty years? Twenty years? Five years? What about a week or even a few days? The three thousand converted on the Day of Pentecost heard only one sermon and not a very long one at that. Yet they shared what they had heard—enough to become a child of God. But their evangelizing had just begun. Their joy was so great and their lives so changed that many of their relatives and friends wanted to accept Christ. These early Christians were taught they were to be their brother's keepers. They were to teach them all the things they had heard from the apostles, encouraging them to "press on," to "keep the faith," and to "love one another."

Discouragement

Discouragement is also a force Satan uses to keep us from evangelizing. Sometimes this force is such a sly one it is hard to recognize and fight. When our efforts fail in bringing someone to conversion, or when we see those we have helped convert fall away, it is easy to say, "What's the use?" or "Was it worth the effort?" "Maybe I'm just not cut out for this!" Recently I saw a

documentary filmed in the early 40s about one of my favorite cities, London, England. The documentary was about how the city survived while the Germans unloaded tons of devastating bombs on it for fifty consecutive nights. Some officials were cowering with, "Surrender; we must surrender!" on their minds. The people were tremendously burdened. Most of the children had been packed away to the country, some even to Scotland and Wales. Thousands were living in bomb shelters. Food was scarce. Most structures had been gutted by fires. These war-torn men and women began looking to the strength of one man, Winston Churchill. At one point during these bombings Churchill made a speech. It seemed everyone who was anyone was there. He rose and stood silently before the microphone as if he was groping for words of encouragement for his tired, discouraged countrymen. Then he said in a soft voice, "Never!" He looked around in silence for many seconds and said again, "Never!" Silence covered the large hall. Everyone was leaning forward in anticipation of Churchill's next statement. And then with a loud voice of defiance, challenge, and command, he said, "*Never, never give up!*" That ended his speech. He turned and sat down. The audience went wild! I am sure those who heard those words went away with new courage, ready to withstand anything to keep England free. Can you think of anyone in the Bible who could have said, "Never, never give up!" I think probably Noah had these thoughts when he became discouraged. He was not able to bring anyone other than his own family into the ark's safety even after one hundred years of preaching. It seems Jesus was discouraged as he looked toward Jerusalem and said, "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not!" There are times we will not reap a harvest because Satan "snatches away" the Word sown in some hearts. The Word we sow sometimes falls in "shallow soil" and will quickly wither away. Other times the Word will fall in "good soil" and will produce a harvest (Matthew 13:1-23). Our Lord understands discouragement and is always there to help us overcome it. He tells us he will be with us always, to the very end of the age.

"Near-Sightedness"

Satan's forces can cause us to have "downcast eyes." These eyes fail to look up and out into the world to see the white fields ready for harvest. When we think of white fields, we usually think of lands across the sea or across the country, even in a neighboring city. But in reality that white field could be next door or across the street. We must look up and out. Geoffrey Ellis, former President of Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville, Ontario, tells us how dangerous downcast eyes can be. "Downcast eyes are sinful because they imply the opposite of Christianity which challenges us all to be positive, optimistic, courageous, and outgoing. Downcast eyes are sinful because they deny that continuing rejuvenation available in Christ and his Spirit. Downcast eyes are sinful because they negate necessary action whereby the lost men and women of the world may be saved."

Let us pray continually that the Lord will shield us from Satan's forces which keep us from evangelizing.

SOME REQUISITES WE MUST INCORPORATE INTO OUR LIVES TO EVANGELIZE MORE EFFECTIVELY

The Lord will equip us with his power! He will fulfill every good purpose of ours and every act prompted by our faith (2 Thessalonians 1:11b). Paul continually reminds us of the power within us. How easy it is to forget to call upon that power! Peter tells us if we serve, we should do it with the strength God provides (1 Peter 4:11). God gives us power through various avenues—some we cannot fathom, others we can. I believe the Lord bestows power through: (1) prayer and (2) Bible study.

Prayer

Where does evangelism begin with you and me? It begins in our hearts! The Lord wants the souls of men on our hearts! Saving souls should become a priority in our lives—not something that can be engaged in when we have a few extra minutes here and there. Even when we are fulfilling our obligations to our family we can *pray* for opportunities to reach someone with the Good News. We can *pray* that the Holy

Spirit will guide us as we study and meditate on the Word. We can *pray* for missionaries and their families. We can *pray* that the Lord will give leaders of the church visions and goals of finding, preparing, and sending men and women into the mission fields of this world! Napoleon achieved tremendous strides in trying to conquer the world in the early 1800s. This masterful strategist of warfare inspired volumes without end. All of his commanding officers were charged to carry on their person one thing above all else—a map of the world. They were to reflect upon it because it was their posted goal. It is like some of us who put special reminders on the refrigerator. Napoleon wanted the world for France. We want the world for Christ! Do we want it badly enough to pray to that end?

Dawson Trotman began an interesting movement, the “Navigators.” They have literally invaded college campuses, high schools, sent missionaries around the world, given some of the finest Christian instruction in books, daily devotional guides and in-depth reading guides like “Daily Walk.” In 1941, Dawson Trotman and Walt Stanton gathered every morning before sunup for two hours of prayer. They brought with them only one prop—it was a map of the world. First, they prayed about some things happening in California and some of the people they were trying to train and send out to find others to baptize and teach. Then, some of their fellows moved beyond California so they started praying and calling out names of other states. For forty days, this vigil continued until in the end they were naming all of the states and all of the continents and all of the countries of the world. They even named some of the islands they could not pronounce! They stayed before God in prayer, giving this over to him. They were dreaming God’s dream—a world for Christ. There is *power* in *prayer*! One who wishes to be effective in reaching others must be one who prays continually.

Study

All of God’s children *must study* his Word! Without study we cannot live our own lives as he wants us to, much less influence others to live for him! We are God’s workers and must correctly handle the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). It is difficult

for me to understand why more people do not feel it necessary to attend Bible classes and other opportunities to learn more about the Scriptures. Even though I study and meditate at home, I still need all the help I can get! I remember many things I learned as a child in Bible class. One teacher helped me with the statement, “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written to give us faith. Acts was written to tell us about the church’s beginning and how to become a member of it. The letters were written to show us how to live as Christians. Revelation was written to show us a little about heaven.” Another teacher taught me to love the Old Testament and how it relates to the New Testament. Without a good knowledge of the Old Testament, it is very difficult to understand the New Testament. We know the first Christians knew very little of what we call New Testament Scripture. But they “continued in the apostles’ teaching” daily. This is necessary for us to grow spiritually today. Many of the people we associate with will notice if we are people “of the Word” or not. If they understand that we strive to know what the Bible teaches, they will respect us for it and will have more confidence in our attempts to teach them the gospel.

There are myriads of ways to teach others about Christ. Each situation is different, and we must choose the most effective method for each individual. Sometimes just letting them ask questions is the best way. There are various filmstrips, videotapes, and tract-type studies we might use. A very good study is entitled “God and Man,” written by Don and Marion Starks. It is a small booklet which can be studied in several hours at one sitting or divided up into several different studies. Recently, a friend of mine who is interested in learning how to become a better soul winner asked other interested ladies into her home for an in-depth study of “God and Man” in order to be better prepared to teach it more effectively. It is important that we choose a method we feel comfortable using and one that can come from our heart as well as our intellect. Let us remember, however, all the methods available will not take the place of a good knowledge of God’s Word.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR KEEPING THE SAVED SAVED

"By now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and not moved from the hope held out in the gospel" (Colossians 1:22, 23; emphasis mine). How many of us have not experienced a weak faith? How many of us have questioned our faith? How many of us have, at times, lost hope? I feel sure our answer would be "guilty on all points." The Lord knows how badly we need each other. That is the reason for all the "one another" exhortations found in the Bible. We are to "encourage one another" and "build each other up" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). "... teach and admonish one another..." (Colossians 3:16). "... pray for each other..." (James 5:16).

Helping each other get to heaven is biblical fellowship. Charles Young, in an article entitled, "What Is Fellowship?" says, "Fellowship is one Christian touching another in such a way it makes a difference in the lives of both Christians." Romans 1:11, 12, says basically the same thing: "For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (RSV). What are we doing to instruct, exhort, and encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ—not only those who are weak and have problems, but also those who are not weak and have no real problems. They also need our encouragement to "keep on keeping on." We never know who is leaning on our "strength" in order to replenish their strength. Just knowing we are there, ready to be there just for them is an encouragement.

Al Horne told this story several years ago during a lecture-ship. "During the war, a soldier discovered that his friend had fallen between the trenches out in no man's land. His friend had been wounded. Turning to his officer, he asked, 'Sir, may I go get him?' The officer replied curtly, 'No one can live out there! I would just lose you, too!' Ignoring the officer's com-

mand, he dashed from the safety of the trench to try to save his friend. With his friend on his shoulder, but himself mortally wounded, he staggered and fell back into the trenches. His friend was dead! The officer rebuked him: 'You fool, I told you not to go. Now I have lost both of you! It wasn't worth it!' With his dying breath, the brave soldier replied, 'But, sir, it *was* worth it!' The officer was unimpressed. 'Worth it,' he retorted. 'Rubbish! Your friend is dead and *you* will be soon!' The soldier's final words were: 'It *was* worth it, sir, because when I got to him, he said, "Jim, I knew you'd come!"' Out there in the mission field—that dark, danger-fraught no man's land of sin, the world waits for the Master's men. Will we be in time? Will we hear them say, 'Jim, ... I *knew* you'd come!'? Think of some brother or sister who needs your help walking the narrow path to heaven—will he be able to say, "I *knew* you'd come"?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ENRICHING OUR FELLOWSHIP³

1. Evaluate our understanding of fellowship. Have our get-togethers been "fellowship"? Have they built up and strengthened our spiritual lives? Or have they been taken up in small talk, gossip, criticism, etc.?

2. Consistent in-depth Bible study, both private and public, will enable us to feel more comfortable in talking about our spiritual life with one another. It is a must in being able to exhort, strengthen, and build up each other in the Lord.

3. Be an optimist. Be cheerful. Do not always talk about all your ills and those of your family members. Look for the best in others. Do not be critical. Do not grumble and gripe all the time. Have an attitude of thankfulness.

4. We can enrich our fellowship by knowing what to say, what not to say, how much to say, and how to say it. Today there are many books and articles written on ministering to the sick, both physically and mentally, the dying, the grieving, etc. They can help us know better how to "serve each other in love."

5. Learning to know each other better in order to better fellowship one another is important. For example, when we invite others into our homes, we sometimes ask each person in

the room a question such as, "What is your goal in life and how do you plan to attain that goal?" or, "If you could change your status in life right now, what would it be?" If it is a couples' gathering, an example of the question could be, "What do you consider your wife's (then husband's) greatest asset?" *Keep it positive.*

6. Notes, telephone calls, small gifts, etc., can be very encouraging and uplifting to a fellow Christian. Just a word or two of appreciation and love is enough.

7. Share inspirational books with others of your congregation. Talk about them. Share poems and articles of a spiritual nature.

8. Use every opportunity to encourage, build up, and strengthen others in the faith. Do not say or do things which would make a brother stumble and possibly even die spiritually. . . .

One Christian helping another Christian get to heaven is a beautiful way of life. I am thankful I enjoy the fellowship of so many people each day! How about you?

PRACTICAL EVANGELISM

Love must accompany every act of evangelizing. Without love, the seed we sow will hardly reach the soil before it is blown away. Usually people know if there is love, understanding, and acceptance in our hearts. They know if we are looking for the angel within them—so to speak. Michelangelo, examining a block of marble, said, "There's an angel in there, and I must set it free."

The following are some practical ways we can use in evangelizing: (1) World Bible School, (2) Bible correspondence courses, (3) mission campaigns, (4) Bible studies, both privately and publicly, (5) hello baskets to visitors, (6) welcome baskets to new members, (7) "we care" totes including information regarding the church which can be hung on doors, (8) keeping exchange students in your home, (9) showing hospitality, (10) encourage fellowship, and (11) use your home in evangelizing.

I feel sure each of you can recount many other suggestions

for evangelizing. The important thing is using whatever tool the Lord has given you to get the task done.

WHY EVANGELIZE?

1. We evangelize because it is a command of God.
2. We evangelize because the world is lost in sin and this is the Lord's way of saving it.
3. We evangelize because we, the Lord's people, need each other as we "press on to the high calling in Christ Jesus."
4. We evangelize because we love mankind.

CONCLUSION

The missing ingredient in evangelism is laborers. There are not enough Christians willing to commit themselves to making a difference in the lives of others. The salt has lost its savour and the light has lost its brightness! Is this true in your life? If so, repent and surrender your life completely to the Master, then ask him to lead you into the white fields to live a sacrificial life serving others.

Our Lord came to this earth to make a difference—he left us here to make a difference.

Christ, to Thee my life belongeth,
All I have and all I own
Place I at Thy sole disposal
For Thy use and Thine alone.

Thou hast time and strength provided,
Talents equal to my state.
So to Thee with all my being
Ev'ry day I dedicate.

Loving Thee is all I live for,
I would spend my life for Thee,
All my will to Thee surrendered.
All I do bring praise to Thee.

I would give Thee, sweet Lord Jesus,
What is precious, dear to me,
Then Thyself to me Thou givest,
And Thy love transfigures me.

Author Unknown

"Lord, here am I, send me."

NOTES

¹This paragraph begins an extensive quotation from my book *Joyful Hospitality* (Abilene, Tex.: Quality Publications, 1983).

²Mobley, *Joyful Hospitality*, 94-95, 99-100.

³The following is taken from Mobley, *Joyful Hospitality*, 89-90.

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SCHOLARS' FORUM

HOMOSEXUALITY: BIBLICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

BILL FLATT

Homosexuality has become an important topic of discussion. Bible believers think that homosexuality is sinful; many others see it merely as a respectable lifestyle. Thus, there is an urgent need to study biblical and psychological perspectives on homosexuality. I will give you my perspectives in the hope that both truth and people might be served by such an effort.

Homosexuality is usually defined as a sexual preference for a person of the same sex. To some, this means that one merely prefers to have sex with a person of the same sex; to others, on a deeper personality level, it means that one romantically and sexually prefers one of the same sex. Such persons often form long-term romantic and sexual relationships, fall in love, and live together much as would a husband and wife.

This elicits several vital questions: (1) How many homosexuals are there in America? (2) Why is there such social and political pressure for everyone to accept homosexuality in our culture? (3) How do people become homosexuals? (4) What are the main arguments to justify homosexuality as a legitimate alternate lifestyle? (5) What has been the historic position of Christianity on homosexuality? (6) What is the biblical position on homosexuality? (7) Can homosexuals change? (8) What should be the attitude of the church toward homosexuals?

THE HOMOSEXUAL POPULATION

Estimates on the number of homosexuals in America generally range from 5 to 10 per cent with the gay community's estimate being on the 10 per cent side. Our answer to this question would no doubt be influenced by our definition of

homosexuality. If our definition includes *every person* who has ever had any kind of homosexual physical contact, such as mutual touching of genitals, 10 per cent would probably be a low estimate. Such experimental casual contact often happens during adolescent years when sexual contact with the opposite sex usually is limited and sexual glandular activity is coming to its peak. However, most experts would not define such experimentation as homosexuality; the opposite sex is still very much preferred by such persons. If on the other hand, homosexuality is defined on a deeper personality level of romance and preferential attraction toward the total person of the same sex, the answer would probably be below 5 per cent. Many homosexuals with whom I counsel fall between these extremes. My working definition of homosexuality is this: Homosexuals are persons who prefer persons of the same sex for sexual and/or romantic purposes.

New perspectives have developed on homosexuality since the middle of this century beginning with Alfred Kinsey's book on *Sexual Behavior in Human Males*.¹ In this book, Kinsey measured sexuality on a continuum from one (exclusively heterosexual) through six (exclusively homosexual) and found that 5 to 10 per cent of the male population rated themselves five or six (predominantly homosexual) and some 25 per cent rated themselves as more than incidentally homosexual in their sexual orientation though not in their practice.² This study was followed by the formation in 1950 of the Mattachine Foundation, the first major American homophile organization.

PRESSURE FOR HOMOSEXUALITY

That there is considerable pressure in our society to accept homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle is undeniable. One sees it in the news media, politics, and everywhere. The person in most television programs who is depicted as abnormal is the person who believes that homosexuality is abnormal and sinful. This trend began about 1950, fueled by theological liberalism and philosophical humanism, and has escalated until the present. The pressure is so extensive that many Christians in

public life are intimidated into silence! God forbid!

Taking a closer look, one sees the trail of escalation: in 1954 in England, a group of Anglican clergy and physicians published a report on *The Problem of Homosexuality*; in 1955 a member of this group, Dr. Sherwin Bailey, published a book entitled *Homosexuality and the Western Tradition*, in which he sets forth liberal and innovative theological ideas about homosexuality. Bailey's influence led to *The Wolfenden Report* in 1957 by a governmental committee in England in which they recommended that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private be no longer considered a crime. This report was adopted by Parliament in 1967.³

Homophile organizations in the major cities of America multiplied in the 1960s starting with five in 1959 and reaching forty by 1968. Since then, the multiplication has continued until their influence has reached into every segment of America. By 1961, the Gay Liberation Movement began to press for equal rights for homosexuals.⁴

Other developments since that time include the following:

- 1964 - The Council on Religion and the Homosexual was founded, growing out of the Memorial Church in San Francisco and several Methodist agencies and supported by the United Church of Christ.
- 1968 - The establishment of the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles by Troy Perry, a minister with a Pentecostal background who left his family to begin this church which has since multiplied to more than fifty sister congregations throughout America.
- 1969 - The "Gay is good" slogan was adopted.
- 1969 - The founding of Dignity, an organization for Gay Catholics, by a priest named Pat Nidorf.
- 1972 - A gay minister was ordained in California by the United Church of Christ.
- 1973 - An ecumenical Task Force on Gay People in the Church was organized by the National Council of Churches.
- 1973 - The American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from the category of mental illness.

1975 - The American Psychological Association followed their lead.

1975 - The Episcopalian Church of New York ordained a self-declared active homosexual.

Since 1975, the trend toward liberal interpretation of the Bible and the acceptance of homosexuality has increased. Much pressure has been exerted for the church to conform to these new philosophical and theological positions.

Giving fundamental support to these movements is humanistic philosophy and psychology which have become strong forces in America since about 1959. Some of their tenets relevant to this discussion are that people have no higher power for guidance than themselves and that perception *is* reality. They often give the following illustration to prove their point about perceptions and reality: Truth in the Middle Ages was that the earth was flat; truth now is that it is round. So truth depends upon your perception, they say. Yet it is now clear that the earth has been round all along. Perceptions were incorrect. Perceptions are sometimes wrong, but truth is absolute.

Such relativism undermines our traditional basis for morality. Biblical arguments on sexuality are set aside for human perceptions and feelings. Yet, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). The theologians and philosophers who have paved the way for the homosexual lifestyle have all used extensively the words and ideas of humanism. The humanistic philosophy that leaves God out of the picture undermines our biblical basis for morality. Such philosophy when read should be screened through the Bible rather than used to judge the Bible. Christian believers cannot afford to take the approach of the world in this matter, for in doing so they abandon Christianity! As Solomon said, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Proverbs 14:12). They go from one sin to another and do not acknowledge God (Jeremiah 9:3). Christians must resist at all costs the temptation to go along with the often subtle pressure to conform to the world on the homosexuality issue. We must not conform to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1, 2).

POSSIBLE CAUSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

Numerous possible causes of homosexuality have been suggested: chromosomes, hormones, family composition, dating experiences, child abuse, Freud's (1930) concept of sexual immaturity, and Kallman's theory of genetic transmission.⁵

Freud thought that every person has the innate capacity to be homosexual or heterosexual. If the persons reached psychosexual maturity, they would be heterosexual, if they become fixiated at an immature psychosexual level, they would be homosexual.⁶

While it is true that chromosomes determine whether the person is a boy or a girl, it is not true that they determine the person's sexual preference. While it is true that fetuses usually look alike during the first few weeks, it is not true that sexual preference is genetically determined. Karlen states that "the evidence is overwhelming that the genes do not cause homosexuality."⁷ This is quite different from the claim of many in the gay community that being gay is genetically determined in the same way that being left-handed is. There is no hard evidence that this is the case. Karlen concludes that genetics have "shown that the idea of homosexuals as a 'third sex' did not hold."⁸ Money states that the genetic cause of homosexuality has been discarded by general consensus.⁹

The secretion of hormones at various stages of one's development affects one's physical development and may cause certain genitalia abnormalities and perhaps sexual tendencies, yet they do not prescribe human behavior. They may instead cause a predisposition "that feeds into postnatal programming of gender-identity/role, its differentiation as masculine, feminine, or mixed."¹⁰ Money gives numerous illustrations of such programming.¹¹ Gender and roles do not determine sexual preference. Sex (being male or female) is determined at conception, gender (a masculine or feminine identity) usually develops by age 2½ to three years old, and sexual preference (the choice of a male or female for sexual and/or romantic purposes) develops over a longer period of time often leading into one's teen-age years or later.

Many studies have investigated prenatal brain develop-

ment, and in particular how sex hormones (androgens and testosterone) influence sexual preference. While some evidence of such influence has been found in tadpoles and killifish,¹² rats and songbirds,¹³ it has been found that primates are more influenced by social conditions and less by prenatal hormones.¹⁴ Dorner and co-workers hypothesized that homosexual males were probably affected by prenatal hormones, a temporary deficiency in androgens probably during the fourth and seventh month.¹⁵ Tournay found in further research that such factors would only predispose one to homosexuality and that such predisposition might then interact with one's life experiences to result in homosexuality.¹⁶

Conditioning is probably the predominant cause of homosexuality: conditioning that begins at birth and continues through one's experiences with parents, siblings, playmates, teachers, friends, dates, sexual abuses, and other experiences. One's total experiences somehow may lead toward a homosexual orientation. Although genes and hormones may cause some people to seem odd and thus affect the way people interact with them, there is no conclusive evidence that they *cause* homosexuality. Male homosexuals, for example, have told me that their fathers, playmates at school, and others called them "queers" because of the way they walked or talked; female homosexuals were called tomboys or other such names. All of these experiences helped such persons to develop a certain image of themselves, which in turn led to homosexual experiences. All of this made it difficult for such boys to date girls or such girls to date boys, and thus a pattern was set and continually reinforced. One young man told me that the first remembrance he had of homosexuality was when he was ten years old. He was watching a "pornographic" homosexual film on satellite television, got excited, and started masturbating. A girl of eight was abused sexually by her older brothers and then turned against men. One boy of eleven was raped homosexually by an adult friend of his father. He "hated" the experience but later returned to it. Although this is not the only pattern that may lead to homosexuality, early homosexual experiences do provide material for mental associations and fantasies during pubescence which conditions such persons

toward a homosexual orientation. Such homosexuals often masturbate while looking at homosexually-oriented pictures or by visualizing homosexual fantasies. I have counseled with many such homosexuals who because of Christian convictions have never had sex but who have been engaged in such masturbation/homosexual fantasy activities for many years. Thus, by then the homosexual orientation is well-established. Often parents feed into this process by discouraging heterosexual relationships and being silent on homosexual sex.

A great deal of evidence supports the belief that the predominant cause of homosexuality is conditioning over a number of years.¹⁷ Karlen correctly observes that studies by Lanz, Slater, and Lallman that were said to support genetic causation of homosexuality can be explained just as well by environmental and psychological factors. Contrary to such studies, more recent studies indicate that adopted children in families display approximately the same rate of sexual difficulty as their step-siblings.¹⁸

A study of hermaphrodites, those born in rare cases with ambiguous external sexual features, demonstrates the strength of nurture in sex typing. In one such study by Money and the Hamptons of seventy-six hermaphrodites, it was found that whatever people are labeled and raised to be, that is what they think they are and live as.¹⁹ Money states that when hermaphrodites are uncertain and disturbed about their sexual gender, it is because the parents were unsure and disturbed. Karlen says that "if gender identity is something learned . . . sometimes despite the anatomy and physiological functions . . . then choice of sex object, which is less basic, is also learned."²⁰ Stroller agrees. Biological systems are almost always "too gentle in humans to withstand the more powerful forces of environment in human development, the first and most profound of which is mothering."²¹

Various other studies reinforce the theory that learning causes homosexuality. Masters and Johnson indicate that one's sexual preference may be influenced by early sexual experiences, homosexual fantasizing during masturbation, and unpleasant heterosexual experiences.²² Bieber and his associates found that homelife is a causal factor in developing

homosexual orientation.²³ In his fifteen-year study of effeminate boys, Green found that they were often alienated from both their peer groups and their fathers because of their effeminate behavior. They were often starved for male closeness and sought out males for physical contact and love.²⁴ Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith in their extensive study of 686 homosexual men, 293 heterosexual men, and 140 heterosexual women found that gender nonconformity in childhood was a significant predictor of homosexuality. Boys avoiding contact sports while enjoying playing house, hopscotch, or jacks were given as illustrations of gender-related games.²⁵

Gadpaille's research gives additional weight to the conditioning hypothesis: "Biological intent. . ." he states "is to differentiate male and female both physiologically and psychologically in such a manner as to insure species survival, which can serve only through heterosexual union."²⁶ He further states that "gender of assignment and rearing predictably takes precedence over and overrides all contradictory determinants: chromosomes, hormones, gonads, internal and external sexual morphology and secondary pubertal changes."²⁷ He concludes that homosexuality is clearly a "result of some disorder in the normally programmed sequence of psychosexual differentiation and development, however early or subtle the interference may be."²⁸

ARGUMENTS FOR HOMOSEXUAL LIFESTYLE

Several arguments, of which these are some of the more serious, are being presented to justify the homosexual lifestyle as a legitimate way of life:

1. New shifts in medical and psychological opinion justify homosexuality as an alternate way of life: "Since God made us that way, it can't be wrong."²⁹ Homosexuality is seen as legitimate: It is like being left-handed or right-handed.

A report by a group of English Quakers concluded in 1963 that "One should no more deplore 'homosexuality' than left-handedness. . . . Surely it is the nature and quality of a relationship that matters: One must not judge it by its outward appearance but by its inward worth.

Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection, and, therefore we cannot see that it is in some way morally worse."³⁰

But, this analogy crumbles under close scrutiny. Everyone admits that left-handedness is genetic; there is no such agreement regarding homosexuality. In fact, the evidence points in the other direction. And, even if homosexuality *were* genetically determined, everything that is genetic is not always morally right. A heterosexual man, for example, might be genetically inclined to have sex with women other than his wife, but it would be wrong for him to do so (Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 22:8). He cannot do what he would like to do because sin dwells in him (Romans 7:15-20). Thus, for the Bible believer, no new evidence justifies the homosexual lifestyle. God's righteous decree condemns such practice (Romans 1:18-32).

2. New theological insights justify the homosexual lifestyle.³¹ Bailey's handling of Genesis 19 in the early '50s paved the way for this very liberal approach to Scripture.³² His rather far-fetched argument was that the people of Sodom did not intend to have homosexual sex with the angels in Lot's house: Their sin was failure to show hospitality to strangers. He dismisses the reference to Sodomites in Jude 6, 7 and 2 Peter 2:4-8 who went after "strange flesh" as being a late interpretation derived from the Book of Jubilees and which may refer to the legend of sex between humans and angels. He goes on to say that the destruction of Sodom was probably due to natural causes misinterpreted by those who observed it.³³ For those who believe in the full inspiration of the Bible, these arguments of Bailey are impossible to believe! Why did the angels strike the men of Sodom blind (Genesis 19) if their only sin was failure to be hospitable? The contest shows that their problem was not neglect of hospitality, but that they wanted to know (have sex with) Lot's guests, perceived by them to be men. They used force to try to do so! Lot was so horrified at their idea of having sex with the two men that he offered them his two daughters who had never slept with a man and told them that they could do with them "what they liked" (Genesis 19:3-8).

Bailey's view of what Jude and Peter said is unacceptable. An inspired writer would not give approval to a misinterpretation of Genesis 19. And, even if Peter and Jude made use of the Book of Jubilees, this does not in itself prove that they were wrong. For those who believe in the complete inspiration of the Bible, whatever they said was correct, and they said that the men of Sodom went after "strange flesh" and were examples of those who are condemned by God for their sin.

In another argument, Bailey distinguishes between *perversion* and *inversion*. *Perversion* is explained as homosexual sex by heterosexuals; *inversion*, sex between homosexuals.³⁴ Interestingly, Bailey did not make allowances for bisexuals, but spoke rather of exclusive heterosexuals or exclusive homosexuals.³⁵ Bailey's position is that the principle texts in the New Testament dealing with this question condemn *perversion* and not *inversion*. Thus, the biblical text does not deal with loving, responsible sex between two caring homosexuals.³⁶ He sees, however, both *inversion* and *perversion* as effects of sin in a fallen world.³⁷ He does not exalt the *inversion* relationship as do later gay writers who utilize his false distinction between different types of homosexual sex. No such distinction exists in the Bible. The world of biblical scholarship since the time of Bailey has not followed his lead in the interpretation of Romans 1. These people in Romans 1 not only engaged in the homosexual act but also *lusted* one after another, thus indicating a homosexual attitude as well as action. Paul sees this as the sort of practice that happens when people abandon God. All people who practice such things are to repent and turn in faith to God through Jesus Christ.

Various other theological positions have been taken that encourage the church to accept homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle. Jones does it on the basis of the lesser of two evils. He says to accept them or lose them to the world.³⁸ Gittings takes a stronger homophile position by stating that homosexual tendencies exercised with consenting adults in private is not a denial of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and that the problem facing the homosexual is not his or her homosexuality but rather society's attitude toward it. Homosexuals, therefore, she said, should not be denied membership or lead-

ership positions in the church because some of them are already serving the church at all levels—and they are doing it efficiently and to the glory of God. Homosexuality is a way of life as good in every respect as heterosexuality, she concludes.³⁹ W. Norman Pittenger states that homosexuality is not sinful and that the church should accept homosexuals even if it were. Their sexual attraction is different, but that is all. He dismisses all relevant biblical data as "culture bound" and unrelated to loving forms of inversion not connected with idolatry. He states that homosexual love can contribute to our becoming more human and says that loving homosexual relationships should be blessed by the church.⁴⁰ Thomas Maurer in a symposium on homosexuality says, "I see no validity whatsoever to the claim that something written two or three thousand years ago has any special relevance to my way of living and thinking."⁴¹ Robert Treese concludes that the ideal state of humanity is *androgynous* or bisexual.⁴² Others go a step further and state that heterosexual relationships and marriage as traditionally experienced are basically unhealthy, that exclusive heterosexuality is a perversion of humanity's natural state, that homosexual love is superior to heterosexual love, that the church represents patriarchal oppression, that the father-god must give way to the mother-god within us.⁴³

This is surely sufficient evidence to demonstrate a trend of argumentation toward acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle. The basic idea is that homosexuals have a right not only to their orientation but also to an active homosexual lifestyle, church membership, and church leadership positions. The biblical account is dismissed as being occasional literature, out of date, misinterpreted, and misinformed. Such arguments go far beyond what the Bible believer can accept.⁴⁴ Their attempt seems to rewrite the Bible in their own image. It is as if they are saying, "This is the way it is, and God is just going to have to agree with it," which brings us to the most important question of what the Bible actually says about homosexuality.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Five biblical texts deal explicitly with homosexuality: Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and 1 Timothy 1:8-10. Each of these texts will now be studied:

Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable (Leviticus 18:22).

If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads (Leviticus 20:13).

These texts teach that homosexual sex is an abomination and that people who practiced such abominations were to be put to death, a very strong punishment indeed! And they are responsible for their own death. Such texts cannot be brushed aside by the claim that such prohibitions were because of cultic taboos of human origin in early Jewish culture. The Bible is inspired of God. Thus, these passages are God's Word. The question then is whether or not God would have one executed for violating a custom. The answer is obvious. Levitical legislation prefigured the work of Christ and Christian behavior. The fact that Levitical material resembled other legal and religious systems of the Near East does not negate its divine inspiration.

These practices were condemned because they were wrong in themselves, not merely because they were associated with idolatrous cultures in Egypt and Canaan. Homosexuality is mentioned in the immediate context of adultery, bestiality, and child sacrifice, all acts wrong in themselves. The point in context is that these practices were a part of the surrounding culture which Israel was being warned *not* to adopt!

Others dismiss these passages because they were a part of the Law of Moses which was replaced by Christ. Yet, much of the Law of Moses was reinforced by Christ and his apostles, and this is true of God's law on homosexuality (Romans 1:26, 27). The rest of the Bible confirms and reiterates the teachings of Moses which prohibit homosexual acts (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:8-10).

Still others refer to different types of homosexuality. Concerning such efforts, Jack Lewis states:

No effort is made to draw hairline distinction like those made by Bailey and McNeil between a homosexual act by a heterosexual person and such an act done by one who is psychologically homosexual—a distinction between so-called perversion and inversion. If an act is male with male it is a condemned act.⁴⁵

The text in the New Testament that perhaps most clearly condemns homosexuality is Romans 1:26, 27:

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

In this passage, Paul condemns both male and female homosexual acts. He seems also to see homosexual passions (shameful lusts) which lead to these acts as sinful though the condemnation in verse 31 is upon those who *do* these things, not merely upon those who *think* such things.

The force of this passage has not been successfully evaded by Bailey's arguments or by the later arguments of others. What is unnatural here is homosexuality—men with men and women with women. "Against nature" means against God's intention for human sexuality as seen in nature, in the function of male and female sexual organs. The severity of Paul's language shows that the seriousness of the offense goes far beyond a mere violation of custom. They had repressed from their minds the awareness of the true God. As a result, God abandoned them to inverted sexual desires and practices. No doubt Paul was aware of the various types of homosexual relationships in the Greco-Roman world. Yet he does not make a distinction here: Men with men and women with women is wrong in itself. It is an example of what happens when humans worship the creature rather than the Creator. One's

homosexual orientation does not justify homosexual acts, even though it be "their natural inclination." The "nature" of many heterosexuals is to have sex with numerous persons of the opposite sex, but as Christians they cannot do so (Galatians 5:16-22). They must submit to God through Christ and let him come in and help take control of such evil desires. That such desires are deeply rooted and subconscious does not alter these behavioral demands. That homosexuals today are not depraved in all of the ways mentioned in Romans 1 does not make modern homosexuality right. Homosexual sex is wrong in itself (Romans 1:32).

The question is not whether God *loves* all people. He does love all people including adulterers, thieves, and homosexuals. But this does not mean that he endorses these practices. Such people are told to repent (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Our next passage is 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This passage clearly teaches that a practicing homosexual who does not repent has not yielded to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Some try to avoid the force of the passage by saying that the same would be true for covetous persons. "We are all sinners," they proclaim. While this is true, there is a difference between a sinner who repents and then experiences lapses and one who denies that he has sins and therefore does not repent saying, "There is nothing wrong with me." Paul indicates that unrepentant fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, covetous people, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers shall not inherit the kingdom of God. This may not agree with *our* logic, but that is what Paul says. We are not to con-

tinue in sin that grace may abound (Romans 6:1).

John Boswell of Yale University argues that the two words used here for homosexual, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, simply mean the self-indulgent and homosexual prostitutes. Donald Williams points out that

while *arsenokoitai* by the sixth century may mean "male prostitutes," here it certainly has a wider reference, "male homosexuals, Sodomites"—literally, "male bed-mates for males." Thus Bailey concludes that *malakoi* means those who give themselves to passive homosexual acts and *arsenokoitai* means those engaging in active homosexual acts.⁴⁶

Arndt and Gingrich agree.⁴⁷ Dowell Platt states that in the New Testament usage the word refers to a man who goes to bed with a male for sexual purposes, a homosexual.⁴⁸ Even if these homosexuals of 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 were self-indulgent and male prostitutes, this would not prove that loving homosexual acts are approved of God. This kind of reasoning would be like saying that since heterosexual prostitution is condemned in the Bible (Proverbs 5) that loving fornication and adultery are approved. Such is not the case! The fact is that sex outside of marriage is *never* approved in the Bible. This includes loving homosexual sex. Stafford correctly states:

There is no reason to believe that Paul was unaware of lasting, loving homosexual relationships of what we call the homosexual condition. Paul lived in a society where homosexuality was commonly accepted. He could easily have mentioned exceptions to his blanket condemnation if he had wanted to. Instead, First Corinthians 6 makes the condemnation absolute.⁴⁹

Some of the Christians *were* homosexuals, but they changed and were saved. The same can happen today.

Our next text is 1 Timothy 1:8-11:

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the

unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

The word for homosexuals here is *arsenokoitai*, a male homosexual, a Sodomite. Dowell Platt states, "Combining these words 'male' [*arsen*] and 'bed' [*koitai*], it literally describes a 'male-bed-person.' It is plain condemnation of a male having sex with another male."⁵⁰

Some scholars put this passage aside because it is in one of the pastoral letters written when Christianity had become hardened and doctrinal instead of spontaneous and full of the Spirit. Yet, for Bible believers this is not an adequate maneuver. All Scripture is inspired of God, and this text is Scripture. Its message is quite in line with earlier passages written by Paul (Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

In addition to these texts which *explicitly* condemn homosexual sex, other passages imply the same message of judgment. Genesis 19 gives the account of the men of Sodom who were blinded and eventually destroyed because of their wickedness which included homosexual behavior. Second Peter 2 and Jude 3-23 confirm this interpretation of Genesis 19.

These interpretations are in line with the broad scope of what the Bible teaches on sexuality. What God had in mind was one man and one woman living together (Genesis 1, 2). Though Paul indicated that sex in marriage may help prevent fornication, its primary purpose was closely connected with family and reproduction.

This view has been held throughout the history of Christianity. Luther saw Paul's arguments in Romans 1:18-27 as a punishment as well as a sign of idolatrous religion. He did not negate law by reference to grace as do some today. He spoke of the Ten Commandments as not trifles of men but the commandments of the Most High God. His sexual ethic included avoidance of "every form of unchastity" and to help your

neighbor do the same.⁵¹ The basic view of Christianity from the first century until about 1950 is that homosexual sex is against God's purpose. And even since 1950, those who go toward a contrary view have been in the decided minority. They have been influenced greatly by humanistic philosophy and liberal theology and have rejected the Bible as God's fully inspired message to us. Such a view should be rejected.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCH

The question of whether or not homosexuals can change is a significant question. Many references could be cited on either side of the issue with more on the negative side, that is, that they cannot change their orientation. However, there is evidence which indicates that homosexuals can and do change. Pattison and Pattison report a change brought about by religion in eleven homosexual males to heterosexual status.⁵² Bieber reported twenty-nine successful changes.⁵³ Masters and Johnson reported a failure rate of only 28 per cent, implying a success rate of 72 per cent.⁵⁴ Scanzoni questions whether or not a homosexual's orientation can ever be changed.⁵⁵ There are few reports of a complete change in sexual orientation, many of a complete change in behavior. More often it is agreed that homosexuals do not change their orientation completely but that some change is possible with proper effort and help. Some who report complete orientation changes often say later that they have reverted back to their previous desires.

Evans correctly states,

The fact that psychological research indicates a poor prognosis for homosexuals desiring to change should not alter our attitudes regarding its moral undesirability; rather, it should motivate us to sharpen our therapeutic tools so as to inch closer to God's created ideal.⁵⁶

Add to this picture the fact that very few professional counselors are adequately trained in mind, spirit, and professional skills to help homosexuals who wish to go straight, and one sees a somewhat disconcerting picture. Calls come on a regular basis to some of us from all over the country for help and

referral sources without our being able to tell them of a qualified psychologist or other professional nearby who is able and willing to help them reach their objective.

Counseling that seems to be most effective would include an attitude of caring toward homosexuals, an understanding of how they came to feel the way they do, aversive covert conditioning (sex is primarily in the mind), an emphasis upon the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ which lives in us (Galatians 2:20; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-17), self-discipline, church, the development of heterosexual friends, a cessation of reading homosexual literature and association with active homosexuals, and the use of positive covert conditioning to enhance latent or thwarted heterosexual potential. God's help, professional help, and self-control are all a part of the solution.

What if after all of this a person still has homosexual thoughts and desires? The emphasis is upon controlling the desires and thoughts. They do not have to control the person's behavior!⁵⁷

CONCLUSION

I leave you with these perspectives regarding homosexuality from a biblical and psychological point of view: (1) God created sexuality. (2) God's Word places the expression of human sexuality within marriage and connects it closely with reproduction and the prevention of fornication. (3) Sex outside of marriage is condemned. (4) Homosexuality is in opposition to God's will. (5) It is physically possible for all people to engage in homosexual sex. (6) Such practice may contribute toward conditioning toward a homosexual orientation. (7) There is no conclusive evidence that homosexuality is genetic. (8) There is some evidence that hormones secreted in one's brain during the prenatal period may predispose a person to homosexuality. (9) There is a great deal of evidence that homosexuality is conditioned or gradually learned from birth into adulthood. (10) If homosexuality is primarily learned, it is theoretically possible that it can be unlearned. (11) The church should make a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual action. Christians must, by the help of God,

control their inclinations toward evil. (12) Homosexual orientation is very difficult to change. (13) Some homosexuals have reported change in orientation, usually a partial change. (14) Homosexuals can, by the help of God and perhaps well-prepared professional counselors, learn to control their behavior. (15) The church must resist being conditioned by humanistic philosophy and liberal theology to accept homosexuality as an alternate way of life. (16) The church must teach what the Bible teaches on human sexuality. (17) The church must willingly accept homosexuals who repent. (18) The church must put forth greater efforts to prepare and support professional counselors to help homosexuals who wish to go straight. (19) The church must rely heavily upon God, his Spirit, Christ, and his Word.

NOTES

¹Alfred Kinsey and Warden B. Pomeroy, *Sexual Behavior in Human Males* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Wm. B. Saunders Co., 1948).

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³Richard F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality and the Church* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1978), 30.

⁴*Ibid.*, 31.

⁵Paul Morris, *Shadow of Sodom* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978), 85.

⁶H. William Masters, Virginia E. Johnson, and Robert C. Kolodny, *Human Sexuality*, 3rd. ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1988), 203.

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¹⁰*Effective Communication Series: The Adolescent Patient* (New York: Health Projects International, 60 East 42nd St. 10017, 1981), 24.

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²⁶W. J. Gaddpaille, "Research into the Physiology of Males and Females," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 2 (1972): 211.

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²⁹Lovelace, *Homosexuality*, 29-34.

³⁰Alastair Heron, ed., *Toward a Quaker View of Sex: An Essay by a Group of Friends* (London: Friends Home Service Committee, 1963), 21, 36.

³¹Lovelace, *Homosexuality*, 34-63.

³²D. Sherwin Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (New York: Longmans, Green Co., 1955), 9-11.

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³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., 159.

³⁷Ibid., 163-68.

³⁸Sally Gearhart and William R. Johnson, eds., *Loving Men/Loving Women: Gay Liberation and the Church* (San Francisco, Calif.: Glide, 1974), 9-49.

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⁴⁰W. Norman Pitenger, *Time for Consent*, 2d ed. (London: SCM Press, 1970), 11-105.

⁴¹W. Dwight Oberholtzer, ed., *Is Gay Good? Ethics, Theology and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Westminster Press, 1971), 98-102.

⁴²Gearhart and Johnson, *Loving*, 46-49.

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⁴⁴John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, McMeel, 1976), 1-169; Anthony Kosnik and other, eds., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 7-214; Ivan Hill, ed., *The Bisexual Spouse* (McLean, Va.: Barlina Books, 1987).

⁴⁵Flatt, Lewis, and Flatt, *Counseling*, 13.

⁴⁶McNeill, *The Church*, 154.

⁴⁷Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2d ed. rev. by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 25-28.

⁴⁸Flatt, Lewis, and Flatt, *Counseling*, 37.

⁴⁹Tim Stafford, "Issue of the Year," *Christianity Today* 22 (5 May 1978): 981.

⁵⁰Flatt, Lewis, and Flatt, *Counseling*, 43.

⁵¹Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1959), 7-211.

⁵²Mansell Pattison and Myna Loy Pattison, "Ex-gays: Religiously Mediated Change in Homosexuals," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 137 (December 1984): 1555.

⁵³Bieber, *Homosexuality*, 276.

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⁵⁵Letha D. Scanzoni, "Can Homosexuals Change?" *The Other Side* 148 (January 1984): 15.

⁵⁶Paul Cameron and Kenneth Ross, "Social Psychological Aspects of the Judeo-Christian Stance Toward Homosexuality," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 9 (Spring 1981): 40.

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THOSE BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD

(1 Corinthians 15:29)

CARROLL D. OSBURN

First Corinthians 15:29 is a classic *crux interpretum* in the history of New Testament exegesis. Most agree that, according to the obvious meaning of the words, the verse refers to "vicarious baptism" in which people are "baptized for the dead." Since this implies a sort of *post mortem* forgiveness of sins, a multiplicity of interpretations has arisen. It may be helpful to survey some of the major interpretations and to address the text in its context.

A SURVEY OF INTERPRETATIONS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29¹

"Baptism" here may be understood as something done for the sake of someone else or as something done for the benefit of the one baptized, and may be taken to refer to sacramental immersion (as 1 Corinthians 1:14), non-sacramental washings (Hebrews 9:10), or, in a metaphorical sense, to "persecutions" or "martyrdom" (as Mark 10:38).

Baptism for the Welfare of Others

Baptism in the Metaphorical Sense:

1. Following Bellarmine, Jesuits have long taken the verse with reference to baptism as "works of penance" for the relief of the dead, based upon Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50.

2. Some, emphasizing the third person of the verb "What shall they do," have taken "baptism" here to mean "inordinate sadness" over the death of loved ones, e.g., "What solace will they have?"

3. Others assert that the verb "to be baptized" refers to the

difficulties of apostolic work on behalf of the "dead," taken to be the living faithful on earth who are called "dead" by their adversaries.

4. Still others take "baptism" here to refer to persecutions endured to hasten the Second Coming, referring to the delay of the coming until the measure of the iniquities of Christ's enemies had been fulfilled (Revelation 6:9ff.).

5. Another view takes "baptism for the dead" in the verse to mean martyrdom, essentially equivalent to "baptism in blood."

Literal Baptism, But Not Sacramental:

6. "Baptism," taken as "washing, ablution," is said by some to refer to the washing of the bodies of the dead prior to burial (see Acts 9:37).

7. A similar view takes "baptism" here to refer to the "wetting" of those who wash the dead bodies, i.e., to get wet with the water used to wash the dead.

8. "Baptism" here has also been taken to refer to the ritual washing by Jews before their sacrifices for the dead (see Numbers 19:11-22), i.e., a purification for the sacrifices they are about to offer for the dead.

9. Due to ritual uncleanness resulting from contact with the dead, a ritual washing was required (Numbers 19), meaning that "baptism" here means "to wash away contact with the dead."

10. Also based upon Jewish customs is the view that if someone who touched a dead person died before receiving the legal ablution (Numbers 19:11), others interested in their legal purity would see to it through vicarious "baptism for the dead" that their impurity was cleansed.

11. A rather strange view is that "baptism for the dead" refers to divers who went into the sea in search of bodies of drowned persons.

12. In attempting to free Paul from not having condemned baptism for the dead, some have stressed that it is not "baptism" itself which is received by proxy, but only the "ceremonies and rites" of baptism.

Baptism as a Sacrament:

13. The most common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15:29

is "vicarious baptism," an act performed in the name of the deceased who died before they could be baptized.

14. As is well-known, Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, instituted the practice of vicarious baptism which continues to the present. However, this view differs in several ways from the preceding view, e.g., in arguing that the "binding in heaven" of Revelation 20:12 refers to "recording" deeds on earth, whether one's own or those of one's agent, and in the curious argument that "turning the hearts of the fathers to the children" of Malachi 4:6 refers to baptism for the dead. Mormons believe that only those baptized by Mormons are recorded in the Book of Life.

15. The view has been advanced that at first in the early church, baptism had little significance attached to it, but that later it came to be considered as a sign of being numbered among the faithful. As baptism came into common use, the view emerged that only through baptism is one considered just, and to be unbaptized is to be unjust, making those earlier faithful who died without baptism no longer included in the list of the just. Thus, this view suggests that it became important to be baptized in their stead lest the end of the world be delayed too long, making the practice of the dead evolve from eschatological rather than sacramental ideas.

16. Still others take 1 Corinthians 15:29 to refer to the "baptism of a dead person's body," requested after death by proxy.

17. Some take the verse to refer to vicarious baptism of catechumens who died before baptism.

18. Another view takes the verse to refer to ritual baptisms for the dead in order to increase the number of faithful and hasten the second coming, viz., to fill the *pleroma*, or the "fullness" of which Paul speaks in Romans 11:12-25.

19. Yet another view holds "the dead" to be formerly baptized persons and those baptized as denying the Resurrection, thus taking the verse to be a defense of the dead and of their faith in the Resurrection.

20. Some hold that those baptized have something to do for the dead *after* receiving the sacrament.

Baptism for the Benefit of Those Baptized

21. An ancient view takes "the dead" to be the "dead body" of the one now being baptized, in the vein of Romans 8:10, where Paul calls the body "dead by reason of sin."

22. Another early view takes "baptism" to refer to those, such as Cornelius, who had received the Spirit, but not baptism, taking the Spirit to refer to "washing of sins" and baptism to "the future resurrection of the body."

23. Based upon Romans 6:4, some maintain that "baptism for the dead" refers to putting to death their own passions and beginning a new life.

24. It was also an ancient view that "the dead" refers to those not yet dead, but very close to death, thus reading "baptized for dead," there being nothing else to gain in this world.

25. Another view takes "the dead" to refer to a state and time, ". . . what profit will they gain for the time when they shall be dead?"

26. Yet another view would read, "What do the baptized gain *beyond the unbaptized believer*, if the dead do not rise?"

27. Some would take the verse to refer to those baptized in order to take the place of Christians who are put to death for their faith.

28. Another view holds that to those baptized, especially infants, Christians gave the names of the dead apostles, martyrs, fathers, deceased relatives, etc.

29. A Reformation argument was that "the dead" refers to the tomb of martyrs, *over which* baptism was administered.

30. Taking "the dead" to be Christ himself, some took the verse to refer to coming to baptism because of the "dead one," namely Christ.

31. Noting "the dead" to be plural, though, others argued that the text refers not only to Christ, but to Christ and others.

32. Observing the plague in 1 Corinthians 11:30, some took the verse to refer to the motivation given to baptism because of observations of vast numbers of people dying in Corinth.

33. Others, taking "the dead" as a Greek neuter rather than a masculine form, argued "baptism for the dead" to be for fanciful reasons, e.g., idle thoughts of the dead.

34. Also taking "the dead" as neuter, some have argued it to refer to death itself, thus making "baptism" here refer to being freed from "the fear of death."

35. It is also held that the "baptism" was for the purpose of leaving the living church and becoming part of the "dead church," beyond suffering and struggle.

36. Another view takes "baptism" here to mean "to be numbered among the dead who are never to rise again."

37. It has also been held that "baptism" here serves as a protection against the principalities and powers after death.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. Does "What shall they do . . ." (*ti poiesousin*; Greek future indicative, rather than deliberative subjunctive) refer to 1 Thessalonians 4:13, as some suggest, or is it to be taken logically (When they come to see that the dead have no hope, what will they do then?), or does it mean, "What will they hope to accomplish. . . ?"

2. Does "those" (*hoi*) refer to orthodox Christians or those denying the Resurrection? Are they Corinthians or others?

3. To what does "baptized" (*baptidzomenoi*) refer?

- a. Traditional Christian baptism
- b. Jewish ritual washing of the dead body
- c. Jewish ritual washing before sacrifices for the dead
- d. Jewish ritual washing due to contact with the dead body
- e. Divers searching the sea for drowning victims
- f. Baptism in the name of an unbaptized dead catechumen
- g. Acceptance of pagan mystery rites
- h. Acts of penance for the dead
- i. Persecution
- j. Martyrdom

4. What does the preposition *hyper* mean in this instance?

- a. "In the place of"
- b. "For the benefit of"
- c. "In defense of"
- d. "As being near"
- e. "Beyond"
- f. "Over, above"

g. Because of"

5. To whom does "the dead" (*nekron*) refer?

- a. Dead believers who are to rise again
- b. Dead believers who are not to rise again
- c. Dead believers already baptized
- d. Dead catechumens who died before baptism
- e. Dead unbelievers
- f. The dead Christ
- g. The dead Christ and other ancient worthies
- h. Living unbelievers
- i. Living faithful ("ironic" use of term)

6. Does the second sentence of 1 Corinthians 15:29 end with "them" (most early manuscripts plus RSV, NIV, Jerusalem Bible) or "the dead" (some late manuscripts plus KJV)?

7. Does "on their behalf" at the end of 1 Corinthians 15:29 go with verse 29 or with verse 30?

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS

The entire context of 1 Corinthians 15:12-34 refers to the resurrection, evoked by some among the Corinthians who assert that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (v. 12). "Else" at the beginning of verse 29 refers to verses 12 through 18, relating baptism to death, burial, and resurrection. Two questions are then presented. First, "What shall they do who are baptized for the dead?" (v. 29). If there is no resurrection, baptism becomes futile, a symbol of something which does not exist.² Second, "Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?" (vv. 30-32) refers not to those being baptized, but to Paul and his co-workers. If there is no resurrection, Christian ministry is in vain. These two questions are followed (vv. 33, 34) with strong exhortations to moral behavior,³ suggesting some vital connection between the matter of denial of the resurrection and the inadequate lifestyle of the readers addressed throughout the Epistle. Although many have difficulty with verse 29 following "logically" from the argument in verses 12ff. for the necessity of the resurrection, there is no doubt that Paul intended verse 29 to be the first of two *ad hominem* arguments for the resurrection.

A widespread consensus exists that the "baptism" men-

tioned in verse 29 refers to vicarious baptism.⁴ Vicarious baptism on behalf of people who had already died, a practice mentioned nowhere else in the New Testament and unknown in the orthodox churches just following the New Testament period, did exist in heretical Marcionite churches of the early period,⁵ but in A.D. 397 the third council of Carthage condemned the practice. A major difficulty with this view is that Paul's silence might appear to give tacit approval to a strange practice which is not in concert with his repeated view of justification by grace through faith, involving personal response by the believer, including baptism. Fee suggests that Paul's silence must not be taken as *condoning* the practice any more than Jesus' silence in Luke 16:1-8 condones the corrupt actions of the household manager.⁶ However, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor argues that vicarious baptism would have been an unconvincing argument, and dangerous in that a simple query as to whether he believed in what they are doing would have forced a negative answer, thus disallowing his argument.⁷ That the "baptism" in 1 Corinthians 15:29 is "vicarious" is not at all certain.

In reality, we do not know who these were who were being baptized, for whom or why they were doing it, nor do we know what effect they thought it might have upon those for whom it was done.

NOTES

¹For a more thorough treatment including criticisms and observations upon which this survey is based, see Bernard Foschini, "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead," 1 Cor. 15:29," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 12 (1950): 260-76, 379-88; 13 (1951): 46-78, 172-98.

²A. G. Moseley, "Baptized for the Dead," *Review and Expositor* 48 (1952): 59.

³Abraham Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 87 (1968): 71-80 argues convincingly that this section has features of "diatribe."

⁴See A. Oepke, "bapto," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 1:542, fn. 63 that "All interpretations which seek to evade vicarious baptism for the dead . . . are misleading."

⁵Tertullian *De Resur.* 48; *Adv. Marcion* 5.10.

⁶Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 764, fn. 19 holds that an otherwise unacceptable matter could have illustrative value.

⁷Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "'Baptized for the dead' (1 Cor. XV, 29): A Corinthian Slogan?" *Revue Biblique* 88 (1981): 532-43.

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ELSE FAILS—THINK!

WILLIAM TEAGUE

ELDERS' AND PREACHERS' DINNER

IF ALL ELSE FAILS—THINK!

WILLIAM TEAGUE

As one looks forward to the responsibilities facing those who lead in the church of our Lord as we near the end of this century, it is easy to identify two remarkably distinct areas: (1) the challenge to doctrine; and (2) projects and programs involved in the daily application of the doctrine with its commands and demands.

Deep faith and active conviction must continue to be prized characteristics that are nurtured within the congregations.

The church's response to the challenge of hedonism with its emphasis on alcohol and drugs and sexual misconduct must receive more attention from more people. This means earlier involvement in the process of preparing people to transmit their values to their progeny.

The role of women in the program of the church will require more attention. We already have scriptural precedent for the role of women in the eyes of God and now we must deal with the practical aspects of carrying out God's plan. It is always difficult to make these decisions without becoming overly impressed with the cultural mores in which the decision is made.

Men's sloth and inactivity contributes to a lack of understanding in the area of women serving the needs of the congregation. We have sometimes justified poor performance by men through an appeal to the authority granted men in the Scriptures.

Home and family concerns will continue to dominate the agendas of congregations. The role of fathers, the special responsibilities of both mothers and fathers, and their impact on teen-age youth will be even more dramatic realities in the future. It is heartening to know that many teen-agers are

being baptized today, and in many cases they are the first members of their families to be Christians.

The openness and readiness to reveal personal problems on the part of all members of the congregation, especially those who are younger, adds additional burdens to eldering. Pastoral care must go beyond the mere wearing of the title of "elder." Too often, elders are consumed with doing the work of deacons because it is easier. It is where we feel the greatest degree of comfort.

The shepherd model will receive more emphasis and will yield greater results than the timeworn model of board of director decision maker or military hierarchy leader.

More leaders will be taking a worldview of their responsibilities. We are obviously ill-prepared for the opportunities that are coming to us with the relaxation of the communist grip on peoples of the world. The motivation to do mission work will and should increase, just as counseling will have a larger role.

Generational divisions will be minimized. There is already a high level of acceptance by college-age students of their grandparents—it is their parents they cannot stand.

More attention must be given to the quality of our worship. (1) Sermons must be more Christ-centered in order to meet the demands of a more discriminating audience. The concept of "Sirs, we would see Jesus" is growing, and for that we should all shout, "Hallelujah!" (2) The total impact of our worship time must receive additional attention.

The leaders within every congregation must become examples of how people may differ in love for the good of the congregation.

"Activities" must not be allowed to become synonymous with "spiritual growth." There are many things to recommend the value of a youth trip to ski the slopes, but unless it is all based upon the fundamental goal of increasing the spiritual depth of the participants, it fails to be worth the effort.

People need to (1) plan their lives, (2) get through the day, and (3) understand their mission. To offer this assistance, there is a need for greater preparation. This often includes formal education. Congregational resistance to formal aca-

demic preparation has been virtually eradicated during the post-World War II period.

Specialization with its advantages does seem to crowd out the source of wisdom. (In some cases with some elders, this is a flight from responsibility. With others, it is a recognition of a need that transcends one's present capacity.) Therefore, in the future we will come to be more respectful of those who have differing talents. We will rely upon them for great work, and we will make a place for them to serve.

Each of us must become more dedicated to developing spiritual depth. We must remember that administering college programs, editing papers, professoring, and being "cumbered about with much serving" is not a substitute for spiritual growth.

The field is—as always—ripe for the harvest. Let us hasten while it is day!

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