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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
BA	Biblical Archeology
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JRE	<i>Journal of Religious Ethics</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NeoT	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSPS	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers Series
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Study Monograph Series
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TynB	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UBSGNT	United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament
WW	<i>Word &amp; World</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

## PREFACE

Every scholar is indebted to countless persons on several different levels. I am indebted to the numerous professors under which I have sat and the academic institutions that have sanctioned their efforts. I am particularly grateful for the opportunity afforded me by the University of South Africa and its competent faculty in the Department of NT and Early Christian Studies. I will forever be appreciative for the guidance and patience of my advisor Professor PJJ Botha. I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the support of my entire family over the years. I would especially like to thank my mother and father, Mrs. Eunice Miller and Rev. Dr. Earl F. Miller, who instilled in me the belief early on that I can do whatever I put my mind to. There is absolutely no way that I could have completed this work without the many prayers, love and support of my church family, countless friends and colleagues. I would also like to thank my children for being so understanding when I had to spend many hours away doing research as well as my loving wife Tonya for constantly encouraged me to persevere. Lastly, I thank the Lord for the desire to learn, grow and share.

## CHAPTER 1      GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians has been a complicated chapter for the church perhaps since the day that the Apostle Paul penned it.<sup>1</sup> In fact, one writer makes the bold assertion that “the understanding of 1 Corinthians 7 held by most scholars and church leaders today derives from an early Christian reinterpretation of Paul, and that this text has been essentially misunderstood almost since its composition.”<sup>2</sup> It should also be said that the depth of this complexity and the subsequent need for in-depth knowledge of Greco-Roman backgrounds has finally entered into the popular debate around the issues of marriage, celibacy and divorce. The result has been nothing less than monumental and has led to the fragmentation of what were once strong Christian denominations (e.g., the Anglican Communion and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America [E.L.C.A.]) as well as a ground swell of criticism (or support) from parishioners who strongly encourage the church to either take a more open course or stand firm on its conservative beliefs.

Without question, 1 Corinthians 7 has been quite influential in shaping the broad expanse of Christian views on marriage, celibacy and divorce, and will continue to exert such influence well into the future. On the matter of marriage, Christians have historically affirmed heterosexual, monogamous relationships.<sup>3</sup> This issue, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Second Peter 3:16 says that Paul writes some things that are “hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction...” It is conceivable that his deliberations on marriage, celibacy and divorce make up one of the issues being twisted by early Pauline readers. In several instances, it can be demonstrated that the Corinthians twisted and/or ignored Paul’s words (i.e., chs. 5, 6, 11, and 14, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Cor. 7* (SNTSMS 83; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>3</sup> The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* suggests that “The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that marriage be indissoluble.” This statement is substantiated with the parallel Synoptic traditions (Matt 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:9; Luke 16:18) and 1 Cor 7:10-11, where Paul

even among Christians who hold to fairly conservative doctrinal views, has grown to be a contentious one as some scholars contest the traditional understanding of marriage on the grounds that its longstanding affirmation has been grounded in a faulty understanding of Paul's socio-cultural context. Also, the gospel has proliferated among people groups in which polygamy is an entrenched social norm that finds substantial validation in the narratives of the Jewish Scripture and only implicit repudiation in the NT.<sup>4</sup> On the matter of divorce, Evangelical and Catholic positions, for instance, agree that a civil dissolution of a marriage does not free one from marriage in the sight of God. Reputable scholars from both camps question the rigid appropriation of certain proof-texts (e.g., Matt 5:31-32, 19:1-9; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-16) to substantiate the rule that divorcees neither remarry or serve as ministers. One scholar complains that the painful introspection that occurs during the dissolution of a marriage is increased by "the false guilt imputed by the false standards of many of our churches."<sup>5</sup> Lastly, celibacy as a mandatory practice within the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church almost derives its Scriptural basis wholly from these texts. For instance, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate 'for the sake of the kingdom of heaven' (Matt 19:12)...to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to 'the affairs of

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makes reference to Jesus tradition on this matter. Furthermore, the catechism goes on to allow separation using language that is almost identical to Paul's language in 1 Cor 7:11. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> For instance, the Nyanza province in Kenya has the highest concentration of polygamous relationships in East Africa. In northern Africa, almost fifty percent of the relationships are polygamous. Many polygamists view themselves as Christians and belong to non-traditional Christian churches. Mission-founded Protestant churches and Pentecostal churches typically speak out against the practice.

<sup>5</sup> Craig Keener, *And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the Teachings of the NT* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 3.

the Lord' (1 Cor 7:32).”<sup>6</sup> On the basis of Paul’s argument that celibacy is a heavenly endowment or a χάρισμα, the *Presbyterum Ordinis* 16 states: “Celibacy is to be embraced and esteemed as a gift.”<sup>7</sup> This scriptural precedent is also traced through Early Church Fathers like John Chrysostom and Origen, the latter of which took Matt 19:12 literally and castrated himself to avoid the potential scandal from privately instructing women.

## 1.1 THE PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION AND PERSPECTIVES

Communication is simply the exchange of information, ideas and attitudes between two or more groups or people. It is a conscious and unconscious disclosure of one’s emotions, thoughts, and intentions. Any theory of communication posits that the field of reference in every model of communication invariably contains sender(s), message(s) and receiver(s). Interference or a breakdown may occur at any phase of the communicative process. The sender may be unclear, for instance, making the receiver misinterpret the code or text. The content of the message may be objectionable to the receiver due to divergent cultural norms. It goes without saying that ancient writers—like modern ones—wrote with assumptions about what linguistic symbols and cultural norms they shared with their audiences. Due to the problem of historical distance, modern interpreters must often make large imaginative leaps in an effort to reconstruct the context of such writings. In doing so, at least two potential problems threaten the possibility of sound interpretation: 1) failure to consider the appropriate linguistic and

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<sup>6</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993). It is significant that the authors recognize the idea common to the Jesus tradition of the Matthean text and Paul. This will be discussed in detail below.

<sup>7</sup> Among other things it also reads, “The sacred synod also exhorts all priests who, in following the example of Christ, freely receive sacred celibacy as a grace of God, that they magnanimously and wholeheartedly adhere to it, and that persevering faithfully in it, they may acknowledge this outstanding gift of the Father which is so openly praised and extolled by the Lord.” See the *Presbyterum Ordinis* online at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651207\\_presbyterorum-ordinis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html).



cultural backgrounds when attempting to do historical reconstruction and 2) the potential clash of worldviews, which typically prohibits the ancient voice from being heard in its fullness.

When it comes to the letters of Paul, these potential pitfalls are even more daunting since they consistently prove to be somewhat of a two-edged sword for biblical scholarship. On the one hand, they offer a window into the intimate conversations that went on between early church leaders and the congregations they set up and reached out to over the course of their ministries. On the other hand, they are problematic in that the modern audience is only able to hear one side of the story and is forced to recreate, after much analysis, the dissenters' point(s) of view. Scholars caution against 'mirror-reading' since letters undoubtedly reflect the biases of the writer, making it difficult to truly get back to the other perspective.<sup>8</sup> As a result of this difficulty, some prefer a synchronic approach to Pauline literature, since all the interpreter truly possesses is the text—not the author, the original audience or the situation that gave rise to the composition. While all this may be true, any adequate interpretation must take into consideration the diachronic dimension since texts derive from and witness to some real lived experience. For this reason, it is necessary to attempt to reconstruct the historical occasion of the letter. This step is more essential for this biblical genre than any other—with the exception of perhaps the prophetic books—since letters assume a particular set of problems and concerns that, if not taken into account, obscure one's interpretation of them.

While it may be the case that historical reconstruction is an essential starting point for interpreting Pauline epistles, this approach alone does not address the doctrinal and pastoral problems that emerge from texts like 1 Cor 7 for the church. For instance, the subjects of marriage, celibacy and divorce have always played an important role in

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<sup>8</sup> For a balanced discussion about mirror-reading, see Thomas R. Schreiner's "Interpreting the Pauline Epistles" in *Interpreting the NT: Essays on Methods and Issues* (ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery; Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publisher, 2001), 415-421.

shaping the identity of the church and the mores of societies in which Christian beliefs have been influential. These issues, however, have never been more divisive than they are now for the contemporary church (e.g., Cession of African Anglican Churches from union with US Episcopal Churches, polygamy, redefining marriage, etc.). This ongoing reality calls for a dynamic relationship between the context of production (the socio-cultural context from which Paul's letters arose), the context of the literary genre (the text), and the context of reception (the contemporary socio-cultural context in which Paul's letters are read and heard). Luz argues that "the holistic character of the act of understanding biblical texts forces the historian to look beyond the mere history of exegesis to the history of the church (in the widest sense of the church), because there the biblical texts were understood and applied."<sup>9</sup>

Since these texts are still 'read and heard,' scholars have put forward interpretive methodologies that attempt to hold in tension that dynamic relationship between past and present. Luz, for example, proposes that the meaning of biblical texts derives from "an interaction of a 'kernel of meaning,' which corresponds to the given structures of a text, and a 'directional meaning,' which gives a present direction to the reader on their way to new lands."<sup>10</sup> This approach "implies that the meaning of a text contains an element of openness, that it leaves room for changing interpretations."<sup>11</sup> Historical criticism serves a descriptive function, creating a chasm between the biblical text and the contemporary reader, but does "not by itself offer the possibility of bringing the text back to us."<sup>12</sup> This approach attempts to counteract the tendency of historical criticism to cut the exegete off from the living community.

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<sup>9</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence and Effects* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 24.

In order for such a method to even have a chance at being objective, modern biblical interpreters must be aware of their biases, especially the potential clash that can occur with an ancient worldview. Anthropologists, for instance, have long concluded that Western categorical abstractions are not helpful for understanding the perspectives of ancient writers. For instance, Saler shows that the dichotomy of natural and supernatural is problematic for properly apprehending an ancient worldview.<sup>13</sup> This is due to the fact that in the modern interpretive context (particularly in the West) "...we may sometimes entertain rather foggy notions of what those categories supposedly mean in our own society. In such cases the causal application of our category labels to various of the collective representations of other peoples becomes doubly problematical..."<sup>14</sup> Generally speaking, the Western mind has viewed 'the supernatural' as a realm that is beyond scientific investigation, completely separate from the natural which can undergo scientific scrutiny. For this reason, many Western scholars refer to the 'supernatural realm' in a pejorative fashion as an imaginary dimension conjured up in the collective psyche of primitive cultures. Furthermore, from a mere conceptual standpoint, the problem with this language is not its capacity to help identify the miraculous or 'other worldly' phenomenon, but the complete detachment of natural and supernatural; especially since in the schema of many ancient worldviews, natural and supernatural phenomenon coexist within the parameters of the natural realm.

Gatumu provides a helpful contemporary model for understanding the problem that clashing worldviews can play in the process of interpretation.<sup>15</sup> He argues that an African worldview is quite similar to the perspectives that Paul addressed in his epistles regarding spiritual phenomenon. Thus, he sees problems with projecting Western

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<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, Benson Saler's "Supernatural as a Western Category," *Ethos* 5, no. 1 (Spring, 1977): 31-53.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Kabiro wa Gatumu, *The Pauline Concept of Supernatural Powers: A Reading from the African Worldview* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

categories of natural and supernatural upon other perspectives (contemporary and ancient). Gatumu says: “This Western dichotomy is not found in the primal African worldview as well as in the worldviews of the first century CE. In the African worldview and in the worldviews of the first century CE, the supernatural lies at the centre of what is natural for the Western worldview.”<sup>16</sup> Since the African worldview holds that spiritual forces cohabit with humans in the same realm, ‘supernatural’ should not be used to reference “a transcendent domain separate from the natural world of human habitation.”<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, the powers that supposedly “determine human existence in Africa are identified with natural phenomenon.” To illustrate this, Gatumu uses the image of a farmer who prays, plants, weeds and harvests to achieve a bumper crop. He argues: “Undeniably, almost every African person knows that crops do not grow by offering and prayers alone but must be tended. They also know that crops do not grow by tending alone without divine intervention, which is beyond unaided human intellect.”<sup>18</sup>

According to Gatumu, the trend among anthropologists has been to deny supernatural powers “and/or to reduce them to psychological or social or political or religious functions. Several biblical scholars, who deal with supernatural powers from the perspective of myth, maintain that supernatural powers are marginal in Paul’s thinking and are irrelevant for modern Christians. They maintain that Paul demythologized supernatural powers so as to refer to existential realities such as sin and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 8. It is important to point out that Gatumu’s “primal African worldview” coexists with other African perspectives which he would likely define as Western. For instance, P. F. Craffert and P. J. J. Botha, in their article “Why Jesus Could Walk on the Sea but He Could Not Read and Write: Reflections on Historicity and Interpretation in Historical Jesus Research,” [*Neotestamentica* 39, no. 1(2005): 5-38] argue their point well that given current knowledge of the social world of the first century, it is possible that Jesus could not read—despite the claim of biblical narratives—and that there is a level of historical truth in the account if one keeps in mind that significant differences exist between the worldviews of ancients and moderns.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 7.

death or to the structures of human existence.”<sup>19</sup> The result has been that Western anthropology and biblical study is often unable to engage the African mind, since a measure of ethnocentrism blocks the West from taking seriously the full measure of an African worldview.

The point is that Pauline discourse and first century worldviews—like that of an African worldview—must be understood on their own terms. Contemporary scholarship must be careful not to quickly modernize Pauline perspective, even on such matters that are seemingly held in common—like marriage, celibacy and divorce. Such a practice results in anachronistic readings that recast Paul in such a manner that his intentions—the meaning that his readers would have been readily familiar with—are completely obscured in favor of a point of view more amenable to a contemporary audience. This is why any ‘directional meaning’ must have as its ground diachronic considerations. Interpreters must use methodology that enables him/her to be as objective as possible, being careful not to impose modern Western mental constructs on the Greco-Roman context.

## **1.2 THE PROBLEM OF METHODOLOGY**

In the pre-critical era of biblical interpretation, Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce in 1 Cor 7 were typically understood against the backdrop of the Jesus tradition found in the Synoptic tradition and the Gospel of John. Little attention was given to the prospect of finding parallels to Pauline ideas outside of the NT itself. As early as the second century AD, however, Christian thinkers—like Clement of Alexandria—began to identify what they saw as significant parallels between Paul’s

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, vii.

perspective and the moral philosophers of his time.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, it was posited that pagan writers were indebted to Christian ones. Wiens explains that these parallels "... so impressed the primitive church apologists that they were inclined to interpret the phenomenon as a case of the pagans' conscious modeling of their language of faith upon that of the Christians, thought to be paradigmatic."<sup>21</sup> At times, writers were quite creative in arguing this point.<sup>22</sup>

Later, with the emergence of critical scholarship, specialists—like Hugo Grotius—identified similar parallels, but drew entirely different conclusions.<sup>23</sup> Since this time, modern scholarship has often held "...the exact obverse tendency from that which prevailed in the early church, namely, the attempt to explain the data in early Christianity on the assumption that there was a borrowing from paganism, has until recently dominated the modern study of this problem."<sup>24</sup> While it is true that such parallels cannot simply be written off as coincidental, methodology must offset the preconceived tendencies of interpreters. Exploration into the nature of such parallels is a must in order to determine whether or not there is substantive dependency and, if such is the case, what is the nature and extent of this dependency. If there is no substantive dependency, then the natural question is, 'What is the most reasonable explanation for similarities?'

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<sup>20</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 2.23, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325* (ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1978), 378. Clement recognized that the Pauline view was quite similar to that of Musonius Rufus and Meander.

<sup>21</sup> Devon H. Wiens, "Mystery Concepts in Primitive Christianity and in its Environment" in *ANRW part 2, Principat 23/2; vorkonstantinisches Christentum*, (ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 1249.

<sup>22</sup> Justin Martyr (c.a. AD100-165), for instance, saw the revelation of God as being broadly inclusive. He held that God had revealed truth to the patriarchs of old, philosophers such as Socrates and to believers. In this regard, each of these parties could bear the name Christian. Cyril Richardson, *Early Church Fathers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996)

<sup>23</sup> See Hugo Grotius' *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* (vol. 2; Paris: Pele, 1646). Also see Werner Georg Kümmel's *The NT: The History of the Investigation of its Problems* (trans. S. McLean Gilmore and Howard C. Kee; London: SCM Press, 1972), 33-9.

<sup>24</sup> Wiens, "Mystery concepts," 1249.

The more specific question is ‘what influences do indeed inform Paul’s perspective?’ Does it go without saying that his perspective on sexual ethics was largely shaped by the broader philosophical and religious milieu of his day?<sup>25</sup> Or, is he principally dependent on Jesus tradition and/or Pharisaism with its distinctive interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures?<sup>26</sup> Even if one takes for granted that Paul is intentionally dependent upon Jesus and Jewish tradition, the early church and his own revelatory experiences, such an assumption still would not necessarily preclude the influence of moral philosophy and Greco-Roman religion. There is certainly a possibility that the tradition does not actually go back to Jesus at all or that the tradition does, but that Jesus was so deeply impacted by the culture, education and philosophical traditions characteristic of the Greco-Roman milieu that what he teaches is simply repeated material. This proposition gains credibility when one acknowledges the degree to which Hellenism impacted Jerusalem and Galilee—Jesus’ primary spheres of influence.<sup>27</sup> How one responds to these questions greatly affects his or her understanding of Paul’s theological perspective, and this is especially true with regard to 1 Corinthians 7.

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<sup>25</sup> Deming, whose ideas are given extensive consideration below, offers valuable insight into the extent to which religious and philosophical ideas mixed over time. For instance, he brings out that Philo, a thoroughly Hellenized Jewish philosopher, “. . . drew heavily from several Greek philosophical traditions in the expression of his religious heritage.” See Deming’s *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 90. We will argue, however, that the lines of demarcation for New Testament writers do not seem to be nearly as blurred as we see in Philo of Alexandria.

<sup>26</sup> By Jesus’ tradition, I mean teaching that purportedly comes down from Jesus himself to the early church. My understanding of tradition will be discussed in detail later, but it should be said here that I intentionally avoid the ‘criterion of dissimilarity,’ since Jesus’ teachings are a complex of Jewish ideas and innovations that are unique to him. At times, his messages are similar to philosophical ideas. See Victor Paul Furnish’s *Jesus: According to Paul* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> See F. Gerald Downing’s *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 85-168 and Martin Hengel’s *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judea in the first century after Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1989).

### 1.3 “PARALELLOMANIA” AND THE DEBATE ON JESUS AND PAUL

Almost a half century ago, the then-president of the Society of Biblical Literature, Samuel Sandmel, questioned the uncritical manner in which parallels were being used in the comparative study of religion. He said that scholars often overstated “the supposed similarities in passages and then proceed to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.” First, he voiced concern about supposed parallels that “sound the same in splendid isolation” but when viewed in context “reflect difference rather than similarities.” Secondly, he raised concern about the inflated claims that were made when parallels did indeed exist. Lastly, Sandmel raises a valid point that even when borrowing occurs, one cannot conclude that the borrowed portion has the same function and significance in the new context.

Regarding Paul on this point, he writes:

“Indeed, I should insist on proceeding to the next question, namely, what is the significance in the context of Paul’s epistles of these parallels. To distort just a little, I would ask this question, what is the use that Paul makes of those parallels which he allegedly has borrowed? Paul’s context is of infinitely more significance than the question of the alleged parallels. Indeed, to make Paul’s context conform to the content of the alleged parallels is to distort Paul. The knowledge on our part of the parallels may assist us in understanding Paul; but if we make him mean only what the parallels mean, we are using the parallels in a way that can lead us to misunderstand Paul.”<sup>28</sup>

Sandmel’s point of view comes as a reflection upon well over a century of biblical scholarship that followed this uncritical approach of ‘parallelomania.’

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<sup>28</sup>

See Samuel Sandmel’s highly celebrated article “Parallelomania,” in JBL 81 (1962): 1-13.



One of the results of this uncritical comparison of parallels was the separation of Paul from Jesus. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many scholars—using Greco-Roman parallels—arrived at the view that Paul’s conception of Christianity was indebted to moral philosophy and the mystery religions of his day, not Jesus. Certainly, Paul did use some of the language that was particular to Stoicism (e.g., “conscience,” “inner law”) as well as similar methods of argumentation (e.g., the Cynic diatribe).<sup>29</sup> It was vehemently argued that Paul *consciously* imitated the Hellenistic mystics, their conception of salvation and language. As it relates to language, this was supposedly apparent in, his appropriation of the pneumatic/psychic dualistic structure, which Reitzenstein and others held were widely used in the Hellenistic world prior to Paul’s time. It was held that this language “provides the vital clue to the linkage with the world of mystery cults and identifies him as an *aficionado* of the typical Hellenistic mystics, with their ecstatic experiences.”<sup>30</sup> The result was that, for a time, Paul was indicted for an intolerable conspiracy by the rank and file within the history-of-religions school specifically and by many within biblical scholarship in general. They held that Paul had transformed Jesus’ simple gospel into a cosmic drama of redemption patterned after mystery religions.

Under this proposal, Paul was an advocate of an entirely different religious movement than Jesus and should be credited as the true founder of Christianity. The Apostle to the gentiles had completely altered the character of the Way by changing the human Jesus into a ‘supernatural’ Christ. This strict emphasis on Greco-Roman parallels for understanding Paul placed an irreconcilable wedge between Jesus, the Palestinian itinerant and Paul, the deeply Hellenized Jew, who supposedly poured his preconceived notions about the Messiah into his characterization of Jesus (Wrede). Patterson observes:

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<sup>29</sup> Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 16-30.

<sup>30</sup> Wiens, “Mystery concepts,” 1254

“Predictably, by the end of this period of liberal theology the chasm between the ‘morally religious Jesus’ and the ‘dogmatic’ Paul had opened even wider.”<sup>31</sup>

Despite, however, the voluminous amounts of scholarship produced to support this understanding, later research would demonstrate that this great ‘wedge’ of distinction between Paul and Jesus was built upon unstable joists. This began with Albert Schweitzer’s seminal work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, in which he provided a critical analysis of the First Quest that also “served as its eulogy.”<sup>32</sup> He showed that the portrait of Jesus as simply reformer and an ethical teacher was essentially a creation of rationalistic liberalism and argued that scholars had been writing lives of Jesus that mirrored their own *Sitz im Leben*. Schweitzer put forward that Jesus did view himself as an apocalyptic prophet who sacrificed himself in order to bring about the kingdom of God. Schweitzer argued that the authors' lack of objectivity made the Quest for the historical Jesus impossible and that the Gospels do not contain enough biographical information for such a reconstruction. Schweitzer’s work momentarily overturned the thought that the historical Jesus could be found behind the Gospel tradition.

Furthermore, as it relates to Paul, modern scholarship arrived at the conclusion that “the practitioners of the history of religions school were entirely too uncritical in their perceptions of the relationship between primitive Christianity and the mysteries.”<sup>33</sup> There is a general acknowledgement that the most significant wave of mystery religions occurred after the rise and expansion of the early church (i.e. in the second century), well after the ministry and compositions of the Apostle Paul. Not only did twentieth century scholarship lay to rest the question of dependency upon pre-Christian mysteries, but, as will be discussed below, it reached the same conclusion about dependency upon a

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<sup>31</sup> Stephen J. Patterson, “Paul and Jesus Tradition: It is Time for Another Look,” *HTR* 84, no. 1 (Jan, 1991): 24.

<sup>32</sup> These are the words of Robert M. Grant in his work *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, co-authored with David Tracy (rev. and enl. ed.; London: SCM Press, 1984), 126-27.

<sup>33</sup> Wiens, “Mystery concepts,” 1256.

supposed pre-Christian Gnosticism. Equally important is the linguistic work of prominent scholars like Arthur Darby Nock, who demonstrate the intentional efforts of nascent Christianity to avoid the language that was commonly used in religious circles.<sup>34</sup> This led many to Wiens' conclusion: "The superficial notion that verbal correspondences signify dependence or a genetic relationship has rightly been called into question."<sup>35</sup>

Along with the death of this caricature of Jesus came the positive acknowledgement that Jesus and Paul held remarkably similar worldviews. Both were found to be deeply impressed by the apocalyptic sentiment of the more radical strands of first century Judaism (e.g., Pharisaism, Qumran, Zealots). There was an acknowledgement that the practices, beliefs and language of nascent Christianity was intentionally distinctive from surrounding systems of belief, and that there seems to have been a real effort at differentiation. What is more, early extra-biblical material affirmed that Paul's supernatural characterization of Jesus was thoroughly consistent with the beliefs of other Christians.<sup>36</sup> By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the wedge of distinction

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<sup>34</sup> See Arthur Darby Nock's article "The Vocabulary of the New Testament." *JBL* 52, no. 2-3 (January 1, 1933): 131-139.

<sup>35</sup> Wiens, "Mystery concepts," 1260.

<sup>36</sup> Pliny, the Younger's Letter to Emperor Trajan, *The Origins of Christianity: Sources and Documents* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973), 51-53. "These accusations spread (as is usually the case) from the mere fact of the matter being investigated and several forms of the mischief came to light. A placard was put up, without any signature, accusing a large number of persons by name. Those who denied they were, or had ever been, Christians, who repeated after me and invocation of the Gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the Gods, and who finally cursed Christ—none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing—these I thought it proper to discharge. Other who were named by the informer at first confessed themselves Christians, and then denied it; true, they had been of that persuasion but they had quitted it, some three years, others many years, and a few as many as twenty-five years ago. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the Gods, and cursed Christ. They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was sunlight, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind. Even this practice, however, they had abandoned after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your orders, I had forbidden political associations. I judged it so much the more

between Paul and Jesus had been largely removed, and the accusations of fictional end-time machinations were scratched from the record of the apostolate as well. The consensus was now moving in the direction of recognizing that Paul has a threefold perspectival indebtedness to Jesus tradition that had been ‘passed on’ (παραδίδωμι) to him, to Judaism (Pharisaic) and to the early church.<sup>37</sup>

It seems, however, that despite not overcoming many of the hurdles proposed by Schweitzer and others, the first version of the Quest was resuscitated, and though the latest attempt (known as the Third Quest) properly emphasizes the Jewishness of Jesus and the necessity of understanding him in light of first-century Judaism, it continues to endorse the assumptions of Samuel Reimarus and subsequent First Questers that Jesus was a non-apocalyptic sage and simply reformer of Judaism. As with the First Quest, a strict philosophical naturalism undergirds much of the contemporary discussion about Jesus and is partly responsible for a ‘new’ wedge that has emerged between Jesus and Paul.<sup>38</sup> For those who see both Jesus and Paul through the lens of a thoroughly Hellenized form of Judaism tantamount to what is seen in Philo of Alexandria, the wedge is removed. This, of course, is at the expense of losing sight of the true character of the Judaism likely to have been most influential on Jesus and Paul. In the early 1980’s, Wiens forwarded, “Though the question, Paul: Jew or Hellenist? is wrong headed, because it implies a false either/or, yet it may be said that current opinion flies in the face

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necessary to extract the real truth, with the assistance of torture, from two female slaves, who were styled deaconesses: but I could discover nothing more than depraved and excessive superstition.”

<sup>37</sup> Even Schweitzer placed Paul firmly in the apocalyptic Jewish camp. He argued vehemently against those who attempted to use Hellenistic categories for understanding Paul. According to Schweitzer, Paul held that Israel’s God had acted apocalyptically through Jesus the Messiah and that now, the true people of God were bound up with and incorporated into Christ. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> See Michael J. Wilkins’ and J. P. Moreland’s introductory chapter, “The Furor Around Jesus” in *Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinvents the Historical Jesus* (eds. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland; Grand Rapids: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1995), 1-15.

of an earlier, ‘Hellenizing’ approach to the New Testament (and to Paul in particular) in two ways:

1. The supposed bifurcation between Jesus and Paul, which was always at least implicit with *Religionsgeschichtliche* researches into the origins of Christianity, is today seen as problematic.
2. The Jewishness of Jesus (which was, of course, rarely disputed, to begin with), but also of Paul, has been appropriately accredited.”<sup>39</sup>

The byproduct of the history of interpretation has been a faulty characterization of Paul’s theology. Since the notion of a supernatural Christ does not match non-apocalyptic characterizations of the ‘historical Jesus,’ the substantive basis of Paul’s perspective—it is argued—must be found among the trends of the broader Greco-Roman culture. Wrede’s century-old suggestion that Paul transferred to Jesus all of the conceptions which he already had from his Hellenistic-Jewish perspective becomes the most sensible proposal. This assumption has consistently led interpreters to the perspective that Paul’s views were innovations that were heavily influenced by the broader Greco-Roman culture.

#### **1.4 HYPOTHESES PRESENTED IN THIS STUDY**

This work attempts to address a renewed sense of appreciation among scholars for what Sandmel has properly termed “parallelomania.” That is, the practice of assuming that linguistic and/or conceptual likenesses necessarily infer dependency without adequate consideration of approach or methodology. This thesis argues for the need to compare “patterns-of-religion” (following E.P. Sanders), which, helps determine whether a specific parallel is indeed genealogical and not simply analogical. It is important to

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<sup>39</sup> Wiens, “Mystery Concepts,” 1262.

compare patterns of belief, understanding that different parts of a given system of thought and how (and why) those parts work together, before an adequate comparison can be made with another system. Then, when parallels do appear to have genealogical connections, an appraisal of the significance of the ‘borrowed material’ in its new context must be done. This is due to the fact that, in antiquity, new functions were constantly being assigned to religious symbols, language and ritual.<sup>40</sup> It must always be held out that at times, the closest that the social historian can come to an explanation is displaying

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<sup>40</sup> Von Rad’s conclusions prove helpful on this point. Convinced that the “OT can only be read as a book of ever increasing expectation,” he shows how the covenant with the patriarchs, the events of Passover, the establishment of Zion, the covenant with David and the declarations with the prophets (for both doom and salvation), all contain new aspects of expectation. More importantly, each arriving expectation caused a reshaping of age-old traditions. This reshaping enacted “a kind of selective process.” A classic example of this selectivity, caused by the arrival of a new set of expectations, can be seen in the discrepancy of thought between the prophets and the election traditions of the patriarchs, Sinai and the Exodus, and Zion and David. The prophets proclaim inevitable doom while old traditions promise asylum and perpetual safety no matter what. Clearly, “...what engrossed the prophets’ attention was God’s new saving action, whose dawn they had discerned.” This new saving action was bound to be an uncomfortable, even unacceptable, shift for the masses because it violated the familiar. A sincere and literal viewing of scripture by no means equated to an understanding of the prophetic agenda. Even though the prophets proceeded to make ‘creative’ use of the old traditions, things changed. They extended interpretation of scripture that was isolated, even a bit esoteric. Now, “...they looked for a new David, a new Exodus, a new covenant, a new city of God: the old became a type of the new and important as pointing to it.” As von Rad aptly states regarding the prophetic writings in particular, “There exists a mysterious combination of close attachment to the old saving tradition and its radical supersession.” Perhaps even deeper insights of how OT writers used old traditions in light of new expectations come from the discoveries of modern scholarship. Modern understanding has drawn out that not only does the OT perpetually reinterpret itself, it has also taken over ‘alien tradition’ (i.e., Enuma Elish) and reinterpreted it. Creation, Jacob’s wrestling at Jabbok, the flood accounts and the story of Abraham, just to name a few, are all pre-Jahwistic. Nonetheless, after coming under the banner of Jahwism, the tracing of various traditions is swallowed up in the ahistorical yet intentionally progressive agenda of the OT. Therefore, interpretation ‘starts over again’ in light of an explicit literary progression. Similarly, when the OT is viewed in light of Jesus Christ, interpretation will again have to make a fresh start. From here, von Rad’s observations turn to the NT. He concludes that “...prophets do not improvise, they show themselves to be bound to definite traditions, they move about within the realm of older witnesses to Jahwism..., they take their own legitimization from these and at the same time, because of new content which they give them, go beyond them and even break them up, that, while they certainly select from among the traditions, at the same time keep them as the broad basis of their arguments – does not this also describe the relationship of the Apostles and the writers of the Gospels to be OT?” See Gerhard Von Rad’s *OT Theology* (trans. D.M.G. Stalker; 2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row Publishing, 1965), 2:318-328 and 2:357-368.

all of the variables and rehearsing all of the possibilities.<sup>41</sup> Sanders' methodology is most helpful for objectively determining, as much as possible, which background best aids in understanding Paul's perspective.

This work argues that Paul derives the substance of his perspective on marriage, celibacy and divorce from Jesus' tradition, the Jewish Scriptures, the early church and his own revelatory experiences. As it relates to Jesus tradition, it would be helpful to know exactly what Jesus taught and believed on these matters, but much of this is irretrievable. The best that can be done is to consider the major contributors in the growth of the early Christian tradition and to faithfully and carefully examine these works. So, as far as this work is concerned, the 'Jesus tradition' under examination is the material found in the gospels and in the works of Paul. Loader adds, "We need to work with those witnesses, knowing at the same time that they were already writing with an eye to the new situation which they faced, which might, in turn, have required them to mould and adapt their material accordingly."<sup>42</sup>

Such a proposal does not rule out significant influence from broader social trends, but it does contend that Paul was acutely aware of many of the philosophical differences between himself and other thinkers of his day—even those within Christianity itself.<sup>43</sup> In fact, this motivation, the need for differentiation, is the fundamental basis for all NT compositions.<sup>44</sup> Paul preached the Gospel in a radically different milieu than Jesus and

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<sup>41</sup> So, for instance, while Bultmann makes significant contributions, his "indiscriminate and historically insensitive use of primary materials" warped his final product. In the end, he falters, not on the basis of research and finding of parallels, but in the area of methodology. See Nils Alstrup Dahl's, "Rudolf Bultmann's Theology of the NT" in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974).

<sup>42</sup> William Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus tradition* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Paul's conflict with Judaizers is an attempt to address an emerging theological problem within the early church.

<sup>44</sup> In the gospel of John, for instance, the writer uses the imagery of light and darkness and refers to Jesus as the divine λόγος. It almost goes without saying that light and darkness are symbols with universal significance and meaning. When this pair is brought together, it generally functions as the backdrop for

his disciples, who, for the most part, lived in Palestine. Paul's setting was one in which converts came from different social locations, and who were, via patron-client relationships, locked into established social roles.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the Apostle to the gentiles takes the Jesus tradition that he received from first generation believers like Peter and James, as well as from his own revelatory religious experience, and attempts to faithfully expand this tradition to address new concerns confronting his missionary congregations.<sup>46</sup> Since Paul makes his dependence upon Jesus' tradition explicit (i.e., 1

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moral discourse. Various religious traditions and philosophical writers use this dualism to expound with clarity their views on truth and falsehood. This is also the case with John, but the writer is clear about how he differs from the other religionists. His usage of this imagery clearly grows out of his evangelistic strategy (John 20). The moral character of light and darkness imagery would have been readily understandable to a very broad audience of all classes, Jew, Greek and Roman alike. As it relates to λόγος in the very first verse of the prologue (1:1), the reader reads: "In the beginning was the word (λόγος), and the word (λόγος) was with God and the word (λόγος) was God." Upon reading this, a knowledgeable Jew would have seen parallels between John's preexisting λόγος, who was before all created things and who was the means through which God created all things, and personified Wisdom. This is a claim that biblical and post-biblical writers make about personified Wisdom. Many scholars have brought this out (e.g., Raymond Brown). However, although texts can be identified that explicitly announce that Wisdom was created first, this cannot be assumed upon the divine λόγος. The writer intentionally avoids this connection between the λόγος and personified Wisdom and supplies the additional distinctive "and the word (λόγος) was God." This is not uncommon for the Fourth Gospel; in several instances the writer strategically uses common imagery to promulgate his message, being clear all the while regarding what is distinctive about his perspective. For a detailed discussion on John's strategic use of light and darkness, see the introductory chapter of Craig Koester's *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Regarding the divine λόγος, see Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB 29; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966-70), CXXII-CXXVII.

<sup>45</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christian: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 1-39.

<sup>46</sup> James D. G. Dunn "'A Light to the Gentiles' or 'The End of the Law'? The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul," in *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990). Here, Dunn demonstrates that from the outset Paul was conscious of a call in a particular direction—to the Gentiles. Apparently, this was revealed to him in his Damascus road Christophany (Gal. 1:11-12) – that is, prior to his meeting with any of the other apostles. Both Paul himself and the Acts of the Apostles designate him as 'the apostle to the Gentiles' (Rom 11:13; Acts 9:15). For Paul, the mystery that God now reveals in this modern age is the inclusion of the Gentiles (Rom 11:25; 16:25-6). His apostleship was not from or through man but directly from God (Gal 1:11-12). Dunn isolates Paul's road-to-Damascus experience as formative for his theology. Dunn reaches four strong conclusions: 1) Paul's own claim to be called to the Gentiles, and that it is a direct result of his Damascus road Christophany, ought to be looked at more closely as being formative of his distinctive theology; 2) Paul saw Christ as the 'image of God,' as the risen embodiment and therefore eschatological fulfillment of God's plan from the beginning to share his



Cor 7:10-11), the burden of proof seems to lie with those who attempt to locate the background of Paul's perspective in 1 Cor 7 elsewhere, and who only see superficial connections between Paul and Jesus.

It should be acknowledged that this case is far more complex than simple dogmatic overtures can contain. The history-of-religions school did much to further positive inquiry into the approach backgrounds with which to understand Pauline literature. This work takes sides in an enduring debate, but also offers fresh application of longstanding methodology to the particular subjects of marriage, celibacy, and divorce. So while many scholars would affirm that Reitzenstein and others were anachronistic in their full placement of mystery parallels before early Christianity,<sup>47</sup> certain acknowledgements must be made. As Wiens suggests: "Nonetheless, in all of this discussion, one ought not overlook the strong probability that mystery ideas were a part of the environment into which Christianity moved. Although the religions *per se* did not reach their acme of development until the second and third centuries AD, yet they can hardly have happened on the scene *ex nihilo*."<sup>48</sup> Even in the absence of a formal movement *per se*, there were—according to Dale Martin—certain 'philosophical commonplaces' that were prevalent throughout the Greco-Roman world.<sup>49</sup>

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glory with his creation – sinner as well as blameless, Gentile as well as Jew; 3) Then, if Paul's call to the Gentiles is formative for his theology, other issues necessarily are secondary. For instance, the sharpness of his antithesis between Christ and the law must certainly owe a good deal to the debate about circumcision at Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10) and 4) Paul's earliest theological impulses as a Christian may well have been related to a central feature of the Jesus-tradition. Pre-conversion Paul held that Jesus died as a sinner who violated the covenant. The reversal of the Damascus road carried with it a radical revision. Jesus' vindication means that God accepts sinners, even Gentile sinners. This is most evident in the life and teaching of Jesus.

<sup>47</sup> Wiens, "Mystery Concept," 1256.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 72.

## 1.5 OVERVIEW OF THESIS CHAPTERS

In this work, *chapter one* introduces the problem and establishes the intended goals. In *chapter two*, the literature review demonstrates how misunderstanding the basis of Paul's theology and perspective can often be traced to faulty interpretive methodology and misguided philosophical assumptions. This becomes particularly evident with regard to 1 Cor 7. This chapter does at least three things: (1) places each interpreter in the broader framework of important interpretive trends in New Testament studies, (2) identifies the biases of each interpreter and attempts to place them within a particular school of thought and (3) sketches out the best methodology moving forward for understanding the background and content of Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce. *Chapter three* applies the methodological approach established in chapter two. Since we are interested in tracing the origin of Paul's thinking, it is important to understand the particularities of the major schools of thought which would have potentially influenced the apostle's point of view: Stoicism, Cynicism, Epicureanism, Secularism, Judaism and the Jesus movement. In this effort to delineate the make-up of each group in view, we will utilize a modified form of E.P. Sanders' "patterns of religion" approach. Sanders establishes the goal of his work as comparing 'patterns of religion' or "how a religion is perceived by its adherents to function."<sup>50</sup> This includes understanding "how getting in and staying in are understood"<sup>51</sup> This work attempts to understand moral philosophy, Judaism and nascent Christianity each on their own terms, regarding marriage, celibacy and divorce, *before* considering the question of dependency. Included in this discussion is consideration regarding life after death since Paul's views on sexuality are impacted by the idea that "the time is short" and the present form of this world is "passing away" (e.g., 1 Cor 7:29 and 31b). *Chapter four* is entitled "The

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<sup>50</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 17.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

Problem of Differentiation: Understanding the Impetus behind Paul's Perspective." Here, effort is made to collate the research of previous chapters in an attempt to make suggestions about the possible influences on Paul's thinking. On a basic level, a degree of discrimination has to take place in a cosmopolitan setting in order for philosophers and religious persons of all types to form groups that are distinguishable from each other. Even, for instance, the Cynics, though impossible to classify by a canon of sacred writ, distinctive practices or a homogeneous set of doctrines, were unique in their rejection of social convention and in their manner of life. These groups understood themselves against the backdrop of 'the other' and were often derived from one another. *Chapter five* closely considers the question of Pauline dependency on Jesus tradition, comparing Pauline texts with those found in the Synoptic tradition. *Chapter six* applies exegetically our conclusions about the content and appropriate background of 1 Cor. 7 and lastly, *chapter seven* draws important conclusions about this research and delineates areas of possible exploration beyond this point.

## **CHAPTER 2 THE APOSTLE PAUL ON MARRIAGE, CELIBACY AND DIVORCE IN 1 CORINTHIANS 7: A REVIEW OF SELECTED SCHOLARS**

As discussed in the introduction, the longstanding assumption of pre-critical scholarship that Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce are squarely based upon authentic Jesus tradition has been a matter of substantial debate among critical scholars in recent decades. If tradition attributed to Jesus has been completely altered by the early church and its redactors, then Paul is the beneficiary of an assorted tradition upon which he bases his own view. What is more, Paul's reverence for what comes from "the Lord" (1 Cor 7:10) is unwarranted if Jesus (and his early interpreters) passed on ideas as if they were unique to himself when they actually came from his exposure to Cynics and other moralists of his day. Below, numerous scholarly proposals regarding 1 Cor 7 and Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce are considered. The strengths and weaknesses of each perspective are discussed along with what, in the end, seems to be the soundest approach moving forward. This history of interpretation will at times consider interpreters against the backdrop of the era in which s/he comes. What is more, time is spent demonstrating how philosophical assumptions and a lack of methodology have led to faulty historical reconstructions. Also, since Rudolf Bultmann has played such a dominant role in biblical studies in general and Pauline studies specifically, this literature review is broken down into the following categories: 'Before Bultmann,' 'Bultmann' and 'After Bultmann.'

## 2.1 BEFORE BULTMANN:

Schweitzer contends that while the teachings of Paul took preeminence in NT exegesis, the mounds of literature produced in his honor and name “did not...advance the historical understanding of his system of thought.”<sup>52</sup> Sixteenth century scholars simply looked for “proof-texts for Reformed and Lutheran Theology.”<sup>53</sup> He continues: “Reformation exegesis reads its own ideas into Paul, in order to receive them back again clothed in apostolic authority.”<sup>54</sup> To this appraisal, Kümmel offers the important adjustment that Luther’s contribution to modern biblical criticism cannot be minimized since he is largely responsible for the movement away from a fourfold spiritual sense in every text (literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical) and abandonment of the allegorical method.<sup>55</sup> Generally, he supported the hermeneutical assumption that each text has one simple meaning.<sup>56</sup>

It is in Luther that we see the seeds of modern biblical criticism. First, he established a hierarchy within the canon, providing rationale for his decisions. He noted, for instance, that some ancients rejected the Epistle of James and did not include it with the “chief books” (the Pauline epistles) since, as he concludes, it leads the reader to the law and works.<sup>57</sup> Luther argues that James upholds an essentially Jewish framework of thought. Lastly, Luther promoted free investigation of the scriptural text, often allowing

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<sup>52</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters* (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1931), 2.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 22-23.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Kümmel contends that Luther did use allegory for devotional purposes.

<sup>57</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* (ed. Hilton C. Oswald; trans. Edward Sittler; 55 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 35:395.

room for other interpretations.<sup>58</sup> Luther's precedent leads to a process of discrimination on the basis of internal ideas and the appraisal of early interpreters.

In his extensive body of works, Luther offers a detailed analysis of 1 Cor 7.<sup>59</sup> Based on the grammar of 7:8, Luther claims that Paul was likely a widower, especially since "in Jewry everyone had to marry, and celibacy was not allowable unless by special permission and as exception made by God."<sup>60</sup> He views marriage and celibacy as 'special gifts,' rejecting the standard Catholic position as inconsistent with biblical literature.<sup>61</sup> As is possible in 1 Cor 7, Paul allows for separation, but prohibits divorce. Luther also extends the possibility that Paul's wife allowed him to remain in a state of perpetual separation after being called. This general approach marks a shift away from the Law of Moses, which allowed for divorce and remarriage of both parties if the male provided a certificate of divorce. Luther connects Paul's perspective with Matt 19:8-9, where Jesus is found prohibiting divorce, and, naturally, in this pre-critical era, he takes for granted that Paul had access to Matthew's gospel instead of the other way around.<sup>62</sup> Luther's canonical approach rarely takes into consideration Paul's social context, with the exception of scattered remarks about Jewish customs, which are typically broad generalizations. After Luther, however, reformation interpreters did adopt the 'proof-texting' approach that Schweitzer speaks of.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 395-6. Even in the preface to James, Luther says, "Therefore, I cannot put him among the chief books, *though I would not thereby prevent anyone from putting him where he pleases and estimating him as he pleases...*"

<sup>59</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 28:9-56.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 22. He asserts that either Paul's wife died or she allowed him to live separately from her. See pp. 21-23.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 15-21, 29. Luther vehemently disagrees with the Catholic position that priests should necessarily be celibate. Referring to 1 Cor. 9, Luther asks: "...Since they have to admit that the apostles remained married although they were already in the office of apostle, I should like to know why marriage is not permissible in the priesthood or after taking the priestly office?" (25)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 31. Luther himself allows for remarriage if a believer's spouse leaves on the grounds that the abandoned spouse does not have the gift of chastity.

<sup>63</sup> Later Reformers like Melanchthon deviated from the intentions of Luther and moved to using the Bible to undergird dogmatic formulations. Of the interpretive school that developed after Melanchthon,

It was not long before commentators noticed the striking similarities between Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 7 and the moralists in the broader culture of the first century CE Greco-Roman Empire. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Hugo Grotius moved Luther's approach forward by comparing NT materials with Hellenistic Jewish materials, classical materials, and the early church fathers, providing evidence of conceptual parallels. Also, he made use of important historical conjectures as essential for understanding the NT—for example, that Paul expected the Parousia within his lifetime.<sup>64</sup> This means that Grotius saw substantive parallels between NT and Greco-Roman writings and also ascribed to a growing set of assumptions through which he filtered his understanding of the biblical text. This is particularly evident in his assessment of 1 Cor. 7, where he identifies parallels between Paul's views on marriage and Stoics like Musonius Rufus, who also claimed that marriage is appropriate for some but not for others.<sup>65</sup> This leads Grotius to take his findings a step farther suggesting that one of the factions in Corinth was comprised of philosophers.<sup>66</sup>

These perspectives represent two different approaches to understanding Paul—not hostile to one another initially—that grew apart with ever increasing intensity. Strauss, for instance, who, along with his emphasis on mythology, asserted that the Jesus of the Synoptic and Johannine traditions was largely fictitious.<sup>67</sup> His work provides an example of the expanding distance between Jesus and Paul in 19<sup>th</sup> century scholarship, and represents an attempt, on the front end, to answer the question of whether or not Paul drew heavily from Jesus tradition. While German pietism flourished in response to the

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Grant says, "...It came to insist on the traditional principle of verbal inspiration and infallibility which had been alien to him (Luther). Scripture no longer speaks to the heart but to the critical intellect." Robert M. Grant with David Tracy, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, 97.

<sup>64</sup> Kümmel, *The New Testament*, 33-8.

<sup>65</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 6. For a comparison of Paul and Musonius Rufus, see Roy Bowen Ward's "Musonius and Paul on Marriage," *NTS* 36 (1990): 281-89.

<sup>66</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, (trans. George Eliot; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 82-83.

expanding influence of Tübingen liberalism, the interpretive lenses of authentic Jesus tradition were deeply scarred by the philosophical assumptions of biblical interpreters, opening the way for a myriad of alternative approaches to understanding Paul's theological perspective in general and his views on marriage, celibacy and divorce in particular. Naturally, the pre-critical view had to be tested as new ideas emerged. Questions that emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were: 'What interpretive assumptions are legitimate?' and 'What criteria should be used?'

### **2.1.1 Ferdinand Christian Baur (1831)**

A century after Grotius and just before his pupil, Strauss, F.C. Baur established an entirely different course for Pauline Studies. He asserted that Christianity, deeply influenced by other movements (i.e., moral philosophy, Hellenistic Judaism, etc.), owes its later crises of division between different parties largely to Jesus himself. Jesus both affirmed and rejected Judaism in his acknowledgement of the need to fulfill Mosaic legislation, while at the same time asserting that this fulfillment transcends mere legalism. As a result, the antithesis of first generation Christianity was between Jewish particularity and Pauline universality. In his famed article, "Die Christus-partei in der korinthischen Gemeinde," Baur argued that Paul developed his theological perspective in conscious opposition to the Petrine wing of the early church.<sup>68</sup> Only later in the second century did a universal or 'catholic' position emerge. Paul deliberately ignored the actual words and deeds of the historical Jesus in favor of a direct relationship with the resurrected Christ. In response to the question of Paul's indifference to the historical facts of Jesus, Baur claims that "the whole Christian consciousness is transformed into a

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<sup>68</sup> F. C. Baur, "Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde, der Gegensatz des petrinischen und paulinischen Christentums in der Ältesten Kirche, der Apostel Petrus in Rom." *Tübinger Zeitschrift für Theologie* 3 (1831): 61-206.



view of the person of Jesus which stands in need of no history to elucidate it.”<sup>69</sup> Baur and subsequent generations of Tübingen scholars perpetuated this conjecture that Pauline exposition of Christian theology was largely devoid of dependence upon actual tradition that descended from the historical Jesus.

A major criticism of Baur’s work was his dependency upon the Hegelian dialectical approach to historical reconstruction. This philosophical misstep led to numerous chronological miscalculations regarding the NT writings. Scholars like J. B. Lightfoot would later expose the problem with Baur’s attempt to classify the writings on the basis of their ‘tendency,’ whether they fit on one side of the dialectic or the other, or whether they belong to the later epoch of the synthesis. Also, even though Baur was quite knowledgeable of classical texts, he does not use his comprehension to reconstruct a social framework by which to understand the problems in Corinth. Recent scholarship has adequately demonstrated the value of considering the social aspects of the first century when attempting historical reconstruction. It seems apparent that Baur’s commitment to a particular philosophical basis kept him from this essential historical task.

Baur’s work incited responses from near and far. Some questioned his philosophical basis (e.g., Lightfoot) while others questioned his bold assertion that Paul cared very little about actual Jesus tradition. Heinrich Paret (1858) was one of the first to respond along the latter lines. Paret stressed that (1) Paul’s perspective as a whole presupposes an in-depth knowledge of the life and teachings of the historical Jesus; (2) Paul’s letters are full of direct and indirect allusions to the teaching of Jesus and they also contain historical data about his life; and (3) Baur’s view makes the fatal error of equating Paul’s preaching with his letters. Paul’s letters followed his preaching in which he would have spent considerable time discussing the words and deeds of Jesus.

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<sup>69</sup> F. C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, (trans. Allan Menzies; 2 vols.; London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 1:50.

Subsequent opponents to Baur and his school, for the most part, used one or more of these facets of Paret's argument.<sup>70</sup>

Positively, the general premise of Baur and the history-of-religions school, that striking similarities exist between Paul and the moralists of his era and preceding periods, did mark an important shift away from the 'dogmatism-parading-as-exegesis' view. While others retort that the idea of syncretism fails to do justice to the historical singularity of Christianity, they 'throw out the baby with the bath water,' so to speak, offering little in the way of explaining the numerous points of concurrency between nascent Christianity and its environs. So, even as Baur's insistence upon the Hegelian dialectic and his assertion that Paul ignored the actual words and deeds of Jesus proved detrimental to his outcome, his efforts helped to completely change the course of biblical inquiry.

### **2.1.2 Frédéric Godet (1889)**

Just before the turn of the century, the Swiss Reformed Theologian Frederic Lewis Godet made a significant contribution to the study of the Corinthian letters. Godet argued that Corinthian syncretistic views were clearly Gnostic in nature, citing the Judaizer Cerinthus as an example. According to Cerinthus, "the true Christ was a celestial virtue which had united itself to a pious Jew called Jesus, on the occasion of His baptism by John the Baptist, which had communicated to Him the power of working miracles, the light from which His doctrines emanated, but which had abandoned Him to return to heaven, before the time of the Passion; so that Jesus had suffered alone and

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<sup>70</sup> David L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul: The Use of the Synoptic Tradition in the Regulation of the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), xviii-xix.

abandoned by the Divine Being.”<sup>71</sup> Therefore, he sees “those of Christ” as “the Gnostics before Gnosticism.”<sup>72</sup> In this way, he falls prey to the inaccurate consensus that Gnosticism predated Christianity.<sup>73</sup>

Surprisingly, Godet does not connect this background to his discussion of 1 Cor 7. He simply suggests that celibacy in Corinth was a reaction to pervasive immorality. He rejects the idea that the Corinthians were influenced by Greco-Roman moralists or even by the example of Paul.<sup>74</sup> Godet shows how Paul’s emphasis on celibacy parallels that of Jesus in Matt 19 and highlights, like Luther, Paul’s acknowledgement that the life of celibacy is a gift (χαρίσμα) that requires special grace; marriage also requires this special grace, he adds. In his discussion on divorce, Paul draws upon Jesus tradition that circulated orally. Godet says, “What are the meaning and bearing of the distinction which Paul establishes in the words, *not I, but the Lord?* The simplest supposition is that he means to speak here of a command given by Jesus Himself during His earthly sojourn. What confirms this meaning is that we really find this precept in our Gospels proceeding from the mouth of Jesus, just as we read it here (i.e., cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18). Not that I hold that the three first Gospels were already composed and circulated in the Churches at the time when Paul wrote; rather he derives his knowledge of this saying from the oral tradition which proceeded from the apostles...But the fact that we find it expressly given in our Gospels by the Lord proves that this is the saying to which he alludes.”

While Godet argues for the presence of Gnostics in Corinth—a premise soundly rejected after Bultmann’s era—he holds that Paul was largely dependent upon Jesus

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<sup>71</sup> Frédéric Godet, *Commentary of First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 1977), 72; repr. of *Commentary on St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthian* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 1889).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>73</sup> See section below on Lütgert, Bultmann and Schmithals.

<sup>74</sup> Godet, *Commentary of First Corinthians*, 273-274.

tradition. This marks a shift from Baur's contention that 'Paul deliberately ignored the actual words and deeds of the historical Jesus.'<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, Godet improved upon the chronological assumptions of Baur and Luther and affirmed the assumption that Paul's letters precede the Synoptic tradition.

### **2.1.3 J. B. Lightfoot (1895)**

In 1895, J. B. Lightfoot discussed the Apostle Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce in detail. Much like Paret, Lightfoot was anxious about proving the approach and outcome of Baur's interpretation false. Eventually, his research did render F. C. Baur's dialectical approach to reconstructing early church history illegitimate. First, he proved that 1 Clement and the first seven letters of Ignatius were genuine. Since they were written around 96 and 115 AD, respectively, they forced the dating of the books of the NT to be pushed back considerably. Second, and most devastating to Baur's theory, neither author reflects the supposed tension between Pauline and Petrine schools of thought. Both, in fact, mention the two apostles together as critical figures in the life of the early church. Therefore, Baur's idea of a 'synthesis' occurring in the second century turned out to be impossible.

Regarding 1 Cor 7, J. B. Lightfoot speaks in broad terms, freely drawing on data from other Pauline epistles to bolster his case. Like Godet, he includes as authentic works that many modern commentators view as pseudonymous. Lightfoot suggests that Paul provides limitations for celibacy in vv. 2 and 9, while in vv. 26 and 32, he establishes the reason for which celibacy is good. Celibacy is to be rejected by those who "cannot control themselves" (οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται) and who "burn with passion" (πυροῦσθαι). The rationale for practicing a life of celibacy was so that an unmarried person could focus solely on "how he can please the Lord" (v. 32). It was the nearness,

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<sup>75</sup> See section on F. C. Baur above.

then, of the *Parousia* that led Paul to strongly encourage celibacy. Though quite knowledgeable of Greco-Roman history and the works of the Apostolic Fathers, Lightfoot never puts forward the idea that Paul learned asceticism from any of the sectarians of his day, but argues that he was likely a celibate throughout his life.<sup>76</sup> According to Lightfoot, celibacy was a gift (*χαρίσμα*) or a “special grace.”<sup>77</sup> Like Godet, he held that Paul based his prohibition on divorce entirely upon the Jesus tradition and cites Matt 5:31 and 19:9, Mark 10:9-12 and Luke 16:18.<sup>78</sup> He contends: “Celibacy therefore is only so far better than marriage in proportion as it fulfills these conditions. It may not, however, fulfill them for certain men, and so for them it is not better than marriage but the reverse. Further, the passage must not be taken alone, but in connexion with what the apostle says elsewhere, as in Eph v. 22-33, where he exalts marriage as a type of the union of Christ with the Church.”<sup>79</sup>

While there is much to be admired about the views of Godet and Lightfoot, two criticisms are worth mentioning. They both reject out of hand, without comprehensive analysis, the notion that Paul was influenced by the philosophical environs of Tarsus or Jerusalem.<sup>80</sup> Lightfoot elucidates parallels between Paul, Judaism and Jesus, but says very little about possible dependency—either way—between Paul and other movements in the Greco-Roman world. Most importantly, neither offers much in the way of a clear delineation of how they arrive at their conclusions. The question is ‘how did they choose this or that background in such a diverse milieu?’ ‘What justifications can be offered for understanding Paul’s perspective from this particular standpoint?’ So, while one may

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<sup>76</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 223-224; repr. of *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1895). Lightfoot carefully weighs all of the possibilities before arriving at this conclusion.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>80</sup> On Tarsus as an important center for philosophy, see F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart set Free* (Cambridge/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 32-36. For Jerusalem, see Hengel’s *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judea*.

have a great deal of appreciation for many of their conclusions, they fail to argue convincingly their positions using a comprehensive methodology.

#### 2.1.4 William Wrede (1904)

In his book *Paul*, Wrede argued that Paul identified the historical Jesus with the divine Christ, in which he already believed in his pre-conversion life. This occurred in such a way that Paul completely transmitted his messianic Hellenistic Jewish speculations entirely unto the historical Jesus. He says, “But in the moment of conversion, when Jesus appeared before him in the shining glory of his risen existence, Paul identified him with his own Christ, and straightway transferred to Jesus all of the conceptions which he already had of the celestial being—for instance, that he had existed before the world and had taken part in its creation.”<sup>81</sup> In this swap, nothing of the actual, historical Jesus was preserved except the actuality of Jesus himself, and everything from Paul’s theological background and Hellenistic-Jewish perspective was imparted. Naturally, then, regarding the 1 Cor. 7, Paul’s views are innovations. Wrede claims that the issues were largely new with the result that Paul had to “construct for the first time a sort of casuistical code for the ethics of the community.”<sup>82</sup>

The fact that Wrede sees no continuity between Jesus and Paul is quite problematic, but is symptomatic of the German scholarship of his era. Schweitzer makes an important criticism of Wrede's view: “In regard to the question of the relation between Paul and Jesus, Wrede holds that they lived in two wholly different worlds of thought. This is connected with his view that the Galilean Master made no claim to the Messiahship, but was first raised to Messianic dignity after his death, and that this claim

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<sup>81</sup> William Wrede, *Paul* (trans. Edward Lummis; Kentucky: American Theological Library Association Committee on Reprinting, 1962), 151.

<sup>82</sup> See Albert Schweitzer’s *Paul and his Interpreters: A Critical History* (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1931) 170; repr. of *Paul and his Interpreters: A Critical History* (trans. by William Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1912), 58-59.

was then projected back into the Gospels in the form that Jesus had made his rank known to His disciples only and had enjoined upon them to keep silent until after his death. Paul, therefore, created something essentially new, which has, one might say, nothing to do with the thought of Jesus, and also goes far beyond the conceptions of primitive Christianity.”<sup>83</sup>

### 2.1.5 Wilhelm Lütgert (1908)

Just after the turn of the century, Lütgert was the first to put forward the popular view that Paul’s opposition in Corinth were ‘spiritual enthusiasts’ who claimed possession of God’s Spirit and access to special knowledge (gnosis).<sup>84</sup> This heightened sense of spirituality led to behavior that was independent of and unsanctioned by the Apostle Paul or his band of co-laborers.<sup>85</sup> Lütgert goes on to suggest that the theology of this ‘Christ party’ produced two opposite responses, libertinism and asceticism. A low evaluation of the body led to overindulgence by some (1 Cor 5-6) and denial of the body’s basic desires by others (1 Cor 7). According to this understanding, both reactions were grounded in the same overemphasis of the spirit and contempt for the body.<sup>86</sup> In concert with Godet, Lütgert argued that celibacy is a reaction to immorality or libertinism within the Corinthian church.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Wilhelm Lütgert, *Frieheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1908).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 119-120. Deming suggests: “It was this misinterpretation of Paul, according to Lütgert, that lay at the root of all the Corinthian problems: it caused the Corinthians to question the resurrection of the dead, it was the impetus behind their effort to emancipate women and slaves, it led to speaking in tongues and abuses at the Lord’s Supper, and it promoted, paradoxically, both licentiousness and asceticism.” *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*,” 22.

<sup>86</sup> Lütgert, *Frieheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth*, 124-29. Victor Paul Furnish, for instance, assumes this background regarding Corinthian sexual ethics in his *The Moral Teachings of Paul: Selected Issues* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985), 29-51.

Importantly, Lütgert took Pauline studies in an entirely different direction since he connected Corinthian celibacy and libertinism with Gnosticism.<sup>87</sup> As seen above, this had been done over two decades earlier by Godet who identified the Christ party of 1 Cor 1:12 as ‘Gnostics before Gnosticism,’ but not in the same comprehensive fashion that we see in Lütgert. Lütgert held that Corinthian Gnosticism resulted from the interaction between Paul’s gospel of freedom and Hellenistic influences. What is more, Jesus tradition had a limited influence on Paul’s perspective. While, on the one hand, it is difficult to see how one cohesive community could derive two distinct sexual practices from the same theological stimulus, it is still important to note that Lütgert’s landmark work represented a new development in biblical studies away from the dominant view of F. C. Baur. Lütgert replaced the foreign dialectic of Hegelian philosophy with a new dialectic that grows somewhat organically out of biblical data.

### 2.1.6 Albert Schweitzer (1912)

It is at this juncture that Albert Schweitzer, arguably one of the most brilliant minds of his time, inserts the following observation: “It is strange that most of these authors reduce the acuteness of the problem [of Paul’s silence with regard to Jesus’ teaching] by pointing out in the epistles as many reminiscences of Synoptic sayings as possible. If so many utterances of Jesus are hovering before Paul’s mind, how come it is that he always merely paraphrases them, instead of quoting them as sayings of Jesus and thus sheltering himself behind their authority?”<sup>88</sup> Schweitzer holds to the position that Paul leaves aside Jesus tradition precisely because he “receives communications direct from Christ through the Spirit,” a posture reminiscent of Baur.<sup>89</sup> He asserts that Paul

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<sup>87</sup> Lütgert, *Freiheitspredigt und Schwarmgeister in Korinth*, 102-135.

<sup>88</sup> Schweitzer, *Paul and his Interpreters*, 43.

<sup>89</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1968), 172; repr. of *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. William Montgomery; London: A. & C. Black, 1931).



takes up “a creative attitude alongside of Jesus and gives the Gospel the form necessary to adapt it to the changed condition.”<sup>90</sup>

Schweitzer’s assertion that Paul adapts tradition to fit “the changed condition” certainly has some merit. It was necessary for Paul to adapt the gospel creatively to address a far different social context than Palestine. But how did this occur and were the outcomes as creative as Schweitzer makes them out to be? Though vehemently against the notion that Paul is dependent upon Jesus tradition, he does acknowledge points of concurrency with Jesus tradition where Paul fails to acknowledge the source of his doctrine.<sup>91</sup> Instead of simply arguing that Paul conveys the substance of what he knows of Jesus tradition without referencing or quoting Jesus, or, instead of entertaining the possibility that Paul writes to congregations to whom he has already conveyed Jesus tradition under his possession and now is simply corresponding out of that assumption, Schweitzer would rather argue that Paul is largely dependent upon a revelatory Christ and is not open to the prospect that Paul is concerned about the teaching of Jesus.<sup>92</sup> Paul also

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. Schweitzer says, “Paul even fails to mention sayings of Jesus in connections where they lay directly to his hand. For example, he quotes the command ‘Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself’ as the summing-up of the whole Law, without making any reference to the fact that Jesus Himself had spoken to this effect (Gal v. 14; Rom xiii. 8-10). To the Corinthians, when justifying himself for not carrying out his announced purpose of coming to them, he makes a detailed statement about making one’s yea, yea, and one’s nay, nay (2 Cor. i. 17-19). Now, there must lie behind this, in some form or other—perhaps it had been quoted by the Corinthians in writing to him—the saying of Jesus, ‘Let your speech be yea, yea, and nay, nay: whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Mt. v. 37).’ But Paul makes no mention of it. Similarly, he is not concerned to establish the point that his exhortation, ‘Bless those who persecute you’ (Rom. xii. 14), reproduces a saying of Jesus.” Schweitzer even acknowledges the possibility that the Corinthians may have been quoting Jesus tradition, in which case, it is likely that they would have ‘received’ it from Paul. Later, Schweitzer connects Paul’s claim to “become all things to all men” to Jesus’ saying in Matt 20:26: “Whoever will be great shall be a servant of all,” but denies dependency asserting that this piece of tradition “is not indeed handed down by Paul’s pen, but it is exemplified in his life” (322). Again, at some point, it is important to acknowledge that these points of concurrency reflect dependency.

<sup>92</sup> In several places Paul speaks of transmitting tradition that he receives. This may not warrant the existence of a catechism as Alfred Seeberg [*Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit* (A. DeichertÖsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf. Georg Böhme, 1903)] suggests, but it does suggest that Paul made sure to pass along traditions *about* Jesus as well as doctrine laid down by Jesus. For instance, in 1 Cor 15:3, Paul says, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance...” Here, Paul clearly connects himself

applies this mixed practice of using tradition without quotation to the OT and precisely for the reason mentioned above, he assumes the knowledge of his readership.<sup>93</sup> This practice is not exclusive to Paul, but to other NT writers as well.<sup>94</sup>

Also, while Schweitzer's concern about methodology has merit and how it is that one arrives at the view that Paul is beholden to Jesus tradition, he falls prey to his own logic. For while he sees it as methodologically improper to find allusions—without explicit reference—to Jesus tradition, he finds it perfectly valid to associate Paul with Greco-Roman moralists about whom he says virtually nothing at all. Paul explicitly claims to receive tradition from the historical Jesus on a variety of subjects like eschatology (1 Cor 15), marriage, divorce and celibacy (1 Cor 7:10), the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23-32)], to note just a few examples.<sup>95</sup> Importantly, these claims have clear parallels in the later Synoptic traditions.

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to the early traditions of the church. He was not the originator, nor did he receive it from the Lord by revelation. See also 1 Cor 11:23-26, 1 Cor 15:3-11, 1 Thess 4:15ff, 2 Thess 2:5, etc. In one instance, he attributes 1 Thess 4:15ff to "a revelation of Christ," not the "historic Jesus," saying: "How could he possibly have possessed a saying of Jesus to the effect that believers who had died since the death of Jesus nevertheless receive, along with those who remains alive at His return, the resurrection state of existence." As one possibility, why is it impossible that Paul could have received such a tradition from Peter in his first visit to Jerusalem? What's more, Paul says "according to the words of the Lord," which does not necessarily suggest that it was directly received by revelation.

<sup>93</sup> See the index of the Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece*, where numerous Pauline allusions to the OT are made without explicit reference.

<sup>94</sup> Matthew, for instance, frequently paraphrases passages or parts of passages without mentioning the book or author from which they were drawn. See Craig A. Evans, "The Old Testament in the New," in *The Face of New Testament Studies*, edited by Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 130-145.

<sup>95</sup> One count for quotes and allusions is close to 400, which includes the works that some deem as pseudonymous. On this question of quotes and allusions, see the index of *Novum Testamentum Graece* (trans. Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, and Kurt Aland; 27<sup>th</sup> ed.; Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 2007). Also, see Victor Paul Furnish's helpful work *Jesus: According to Paul* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

### 2.1.7 Johannes Weiss (1925)

In 1925, Johannes Weiss proposed that the problems in Corinth resulted from a misunderstanding of Paul's firm stance on sexual sins (see 1 Cor 6:12-20) along with his radical view of Christ's imminent return. Supposedly, some were provoked to embrace a radical form of asceticism.<sup>96</sup> In a later work, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period from AD 30-150*, Weiss contends that Paul's view on celibacy grew out of an appreciation for the flesh/soul dualism of Hellenism in which carnal pursuits are evil, and, in particular, the "pessimistic view that in the sexual life the root of all evil is to be sought."<sup>97</sup> This is why Paul places so much emphasis on sexual sins in his epistles.

While Weiss is correct that many of Paul's contemporaries saw women and excessive sexual passion at the root of human sin, it seems unwarranted to attach this view to Paul. This understanding loses sight of the obligation that Paul places on each of the marriage partners to fulfill their conjugal duties toward their spouse in 1 Cor 7:1-5. Implicit in Weiss' comments is an acknowledgement that Paul's views differ somewhat from certain strands of Hellenistic thought when he says "Paul's thinking approaches closely to Hellenistic dualism."<sup>98</sup> Certainly, Paul uses the language of Hellenism, but seems to do so as part of his "become all things to all men" evangelistic strategy.<sup>99</sup> In many respects, Paul's views on sexuality appear to be diametrically opposed to what we

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<sup>96</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 169.

<sup>97</sup> Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period AD 30-150* (2 vols; New York: Harper & Rowe Publishers, 1965), 2:581-585.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 581.

<sup>99</sup> It is important that we consider Paul's explicitly stated intentions. As some have suggested, it is quite sensible that Paul would couch his message in language readily accessible to his audiences. I would hold, however, that Paul was clear about the ideals of his message even though some may have become confused behind his tactics (1 Cor 5:9-13.) Paul uses the spirit/flesh dualism that was commonplace in religious and philosophical discourse of the first century, but infuses it with new meaning.

find in some strata of Hellenism, especially since Paul gives the impression that sexual fulfillment of one's spouse—apart from procreation—is a divine imperative.<sup>100</sup>

### 2.1.8 Gerhard Delling (1931)

In 1931, Gerhard Delling published his *Paulus' Stellung zu Frau und Ehe* in which he maintained that the problems in Corinth arose from Paul's incoherent views on marriage, celibacy and divorce.<sup>101</sup> Corinthian celibacy was the natural consequence of Paul's conflicted view that sexual practice is inconsistent with being in Christ.<sup>102</sup> Even marital sexuality amounts to the mixing of Christ members with the flesh.

In characterizing Paul as saying that in marriage and extramarital relations one is 'ruled by a foreign power,' Delling seems to miss the clear lines of demarcation that Paul establishes with regard to acceptable sexual expression (1 Cor 7) and porneia (1 Cor 6:12-20).<sup>103</sup> Paul clearly says that those who marry "do not sin" (7:36). Delling connects Paul's language about flesh with his comments in 1 Cor 7 and misses the distinction that he often makes between flesh and body. There are instances where Paul does connect the flesh with sexual sins (Gal 6:8), but "when Paul does use σάρξ in a pejorative sense, he is not thinking in terms of a human being's lower nature...nor does he associate it uniquely with the sphere of sexual disorder."<sup>104</sup> The dualism that we may witness in Paul "is not between the fleshly and spiritual dimensions of human existence but between a human

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<sup>100</sup> Ward brings out that while Musonius and Paul both suggested that marriage is for some and not for others, Musonius restricted sexual expression for the purposes of procreation. Paul, on the other hand, gives no indication of such a limited view. What is more, while Aristotle and first century thinkers, like Philo of Alexandria, held that women were intrinsically weaker than men, Paul makes no such intimation, but claims that "in Christ," "there is neither male nor female..." See Ward's "Musonius and Paul on Marriage."

<sup>101</sup> Gerhard Delling, *Paulus' Stellung zu Frau und Ehe* (BWANT 4/5; Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1931).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 62-69.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas Deduin, "Beyond Dualism: Paul on Sex, Sarx and Soma," *The Way* 28 (1988): 199.

existence conformed to the 'old aeon' and left to its own resources and one which is re-patterned on the crucified and risen Christ by the power of the Spirit. The σάρξ is not opposed to the spirit, but the Spirit.”<sup>105</sup>

Certainly, there is precedent for arguing that the Corinthians misunderstood Paul’s perspective on matters of sexuality. Corinthian fragmentation into groups around different leaders, whatever the motivation, indicates such confusion. In chapter 5, Paul corrects the misnomer that believers were to separate themselves from anyone engaged in illicit sexual practice. He clarifies that this holds only for those who call themselves “a brother” (1 Cor 5:11). Moreover, Paul provides clarity regarding his right to be married like the other apostles, and his conscious choice not to be (1 Cor 9).

### **2.1.9 Pre-Bultmann Conclusions:**

Before Bultmann, a number of assumptions had emerged within the ranks of biblical studies, and, while some views were outmoded and on their way out, they were still influential on later thought. For instance, although Lightfoot exposed the weaknesses in Baur’s Hegelian approach to the historical reconstruction, many works throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries still held to the view that Paul developed his theological perspective in conscious opposition to the Petrine faction of the early church.

Baur’s view, however, that ‘Paul deliberately ignored the actual words and deeds of the historical Jesus,’ was a standard assumption for many subsequent scholars, and, as will be shown, for Bultmann and his school. As shown, this argument was upheld by the likes of Wrede and Schweitzer. Wrede claimed that Paul transferred to Jesus all of the conceptions which he had previously learned from his Hellenistic-Jewish background. Similarly, Schweitzer denied that Paul used Jesus tradition in favor of communications received directly from Christ through the Spirit. This assumption consistently led to an

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

outlook that Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce were innovations. If one recalls, Wrede claimed that in 1 Cor 7, Paul had to "construct for the *first time* a sort of casuistical code for the ethics of the community," while Schweitzer suggested that Paul takes up "a *creative attitude* alongside of Jesus and gives the Gospel the form necessary to adapt it to the changed condition."<sup>106</sup> From this assumption, Weiss maintained that Paul's view on celibacy grows out of 'an appreciation for the flesh/soul dualism of Hellenism, in which carnal pursuits are evil.'<sup>107</sup> Over a decade before, Lütgert forwarded a similar idea from the Corinthian side, arguing that 'spiritual enthusiasts' in Corinth also fostered a low evaluation of the body out of which grew the opposite responses of asceticism and libertinism.

While criticisms can be made, the suggestion of Wrede and Schweitzer is quite helpful. Paul does have to demonstrate a kind of "creative attitude" as he pioneers new territories; regions in which the gospel had yet to be heard and the legacy of the Jewish Scriptures could not to be assumed. It is our contention, however, that this creative impulse in Paul is not done without consideration of Jesus tradition and his pharisaic roots, as some scholars assume. It is plausible that Paul pioneered new ground, while at the same time considering Jesus tradition and its broader intentions.

Nearly four centuries before that discussion, Luther injected a critical spirit into the discussion of the biblical text on the basis of content. Later, Bultmann would make a similar emphasis due to his fondness for content criticism (*Sachkritik*). Regarding sexual ethics, he claimed that marriage and celibacy require special grace, in opposition to the Catholic position. He connects Paul's point of view with Jesus' prohibition of divorce, but says little about the social aspects of Paul's perspective. Then, Hugo Grotius identified parallels among Greco-Roman moralists; such parallels were noticed much

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<sup>106</sup> See reviews of Wrede and Schweitzer above.

<sup>107</sup> See review on Weiss above.

earlier but not thoroughly pursued.<sup>108</sup> Grotius drew conclusions about what these parallels might suggest (e.g., one of the Corinthian factions was comprised of philosophers) and in this way expands the discussion on 1 Cor in general and 1 Cor 7, specifically. Scholars like Godet and Lightfoot, who assert Paul's dependency upon Jesus tradition, consistently connect 1 Cor 7 with this tradition as found in the Synoptic tradition or some version of it which may have been circulating orally. Scholars like Paget introduce a consideration for understanding why Paul is seldom explicit about his use of this tradition, claiming that Paul may have passed on tradition in his missionary preaching and teaching which he simply assumes when writing his correspondences.

Generally it can be said that some scholars (or those who have affiliation with the history-of-religions school) detach Paul from Jesus tradition, with the result that his views become innovations and significantly dependent upon 'Hellenism' and Greco-Roman moralists, while other scholars (e.g., Luther, Godet, Lightfoot, etc.), who argue for Paul's reliance upon Jesus tradition, characterize the Apostle as faithfully expanding this tradition. It can also be said that while the latter place very little emphasis on Jewish backgrounds, the former say very little about the possible influence of the broader social world on Paul's perspective. What is more, these scholars all fail to provide an adequate methodology for explaining how these traditions interface in Pauline thinking. This was the state of the conversation on 1 Cor. 7 and the methodological assumptions leading up to Bultmann.

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Grotius explicitly mentions Musonius Rufus.

## 2.2 BULTMANN:

### 2.2.1 Rudolf Bultmann (1948)

Rudolf Bultmann is perhaps the most influential 20<sup>th</sup> century biblical scholar. Building on the efforts of his predecessors, like Reitzenstein and Bousset, Rudolf Bultmann characterized the NT era as a time in which Paul and the leaders in the Gentile churches used an allegedly widespread myth of a heavenly redeemer figure—who came to earth to achieve human redemption—to create a Hellenistic mystery cult centered upon Jesus. A second phase came in a reaction to this construction on the part of Jewish Christians, who sought to depict Jesus along more Jewish lines, drawing especially on apocalyptic imagery. This conflict of theological viewpoints brought about a third stage where the church became institutionalized, and its freedom in thought and action was transformed into a dogmatic, authoritative system. Bultmann and his contemporaries within the history of religions school held in concert the assumption that Gnosticism preceded and coexisted with Christianity. This dual reality is what we also find among other German scholars like Baur (see above).

In volume one, in the very first line of his *New Testament Theology*, Rudolf Bultmann puts forth his understanding of the role of Jesus tradition in the theological perspective of the first century church: “The message of Jesus is a presupposition of the New Testament rather than a part of that theology itself.”<sup>109</sup> He argues that it was the church itself that introduced into the gospel accounts of Jesus’ message, “motifs of its own proclamation.”<sup>110</sup> His contention is that the “...theology of the New Testament begins with the *kerygma* of the earliest church and not before.”<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955) 1:3.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.



In a second set of preliminary remarks, he suggests that the Synoptic gospels are a source for the sayings of Jesus, but one should bear several things in mind. First, one should begin with the assumption of the two-source theory (i.e., Mark, as most primitive gospel account, was used by Matthew and Luke, and that a collection of Jesus' sayings was also used known as the so-called Q-source). Bultmann sees the need to distinguish between three strands within the gospels accounts: "old tradition, the ideas introduced in and by the early church, and the editorial work of the evangelists."<sup>112</sup> The fusion of myth and history in the NT makes such an effort of vital importance.

It is no surprise when Bultmann categorically asserts that "the teachings of the historical Jesus play no role or practically none in Paul."<sup>113</sup> The rationale for such a position is the assumption that Paul was a product of Hellenistic Christianity, not Palestinian Christianity, between which exists a broad philosophical chasm. Bultmann writes: "After his conversion, he made no effort toward contact with Jesus' disciples or the Jerusalem church for instruction concerning Jesus and his ministry. On the contrary, he vehemently protests his independence from them in Gal 1-2. And, in fact, his letters barely show traces of the influence of Palestinian tradition concerning the history and preaching of Jesus."<sup>114</sup> In Hellenistic Christian communities, Jesus "is understood to be the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, a great preexistent heavenly being who became man for the sake of our redemption and took on himself suffering, even the suffering on the cross. It is evident that such conceptions are mythological, for they were widespread in the mythologies of Jews and Gentiles and then were transferred to the historical person of Jesus."<sup>115</sup> Here, Bultmann sounds a lot like Wrede.

Bultmann goes on to add: "But of decisive importance in this connection is the fact that Paul's theology proper, with its theological, anthropological, and soteriological

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>115</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 17.

ideas, is not at all a recapitulation of Jesus' own preaching nor a further development of it and it is especially significant that he never adduces any of the sayings of Jesus on the Torah in favor of his own teaching about the Torah."<sup>116</sup> The rationale as to why it seems reasonable to Bultmann that Paul's views are inventive are reminiscent of Schweitzer's comments decades earlier. They are also open to the same criticism.<sup>117</sup>

It is understandable, then, that when Bultmann considers Paul's views in 1 Cor 7:1-7, he examines them in the context of Hellenistic-dualistic depreciation of the body, much as we see in Weiss. He contends that "in keeping with the tendencies of ascetic dualism, he [Paul] evaluates marriage as a thing of less value than 'not touching a woman' (v.1); indeed, he regards it as an unavoidable evil ('on account of fornication,' v. 2, tr.)."<sup>118</sup> With these comments, Bultmann empties the once zealous Pharisee of the standard Jewish ideals on marriage and procreation. He adamantly asserts that pre-conversion Paul was deeply influenced by Hellenistic culture, with the result that his theology displays significant evidence of religious syncretism.<sup>119</sup>

Regarding marriage, celibacy and divorce, Bultmann holds that Paul was deeply influenced by Hellenistic-dualistic devaluation of the body, not Jesus tradition; in fact, nowhere does Bultmann attempt to consider this as a possibility. Despite these claims, Bultmann himself has to acknowledge that "echoes of the words of the Lord"—as he calls them—are seen throughout the Pauline corpus: 1 Cor 7:10f (Matt 5:32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18); 1 Cor 9:14 (Matt 10:10); Rom 12:14 (Matt 5:44); Rom 13:9 (Mark 12:31); Rom 16:19 (Matt 10:16); 1 Cor 13:2 (Mark 11:23). Against Bultmann's

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<sup>116</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 189.

<sup>117</sup> As stated earlier, Schweitzer's views tend to be circular since "it is seen as methodologically improper to find allusions—without explicit reference—to Jesus tradition, yet proper to associate Paul with Greco-Roman moralists about whom he says virtually nothing at all. Paul claims to have received tradition from the historical Jesus on a variety of subjects [i.e., eschatology (1 Cor. 15), marriage, divorce and celibacy (1 Cor. 7), the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11)]" (42).

<sup>118</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 202.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

view, scholars have demonstrated that these “echoes” appear to be the substantive basis for much of Paul’s instruction.<sup>120</sup> What complicates matters is that in 1 Cor 7, Paul explicitly claims to base his views on received Jesus tradition.

### 2.2.2 Bultmann Conclusions:

Bultmann’s perspective had several points of agreement with previous generations. Before considering, however, these numerous commonalities, Patterson offers the following key distinction: “While the liberal quest emphasized what it held to be the authentic moral teachings of Jesus, deemphasizing the more christologically oriented preaching of Paul, Bultmann reversed this...in contrast to liberal theology’s earlier assessment of this difference, which led to the dismissal of Paul as one who misunderstood the nature of the Christian faith, Bultmann embraced Paul’s thought. For Bultmann, Paul’s genius was his realization that historical knowledge of Jesus’ own life neither eases nor controls the decision one is called to make about Jesus as the eschatological in-breaking of God’s reign.”<sup>121</sup>

As it relates to commonalities with previous generations, first, Bultmann posited that Gnosticism predates Christianity in concert with the likes of Godet and Lütgert. He argued that the language of Gnosticism and the Gnostic myth was used to “unfold” the Hellenistic Christian message.<sup>122</sup> He contends that along with the Kyrios cult and Gnosticism, Hellenistic Christianity became a syncretistic reality. In the 1960s and 1970s, such a reconstruction suffered a significant setback when scholarly analysis

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<sup>120</sup> The following works go far to establish a common philosophical foundation for NT theology, which explains why substantive agreement exists between NT writers: C.H. Dodd’s *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nesbit & Co., Ltd, 1953), *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1964) and Alfred Seeberg’s *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*.

<sup>121</sup> Patterson, “Paul and the Jesus Tradition,” 25.

<sup>122</sup> Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 164-165.

determined that a pre-Christian Gnosticism was a doubtful assumption.<sup>123</sup> This finding greatly discredited the efforts of Bultmann and his students who followed his lead (e.g., Walter Schmithals); especially since the Gnostic Redeemer myth supposedly undergirded the *entire* NT. As Hengel states, “This myth (*the Gnostic myth*), as described, say by Bultmann in numerous publications...before the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts (and the discussion about Gnosticism which was considerably changed by them) is an ahistorical construction of the history-of-religions school...”<sup>124</sup>

Secondly, Bultmann upheld the longstanding view that a deep philosophical chasm existed between Hellenistic Judaism and Palestinian Judaism. This longstanding assumption proves to break down under close scrutiny. Hengel asserts that the “most important centre of the Greek language in Jewish Palestine was of course the capital, Jerusalem” and provides significant epigraphical evidence for his claim.<sup>125</sup> Such a claim—which seems warranted—closes somewhat the supposed cultural and philosophical gap between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism that was commonly held to be extremely wide among scholars in Bultmann's era.

Lastly, like Baur, Bultmann is greatly committed to his philosophical foundations (e.g., existential philosophy). The negative insistence that Jesus never claimed to be the Jewish Messiah works in favor of existential interpretation in which Jesus is revealer and

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<sup>123</sup> David G. Horrell and Edward Adams, *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. David G. Horrell and Edward Adams; Louisville and London: Westminster Knox Press, 2004). In chapter one, which surveys the history of research on the Corinthian Correspondence, the authors demonstrate how this faulty assumption impacted a wide segment of biblical scholarship for better than half a century (See especially 16-23). For an interesting discussion of Gnosticism and its emergence, see David Brakke's *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Brakke actually prefers the term ‘Gnostic,’ believing that it can be “retrieved as a social category, one that corresponds to a group that recognized itself as such—and was so recognized by others” (27).

<sup>124</sup> Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea*, 94-5, see note on 285.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 8. For a fuller discussion on this point, read pages 9-29.

savior only in the decision of faith. In response, Dahl states, “The kerygma isolated from Jesus' history is in danger of becoming a paradox without content.”<sup>126</sup>

## 2.3 AFTER BULTMANN:

### 2.3.1 W.D. Davies (1955)

In his celebrated work, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, Davies dealt at length with the prospect of Paul’s exposure to Jesus tradition. He begins with the assertion that Paul and others drew extensively from a pre-Christian tradition of exhortation, namely, the didactic tradition of Judaism: “It is clear that what is found in the hortatory sections of the Epistles of Paul arises largely out of habit, from a tradition of exhortation which Paul held in common with the other apostolic leaders.”<sup>127</sup> Be that as it may, “Paul has Christianized material of ‘foreign’ origin by adding the formula ἐν κυρίῳ, this being added to show that all the exhortations were regarded as inspired by the Spirit of the Lord.”<sup>128</sup> He argues, however, that Paul’s primary source of ethical teaching came from the words of Jesus himself. Davies provides a detailed list of parallels between Paul and the words of Jesus, as preserved in the Synoptic tradition, and concludes: “Furthermore, while Pauline ethics does emphasize life in the Spirit, this cannot be taken to mean that the ethical teachings of Jesus have no significance in Paul.”<sup>129</sup> Such a view offers a more balanced view than what we see in Bultmann and some of his predecessors, who claimed that the historical Jesus was eclipsed in the mind of Paul by a strong Hellenistic Jewish indoctrination. Davies says, “We have above noted the extreme deference with which he

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<sup>126</sup> Nils Alstrup Dahl, “Rudolf Bultmann's Theology of the NT” in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974) 104.

<sup>127</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (Mifflintown, Pennsylvania: Sigler Press, 1998), 136.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 133-136.

refers to the words of the Lord, and his almost unconscious references to them show that his mind was permeated with his sayings.”<sup>130</sup>

Naturally, regarding marriage, celibacy and divorce, Davies holds that the Synoptic writers and Paul ascribe to a common tradition (cf. Mark 10:12).<sup>131</sup> Davies’ view does not necessarily break new ground here, but he acknowledges that Paul’s indebtedness to different streams of ethical teaching does not eclipse the fact that his primary dependence was upon Jesus tradition. Contrasted with Bultmann, this is a significant development in another direction. For while Bultmann rejects the idea that access to authentic Jesus tradition was even a concern for Paul, Davies argues that it was, and attempts to demonstrate these lines of dependency. He does not, however, provide a methodology for understanding Paul’s views in light of parallels among Jewish and Greco-Roman thinkers.

### **2.3.2 Walter Schmithals (1956)**

It was Walter Schmithals, one of Bultmann’s most promising pupils, who provided the most comprehensive study of Gnosticism in Corinth. Again, proponents of Gnostic influence in Corinth argued that Gnosticism, with its low view of the material world and devaluation of bodily existence, resulted in the dual response of libertinism and asceticism. Inspired by the conviction that Gnosticism was a pre-Christian movement, in 1956, Schmithals’ revised doctoral thesis asserted that the heresy of Gnosticism, brought in by Jewish false teachers, stood behind nearly all of the conflicts in Corinth. Schmithals’ version of this approach uses Gnostic sources to explain in a step-by-step fashion how Paul’s correspondence provides a rebuttal to Gnostic infiltration.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 140.

According to Schmithals, what might be labeled licentiousness from a Christian perspective fits into an entirely different category for Gnostics. He argues, “Gnosis bestows upon the Pneumatic the ἐξουσία or ἐλευθερία—the two concepts are interchangeable—for every desired contempt for fleshliness. Thus πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν does not mean for the Gnostic, 'Someone has given me permission,' but, 'For me (as a Pneumatic) it is a matter of free choice to act thus; for me no peril is involved therein.’”<sup>132</sup> The truly spiritual have freedom with regard to sex and food, since whatever actions are taken are not considered immoral or unethical, but are perceived as acts of justified hostilities against the flesh, the prison house of the soul. Surprisingly, though, Schmithals rejects the dialectic of Lütgert and others, arguing that Paul’s problems were with Gnostic libertines and not Gnostic asceticism. In view of the Apostle’s stance against πορνεία, the community sought a clear statement on Paul’s view of Christian marriage. According to Schmithals, nothing in 1 Cor 7 justifies speaking of “explicit ascetic tendencies in Corinth.”<sup>133</sup> If anything, certain members of the Pauline group took Paul’s comments too far, demanding continence.

As with Bultmann, Schmithals claims that Paul responds as a Hellenistic Jew deeply influenced by his socio-religious context. Schmithals’ view, while quite intriguing at points, falls prey to the same criticism leveled against all studies that assume the existence of Gnosticism before the second century: there is simply no evidence for such an assumption. At best, scholars can talk of a kind of proto-Gnosticism, but significant criticisms are raised against this view as well.<sup>134</sup> As with Bultmann, this view results from a flawed methodology guided more by preconceived ideas than a comprehensive analysis of the data available.

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<sup>132</sup> Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. John E. Steely; New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 231.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>134</sup> Horrell and Adams, *Christianity at Corinth*, 19-20.

### 2.3.3 Ernst Käsemann (1969)

In 1969, Ernst Käsemann wrote an article entitled “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic” in which he develops some of the ideas found in, Lütgert produced six decades earlier.<sup>135</sup> Käsemann presented his thesis that Christianity in its earliest form in Palestine was thoroughly apocalyptic, but its manifestation on Greek soil was a significantly different apocalypticism which mutated into a theology of enthusiastic freedom. Käsemann suggested, however, that some in Corinth believed that they had come into possession of the eschaton. He asserts: “Today we must take it for granted that the dominant group in Corinth believed themselves to have reached the goal of salvation already—in the shape of baptism—and Christian existence here on earth meant for them solely the temporal representation of heavenly being.”<sup>136</sup> Baptism meant that believers were simultaneously participants in the “Resurrection and Enthronement, liberated from the old aeon of death and the powers and translated into the new aeon of the Kingdom of Christ.”<sup>137</sup> In this view, a heavenly body has been conferred and the earthly body has been degraded to an insubstantial, transitory veil. Käsemann believes that it is this “sacramental realism” that is behind all that is wrong in Corinth; “...the contempt for discipline and decency, the want of consideration for the weaker brother at the Lord’s Supper and in daily life; the rise of women ecstatically gifted and the over-valuing of glossolalia and sexual asceticism, which are being regarded as expressions of angelic status.”<sup>138</sup> Käsemann brings out that throughout the ancient world, abrogation of sexual differentiation is one of the key evidences of this angelic state.<sup>139</sup> To balance the

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<sup>135</sup> Ernst Käsemann, “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (trans. W.J. Montague; London: SCM Catebury Press, 1974), 108-137.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 130.



Corinthian perspective, Paul inserts an “eschatological reservation” that places participation in the resurrection in the future.<sup>140</sup>

### 2.3.4 David L. Dungan (1971)

In 1971, David L. Dungan, in his book *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul: The Use of the Synoptic Tradition in the Regulation of the Early Church*, sets out to determine the extent to which the statutes governing the early church can be traced back to Jesus. He compares Paul’s interpretation and application of Jesus tradition found in 1 Cor 7:1-17 and 9:4-18, with the corresponding tradition in the Synoptic materials (Matt 19:1-12, Mark 10:1-12), in an effort to determine whether or not the rules governing the early church are indeed traceable to Jesus. He begins by analyzing the above-mentioned legal sayings cited in 1 Cor and then applies form-critical analysis on the Synoptics to identify the distinctive motivations of each Synoptic editor, as revealed in the changes and additions that each made to their source material.

When Dungan considers Paul’s application of ‘the Lord’s command’ in 7:10f., he arrives at three conclusions. First, he suggests that Paul operates within a Jewish framework regarding divorce. According to Dungan, this can be seen in the language that Paul uses, since he prohibits wives from ‘separating’ from their husbands, but does not allow husbands to ‘divorce’ their wives. He claims that vv. 10-11 are “phrased in typical fashion according to the different status of men and women under Jewish law. Only the man could initiate proceedings in order to dismiss his wife; the woman could not do this.”<sup>141</sup> If, however, this “Jewish framework” informs this pericope as thoroughly as Dungan suggests, Paul would hardly speak in the egalitarian terms that he does throughout (e.g., 7:1-6). Furthermore, after setting up this distinction, Dungan himself

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor makes a similar point in his commentary *1 Corinthians: A Biblical Theological Commentary* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1980), 61-66.

seems to suggest that the terms are synonymous.<sup>142</sup> This proves to be problematic for his argument and loses sight of the fact that Paul was addressing a blended audience of both Jews and Gentiles.

Paul seems to strangely contradict ‘the saying of the Lord,’ since, after proscribing divorce, he immediately allows for separation, as long as the one separating either remains unmarried or reconciles with her spouse. It is possible, as Dungan brings out, that Paul is attempting to address a situation that had already begun to unfold in Corinth before he received word, a situation in which a woman had left her husband in hopes of marrying another. Dungan highlights Paul’s key points: 1) the members of the Corinthian congregation could divorce—an idea that, according to Dungan, is inherent in the Synoptic tradition as well—but could not remarry another; 2) The only other option was reconciliation with one’s spouse.

Dungan makes several other insightful observations, but two are particularly noteworthy. First, Paul appears to be familiar with the entire account as delineated in the Synoptic tradition and properly understands Jesus’ intentions without actually quoting the tradition. Generally, just as in the Synoptic tradition, Paul prohibits remarriage and only allows for divorce on rare occasions (e.g., the request of an unbelieving spouse). Second, Paul’s awareness of a much larger tradition can be seen by other points of connection. For instance, in 6:15 and 7:12-16, Paul makes reference to “two becoming one flesh” (Gen 2:24), as does Jesus in the Synoptic tradition (Matt 19:4-6, Mark 10:5-9). What is more, Jesus’ reference to Gen 2:24 in Matt 19:3-9 may have the same connotation as that found among the Essenes, where marriage—which was an exception—was primarily for the purpose of procreation. Interestingly, Paul’s reference to Gen 2:24 occurs in a context in which he too makes reference to godly children (1 Cor 7:12-16). This all reveals that while Paul only mentions a very short abstract from the larger tradition, his

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<sup>142</sup> Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul*, 97- 98.

audience was well acquainted with the larger tradition. Another significant point of connection is found in 1 Cor 7:7, where Paul is careful not to impose the standard of celibacy on all, but classifies it as the Spirit's gift. In Matt 19:10-12, Jesus is recorded as making the same point. While Dungan brings this out, he is convinced that these are more than likely editorial comments put into the mouth of Jesus.<sup>143</sup>

Dungan believes that the manner in which Paul cites and applies the commands of the Lord closely corresponds with what he finds in the Synoptic tradition. He follows the trajectory of the uses of the sayings of the Lord "as a polemical remark of Jesus in the milieu of Palestinian Judaism, to its eventual transformation into a regulation concerning divorce and marriage in the early Church."<sup>144</sup> Dungan contends that the Synoptic editors were quite freehanded with the tradition, "inventing, altering, rearranging, omitting and combining on a massive scale."<sup>145</sup> Even still, he holds that intentions of the Synoptic editors as reflected in their interpretation and application of Jesus tradition matches Paul's interpretation and application in Corinth. He states, "It was one of the major themes of this demonstration that if Paul and the editors of the Synoptic gospels are compared in this respect, that is, if the Synoptic editors' intentions, as to how the older traditional sayings of Jesus were to be interpreted and applied, are compared with Paul's actual interpretation and application at Corinth and elsewhere, they turn out to resemble one another almost exactly."<sup>146</sup>

### **2.3.5 David Balch, Robin Scroggs (1972)**

Not much later in 1972, D. L. Balch came out with his *NTS* article "Backgrounds of I Cor. VII: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an ascetic ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ in II Cor. III."

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 139.

Balch approaches 1 Cor. 7 from an entirely different perspective than Dungan. Unlike Dungan, he spends very little time on the text of 1 Cor. 7 itself, but uses the entire article to argue for his view that Hellenistic Judaism provides the most appropriate background for understanding 1 Cor. 7. He draws extensively from the works of Philo, a contemporary of Paul, as being ‘representative’ of the asceticism that was pervasive in the first century among Hellenistic Jews.<sup>147</sup> He begins by arguing that the ascetic trends of the time are well documented and that concern about its detrimental effects on the empire can be seen in the political efforts of Augustus. Balch spends considerable time arguing that Philo’s appraisal of Moses in his *Life of Moses* as a θεῖος ἀνὴρ or a divine man, who withdrew from cohabitation with his wife in order to be able to receive divine revelation, is important for understanding the Corinthian attitudes as found in 1 Cor 7. He brings out that some scholars see in 2 Cor 3:4-18 an example of Hellenistic Jewish midrashim of Exod 34:29-35. According to Balch, Paul’s midrashic use of this text connects him with Philo and suggests that within the Corinthian congregation, there were some Jewish-Christians who ascribed to this Hellenistic ascetic Jewish understanding.

Balch suggests that Paul is forced to use Jesus tradition in his efforts to combat his opponents who also use sayings of Jesus to encourage the separation of married couples. According to this view, they make use of texts like Luke 18:29, where Jesus is characterized as listing ‘wife’ as one of the things to be left behind for the Kingdom. As a result, “...Paul must argue in 1 Cor 7:28 and 36 that marriage is not sinful.”<sup>148</sup> Subsequently, Paul grounds his advice on marriage and divorce in Jesus tradition and claims that celibacy is expedient for both Christological and eschatological reasons. Marriage preoccupies the believer with worldly affairs and robs him or her of freedom for Christian service.

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<sup>147</sup> D. L. Balch, “Backgrounds of I Cor. VII: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an Ascetic ΘΕΙΟΣ ANHP in II Cor. III” in *NTS* 18, no. 3 (1972): 356.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

A criticism of Balch's work is that he spends little time with the actual text of 1 Cor 7. Balch's preoccupation with reconstructing a background for the text leads him to derive one almost entirely from his imagination. Hermeneutical imagination is warranted when the case is clearly made for one background or another, but Balch never does this. In addition, the lack of textuality does harm to the integrity of this view since rarely does he connect his hypothesis with the actual verses of 1 Cor 7. What is more, Paul never explicitly mentions Balch's supposed connection between asceticism and a desire for divine revelation. Furthermore, it is questionable whether Philo is an appropriate representative for Hellenistic Judaism. Paul himself, for instance, may provide a good example of an entirely different strand of Hellenistic Jew than we see in Philo. Lastly, Balch's argument that 1 Cor 7 should be understood through the lens of 2 Cor 3 is problematic. It seems to be a stretch even to claim that Paul's opponents had this Moses typology in mind.<sup>149</sup>

Robin Scroggs' article "Paul and the Eschatological Body" discusses 1 Corinthians 7 in the context of Paul's 'new creation' ethics. Assuming that Paul's view of the body is neutral, Scroggs demonstrates that corporeality becomes an eschatological body when bodily acts build up the Christian community. He shows this Pauline principle at work in a number of 1 Corinthians texts along with 1 Cor 7. For instance, in the case of eating meat sacrificed to idols, Paul argues that the believer who is strong in faith should waive his/her rights if such consumption would be an occasion of offense for a weak believer. Scroggs draws out that Paul's primary concern is the preservation of the

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<sup>149</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 11-12.

weak believer's faith, while the freedoms of the strong believer are secondary:

“Preservation of a fellow believer takes precedence over the freedom to eat and drink.”<sup>150</sup>

In the case of 1 Cor 7, Scroggs draws out the selfless ethic promoted by Paul whether marriage or celibacy is in view. In the former, Paul establishes marriage as the context for proper sexual expression and does not mention procreation as the goal of sexual union as was the case for some of his contemporaries (e.g., Philo). Verses 3-4 seem to suggest that neither spouse has “authority” over his/her body, but the partner does. In the context of marriage, one ‘upbuilds’ his/her mate by offering the body for the sexual pleasure of the spouse. With regard to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, one gives primacy to the community of faith and its upbuilding over his/her sexuality and the potential conflict that arises out of a spousal responsibility to meet the practical needs of his/her spouse. So, according to Scroggs, bodily actions belong to eschatological reality when they promote the ethic of the kingdom. In another instance, Scroggs makes reference to 1Cor 7:15-16 and argues that divorce was permissible in the case of mixed marriages, “if the eschatological reality of peace does not exist, due to the squabbling of the spouses...”<sup>151</sup> He then adds a disclaimer, saying that the language of the text is difficult.

Despite the fact that in the latter instance Scroggs overextends his point beyond what is explicit in the text, he brings out the important point that Paul promotes an ethic of self-denial for the sake of the gospel. This, while not mentioned by Scroggs, is a direct outgrowth from the teaching on Jesus, the suffering servant. Scroggs’ article, while generally helpful, says nothing about Paul’s use of Jesus tradition and therefore does not advance us beyond what we learned from Dungan on that issue.

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<sup>150</sup> Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Body,” in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and his Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* (ed. Eugene H. Lovering, Jr. and Jerry L. Sumney; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid, 26; see note 28.

### 2.3.6 David Cartlidge, Kurt Niederwimmer (1975)

In 1975 two significant works came out by David R. Cartlidge and Kurt Niederwimmer. In harmony with Scroggs, Cartlidge characterizes Paul as being progressive in his sexual ethics since Paul, despite having a preference for the celibate lifestyle, recognizes the reality of the sexual drive and appears to be attempting to overturn an aggressive trend toward asceticism in Corinth. The social realities of the first century provide a stark contrast to the Pauline vision of ‘neither male nor female, Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free.’ Cartlidge claims, “Paul’s preaching did not simply reevaluate these traditional patterns of hierarchy in the Hellenistic culture; it negated them. To declare that the rubrics of male dominance, ethnic differences, and slave economy were no longer operative was to declare that basic models upon which most of contemporary society was based were no longer viable.”<sup>152</sup> It is precisely this liberating ideal that led to chaos in the Corinthian context.

Apparently, some in Corinth held that asceticism was a mandatory posture for the truly spiritual since the resurrection had in some sense already been realized. Cartlidge shows that while Paul favored celibacy, a conviction rooted in his eschatological understanding, he also gives room for what he calls “eschatological reservation.”<sup>153</sup> That is, Paul recognizes that Gal 3:28 is an eschatological ethic that will occur at some point in the future. Paul clarifies for the Corinthian that “(1) celibacy is not the only option for the community (2) because the time when men and women will not be sexual is for the future”<sup>154</sup> The Corinthian realized eschatology likely results from Paul’s tendency to collapse the distance between the realities of the Greco-Roman context and his

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<sup>152</sup> David R. Cartlidge, “1 Corinthians 7 as a Foundation for a Christian Sex Ethics,” *Journal of Religion* 55, no.2 (1975): 223.

<sup>153</sup> A term borrowed from Käsemann’s “On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic,” 132.

<sup>154</sup> Also see Cartlidge, “Christian Sex Ethics,” 227.

eschatological vision—“married acting as though they are not” (7:29). The Corinthians were perhaps confused about the language of Jewish apocalypticism.

In the end, Cartlidge suggests that Paul is not a “chauvinist,” but concedes that he is a product of Hellenistic Judaism and “contemporary Judaism,” both of which had low estimates of women. While these streams of influence are certainly viable, Cartlidge never acknowledges the explicit connections between what Paul teaches and Jesus tradition.<sup>155</sup> The closest that he comes is acknowledging that the Corinthians had been exposed to Jesus tradition (Luke 20:34-5, Mark 12:25) which in turn encouraged their ascetic practices. It might be easier to simply acknowledge that Paul’s commitment to celibacy derives from such exposure and that the Corinthians followed his example (1 Cor 4:16). What is more, if Paul did indeed follow Jesus tradition closely, it is also likely that his views regarding female roles are more liberating than Cartlidge grants.

In his work *Askese und Mysterium*, Kurt Niederwimmer furthers the position of Johannes Weiss a half century earlier that the sexual attitudes found in 1 Cor 7 derive from a misunderstanding of Paul’s perspective and exposure to a degraded view of sexuality. Niederwimmer is also reminiscent of Wrede, for he too holds that Paul draws some of the substance of his perspective from his pre-Christian days.<sup>156</sup> Niederwimmer shows just how pervasive the denunciation of *porneia* was in the Greco-Roman world, asserting that Paul’s baptismal teaching emanates from Hellenistic vice lists and Hellenistic Jewish Wisdom literature. This background resulted, according to Niederwimmer, in the elevation of celibacy and the degradation of marital life.<sup>157</sup> The question some in Corinth raised was whether or not baptism nullifies the marital bond.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Paul explicitly makes the point when using Jesus tradition (i.e. 7:10-11), but is also clear when he is not (i.e., 7:25).

<sup>156</sup> Kurt Niederwimmer, *Askese und Mysterium: Über Ehe, Ehescheidung und Eheverzicht in den Anfängen des christlichen Glaubens* (FRLANT 113; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 243-244.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 98. Niederwimmer says, “Paulus bietet in diesem Abschnitt nicht, wie man eigentlich erwarten würde, Anweisungen zur Führung einer “christlichen Ehe”, sondern er geht auf eine allen solchen



The difficulty with this view resides in the assertion that sexual indiscretion in Corinth would necessarily lead to asceticism. Niederwimmer does not adequately demonstrate that the Corinthians had associated *porneia* with sexuality in general, including marital relations. None of the sources referenced by Niederwimmer give evidence of this confusion, but, to the contrary, they denounce *porneia* and still affirm the propriety of marriage. Also, 1 Cor. 7 does not provide evidence of such a view since Paul rejects *porneia* (ch. 6) and establishes marriage as the appropriate context for sexual expression (7:9; "...better to marry than to burn with passion").<sup>159</sup>

### 2.3.7 Orr and Walther (1976)

In their Anchor Bible Commentary, Orr and Walther bring out that Paul seems to be responding to questions asked of him by members of the Corinthian community.<sup>160</sup> They hold that the most likely rendering of ἀγαμιους in 7:8 is widowers. Paul's comment that Corinthian widows should remain as he is has been taken by some as acknowledgment of his being a widower himself.<sup>161</sup> It is quite possible that Paul was

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Problemen vorgängige, fundamentale Frage ein, nämlich auf die Frage, ob die Taufe nicht die Ehe bindung aufhebt. Wir haben uns das escatologische Selbstverständnis der ersten Gemeinden vor Augen zu führen, für die Glaube und Taufe radikale Entweltlichung bedeutete. Die Frage, die unter solchen Voraussetzungen verheiratete Christen *zunächst* bewegen musste, konnte gar nicht die sein, wie man eine "christliche Ehe" führt, sondern vielmehr die, *ob man überhaupt noch die Ehe weiterführen konnte und sollte!* Paulus antwortet also V. 10f. schwerlich auf die Frage, ob an und für sich der Mann seine Frau wegschicken darf, die Frau den Mann verlassen darf (etwa um sich anders ehelich zu binden); vielmehr geht Paulus, wie es doch scheint, auf *die* Frage ein, *ob das neue Sein*, in das sie durch die Taufe geraten sind, *die Scheidung fordert oder nicht.*"

<sup>159</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 17-8.

<sup>160</sup> William F. Orr and Walther A. James, *The Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians* (ed. William F. Albright and David N. Freedman; Vol. 32; Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976), 203-9.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-1. Luther held this to be a possibility. See Luther's review above.

married prior to his conversion given his status in the hierarchy of Judaism and now that he was a widower.<sup>162</sup>

Orr and Walther hold that Paul rejects divorce as an option for Christian couples. According to them, Paul's views on divorce and remarriage derive, not from the Apostle himself, but from *the Lord*. "It is not Paul's practice to quote dominical sayings, but he evidently takes Jesus' instruction (Matt 5:31-32 and 19:9 [without the exceptive phrases] Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18) as absolutely binding on the church."<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, however, Orr and Walther bring out that the right to divorce of the unbelieving spouse is consistent with Roman and Greek views in which both parties have a right to divorce. In this context, men and women could divorce one another for a variety of reasons even though this was discouraged in the later empire. Palestinian Judaism afforded this right to men only.<sup>164</sup> Orr and Walther do mention that interest in celibacy may be attributable to exposure to Gnosticism and/or an 'Essenian doctrine,' but this is just mentioned.<sup>165</sup>

For the most part, the authors simply reiterate many of the conclusions set forth by many scholars prior to their work. They spend a great deal of time with introductory comments (over a third of the commentary) and important exegetical matters are either lightly touched upon or not mentioned at all. By detecting possible connections between Paul's views on celibacy and other sectarian groups, Orr and Walther are not wrong, but only offer superficial comparisons. They seem to miss the obvious connection between celibacy and Jesus (a celibate)—as the motivation for the practice in nascent Christianity,

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. Phipps systematically delineates this point as well. See William E. Phipps' *Was Jesus Married?* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970).

<sup>163</sup> Orr and James, *1 Corinthians*, 212.

<sup>164</sup> Tal Ilan in her *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996) provides a short list of exceptions to this rule (see 107-110, 135-157). Almost half a century earlier, Joachim Jeremias made similar observations in the appendix (entitled: "The Social Position of Women") of his *Jerusalem in the time of Jesus: An investigation into the economic and social conditions during the NT period* (trans F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave; London: SCM Press, 1969); trans of *Jerusalem zur Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962)

<sup>165</sup> Orr and James, *1 Corinthians*, 208.

but do pick up on Paul's allegiance to Jesus tradition on marriage and divorce. This does not advance the study of 1 Cor 7, but simply reiterates views more thoroughly delineated by previous scholars (e.g., Dungan).

### 2.3.8 D. L. Balch, C. M. Tuckett, Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983)

In 1983, David Balch submitted another article to the *JBL* entitled "1 Corinthian 7:32-35 and Stoic debates about Marriage, Anxiety and Distraction."<sup>166</sup> Balch explicitly sets out to contribute to the ongoing discussion about whether or not Stoic ideas are reflected in Paul's thought. The first part of Balch's article draws from the fifth century A.D. philosophical handbook of Johannes Stobaeus. Balch assesses the value of this collection of excerpts of ancient philosophical works on marriage and celibacy, which in some cases dates back well before the first century A.D. Stobaeus categorizes these excerpts into seven groups, but Balch draws from the first three headings: (1) marriage is best, (2) marriage is not good, or (3) the paired style of life makes marriage helpful for some but not advantageous for others.

In 1 Cor. 7:32, "Paul tells the Corinthians that he wants to be free from anxieties" (ἀμέριμνοι) and in 7:35, he says that he wants to serve the Lord in an "undistracted manner" (ἀπερισπάστως).<sup>167</sup> His use of these expressions, according to Balch, suggests that, along with some Roman Stoics, Paul believes that "one should not be 'undistracted' from one's primary call," which means that some do not have to marry.<sup>168</sup> What is more, he concludes that while Paul does use egalitarian language, like his Stoic contemporaries, he does so only in theory. In practice, women were to be subordinate to men. Balch holds that Paul—in contrast to some who ignore "the social attraction and pressure which

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<sup>166</sup> David Balch, "1 Corinthian 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety and Distraction," *JBL* 102 (1983): 429-439.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

Hellenistic culture would have asserted on the small, newly formed Christian group at Corinth”—was deeply impacted by the “Roman Stoics whose philosophy influenced the culture in which Paul lived.”<sup>169</sup>

Balch’s assessment that Paul’s use of “egalitarian language” is mere semantics loses sight of contextual considerations and is therefore problematic. Gender relations in the first century were more complex than he acknowledges. In some matters within the Pauline communities, women were subordinate to the husbands and had to “consult their husbands at home” or “wear a sign of authority on their heads.”<sup>170</sup> These facts in no way eclipse the simultaneous reality that women were seemingly allowed to pray and prophesy during times of worship and that Christian men were commanded to be monogamous and were obligated not to withhold sexual relations from their spouse. Moral philosophers, on the other hand, often winked at the issue of adultery in the Greco-Roman world, encouraging women to do the same. In his treatment of women, Paul appears to be following the example of Jesus who also included women in very important ways.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, Balch's method to establish Stoic thinking is far from systematic, with the result that he produces “an abbreviated and somewhat confused picture of Stoic thinking.”<sup>172</sup>

In his article, “1 Corinthians and Q,” C. M. Tuckett explores the idea, once again, of “a connection between the Q tradition in the Synoptic gospels and the Corinthians to whom Paul wrote in the letter known as 1 Corinthians.”<sup>173</sup> He acknowledges with sufficient detail the number of past attempts at finding such a connection, citing the likes

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 430 and 439.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> See Ben Witherington’s *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus’ Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in his Earthly Life* (SNTS 51; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>172</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 3.

<sup>173</sup> C. M. Tuckett, “1 Corinthians and Q,” *JBL* 102, no. 4 (1983): 607.

of J.M. Robinson, Helmut Koester and David Balch, and provides a fairly sound critique of their proposals. In stating the case for such a connection, he rehearses Robinson's claim that 1 Corinthians is unique among the Pauline epistles since in it Paul explicitly cites Jesus tradition three times compared to once elsewhere. This is not to mention a myriad of other fairly clear allusions like 1 Cor 9:14, about which "Practically all commentators agree that this is an allusion to (rather than an exact quotation of) the saying of Jesus in the mission charge 'the laborer is worthy of his hire/food' (Matt 10:10/Luke 10:7)." <sup>174</sup>

Regarding 1 Cor 7:10-11 and Paul's prohibition of divorce, Tuckett claims that Paul's allusion is closer to the Marcan account (Mark 10:11-12/Matt 19:9) than the Q form of Matt 5:32/Luke 16:18. While the accounts are similar, he suggests that there is "a formal difference:" "the Marcan version makes the subjects of the two halves the husband and the wife of the first marriage; the Q version makes the two subjects the husband of the first marriage and the new husband of the proposed remarriage." <sup>175</sup> He concludes that there does appear to be "a link between 1 Corinthians and the Marcan tradition." <sup>176</sup> While this positive tone does not carry over to his assessment of the link between 1 Corinthians and Q, he does argue for Paul's usage of Jesus tradition. <sup>177</sup> It is significant that he uses Balch's earlier work as a kind of foil for his own, rejecting many of Balch's conclusions. This is the extent of what can be gained here since Tuckett stated that his objective was to offer a critique of a longstanding view, not detailed analysis of 1 Cor. 7.

In this same year, renowned feminist scholar Elisabeth Fiorenza released her study *In Memory of Her*, in which she attempts to deconstruct male-dominated constructions of the history of early Christianity and reconstructs a history that takes into

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 612.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 613.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 619.

account women's contributions and their struggles for equality. Regarding NT writings, she says: "Since the early Christian communities and authors lived in a predominantly patriarchal world and participated in its mentality, it is likely that the scarcity of information about women is conditioned by androcentric tradition and reaction of the Christian authors."<sup>178</sup> Fiorenza posits two groups of women in Corinth in an effort to reconcile literary tension between chapters 11 and 14. She claims that the praying and prophesying women of 1 Cor. 11 were unmarried (i.e., widows, virgins, celibates), while the women silenced in chapter 14 were wives and mothers.<sup>179</sup>

She suggests that Paul had in mind a baptismal formula which said that the social constructs of male/female, Jew/Gentile, slave/free no longer have relevance in the Christian community. This argument builds upon an early discussion in which Fiorenza asserts that Gal 3:28 is a baptismal formula declared by all Pauline converts. Paul's prohibition of divorce is squarely based upon Jesus tradition, not social order. Women are given "the possibility of freeing themselves from the bondage of patriarchal marriage, in order to live a marriage-free life."<sup>180</sup> The stipulation was that they could either reunite with their husbands or remain single. Paul also expands the parameters of acceptable marital disengagement in the case of believers and unbelievers. Since believers were called to peace, the unbelieving spouse was allowed to determine whether the marriage would continue. Fiorenza asserts that early church history reveals that such a posture was harder on women since wealthy women often unadvisedly left their husbands and poor women were abandoned by theirs, "losing their economic sustenance."<sup>181</sup> She highlights

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<sup>178</sup> Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 49.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-233.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

that while Paul prefers the celibate lifestyle, he acknowledges that “marriage and freedom from marriage are callings and charisms from God.”<sup>182</sup>

Fiorenza brings out that in light of the Augustan marriage legislation, Paul’s promotion of celibacy serves as a kind of “frontal assault on the intentions of the existing law and general cultural ethos.” What is more, Paul’s encouragement of women to remain marriage-free was an encroachment upon the rights of the *paterfamilias*. Such an approach, at times, would have led to conflicts with the broader society.<sup>183</sup>

Given Paul’s view on peace (1 Cor 1:3, 7:15, 14:33, 16:11), it seems unlikely that he would go head-to-head with the longstanding, government-backed institution of *paterfamilias*. It may be, as in the case of Cornelius (Acts 10:24-48) and Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:15), that entire households were converted and that Paul extended the choice of perpetual virginity in these instances. Certainly, we could argue that many of Jesus’ practices had significant social implications and did lead to an elevation of the status of women (e.g., teaching women (Luke 10:38-42), meeting with women in private (John 4), and even talking with a prostitute). However, if Paul intended to defy the unconverted *paterfamilias*, he would have also challenged the other patron/client relationships (e.g., slavery, especially since he encourages slaves to get free “if possible” (1 Cor 7:21)).

### 2.3.9 O. L. Yarbrough (1985)

Then, O. L. Yarbrough introduced his acclaimed work, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage in the Letters of Paul*.<sup>184</sup> Yarbrough argues that the function of Paul’s parenesis in 1Thess 4:1-8 has significant parallels in Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Naturally, similar parallels are seen in the rabbinic literature, much of

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>184</sup> O. L. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBLDS 80; Atlanta; Scholars Press, 1985).

which is codified at a much later point and which had as its preoccupation the ordering of every aspect of Jewish life. He establishes early on that his concern is the sociological function of Paul's view of marriage and the appropriate limits of sexuality, as opposed to the theological or philosophical.<sup>185</sup> He argues for a common tradition between 1 Thess 4:2-8 and 1 Cor 7, with the exception that "in the former letter its purpose is exhortation; in the latter it's chastisement."<sup>186</sup> He claims that Paul's assertions about the broader culture in 1 Thess 4 were polemical and not "objective description(s) of social reality."<sup>187</sup> First Corinthians 7, however, is considered to be an adaptation that serves the purpose of addressing the particular problems of Corinth.

Yarbrough states that while celibacy was Paul's preference, much like the Cynics, he does not make such a position mandatory. Also in line with some Greco-Roman moralists, Paul claims that those who marry will have tribulation in the flesh (θλίψις ἐν σαρκί).<sup>188</sup> For Paul, the Jewish apocalyptic framework adds another level of urgency, since "the form of this present world is passing away." While Yarbrough does find a parallel for such a consideration in Epictetus' positive appraisal of Cynicism, it lacks genuine compatibility since that common language has entirely different referents. Marriage and the rearing of legitimate children, especially among Stoics, was a civic responsibility. A growing populace was important for the survival of the city and children helped to care for parents in their old age. Paul appeals to neither of these traditions, leaving the options of celibacy or marriage open to the individual believer.<sup>189</sup> Yarbrough acknowledges that there is no precedent among Greco-Roman moralists for Paul's view on divorce. On the matter of male adultery, they were often silent and

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 3-5; 123-125.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 124; He bears this out in his treatment of marriage and sexuality in Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions. Also, see pages 7-63 and 76-77.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 103-105.



simply encouraged women to accept it as a part of the culture.<sup>190</sup> Precedent, at least for the Matthean adaptation, can be found in Jewish circles, but Markan and Pauline accounts represent a radicalization that has no precedent.

Yarbrough's work is a significant contribution and represents a development from drawing conclusions simply on the basis of verbal parallels. However, for the reason that it moves beyond a comparison of verbal, his lack of clear methodology as it relates to handling numerous parallels leads to a superficial comparison of the different traditions. Though Yarbrough continues in the tradition of the history-of-religions school in some respects, he avoids the question of dependency except to say that Paul seems to be drawing ethical thought from his Jewish ancestry (*Tob* 4:12 and *T. Levi* 9:9-10), which creeps into the discussion due to lack of methodological precision. It should be said, however, that Yarbrough's work is different from his predecessors' in that he does a thorough job of delineating both Jewish and Greco-Roman perspectives before taking on the question of dependency.

Deming argues that Yarbrough's handling of the Greco-Roman material moves too freely between chronological periods and philosophical contexts and spends little time specifically comparing Stoic and Cynic authors, which is his concern.<sup>191</sup> He goes further to suggest that in Yarbrough, one "does not venture far beyond a general comparison of their material."<sup>192</sup> While Deming is generally correct, he does not give Yarbrough adequate credit. The supposed "Stoic-Cynic" debate regarding marriage and celibacy may be more apparent than real. Certainly Stoics and Cynics represented two competing views, but these positions were also held by others in that era.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the NT Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 244-247.

<sup>191</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 2-4.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>193</sup> For instance, the Neo-Pythagorean Apollonius Tyana was a peripatetic philosopher who renounced eating meat as well as marriage. Celibacy and rejection of social convention, then, grew out of broader social trends. For more on this, see Martin's *The Corinthian Body*, 3-102. Also see T. L.

It is not entirely clear how 1 Thessalonians fits into the overall equation, especially since the basic proposition that these passages even speak about marriage is questionable in the first place. If indeed Paul was speaking about marriage in his use of σκεῦος, it serves to reason that he would have done so explicitly, especially since this was a fledgling church with little exposure to Pauline perspective as compared to Corinth, where it is likely that he spent eighteen months on his first visit (Acts 18:8-11). Furthermore, the textual argument does not appear very sound.<sup>194</sup>

Lastly, the notion that Paul would forward an argument that is strictly polemical and not based upon an actual description of social reality is problematic. It asks the reader to assume that Paul's audience, drawn from different socio-economic strata, would have accepted spurious portrayals of family, friends and well-known moralists, and that this in some way would give these new converts a sense of corporate identity.

### **2.3.10 Vincent L. Wimbush (1987)**

In 1987, Vincent L. Wimbush built upon the efforts of Balch, publishing a revision of his doctoral dissertation under the title *Paul: The Worldly Ascetic*, in which he argues for a societal trend toward ascetic behavior and Paul's perspective on marriage and celibacy as a byproduct of that development.<sup>195</sup> This view is substantiated by Paul's apocalyptic conviction that the world was coming to an end, making the mundane affairs of marriage, sexual gratification and raising a family unwarranted. Paul's stress on the need "to remain" carries with it a level of complexity in that, according to Wimbush, eschatological ideas are only partially in view. He is also attempting to offset the

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Donaldson's "Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations" *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 193-210, esp. 198-203.

<sup>194</sup> See chapter 4 in Michael W. Holmes' *1 and 2 Thessalonians: the NIV Application Commentary from biblical text-- to contemporary life* (Grand Rapids, Mich: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1998).

<sup>195</sup> Vincent L. Wimbush, *Paul the Worldly Ascetic* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987). See especially the introduction and chapters 2 and 3.

Corinthian preoccupation to change by withdrawing into an ascetic way of life.<sup>196</sup> These Pauline directives have particular Corinthians in view, namely, those with higher social status, designated in places (i.e., 1 Cor 8:7-13) by the epithet “strong.”

Key verses for Wimbush are 1 Cor 7:29-35. He sets the stage for his discussion on these passages with the argument that the chapter as a whole is concerned with clarifying widespread confusion in Corinth on the matters of celibacy, marriage and divorce. Under this scheme, Paul’s perspective of eschatological detachment or the ideal of indifference, which Wimbush sees in the terms ἀμέριμνος and ἀπερισπάστως of vv. 32 and 35, respectively, are synonymous with the Stoic conception of ἀπάθεια. Wimbush then proceeds to trace this ideal of spiritual detachment through the Greco-Roman philosophical traditions, placing special emphasis on Stoicism. He lays out the parallels between Pauline and Stoic views of marriage, and concludes that both were influenced by the tendency toward asceticism of their time.<sup>197</sup>

### 2.3.11 Wolfgang Schrage (1988)

Building upon work published in 1976, Schrage reviewed the topic again in his work entitled *The Ethics of the New Testament*. In line with what might be deemed as the traditional view, Schrage argues that a theology of Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce should not be attempted from his comments in 1 Cor 7 since they are largely contingent upon specific issues addressed in Corinth. He establishes that Paul is responding in 7:1 to questions raised by the church in Corinth, while verse 2 should be seen as Paul’s response: “In verse 2, Paul states his own opinion, which opposes the

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<sup>196</sup> Here, Wimbush discusses the importance of the Parousia, but claims that Paul downplays it. He acknowledges the apocalyptic thrust of this chapter, but seems to import the idea that Paul has been significantly influenced by Stoicism, even though apocalypticism grows out of uniquely Jewish considerations. See pages 32, 50 and 84.

<sup>197</sup> Wimbush, *Worldly Ascetic*, 54-71.

option of sexual abstinence and celibacy.”<sup>198</sup> Paul understands the potential dangers of asceticism and—implicit in his argument that marriage is not sin—recognizes that marriage is a God-given gift “to protect men and women from sexual excess.”<sup>199</sup> Schrage brings out the possibility that Paul’s assertion that one ‘no longer rules over his or her own body,’ grows out of the idea that Christians in general are no longer to rule over themselves and are no longer to be self-seeking. Also, he suggests that while Paul demonstrates a fondness for celibacy “...this hesitation is not based on rejection of sexuality or the body; its roots are quite different.”<sup>200</sup> He holds that Paul held marriage as sacred for some and that celibacy was a special gift of God’s grace (χαρίσμα).<sup>201</sup> What is more, the ‘impending crisis of the eschatological age’ leads Paul to counsel against marriage and for devoted service. Schrage also argued that Paul based his views regarding divorce on Jesus tradition. He bolsters his view by mentioning that divorce was not permitted even in mixed marriages in which one had become a believer.

### 2.3.12 Antoinette C. Wire (1990)

Wire offers a feminist reading of the status of women prophets in Corinth. She argues that Paul sought to confer a more passive role upon women prophets so as not to subvert communal life. Paul’s rhetoric, she concludes, appears on the surface to advocate “mutuality” but in practice constrains the freedom of the women prophets, who provide, to a large extent, the basis for writing the letter in the first place.<sup>202</sup> Wire suggests that Paul is crafty in selecting reciprocal language, knowing that this would be more

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<sup>198</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the NT* (trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988), 226.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 228-229.

<sup>202</sup> A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990)

appealing to women “in a society where their rights are minimal.”<sup>203</sup> She argues that Corinthian women prophets held that celibacy, in and out of marriage, constitutes a liberation from male domination and represents an expression of their new right (ἐξουσία) to freedom. Wire argues well that the number of categories of women mentioned by Paul suggests “a movement of considerable proportions.”<sup>204</sup>

In concert with Dungan’s conclusions from over a decade before, Wire asserts that Paul’s expansion of Jesus tradition addresses the particular circumstances in Corinth, with the result that he stands in direct conflict with the word of the Lord. She says: “Although he does not say explicitly to the separated that singleness would be better in principle, he does find ways, even against the word of the Lord, to allow divorce to a woman if she does not remarry and to those deserted by unbelievers.”<sup>205</sup> This fails to consider the possibility, or likelihood, that Paul understood the ‘intentions’ of Jesus tradition as he had conversations with the other apostles like Peter. It is also likely that Paul ‘received’ this tradition directly from these individuals who were fully aware of the context in which they were spoken.

### 2.3.13 Will Deming (1995)

Deming systematically sets out to demonstrate that the best way to understand the complexity in 1 Cor 7 is through what he calls the Stoic-Cynic debate. Although he agrees with the practice, understanding Paul and 1 Cor 7 in the light of Stoic and Cynic materials, Deming distances himself from Balch and Wimbush. Since he arbitrarily picks only the first three categories of Stobaeus’ anthology, Deming says that “Balch’s method for determining the issues is far too oblique.”<sup>206</sup> As a result, Balch only recognizes Stoic

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>206</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 7.

elements in 7:32-35, which, according to Deming, is “a very abbreviated and confused picture of Stoic thinking.”<sup>207</sup> Regarding Wimbush, Deming rejects the idea that 7:29-35 are central to Paul’s case and also argues that Wimbush wrongly equates Paul’s words on a life free from distractions with the Stoic ideal of ἀπάθεια. The notion of ἀπάθεια plays no part in the Stoic discussion on marriage and celibacy. A life free from distractions (ἀπερισπάστως) and anxiety (ἀμέριμνος) “has to do with the proper management of one’s outward routine,” which results in a measure of freedom from civic, social and economic responsibilities, while ἀπάθεια relates to a release from “a mental and emotional attachment to people and things.”<sup>208</sup> Deming also suggests that since Wimbush depends on Balch, his work does not advance us very far.

Deming argues that centuries before the coming of Jesus, Stoicism argued that men have a moral obligation to marry and build a household. This was the divine will. He says, “As for marriage in particular, they maintained that any man who respected the divine will would count it as his moral duty to marry and have children.”<sup>209</sup> Establishing a household reflected one’s commitment to local city-states as well as the κόσμος, since the κόσμος consisted of all city-states combined. Not only was the undoing of the family against the divine will, it resulted in the undoing of an ordered society and the overturning of longstanding Hellenistic ideals.

Cynics, on the other hand, denied the significance of the Greek city-state, rejecting the social convention of marriage and having of children in lieu of a kind of radical cosmopolitanism. According to Deming, “They held that the social structures of marriage, household, and city-state had their origin in mere human convention, not divine purpose, and in their place they demanded individualism and self-sufficiency.”<sup>210</sup> Cynics

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 60.

saw traditional social structures as “mere human convention,”<sup>211</sup> opting for a life of freedom to pursue philosophy as a fulltime profession. They saw the duties of citizenry and household management as cumbersome responsibilities that robbed them of the time needed to effectively practice their radical version of the philosophical life.

At this point, Deming makes a significant observation:

In sum, the Stoic-Cynic marriage debate was essentially a forum for defining an individual’s allegiances to a higher cause. It pitted Stoic dedication to traditional Greek life in the city-state against the Cynic calling to the philosophical life. One could even say that marriage became the central issue in this debate unwittingly, due to the claims it made on an individual regarding one of these two causes, for no participant in the debate ever evaluates marriage solely on its own merits.<sup>212</sup>

Deming goes on to demonstrate how far-reaching this debate actually was. His discussion reaches somewhat of a culmination in the first century, where Deming considers the works of some of Paul’s contemporaries. He finds that by the first century, a blending of philosophical ideas had taken place. He illustrates this point well with his analysis of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.<sup>213</sup> Epictetus, in many ways, was a traditionalist, seeing marriage as tantamount to being involved in the life of the city-state. He stringently held to traditional Stoic values, with one significant exception. He had a deep appreciation for Cynics and saw them as being uniquely called of God to a life of celibacy and social inactivity.

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 61.  
<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 81-87.

### 2.3.14 Dale B Martin (1997)

In his article, Martin argues that Paul viewed marriage as the context in which sexual desire can be extinguished. In agreement with a particular strand of ancient thought, Martin says, Paul condemns sexual desire and promotes passionless sex. He writes: “In Paul's view, sex was not so much the problem as desire. And sexual intercourse within marriage functioned to keep desire from happening.”<sup>214</sup> Similar comments are made in his earlier work, *The Corinthian Body*; “Particularly in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul’s statements repeatedly reveal that he advocates celibacy while allowing marriage only as a necessary option for the weak.”<sup>215</sup> Martin asserts that any positive interpretation of Paul’s views on sexual desire reflects “...a contemporary sexual ideology derived mainly from modern psychology and psychotherapy (including the acceptance of the modern category of sexuality), many biblical scholars go so far as to rejoice that ‘Paul has a robust sense of the fittingness of sexuality in the Christian life.’”<sup>216</sup>

Martin argues that Paul had no concept of good, healthy, heterosexual sexual desire. Paul’s views are akin to Stoic philosophers, who saw sexual desire as irrational and unnatural, and held that a determined individual has the capacity to eliminate altogether sexual desire with all its passions.<sup>217</sup> Interestingly, this perspective did not equate to an elimination of sex or marriage—both of which were necessary for legitimate children—it just meant sex without desire. According to Martin, Paul designated wives as “safe receptacles for their (male) sexual overflow,” as opposed to πορνεία.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Dale Martin, “Paul without Passion: On Paul’s Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (ed. Halvor Moxnes; London/New York: Routledge, 1997), 201.

<sup>215</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 209.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid. This quote is drawn from Jeremy Moiser’s “A Reassessment of Paul’s View of Marriage,” *JSNT* 18 (1983): 110.

<sup>217</sup> Martin, “Paul without Passion,” 203-4.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 202-203.



While Martin displays unquestionable brilliance in his handling of primary sources, his assessment is overwhelmingly lopsided. It is appropriate to thoroughly consider the Hellenistic background that would have impacted Paul's thought. Martin, however, rarely offers comments on Paul's Jewish heritage and what role apocalyptic ideals have played in his perspective. This explains why, in the end, Paul is indistinguishable from the Stoics of his day, according to Martin. If we follow Martin's line of thinking, Paul was wholly given over to non-Jewish moral philosophy in much the same way that Philo was.

Martin is not necessarily wrong to say that Paul prefers celibacy over marriage for *some* of his congregants, but finds rationale for this outside the context of 1 Cor 7. Martin suggests that Paul draws heavily from the moral philosophers of his day, to the extent that his views are largely indistinguishable from theirs. Paul, however, explicitly claims celibacy as a most appropriate option "in view of the impending crisis (v. 26)." What is more, Paul explicitly seeks to promote "unhindered devotion to the Lord (v. 35)" until his return, which is imminent. These comments seem to place Paul's philosophical perspective firmly within the context of Jewish apocalypticism, as will be considered below.

Also, Martin brings the language of 'strong' and 'weak' into his discussion of 1 Cor 7, claiming that Paul saw the willing celibates as 'strong' and those who insisted upon marriage as 'weak.' The language of strong and weak does not show up until chapter 8, when Paul talks about consuming meat previously sacrificed to idols. Applying this language to chapter 7, then, is an unwarranted retrojection back onto chapter 7. In chapter 8, the 'strong' represent those who understand that idols mean nothing with respect to the sacrifice, while the 'weak' represent those who are unwilling to eat such meat. This neat categorization does not work for celibacy and marriage, since Paul acknowledges that celibacy is a  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\sigma\mu\alpha$  in the same way that the spiritual gifts ( $\chi\alpha\rho\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ ) of chapter 12 are. Paul acknowledges his own right to marriage, like the other apostles (9:5), and concedes that celibacy is a personal sacrifice made by Barnabas

and himself for the sake of the gospel, in the same way that rejecting his apostolic right to remuneration is. Paul asserts unequivocally that marriage no way symbolizes moral compromise; it is not sinful (7:36).

Lastly, Martin may miss the obvious connection of 1 Cor 7 and Jesus tradition. If the strong/weak dichotomy is helpful at all for understanding 1 Cor 7, it is in the fact that the dichotomy also seems to be squarely based upon Jesus tradition and therefore confirms that Paul consistently used Jesus tradition in his argumentation. For instance, Paul's views in 1 Cor 8 parallel Matt 15:11, where Jesus is recorded saying, "...it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." Also, Paul's apocalyptic rationale for celibacy and views on marriage and divorce, have important parallels in the Synoptic tradition (e.g., Matt 19). What is more, numerous parallels can also be found among the apocalyptically-minded sects within Judaism (discussed below).

### **2.3.15 David Fredrickson (2003)**

Fredrickson builds a case like Martin's. With a strong grasp of the primary sources of the moral philosophers leading up to the first century, Fredrickson sets out to reconstruct how Paul's first century audience might have understood his words.<sup>219</sup> He begins his article on 'Passionless Sex in 1 Thess 4:4-5' by assuming that Paul's audience would have understood the expression *σκεῦος* to mean wife. Furthermore, he asserts that the phrase *τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι* would have been understood as acquiring a wife and handling her properly. This 'proper handling,' according to Fredrickson, involves the possibility of passionless sex, which, according to the numerous ancient sources that he

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<sup>219</sup> See David Fredrickson's two articles: "Natural and Unnatural Use in Rom 1:18-32: Paul and the Philosophic Critique of Eros," in *Homosexuality, Science and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999) 197-222, and "Passionless Sex in 1 Thess 4:4-5," *WW* 23 (Winter 2003): 23-30.

cites, seems to be a plausible reconstruction. Just as in Martin, marriage provides a cure for passion.<sup>220</sup>

On the one hand, Fredrickson and Martin are correct in their assessment that Greek and Roman marriage had motivations other than sexual gratification, which were provided by prostitution and concubinage. As mentioned earlier, however, his understanding of 1 Thess has been problematic since the 1980's, when Yarbrough connected 1 Thess 4 with 1 Cor 7. Then, as now, many passionately contest this reading of 1 Thess 4 since Paul does not follow this course of action in any of his other letters. Again, if Paul was speaking about marriage in his use of σκεῦος, it stands to reason that he would be explicit.<sup>221</sup> Also, as with Martin, Fredrickson's reconstruction is heavily laden with Hellenistic sources that are some distance from more conservative Palestinian perspectives. This is a substantial oversight since Paul makes much ado about his zealous pharisaic past. Lastly, there is no real consideration of the idea that Paul's view of sexuality might be dependent upon Jesus tradition.

### **2.3.16 Post-Bultmannian Conclusions:**

As mentioned above, pre-Bultmannian scholars typically fell into two camps on the issue of Paul and his use of Jesus tradition. More liberal scholars (or those who have affiliation with the history-of-religions school) detach Paul from Jesus tradition with the result that his views become innovations and/or significantly dependent upon 'Hellenism' and Greco-Roman moralists. Moreover conservative scholars, on the other hand, argue for Paul's reliance upon Jesus tradition and characterize the Apostle as faithfully expanding this tradition. It can also be said that while the first camp placed very little emphasis on Palestinian Jewish backgrounds, the second says very little about the

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<sup>220</sup> Fredrickson, "Passionless Sex," 29-30.

<sup>221</sup> On this point, see the critique of Yarbrough's work above.

possible influence of the broader social world on Paul's perspective. Also as mentioned, these scholars typically fail to provide adequate methodological explanation as to how these traditions inform Pauline thinking. This was the state of the conversation on 1 Cor. 7 and the methodological assumptions leading up to Bultmann.

Then we discussed how Bultmann considered Paul's views in 1 Cor 7:1-7 through the assumption of a Hellenistic-dualistic depreciation of the body, much as seen in Weiss. He posited that Gnosticism predated Christianity in concert with the likes of Godet and Lütgert. Bultmann adds that the language of Gnosticism and the Gnostic myth was used to "unfold" the Hellenistic Christian message.<sup>222</sup> He also argued that along with the Kyrios cult and Gnosticism, Hellenistic Christianity became a syncretistic reality. As mentioned above, this reconstruction suffered a significant setback in the second half of the twentieth century when scholarship concluded that a pre-Christian Gnosticism is likely a dubious consideration.<sup>223</sup> This discovery went far in bringing into question the suppositions of the Bultmannian school since it held that the Gnostic Redeemer myth was supposedly essential for understanding the NT as a whole. In the end, even the radical skeptic Bultmann finds "echoes of the words of the Lord" in the writings of Paul (see summary of Bultmann's views above), and this includes the apostle's discussion on gender relations.

Furthermore, Davies acknowledged that Paul and others drew extensively from a pre-Christian didactic tradition of Judaism. Be that as it may, "Paul has Christianized material of 'foreign' origin by adding the formula ἐν κυρίῳ this being added to show that all the exhortations were regarded as inspired by the Spirit of the Lord."<sup>224</sup> Davies argued, however, that Paul's primary source of ethical teaching came from the words of Jesus Himself. He also provides a detailed list of parallels between Paul and the words of

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<sup>222</sup> Bultmann, *NT Theology*, 1:164-165.

<sup>223</sup> Horrell and Adams, *Christianity at Corinth*, 16-23.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

Jesus, as preserved in the Synoptic tradition with the conclusion: “Furthermore, while Pauline ethics does emphasize life in the Spirit, this cannot be taken to mean that the ethical teachings of Jesus have no significance in Paul.”

Since the 1970s, an ever-increasing emphasis has been placed upon the social aspects surrounding Pauline perspective. This has been a most fortunate shift in methodology, despite the reductionism of some. Judge, Malherbe, Yabrough, Deming, Forenza, Wire, Meeks, Fredrickson, Martin and many others have made considerable deductions using a description of the social world of the NT or by utilizing some sociological theory or model to explain problems that arose in the early church. This survey of relevant materials has catalogued the wide array of perspectives regarding Greco-Roman philosophy and religion (which includes both Judaism and Christianity) and their possible (or likely) impact on the outlook of Paul and the Corinthian church on marriage, celibacy and divorce. Dale Martin suggests that at times, the best we can attain is to articulate “philosophical commonplaces” prevalent throughout the Greco-Roman milieu.<sup>225</sup> To be sure, the range of proposals may justifiably lead to such a conclusion.

From the Corinthian side, this view appears to fit. In the cultural mix of the first century CE, there were seldom any rigid theological and philosophical barriers holding back syncretism. While Jews in Palestine were exempt from the compulsory aspects of Roman religion (e.g., emperor worship), others practiced emperor worship and other religious rights. The Stoic Epictetus, for instance, was seldom critical of traditional religion and chose to highlight commonalities between himself and other philosophical group like the Cynics.<sup>226</sup>

From Paul’s side, however, an entirely different thing must be said. It goes without saying that the best hermeneutical practice for understanding Paul’s perspective

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<sup>225</sup> Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 72.

<sup>226</sup> In *Enchiridion* 31.4-5, Epictetus says, “But is always appropriate to make libations, and sacrifices, and to give of the first-fruits after the manner of our fathers, and to do all this with purity, and not in a slovenly or careless fashion, nor, indeed, in a naggardly way, nor yet beyond our means” (Oldfather, LCL).

is to follow explicit clues given by the Apostle himself. Throughout his letters, Paul makes it adamantly clear that prior to his conversion,<sup>227</sup> he was extremely devoted to the traditions of his ancestors. In Gal 1:13-4, Paul reminds the Galatians of his former life: “You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous (ζηλωτής) for the traditions of my ancestors.” This autobiographical statement can be verified by the Lukan characterization of Paul in Acts. Prior to his Damascus road experience (Acts 9)—to which he seems to refer in Gal 1:15-6 and which becomes important for his theology—Paul is depicted as a violent dissenter to the spread of Christianity.

Further, Paul's zealous posture expressed within the Palestinian region may provide conclusive evidence that he spent much of his life in Jerusalem or perhaps at least among conservative Jews in Cilicia.<sup>228</sup> Diaspora Jews were often unaffected by events that transpired in the Holy Land. Meeks brings out that Jews in regions like

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<sup>227</sup> Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul Rabbi and Apostle* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 52-55. Lapide, a Jew himself, does not see any substantial movement from Judaism in Paul. He questions whether ‘conversion’ is the appropriate language to use for Paul. I realize that many scholars believe that Paul did not see himself as a convert into another religion. It must be acknowledged, however, that he did affirm a sense of movement in places like Gal 1:13-14, where he contrasts “Judaism” and the “church of God” that he tried to destroy. Also, in v. 14, he moves from being “zealous for the traditions of my fathers” to “but when God... was pleased to reveal his Son in me...” Significant is the fact that even after becoming a follower of the Way, Paul (like Jesus) had much in common theologically with many of his Jewish contemporaries. While he overstates his case at points, Brad Young talks in detail about this theological compatibility. See Young’s *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995) and *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee Among Christians, Jews and Gentiles* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

<sup>228</sup> W.C. van Unnik argues well that when punctuated correctly, Paul’s address to a hostile crowd in Acts 22:3 demonstrates three significant points about his upbringing. He was: (1) “a Jew, born at Tarsus of Cilicia,” (2) “brought up in this city (Jerusalem)” and (3) “educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the Law of our fathers, being zealous for God...” If these points are feasible, it is possible that Paul grew up in Jerusalem and came under the tutelage of Gamaliel during his teen years. See his *Tarsus or Jerusalem: The City of Paul’s Youth* (trans. George Ogg; London: Epworth, 1962). Joachim adds that it was a common practice for Jews to move to Palestine for religious purposes. Joachim Jeremias makes the claim: “Many people moved to Jerusalem, so that they might die in the Holy place and might be buried in the place of the Resurrection and the Last Judgment.” Joachim, *Jesus in the Time of Jesus*, 75.

Alexandria were closely connected to Rome and depended upon them greatly for survival.<sup>229</sup> Strategically, Rome made clients out of Jews (and other “coherent communities”) with ambivalent local status, making imperial patronage a must for survival. Indeed, unlike Palestinian Judaism, Diasporan Jews viewed Rome as their protector. On several occasions during the Jewish wars of 66-77 and 132-135 CE, Rome vigorously upheld the rights of Diasporan Jews in the face of Jewish anti-Semitic trends, to the end that “they suffered no visible consequences of the latter’s defeat.”<sup>230</sup> Such a stance is incompatible with what we see in the biographical comments made about Paul as well as his own autobiographical comments.

This work attempts to understand Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce only after thorough consideration of his Jewish heritage, his conversion into Christianity<sup>231</sup> and his exposure to the Greco-Roman philosophical thought. It goes on to discuss as expanded Jesus tradition two significant aspects of Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 7:

[1] One could use many other examples that would bear out the significance of Paul’s conversion experience and the subsequent radical reorientation of his worldview. The basic thesis of this paper is that 1 Cor 7 should be categorized as expanded Jesus tradition. It should also be said that Paul’s pharisaic past seems to have been instrumental in his theological formation as well. Evidence within 1 Corinthians itself suggests that Paul intensifies rather than dilutes this Jesus tradition. He places significant emphasis on eschatological concerns, which greatly colors his perspective and provides the rationale for his radical brand of sexual ethics. He aggressively sets forth his opinion (γνώμη), but leaves the final decision up to the individual; in fact, 1 Cor 7 should be viewed in light of what Paul says in 7:8: θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ

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<sup>229</sup> Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 30-38.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>231</sup> See note 227 on the idea of ‘conversion’ in relationship to Paul.

ἐμαυτόν. ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως. He sets forth his desire for all of the members of the Corinth church to be as he is himself (i.e., celibate), but classifies his life as a celibate as a gift (χάρισμα). It is perhaps telling that Paul also refers to the gifts in 1 Cor 12 with the term χάρισμα. In fact, every time this term is used outside of 7:7—1:7, 12:4, 12:9, 12:28, 12:30 and 12:31—it refers to the spiritual gifts. Since this is the case, Paul would have seen celibacy as a special endowment given by the Spirit much like the other gifts in chapter 12.

In chapter 12, Paul suggests that the spiritual gifts were not for self-indulgence and conveys two significant points about them: (1) They are given by the Spirit as the Spirit wills, and (2) they were to be used for the edification of the church as a whole. In 12:4-6, Paul says, “There are different kinds of gifts but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.” Then, in v. 11, he says, “All these (χαρίσματα of 7-10) are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one as he determines.” Similar statements are made throughout the chapter (e.g., v. 13, 27-30). Paul clearly puts forward the idea—as he does in 7:7—that spiritual gifts are given, not chosen. Those who occupy certain offices have been “appointed” (12:28). Here, Paul uses the term τίθημι, which in his letters is almost always used in reference to divine activity. In 12:28, as in 12:18, Paul connects God’s election with the existence of varied spiritual gifts.<sup>232</sup>

Another linchpin of this discussion is the rationale that Paul gives for the gifts in the first place. Paul argues that the χαρίσματα were given for the “common good” (1 Cor 12:7). In chapters 7 and 9, celibacy functions in a like manner, for the “common good.” In chapter 7, celibacy enables Paul, and others who follow his practice, to be solely “concerned about the Lord’s affairs.” As a result of this χάρισμα, Paul led the life of an

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<sup>232</sup> Christian Maurer, “τίθημι,” *TDNT* 8:152-168. “One sees this too when the existence of different members (IV, 561, 15 ff.) in Christ’s body is traced back to divine ordination, 1 C. 12:18, 28” (157).



itinerant preacher, becoming all things to all men, not encumbered in his evangelistic efforts by the affairs of this life (1 Cor 7:33).

Most significant, however, is that Jesus is also recorded making such a claim about the life of the celibate in Matt 19:11-12. It may be that Paul plays with the ambiguity inherent in the Jesus tradition handed down to him. The capacity to live as a celibate is seemingly 'given' (ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Οὐ πάντες χωποῦσιν τὸν λόγον [τοῦτον] ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται) in the same sense as the χάρισμα in Paul. There is a measure of ambiguity in the phrase: καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω. It seems, according to this tradition, that one chooses a celibate lifestyle because it has been 'given' to him or her by God; this determination, however, has to be made by the individual. This individual is "the one who has the ability to practice (the life of a eunuch), let him practice [it]" (ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω). It is clear that for Paul, δυνάμει is often connected with God-inspired 'capacity.' This term also relates to the amount of suffering that one is able to endure for the sake of the gospel.<sup>233</sup> So, both God-induced and self-induced celibacy are within the semantic range of the term δυνάμει in Pauline thought.

It was mentioned earlier that Paul bases his argument in 1 Cor 7 on Jesus tradition, and the practice of Paul is toward intensification, not dilution of this tradition. It is possible that he follows Jesus in this practice as well.<sup>234</sup> Paul's comments in 1 Cor 9 provide ample evidence for seeing this tendency in Paul, particularly with regard to the church in Corinth. Here, Paul strongly affirms the apostolic right of financial support and marriage, but rejects them on strictly personal grounds—a practice that also clearly grows

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<sup>233</sup> Walter Grundman, "δυνάμει," *TDNT* 2:284-317.

<sup>234</sup> Even his preference for whatever leads to peace (ειρήνη) may also be an intensification of Jesus tradition. At least it matches the stance of Jesus as depicted in the Synoptic tradition. For instance, Jesus tells Peter to pay the temple tax so as not to offend those demanding it (17:24-26) and prays for his prosecutors, saying, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) Also, in the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus is depicted as using hyperbole on several occasions ("If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out.").

out of his γνώμη and which he advocates but does not make mandatory.<sup>235</sup> The link between Paul's comments in 1 Cor 7 and 9 is quite strong and exposes his conscious tendency to intensify his stance for the sake of the gospel. Indeed, the sacrificial attitude, as will be shown, permeates Paul's entire perspective, especially as seen in 1 Cor. The radical nature of Paul's conversion and faith suggest that these connections are perhaps more helpful for understanding 1 Cor 7 than looking elsewhere.

[2] This same connection to Jesus tradition shows up in Paul's comments on divorce. In 1 Cor 7:10-11, Paul explicitly claims to base his command on Jesus tradition: "To the married I give this command (not I but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does she is to remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife." The interpretation that Paul is not loosely referring to this tradition can be bolstered by the fact that in the next very verse, he qualifies his comment, saying, "To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord)..." As Dungan mentions, the Synoptic gospels affirms such a tradition as well. Paul seems to follow the trajectory of the tradition "as a polemical remark of Jesus in the milieu of Palestinian Judaism, to its eventual transformation into a regulation concerning divorce and marriage in the early Church."<sup>236</sup>

This proposal, however, must be justified using a methodology that attempts to carefully consider the biblical data as well as the potential options, an approach that fairly and precisely lays out the potential influences on Paul as opposed to simply seeking to explain his thought via parallels from all over the Greco-Roman environs and from different time periods. As mentioned above, several factors have led the contemporary discussion on Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce in 1 Cor 7, away from the

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<sup>235</sup> Throughout 1 Cor, Paul argues that others should follow his example and his sacrificial mentality. For more on this, refer to Scroggs' article "Paul and the Eschatological Body" and my discussion in chapter 5.

<sup>236</sup> Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul*, 132.

view proposed here. Below we will lay out dominant religious and philosophical perspectives in the first century in an effort to understand likely influences on Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce.

## CHAPTER 3      COMPARING PATTERNS-OF-RELIGION: MORAL PHILOSOPHY, JUDAISM AND PAUL

It is generally understood that the early church adapted the early sayings of Jesus to address the particular concerns confronting its congregations. In the Synoptic tradition, a vivid example can be seen in the way that Mark seemingly expands Jesus tradition on divorce to address what appears to be a largely gentile audience.<sup>237</sup> As mentioned earlier, Mark expands the primitive tradition as possibly seen in Matthew (and Luke)<sup>238</sup>—which directs the prohibition against arbitrary divorce solely at men—to include both men and women in a context other than Jewish Palestine where women clearly have the authority to divorce their husbands. The tradition, then, is expanded by the early church to fit a different context, while at the same time being faithful to the original intentions of the tradition.

This work argues that Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce are based upon authentic Jesus tradition and that the expansion of this tradition was already in process prior to his conversion. Naturally, this expansion is more aggressive in the Pauline corpus since it represents the first instance of written reflection upon Jesus’ ideals in conjunction with a thoroughgoing philosophy of gentile inclusion. In the same fashion as other NT writers, Paul takes Jesus tradition and adjusts it to address the specific needs of his diverse congregations without moving away from the tradition’s original intent.

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<sup>237</sup> On the question of audience, see Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001) and William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974)

<sup>238</sup> As seen above, Dungan argues that Luke or Matthew are possibly the most primitive since they strictly prohibit the husband from divorcing his wife, which would have been consistent with Palestinian Jewish mores. It seems likely, in Dungan’s estimation, that Luke’s account is oldest.

Such a claim, however, does not take us very far, if, as some argue, Jesus is deeply influenced by Hellenism and borrows extensively from the moral philosophy of his day.<sup>239</sup> It would simply mean that Paul and other NT writers were more influenced by Greco-Roman religious and philosophical trends than they themselves realized. This point of view, however, may assume a kind of naiveté on the part of Paul and others and an inability to see the philosophical differences between Jesus' movement, Judaism and the surrounding world.

Due to our contention that Paul draws extensively from Jesus tradition and goes on to expand this tradition, considerable time is spent comparing Jesus' thinking with that of the rabbis and moral philosophers of his day. Methodologically, this work follows E. P. Sanders' approach of providing a thoroughgoing comparison of 'patterns of religion' or "how a religion is perceived by its adherents to function."<sup>240</sup> In doing so, attention will first be given to each tradition, followed by a discussion of possible influences. While time is spent on characterizing each group generally, comparison will focus on two areas that are most relevant to our understanding of 1 Corinthians 7: 1) Views on life after death and 2) views on marriage, celibacy and divorce. These areas are important as Paul's apocalyptic ideals appear to be quite influential on his views regarding marital relations.

Why is this approach important for determining the important influences on Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce in 1 Cor 7? As shown above, many argue that Paul's views derive from the multifaceted philosophical and religious milieu of the Greco-Roman world, while others contend that they come from his Jewish past and/or exposure to Jesus tradition. Therefore, it is important to examine relevant primary source materials from the Greco-Roman context on their own terms and then to discuss points of

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<sup>239</sup> Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992)

<sup>240</sup> E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 16-17.

possible dependence. It is necessary to analyze parallels closely since it is not safe to assume dependency one way or the other. For instance, late Jewish and Christian views on resurrection are conceptually close to Greek notions of the immortality of the soul. It seems likely, however, that resurrection is a distinctive outgrowth from Judaism, providing an answer to the theological problem of righteous suffering (theodicy).<sup>241</sup>

Unfortunately, much scholarship looks past this very important step when attempting to reconstruct social and historical phenomenon. While it is virtually impossible to separate out differences at points, certain norms within sects are identifiable. For instance, Deming, in his work, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* does a masterful job at exposing the ongoing discourse on marriage and celibacy between Stoics and Cynics. Whether there was ever a formal debate is uncertain, but, in several instances, philosophers do indeed clarify their views in contrast to the other side.<sup>242</sup> It must be said, however, that Deming spends very little time contrasting his view with a more thoroughgoing understanding of the more orthodox brands of Judaism. The closest that he gets is a rather one-sided conception of Hellenistic Judaism, which he uses as a kind of foil for his own perspective. For instance, in his interpretation of 1 Cor 7:1-7, Deming never considers that possibility that Paul's appreciation for celibacy mirrored that of the more radical Jewish sectarians and/or Jesus himself. He connects Paul's view on celibacy to an exposure to Cynicism "mediated via Stoic thought" or else possibly "a synthesis of ideas from Stoic philosophers and Jewish sages."<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> For more on this, see Sandmel's highly celebrated article "Parallelomania," briefly discussed in note 34. Also, see Donaldson's article entitled "Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations."

<sup>242</sup> See Deming's summary above.

<sup>243</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 127.

### 3.1 PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1.1 A Methodological Note: E. P. Sanders' Pattern of Religion

E. P. Sanders argues that Paul's relationship to Rabbinic Judaism has been largely misunderstood. Rather than understanding Judaism on its own terms before seeking out parallels for a variety of topics seen as central in Pauline thought, NT scholars have generally been guilty of ignoring the need for thoroughgoing analysis. Important for Sanders is the acknowledgement that the Rabbinic Judaism as reflected in the sources of his study bears little or no resemblance to the depiction given in the Pauline corpus. Equally dissatisfying are the scholarly approaches used to compare Paul with the Jewish matrix out of which he came. Sanders argues vehemently against the view that the fundamental antithesis of justification by grace versus justification by works, as forwarded by prominent scholars like Thackeray, Bultmann and Schrenk, is an adequate characterization of the differences. Sanders asserts that this view was largely held by scholars who uncritically embraced the antithesis set up by Paul himself.<sup>244</sup>

Sanders clearly establishes the goal for his work as comparing 'patterns of religion' or "how a religion is perceived by its adherents to function."<sup>245</sup> This includes understanding "how getting in and staying in are understood."<sup>246</sup> After a detailed consideration of the literature connected to Palestinian Judaism, Sanders arrives at his understanding of its pattern of religion as 'covenantal nomism.' "The 'pattern' or 'structure' of covenantal nomism is this: (1) God has chosen Israel and (2) given the law. This implies both (3) God's promise to maintain the election and (4) the requirement to obey. (5) God rewards obedience and punishes transgression. (6) The law provides for means of atonement, and atonement results in (7) maintenance or re-establishment of the

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<sup>244</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 1-12.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

covenant relationship. (8) All those who are maintained in the covenant by obedience, atonement and God's mercy belong to the group which will be saved."<sup>247</sup> Significantly, Sanders concludes that election and salvation were by God's mercy, not human achievement.

This work will follow a modified form of this methodology as set forth by Sanders, as it seems to be the most helpful rubric by which to establish uniqueness and dependence between disparate movements that have philosophical points of concurrency. The modification will reside in its application, for—as mentioned earlier—emphasis will be placed on two particular areas of interest related to 1 Cor. 7: 1) views on life after death 2) and views on marriage, celibacy and divorce. These areas are of particular interests since they are often identified as the places where dependence is typically argued to exist. The range of groups considered calls for such a methodological modification. This section has both diachronic and synchronic intentions, since it begins with a brief evolutionary summary of the groups under consideration and then provides detailed exploration of their unique doctrines and practices in the two areas mentioned above.

### **3.1.2 Hellenistic Philosophy: A Brief Historical Sketch**

In an effort to be as precise as possible, it is important to clearly establish the character of philosophy that would have been most influential on Jesus' and Paul's thinking. First, a brief statement about the origin and spread of the Greek philosophical tradition appears to be in order. At its conception, Greek philosophy—if we can use such an inclusive expression—was a counter-cultural phenomenon, attempting to answer

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 422-43.



questions about life and ultimate reality in a way that, heretofore, was unheard of.<sup>248</sup> Pre-Socratic philosophy held the works of Homer and Hesiod in regard, but “tried to explain what happens, and why things are as they are, by appeal to laws involving natural stuffs, events, and processes, apart from the anger of Poseidon or Apollo.”<sup>249</sup> In other words, it intentionally sought to construct a vision of reality that was less theological in nature. Greek philosophy’s pursuit of wisdom, apart from any reference to the gods, grew, in part, out of the low opinions of the immoral, anthropomorphic deities of Greek mythology.

In one sense, then, the character of traditional Greek religion inspired the need for formal, systematic philosophical inquiry. Traditional Greek religion which drew creatively upon the works of authors like Homer had no systematic delineation of the will of the gods.<sup>250</sup> The gods’ actions were arbitrary and capricious with the result that theological tradition had to be based merely upon their existence and not upon some

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<sup>248</sup> Scholars tend to characterize the emergence of the Greek mind as a phenomenon that somehow arose in a vacuum. This can be seen in the comments of noted classicist H.D.F. Kitto, who overstates this point by saying that the Greeks “had a totally new conception of what life was for, and showed for the first time what the human mind was for” (7). He goes on to say “philosophy and in all its branches, from metaphysics to economics; mathematics and many of the natural sciences – all these begin with the Greeks.” Kitto loses sight of the amazing achievements of groups like the Egyptians, who were master mathematicians and were responsible for architectural marvels and accomplishments that we have yet to unravel. Furthermore, since knowledge is accumulated and circulated among people groups in fairly close proximity to one another, it stands to reason that Greek thought drew heavily from surrounding peoples. This does not detract from the unquestionable contributions to the world by Greek thinkers; it simply attempts to reconnect such a phenomenon to a milieu that was vibrant and not devoid of intellectual acumen. See H.D.F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963).

<sup>249</sup> Terence Irwin, *Classical Philosophy* (ed. Terence Irwin; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>250</sup> Even discussion about places of the dead is not realistic given the anthropomorphic characterization of the gods. Such does hint at an underlining morality, but it is not made explicit; this is what Leo G. Perdue hints at in his book *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2007). According to Perdue, one of the factors that led to the composition of the Wisdom of Solomon “was what may be best described as an internal crisis of the religious spirit of Hellenism, leading to a growing disenchantment with Greek state religion, centered on the Olympian gods, and with the military control imposed by Imperial Rome. Wisdom, the *Letter of Aristeas*, and Philo join with Greek intellectuals in ridiculing Greek myths (*Philo*, Praem. 8), polytheism (*Spec.* 2. 164), and the adoration of beauty (*Abr.* 267-8)” (286).

system of ethics established by them. Greek and Roman religion did catalog rules for what could and could not be done in an effort to appease the gods, but these rules did not necessarily relate to a code of behavior as they did the proper manner in which to perform rituals.<sup>251</sup> In his estimation of mystery and Olympian cults, Kitto asserts: "...these [mystery cults] admitted anyone, bond or free, the Olympian admitted only members of the group: these [mystery cults] taught doctrines of rebirth, regeneration, immortality; the Olympian taught nothing, but were concerned with the paying of honours due to the immortal and unseen members of the community."<sup>252</sup>

This can be contrasted, for instance, with the characterization of Israel's God, who commands: "Be ye holy for I am holy" (Lev 11:44-5). At an early stage in its evolution, Judaism understood itself to worship a God who reveals expectation and character through a set of laws and divinely appointed leaders. These laws covered the full expanse of Jewish life – civil, cultic and moral. When the laws were broken, consequences were clearly defined in an effort to deter others from similar practices (Deut 28-9). The God of the Hebrew Bible is always transcendent, omniscient and always clear about why certain practices are appropriate, even when characters (and readers) ask why.<sup>253</sup>

Greek philosophy burgeoned in the fifth and sixth centuries BCE in the independent Greek city-states of western Asia and Sicily, later spreading to Athens.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> See the fragments of Seneca's work "On Superstition" in Augustine's *City of God* 6.10.

<sup>252</sup> Kitto, *The Greeks*, 20.

<sup>253</sup> The characterization of Gideon conveys that he is oblivious to Israel's sinful past and is frustrated at God who speaks to him as he secretly threshes out wheat in a wine press. In Judges 6:13, Gideon asks, "Why has all this happened to us?" His question is never directly addressed.

<sup>254</sup> In his *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), Bertrand Russell acknowledges this, saying that Thales—with whom some believe that philosophy began—"...travelled to Egypt, and to have thence brought to the Greeks that science of Geometry" (25). Also, George G. M. James, in his work, *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1993), argues that Greek philosophy was stolen without appropriate recognition of Egyptian philosophers. His work, however, has been greatly disputed on the basis of alleged anachronisms and other historical inaccuracies.

While philosophers and sophists could be agnostic, atheistic or theistic, they were generally relativistic and open to philosophical discourse as seen in the characterization of Mars Hill in Acts 17:19.<sup>255</sup> In the fourth century BCE, it experienced what proved to be somewhat of a golden age of the Greek philosophical tradition in much the same way that the United Monarchy of King David was for Israel. This is due in part to the foundation established by the Pre-Socratic era and the arrival of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Later in that century, armed with the phalanx maneuver and the sword of Aristotelian political philosophy, Alexander the Great went about conquering body and mind. Aristotle said: “Man is an animal whose characteristic it is to live in a city-state.”<sup>256</sup> This, he surmised, was a fundamental difference between Greeks and the rest of the world. The city-state “became the focus of a man’s moral, intellectual, aesthetic, social and practical life, developing and enriching these in a way in which no form of society had done before or since.”<sup>257</sup>

Alexander’s perspective would eventually shift away from Aristotle’s conception that the Greek city-state was the ideal social organism, since the formation of a sprawling empire necessarily led to the ideal of cosmopolitanism. The barriers that upheld national distinctions and kept Greeks and barbarians from interacting were eventually swept away under the rule of his generals and later Rome. This is why some scholars often speak in terms of empire-wide trends. While “the Greek city continued everywhere except in Egypt, Alexander’s successors carried out a hellenizing policy by establishing or

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<sup>255</sup> Mason claims that allegiance to one philosophical school was looked down upon by the social elite. Josephus, Cicero and others mention their exposure to several philosophical groups in an indirect effort to demonstrate the eclecticism of a true aristocrat. Mason highlights, for instance, how Lucian the satirist pokes fun at the notion of embracing one school’s doctrine in *Philosophies for Sale*. See Steve Mason’s in work entitled “Josephus’s Pharisees: The Philosophy,” in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 41-66.

<sup>256</sup> Kitto, *The Greeks*, 11.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

developing urban centres on the Greek model...city-activity had little more than local significance...it was no longer the fundamental category, the supreme norm, of thought and culture.”<sup>258</sup> The true sophist saw himself as a citizen of the world, κοσμοπολίτης.<sup>259</sup> A clear example of the move toward uprooting Aristotelian prejudice against foreigners can be seen in the promoting of soldiers to marry women from newly conquered regions. The Greek hierarchy was convinced that this kind of cultural blending was an important step in establishing an empire-wide bond necessary for political union.<sup>260</sup>

This movement to a broader conception of the self and its relationship to the world can be seen in the expansion of the idea of παιδεία. No longer did this expression simply reference the methods used to bring a child into adulthood; it also came to denote the “*results* of this educational effort, pursued beyond the years of schooling and lasting throughout the whole of one’s life, to realize more perfectly the human ideal...Παιδεία (or παιδευσις) comes to signify ‘culture’”; a culture that extended over the entire inhabited universe (οἰκουμένη) and included the world of civilized men.<sup>261</sup> Under Alexander, and especially his successors, this could no longer simply be a racial reality; it extended to everyone who wholeheartedly embraced the essential features of Hellenism. Furthermore, individual culture extended beyond the borders of the traditional city and was something that one carried with himself (and, according to a few thinkers, herself) wherever he went.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 97-98.

<sup>259</sup> Really this movement had started as early as Socrates and was significantly developed by Stoic thinkers. Socrates was critical of ordinary political involvement since Athenian politics failed to improve the conditions of people as it should have. Later, Stoic thinkers like Chrysippus of Soli argued for the ideal of being ‘a citizen of the cosmos’ as a metaphor for the true virtuous life. See Josiah Gould’s *The Philosophy of Chrysippus* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970) for a more detailed discussion on this point.

<sup>260</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 294.

<sup>261</sup> Henry Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (Sheed and Ward” New York, 1956), 98.

<sup>262</sup> The philosopher Stilpo, being asked to estimate the damage of the siege of Megara, claimed to have lost nothing since he still had his learning (παιδεία) as seen in “his eloquence and knowledge” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 2.115). See Marrou, *A History of Education*, 100.

Hellenistic education took its classical and definitive form in the generation following Aristotle and Alexander. It should be said, however, that the seeds of this development were actually planted prior to their time. In one instance, Aristotle says: “Reading and writing play a leading role in education because, in addition to their practical utility in professional, family and political life, ‘they are the means of acquiring many other types of knowledge and in consequence form the basis of all education.’”<sup>263</sup> Thus, physical education diminished in significance, being displaced by an emphasis on literacy.

The fourth century BCE also brought a myriad of philosophical innovations. Cynicism arose with the distinctive character of being a nonconformist movement, rejecting all convention (i.e., decency, manners, religion, etc.) for the pursuit of virtue on simple, non-materialistic terms.<sup>264</sup> While its adherents had different views and lifestyles, there are some commonalities that justify the designation ‘movement.’ Among other things, Cynics emphasized self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια) and freedom of speech (παρρησία). Diogenes is often remembered as the perfect embodiment of these ideals. It is recorded that on one occasion he was visited by Alexander the Great, who in admiration of his lifestyle asked him if he could do anything in his behalf. Diogenes is said to have responded, “Stand out of my sunlight” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.38 [Hicks, LCL]). He emphasized detachment from things considered to be good by others and taught that a life lived according to nature was a simple life. The gods intended for human existence to be easy, but humans had complicated it by seeking after things (Ibid., 6.44). Diogenes believed that training for virtuous behavior was important, although our sources say little if anything about what this training entailed (Ibid., 6.71).

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<sup>263</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education*, 95.

<sup>264</sup> When Diogenes was a slave, he taught the children of Xenias to be content with the basics of life. In response, Xenias used to say, “A good genius has entered my house” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.74). On another occasion, Diogenes saw a child drinking water with his hands and felt that a child had beaten him “in plainness of living.” He promptly threw away his cup (Ibid., 6.37)

While it is possible that Diogenes received training at the feet of Antisthenes, it seems equally likely that he learned a great deal from observation.<sup>265</sup> In one instance, he discovered a cure for poverty by observing a mouse. In response, he doubled his cloak as a pallet, kept his food in his wallet and used whatever place for all sorts of purposes (e.g., eating, drinking, disseminating his philosophical views, etc. (Ibid., 6.22 ). There is a sense in which he inflicted upon himself certain cruelties in an effort to train his body for outdoor weather. He slept in a barrel, rolled around in sand in the summer and would embrace statues covered in snow in the winter – “using every means of inuring himself to hardship” (Ibid., 6.23). He also regularly walked in the snow with bare feet and even tried to consume raw meat (Ibid., 6.34).

Late in the same century, Epicurus opened his school in the garden of his home, admitting both slaves and women; while this egalitarian spirit was echoed by some (e.g., Pythagoras and—to a lesser extent—Plutarch), Epicurus appears to be the most inclusive among ancient Greek thinkers. Honored as a god by some and utterly despised by others, Epicurus held to a radical materialism in his effort to refute the notion of the soul’s survival after death and the prospect of punishment in the afterlife. He saw the primary cause of anxiety among humans as the fear of death and anxiety in turn as the source of excessive, unfounded desires. He believed that removal of divine causality and the fear that it produced release individuals to pursue the mental and physical pleasure to which they are naturally inclined and have freedom from disturbing cares (ἀταράχος).<sup>266</sup> As

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<sup>265</sup> Though it has been posited by some that Cynicism can trace its origin back to Socrates and his disciple, Antisthenes, it appears more probable that it actually begins with its most esteemed proponent, Diogenes of Sinope (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 2.47 and 6.2).

<sup>266</sup> Unfortunately, the true and noble character of his philosophy was displaced by the mis-characterization in later history by the view that he was a hedonistic libertine. De Witt does well in his effort to “understand rightly the new Hedonism of Epicurus.” The “summum bonum” fallacy, as he calls it, is the notion that pleasure itself is the highest good. Actually, for Epicurus, life itself is the highest good. It is this misunderstanding that has led generations of outsiders to improperly characterize Epicurus and to view his works in a negative light. See Norman Wentworth De Witt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 216-248.

mentioned above, successive generations faithfully adhered to his doctrine, such that Epicurus and his school of thought attracted the respect and admiration of individuals not agreeing with their tenets.<sup>267</sup>

Stoicism had also been quite influential in the centuries leading up to the first century, perhaps more so than Cynicism and Epicureanism combined. Its founder, Zeno, had been greatly influenced by Cynicism and the works of Socrates. Unlike Epicurus, the nature of the works he left behind—short writings open to a wide range of interpretations—led to constant expansion and amendment by his followers, with the result that there is significant diversity of perspectives among ancient witnesses. Zeno arrived at the view of god as the world-soul and humans as a microcosm of this world-soul; just as man is an orderly, rational being with laws, the world displays a similar orderliness. While Stoic theology can sound remarkably similar to the theistic language of the Bible, it is thoroughly pantheistic.

As determinists, Stoics believed that a person's fate cannot be avoided and that to fight against it is the epitome of imprudence. Epictetus records a poem supposedly composed by Cleanthes that illustrates this perspective well (Epictetus, *Enchiridion*, 53 [Oldfather, LCL]):

*Lead thou me O Zeus, Destiny,  
To that goal long ago to me assigned  
I'll follow and not falter; if my will  
Prove weak and craven, still I'll follow on.*

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<sup>267</sup> F. F. Bruce, *NT History* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1977), 43. Bruce quotes Lucian of Samosata who held Epicureans and Christians as the least likely “to be taken in by charlatanry” (Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 38). He characterizes Epicurus as “that great man, a genuine saint and inspired prophet, who alone possessed and imparted true insight into the Good, and has proved a deliverer to all who consorted with him” (Ibid., 61).

As Bruce suggests, in this poem Zeus is “little more than the personification of fate.”<sup>268</sup> Instead of fighting against fate, one can experience a measure of peace if s/he gladly accepts it. Epictetus speaks of dismissing from oneself all sense of emotion, teaching oneself not to care when something is lost. He says, “This is what you ought to practice from morning till evening. Begin with the trifling things, the ones most exposed to injury, like a pot, or a cup, and then advance to a tunic, a paultry dog, a mere horse, a bit of land; thence to yourself, your body, and its members, your children, wife, brothers” (Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.111-2 [Oldfather, LCL]). This conviction can be seen in the ideal of *ἀπάθεια*. It was a genuine attempt to make sense of and then to cooperate with the forces already at work in the universe.

In the second century BCE, Rome began to assert itself so that, by the time of Emperor Augustus (ca. 31 BCE - 41 CE) Roman domination was a settled issue. Athens, however, retained its status as the key philosophical center in the Greco-Roman world, along with Alexandria and Tarsus.<sup>269</sup> By this time, Stoic and Epicurean ideals had taken deep root and exerted influence throughout the empire. Even within the Palestinian region, known for its devotion to Yahwism, the presence of these and other philosophical schools could be felt. In fact, Herod’s relationship with Emperor Augustus and his intentional efforts to make Jerusalem somewhat of an international tourist attraction provide reasonable explanation for the presence of such thinkers.<sup>270</sup> Some scholars contend that Cynicism had made such significant inroads into Palestine by the first

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<sup>268</sup> Bruce, *NT History*, 46.

<sup>269</sup> Johnson highlights Strabo’s praise of Tarsus “for their devotion to education and says that the city has surpassed Athens, Alexandria and any other place where there are schools of philosophy.” This may be important for our understanding of Paul and his intellectual development. Sherman E. Johnson, *Paul the Apostle and His Cities* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1987), 29.

<sup>270</sup> See Martin Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judea in the First Century After Christ* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1989) 11-13 and 33-35. Also, see Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus in the Time of Jesus*, 73-74.



century CE that Jesus' thought and practice necessarily reflect unquestionable influence.<sup>271</sup>

This is important since Romans were still under the hypnotic spell of Greek culture and would be for some time. In 155 BCE, a delegation of three philosophers—Carneades, Critolaus and Diogenes—arrived in Rome from Athens to dispute an almost overwhelming indemnity of 500 talents, which had been placed upon them for invading Oropus (Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.155-61). This marks an important date for Roman exposure to Hellenistic philosophy since their lectures garnered wide appeal, resulting in a significant rise in the number of philosophers in Rome and the numbers of Romans who embraced particular philosophical traditions. Upper-class Romans went to Greece for higher education and the marks of hellenization could be seen in Roman architecture, literature and models of education.<sup>272</sup> In fact, Quintilian illustrates this point when he argues that “a boy should begin with Greek since Latin, being in general use, will be picked up by him whether we will or no...” (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratio* 1.1.12 [Butler, LCL]). He goes on, however, to argue against what was “being done in a majority of the cases”; namely, teaching them Greek alone for an extended period (Ibid., 1.1.13). The result was the common occurrence of “many faults of language and accents” (Ibid.).

It is appropriate, then, to place emphasis on the philosophical traditions of Epicureanism and Stoicism, as they were the most dominant philosophical voices in the first century CE and had by that time experienced much proliferation throughout the Mediterranean world. The Roman Epicurean, Lucretius, vigorously spread Epicurus' ideals such that a growing appeal arose in the Greco-Roman world for his life of

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<sup>271</sup> See John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Burton Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988) and Downing, *Cynics*. Also see, Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 19-29 and 45-52.

<sup>272</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 255.

simplicity and his rejection of religious superstition.<sup>273</sup> Even more so than Epicureanism, Stoicism's hegemony of the Roman philosophical mind can be deduced from prolific individuals who embraced modified versions of it, like Cicero, Epictetus, Musonius Rufus and Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Also, philosophical parallels seem to exist between the movements of Cynicism and Jesus. If not broadly followed, Cynics and their views were broadly known. In fact, important Stoic philosophers expressed high regard for Cynicism (e.g., Epictetus), despite notable differences in doctrine.

### 3.1.3 Second-Temple Judaism: A Brief Historical Sketch

The success of Alexander the Great's Hellenizing policy is an incontestable historical fact, since his cultural empire lasted for nearly a millennium until the Islamic conquests of the seventh century CE. Even this statement places insufficient limits on just how far Greek philosophy and culture spread, splintering into innumerable forms and experiencing admiration and revival in subsequent eras (e.g., Byzantine Empire). Kitto suggests, however, that the Hebrews represent the other "race" that made a sharp "distinction between itself and all other foreigners."<sup>274</sup> He adds that "each is very conscious of being different from his neighbors, living not very far apart, yet for the most

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<sup>273</sup> Lucretius says, "When man's life lay for all to see foully groveling upon the ground, crushed beneath the weight of Religion, which displayed her head in the regions of heaven, threatening mortals from on high with horrible aspect, a man of Greece was the first that dared to uplift mortal eyes against her, the first to make a stand against her; for neither fables of the gods could quell him, nor thunderbolts, nor heaven with menacing roar, nay all the more they goaded the eager courage of his soul, so that he should desire first of all men, to shatter the confining bars of nature's gate. Therefore the lively power of his mind prevailed, and forth he marched far beyond the flaming walls of heaven, as he traversed the immeasurable universe in thought and imagination; whence victorious he returns bearing his prize, the knowledge what can come into being, what cannot, in a word, how each thing has its powers defined and its deep-set boundary marked. Wherefore Religion is now in her turn cast down and trampled underfoot, whilst we by the victory are exalted high as the heaven" (Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 1.62-79 [Rouse, LCL]). Also, regarding the high esteem given to Epicurus, see Lucian, *Alexander*, 61.

<sup>274</sup> Kitto, *The Greeks*, 8.

part in complete ignorance of the other and influencing each other not at all until the period following Alexander's conquests...<sup>275</sup>

It is helpful to begin a sketch of this nature with the broad realization that most Jewish people of the time were not adherents of any particular religious party. In fact, Grabbe contends that “the average Jew was probably what the later rabbis referred to as an *am ha-aretz*. That is, they were men and women who were pious in their own way but whose main focus of attention was making a living.”<sup>276</sup> There were, however, certain “institutions and ideals” that all Jews had in common: monotheism, being a part of the chosen people, acceptance of Torah as the word of God, the rite of circumcision, belief in the corporate inheritance of the promised land and annual festivals compulsory for every male (Passover, Pentecost, the festival of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles).<sup>277</sup>

The various groups within Judaism reflect unique responses to the encroachment of Hellenism, with the Jewish aristocracy—including the Sadducees and high priests—on one end of the continuum, and the Qumran Essenes on the other. The assessment that this phenomenon should lead us away from monolithic portrayals of Judaism is an accurate one. In fact, it is perhaps best to speak in terms of ‘Judaisms’ to reflect the many distinct forms of Jewish belief prevalent in the second temple period.<sup>278</sup> What is more, some scholars caution about the problematic nature of certain ways of categorizing second-temple Judaism, saying, for instance, that terms like sect have “too often been influenced by the situation and bias of the Christian tradition.”<sup>279</sup> As with Grabbe and

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<sup>275</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>276</sup>

Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*. (vol. 2; Minneapolis: Fortress Press., 1992),

530.

<sup>277</sup>

Ibid., 528-530.

<sup>278</sup>

Ibid., 527.

<sup>279</sup>

Ibid., 465.

others, the term “sect” will be used in this work “in a neutral and more encompassing sense to mean a minority religious movement.”<sup>280</sup>

Josephus recognizes four sects within Judaism that were most dominant in vocalizing its theological identity: the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Zealots and the Pharisees (Josephus, *Ant.*, 13.171-3; 18.12-25; *J.W.*, 2.119-166). The Sadducees were comprised of the priestly aristocracy who appealed solely to the Torah while rejecting tradition. They led the temple cult and had no problem negotiating with political powers. As it relates to their “philosophy”—to use Josephus’ terminology<sup>281</sup>—they were not proponents of fate, but held that God is distant from human beings (a view, as we will see below, not uncommon among moral philosophers). Humans are thus in full control of their own destinies. In addition, Sadducees were of the opinion that the soul perished with the body and therefore they looked forward to no rewards after death. People are compensated in *this* world for things done. According to Josephus, their philosophy did not gain wide appeal (*Ant.* 13.297-8; 18.15-7).

In many respects, the Sadducean perspective bears more important points of concurrency with moral philosophy than with the moderate and more radical strands of Judaism. For while it agrees with Epicureanism that God is aloof from the human predicament and that there is no afterlife, it at the same time rejected much of the theological substance that was commonplace among the Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes.<sup>282</sup> This was cause for an ever widening gap between it and other sects. Kee

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<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> In Josephus’s defense, Mason brings out that “philosophic” is an appropriate expression for ancient religious groups since a virtuous or righteous life, which pleases God was the standard goal of most philosophical inquiry. He goes on to say that this definition “drives home the signal differences between modern philosophy and ancient φιλοσοφία or philosophia. (Can you imagine inviting the local philosophy department to dinner, to solicit their help in our quest to live a decent, God-fearing life?) Yet ‘justice’ in all its valences—political, criminal, moral, religious—was indeed a central preoccupation of ancient philosophy.” See Mason’s, “The Philosophy,” 41.

<sup>282</sup> Sanders brings out that groups other than the Pharisees held to similar views regarding the resurrection. This would, of course, include followers of the Way, Essenes and Zealots (Sanders,

brings out: “The irony is that the more completely acculturated the official Jewish leader became in the Greco-Roman period, the more zealous and determined large segments of the Jews became to retain their identity as the covenant people by adapting and transforming the previously prevailing norms of covenant participation.”<sup>283</sup>

The Pharisees, who were the most influential with the masses (Josephus, *Ant.*, 13.297-8 and 18.15-7),<sup>284</sup> held as sacred the law, the writings and the prophets (a threefold canon recognized at least as early as Ben Sira<sup>285</sup>). It is likely that “writings” was a broad enough category to include certain apocryphal works as well. Their commitment to a much fuller canon and oral tradition led to a broader theological perspective, which the Sadducees saw as unfounded.<sup>286</sup> In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees “...believed in the survival of the soul, the revival of the body, the day of

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*Palestinian Judaism*, 147-52). What is more, like Jesus (Mark 12:18-27), they all believed that evidence of the resurrection could be found in the Torah.

<sup>283</sup> Howard Clark Kee, *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective: Methods and Resources* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980) 45.

<sup>284</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginnings of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 27. Neusner believes that Josephus overestimates pharisaic influence in Palestine. Dunn, on the other hand, maintains that Neusner reaches such a conclusion only by disregarding the clear evidence found in Josephus. For Dunn's rebuttal, see his “Pharisees, Sinners and Jesus,” 65-7. Mason agrees with Dunn arguing that those in power had to cooperate with the Pharisees in order to maintain some semblance of control over the masses, even the likes of King Herod. On one occasion he says that “the Pharisees had avenues of access to the masses that the priestly aristocracy as a body lacked” (12). Then, elsewhere he contends: “If Josephus wishes to leave any image of the Pharisees with his audience, it is that they have popular access, support and influence” (19). Steve Mason, “Josephus’s Pharisees: The Narratives” in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007).

<sup>285</sup> The prologue of Ecclesiasticus, translated from Hebrew to Greek by the unnamed grandson of one Jesus ben Sira, is an early witness to the three authoritative sections of the Jewish Scriptures. On the very first line, he writes: “Many great things have been given us through the law and the prophets and other authors...” Two lines later, he asserts that his grandfather dedicated himself to careful study of “the law, the prophets and the other books of our fathers.” Scholars typically date this work to the first half of the second century BCE, although some place it in the last quarter of the fourth.

<sup>286</sup> Josephus contends, “For the present, I wish merely to explain that the Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded by Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down (in Scripture), and that those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed” (*Ant.*, 13.297 [Marcus, LCL]).

judgment, and life in the world to come.”<sup>287</sup> Also, according to Josephus, they believed in a peculiar mixture of determinism *and* free will (Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.162-163; *Ant.* 18.13-15).

The Essenes held that Pharisaism was irreparably corrupt due to its association with persons and institutions they considered defiled. In fact, the writings of the Qumran monastics characterize Pharisees as “false expounders” of the Torah to be punished by God (*4Q169* 3:4). The Essenes held Moses and his law in high esteem, making blasphemy of his name a capital offense (Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.145).<sup>288</sup> They were also known for their prophetic accuracy, which gave them place before kings (*Ant.* 13.311-6, 5.373-9, 17.346-8; *J.W.* 1.78, 2.113 and 159).<sup>289</sup> This group awaited the end of the world and rigorously prepared for the great battle of Armageddon that would supposedly precede it. In their estimation, they were the remnant within Judaism that would be saved as an example to the world. As pure determinists, the Essenes claimed that God predestinated those who would be saved and those who would not.

To a large extent, zealotism had more to do with an attitude prevalent among some strands of Judaism than it did one particular sect.<sup>290</sup> In fact, Mason claims that the

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<sup>287</sup> Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity*, 28-29.

<sup>288</sup> Philo suggests that the Essenes held that Moses personally founded their community. He says, “Multitudes of disciples has *our* (ἡμέτερος) lawgiver trained for the life of fellowship” (Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.1). This seems to be the reason for the high regard that was given his name.

<sup>289</sup> This should perhaps be compared to what Josephus says about Pharisaic inaccuracies in prophecy. On one occasion, for instance, Herod executed his beloved eunuch Bagoas because he believed the Pharisaic prediction that he would one day have political clout, marry and beget children of his own (Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.45).

<sup>290</sup> For instance, when talking about the Essenes, Hippolytus suggests that the Zealots was one of four Essene parties which had derived from a split (Black, “The Essenes in Hippolytus,” 187ff.). Regarding this Bruce states: “If this does not indicate an actual overlapping of the Essenes and the Zealots, it does at least suggest that some Essenes adopted an attitude toward Gentiles which led people to confuse them with Zealots. That the Essenes were not pacifists in principle seems to be further indicated by the appearance of an Essene named John as an energetic commander of the insurgent Jewish forces in the war against Rome” (F.F. Bruce, *NT History*, 90).

Josephus' 'fourth philosophy' is in fact "an ad hoc literary construction."<sup>291</sup> Hengel suggests, Zealotism "was a phenomenon that had characterized the whole of Palestinian Judaism in general from the time of the Maccabees and in particular the groups of Essenes and Pharisees who had emerged from the Hasidim."<sup>292</sup> It was not until after the defeats of 70 CE and the Bar Kochba revolt that rabbinic theology became critical of "certain aspects of this zeal" and messianicism.<sup>293</sup> It found its roots in the likes of Phinehas, who singlehandedly and violently extinguished the apostasy of Baal-Peor (Num 25:7-13), and includes a long succession of individuals, including Paul, who also sought to eradicate theological deviations within Judaism: "This 'zeal for God's cause' represented vicariously the anger of God's judgment."<sup>294</sup> The sect Josephus refers to as Zealots refused to pay taxes, avoided the census, refused to make sacrifices to the emperor and were unswerving in their commitment to the unconditional freedom of Israel. Such a posture necessarily led to alienation since their radical views caused them to direct their hostility not only toward pagans, but also toward Jews who cooperated with these foreigners.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Mason, "The Philosophy," 60. Mason gives four reasons for his view: 1) the fourth philosophy is missing from other sources, 2) a fourth group does not appear throughout Josephus' writings; up until this point (*Ant.* 18.23-25) he only mentions three, 3) blaming a fourth philosophy for Judea's problems is an "ex post facto exercise," possible only with hindsight and 4) this is the only group without a distinctive set of views/values.

<sup>292</sup> Martin Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigation Into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 AD* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989) 224. Bruce affirms this position, adding, "There was thus a well-established tradition old religious 'zeal' in Israel, and zealots for God could point to worthy antecedents. We must beware of thinking that every time the word 'zealot' appears in a Jewish context in the New Testament membership in the Zealot party in the stricter sense is meant. Thus when Paul says that in his earlier days he outstripped his contemporaries as 'a zealot for the ancestral traditions' (Gal 1:14), or when James the Just describes the thousands of believers at Jerusalem as 'all zealots for the law' (Acts 21:20), the word is used in its ordinary, non-technical sense, albeit with a religious connotation" (*NT History*, 94). Also, on 121 Bruce argues that while the Essenes were not "Zealots in the party sense, they were certainly in the non-party sense zealots for God, for his law and for his cause."

<sup>293</sup> Bruce, *NT History*, 121.

<sup>294</sup> Hengel, *Zealots*, 225.

<sup>295</sup> Josephus describes the 'sicarii' as individuals who were not sufficiently sympathetic to nationalistic ideals and pro-Roman posture. The sicarii were responsible for the public execution of pro-

Josephus portrays Zealot sectarians negatively, placing much of the blame for the revolt of 66-70 CE on their shoulders as well as the setting of the Temple ablaze. That his view is clearly polemical can be deduced by comparing his pro-Roman sentiment with the broader perception of Judaism, which resoundingly held Romans responsible for the desecration and destruction of the temple.<sup>296</sup> Bruce says, “The blame for the havoc of 70 CE could not be laid at the door of the Romans, his patrons (apart from an occasional individual like the procurator Florus), nor at the door of his own people as a whole; but the Zealots, who persisted to the bitter end and endured the worst reprisals, might conveniently be held responsible for the sufferings that befell the Jewish nation.”<sup>297</sup> The consistent practice of violating Jewish sensibilities by Greek and Roman administrations led to the Zealot conviction that foreign rule was incompatible with the practice of Jewish faith. The Temple and its copious treasury were always under potential threat, and the once sacrosanct high priesthood was often awarded to the highest bidder.

Despite the fact that significant differences existed between the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots, they were all in agreement on some of the more substantive theological issues.<sup>298</sup> This is due to the fact that the roots for each can likely be traced

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Roman Jewish officials by daggers concealed in their garments. See *J.W.* 2.254-7, 4.400-405; *Ant.* 18.4-10)

<sup>296</sup> Hengel, *Zealots*, 210. Bruce brings out that Josephus' disdain for the Zealots must be kept in context. Nationalism alone does not fully explain the motivation for their movement, since they were equally hostile to the Jewish aristocracy who generally held to a pro-Roman sentiment. “They commanded the admiration of the common people because they were known to be champions of the common people. The war of A.D. 66-73, as Josephus describes it, was not only a war of independence against Rome but also a class war within Israel. His animus against the Zealots was the sharper because he saw in their policy and activity a mortal threat to all the privileges that he and his fellow-aristocrats prized” (*NT History*, 100).

<sup>297</sup> Bruce, *NT History*, 95.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-151. Regarding the Pharisees and Zealots, Bruce says, “In general the party founded by Judas shared the theological beliefs of the Pharisees, but whereas the Pharisees (wisely, as the event proved) were for the most part content to await God's good time and bear the foreign yoke as best they might until that time came, the adherents of the 'fourth philosophy' held that it was their duty to co-operate actively with what must be God's purpose—the liberation of Israel from foreign yoke—and seize the initiative, like Matthias and his sons in the days of the Seleucid dominance, in breaking that yoke” (*NT History*, 96-7).



back to the Hasidim of the second century BCE. Kee affirms this, saying, “In spite of fierce disagreements on detail, the Pharisees, Samaritans, the Essenes, and the various early Christian groups had much more in common than one might infer from the fervor of their differences.”<sup>299</sup>

## **3.2 GRECO-ROMAN VIEWS ON LIFE-AFTER DEATH**

### **3.2.1 Greco-Roman Philosophy and Religion on Life-After Death**

Hengel intimates that immortality of the soul and places of punishment for the wicked are “old Greek notions.” Homer and Hesiod provide an illustration of the underworld, characterizing immortality as quite undesirable. For instance, the *Odyssey* recounts Odysseus’ visit to the world of the spirits of the dead where he attempts to console Achilles. Achilles, who despises his lifeless condition wanted nothing more than honor in his life, tells Odysseus that he would willingly be a slave to a poor man on earth over being a lifeless phantom (*Odyssey* 11). It is important to note that Odysseus identifies a region in Hades for the punishment of those whose sins are particularly egregious. What is more, at Zeus’ command the region of Tartarus held the overthrown Titans and defiant gods (e.g., Prometheus). As it relates to their location, in relation to one another Bernstein assess: “Hades may dwell at or above Tartarus, but not at all within the realm are punished, as the visit of Odysseus to the land of the dead made clear.”<sup>300</sup> Humans are said to experience different fates depending upon various factors (e.g., personal conduct, knowledge of and adherence to certain rites, decisions of the gods, etc.). This will be important for later discussion. Clearly, the Homeric appraisal of

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<sup>299</sup> Kee, *Christian Origins*, 35.

<sup>300</sup> Alan E. Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Works* (Ithaca: Columbia University Press, 1993), 42.

immortality in no way approaches desirability. Good, as it is conceived here, is primarily experienced in this life.

In the sixth and seventh centuries BCE, a new religious phenomenon arose in which participants did in fact long for immortality in a way much opposed to what we see in the *Odyssey*. This yearning seemingly grew out of dissatisfaction with earthly existence and resulted in a subsequent desire for unification with the divine. Organized into cults called mysteries, these religious sects typically ascribed to belief in particular god(s) who assured some type of redemption for faithful adherents. The Eleusinian Mysteries are said to have derived from Demeter, who revealed her mysteries and sacred rites at Eleusis after restoring prosperity to the earth. So fundamental to the Eleusinian Mysteries was the cyclical relationship between death and regeneration that adherents believed that “he who is not initiated in the rites and who has no part in them, does not share the same good things once he is dead.”<sup>301</sup>

It is the *Hymn to Demeter* that explicitly makes the case that initiates into the Eleusinian Mysteries fare better in this life and the life to come. Bernstein contends: “Since the hymn related the establishment of the very rites that determined one’s fate in the next world, that provision made the hymn self-enforcing.”<sup>302</sup> It is this doctrinal claim regarding the afterlife about which many ancient thinkers were critical. Diogenes, for instance, questioned how the infamous thief Pataecion who had achieve initiation, could secure a better eternal fate than other far more noble individuals; “What! Do you mean to say that Pataecion, the robber, will have a better portion after death than Epaminondas, just because he is an initiate?” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 21F [Babbitt, LCL]).

The mysteries involved fasting, cleansing (baptisms) and secret ceremonies, which led to unification with the god(s) and immortality. In some instances, sexual union in a cultic setting supposedly resulted in a rapturous merger with the god(s), with the

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., 43.

experience of immortality becoming an immediate reality. The Dionysus (or Bacchus) cult, for instance, proved to be a popular mystery of the Hellenistic period. While association with drunkenness made Bacchus disreputable to some extent, a form of mysticism was derived from this movement that deeply affected Hellenistic philosophy. Originally a Thracian fertility god, Bacchus later and most predominately became associated with beer and wine.<sup>303</sup> Since it was held that Dionysius was present in both wine and wild animals, drinking wine and eating flesh literally meant taking the deity within oneself. While in a state of intoxication, female worshipers would often tear flesh from living animals and eat it raw, at which point, the adherent supposedly felt the deity's spirit pass into her body enabling her to share in the immortality of the divine momentarily, thus affording a foretaste of life to come. Russell says, "It [Bacchanalianism] had a curious element of feminism. Respectable matrons and maids, in large companies, would spend whole nights in the bare hills, in dances which stimulated ecstasy, and in an intoxication perhaps partly alcoholic, but mainly mystical."<sup>304</sup>

Bacchic worship in its original form was far too savage to influence moral philosophy. It was through its spiritual form, attributed to Orpheus with its emphasis on mental intoxication, that this took place. Like the physical intoxication of Bacchic ritual, the mental intoxication of Orphics produced what is called 'enthusiasm,' "which means, etymologically, having the god enter into the worshipper, who believed that he became one with the god."<sup>305</sup> Orphics also held to the notion of the transmigration of souls. Through 'enthusiasm' they achieved mystical union with Bacchus and gained access to mystical knowledge not attainable through other means. It is this distilled mystical element that entered Greek philosophy. First, it influenced Pythagoras, who ascribed to

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<sup>303</sup> Russell, *History of Western Civilization*, 14.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 16.

Orphic beliefs—including transmigration of souls—and sought to reform them. Russell claims: “From Pythagoras Orphic elements entered the philosophy of Plato and from Plato into most later philosophy that was in any degree religious.”<sup>306</sup>

The movement that Pythagoras left behind was largely Orphic in make-up. As advocates of reincarnation, Pythagoreans emphasized a certain way of life since in their “estimation the immortal soul passed through a cycle of rebirths, appearing on earth in various forms depending on the quality of life it had led in its previous existence. For them the end of life, the moral goal, was to obtain release from this cycle of birth and death. This could be accomplished by obtaining wisdom.”<sup>307</sup> Pythagoreans categorized individuals as either lovers of gain, lovers of honor, or lovers of knowledge; the last of which supposedly lifted individuals from the wheel of births and thrusts them into a higher sphere of reality.

Postmortem retribution weighed heavily in the thinking and perspective of many moral philosophers. Plato delineates the logic of such a view when he says, “We must at all times give our unfeigned assent to the ancient and holy doctrines which warn us that our souls are immortal, that they are judged, and that they suffer the severest punishments after our separation from the body. Hence we must also hold it a lesser evil to be victims of great wrongs and crimes than to be doers of them” (Plato, *Letters* 7.335a [Hamilton and Cairns]). In the *Phaedo*, Socrates, before taking the hemlock that would seal his earthly fate, comforts his friends with the idea that it is his soul—not his physical body—which comprises the true self. Socrates goes on to describe what happens to the soul upon death, suggesting that its fate in the afterlife is greatly affected by how well it was disciplined in this world. Regarding the soul, he says, “. . .if the soul is immortal, we must care for it, not only in respect to this time, which we call life, but in respect to all

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<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>307</sup> W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York, Chicago and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1952), 52.

time, and if we neglect it, the danger now appears to be terrible...But now, since the soul is seen to be immortal, it cannot escape from evil or be saved in any other way than by becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul takes with it to the other world nothing but its education and nurture, and these are said to benefit or injure the departed greatly from the very beginning of his journey thither” (Plato, *Phaedo*, 107c-d [Bury, LCL]). Socrates goes on to say, “If death were a release from everything, it would be a boon for the wicked, because by dying they would be released not only from the body, but also from their own wickedness together with the soul” (Ibid.). Socrates suggests after death each soul is guided by its ‘tutelary genius’ or ‘guardian spirit’ to the place of judgment; the “orderly and wise” soul follows willingly, while the soul that is “desirous of the body” has to be forcibly taken to the next world after a long time in the visible world as an apparition (108a-b).

Awaiting the dead are four possible outcomes at the judgment and sentencing of souls. The fate of 1) the holy, 2) those found to have lived “neither well nor ill,” 3) those whose sins are of a curable nature and 4) those deemed as incurable. The first group is comprised of persons judged to have lived holy lives. Some individuals, whose lives were sanctified by philosophy, are freed from cyclical earthly existence and allowed to live as disembodied souls in a pure state, sharing ether with the gods; “But those who are found to have excelled in holy living are freed from these regions within the earth and are released as from prisons...all who have duly purified themselves by philosophy live henceforth altogether without bodies, and pass to still more beautiful abodes which it is not easy to describe” (114b). Those of indeterminate character (“neither well nor ill”) are purified in a region where they pay the appropriate penalty for sin and are rewarded for their good deeds. For the curable, they are cast into Tartarus, but let out annually in order to plead for mercy from those they wronged. This cycle is maintained until they obtain forgiveness. Those judged incurable are immediately sent to the region of Tartarus; “But those who appear to be incurable, on account of the greatness of their wrongdoings, because they have committed many great deeds of sacrilege, or wicked and

abominable murders, or any other such crimes, are cast by their fitting destiny into Tartarus, whence they never emerge” (113e).

### 3.2.2 Epicureanism:

Epicureans did have a theological perspective, but, as mentioned above, held a low view of popular religion and traditional Greek mythology. At all points in its evolution, Epicureanism roundly rejected the notion that the gods interfere in human affairs as well as any form of divine providence. Dating to the first century BCE, the Epicurean fragment *P. Oxy. 215*, suggests that traditional religion could play a beneficial role in the lives of masses as long as a ‘proper attitude’ toward the gods was maintained.<sup>308</sup> This emphasis on ‘proper attitude’ was more important than external forms of worship since, in the Epicurean view, such practices did not move or benefit the gods in any way. Much like the fate of the holy in the Socratic paradigm just mentioned, Epicurus held that all mortals can live in tranquility without fear caused by prophecy and belief in a system of rewards and punishments in the afterlife.<sup>309</sup> The letter to Menoecus and the first Authorized Doctrine both convey the idea that the gods are incapable of wrath and are thus not to be feared: “The blissful and incorruptible being neither knows trouble itself nor occasions trouble to another, and is consequently immune to either anger or gratitude, for all such emotions reside in a weak creature.”<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Grenfell and Hunt translate the obscure passage of column 2 of P.Oxy. 215 as saying that “the ideal of the supreme Being is to be honoured with feasting and pleasures like those commonly enjoyed at the festivals of the gods, but that the wise man will also sometimes do homage to received opinions and the established laws relating to the worship of the gods.” *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (ed. Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt; London: Egyptian Exploration Fund, 1898), 32.

<sup>309</sup> C. W. Chilton, *Diogenes of Oenoanda: the Fragments: A Translation and Commentary* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). Diogenes argues, for instance, that the gods and Epicurus share the same blessed existence.

<sup>310</sup> De Witt, *Epicurus*, 252. De Witt also suggests that a basic understanding of the gods can be captured in this summary: “The major premise is the assumption that a being whose happiness is perfect and assured cannot stand in need of anything; the minor premise is the perfect and assured happiness of the

Epicurus proposed a thoroughly materialist understanding of reality, denying the immortality of the soul. According to his atomic theory—atoms as ultimate ‘principles’ (ἀρχαί) of everything that exists—all human sensation ceased at death and the atoms which comprise the soul immediately disperse back into the universe. Again, by his denial of immortality, Epicurus attempted to liberate the masses from the fear of death and to provide a solution for anxiety about death by attempting to dispense with the yearning for immortality (Epicurus, *Diogenes Laertius*, 10.124). This freedom from anxiety (ἀταραχία) flows from a 'proper attitude' towards the ‘famous four’ –the gods, death, pleasure and pain.<sup>311</sup> Algra says, “The person who is in this state of mind will neither ascetically abstain from further pleasure, but nor if death is upon him will he feel deprived of something which might have made his life better.”<sup>312</sup>

### 3.2.3 Cynicism

Cynicism in general had little to say about life after death since it emphasized an austere way of life. When it came to the gods, Diogenes, for instance, seems to have been of two minds. While he seems to have acknowledged the existence of gods, he is depicted as being persistent in his efforts to correct what he saw to be superstitious allegiance to them. In one instance, he ridiculed a woman for falling down before the gods (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.37-8) and questioned the sacrifices made to the gods, especially when these individuals turned around and ate the sacrifice in a gluttonous fashion (Ibid., 6.28). He claimed that he viewed humans as the wisest of all animals when he saw philosophers, pilots and physicians, but as the most pitiful of all animals

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gods. The conclusion is that men cannot bestow a gift upon the gods and so win their favor nor withhold a gift and so incur their anger. The gods are immune to anger and gratitude because of their immunity to need. To be in need would be a symptom of weakness, which cannot be ascribed to a god” (253).

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>312</sup> Keimpe Algra, *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 662.

when he saw soothsayers and interpreters of dreams (Ibid., 6.24). Lastly, as mentioned earlier, Diogenes questioned the justice in the known robber, Pataecion, securing a better fate in the afterlife than the nobleman Epaminondas simply because he had been initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 21F).

Demonax, a second century Cynic (c. 70 -170 CE), was critical of all religion, questioning the value of both prayer and sacrifices. On one occasion, he ridicules a friend for insisting that they go to the temple and pray for his son, saying, “You must think Aeseulapium very deaf, that he can’t hear our prayers from where we are!” (Lucian, *Demonax*, 27 [Harmon, LCL]). More importantly for our study, Demonax provides us with a Cynic voice that is openly skeptical about immortality: “When a man asked him if he thought the soul was immortal, he said: Yes, but no more than anything else” (Ibid., 32).

### 3.2.4 Stoicism

Stoicism held to a pantheistic monotheism which made it unquestionably unique in its philosophic-religious milieu. Epictetus serves as a kind of ideal representative of this kind of piety, suggesting that proper understanding is essential to true piety (*Diss.* 4; *Enchiridion* 31). Certainly, this sounds quite similar to what we see in Epicurean theological perspective, but important differences do exist between the two groups. Stoics of Epictetus’ type were rarely critical of traditional religion and chose to highlight commonalities between themselves and other philosophical groups.<sup>313</sup> In this way, then, some offer a kind of philosophical (or even theological) syncretism.

The Stoic Seneca, on the other hand, has much criticism to offer in his work ‘On Superstition.’ Seneca is critical of foreign religions like Judaism for its Sabbath rest and

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<sup>313</sup> As mentioned above, in *Enchiridion*, 31.4-5, we find Epictetus encouraging moderation in offerings and traditional sacrificial practices, but he is mindful not to rule out observance of traditional religion.



the emotional character of the worship of other deities (Augustine, *City of God*, 6.10-1).<sup>314</sup> Perhaps common to all Hellenistic philosophy in general, Seneca seeks to clearly distance himself from these forms of religious expression, even going as far as calling traditional Roman religion madness (Ibid., 10). Such actions were incompatible with the Stoic ideal of ἀπαθεία.<sup>315</sup> True piety, again, is seen more in the proper understanding of the god(s) and less in a temple or external cult. Although Seneca and other Stoics ascribed to a belief in the afterlife, classical formulations of Stoicism were similar to Epicureanism in its disbelief in life after death.<sup>316</sup> Bruce states: “Stoicism proper had no doctrine of immortality; the soul survived the death of the body, but was bound to disappear when the next world conflagration took place, if not earlier.”<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Here, Augustine recounts Seneca’s views regarding the Sabbath saying: “Along with other superstitions of the civil theology Seneca also censures the sacred institutions of the Jews, especially the Sabbath. He declares that their practice is inexpedient, because by introducing one day of rest in every seven they lose in idleness almost a seventh on their life, and by failing to act in times of urgency they often suffer loss” (11).

<sup>315</sup> See Wimbush's discussion on the Stoic ideal of ἀπαθεία in *Paul the Worldly Ascetic*, 56-71.

<sup>316</sup> In his work *The Encounter between Seneca and Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), Paul Berry goes so far as to suggest that Seneca is deeply influenced by the early Christian understanding of life after death. He says, “It was in his final reflection on the immortality of the soul that the mind of Seneca appeared to be most openly drawn from Stoicism and toward the New Testament. The philosopher could hardly have avoided the passages of Scripture in which Christ spoke of the soul...The verse from Matthew, in particular, would have created a lasting image of eternity, Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Fear, rather, him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell...His 65<sup>th</sup> letter seems to extend Matthew’s verse: ‘*My body is the only part of me that cannot suffer injury. Yet, in such a dwelling place, exposed to every danger, my soul lives free*’ [Lt. 65-22]” (41). Berry then argues that the Apostle Paul’s discussion about the movement of the body from a material to a immaterial state seems to “have been reconceived in one of the late Senecan letters: ‘*My soul is a living thing, just as I am. We are not two separate persons, for the soul is part of myself. Yet, it will become a distinct being to itself only when it shall exist—detached, whole and entire—unto itself.*’ [Lt. 113-5]” (41-42). Also, see Seneca’s discussion on ‘Immortality’ in *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca: Essays and Letters* (trans. Moses Hadas; New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1968), 248-255.

<sup>317</sup> Bruce, *New Testament History*, 57.

### 3.2.5 Secularists

Other writers attempt to systematically demonstrate the utter absurdity of belief in an afterlife and the gods as characterized by traditional religion and mythology. Plutarch, who had an appreciation for some aspects of traditional religion, sounds much like the Epicureans in his objections to religion that produces fear (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 473-475). Trepidation caused by belief in a system of punishments and rewards in the afterlife is one of the principle ways that superstition manifests itself (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 467), along with paralyzing guilt, according to Plutarch (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 473).<sup>318</sup> Plutarch adopts a median position between atheism—as understood in antiquity—and superstition, arguing that neither extreme is good.<sup>319</sup> At times, however, Plutarch seems to be somewhat inconsistent as seen in the positive role that he assigns belief in an afterlife as a deterrent for immorality (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 933-935D).<sup>320</sup> This functionalist approach to belief in the afterlife is similar to what we see in Plato and Socrates. The difference between Plato and Plutarch on this point might be best summarized by Bernstein: “For Plato, the social utility of an idea is only one measure of its validity. It would not be right if it did not conform to the cosmic truth, and if it were true by that standard, correct understanding of it would certainly guide the human pursuit of justice.”<sup>321</sup>

Pliny the Elder rejects the notion that life persist beyond the grave in *Natural History* 7.55, arguing that “neither body nor soul possesses any sensation after the grave.”

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<sup>318</sup> Lucretius says something quite similar when he contends regarding Epicurus’ doctrine: “For as soon as thy reasoning born of a divine intelligence begins to proclaim the nature of things, *away flee the mind’s terrors*, the walls of the heavens open out...” (Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 12-7 [Rouse, LCL])

<sup>319</sup> Plutarch, *On Superstition*. The entire essay is dedicated to defining atheism and superstition and exposing what he believes to be problematic about both. In the end, Plutarch appears to be much closer to atheism than superstition.

<sup>320</sup> For more on Plutarch’s inconsistencies, see A.G. Nikolaidis’ “Plutarch’s Contradictions” in *Classica Et Mediaevali – Revue Danoise De Philologie Et D’histoire* 42 (1991): 153-186.

<sup>321</sup> Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 54.

He contends that no one claims immortality for other animals that breath as humans do, some of which have longer life spans. Pliny then identifies what he sees as the motivation for the longing for immortality, a rationale that is similar to what we see in Epicurus, Lucian, Demonax and others. He says:

“These are fictions of childish absurdity, and belong to a mortality *greedy for life unceasing*. Assuredly this sweet but credulous fancy ruins nature's chief blessing, death, and doubles the sorrow of one about to die by the thought of sorrow to come hereafter also; for if to live is sweet, who can find it sweet to have done living? But how much easier and safer for each to trust in himself, and for us to derive our idea of future tranquility from our experience of it before birth!”  
(Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.55 [Rackham, LCL])

While this brief sketch may suggest a kind of connectedness to Greco-Roman ideas, views on the afterlife were far from uniform. Some still held to a platonic body/soul dualism, characterizing the body as a kind of prison house for the soul. On several occasions, Epictetus displays this kind of disdain for the physical body (Epict. *Diss.* 1.1.9; 1.5.4-5). This explains why Stoicism saw suicide as the highest form of freedom (Seneca, *Ep.*, 77.15).<sup>322</sup> Some held to varying understandings of the traditional view that the dwelling of the dead is beneath the earth in Hades, while others held to belief in the immortality of the soul. The lack of epigraphical data regarding belief in an after-life may suggest that it simply was not a preoccupation for many.<sup>323</sup> Especially among satirists and philosophers, the notion was downplayed or even ridiculed. Lucian the satirist was relentless in his sardonic views regarding the Greek gods and belief in an

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<sup>322</sup> Seneca says, “Unhappy fellow, you are a slave to men, you are a slave to your business, you are a slave to life. For life, if courage to die be lacking, is slavery” (Seneca, *Ep.*, 77.15 [Gummere, LCL]).

<sup>323</sup> Dale Martin cites helpful epigraphical data on this point from J. J. E. Hondus, et al., eds. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. See his *The Corinthian Body*, 109, notes 18 and 19.

afterlife (e.g., Lucian's *Menippus* [or *The Descent into Hades*]). A common inscription of the Greco-Roman era attributed to Epicurus seems to suggest that this sentiment was fairly widespread: "I was not, I have been, I am not, I care not."

This data reveals that by the Roman period, a wide array of religious and philosophical beliefs were held about life after death. Many philosophical groups rejected prophecy, worship of images, worship in temples, prayer and animal sacrifice. Since true piety is the appropriate apprehension of the gods, the external cult is of little value to the truly pious. Indeed, the external cult is a relic of anthropomorphic characterizations of the gods and should be avoided since these activities have no influence on the gods whatsoever. Some philosophers despised traditional religion and Hellenistic philosophy altogether (Demonax), while others held to a mediating view between superstition and atheism (Plutarch). Some religious and philosophical schools ascribed to a belief in life after death, while others saw the fear caused by such belief as psychologically stunting (Epicureanism, Plutarch). Beliefs about life after death varied significantly from group to group and, as with Judaism, significant differences existed between members of the same school of thought. Reincarnation (Pythagoras), union with the divine (mystery religions) and a negative appraisal of the afterlife (Homer, *Odyssey*) all coexisted at one point or another.

### **3.2.6 Judaism**

While a 'process of sterilization' was an important development in Greco-Roman religious thought whereby the palatable aspects of traditional Greek religion were distilled, it can be argued that such considerations were a part of the Hebrew religious tradition early on. In a very real sense, the story of Hebrew religion could be told in terms of a tension between a spiritual notion of God and various pressures, such as idolatry, which attempted to degrade and materialize the national religious consciousness and practice. This is exemplified in Exodus 32 and the characterization of Israel making

a golden calf as a physical, material representation of their God. We do not detect a process of sterilization or a movement from idolatry to a purer form of worship, as seen in the Greco-Roman religious tradition.<sup>324</sup> Rather, we find a people with a spiritual theology, constantly fighting, through the medium of leaders, judges, prophets and priest, to preserve this sacred identity.

The Mosaic tradition argues that the religion that descends from Mt. Sinai is revealed religion and utterly intolerant of idolatry. The Decalogue, or ‘Ten Words,’<sup>325</sup> which forms a significant aspect of the law and is possibly to be understood as the basis for all other laws that follow, makes this plain on the outset.<sup>326</sup> The second commandment explicitly commands Israel to resist the inclination to make representative images of their God (Exod 20:4). The theological rationale for Assyrian and Babylonian exile provided by the editors of the historical tradition clearly holds out acceptance of idolatry as a key to Israel’s displacement. In contrast to the philosophical ideal that the gods cannot be moved by human behavior, Israel’s God, enraged by their spiritual adultery, exacts punishment upon them in different ways. In response to the idolatrous practices of Israel and its kings was the aniconic preachment of both the literary and non-literary prophets. The prophetic tradition is replete with denunciations of idolatry and

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<sup>324</sup> Some argue against this view, claiming that early Yahwism was henotheistic—worshipping one god while holding to the possibility of the existence of others—and only evolved to the singular view of radical monotheism over time. For more on this, see chapter one in William Barclay’s *Introducing the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

<sup>325</sup> Ronald Youngblood, *The Heart of the OT: A Survey of Key Theological Themes* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 49-51. Youngblood brings out that ten words might be a better rendering than Ten Commandments. A strong case for this is that in its Hittite antecedents, ‘words’ stand for the ‘covenant stipulations.’

<sup>326</sup> Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 96-98 and Temper Longman III’s *Making sense of the Old Testament: 3 Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1998), 105-117. Anderson is convinced that “The Decalogue merely stakes out the general limitations which are defined by the covenant relationship; but within these limitations there is wide latitude for freedom of action....” Longman takes Anderson’s point a step further saying, “the case laws of the OT are applications of the Ten Commandments to the specific situations of the OT people of God.”

provides ample perspectival evidence of the religious posture predominating in Ancient Judaism. It can be reasonably argued, then, that this parallel aniconic phenomenon in Judaism and Hellenism grew out of different concerns. Within Judaism, allegiance to monotheism seems to be the most likely reason for rejecting idolatry, while in Hellenism—and subsequently Greco-Roman practice—we detect a growing distaste for graven images over time. More importantly, the underlying mythologies that pointed adherents to idols lost credibility.

Another parallel idea needs further clarification. As mentioned above, many moral philosophers and intellectuals grew to despise sacrifices to the gods, holding that a 'proper attitude' about their role in human affairs is most critical. Early on in ancient Israel, a similar view is expressed in the prophetic tradition; the difference being that the classical prophets never reject the sacrificial system, just how some attempted to use it to manipulate their God without changing their attitude and/or behavior. For instance, Amos prophesies against Israel:

“I hate, I reject your festivals,  
Nor do I take delight in your solemn assemblies.  
Even though you offer up to me burnt offerings  
And your grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
And I will not even look at your  
peace offerings of your fatlings.  
Take away from me the  
noise of your songs;  
I will not even listen to the  
sounds of your harps.  
But let justice roll down like  
waters and righteousness like an ever-

flowing stream.” (5:21-24)

Clearly, the prophetic cry was that ritual and ethics were to be inextricably tied together. According to Amos, the proper attitude and behavior had to accompany one’s sacrifice in order for it to be received by God. This sort of dual focus shows up several places in the prophetic tradition.<sup>327</sup> Much like we see in Plutarch, the ritual of sacrifice was acceptable as long as the form did not precede the function. Most importantly, in Judaism, sacrifices—properly done—did supposedly have a positive impact on one’s relationship with God, and, according to the Mosaic tradition, were necessary for maintaining a positive relationship with God.

As it relates to Israel’s views about life after death, some scholars claim that the Jewish Scriptures are largely silent. Some argue that traditional Jewish thought on the subject is best represented by Ben Sira—a relatively late work composed most likely between 200 and 175 BCE.<sup>328</sup> He claims that a person outlasts his death 1) through his children (30:4-5) and 2) by leaving behind a good reputation (41:11-3). As a general rule, works composed before the six century BCE say very little about afterlife and what is said must be distilled, nothing is explicit. It is significant that this silence goes on despite pervasive discussion about afterlife in surrounding cultures to which Judaism was constantly exposed.<sup>329</sup> At this juncture, Hebrew thought appears hesitant to grant a realm

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<sup>327</sup> The same point, for instance, is made in Is 1:11-14 and 66:3.

<sup>328</sup> Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom Literature: A Theological History* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2007), 235.

<sup>329</sup> Alan F. Segal, “Some Observations about Mysticism and the Spread of the Notion of Life After-Death in Hebrew Thought,” in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1996* (SBLSPS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 385-399. For instance, the Egyptian Book of the Dead was a collection of magical chants for the use of the dead in the afterlife. Certainly, Moses and those who were enslaved in Egypt would have had firsthand knowledge of Egyptian burial practices and views regarding the hereafter; especially since Joseph—if we hold to the biblical characterization of him—was deeply acculturated after being promoted. The OT historical narratives reveal that the memory of Egyptian and Mesopotamian religious ideas lingered among the Israelites for quite some time. This can be illustrated by what Joshua said to the Israelites after the conquest had begun and a theoretical division of the land had taken place. He gathered the people and said,

of spiritual power able to contend with God.<sup>330</sup> Others suggest, however, that Israel did have a view on resurrection, but that the doctrine was suppressed since it could have become a source of syncretism if too much emphasis had been placed on it.<sup>331</sup> Again, little is said directly about resurrection in the Jewish Scriptures, but certain scriptures do allude to it (see Ezek 37, Ps 16:10f, Dan 12, Is 27:19, Job 39:25-27). NT writers claim explicit reference to resurrection in Hebrew prophesy but often in reflection upon the words of Jesus and the set of events that transpired after his death.<sup>332</sup>

The Deuteronomic history does reveal a concern about certain deviant religious practices that attempt to cross the divide between the living and the dead, such as divination.<sup>333</sup> In fact, Jewish Inscriptural evidence suggests an ongoing communal awareness of the afterlife and an intentional effort to maintain a sense of connectedness to ancestors.<sup>334</sup> Bernstein contends that “Biblical prohibitions against communication with the dead would make no sense unless some people propitiated, consulted, or venerated deceased family members.”<sup>335</sup> Friedman and Overton propose a sort of political motivation for this, arguing that the priests were unwilling to forgo their hegemony over Israel as the spiritual leaders of the nation. First of all, this would have “brought no

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“Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:14-5). The *Epic of Gilgamesh* provides another example of the persistent notion of afterlife existing as far back as the third millennium BCE. Ironically, it may have exerted significant influence on the story of Noah, but, if this is the case, the biblical account has been demythologized and therefore contains no reference to life after death.

<sup>330</sup> Segal, “Some Observations about Mysticism,” 385-399.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> See William Lane Craig's article, “Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?” in Wilkins’ and Moreland’s *Jesus Under Fire*.

<sup>333</sup> Segal, “Observations about Mysticism,” 386 and 395.

<sup>334</sup> R.E. Friedman and S.D. Overton, “Death and Afterlife: The Biblical Silence” in. *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (eds. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and Bruce Chilton; Vol. 3; Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 35-59.

<sup>335</sup> Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 137.



income to the priesthood” since “local ceremonies for dead did not require a priest.”<sup>336</sup> They go on to suggest: “If belief in an afterlife was encouraged, and necromancy was given legitimacy as a means of knowing the divine will, then the priests would be ceding a portion of the control of the religion.”<sup>337</sup>

In 1 Sam. 28:6-17, King Saul consults the witch of Endor to contact the prophet Samuel since “the Lord did not answer him by dream or Urim or prophets (v. 5).” Both Samuel and the medium are hesitant to answer Saul’s questions since the law forbade the practice (Lev 19:31) and also since Saul had recently reestablished this law throughout his kingdom (vv. 3, 9 etc.). This is simply one instance among many where suppressed tradition regarding afterlife seems to come shining through. Segal suggests: “Because of his supernatural powers, the ghost Samuel is called *Elohim*, a *god* emerging from the ground. On the other hand, the plural verb may imply several ‘gods’ or ‘supernatural judges’ appearing, of which Samuel is one. In any event, the term suggests the reasons for biblical silence on the life after death...the dead can be recalled but it is sinful to do so, probably because to do so suggests that there are divine beings, breaching the canons of monotheism.”<sup>338</sup>

Advocates of an evolutionary approach to the Jewish notion of afterlife, suggest that the biblical tradition begins early on by not characterizing Sheol morally. It was known generally as the place of the dead, where all go, irrespective of life’s indiscretions or good deeds. Bernstein argues that “in the process of conquering Canaan and

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<sup>336</sup> Friedman and Overton, “Death and Afterlife,” 53.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Segal, “Observations about Mysticism,” 386. Also see Friedman and Overton, “Death and Afterlife,” 53-4. On this point, Bernstein says, “Beyond its glimpse of the world of the dead, the story of Samuel suggests yet other considerations. If the late king is referred to as one of the ‘*elohim*,’ a term also used to name the divinity, then there is uncertainty about the range of minor gods, supernatural spirits, ghosts who could be considered competition for the one God. Any veneration of the dead, whether recently deceased immediate family members or revered ancestors, could constitute a throwback to something akin to polytheism, or at least distract from the more focused, centralized, urban, Jerusalem-based institutions on monarchy and Temple” (*The Formation of Hell*), 139.

intermingling with the vanquished, some of the Jewish people adopted from them certain practices that, if they do not quite form a cult of the dead, at least constitute a reverence for or dedication to the dead that is very hard to delineate now but that the authors of the Bible were at pains to extinguish.”<sup>339</sup> Proponents of this view argue that later, during and after Babylonian exile, different groups were assigned to different regions in Sheol. Ezekiel 32 assigned the violent uncircumcised to the lower regions of Sheol, districting Sheol on the basis of a country’s (i.e., Egypt) moral turpitudes; “The wicked suffer ignominy in the deepest recesses of the underworld. Shame in death is the beginning of hell.”<sup>340</sup>

Almost simultaneously, another region began to function as the eventual fate of evildoers—Gehenna.<sup>341</sup> A valley just outside of Jerusalem, it became known as the site of detestable idolatrous sacrifices to pagan gods. It was in this place that apostate Jews—including King Ahaz—sacrificed their children to the god Molech. The prophet Jeremiah makes numerous references to this practice (Jer 2:23, 19:4, 7:31-2, etc.) and, upon ascending to the throne, King Josiah immediately ushered in reforms to stop the practice (2 Kings 23). It is for this reason that “Ge-Hinnom was associated with burning, shame, and wickedness...The bodies of executed criminal and others lacking proper attention were discarded there. Varying from a place where innocents were sacrificed to a collective grave for executed criminals, this valley was ripe for metaphorical extension into a place of torment...”<sup>342</sup> Later works, according to this view, put forward the notion that a destruction of the wicked and the revitalization of the righteous would occur in a future judgment.

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<sup>339</sup> Bernstein, *The Formation of Hell*, 136-7.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 167-8.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 168-9.

One of the most noted canonical occurrences of the discussion about life after death occurs in Daniel 12:1-3.<sup>343</sup> Though resurrection is hinted at in earlier biblical works, the references are ambiguous.<sup>344</sup> While it is difficult to demonstrate a chronological progression of the notion of resurrection (or resuscitation), it must be acknowledged that—at the very least—“the concept in Israel was a familiar one in Israel for a long time.”<sup>345</sup> Dan 12:1a reads, “. . .and at that time Michael will arise” and goes on to explain what will occur “at the time of the end.” The character and context of these verses is a source of significant debate. Some argue that Dan 12 is discourse that results from actual Hellenistic persecution and should therefore be classified as ‘vaticinium ex eventu’ (prophecy from the event).<sup>346</sup> More conservative interpreters, who see in Dan 11 a reference to “a future antichrist,” point to “subtle indicators” such as “the increase in the use of mythological materials” as well as eschatological language.<sup>347</sup> Both views acknowledge, however, that the immediate context of these words do relate to the sixth century BCE. It was believed that the end of this present age would be accompanied by judgment at the hands of ‘one like a son of man,’ who, from one perspective, was Michael the patron angel of Israel. In Jewish literature, the angel Michael does often

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<sup>343</sup> Hengel sees in Dan 12 the first biblical reference to hope beyond the grave and connects this development to Hellenism (*The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 45-46). This point of view may lose sight of the apocalyptic nature of Daniel’s discourse and may view this prophetic work as a second century fictional composition posing as futuristic prophecy. Ezekiel 14:14, a sixth century BCE work, makes mention of Daniel. Scholars are divided on who this character is. Some contend that it had to be in reference to a primitive account of a Daniel whose story circulated in the ANE outside of Judaism. Others suggest that it is a reference to Ezekiel’s contemporary. See Longman and Dillard’s *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 233 and 375.

<sup>344</sup> Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Isa 26:17-9 are the verses that are in view here. While it is likely that Daniel 12 takes into consideration Isa 26, this is not necessarily the case with Ezekiel 37. Nonetheless, both references are ambiguous.

<sup>345</sup> Friedman and Overton, “Death and Afterlife,” 56.

<sup>346</sup> See George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 23-59.

<sup>347</sup> Tremper Longman, *Daniel: the NIV Application Commentary from Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 272.

stand in opposition to the accusing angel.<sup>348</sup> In several scenes the accusing angel raises accusations to God against the saints (e.g., Job), while Michael (often left unnamed) stands against him and even exercises authority over him at times (*Assumption of Moses*; cf. *Jude* 8-9).

What is most significant for us is what occurs after the great period of trouble (12:1d). There is a period of restoration that includes resurrection and judgment. A judgment in which the righteous are separated from the wicked, whose names are not written in the book of life. A proponent of the later date, Nickelsburg suggests: “The identity of the two groups can be ascertained from the specific historical situation reflected in Daniel. In the eyes of the Hasidic Jew of 167 BCE the wicked were those who had compromised their Judaism and adopted the Hellenistic way of life. The righteous had been steadfast, even in the face of Antiochus’ persecution.”<sup>349</sup> If this context is correct, however, this judgment by no means refers to the general resurrection, but to the resurrection of particular groups of Jewish people. Some interpreters see a double meaning in this text with a much broader group in view, consistent with the NT understanding. Such a characterization would be consistent with the universal ideas in Daniel 7 where the “one like the son of man” is worshipped by “nations and people of every language” (7:14).

It is important to understand the rationale behind Daniel’s view of the resurrection. It is the logical progression from the belief that God will honor his word. According to one assessment, Hasidic Jews were killed during the Maccabean period because of unwavering devotion to the Torah, while Hellenizers simply conformed. In this formulation, then, resurrection is an answer to a theological problem.<sup>350</sup> This

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<sup>348</sup> Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*, 11-18.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 19. Nickelsburg affirms this, saying, “Resurrection to life, on the one hand, and to punishment, on the other hand, was an answer to this problem.”

depiction places resurrection in a purely ethical context, an important point which will be revisited later.

A few important features of Daniel (12 in particular) directly influence later Intertestamental apocalyptic discourse. First, the fact of the coming end of this present age is firmly established. Though it is almost certain that Daniel 12 relies greatly on Isaiah (e.g. 59:15-20), the writer of Daniel 12 seems to give a much fuller explanation at this point.<sup>351</sup> Daniel gives a historical prediction of when the end would occur (at the demise of Antiochus IV, according to one appraisal), speaks of a time of trouble and a double resurrection (of righteous and wicked), ushering the raised to either eternal life or eternal contempt. The new era is qualitatively different from the old age, and Daniel's prophetic presentation is painted in distinctly ethical terms. This is one of the first detailed Jewish models of the theory of two aeons.

Resurrection at the end of this present age, as a means of vindicating the righteous, is consistently found in Apocalyptic and Non-Apocalyptic Intertestamental literature. An example of this can be found in 2 Macc 7. Here, seven brothers, along with their mother, are willing to endure martyrdom with the understanding that *bodily* resurrection would eventually occur because of their faithfulness to the traditions of their people:

- 9 With his last breath he exclaimed, 'Cruel brute, you may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws, to live again forever.'
- 10 After him, they tortured the third, who on being asked for his tongue promptly thrust it out and boldly held out his hands,

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<sup>351</sup> George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 15.

- <sup>11</sup> courageously saying, 'Heaven gave me these limbs; for the sake of his laws I have no concern for them; from him I hope to receive them again.'
- <sup>12</sup> The king and his attendants were astounded at the young man's courage and his utter indifference to suffering.
- <sup>13</sup> When this one was dead they subjected the fourth to the same torments and tortures.
- <sup>14</sup> When he neared his end he cried, 'Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men's hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection to new life.' (2 Macc. 7:9-14; NJB)

As can be seen, the conviction that God will honor those who honor God's law to the point of being willing to die for it will one day be vindicated by bodily resurrection (see esp. vv. 9 and 14). Segal suggests, "The effect of this extreme attention to the body in the restoration of this world shows that the tradition of resurrection is not at all obligated to platonic thought or even Greek thought... It is the remedy given by God to the Jews because of the cruelty and oppression of foreign domination, a notion that will carry directly on into the Roman period."<sup>352</sup> Indeed, Nickelsburg argues well when he says that "...2 Maccabees offers a *paradigm* for vindication after unjust death."<sup>353</sup>

The Book of the Watchers (*1 Enoch 17-36*), a composite work that dates from the second or third BCE, shows an expressed interest in the rewards and punishments directed to both angels and humans after death. The Book of the Watchers contains a description of Enoch's cosmic journeys to places usually inaccessible to human beings

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<sup>352</sup> Segal, "Jewish Mysticism," 391-2. While this may be the case, Nickelsburg makes the following observation: "Although 2 Maccabees' teaching about bodily resurrection is often seen as Hebraic rather than Greek in its orientation, it is presented in a book that imitates so-called "pathetic" Hellenistic historiography." See George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Apocrypha and the Non-Apocalyptic Pseudepigrapha" in *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (eds. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and Bruce Chilton; Vol. 3; Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 150.

<sup>353</sup> Nickelsburg, "The Apocrypha and the Non-Apocalyptic Pseudepigrapha," 150.

and consists of three distinct parts: Enoch's two journeys to the west (17-19; 21-36), separated by an intervening list of the archangels (20). For our discussion, the first journey is relatively unimportant since it says little about life after death. In his second journey to the west (21-25), however, Enoch views two distinct places of punishment for the seven stars judged according to the character of their sins and the fallen angels (21). He tours Sheol, characterized with four chambers, which functions as a place of detainment for the wicked souls of the dead (22). These 'tours of hell' appear to have been unique, characteristic features of Jewish and Christian apocalypses and reflect ideas that circulated *prior* to the composition of the Book of Watchers.<sup>354</sup>

As time went on, what some call "a second doctrine of life after death" emerged within the ranks of Judaism.<sup>355</sup> This was the belief in a syncretistic understanding of the immortality of the soul, discussed above. If bodily resurrection provided a theological explanation of what would happen to the faithful martyr in the hereafter, immortality of the soul was accepted by those who had developed an appreciation for Hellenism, and sought to combine them with Judaism. In this sense, these ideas are polar opposites, especially since immortality of the soul seems to have had an audience among the social elite. Segal says, "Even more important is the social context of these ideas, which places it squarely within the higher classes of Jewish life, who have seen fit to articulate the inchoate notion of afterlife in the Bible with the help of Greek philosophy... Among those who adopt platonic notions in Hebrew thought are Philo, Josephus, several other Jewish philosophical writers."<sup>356</sup>

The Wisdom of Solomon (100 BCE) and some canonical psalms provide good examples of this trend. While the writer claims that the righteous are with God (see for example 3:1-4), there are some obvious differences. The writer leaves out discussion of

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<sup>354</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Early Jewish Visions of Hell," in *JTS* 41, No. 2 (1990): 355-385.

<sup>355</sup> Segal, "Jewish Mysticism," 392.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

an end time with a judgment or a general resurrection. Souls are simply found “*in the hand of God*,” which “is quite similar to some of the Psalms where the righteous are preserved by God from Sheol.”<sup>357</sup> Nickelsburg adds: “The righteous only *seem* to die; in reality they pass to the fullness of immortality, and their souls rest in peace in the hands of God (3:1-9).”<sup>358</sup> While most of the psalms do not color Sheol morally, they do contain some “moralizing tendencies in statements like ‘the good will praise you’ while the evil will be lost.”<sup>359</sup> Some scholars contend on the basis of Ezek 31 that there are “gradations in Sheol.”<sup>360</sup> In addition, “throughout the Bible there are some notions that the good remain with God, since God would not suffer his righteous to perish.”<sup>361</sup> For the most part, however, biblical psalmists are silent about notions of life after death well after Greek influence had been felt.

### 3.2.6.1 Jewish Sectarianism:

Theological shifts within exilic and post-exilic Judaism play a significant role in the hopes of later Jewish sectarians. Nickelsburg argues, “The events of the sixth century spawned a literature that, along with the Law, would deeply influence the shape of post-biblical religion and theology.”<sup>362</sup> A period of noteworthy prophetic activity began after Cyrus authorized the Jerusalem Temple be rebuilt. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah declared divine endorsement of Zerubbabel as Davidic heir, affirmed the reconstruction efforts and predicted the coming of a new era at the Temple’s completion (Hag 2). At

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Nickelsburg, “The Apocrypha and the Non-Apocalyptic Pseudepigrapha,” 153.

<sup>359</sup> Segal, “Jewish Mysticism,” 387.

<sup>360</sup> John Goldingay, “Death and Afterlife in the Psalms” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (eds. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and Bruce Chilton; Vol. 3; Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 64.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 17.



this same time, the Chronicler—in a fashion consistent with the practices ancient historiography—modifies the history of Israel, choosing to emphasize the importance of the Temple, its cult, and the Davidic dynasty. After 515 BCE, the hope of a more splendid Temple persisted into post-biblical times when the restored Temple failed to meet expectations. In addition, the Davidic prince Zerubbabel ceases to be important as a means of reestablishing the Davidic line. These points led to a return to the more futuristic hopes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel: “The hopes of Jeremiah and Ezekiel for the restoration of the dynasty would continue to be applied to the future, to an unknown figure whom God would enthrone as his ‘anointed king.’”<sup>363</sup>

So-called Third Isaiah and Deutero-Zechariah reflect their sentiment in the time just prior to the rebuilding of the Temple. In their estimation, the halt of factionalism and true social cohesiveness would only occur upon *the direct intervention of God*. Not only do they describe an imminent judgment that will separate the wicked from the just, Isaiah, in particular, places this end-time judgment in the *future*.<sup>364</sup> This gave his eschatology a strong ethical quality. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, with his talk of imminent judgment, “the dawn of a new age qualitatively different from the present one” and “the use of mythic ahistorical language to depict these future events,” Isaiah provided later apocalypticists with the raw thought materials for eschatological discourse.<sup>365</sup>

Of the sects mentioned by Josephus, the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots draw heavily from Isaiah and Zechariah in the development of their eschatological perspectives. In fact, specialized usage of the prophetic texts is a common feature of these sects and early Christian thinkers, with the result that many have argued for

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

dependence in their scriptural arguments.<sup>366</sup> The Hasidim appear to be the theological forerunners to both the Pharisees and Essenes, while the Zealots appear to have been a subsequent movement drawing from one of the two.<sup>367</sup> From the third century, the Christian writer Hippolytus makes the claim that the Zealots derive from one of the four groups into which the Essenes split.<sup>368</sup> Jacob Neusner suggests that the Pharisees shifted ‘from politics to piety,’ moving away from direct support of the Maccabees to the promotion of the ritual purity of their members as the covenant people.<sup>369</sup> The Essenes also seem to have shared this outlook, but held that it could only be realized in segregation from secularized Jewish society.

According to Josephus, the Pharisees held to a form of reincarnation for righteous souls and eternal suffering for wicked souls (*J.W.* 2.163; *Ant.* 18.14). All souls, he contends, are impervious to corruption (ἄφθαρτοῶ), with the souls of the righteous ‘transferring’ or ‘passing over’ (μεταβαίνειν) into another body and the wicked into eternal damnation (αἰδίῳ τιμωρία κολάζεσθαι). He also contrasts Pharisaic and Sadducean ideals. The latter, as mentioned, reject completely belief in “the persistence of the soul after death, penalties in the underworld, and rewards, they will have none of them” (*J.W.*, 2.164-5 [Thackery, LCL]). The Pharisees held to “the survival of the soul, the revival of the body, the day of judgment, and life in the world to come.”<sup>370</sup> Josephus does not spell things out beyond this. Josephus does state that while the Pharisees

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<sup>366</sup> See, for instance, A. T. Robinson's “The Baptism of John and the Qumran Community,” in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1962).

<sup>367</sup> Hengel suggests that Zealots have a similar composition as the Shammaitic Pharisees and also exhibit characteristics related to the Essenes. See M. Hengel's *The Zealots: Investigation Into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark LTD., 1989), 226-227.

<sup>368</sup> See Matthew Black's appendix article “Josephus and Hippolytus” on the Essenes in his *The Scrolls and Christian Origin: Studies in the Jewish Background of the NT* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1961), 187ff.

<sup>369</sup> Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: the Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

<sup>370</sup> Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity*, 28.

believed in a peculiar mixture of determinism *and* free will, the Sadducees affirmed that “man has the free choice of good or evil” (Ibid.).

Theologically, the Zealots were similar to the Pharisees, recognizing their (the Pharisaic) interpretation of tradition. In fact, in *Ant.* 18:23, Josephus says, “This school [the Zealots] agrees in all other respects with the opinions of the Pharisees, except that they have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable, since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master” (Feldman, LCL). The main point of distinction, then, resided in the fact that while the Pharisees were content to wait patiently for God’s intervention in overturning foreign rule, Zealots saw it as their responsibility to participate in the liberation of Israel. Josephus placed the blame for the Jewish war of 66 CE to 73 BCE on their shoulders, claiming that they “ruined the peace of the city” and described them as “deceivers and impostors, under the pretense of divine inspiration fostering revolutionary changes...” (*J.W.* 2.259 [Thackery, LCL])

Josephus and the much later work of Hippolytus of Rome are useful in reconstructing the Essene eschatological perspective, but the final picture is still somewhat imprecise. Josephus suggests that they were ardent proponents of fate, christening it as “the mistress of all things, holding that nothing befalls men except by her *decree*” (*Ant.* 13.171-173 [Marcus, LCL]). Most importantly for this section, he contends that they believed in the immortality of the soul and characterizes Essene doctrine as thoroughly syncretistic, alleging that they worshiped the sun (*J.W.* 2.128-133). Also, they believed in angels and made blasphemy of the name of Moses grounds for capital punishment (ibid, 2.145-6). What is more, Josephus likens the sect to the Pythagoreans and asserts that they firmly held to a body-soul dualism (*Ant.* 15.371). He goes so far as to say that they actually shared “the beliefs of the sons of Greece” that an abode “beyond the ocean” awaits the virtuous soul, while a place of eternal punishment lies ahead for wicked souls (*J.W.*, 2.155 [Thackeray, LCL]). A possible explanation for this overlap might be found in 1 Macc 12:21, where it is said that relationship with the

Spartans and Jews may extend back well beyond the second century BCE (e.g., “...they are brothers and of the race of Abraham”).<sup>371</sup>

Our sources agree that the Essenes did embrace the notion of the immortality of the soul, but Hippolytus alleges that they also held to a belief in bodily resurrection. The discrepancy in our sources resides in the fact that Josephus explicitly denies this latter point, while Hippolytus—a century later—claims this to be true. It is certainly possible that Josephus’ polemic derives from his attempt to appease Greco-Roman sensibilities.<sup>372</sup> On the other hand, Josephus is far more acquainted with Jewish sectarianism in general—being a first century Jew—and the Essenes in particular, since he supposedly joined the group for a short period of time. Both affirm Essene belief in the immortality of the soul, a conviction not customarily Jewish.

This complex picture of the Essenes might be simplified by considering two things. First, Josephus acknowledges that the Essenes were brutally punished by the Romans for their beliefs, from which they would not recant. He suggests:

“The war with the Romans tried their souls through and through, by every variety of test. Racked and twisted, burnt and broken, and made to pass through every instrument of torture, in order to induce them to blaspheme their lawgiver or eat some forbidden thing, they refused to yield to either demand, nor ever once did they cringe to their persecutors or shed a tear. Smiling in their agonies and mildly

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<sup>371</sup> It is likely that we are dealing with diplomatic fiction linking two people groups, a common feature of that time. Another example of this kind of fictional corporate history is an amphictyony or tribal league. On this point see John Bright *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), 144-182 and Paul J. and Elizabeth Achtemeier *The Old Testament Roots of our Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 1-22.

<sup>372</sup> See the helpful introduction of Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War* (trans. G. A. Williamson; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1959), 9-26.

deriding their tormentors, they cheerfully (ἔυθυμοί) resigned their souls, confident that they would receive them back again (πάλιν κοιτούμενοι, fut. mid.).”<sup>373</sup>

The passage informs us that the Essenes were radically committed to the Law of Moses, accepting martyrdom over renunciation. Perhaps more significant is the rationale that he provides for their confidence: the conviction that they would receive their souls back again. Clearly, this view is consistent with the doctrine of resurrection, as seen in Dan 12 and 2 Macc 7, where the righteous martyr, who dies for his or her faith, can “cheerfully” (ἔυθυμος) accept his or her fate knowing that s/he will be vindicated by resurrection.

Secondly, the degree of syncretistic behavior upheld by Josephus seems to be inconsistent with Essene rationale for separating from the larger society as some of them did. It would seem that if they were as tolerant of such a wide range of ideas as this suggests, the logic of their existence as a sect, in the first place, and their brutal persecution, in the second place, breaks down.<sup>374</sup> It is certainly possible that Josephus misunderstood Essene practices or was involved with a group of Essenes—since, according to Philo, there were several clusters of them—that had adopted some unorthodox practices. Josephus and Philo both recognized the Essenes as a widespread movement with many declensions (e.g., some allowed marriage, others did not, etc.).<sup>375</sup>

It may be helpful to consider the Qumran community, especially since many scholars view them as an Essene sect. While worship is not the necessary conclusion, evidence from Josephus and Qumran both agree that the Essenes did have a high regard

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<sup>373</sup> J.W. 2.152-3.

<sup>374</sup> Neusner suggests, “The members of the wilderness communes described by Philo as Essenes avoided the settled society of town and city ‘because of the iniquities that have become inveterate among city dwellers, for they know that their company would have a deadly affect upon their souls’” (*Judaism in the Beginning of Christianity*, 26. Also, see Matthew Black’s “The Reports of the Greek Historians,” in *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 25-47.

<sup>375</sup> Matthew Black, “The Reports of the Greek Historians,” in *The Scrolls and Christian Origins*, 25-47 and F.F. Bruce’s *NT History*, 82-92 and 101-121.

for the sun. In fact, Qumran sectarians may go so far as to provide a description of God in terms of sunlight (*IQH* 4.5-6). Bruce sees in Josephus' language regarding the sun a strong similarity to that of the Sampsaeans, which was a baptist sect that "paid homage to the sun as a manifestation of divinity."<sup>376</sup> On this point, however, Beall makes a distinction between the veneration of the sun versus worship.<sup>377</sup>

The Qumran community does seem to be a distinctive group of Essenes which was established after a period of disillusionment with the Maccabees and was given spiritual direction by 'the Teacher of Righteousness.' Seeing the political and priestly leadership of Jerusalem as hopelessly corrupt, the Qumran monastics resorted to the desert, rigorously studying the Law and awaiting the day of Armageddon. They anticipated two anointed messianic personages—one kingly and the other priestly, who would lead them into an eschatological battle between good and evil. It was through this small remnant that humanity would come to know the truth. With the aid of the aforementioned leaders and an angelic host, they would overcome their enemies and be established in Jerusalem as the true, sanctified people of God. Their apocalyptic outlook led to a holding of everything in common and a diminished interest in sexual relations. Regarding the Essenes, Josephus records, "They shun pleasure as a vice and regard temperance and the control of the passions as a special virtue" (*J.W.* 2.120 [Thackeray, LCL]).

In the final analysis, it is important to note that the expectation of "a time of the end" or an "age to come" is a consistent part of Palestinian Judaism and early Christian thought. What is more, this radical view consistently paints the faithful adherent as one willing to die for his or her convictions. Hengel suggests, "H. Braun has correctly traced this radical tendency in the Essene community and in the proclamation of Jesus back to

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<sup>376</sup> F.F. Bruce, *NT History*, 88.

<sup>377</sup> Todd S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes as Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls* (SNTS 58; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 52-54.

the imminent expectation of the Eschaton in Judaism. The radicalization of the law can similarly be regarded as having its origin in the fundamental eschatological attitude of the sect.<sup>378</sup> The conviction that human complicity was necessary for the coming of the kingdom of God bolsters the conclusion that the radical tendencies of these groups can be traced to their eschatological views, even though their views differed substantively from one another at points. Significantly, these zealous groups, preoccupied with God's rule, bear striking similarities in their guidelines for involvement, the devaluation of material possessions—hence the practice of having all things in common—a loosening of traditional familial bonds and a willingness to be martyred for their convictions; with the hope that righteous suffering would ultimately result in resurrection.<sup>379</sup>

### 3.2.7 Christian Eschatology

Christian eschatology differentiates between the present age and the age to come. The coming age speaks of a time of altered existence that God will establish at the end of human history. This scheme of two ages, which the primitive Christian community took up and adapted from traditional Jewish apocalypticism, provides the basic framework for eschatological conceptions as found in biblical and intertestamental writings. The term eschatology is inherently ambiguous since it can refer to events that are to happen at the end of this present age or even that will occur at the beginning of or during the new age. The NT concept of latter-days (synonymous with the expressions like 'end times', 'fullness of time,' 'last times,' and 'last days') is inclusive of the Christ-event, the interim between the first and second comings, and the second coming itself.

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<sup>378</sup> Hengel, *The Zealots*, 238.

<sup>379</sup> Regarding Zealot disregard for life, consider Josephus' description of the death of Judas the Zealots sons—Jacob and Simon (*Ant.* 20.102-3).

### 3.2.7.1 PART I: JESUS' ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### 3.2.7.1.1 Realized and/or Futuristic Eschatology

The burden of Jesus' preaching throughout the Synoptic tradition seems to be the proper characterization of the kingdom of God, his substitutionary death as the focal point in salvation history and the benefits that extend to those who believe in him as Savior and Lord. Such an objective accomplishes at least two things. First, as one might expect, it attempts to carve out a particular understanding of the kingdom of God amid other competing views. Not only did the Essenes and Pharisees envisage the kingdom of God differently, but this was also the case among those who affirmed Jesus' ministry. John the Baptist's concern just before his beheading draws this out: "Are you the one who has come, or should we expect someone else?" (11:2) A similar clash of ideas can be seen in Acts 1:6 when the eleven remaining disciples are depicted asking the resurrected Jesus about the glorification of Israel: "Lord, are you at this time going to restore Israel?"

A second point should also be made here. Implicit is the recognition that whoever embraces Jesus' idiosyncratic view of the kingdom also acknowledges his authority to provide such a perspective.<sup>380</sup> According to Mark, Jesus' arrival in human history meant that "the appointed time has fully come" and "the kingdom of God has drawn near." The proper response, then, is repentance and belief (Mark 1:15). Jesus is characterized as claiming that his mere appearance brought expectants face to face with the kingdom of God. This can perhaps be bolstered by texts like Luke 11:20: "If it is by the finger of

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<sup>380</sup> By 'idiosyncratic,' we do not go as far as some scholars who make the assumption that Jesus' perspective was dissimilar to Palestinian Judaism as well as to later Christian perspective, and use this criteria in an effort to determine which gospel sayings actually descend from Jesus. Regarding this practice, Witherington suggests the following about the resulting characterization: "There has never been such a person in all of history." See Ben Witherington III, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 46-8.



God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Similar comments are recorded in Luke 17:20: “The kingdom does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is’ because the kingdom of God is within you.” Extra-biblical sources affirm that these basic tenets were held by early believers (Pliny the Younger).<sup>381</sup>

The NT contains Jesus tradition with two types of eschatological perspective—realized and futuristic eschatology. The Gospel of John provides a classic example of this dual phenomenon in the NT and has been at the center of much debate on this matter. Some give more interpretive weight to the realized elements, claiming that the futuristic aspects are leftover remnants of an earlier stage of redaction.<sup>382</sup> Careful observation reveals, however, that while realized eschatology does seem to dominate Johannine perspective, futuristic elements appear at strategic points throughout. John 3:36 is characteristic of John’s realized eschatology: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever disobeys the Son will not have life, but will remain under God’s punishment.” Here, judgment occurs in the immediate encounter with Jesus. One is immediately translated into the realm of ‘life’ or ‘death’ when he/she makes a decision for belief or unbelief (see 3:36; 5:24; 8:51). Put another way, belief or unbelief exposes

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<sup>381</sup> See note 36.

<sup>382</sup> Bultmann believed that the Gospel of John as it stands is a rather elaborate composite work that suffered serious disarrangement, which later redactors unsuccessfully attempted to correct. Bultmann contends that with his careful application of style and content criticism, he was able for the most part to distinguish between the main lines of the three strata of the Gospel—the evangelist’s sources, the work of the evangelist himself and the work of the redactor(s). Bultmann concluded that the redactor(s) was an early second century churchman most concerned with restoring to the Gospel and orthodox flavor that would make it palatable to the church of his day. This so-called “ecclesiastical redactor” went about making additions to the Gospel which fall under five categories: (1) the sacramental, (2) the futuristic eschatological, (3) those which attempt at some point to harmonize the Gospel with the Synoptic Tradition, (4) those which lay claim to apostolic and eyewitness authority for the evangelist and therefore for his gospel, (5) and a miscellaneous group which are assigned to the redactor for a variety of textual and theological reasons. See Bultmann’s *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (1-85) and *Theology of the New Testament* (1:164-83).

the existing state of the individual.<sup>383</sup> Humanity stands judged and God sends his Son as the means of *escape* from the wrath to come.

Futuristic eschatology is also unquestionably a part of the evangelist's theological perspective. For instance, in 6:39-40, John records: "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the *last day*. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the *last day*." Then, in places like 12:48, Jesus issues a warning, saying: "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the *last day*." Jesus is depicted making this precise declaration a total of seven times throughout John's gospel (5:28-9, 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48). These texts clearly highlight belief in a future judgment.

At times, John juxtaposes these points of view. For example, 12:31 and 47 both speak of judgment that occurs in one's immediate encounter with Jesus. On the other hand, 12:48 clearly declares, "The words which I have spoken, that will judge him *at the last day*." Again, 5:24 claims that that believer has already passed from death to life, but just a few verses later the evangelist affirms that a time is coming when there will be a resurrection (5:28-9). Lastly, in the midst of affirming the futuristic eschatology which will occur *in the last day* (6:39-40, 44 and 54), Jesus is depicted as saying, "I am telling you the truth: he who believes has eternal life."

### **3.2.7.1.2 The Already-Not Yet Dialectic**

Some connect this theological duality to a similar phenomenon found in the reflections and commentary of Jewish apocalyptic sectarians who themselves

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<sup>383</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 2:37-40. Here, Bultmann makes a similar point.

experienced unexpected delays in the Eschaton.<sup>384</sup> Proponents of an evolutionary understanding of Christian theology claim that what broadened the scope of Christian eschatological hopes was the fact that the immediate return of Christ did not materialize. When it did not occur, and the hope of Christ's appearance in glory was pushed further into the future, more emphasis was placed upon the sense in which salvation was already present in the life of the believer, hence the term 'realized eschatology.'<sup>385</sup> This expansion or movement within Christian eschatological expectations is supposedly detected by comparing the earlier and the later works of the NT (e.g., cf. 1 Thess. with the Gospel of John).

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<sup>384</sup> James D. G. Dunn provides a good example of this, showing that this trend can be found in both Jewish apocalypticism and Christian eschatology in his article "The Significance of Matthew's Eschatology for Biblical Theology," in *SBL Seminar Papers, 1996* (SBLSPS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996) 150-162. First, Dunn suggests that the hope's fulfillment is delayed or deferred *without* the hope itself being brought into question. Significant also is the frequency with which a delayed hope becomes the basis for a redefinition and reaffirmation of that hope. In one instance, he illustrates this point by showing how "the longed-for return from exile became a continuing metaphor for Israel's hoped for restoration as God's favored nation. So the great prophets of the school of Isaiah could depict the restoration of Israel and the longed-for return of Judea in classic images of eschatological renewal and of paradise restored—the child playing over the hole of the asp, and the wolf and lamb feeding together (Isa 11:6-9; 65:25)" (153). Secondly, Dunn brings out that eschatological delay was *not* a new problem unique to Christians. It was part and parcel of Jewish apocalypticism *two centuries before Jesus*. This trend can be seen in Daniel, 1 Enoch, Jubilees, the Qumran commentaries and several other intertestamental works. As one turns to the NT, it is argued that the hope projected by early Christians was well accustomed to living with delay and readjustment. Clearly, even with regard to Jesus, traditional expectations were not fully met. Initially, at least, most raised questions, even his supposed forerunner, John the Baptist (Matt 11:3). One of the main points of contention was that the royal messiah would restore the glory of his father's house. Dunn writes, "For Christian Theology it is an uncomfortable but undeniable fact that Jesus did *not* fulfill all the messianic hopes for the age to come. In the light of Jesus' ministry, the sect of the Nazarenes had to redefine the biblical hopes they inherited - above all to hope of a Messiah who must suffer and die" (155). Dunn sees continuity between Jewish apocalypticism and Christian eschatology in the fact that in both hope's fulfillment is delayed or deferred without causing the hope itself to be brought into question. Then, there is the frequency with which a partially-fulfilled hope becomes the basis for a redefinition and reaffirmation of that hope. Lastly, the delay of the end is a feature that far precedes the Christian delay of the Parousia. It belongs to Jewish apocalypticism first. Dunn also holds to the already-not yet dialectic. Also see Dunn's work, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 1998), 461-98.

<sup>385</sup> Robert Kysar, *John: The Maverick Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1976) 98-105. Kysar delineates the significance of and the reasons behind the development of realized eschatology.

In his study of the fourth gospel, Bultmann concludes that the fourth evangelist was likely a Jew, but not one who came out of an orthodox stream of Judaism. A victim of a period in interpretive history when it was held that Gnosticism preceded Christianity, Bultmann characterized the author as the product of a Gnostic brand of Judaism.<sup>386</sup> More importantly, he argued that the evangelist proved to be the first to undertake the task of radically demythologizing the primitive Christian tradition. Where Paul began this process somewhat modestly, the fourth evangelist thoroughly re-read the tradition, particularly at the points of its eschatological beliefs.

Consequently, the eschatological passages in the present gospel which originated from the hand of the evangelist are those which express an existential eschatology (i.e., the eschatological themes are understood in terms of the immediate present of the person of faith). Bultmann contends that “Myth speaks of the power or powers which man supposes he experiences as the ground and limit of his world and of his own activity and suffering.”<sup>387</sup> The eschatology of the evangelist is, then, a ‘historical’ eschatology in which the eschatological event is the encounter of man with the Christ-event in the proclamation of the church, and all the primitive apocalyptic eschatology (i.e., the mythology) of the Christian tradition, has been abandoned.<sup>388</sup>

It can reasonably be argued that realized and futuristic elements have always coexisted in the NT. In the Synoptic tradition, it is clear that some eschatological expectations came to pass, while others remained to be fulfilled. On the one hand, the world had yet to be fully changed. Demonic forces were still active in the world. The

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<sup>386</sup> Rudolf Bultmann’s *Theology of the NT*, 1:174-7. For a thorough critique of Bultmann’s *Theology of the NT*, see Nils Alstrup Dahl’s article “Rudolf Bultmann’s Theology of the NT” in his book *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays*.

<sup>387</sup> Rudolf Bultmann “NT and Mythology” in Rudolf Bultmann and Hans Werner Bartsch, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*. (trans. Reginald Horace Fuller; New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 10.

<sup>388</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 1-85. Here, Bultmann outlines his view succinctly. It is interesting to note how he comes to the text with the assumption that there can be no future eschatology. In other words, he is locked into an exclusive interest in ‘realized eschatology.’

long-anticipated tribulation had not occurred as of yet. Clearly, ahead lay the resurrection of past generations and the judgment, at which time the righteous will inherit the kingdom of God, while the wicked will be forever excluded from it. On the other hand, it also appears that Jesus and/or the Gospel writers were convinced that some eschatological events had occurred. First, the anticipated Elijah figure had appeared in the person of John the Baptist. He was seen as the final preacher and prophet before “the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Matt 11:2-15; 17:10-3; Mark 9:9-13; cf. Mal 4:5-6). Secondly, Jesus and his disciples had authority to both expel demons and heal the sick, proving the arrival of the kingdom. All three Synoptics contain texts indicating that Jesus held that the benefits of the kingdom had begun with his appearance and that they would be fully realized at his Second Coming.

A position that attempts to hold these perspectives in tension was first presented by Gerhard Vos. It argues essentially for two things. First, that Christianity holds to the apocalyptic beliefs of Judaism of a ‘present age’ and an ‘age to come.’ However, this neat break between ages did not figure, since Christ’s appearance did not bring about a final consummation. This view suggests that Jesus’ appearing inaugurated the new age. Vos shows repeatedly how such an understanding seems true to the data found in the NT as a whole.<sup>389</sup>

Ladd sees the same framework in the NT. He says that the “entire framework of Paul’s theological thought” as consisting of an apocalyptic dualism of “this age and the ‘Age to come.’”<sup>390</sup> This appears to be a carryover from the hopes of the OT prophets and is argued for most explicitly in Paul’s thinking in Eph 1:21.<sup>391</sup> Ladd argues, however,

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<sup>389</sup> See Geerhardus Vos’ work *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979) along with his *ISBE* article “Eschatology of the NT,” (ed. James Orr; Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1956), 2:979-993. Herman N. Ridderbos agrees with the basic line of Vos’ understanding. See Ridderbos’ *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1997), 44-66.

<sup>390</sup> See George Eldon Ladd’s book *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 550.

<sup>391</sup> Ladd holds Ephesians to be authentic Pauline tradition.

that Paul's dualistic structure has within it a "radical modification," since what God has done in Christ has set the new age in motion. "Because of Christ's death, the justified man stands already on the age-to-come side of the eschatological judgment, acquitted of all guilt."<sup>392</sup> At the same time, however, there is a sense that in the "new life of the believer is an ambiguous experience, for he still lives in the old age."<sup>393</sup> Ladd asserts that the NT believer claims to have truly experienced the life and blessings of the new age, but still looks forward to its full appearance.

The details of this "radical modification" are as follows. Ladd establishes that 'the Day of the Lord' speaks more of a period of time—from Christ's resurrection to the Parousia—than an actual day, as it were. This period of time consists of two undefined intervals: (1) between Christ's resurrection and Parousia and (2) between the Parousia and the telos. Ladd discusses a variety of issues that fall within the first interval. He claims that prior to the Parousia believers who die 'in the Lord' will endure a disembodied state prior to the Parousia. Paul never argues for an 'intermediate body' at death, as some scholars suggest.<sup>394</sup> While he seems to abhor the idea of existing in a disembodied state and argues ultimately for a new body, according to Ladd, the biblical data is much stronger for the disembodied view.<sup>395</sup> The close of the first interval will be seen in the release of a spirit of lawlessness that will be terminated only by the return of Christ and the resurrection of the saints, both the living and the dead.

The second interval, according to Ladd, consists of a time of judgment and consummation. While the believer must go through this judgment, he is justified once and for all through his faith in Christ. In this sense, death has lost its sting, so far as the believer is concerned. Ladd goes on to define consummation as the very goal of God's redemptive purpose; "the restoration of the order to the universe that has been disturbed

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 551.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 552.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 552-554.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

by evil and sin.”<sup>396</sup> At this moment, God will, in definitive fashion, reconcile the world to Himself through Christ, through whom and for whom all things were created (Col 1:16). The cosmos itself will also be transformed. Powers, whether earthly or spiritual, will bow to the Lordship of Christ (Phil 2:10-1). Ladd says, “No rebellion will finally remain outside the sway of the lordship of Christ.”<sup>397</sup> Judgment of the wicked and exaltation of the righteous are necessary acts whereby God asserts his dominion over his renewed world.

Hoekema grounds his case concerning eschatology in the Jewish Scriptures, rebutting the longstanding idea among some scholars that it is a later development.<sup>398</sup> He claims that the OT believer’s outlook was just as eschatological as the NT believer’s. Hoekema argues: “But we must say again that the faith of the OT believer was eschatological through and through. He looked forward to God’s intervention in history, both in the near future and the distant future.”<sup>399</sup> Hoekema argues that, in characteristic fashion, the prophets intermingled events to happen in Christ’s first and second coming. As far as the OT believer was concerned, there was no clear understanding of how the various eschatological events would unfold. It was assumed that “these eschatological events would all happen together.”<sup>400</sup>

Like Vos and Ladd, Hoekema argues for an ‘already-not yet’ view of NT eschatology. The NT believer was clearly conscious of living in the last days and yet expected a final consummation and fulfillment of things. He asserts: “In other words, the NT believer is conscious, on the one hand, of the fact that the great eschatological event predicted in the OT has already happened, while on the other hand, he realizes that

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<sup>396</sup> Ibid., 567.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 555-556.

<sup>398</sup> See Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the future* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1979), 1-67; 288-306.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

another momentous series of eschatological events is still to come.”<sup>401</sup> He has an appreciation for Oscar Cullmann's notion of eschatological ‘tension’ which characterizes the NT. He contends that whereas OT believers looked forward to the coming ‘day of the Lord,’ NT believers have moved beyond the midpoint of history—Christ’s resurrection—and understand that while history is moving toward a final consummation, they currently stand in the new age.

Lastly, Hoekema reflects upon the role of the Holy Spirit in eschatological perspective. His claim is that it is the blessing of the new age that gives evidence of a more grandiose time of fulfillment. He says that “...the Spirit represents the breaking in of the future into the present, so that the powers, privileges and blessings of the future age are already available to us through the Spirit...”<sup>402</sup> He begins with the OT prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days recorded in the book of Joel. Not only would the Spirit rest upon Israel’s redeemer figure, he would be the actual source of Israel’s ‘new life.’ The Spirit would empower God’s people, enabling them to live out the implications of faith in Christ. In fact, Hoekema is convinced that the Spirit ushers the believer into “a new mode of existence.”<sup>403</sup>

### **3.2.7.2 PART II: PAUL’S ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

This section of the work is an attempt to distill, directly from the letters of Paul, his eschatological understanding. It will be enhanced by much of what has preceded and bolstered by additional considerations. Due to the contingent nature of Paul’s letters, gaps will be bridged by the conclusions of the writer. It is not necessary to give a full-

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 57.



blown listing of every instance of eschatological discourse in Paul. Most of the time, however, all of the relevant occurrences of a particular idea will be cited.

In 1 Cor 7:29-31, Paul urges, “I mean brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they have none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. *For the form of this world is passing away.*” Many scholars agree that these words are hard to decipher.<sup>404</sup> Winter, however, offers some helpful insights. In his article, “Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines,” he brings out the likelihood that famine plagued most regions around the Mediterranean.<sup>405</sup> Not only was this prophesied of by Agabus (Acts 11:28), but would have been interpreted by Christians as the beginning of birth pangs recorded in the little Apocalypse of Mark 13. Winter writes, “The prophecy of Agabus of a famine was fulfilled and from the time of the worldwide food shortage under Claudius there was a heightened expectation of the *parousia* as witnessed in the Thessalonian letters of Paul.”<sup>406</sup> This proposal at least accounts for ‘present’ ἀνάγκη of 7:26.

It at least seems clear that Paul’s preference for celibacy over marriage has a great deal to do with his conviction regarding brevity of time remaining before the Parousia. Such a view is largely consistent with radical Jewish sectarianism (e.g., Qumran community). Due to this fact, everyone should stay in the social situation in which they were first converted (married, slavery, celibacy, women subordinate to men, etc.), no matter how desperate the circumstances. The point Paul seems to be making is that one should be as preoccupied as possible, not with the mundane, but with the “affairs of the Lord” (vv. 32-5), since this *present age* is about to pass away.

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<sup>404</sup> See Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Body,” 25-8.

<sup>405</sup> Bruce W. Winter, “Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famine,” *TynB* 40, no. 1 (1989): 86-106.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

Another significant statement is made in this same pericope. In 7:26, Paul says, “I think that in view of the impending distress, it is well for a person to remain as he is.” This passage either refers to a current crisis within the Christian community and/or the imminent end of the age (Winter). Due to the eschatological context in which it is found (vv. 28, 31b), the latter seems more plausible. Furthermore, 1 Thess 5:2-6 is a parallel idea where Paul claims that the day of the Lord will come with darkness and sudden destruction. That the imminent return of Christ in the Parousia was a preoccupation of all the NT writers can be seen throughout (e.g., Matt 13, Matt 24, 1 Cor 15, 1 Thess 4-5, 2 Thess 2, Rev, etc.). Such a consistent pattern makes it likely that futuristic eschatology was an important feature for nascent Christianity. In one instance, Paul catalogs in 2 Thess 2 the events that must occur before the Parousia. First, there would be ‘the great rebellion’ (ἡ ἀποστασία) or falling away from the church (2:3). Then, the “man of lawlessness” would be revealed, accompanied with all kinds of counterfeit miracles (2:7-10). Certainly, this belongs to the complex of ideas that make up Paul’s notion of an “impending crisis.”

As mentioned above, Daniel 12:1 anticipates “a time of trouble” at the end of the present age. Squarely upon the shoulders of this tradition, early Christians also adopted such into their eschatological scheme. This is seen most clearly in the Synoptic tradition where all three gospels anticipate this “time of trouble” (Matt 24:15-28; Mark 13:14-23; Luke 21:25-28), explicitly connecting this expectation to Daniel 12; an event which is supposed to directly precede the coming of the ‘Son of man.’ This appears to be what Paul has in view as well, a time of trouble prior to the eschaton (2 Thess 2:1-10).

In summary, at least four things concerning Paul’s eschatological understanding emerge: 1) Paul accepted the Jewish theory of two aeons. 2) He was convinced that this present age was passing away, possibly within his lifetime. In as much as it was possible, he felt that one should be preoccupied with this fact rather than with mundane issues (e.g., marriage, personal freedoms, etc.). 3) Like other NT writers, he believed that there would be a time of trouble immediately prior to the Parousia. 4) Paul held that Jesus

would return in the clouds with his angels and that transformed believers would meet the Lord in the air (this point is discussed below). This should be seen as a form of *bodily* resurrection. Each of these points is largely continuous with Paul's Pharisaic past.

### 3.2.7.2.1 The Old Age

The old age is marked by universal sin. Sin as a power, holds the Jew and the Gentile captive (Rom 3:23; 5:12-21). In his description of a dispute with Peter, Paul delineates the case for universal sin (Gal 2:16). He rehearses, "We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law...because by works of the law shall no one be justified." The Gentile is seen as a sinner, without God (cf. 1 Thess 4:13; Eph 2:11-13). It was a belief within Judaism that eventually the entire Gentile world would abandon their pagan ideologies and idolatry for faith in the God of Israel.<sup>407</sup> In 1 Cor 10:20, Paul equates paganism with the worship of demons. This is thoroughly consistent with Jewish views of paganism.<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Isaiah prophesied that Israel was chosen to bring the knowledge of God to the nations (Isa 42:4-6, 51:4f.). He also claimed that the Lord promised to save Israel with an everlasting salvation and tells the nations to "turn to me and be saved" (Isa 45:22). What is more, the nations, led by their kings, will come and enrich Israel (Isa 60:3-5, 10-11, 14; 61:5-6) and worship God. The story of the prophet Jonah also expands the biblical tradition in this same manner; the God of Israel is also the God of 'the nations' (cf. Rom 3:27-31). Caird establishes that of the three possible responses to other religions—syncretism, suppression and subordination—Israel eventually adopted the last. Foreign gods (e.g., those of Canaan) became part of the heavenly host surrounding God. Through idolatry, the Gentiles went wrong in the worship of their patron angel who had been assigned by God himself. To a large extent, God holds these 'rulers of the age' responsible and will therefore overthrow them in the end of the age. G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: At The Clarendon Press, 1956) 1-30. Also see Dale Martin's "Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32" in *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995): 332-55, esp. 333-9. Martin's article gives a helpful understanding of Jewish perceptions of Gentiles and their relationship to idolatry in his effort to understand the background to Rom.1. Martin says, "Paul apparently assumes a Jewish mythological narrative about origins of idolatry. Since the first chapters of Genesis do not explicitly recount the beginnings of idolatry and polytheism, Jews in Paul's day had filled in the missing data in different ways (335)."

<sup>408</sup> See Chapter 4 of this work.

Paul equates whatever belief system the Gentiles of Galatia had before conversion to enslavement to weak beggarly spirits (Gal 4:3).

According to Paul, the law is good and holy (Rom 7:7-12), but was always meant to serve a limited purpose as a kind of guardian until the coming of Christ.<sup>409</sup> He brings out that through Abraham, God's fuller covenant intentions were announced four hundred and thirty years before the Mosaic legislation: "Through you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gal 3:8 cf. Gen 12:3)." Since Christ ushers in a time of fulfillment, "the covenant should no longer be conceived in nationalistic and racial terms... The covenant is not thereby abandoned. Rather it is broadened out as God originally intended—with the grace of God which it expressed separated from its national restriction and freely bestowed without respect to race or work, as it had been bestowed in the beginning."<sup>410</sup>

Paul also characterizes the old age as transient and plagued by hopelessness. This present age is passing away (1 Cor 7:31) and those who place their hopes upon it are 'perishing' (1 Cor 1:8, 2:6; 2 Cor 2:14-5). Paul even acknowledges the transient nature of physical existence: "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day (5:16)." This last comment is significant since Paul highlights for the Corinthians the reality of their dual existence (i.e., still in the old age, while benefiting from the new), despite the lofty view of some that they had already transcended the old age.

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<sup>409</sup> Dunn argues that, generally speaking, "works of the law" has a specific referent in Paul. That is, the identity markers of circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance which were practiced as evidence of already being in covenant with God. In reference to Gal 2:16-17, he contends that "'works of the law' are nowhere understood here, either by his Jewish interlocutors or Paul himself, as works which earn God's favor, as merit-amassing observances." James D. G. Dunn, "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Ryland Library* 65, no. 2 (1983): 110.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

### 3.2.7.2.2 The Interim

As mentioned above, the early Christian community adopted the Jewish apocalyptic scheme of two ages in their interpretation of the ‘Christ event.’ However, they nuanced this eschatological framework to accommodate the realities that they perceived to be aflight within their community, with the parameters of the interim being the resurrection and Parousia of Jesus, and the reign of the Messiah already being seen in the age of the Spirit. This latter point is important for another reason. First century Jews were as Bultmann suggests, ‘waiting men,’ awaiting the breaking in of a new age. The early Christian conviction was consistent with this view with one major distinction: “...the Christian community was convinced that the new age is already breaking in and that its powers are already at work and can be discerned.<sup>411</sup>”

Like other Christian writers, Paul believed that prophetic literature pointed with relevance to his era. Interestingly, he describes the revelation of Jesus as “the mystery which was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings, is made known to all nations...” (Rom 16:25-6). Here, two seemingly distinct ideas are held together: the mysterious secret of God and the foretelling of the Christ event in prophetic scripture. Clarity seems to emerge in 3:21, where Paul acknowledges, after delineating the universal case for sin, that God ‘now’ has ushered in a new means of dealing with sin that is distinct from the law. However, “...the law and the prophets bear witness to it (3:23).” Similarly, Galatians 4:4-5 says, “But when time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.” The idea “when time had fully come” seems to be synonymous with the “But now” (νυνὶ δὲ) of Rom 3:21; both

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<sup>411</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “Man Between Times,” in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolph Bultmann* (trans. Schubert M. Ogden; Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1960), 248.

demarcate the beginning of the interim period. The Parousia seems to mark the end of this period in the Pauline corpus (1 Cor 15:50-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

This age of fulfillment is marked by tremendous spiritual activity. In fact, early Christians saw this interim period as the ‘age of the Spirit,’ described in the book of Joel the prophet. Peter’s speech in Acts 2:14-40 (esp. vv. 16-21) is an explicit acknowledgement of this conviction. As mentioned in Joel and other apocalyptic works (Daniel, Isaiah, Jubilees, Revelation, etc.), Paul attests to having visions, revelations and even out of body experiences (2 Cor 12:1-4). On this latter point, Paul’s experience sounds similar to the soul flight of 1 Enoch, where Enoch too is told the secrets of heaven (1 Enoch 33, 81, 85-90).<sup>412</sup> A number of other features are important regarding the function of the Spirit. The Spirit is the first installment, a sign of the breaking in of the new age (2 Cor 1:22; Rom 5:5). The message of the cross is not convincing by eloquence of speech, but by a demonstration of power (1 Cor 2:4). The Galatians, at conversion, received the Spirit and miracles were worked among them (3:3-5). Not only does the gospel go forth with the power of the Spirit and full conviction, it is a source of strength in the midst of persecution (1 Thess 1:5-6; 2:14). The messianic age is an age of radical inclusion of all nations and the Spirit is the evidence of that fact (Gal 2:15-6; Acts 10:1-11:18).<sup>413</sup> Moreover, life in the Spirit is unpredictable (2 Cor 1:17-8; 2:18).

Perhaps the most prominent and important roles of the Spirit in the interim period are the sustaining and the sanctification of the believer. Paul declares to the church in Corinth “...you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ (1:7).” The idea of waiting for the Parousia is seldom spoken of

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<sup>412</sup> See Nickelsburg’s discussion on this in *Jewish Literature* 145-151 and 214-227.

<sup>413</sup> Acts 10:1-11:18 is a shining example of this fact. After the Spirit falls upon Cornelius’ family, Peter meets sharp criticism by the other apostles because of his dealings with Gentiles. It is not until he establishes that the Spirit fell on the Gentiles in the same manner that it did on the Jews, that they respond: “Then God has given to the Gentiles also the opportunity to repent and live!” (11:18). Regarding the prophetic background to Gentile inclusion, see Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul’s Gospel and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 128-39.

without mention of the Spirit. In fact, the presence of this pair finds representation in all seven of the so-called authentic Pauline letters. Galatians 5:5 says, “For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness.” In 1 Thess 1, the Thessalonians became imitators of Paul and others, receiving with Holy Spirit inspired joy their message despite persecution. Paul reminds them how they “...turned to God from idols, to serve a true and living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven...” (vv. 9-10) Then, in Romans, Paul asserts that not only do believers wait for the revelation of Christ, but he extends this status to creation. “For creation awaits with eager longing for the revealing of the Sons of God (8:19).” The theme of waiting is characteristic of all NT eschatological discourse, especially the Apostle Paul’s.

Paul consistently singles out two groups: those who are being saved and those who are perishing, a designation that seems to have a parallel with righteous and wicked in Daniel 12. In 1 Cor 1:18, Paul says, “...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.” Not only does Paul distinguish between the character of those involved in these two groups, he suggests that there is no continuity in their thought life (1 Cor 1:27-8). Believers have the “mind of Christ” and can therefore know spiritual mysteries. Paul claims that “...among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away” (1 Cor 2:6; also see 2:10-6). In 2 Cor 2:15-16, Paul says, “We [the apostles] are the aroma of Christ to God to those who are being saved and to those who are perishing. To one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

For the believer, Paul encourages that although the outer nature is wasting away, as part of this present order, the inner nature is being renewed every day. Paul, in one instance, moves away from the ideas of process and sanctification, to the declaration, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away behold, the new has come (2 Cor 5:17).” In addition, they have two obstacles to victorious living: spiritual forces and an inborn predilection toward sin (2 Cor 10:1-6; Rom 3:9-20).

On the one hand, Paul makes it clear that believers are engaged in a spiritual war (1 Thess 2:18; Eph 6:10-13), for which they have been equipped with spiritual weapons (2 Cor 10:3-5; Eph 6:10-18). On the other hand, he delineates regarding the individual's struggle with self. This is quite clear in Gal 5:16-24, where he contrasts life in the Spirit with life in the flesh. Life in the Spirit means consistently demonstrating a particular set of virtues (Gal 5:22-26, cf. w/Rom 7).

For the sinner, those who are perishing stand under the wrath of God which will be displayed on the coming 'day of the Lord' (1 Thess 5:2-6). What this means exactly is hard to establish in Paul since he never sets the notion of eternal life explicitly against hell or the lake of fire, which we see elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Matt 13 and Rev 21:7-10). He does contrast eternal life with the concepts of death, corruption and perishing (cf. Matt 13:36-43, Rev 20:7-10). In Gal 6:8, he says that those who sow to the flesh reap corruption, while those who sow to the Spirit reap eternal life. Carnal persons (σάρκικος) are those who are involved in things such as fornication, idolatry, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, the drunkards, revilers, robbers (1 Cor 6:9-10). Regarding these, Paul says, "they will not inherit the Kingdom of God." A similar vice list is given in 1 Cor 10:6-10, with the same warning. Given the ethical injunctions that he sets forth prior to this comment, Paul's conception of the 'Kingdom of God' is quite similar to that spoken of earlier in the section on Jewish Apocalypticism. He argues that Christians too must face a judgment, but one that will ultimately end in redemption (1 Cor 3:12-15; Rom 2:16, 14:10).

There are some clear universalistic ideas in Paul's thought. Paul affirms not only the redemption of humanity, but also of creation: "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God (Rom 8:19)." Scholars have long debated the universal tenor of Rom 5:1-21, since it contrasts the work of Adam and Christ. In Adam, all are said to die because of sin (vv. 12, 15, 18), but in Christ all live (v. 17). This is a notion that also occurs in much later writings such as 1 John. In 1 John 2:2 we read, "And Christ himself is the means by which our sins are forgiven, and not only our



sins only, but the sins of all men.” Interestingly, the writer makes this seemingly universalistic comment only to turn around and condemn those who do not espouse his doctrine as children of the Devil (3:9-10). Since right confession (Jesus is the Messiah) and right action (unity) are mandatory for the child of God (5:1-5), this comment is qualified. The universal relevance of the Christ event is only properly appropriated through faith. This is certainly the case for Paul.

Lastly, as mentioned above, Paul suggests that the reign of sin as a result of the law was ordained by God (Rom 3:19). Paul held that believers are free from the elemental spirits and the power of sin and that the Spirit is what displaces its control in the interim period. In 1 Thess 2:12, Paul admonishes believers to lead lives worthy of God, “who calls them into his own kingdom and glory.”

### **3.2.7.2.3 Paul’s Interim Ethics**

Whatever one might say about Albert Schweitzer’s proposal of an ‘interim ethic’ for the kingdom of God concept in the Synoptic tradition,<sup>414</sup> it is an appropriate title for some of Paul’s content since he often puts forward a pattern of behavior appropriate for the period leading up to the Parousia. This ethic is often inextricably bound to the situation.<sup>415</sup> On the other hand, he often simply upholds tradition passed on to him from

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<sup>414</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1968), 81-86. On 86, Schweitzer says, “The entire thought of those who were looking for the Kingdom of God must be directed toward doing God's will. This is the only thing that counts. A resolution of this kind creates a sense of solidarity among men surpassing any other...This is the profound, spiritual, inward-looking ethic required for entry into the Kingdom.” While Schweitzer's overall view is skeptical, strictly relegating the significance of Jesus to the realm of faith, some aspects of his view are quite tenable.

<sup>415</sup> Beker has identified five basic reasons for the evasive character of Paul’s thought. First, he asserts that “Paul did not write a ‘dogmatics in outline.’ Even with regard to Romans, which seems to be Paul’s more systematic work, its contingent, dialogical character makes rigid adherence to it problematic. Second, all we possess of Paul are seven occasional letters, which “exhibit a great variety of thought.” Third -- and this is, for Beker, the crux of the matter -- “Paul’s method of interpreting the gospel resists our attempts to establish the ‘fixed core’ of his thought... The intensely personal and dialogical character of Paul’s gospel demonstrates that the written form of his letters is actually a substitute for the viva vox of his

his Jewish ancestry and/or the early church (e.g., 1 Cor 7:10; 11:23-2; 15:1-8).

Eschatological urgency only affects certain aspects of Paul's ethical views, however.

Collins is largely correct in his assessment: "The significance of the resurrection for Paul was not only in an urgent sense of an ending, which it triggered. It also provided a model for Christian life."<sup>416</sup> In Phil 2:5, seeking to reestablish unity within the Philippians community, Paul says, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..." Discussion about 'one mindedness' and social cohesiveness is common among rhetoricians of Paul's day. What is important is that he grounds his call to unity in the example of Jesus, who, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...(vv. 6-7)" He goes on to say: "...he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him a name above every name...(vv. 8-9)." By connecting the common rhetoric of 'one-mindedness' with the example of Jesus, the Christ event becomes a model for communal submission

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personal presence." Fourth, "the rhetorical situations that Paul creates in his letters constitute a further obstacle in establishing the fixed core of his thought, since the implied situations may occasionally be at variance with the actual situations to which he responds." Lastly, he notes that the apostle's passionate character affects not only his lifestyle but also the texture of his thought. Despite these rather formidable obstacles, Beker acknowledges that it is still possible to sketch the broad lines of Paul's thought. Also, before extending this sketch, he asserts the need to distinguish the task of the historian (to achieve a proximate delineation of the basic contours of Paul's thought) from that of the interpreter (the adaptation of Paul's thought for new times). Beker sets forth seven points in his sketch of Paul's thought. First, he suggests that Paul's thought strains forward to the apocalyptic triumph of God, "when everything in creation, which resists his majesty, will be overcome and the whole creation will be at peace..." Then he highlights the theocentric cast of Paul's thought, in which Christology is subordinated to the coming triumph of God. Thirdly, the radical act of the death and resurrection of Christ, as God's intervention, marks the division between the old and the new age (the beginning of what I call 'the interim period' below). This has anthropological, soteriological and ethical implications for Paul. Next, since Christians stand in the interim between the resurrection and the Parousia, they are responsible for their morality to the extent each believer will have to give an account of his or her moral life at the final judgment. Finally, Paul's thought is "shaped by his encounter with Judaism. His struggle with his Jewish heritage permeates all aspects of his thought." See J. Christiaan Beker, *Heirs of Paul: The Legacy in the New Testament and the Church Today* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991) 20-39.

<sup>416</sup> John J. Collins, "The Apocalyptic Context of Christian Origins," in *Backgrounds for the Bible* (ed. Murphy-O'Connor and David Freedman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 268.

one to another and for Christian behavior. In 2 Cor 8:9, Paul says Jesus became poor so that we might become rich, which may explain Paul's boasting in his sufferings (2 Cor 12:1-10). In addition, as Phil 2:9 projects, exaltation by God is the inevitable progression of the model of Jesus (also see Rom 15:1-13; cf. Jas 4:10, 1 Pet 5:6).

It is on the basis of this model that Paul extends his own suffering as an example for the community. This apocalyptic trend in Paul's thought is broadly recognized. In 2 Cor 4:11-12, Paul lifts up apostolic suffering as means of 'life' for the community. Here, as in the example set by Jesus, life is a product of self-sacrifice. This is a theme that Paul uses to characterize his ministry in 1 Cor 9:1-14. After establishing his right to certain things (e.g., a wife, wages, food and drink), he explains that he has relinquished these rights for the gain of others. This understanding is also seen in his counsel. In Romans, Paul tells those whom he explicitly calls 'strong' to forego the right to eat meat sacrificed to idols so as not to cause the 'weak' to stumble (also see 1 Cor 10:14-33).

The practical notion of Jesus as model says a great deal about Paul's apocalyptic understanding. First, it must be remembered that the model of affliction to glory is an apocalyptic concept. In this view, bodily resurrection is God's way of vindicating the righteous who died in faith. To extend Jesus' example as the normative model for Christian theology places the apocalyptic rationale at its core. Other NT writers place this understanding at the core of their writing, but none as effectively as Paul. Not only does he lift up Jesus' example; he lifts up his own and beckons to others to follow him as he follows Christ (1 Cor 4:16).

#### **3.2.7.2.4 The New Age**

It is most fortunate that Paul delineates clearly his understanding of what happens at the end of the present age in 1 Cor 15 and 1 Thess 4. A point on which these texts concur is the belief that the Parousia will likely take place within Paul's generation and at the trumpet sound the dead will be raised (1 Cor 15; 51-3; 1 Thess 4:13-8). In 1 Cor 15,

Paul adds an extended discussion about the nature that will be given to the believer at the coming of the Lord; the dead will be raised imperishable and those alive will be changed (vv. 35-54). This is a form of *bodily* resurrection that is analogous to that of Daniel 12. First Thessalonians, on the other hand, adds the idea of the dead and living meeting the Lord “*in the air*” (4:17). There is no mention of change here, but the contextual issues that Paul attempts to address in Thessalonica are different than those in Corinth.

Another significant fact (in 1 Thess 4:16) is the reference to meeting Christ ‘in the clouds.’ This was a common early Christian belief, also based on Daniel 7:13. In Daniel 7:13, after the defiant kingdoms are slain, “one like a son of man” comes to the Ancient of Days with the clouds and is given authority. Earlier Christians characterized the Parousia of Jesus according to this model, affirming that he would come on the clouds (see Matt 16:27; Mark 14:62; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7, 10). Paul’s reference to clouds seems to suggest that he also held to this standard tradition within nascent Christianity.

In the Synoptic tradition, it is said that Jesus would come on the clouds accompanied by angels to judge both the living and the dead (Matt 13:37-43, 16:27; Mark 14:62). In 1 Thess 3:13, Paul says, “the Lord Jesus will come with all his saints.” Saints (ἁγίοι) is an expression that he often uses for believers (e.g., Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1). In this instance, however, two clues seem to suggest that angels are in view here as in the Synoptic tradition. First, the literary context clearly suggests that these ‘holy ones’ come with him and are not the ones caught up to him (Matt 13:36-43). Secondly, this usage of saints for angels finds numerous parallels in apocalyptic sources.<sup>417</sup> It is probable that 1 Thess 3:13 represents a tradition that he received.

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<sup>417</sup> Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 213-214.

### 3.2.7.2.5 Conclusion

This survey on the views on afterlife prevalent in the Greco-Roman world reveals several helpful considerations as we attempt to determine the dominant influence on the Apostle Paul's thinking. First, people within various cultures held to different forms of life after death (e.g., Pythagoras, Pharisees, Paul), while others rejected such notions as primitive and not in line with the truth (Epicurus, Demonax, Sadducees). Within the Greco-Roman context, a myriad of views can be enumerated. Epicurus rejected the notion of a system of punishments and rewards after death, claiming that at death the atoms which make up the soul dissipate back into the universe. Pythagoras, on the other hand, argued for orphic ideals, suggesting that the immortal soul passes through a series of rebirths and that the ultimate moral goal was to be released from this cycle by obtaining specialized knowledge.

From the time of the composition of the *Odyssey* until the emergence of mystery religions in the sixth and seventh centuries, we find a perspectival shift. As mentioned above, Achilles despised his lifeless condition, preferring the status of a slave of a poor man among the living. Mystery religion, which may have been partially inspired by dissatisfaction with earthly existence, saw immortality and reunification with the gods in a far more positive light. In fact, cultic rituals, which often involved sexual ecstasy, supposedly provided adherents with a foretaste of immortality and reunification with the divine.

Satirists and philosophers from all schools of thought were ambivalent about or ridiculed belief in the traditional gods. Demonax, the Cynic, for instance, expressed that the soul is no more immortal than anything else. As mentioned, Plutarch seems to have been double minded. On the one hand, he argued that fear inspired by belief in a system of punishment and rewards in the afterlife was psychologically crippling and should therefore not be forwarded (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 166F-168B). On this point, his views here are very much in line with Epicurus. On the other hand, he liked the positive effects of

belief in an afterlife as a deterrent for immorality (Ibid., 940F-945D). Lucian the satirist constantly mocked traditional religion, going so far as to mock Zeus for a variety of reason (e.g., having a baby). Lastly, many chose an agnostic posture, giving little thought to what happens after the grave, uttering the Epicurean phrase “I was not, I have been, I am not, I care not.”

Problematic for many philosophers and thinkers on the question of a system of punishment in the afterlife was the association of the gods with wrath. Epicurus rejected the idea of divine causality and the fear that it caused, and Stoics held firmly to human need to cooperate with fate, an unalterable force in the universe. As a general rule, Cynics do not seem to have cared much either way. Naturally, this criticism was regularly leveled against the Jewish and Christian conception of the one true God, who can be angered and at the same time confer blessings upon the faithful. As mentioned above, from the onset moral philosophy sought to map a vision of reality that was not encumbered by the capricious, immoral gods of the Greek pantheon who were simply adopted and renamed in the Roman milieu.<sup>418</sup> This vision of reality was not based on revelation, sacred texts or the like, but on the pretext that the gods were aloof from the human condition.

Judaism was comprised of a wide range of views as well. Some Jewish views were unquestionably syncretistic. The Wisdom of Solomon, for instance, reflects a ‘second doctrine’ on afterlife that emerged in Judaism that attempts to merge the Greek notion of immortality of the soul with idea of resurrection. It was popular among the social elite who were comfortable with Greek philosophical ideas. Also, in popular Jewish thought of the second century, pseudonymous apocalyptic literature speaks of

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<sup>418</sup> This can be seen in Socrates’ dialogue with Euthyphro. Socrates brings into question Euthyphro’s overly simplistic understanding of piety, based on the actions of the gods. Socrates undermines his entire argument that piety is that which is ‘dear to the gods,’ by showing the lack of uniformity among the gods regarding what is pious and what is not. See Irwin Edman’s *The Works of Plato: Selected and Edited* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1956), 35-55.

‘tours of hell,’ where the dead await judgment (Book of Watchers). Apart from its apocalyptic aspects, this work seems to draw from the well of Greek afterlife mythology at several points.

Prior to the sixth century BCE, some contend that Hebrew culture said very little about the afterlife; and the view was advanced that one outlives death through his/her children and by means of a good reputation. After this time, however, the works of Tristram and Deutero-Zechariah predicted a time of direct divine intervention in which God will separate the wicked and the just. This talk of an imminent judgment, a new age that is qualitatively different than the present, provided later apocalypticists with the raw material for their eschatological discourse. Building on these efforts, the Book of Daniel greatly impacted all later apocalyptic discourse with its emphasis on two ages, a time of great tribulation and a double resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

Equally important is the ethical motivation that provided the ground for the apocalyptic point of view. As in the case of 2 Macc 7, the seven brothers and their mother were willing to undergo death with the conviction that one day God would raise them from the dead on account of their faithfulness to the law. Resurrection at the end of the age is forwarded as a means of vindicating the righteous who suffer for the Lord. It is this rationale that provides the ethical basis for all apocalyptic discourse and the overarching perspective that guided much of Jewish sectarianism from the second century BCE through the first century CE. Again, Segal says, “The effect of this extreme attention to the body in the restoration of the world shows that the tradition of the resurrection is not at all obligated to platonic thought or even Greek thought...It is a remedy given by God to the Jews because of the cruelty and oppression of foreign domination, a notion that will carry directly on into the Roman period.”<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Segal, “Jewish Mysticism,” 391-392.

Christian eschatology seems to have consciously taken up and adapted the traditional Jewish Apocalyptic scheme of two ages. More specifically, Paul's theological thought consists of an apocalyptic dualism, along with what Ladd calls a radical modification of this age and the age to come. This modification suggests that what God has done in Christ has set the new age in motion. Because of Christ's sacrificial death, "the justified man stands already on the age-to-come side of the eschatological judgment, acquitted of all guilt."<sup>420</sup> What is more, in this interim period, "the Spirit represents the breaking in of the future into the present, so that the powers, privileges and blessings of the future age are already available to us through the Spirit..."<sup>421</sup> At the same time, however, there is a sense that in the "new life of the believer is an ambiguous experience, for he still lives in the old age." The NT believer claims to have truly experienced the life and blessings of the new age, but still looks forward to its full appearance.

Jesus as model plays an important role in Paul's perspective. As mentioned above, the model of affliction to glory is an apocalyptic concept, in which bodily resurrection is God's way of vindicating the righteous who die in the Lord. As mentioned, by using Jesus' example as the normative model for his theological perspective, Paul places the apocalyptic rationale at its core. What is more, he fully embraces Jesus' command to "take up your cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23), admonishing new converts to become practitioners of this ethos in the same manner as himself (1 Cor 4:16). Here, as in the example set by Jesus, the Apostle Paul suggests that successful communal life is a byproduct of self-sacrifice. This is a theme that Paul uses to characterize his ministry in 1 Cor 7 (e.g., celibacy) and 1 Cor 9:1-14 (e.g., a wife, a salary, food and drink, etc.); where he willfully surrendered these rights and privileges for the benefit of the kingdom of God and others.

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<sup>420</sup> Ladd, *A Theology of the NT*, 551.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.



### 3.3 GRECO-ROMAN VIEWS ON THE MARRIAGE, CELIBACY AND DIVORCE

#### 3.3.1 Greco-Roman Sexuality

In the eighth century BCE, Sparta adopted a policy that ensured its survival and made it an anomaly in the Greek world. In an effort to control the masses of neighboring Messenians, who greatly outnumbered them, the Spartans subjugated them and developed a program that would maintain their advantage. When a Spartan boy reached the age of seven, he became the property of the state, was taken from his home and raised in barracks with other boys (Plutarch Lives, *Lycurgus*, 16.4-5). Even prior to this, Lycurgus “made the maidens exercise their bodies in running, wrestling, casting the discus, and hurling the javelin, in order that the fruit of their wombs might have vigorous root in vigorous bodies and come to better maturity...” (Plutarch Lives, *Lycurgus*, 14.2 [Perrin, LCL]). Boys were socialized through the formation of ‘friendships,’ relations between an adult male and a beloved, a boy between the ages of 15 to 19. Supposedly, the idea behind these friendships was not the exploitation of boys but their education.<sup>422</sup> Friendships played a critical role in the socialization of boys, and in this light, were considered to be noble relationships. Harry Marrou states that these “relationships were maintained openly by daily association, personal contact and example, conversation, a

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<sup>422</sup> I say ‘supposedly’ here since some saw ‘friendships’ between an adult male and a boy lover as an attempt to legitimize a horrible perversion within Hellenistic culture. In the *Dialogue on Love*, Daphnaeus says, “Boy-love denies pleasure, that is because it is ashamed and afraid. It needs a fair pretext for approaching the young and beautiful, so it pretends *friendship* and virtue. It covers itself with the sand of the wrestling floor, it takes cold baths, it plays the highbrow and publicly proclaims that it is a philosopher and disciplined on the outside—because of the law. But when night comes and all is quiet: *Sweet is the harvest when the guard is away*” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 752A-B). A similar reaction to pederasty can be seen within Hellenistic and Palestinian Judaism. See Robin Scroggs, *The NT and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983) 66-98.

sharing in the common life, and the gradual initiation of the younger into the social activities of the elder.”<sup>423</sup>

Pederasty played an important role in the military training of Spartan soldiers. The practice had military and psychological affects since the adult warrior and his boy lover were often viewed as one. Plutarch records: “The boys’ lover also shared with them in their honour or disgrace; and it is said that one of them was once fined by the magistrates because his favourite boy had let an ungenerous cry escape him while he was fighting” (Plutarch Lives, *Lycurgus* 18.4 [Perrin, LCL]). Scroggs adds: “In battle they fought side by side. At the same time the presence of the beloved was a spur to the valiant action by the adult, who would not want to be ashamed in the eyes of his beloved.”<sup>424</sup> The distinction between noble and base love of boys supposedly resided in the intentions of the adult to educate the lad and bring him into manhood. This imputation of wisdom, in the minds of many Greeks, naturally included sexual gratification. In the sexual relationship, the young lad played the ‘passive’ role while the adult male played the ‘active’ role.’ Certainly there is some debate about the manner in which this occurred, but the active partner received sexual gratification that was rarely reciprocated.<sup>425</sup> The lad was often given gifts for the use of his body. This standard of active versus passive partner is often maintained in our sources by the distinction of beardless youth versus bearded adult male.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 29-30.

<sup>424</sup> Scroggs, *The NT and Homosexuality*, 30.

<sup>425</sup> In the Spartan era, Cicero claims that an adult and his beloved were allowed to sleep together and be affectionate, but with certain limits: “the Spartans themselves who give every freedom to love relations with young men except that of actual defilement, protect only by a very thin wall this one exception; for, providing only that cloaks be interposed, they allow embraces and the sharing of the bed” (Cicero, *De Republica*, 4.4 [Keyes, LCL]). Regarding this Scroggs comments: “Such compromises were, no doubt, further cause for suspicion in the larger culture that followers of this pattern did not always limit themselves to their ideal” (31). He also highlights the fact that “beautiful” youths were sought out in the first century CE (*The NT and Homosexuality*, 30-32).

<sup>426</sup> For more on this, see chapter 3 in Robin Scroggs’ *The NT and Homosexuality: Contextual Background for Contemporary Debate*. Swancutt’s work suggests a need for further consideration of the

As it relates to marriage, Spartan males lived and trained together for thirteen years—from age seven to twenty—before they could marry and officially become soldiers. Furthermore, a soldier continued to live in the barracks until the age of thirty. Sparta’s political philosophy preserved Sparta and created a way of life and thinking that would later impact all of Greece and moral philosophy in general. For while nationalism provided the impetus for the Spartan approach to life, the outcome was a unique form of male ‘friendship’ that had far-reaching implications on sexual ethics in the ancient world.

In the classical period, Athenian schools called *gymnasia* were comprised almost solely of young men and emphasized athletics and the study of music and poetry over against purely intellectual pursuits. Young men worked out in the nude in an effort to create strong, attractive bodies. Naturally, in a culture where pederasty and homosexual relations were cultural commonplaces, sources reveal that the gymnasium was a source of significant temptation for many adult males. For instance, laws designated the proper starting time and close of the school day. Aeschines asserts that such provisions were put in place because “the lawgiver distrusts them (the teachers)” and “is exceedingly suspicious of their being alone with a boy, or in the dark with him” (Aeschines, *The Speeches of Aeschines*, 9-10 [Adams, LCL]). Caution is even advised regarding the *παιδαγωγός* whose primary function was to protect the young lad against sexual advances to and from school (Ibid.). After secondary school, it was compulsory that young men enter the military for two years (as *ephebi* or cadets) and then—for those interested—further education in rhetorical and philosophical schools. Again, these institutions were male-dominated and aided in solidifying the patriarchal worldview.

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language and categories used to talk about Greco-Roman sexuality. She brings out that some hold that Roman ‘sexualities’ were not “defined by ones biological sex” but by ones sexual practices. Romans identified sexual practices as active and passive “based on the orifice (vagina, anus, mouth) a person penetrated (*vir* or ‘Roman citizen-male’) or in which they were penetrated (*pathicus* or ‘passive not-man’; *femina* or ‘woman’).” See Diana Swancutt’s essay, “Still before Sexuality: ‘Greek’ Androgyny, the Roman Imperial Politics of Masculinity and the Roman Invention of the tribas,” in *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses* (ed. T. Penner and C. Vander Stichele; Brill: Boston, 2007) 16-17.

In 45 or 46 BCE, talking on the issue of friendship after death of his closest friend, Cicero himself claims that, “friendship can only occur among good men” (Cicero, *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, 5.18 [Falconer, LCL]). In this same spirit, sometime between 90 and 110 CE, Protogenes, an advocate for pederasty and homosexual relations, suggests that relationships with women are “...devoid of manliness and friendship and inspiration.” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 751A-B [Minar, Sandbach, Helmbold, LCL]). Furthermore, “...there is only one genuine love, the love of boys” (Ibid.). While Cicero’s discourse may not reference pederasty or homosexual relations, it still highlights the same idea that Protogenes’ does; love and friendship were shared solely among men. This type of socialization could not help but evolve into a self-perpetuating patriarchal society. Friendship and genuine ‘love’ were realities shared solely among ‘free men.’<sup>427</sup> Marriage, for many in Greco-Roman society, was strictly for the production of legitimate children and the benefit of household management.<sup>428</sup>

A significant development that resulted from the Spartans’ example and which greatly influenced moral philosophy is what Mason calls this the “‘Spartanization’ of philosophy’s image...”<sup>429</sup> By this Mason makes reference to “the highly disciplined community of classical Sparta as a paradigm for moral and political philosophy.”<sup>430</sup> He highlights that the traits of a true philosopher, closely resemble those of a Spartan soldier. Mason demonstrates this by comparing Xenophon’s descriptions of the Spartan soldier Agesilaus with that of Socrates. He concludes: 1) both are masters of endurance in all seasons, 2) able to control their passions, 3) following a tough regiment, 4) submit to relentless training of his body, 5) rejecting all forms of luxury and softness, 5) lived in

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<sup>427</sup> In one instance, Protogenes is depicted saying that the love between a man and a woman is like the love between a free man and slave boy—it “is mere copulation” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 751B).

<sup>428</sup> For more on this, see Roy Bowen Ward’s “Musonius and Paul on Marriage,” in *NTS* 36 (1990): 281-289. Also, consider David Fredrickson’s “Passionless Sex in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5,” *WW* 23 (2003): 23-30.

<sup>429</sup> Mason, “The Philosophy,” 43.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

extreme simplicity, eating and drinking only what's necessary, and 6) fled sexual temptation.<sup>431</sup> He claims that "Sparta was so attractive because it was a basic goal of ancient philosophical training to make the practitioner impervious to physical hardship, weakness, and desire, to emotions and to human suffering."<sup>432</sup> Cited above, Epictetus' comment provides a helpful example of this process of radical disengagement, when he says: "This is what you ought to practice from morning till evening. Begin with the trifling things, the ones most exposed to injury, like a pot, or a cup, and then advance to a tunic, a poultry dog, a mere horse, a bit of land; thence to yourself, your body, and its members, your children, wife, brothers" (Epict., *Diss.* 4.1.111-2 [Oldfather, LCL]).

Even within such a male-dominant context, the evolving social role of women can possibly be seen in works like Plutarch's *The Dialogue on Love*, and Musonius Rufus' *That Women Too Should Study Philosophy*. Speaking in response to Protogenes, Plutarch reflects a new, more inclusive pattern of thinking about women. In one instance, he says, "There are very few examples of a durable relationships among boy lovers, but countless numbers of successful unions with women may be enumerated..." (*Moralia*, 770C [Minar, Sandbach, Helmbold, LCL]). And in another, "...in the case of lawful wives, physical union is the beginning of friendship" (Ibid., 769A). He cites Homer as a proponent of the view that husbands and wives comprise a true 'friendship' (Homer, *Iliad*, 14.209) and reminds that Solon—used by both sides in this dialogue—suggested that men should consult with their wives on a regular basis as a kind of perpetual renewal of the marriage (*Moralia*, 769A-B).

That Plutarch's views are not merely theoretical can clearly be seen in the genuine heartfelt affection that he directs toward his wife at the loss of their daughter. In his work entitled "Consolation to his Wife," Plutarch comments on the warmth of their home in which four boys were raised and acknowledges her pain. He applauds the proud and

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 45.

dignified manner in which she has held up under the weight of their loss, not yielding to her emotions for a moment. Plutarch says that “... not only ‘in a Bacchic riot’ must the virtuous woman remain uncorrupted; but she must hold that the tempest and tumult of her emotion in grief requires continence no less...” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 609).

Musonius Rufus offers a strong case for the equality of men and women. In his discourse “That Women Should Study Philosophy,” Musonius argues that men and women are fundamentally equal.<sup>433</sup> He states, “Women as well as men have received from the gods the gift of reason.<sup>434</sup> The female has the same senses as the male, also both have the same parts of the body, and one has nothing more than the other. Both have a natural inclination toward virtue.”<sup>435</sup> He defines philosophy in less obscure terms than many of his contemporaries and predecessors.<sup>436</sup> He asserts that “....all reasoning of a philosopher is useless unless it tends towards excellence of the human soul.” Women trained in philosophy will in turn be efficient household managers and able practitioners of virtue. Our lofty assessment of Musonius' view is not diminished by his emphasis on household codes for women since he emphasizes that philosophy leads to excellence in any role one might play. His comments about equal ability in men and women seems to suggest that if women were placed in many of the same roles traditionally held by men, the outcomes would be the same. After building his case, Musonius concludes, “why on earth should it be a duty for men to search and investigate how they can live nobly—for that's all philosophy is—but not for women?”<sup>437</sup>

These views are a radical departure from the majority viewpoint expressed by writers and philosophers of the time. The idea that women could be the actual facilitators

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<sup>433</sup> Cora E. Lutz, “*Musonius Rufus: The Roman Socrates*,” *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947): 38-41.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> Musonius Rufus is particularly clear on this point in the section entitled “Which is More Effective, Theory or Practice?” See the fifth discourse in Lutz’ edition of Musonius’ work.

<sup>437</sup> Lutz, “*Musonius Rufus*,” 39.

of virtue and friendship evidenced part of an evolution of women's social status.<sup>438</sup> Lest we oversimplify the facts, however, it must be said that these gains seem to have been limited.<sup>439</sup> Other works reveal that even Plutarch was not completely free of the traditional Greek thinking.<sup>440</sup> What is more, Musonius' pupil Epictetus spoke contemptuously about women,<sup>441</sup> while Seneca held to the Platonic notion that women were by nature inferior to men.<sup>442</sup>

### 3.3.2 Marriage, Celibacy and Divorce among Greeks and Romans

Even before Aristotle, discourse on the institution of marriage was grounded in discussion concerning an ordered society.<sup>443</sup> The household (οἰκονομία) was comprised of masters and slaves, husbands and wives, parents and children. This remained as an assumption throughout centuries of philosophical discourse. Dunn demonstrates that the maintenance of these basic relationships “became common concerns in thoughtful a society...”<sup>444</sup> Household codes, as the appropriate *modus operandi* of married life, show up in the works of Dio Chrysostom (*ca.* 40-120 CE), Seneca (*ca.* 4 BCE - 65 CE) and

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<sup>438</sup> Wayne Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *HTR* 13 (1974): 168-169.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-173.

<sup>440</sup> Plutarch seems to believe that if left to their own devices, women will get caught up all kinds of folly. He says, “For if they do not receive the seed of good doctrines and share with their husbands in intellectual advancement, they, left to themselves, conceive many untoward ideas and low designs and emotions” (*Moralia*, 145D-E [Babbitt, LCL]).

<sup>441</sup> In one instance, Epictetus says, “Or did you also neglect to study this matter, but, like worthless (οὐδενός) women, did you enjoy everything in which you took delight as though you were to enjoy it forever, your surroundings, human beings, your ways of life?” (Discourses 3.24.5 [Oldfather]) Then, in 3.24.53, he says, “Therefore, when you have been introduced into this city state by the gods, and find it now your duty to lay hand to the work of a man, do you yearn for nurses and the breast, and does the weeping of poor silly women move you and make you effeminate.”

<sup>442</sup> Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne,” 172.

<sup>443</sup> In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle defined households as master and slaves, husband and wife, parents and children (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1).

<sup>444</sup> See James D.G. Dunn's “The Household Rules in the NT,” in *The Family in Theological Perspective* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 50.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (ca. 60 BCE-8 BCE). These writers represent a span of better than a century in which the definition of a ‘household’ and its value to the broader society remained virtually unchanged. Interestingly, he also brings out that similar concerns were addressed within Diasporan Judaism, citing Pseudo-Phocylides, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus.<sup>445</sup> He cautions that we should focus more on the fact that ethical and political thinkers leading up to the first century had some “common preoccupations” around the good ordering of a household, rather than argue for a pure form from which other household codes were derived.<sup>446</sup>

After the time of Alexander the great, the Greek city-state with its emphasis on the household began to lose its ground as the focus of man’s “moral, intellectual, aesthetic, social and practical life.”<sup>447</sup> This societal emphasis upon becoming a citizen of the world rather than simply this or that city-state, led some intellectuals to be concerned about the preservation of local city-states, the household and the responsibility of raising a future generation of citizenry. Deming says that some “even maintained that the new cosmopolitan spirit proved to be the underlying cause of the depopulation of the Greek city-states. As proof they pointed to the fact that the authorities in some areas had found it necessary to pass measures requiring citizens to marry and have children under penalty of law.”<sup>448</sup> It is this struggle, to preserve “the traditional Greek understanding of human society” that provides the appropriate context for Stoic preoccupation with the responsibility of starting and sustaining a household; marrying and having children were tantamount to participating in the city-state.<sup>449</sup>

According to Deming, this is precisely where the Stoic-Cynic debate regarding marriage and celibacy begins. As mentioned before, “Cynic denied the importance of the

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 50-51.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 58-63.

<sup>447</sup> Kitto, *The Greeks*, 11. Also referenced in note 254.

<sup>448</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 54-5.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 57.



Greek city-state, promoting instead a radical cosmopolitanism. They held that the social structures of marriage, household and city-state had the origin in mere human convention, and in their place they demanded individualism and self-sufficiency.”<sup>450</sup> Cynic perspective overruled the assumptions and moral arguments that Stoics claimed as the divine will. Deming says, “This rejection is consistent with the Cynic concept of radical cosmopolitanism, and it is grounded in their more basic rejection of the notion that ‘civilized life,’ or the life worth living, is dependent upon the prosperity of the city state.”<sup>451</sup>

Since they were written by dominant males and directed to the same, household codes reflect certain attitudes regarding wives and women. Particularly among the elite, wives of equal status were taken for the purpose of legitimate heirs, to keep the wealth in the family and for the maintenance of one’s household.<sup>452</sup> To this end, Demosthenes says, “For this is what living with a woman as one’s wife means—to have children by her and to introduce the sons to the members of the clan and of the deme, and to betroth the daughters to husbands as one’s own. Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households” (Demosthenes, *Against Neaera*, 59.122 [DeWitt, LCL]). This also comes across in Procne’s lament regarding the status of women, “...often I pondered the status of women: we are nothing. As small girls in our father’s house, we live the most delightful life, because ignorance keeps children happy. But when we come to the age of maturity and awareness, we are thrust out and bartered away, far from the gods of our forefathers and parents, some to alien mew, some to barbarians, some to good homes and some to abusive ones. And after one single joyful

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<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>452</sup> Socrates (469-399 BCE) scolds a frustrated Critobulus for failing to provide proper training for his young wife, saying, “Is there anyone to whom you commit more affairs of importance than you commit to your wife? And after Critobulus answers, “There is not.” Is there anyone with whom you talk less?”

night of love, we are compelled to praise this arrangement and consider ourselves lucky” (Sophocles, *Tereus*, Frag. 583).<sup>453</sup> The detached nature of the husband/wife relationship can also be seen in Solon’s portrayal of the marriage bond: “He (Solon) prescribed that a man should consort with his wife not less than three times a month—not for pleasure surely, but as cities renew their mutual agreements from time to time” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 769A [Minar, Sanbach, Helmbold, LCL]).

Meeks talks about this broad sentiment regarding the status of women most vividly when he suggests that “... a rhetorical common-place [among Hellenistic men] was the ‘three reasons for gratitude,’ variously attributed to Thales or Plato: that I was born a human and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian....the pattern was [also] adopted by the Jewish Tannaim and eventually found its way into the synagogue liturgy: ‘R. Judah says: Three blessings one must say daily: Blessed (art thou), who did not make me a gentile; Blessed (art thou) who did not make me a woman; Blessed art thou who did not make me a boor.’”<sup>454</sup> Philo of Alexandria connects a large number of pejorative expressions to women, describing them as weak, easily deceived, causes of sin, lifeless, diseased, enslaved, unmanly, nerveless and mean.<sup>455</sup> In addition, in his description of Essene communal life and explanation for celibacy, he provides the following negative characterization of women:

For no Essene takes a wife, because a wife is a selfish creature, excessively jealous and an adept at beguiling the morals of her husband and seducing him by her continued impostures (Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.14 [Colson, LCL]).

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<sup>453</sup> Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 98.

<sup>454</sup> Meeks “Image of the Androgyne,” 167-68.

<sup>455</sup> Richard A. Baer, *Philo’s Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 1970). 42.

Apart from her husband, the respectable Greek wife was to live a life of seclusion not concerning herself with the social affairs of her husband, which often included a great deal of promiscuity. What is more, while she was to be a paragon of virtue, her husband could engage in the vilest of activities without being questioned. Under such circumstances, prostitution became quite common among the Greeks and was raised to a level of refinement. The practice became so common, in fact, that, at an earlier period, “the city supervisors (*astynomoi*) had as one of their specific functions the task of preventing prostitutes or their owners from charging too much.”<sup>456</sup> The institutional alliance between government and prostitution can be seen in the efforts of Solon who was the first to allow the introduction of prostitution into Athens and supported the construction of brothels (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 13.569D-E; Plutarch Lives, *Solon*, 23). Since Athenian citizens could not be prostitutes, they tended to be resident aliens or slaves, with certain rights and privileges. As slaves, prostitutes—men and women—were often purchased and trained from a very young age for such a life.<sup>457</sup> Typically, they had to pay taxes and wear distinctive clothing.

The *hetairai* was a class of courtesan that was often more educated, better groomed and accomplished than the Greeks’ sequestered wives and daughters. Furthermore, the *hetairai* were frequently the companions of famous men. Laïs, for instance, was the *hetairai* of both Diogenes the Cynic and Aristippus. On one occasion, Aristippus’ servant questioned the fairness of the arrangement since Diogenes indulged

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<sup>456</sup> Keuls, *Phallus*, 195.

<sup>457</sup> Plutarch suggests that Laïs was the daughter of the *hetaera* Timandra (Plutarch’s Lives, *Alcibiades*, 39.4). At a very young age Apelles recognized her beauty and predicted her fame as a *hetaera*; “The painter Apelles caught sight of her when she was still a maid carrying water from the fountain of Peirene, and, struck by her beauty, he took her with him once to a symposium of his friends. And when they jeered at him for having brought to the symposium not a professional courtesan, but a maid, he replied, ‘Don’t be surprised; for I shall show you that she will be in less, altogether, than three years, a beautiful woman for men’s delectation’” (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 588E [Gulick, LCL]). Demosthenes claims that Neaera was a slave girl, who was led into prostitution at a young age. Eventually, she was purchased by two of her lovers, who shared her for some time (Demosthenes, *Demosthenes*, 59.23-4).

free of charge, while Aristippus paid her large sums of money. Aristippus responded, “I give Laïs many bounties that I may enjoy her myself, not that I may prevent another from doing so” (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 588E [Gulick, LCL]). Many other renowned statesmen and philosophers had similar relationships with *hetairai*—like Pericles and Aspasia and Alexander the Great and Thaïs (Plutarch *Lives*, *Alexander*, 38.1-2). Even the great Epicurus had Leontion as his mistress. Athenaeus ridicules him since even after their affair had gone public, Leontion, he claims, continued to lie with other men: “Even when she began to be a philosopher, she did not cease her strumpet ways, but consorted with all the Epicureans in the Gardens, and even before the eyes of Epicurus; wherefore, he, poor devil, was really worried about her...” (Ibid., 588B). Furthermore, even Socrates was fully engaged in the culture on this point.<sup>458</sup> On one occasion, Socrates is portrayed as not adverse to the practice as seen in his response to hearing about the beauty and stature of Laïs.<sup>459</sup> Even when many *hetairai* were old and unable to perform, some still had their services held in high regard due to their reputations.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> In his *Memoirs*, Xenophon records two instances in which Socrates is a proponent of or is engaged to soliciting the services of prostitutes. On one occasion, Socrates hears about the beauty of a prostitute by the name of Theodote and immediately goes to see her for himself. He engages in a conversation in which he appears to be schooling her on the fine art of prostitution! In the end, Socrates has sex with her (Xenophon, *Memoirs*, 3.11.4-18 [Marchant, LCL]). On another occasion, Socrates says to his son Lamprocles, “Of course you don’t suppose that lust provokes men to beget children, when the streets and the stews are full of means to satisfy that?” (Ibid., 2.2.4). In Plato’s *Symposium*, “And now I shall let you alone, and proceed with the discourse upon Love which I heard one day from a Mantinean woman named Diotima: in this subject she was skilled, and in many others too; for once, by bidding the Athenians offer sacrifices ten years before the plague, she procured them so much delay in the advent of the sickness. Well, I also had my lesson from her in love-matter...” (Plato, *Symposium*, 201D-E [Lamb, LCL]). While sex is not explicitly mentioned, it is possible that Diotima was Socrates’ courtesan.

<sup>459</sup> Athenaeus says, “When someone remarked that she (Laïs) was very beautiful and had a bosom beyond the power of any tongue to describe Socrates said: ‘We must go to see the woman; for it is not possible to judge her beauty by hearsay’” (*Deipnosophists*, 588D [Gulick, LCL]).

<sup>460</sup> Plutarch says, “Quite similar is their behaviour toward notorious women. There are times when they repose in quiet with their own wives who are both lovely and loving, but when they have paid money to a Phryne or a Laïs, although their body is in sorry state and is inclined to shirk its task, they rouse it forthwith to action, and call in licentiousness to minister to pleasure, all because of empty repute. In fact, Phryne herself, in her advancing years, said that she got a better price for her remnants because of her repute” (*Moralia*, 125A-B [Babbitt, LCL]).

The typical term for prostitute was *porne*. The semantic range of this expression includes woman who are sold into slavery as well as the actual act of submitting oneself to the practice of prostitution. This is most telling since slaves and manumitted persons made up the class of individuals who engaged in prostitution. Keuls suggests that “the only manner in which a prostitute in Classical Athens could aspire to modest financial autonomy was by becoming an entrepreneur in the trade and stocking up on young slave girls...*Pornoboskoi* bought girls small and raised them for prostitution.”<sup>461</sup>

Before the Roman era, a vivid example of this can be seen in Strabo’s characterization of the temple of Aphrodite. He says that the temple was so rich that “it owned more than a thousand temple slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess. And therefore it was also on account of these women that the city was crowded with people and grew rich” (Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 8.378 [Jones, LCL]). Barclay contends that these thousand sacred prostitutes of the temple would “descend from the hill of the Acropolis at night and carried out their trade in the streets of Corinth.”<sup>462</sup> It is for this reason that Strabo quotes the proverb: “Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth” (Strabo, *Geography*, 8.378). With the profits from the brothels, a new temple was built to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. As a general rule, Greeks saw nothing wrong with associating religion and prostitution, a fact that is almost certainly a byproduct of Bacchanalianism.

In the Roman republic, emphasis seems to have been placed more firmly upon the family. All power was centralized in the hands of the *paterfamilias* and by law—at least in theory—the power of life and death was in his hands. Unlike her Greek counterpart, the Roman matron was engaged in the day to day affairs of life, even beyond domestic

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<sup>461</sup> Keuls, *Phallus*, 196. This is the story of Neaera who had been trained from a very young age to be a prostitute. See Demosthenes, *Against Neaera*, 59.18-9.

<sup>462</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 3.

affairs, depending upon her social status. As mentioned above, some Roman writers, like Plutarch, held that true friendship took place in the context of the marriage bond.

After the second century BCE, however, Roman mores began to look similar to what we find in Greece. For instance, we find Cicero arguing for the husband's rights to affairs outside of the marital bond, sounding remarkably similar to what we hear Demosthenes claiming almost three centuries earlier. In his defense *For Caelius*, Cicero says, "However, if there is anyone who thinks that youth should be forbidden affairs even with courtesans (*mereticiis*), he is doubtless eminently austere (I cannot deny), but his view is contrary not only to the license of this age, but also to the custom and concessions of our ancestors. For when was this not a common practice? When was it blamed? When was it forbidden? (Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 20.48 [Gardner, LCL]) Aware of the prevailing norms, the Stoic Musonius argues, "So no one with any self-control would think of having relations with a courtesan (*hetairai*) or a free woman apart from marriage, no, not even with his own maid-servant (Musonius, *On Sexual Indulgence*, 12 [Lutz]). These statements confirm that wives were often obtained merely for legitimate children and domestic security.

As mentioned, bisexuality was commonplace among many men, and adultery with the opposite sex applied only to affairs with women from the same social class.<sup>463</sup> Juvenal's sharp criticism highlights just how widespread this was among the wealthy in the Roman era: "Besides all this, there is nothing sacred to his lust: not the matron of the family, nor the maiden daughter, not the as yet unbearded son-in-law to be, not even the as yet unpolluted son; if none of these are there, he will debauch the grandmother!" (Juvenal, *Satire 3*, 109 [Ramsey, LCL]) Even though Juvenal's comments likely reflect a certain degree of exaggeration, they reveal that a great deal of latitude existed for male promiscuity. Such philandering was so common that philosophers often encouraged

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<sup>463</sup> Jeffers says: "Affairs with slaves or lower-class free women were not considered adultery by the state (*The Greco-Roman World*, 245).

wives to turn a blind eye to it (Plutarch, *Advice on Marriage* 144D). Peterman suggests that Plutarch held that “a wife should not become angry if the husband, owing to a lack of control with regard to pleasure, indulges in some loose conduct with another woman such as a paramour or maidservant (Moralia 140B, cf. 613A).”<sup>464</sup> As mentioned above, Juvenal also characterized a good wife as one who ‘put up’ with her husband’s affairs (*Satire* 6).

In fact, a consideration of marriage contracts suggests that marital fidelity was expected from women, but not necessarily explicit for men. For instance, the marriage contract *P.Tebt.* 104 (92 BCE) forbid the wife Apollonia from staying away a night or a day from her husband Philiscus or to consort with another man being shame upon her husband. On the other hand, Philiscus was restricted from keeping a woman or a boy in his home used for sexual favors. Extra-marital children are forbidden, but not extra-marital sex.

Widespread promiscuity eventually affected both sexes, which explains why philosophers regularly complained about the need for a disciplined approach to sexuality. Plutarch comments on the parallel actions of Spartan men and women, and their young lovers. He says, “...this sort of love (Spartan men and the boy lovers) was so approved among them that even the maidens found lovers in good and noble women, still, there was no jealous rivalry in it...” (Plutarch Lives, *Lycurgus*, 18.4 [Perrin, LCL]). While not well-documented in the Roman era, same-sex relations among women seem to have been pervasive.<sup>465</sup> Despite obvious advantages over the Hellenistic era, a double-standard continued into Greco-Roman society since “a woman could be severely punished for affairs with slaves or men of lower-class.”<sup>466</sup> Marital’s comment suggests that the high cost to female adulterers was not an adequate deterrent for some: “Your wife calls you an

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<sup>464</sup> G. W. Peterman, “Marriage and Sexual Fidelity in the Papyri, Plutarch and Paul,” *TynB* 50, no. 2 (1999): 168-9.

<sup>465</sup> For a detailed consideration of this point, see Swancutt’s article “Still before Sexuality.”

<sup>466</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 245.

admirer of servant maids, and she herself is an admirer of litter-bearers. You are a pair, Alauda” (Martial, *Epigrams*, 12.58 [Ker, LCL]). Juvenal adds: “But will Hiberina be satisfied with one man? Sooner compel her to be satisfied with one eye!” (*Satire* 6.53-54 [Ramsey, LCL]) Their claim was that women often followed in their husband’s footsteps.

Celibacy was a growing trend in the Greco-Roman world, but only truly upheld by a small minority. Neo-Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana, for instance, the wandering philosopher, represents someone who can truly be defined as a celibate along the same lines as what can be seen in Jesus and Paul. Not only did he renounce marriage and sexual relations, he refused to eat meat as well (Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.32; 6.42). As Wimbush and Brown suggest, celibacy and rejection of social convention seem to have grown out of broader social trends.<sup>467</sup> The Stoic Epictetus regarded the legitimate state of being unwed as a special calling, only valid under three specific circumstances—military service, pursuit of scholarship and the special calling of Cynicism.<sup>468</sup> The Cynic Diogenes commended those who rejected social convention on different levels, specifically with regard to marriage. He praised those who were on the verge of engaging in the affairs of the state and association with princes, but decided not to. As well as those on the verge of getting marriage, but who choose not to or have children (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.5.227). Regarding the latter case and as mentioned earlier, Diogenes felt that love was a preoccupation of the idle.<sup>469</sup> All marriage is nullity but should a man marry, it should only be with a woman whom he can persuade to agree

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<sup>467</sup> See Vincent Wimbush and Peter Brown in the literature review.

<sup>468</sup> Epictetus argues, “Shall high military command or writing a book prevent a man from marrying or having children, while such a person will not be regarded as having exchanged his childlessness for naught, and yet shall the Cynic’s kingship not be thought a reasonable compensation” (Epict., *Diss.* 3.22.79-80 [Oldfather, LCL]). Also, see Epictetus’ *Diss.* 4.5.6.

<sup>469</sup> See Cynic Epistle of Diogenes 44 in Abraham J. Malherbe’s *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* (Missoula, Mont: Published by Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1977), 175.



with him. This is perhaps Crates' rationale for marrying Hipparchia of Maroneia. It does appear that she fell in love with him and wholeheartedly adopted his way of life.<sup>470</sup>

Cynics did not deny the need for sexual expression, even among those who avoided sexual relations with women. They were interested in “freedom from conventional existence: ‘from care about food, clothing, house, home, marriage, children, etc.; freedom from all ties which morality, state, and communal life in general may put upon the individual.’ For this reason they resolutely excluded marriage from their sphere of moral concern. Marriage and all that it implied—the duties of husband, father, household and citizen—represented for the Cynic a burden of responsibility that involved them in a vision of the world for which they had no sympathy, and reduced the time available to them for the practice of their true profession, the philosophical life.”<sup>471</sup> This led to a reject of marriage as well as the Stoic rationale of procreation and societal benefit, but certainly not sexual relations. Many Cynics hired prostitutes, while others who viewed relations with women as a waste of time simply masturbated.<sup>472</sup> As mentioned, Diogenes, for instance, frequented brothels and had no moral qualms with this practice. In fact, he seems to have seen it as a norm for Cynic life. This comes across in Athenaeus' work *The Deipnosophists*, where he is engaged in a debate of sorts with Aristippus:

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<sup>470</sup> Diogenes Laertius records, “She fell in love with the discourses and the life of Crates, and would not pay attention to any of her suitors, their wealth, their high birth or their beauty. But to her Crates was everything. She used even to threaten her parents she would make away with herself, unless she was given in marriage to him” (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.96 [Hicks, LCL]). Scroggs suggests: “The emergence of women as Cynic philosophers seems somewhat exceptional.” Scroggs, *The NT and Homosexuality*, 20.

<sup>471</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 60-61.

<sup>472</sup> For instance, in Cynic Epistle of Diogenes 35, Diogenes is depicted as wrestling a young man, “very handsome in appearance” and “beardless.” After a time, Diogenes became erect and the young lad went away embarrassed. Then, Diogenes is depicted saying, “I stood there and rubbed myself.” See Cynic Epistle of Diogenes 35 and 42 in Abraham J. Malherbe's in *The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition* (Missoula, Mont: Published by Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1977), 145-7 and 173.

“When Diogenes said to him: ‘Aristippus you cohabit with a common whore. Either, then, you should be a Cynic like me, or stop it entirely;’” and Aristippus said: “You don’t think it out of place, Diogenes, to live in a house in which other men have lived before you ?” “Not at all,” replied he. “How about sailing in a ship in which many have sailed?” “Nor that either,” he said. “That being the case, then, it isn’t out of place to consort with a woman whom many men have enjoyed” (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 588E-F [Gulick, LCL]).

Here, Diogenes is recorded saying that to “cohabit with a common prostitute” was accepted Cynic conduct. This suggests that Diogenes did not practice celibacy in the literal sense at all; he simply rejected the institutions of marriage and family as unnecessary, cumbersome human inventions. At a later date, however, he seems to have preferred masturbation to “all forms of sexuality.”<sup>473</sup> The Cynic poet Cercidas also frequented brothels. He “praised a carefree recourse to prostitutes, ‘Aphrodite from the market-place.’”<sup>474</sup>

As it relates to divorce, a stark contrast can be seen between Roman and Greek perspectives in the early republic. Among the Greeks divorce was fairly commonplace and relatively easy to secure. Originally, marriage and divorce were private matters, but since the birth of children affected the inheritance of property and one’s status, it became necessary to institute laws to govern the process. Divorce could be enacted by simply sending one’s wife back to her father. In the early Roman period, only the husband could secure a divorce, but would only be allowed one in the case of adultery.<sup>475</sup> In fact, in the

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<sup>473</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 61. Diogenes developed the habit of public masturbation. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.46, 69 (cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 1044B) says, “When behaving indecently in the marketplace, he wished it were as easy to relieve hunger by rubbing an empty stomach.”

<sup>474</sup> R. D. Finn, *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

<sup>475</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 234-241.

first five hundred years of the Roman republic there was supposedly not a single recorded instance of divorce. Though the Twelve Tables gave provisions for divorce over two centuries prior to his time, Spurius Carvilius Maximus Ruga is credited as the first Roman to divorce his wife (c. 234 BCE) on account of her barrenness.<sup>476</sup> After the influx of Greek influence in the second century BCE, however, things seem to have changed dramatically. The stigma attached to divorce seems worn off by the end of the republic and women could acquire a divorce just as easily as a man.<sup>477</sup> In fact, Juvenal mentions a case of a woman who had had eight husbands in five years and then returned back to the first!<sup>478</sup>

The changing character of marriage among the elite helped to facilitate the rise of divorce in the Roman era. Marriage in which the father retained authority (*manus*) over the daughter became increasing common leading up to the first century. Marriage without *manus* limited the husband's authority over the wife and enabled both to retain their family's wealth. Pomeroy suggests, "The marriage without *manus* was a tentative arrangement and was largely responsible for the instability of marriage in the late

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<sup>476</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 4. 3: "It is on record that for nearly five hundred years after the founding of Rome there were no lawsuits and no warranties in connection with a wife's dowry in the city of Rome or in Latium, since of course nothing of that kind was called for, inasmuch as no marriages were annulled during that period. Servius Sulpicius too, in the book which he compiled On Dowries, wrote that security for a wife's dower seemed to have become necessary for the first time when Spurius Carvilius, who was surnamed Ruga, a man of rank, put away his wife because, owing to the some physical defect, no children were born from her; and that this happened in the five hundred and twenty-third year after the founding of the city, in the consulship of Marcus Atilius and Publius Valerius. And it is reported that this Carvilius dearly loved the wife whom he divorced, and held her in strong affection because of her character, but that above his devotion and his love he set his regard for the oath which the censors had compelled him to take, that he would marry a wife for the purpose of begetting children."

<sup>477</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 244.

<sup>478</sup> Juvenal, *Satire*, 6.228 (Humphries): "So she is lord of her spouse. But soon she abandons this kingdom, Occupies house after house, and her bridal veil gets pretty ragged, Then she comes flying back to the bed she scorned and abandoned, Leaving behind her the doors in festal array, and the garlands New on the walls, and the branches still green over the lintel. So her conquests grow: eight husbands in five Octobers— O illustrious feat, worth being carved on her tombstone!"

empire.”<sup>479</sup> Such an arrangement and the subsequent low childbirth rate motivated the Augustan legislation, which penalized childlessness and not being married.<sup>480</sup> Even widows were penalized if they were not married within the prescribed six months after their husband’s demise. These measures, however, did not necessarily increase childbearing since Romans regularly practiced infanticide (especially with girls), abortion and contraception.<sup>481</sup> This was particularly so among the wealthy, who, quite often, were uninterested in having children.<sup>482</sup>

In order to secure a divorce, no public official was needed; one or both parties simply needed to withdraw their *affectio maritalis*. By the first century BCE, the husband/wife typically informed his/her spouse orally or in a written form of his/her intentions. It was not necessary to provide the reasons. He/she would then leave the home in an effort to make it official. Both parties could initiate divorce fairly easily with little or no intervention of the court, except in cases where there was disagreement about the dowry. Among the aristocracy, marriages were arranged and fell apart for a variety of reasons. Jeffers says, “Romans generally divorced for the following reasons: failure to have children (generally assumed to be the woman’s fault), political reasons like those that dictated many marriages, continued adultery by the spouse, and to initiate a desired new marriage.”<sup>483</sup> Divorce among the lower-classes could be secured just as easily, especially since they were informal and not regulated by the government.

In legal marriages, the father retained custody of the children in the event of divorce, which would have made divorce agonizing for some women. Since informal marriages were not governed by the state, women could seemingly dissolve them easier

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<sup>479</sup> Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 155.

<sup>480</sup> Leo Raditsa, “Augustus’ Legislation Concerning Marriage, Procreation, Love Affairs and Adultery,” in *ANRW* 2.13 (1980): 278-339.

<sup>481</sup> Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 166-8.

<sup>482</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 237-249.

<sup>483</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 244.

and still retain custody of the children. Despite the fact that lower-class women would have made more of the family's income, financial hardship would have been a deterrent from divorce for many lower-class women. It should be remembered that after the republic and as early as Augustus, wealthy artisans of all types began to emerge and were absorbed into the broadened conception of Roman aristocracy.<sup>484</sup>

In the Hellenistic era, the male social system was based upon relationships outside marriage. These relationships were accepted as natural and normal and supported by the logic of some of the greatest minds of the time. This web of relationships was spun out of the low view held of women. In this period, a man's wife often lived in seclusion and was expected to hold to highest standards of purity.<sup>485</sup> As brought out, Roman sexual ethics declined to such a degree that Augustus fined the unmarried, including widows and celibates. What is more, special privileges were extended to those who had children, since the desire for offspring waned, especially among the elite. Among those who espoused a form of celibacy, there was an ongoing disdain for social convention. Cynics affirmed their sexuality, recommending prostitution and/or masturbation as outlets for sexual expression in lieu of marriage. As illustrated, Diogenes and Cercidas frequented brothels, teaching—by word and example—that there was nothing morally shameful about the practice. The real struggle for Cynics and nobles and everyone in between seems to have been varying degrees of commitment to the ideal of a 'civilized' society, structured on the building blocks of the family unit.

Philosophically this makes sense, given the absence of divine causality among many of the thinkers of the day. Epicurus rejected the notion of divine causality and held that its denial alleviated the fear that it produced in people. Release from this preoccupation then freed persons to pursue both the mental and physical pleasure to

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>485</sup> Pliny the Younger praises his wife for eagerly memorizing his speeches and sitting behind a curtain shielded from the gaze of the crowd as he recites them (*Letters* 4:19).

which they “naturally” gravitated. While many of the claims made by his enemies were groundless, such a principle did lead to a sexual ethic that in no way restricted his constituency. The conclusion is that men cannot bestow a gift upon the gods and so win their favor nor withhold a gift and so incur their anger. The gods are immune to anger and gratitude because of their immunity to need. To be in need would be a symptom of weakness, which cannot be ascribed to a god.

### 3.3.3 Jewish Attitudes Regarding Women, Marriage, Celibacy and Divorce

In many instances women were not given equal exposure to the Torah. In fact, R. Eliezer says, “Whoever teaches Torah to his daughter is as if he teaches her sexual satisfaction” (*mSot.* 3.4 [Neusner]). In agreement, a later rabbi concurs, saying that “it is better for the Torah to be burned than for it to be given to a woman” (*ySot.* 3.4, 19a). Keener suggests, “This became the prevailing view among later rabbis, and all Jewish sources point in the direction that girls, unlike boys, did not receive much Torah training.”<sup>486</sup> It must be acknowledged, however, that since women were accountable for the full range of civil and religious law, their exposure to Torah training—even if just orally—had to be fairly extensive. Furthermore, women played an important role in the religious education of their children making Torah instruction imperative. The Mishnah contains tradition that says of a father, “he teaches his sons and daughters Scripture” (*mNed.* 4.3 [Neusner]). What is more, Ben Azzai is recorded saying, “A man is required to teach Torah to his daughter” (*mSot.* 3.4[Neusner]).

While it is true that sons appeared to be valued more than daughters, there may also be good reason for their exemption from certain laws not necessarily connected to a notion of inherent inferiority. For instance, Ben Witherington observes, “It is rare for a father to prefer his daughters, considering the importance of a son to a Jew who wished to

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<sup>486</sup> Craig Keener, *...And Marries Another*, 83.

preserve and pass on his name and heritage.”<sup>487</sup> He adds, “Whatever one may think about the precepts found in Leviticus 15, it should be clear that a woman could not be priestess in the cult because of the ordinances about her uncleanness during her monthly menstrual cycle, and not because of rabbinic prejudices.”<sup>488</sup> Now whether rabbinic prejudices occurred as a result of these legal restrictions is another question altogether. The emphasis on an all-male priesthood initially grew out of the fact that “a priest must be clean and holy at all times in order to offer the sacrifice (Lev. 21, 22).”<sup>489</sup> Since women could be unclean at any point in a given month, they were excused from sharing in annual events like feasts and daily prayer. So, again, one should be careful not to attribute female exclusion at certain points *solely* to rabbinic prejudices.

Among the Jews, marriage was generally held as mandatory and thus, the “misogamy” that held the attention of some Greek and Roman men favoring pederasty did not characterize Jewish thinking.<sup>490</sup> Nonetheless, even among some Jews, women were viewed as property.<sup>491</sup> When speaking of Philo of Alexandria, Meeks states: “To be sure, despite his ascetic and dualistic tendencies, Philo is both Jew and Greek enough to regard marriage as natural and necessary—but the husband’s relationship to his wife is like that of a father to children and owner to slave. He believed that the proper relation of husband to wife is expressed by the verb *douleuein*, ‘to serve as slave’ and the sole purpose of sexual intercourse is procreation.”<sup>492</sup> What is more, rabbis spoke of marriage as the “acquisition” of a wife (קנין), which was mentioned together with “the acquisition

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<sup>487</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 5.

<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>490</sup> Wayne Meeks, “Image of Androgyne,” 174 and Craig Keener’s *...And Marries Another*, 72.

<sup>491</sup> Keener, *...And Marries Another*, 72-75.

<sup>492</sup> Meeks, “Image of Androgyne,” 177. Wegner, however, contends that Philo’s low opinion of women should be more attributed to his Hellenistic than his Jewish background. See her “Philo’s Portrayal of Women – Hebraic or Hellenic?” in *Women Like This’: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman Period*, (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991). Plutarch also asserts that sex (“sacred sowing”) is appropriate only if the couple is willing to bear offspring. Plutarch, *Conjugal Precepts*, 41-43.

of a Hebrew slave, a Caananite slave, large cattle, secured property and unsecured property (*mQid.* 1.1-5).<sup>493</sup> The language undoubtedly refers to an earlier phase in Jewish history, since rabbis uniformly agreed that acquisition, so far as a wife was concerned, became merely symbolic.<sup>494</sup>

### 3.3.3.1 Ben Sira's Characterization of a Good and a Bad Wife

The prevailing idea within first century Judaism appears to have been that marriage and children were seen as important. Naturally, in a patriarchal context, the literature makes distinctions between good and bad wives. Ben Sira—typically dated to the first half of the second century BCE—places women in three overlapping groups: good spouses, bad spouses, and unscrupulous young women. Much like the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31, the good spouse is a domestic goddess, the desire of every man. She works diligently at making a home for her husband and family, and is a source of strength for her spouse (36:24-5). Much as we see in Plutarch, a husband and a good wife are inseparable—a fact that is “beautiful in the sight of the Lord” (25:1). Ben Sira suggest that a good wife is “a great blessing” bestowed upon those who fear the Lord. What is more, her presence results in an extension of her husband's life (26:1-4).

A bad wife, on the other hand, resists the control of her husband. Ben Sira says, “Any iniquity is small compared to a woman's iniquity” (25:19). “A bad wife is a chafing yoke; taking hold of her is like grasping a scorpion” (26:7). What is more, bad wives are known for constant nagging and unfaithfulness. In one instance he says, “It is easier for an old man to climb a sand dune as for a quiet husband to live with a nagging wife” (25:20). Ben Sira even pictures the husband going next door to eat in an effort to avoid the evil looks of his nagging wife (26:16-8). When a man finds himself with such a

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<sup>493</sup> Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 88.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.



woman, Ben Sira advises: “If she does not go as you direct, separate her from yourself” (25:26).

The latter two categories are closely related since unfaithfulness in marriage is associated with the lustfulness of young women. In 22:3, he claims that “the birth of a daughter is a loss.” Then, in 42:9, he says, “A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father...” This is supposedly due, for the most part, to the struggles that a father has in raising her, particularly if she is inflexible. “Keep strict watch over a headstrong daughter, or else, when she finds liberty, she will make use of it” (26:10). On account of her lustfulness, she has to be closely watched because: “As a thirsty traveler opens his mouth and drinks from any water near him, so she will sit in front of every tent peg an open her quiver to the arrow? (26:12; cf. 42:11-4).<sup>495</sup>

### **3.3.3.2 The Testaments of Reuben and Judah on Gender Relations**

The Testaments of the Twelve from the second century CE conveys the supposed words of each of the sons of Jacob on their death beds. The scene is such that the patriarch has gathered his sons around him to give his last will and testament. Generally speaking, the testaments exhort the sons to be of virtuous conduct, avoiding the example of the wicked. The Testament of Reuben and the Testament of Judah are helpful since they differ slightly in their views of women. In the Testament of Reuben, the patriarch’s incestuous encounter with Bilhah is reexamined, with the insertion that she was drunk. Readers of this work are often warned against fornication. Women, in particular, should be watched, however, since they use their looks to draw men into sexual relations. Furthermore, the spirit of Beliar (or the Devil) encourages this act. The writer does not

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<sup>495</sup> For more on Ben Sira views on wives and women, see Henry McKeating’s “Jesus ben Sira’s Attitude to Women,” in *Expository Times* 85, no. 3 (1973): 85-87.

stop here but goes on to substantiate his low estimation of women by referring to Potiphar's wife (4:9-11).<sup>496</sup>

In the Testament of Judah, the writer avoids placing all of the blame on the woman (Bathsua), but also points to Judah and his drunkenness. Therefore, the writer emphasizes, not the seductive nature of the female, but explicitly connects fornication to drunkenness. In doing this, it seems that the writer deliberately places equal responsibility on both parties involved in the illicit sexual act. Also important for this work is the eschatological battle between the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit (20:1-5). These spirits prod humanity in the direction of righteousness or defilement. The Testament of Judah celebrates the forthcoming messianic king at whose appearance will be the general resurrection and eschaton (1-6; 25:1-5).<sup>497</sup> An evaluation of 25:3-5, reveals the writer's adherence to the doctrine of resurrection, where those "who died in grief shall arise in joy" (25:4).

These sources convey that women were firmly under the jurisdiction of men, even viewed as property by some. There were a wide range of stereotypical views regarding women within second temple Judaism, many of which were based upon assumptions about the innate weakness of their character. They also reflect, however, a growing understanding of male culpability in male/female interactions. This difference of opinion was reflected in views on how women should be educated, what responsibilities they should be given and how closely they should be watched. What is more, this entrenched perspective was often perpetuated by rabbinic consensus which greatly informed popular opinion.

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<sup>496</sup> For more of the Testament of Reuben, see Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 234 and Loader, *Sexuality*, 34-5. Regarding the prevalent idea that women were prone to be lustful, Loader says, "The primary responsibility would have lain with the male perpetrator, because men were considered able to be responsible, whereas women were deemed to have little self-control" (51).

<sup>497</sup> Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 238.

### 3.3.3.3 Radical Views on Marriage and Celibacy in Judaism

Regarding celibacy within the ranks of Judaism, the Essenes were known for their communal living and renunciation of marriage. As mentioned above, before the discoveries at Khirbet Qumran, our sources for understanding the Essenes were three first century CE writers: Philo (*Hypothetica* and *Every Good Man is Free*), Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*) and Josephus (*Jewish War* and *Antiquities*). Additional comments by Philo are also recorded in the works of the Christian historian Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica*). While Philo makes it clear that the Essenes were celibates, he makes another rather intriguing observation: “[they were] full grown and already verging upon old age, no longer carried under by the tide of the body nor led by the passions...” (Philo, *Hypothetica*, 11.3 [Colson]). Pliny confirms Philo’s first claim about the community, saying, “...it has no women and has renounced all sexual desire” (Pliny, *Natural History* 5.73 [Rackham, LCL]). Josephus, however, speaks of two groups of Essenes, one major and the other minor. The major group, consistent with the assertions of Philo and Pliny, lived ascetic lives but did not condemn the institution of marriage. Seeing a need to propagate the race, the minor order of Essenes did marry and raise children (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.160-1).

The evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls appears to run counter to what some of these sources suggest. Female skeletons in Qumran cemeteries provide indisputable evidence that women were not excluded and the Damascus document explicitly discusses male members taking wives and having children (*CD* 7.6-9). While it is not exactly clear if marriage was compulsory at Qumran, textual evidence may point in this direction (*IQSa* 1.6-19). Furthermore, this document affirms that monogamy was the communal standard (*CD* 4.21).

How do these accounts hold together? Some scholars argue that it is possible (if not likely) that Essenes married and had children prior to joining the commune or between the ages of twenty and twenty-five.<sup>498</sup> The Qumranites saw themselves in training for a great conflict between good and evil. Since twenty was the age of enlistment for military service in the Jewish Scripture, some believe that this became the age of enlistment for holy war as well.<sup>499</sup> Five years of training and family life was followed by permanent celibacy mandatory for individuals engaged in ‘holy war.’<sup>500</sup> This would mean that the celibates of our secondary sources (Philo, Pliny and Josephus’ major group) reference one group, while Josephus’ second order of marrying Essenes represents a particular age-specific group within the same commune.

Besides this group, rabbinic literature and Josephus record instances of celibate bachelors. For instance, Simeon ben Azzai, who, after speaking well of married life, is told by the rabbis that he “is very good at expounding, but not fulfilling.”<sup>501</sup> He defends his posture by saying “What can I do? My soul thirsts for the Torah; the world can be maintained by others.”<sup>502</sup> Other sources, however, bring into question whether Ben Azzai was a bachelor all of his life. The Talmudic sources suggest that he was married to the daughter of R. Aquiba, but later divorced her.<sup>503</sup> Agrippa II was another known bachelor, who was possibly involved in an incestuous relationship with his sister (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.145). No instances of female celibates can be found in any extant

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<sup>498</sup> Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* 30-33; J. M. Ford, *A Trilogy of Wisdom and Celibacy* (London: 1967), 30-31, 34.

<sup>499</sup> Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* 30-33.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> *tYeb.* 8.7, *bYeb.* 63b

<sup>502</sup> There is tradition in the Babylonian Talmud that contradicts this understanding of him being a bachelor (*bKet.* 63a).

<sup>503</sup> Ibid.

Jewish literature.<sup>504</sup> If our reconstruction is tenable, it serves to reason that both men and women entered bachelorhood simultaneously among some Essenes.

### 3.3.3.4 Divorce in Judaism

Throughout the OT and leading into first century BCE, a progression can be seen with regard to attitudes concerning divorce. Loader brings out that since Abraham ousts Hagar at the appeal of Sarah, there seems to have been no legal restrictions. The Mosaic legislation as recorded in Deut. 24 marks a major advancement in women's rights since the grounds for divorce had to stand up in court. Later, the prophetic tradition gives evidence of the emergence of an even stricter attitude regarding divorce, where Mal 2:15-16 says, "And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look at yourselves, and do let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce..." Loader says, "The verses indicate an attack on people who divorce simply on the basis of aversion, in other words, divorce without adequate grounds."<sup>505</sup>

One fact remained constant however, divorce proceeded from the husband. This contrasted with Roman law, which by the first century BCE granted women the right to divorce. The basis for divorce in Judaism was found in literal and idiosyncratic interpretations of Deut. 24:1. It reads: "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and writes her a certificate of divorce..." According to this passage and subsequent tradition, the certificate of divorce provided, protected the woman's reputation and verified that she could indeed remarry; the Mishnah records that the husband had to explicitly state on the certificate: "Lo, you are permitted to any man" (*mGit.* 9.3 [Neusner]).

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<sup>504</sup> Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 62-65.

<sup>505</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 64.

The two leading Pharisaic schools—the Hillelites and the Shammaites—differed in how they handled the term translated here “indecent”; the Hillelites gave Jewish men a great deal of latitude, while the Shammaites restricted divorce to premarital unchastity or unfaithfulness. For instance, the Hillelites seemingly allowed husbands to divorce their wives if they had burned their meal (*bGit.* 90a). Rabbis also discussed a number of circumstances outside of marital infidelity under which divorce was permissible, e.g., the very appearance of unfaithfulness (*bYeb.* 24b-25a), nursing in public, and even if he had fallen for another more attractive woman (*mGit.* 9.10).<sup>506</sup> Ben Sira seems to have held to a view similar to what we see in Hillel, since he advises that a man with a “bad wife”—defined broadly—has the right to divorce: “If she does not go as you direct, separate her from yourself” (25:26). As mentioned above, he characterizes a bad wife as one who nags and/or is unfaithful (25:20, 26:16-8). Jewish men could divorce their barren wives seemingly without being frowned upon by the broader culture.<sup>507</sup> Romans, however, may have frowned upon such a practice.<sup>508</sup> Lest we overstate the true nature of things, Romans did reserve a special status for women who bore legitimate children.<sup>509</sup>

Satlow argues that rabbinic sources consistently define love as the sexual attractiveness of the woman, which can thus be expressed only by men; never the other way around.<sup>510</sup> Since such a premium is placed on the wife’s physical beauty, maintenance of the marriage was viewed as the wife’s responsibility. Satlow argues: “A failed marriage indicates the absence of the love of a man for his wife, which itself is seen as an indication of the loss of the wife’s attractiveness. Never, in this rabbinic

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<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 141-2.

<sup>507</sup> Rabbinic law permits divorce if one’s wife has not given birth within the first ten years. See, for instance, *mYeb.* 6:6 (ed. Neusner).

<sup>508</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 241.

<sup>509</sup> Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 166-170.

<sup>510</sup> M. L. Satlow, “‘One Who Loves His Wife Like Himself’: Love in Rabbinic Marriage,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49 (1998): 67-87.

world-view, can divorce be seen as the husband's fault."<sup>511</sup> For this reason, rabbinic thought constantly provides religious concessions for women so that they are never viewed as repulsive by their husbands.<sup>512</sup>

There were exceptions to the general rule of male-initiated divorce. At times, husbands agreed to give divorces to wives who were persistent in asking for one.<sup>513</sup> According to rabbinic thought, such was warranted with men who had physical defects or who had certain despised careers.<sup>514</sup> Another phenomenon worth consideration is the fact that wealthy women, who had obtained the privilege of Roman citizenship, did often divorce their husbands. Under Roman law, this was permissible. The family of Herod the Great provides a helpful example of this practice. Josephus informs us that Herod the Great's sister, Salome, divorced her Idumean husband, Costobar, after a dispute. He

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<sup>511</sup> Ibid., 74-77.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>513</sup> Tal Ilan suggests that there is evidence of a Jewish woman giving her husband a bill of divorce. Ilan suggests that Papyrus Se'elim may provide textual proof of a much broader trend. She concludes: "Perhaps in ancient Jewish practice women could divorce their husbands, and it is an accident of our transmission history that this fact is not amply illustrated. After all, almost all we know of Jewish legal traditions from the first and second centuries CE and earlier derives from pharisaic/rabbinic tradition. Perhaps these writings intentionally distort our picture of other Jewish attitudes to divorce in their time." Tal Ilan, "Notes and Observations on a Newly Published Divorce Bill from the Judean Desert" *HTR* 89:2 (1996): 201.

<sup>514</sup> *mKet. 7.10* (ed. Neusner) says, A. "And these are the ones whom they force to put her away: (1) he who is afflicted with boils, or (2) who has a polypus, or (3) who collects [dog excrement], or (4) a coppersmith, or (5) a tanner—

B. whether these [blemishes] were present before they were married or whether after they were married they made their appearance.

C. And concerning all of them did R. Meir say, "Even though he made a condition with her [that marriage is valid despite these blemishes], she still can claim, 'I thought that I could take it. But now I find that I cannot take it.'"

D. And sages say, "She takes it despite herself, except in the case of one afflicted with boils,

E. "because [in that case] she enervates him."

F. M'SH B: In Sidon there was a tanner who died, and he had a brother who was a tanner.

G. Sages ruled, "She can claim, 'Your brother I could take, but I can't take you [as my levir].'"

Satlow makes the observation, however, that even in these cases a woman was granted a divorce because contact was uncomfortable for her husband. Very little attention is given to the idea that divorce is warranted since the husband is repulsive to the wife. See Satlow's "One Who Loves," 75. Also, see Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 143.

says, "...[Salome] sent him a document dissolving their marriage, which was not in accordance with Jewish law...Salome, however, did not choose to follow her country's law, but acted on her own authority and repudiated her marriage" (*Ant.* 15.259-260 [Marcus and Wikgren, LCL]). It is of particular interest that, according to Josephus, Salome does not make an appeal to an authority outside of herself. As it turns out, it was not uncommon for women to abandon their husbands as they had no recourse outside of the few above-mentioned circumstances, none of which account for the possibility of extreme physical and emotional abuse.<sup>515</sup>

Herodias divorced Herod Philip in order to marry his brother, Herod Antipas. Under certain circumstances, marrying a brother's wife was perfectly acceptable (e.g., levirate marriage).<sup>516</sup> But to marry one's brother's wife while he is yet living would have been quite offensive to devout Jews since it reflected a blatant disregard for the Law (Lev. 18:16, 20:21). To make matters worse, it seems clear that Antipas seduced his brother's wife while visiting him in Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.110-5). This provides the occasion for the beheading of John the Baptist, who had condemned Antipas' actions (Mark 6:17-21; Matt 14:1-12).<sup>517</sup>

In sum, divorce seems to have been far rarer than one might expect. Josephus only records four instances of husband-initiated divorce (*J.W.* 1.241, 2.115; *Life* 426; *Ant.* 14.300, 16.198-9, 17.68-78) and in some instances, the couples remarried despite rabbinic disdain for such practices (*bPes.* 113b). The fact is, as in the case with

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<sup>515</sup> Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 147.

<sup>516</sup> Jesus makes mention of this custom in Mark 12:18-27. For more on this practice in the Greco-Roman era, see Tal Ilan's *Jewish Women*, 152-157.

<sup>517</sup> The rationale that Josephus' account provides for Antipas' execution of John the Baptist was his growing popularity. "When others too joined the crowds about him, because they were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons, Herod became alarmed. Eloquence that had so great an effect on mankind might lead to some form of sedition, for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did. Herod decided therefore that it would be much better to strike first and be rid of him before his work led to an uprising, than to wait for an upheaval, get involved in a difficult situation and see his mistake" (*Ant.* 18.118-9 [Feldman, LCL]).



polygamy where husbands had to maintain the first wife's lifestyle, divorce was far too costly for poorer individuals. The *ketubbah*, which guaranteed the wife's maintenance in the event of a divorce, varied based upon the wife's premarital status.<sup>518</sup> The effect was that only wealthy men could afford to divorce.

### 3.3.3.5 Exceptions to the Rule

With this being said, a profound consideration must be borne in mind. The tradition of the Hebrew prophets offers a peculiar picture of marital practices. At a very young age, the prophet Jeremiah is convinced by revelation that he should not marry at all,<sup>519</sup> while the prophet Hosea, on the other hand, is told that he should marry a prostitute.<sup>520</sup> Also, the prophet Ezekiel believed that he was instructed by God not to remarry (Ezk. 24:15-27). What is more, it can be inferred that Elijah and Elisha, two significant non-literary prophets, were unmarried as well. This mixed picture of prophetic marital practices reveals that the rules governing the standard marital practices in Judaism were quite fluid at an earlier period and could be suspended in the revelatory practices of certain individuals like the prophets.<sup>521</sup> Such was also the case for certain religious women as well, like Anna (Lk 2:36-38). In an effort to convey their messages, beneficiaries of supernatural revelation—often despised by the broader culture—engaged

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<sup>518</sup> Tal Ilan says, "If, as our sources indicate, the minimum amount of the *ketubbah* was 200 zuz for a virgin and 100 for a widow of divorcée (*mKet.1.2*), only a man of considerable means could afford to get divorced" (91). A zuz seems to have been equivalent to a denarius or a day's wage.

<sup>519</sup> See Jer 16:1-4. Phipps attempts to minimize this instance of celibacy in Ancient Israel by referring to the impeding contextual reality of Babylonian captivity. The fact that Jeremiah's celibacy provides "a warning of national disaster" does not discredit it as an early witness to the practice of celibacy. Furthermore, impeding (apocalyptic) crisis does provide the backdrop of celibacy in the NT. For Phipps argument, see *Was Jesus Married?* 26-29.

<sup>520</sup> Heschel argues that *'esheth zenunim* does not necessarily translate harlot—which is the typical rendering *zanah*—but connotes someone who was inclined to becoming one, "a women filled with a spirit of whoredom." See Heschel's *The Prophets*, 52-53.

<sup>521</sup> For more on this, see John C. Poirier and Joseph Frankovic, "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor 7:5-7," *HTR* 89 (1996): 1-18.

in marital practices that were considered to be abnormal. Arguably, these antics provided the ‘shock-value’ necessary to engage the masses. As mentioned earlier, the suspension of the Law is also spoken of extensively in the apocalyptic sections of the prophetic.

In the NT, after Jesus, it is Paul who is adamant in his views regarding celibacy. This could grow out of his deep appreciation for the prophetic tradition to which he refers on several occasions. It is primarily Paul who informs us that the μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας are revealed in the prophetic tradition. In 1 Cor. 2:7, Paul claims to speak God’s “secret and hidden wisdom” which God predestined “before the ages for our glory.” He consistently claims that the mystery of the gospel “hidden for long ages” has been made known “through the prophetic writings” (Rom 16:25-26). Later in his ministry, Paul makes similar claims: “In former generations it (μυστήριον, see context) was not made known to humankind as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit...(Eph 3:5).” Just a few verses from this, he asserts that “the plan of the mystery [μυστήριον] (was) hidden for ages in God who created all things...(v. 9)” Paul’s preoccupation with the prophetic tradition is perhaps also seen not only in his deep admiration for their spiritual ideals, but also their practices (e.g., celibacy). This appears to be the example followed by Jesus, John the Baptist and Paul.<sup>522</sup>

### 3.3.4 Marriage, Celibacy and Divorce among Christians

Ben Witherington affirms that a broad range of views existed within Judaism of the first century, but suggests that Jesus empowered women in a unique fashion, defying much of the logic that we see in the likes of Philo and others. He argues that Matt 5:27-8 should be rendered, “Anyone who so looks on a woman that she shall become desirous

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<sup>522</sup> Loader makes a similar point, saying, “Paul’s celibacy is probably related to the apparent celibacy of Jesus and John the Baptist, at least to the extent that they probably belong to a similar sphere of influence. In all three, prophetic traits are apparent and may have played a role, although in the case of Jesus’ followers there is no indication that celibacy is necessarily tied to becoming a prophet.” (Loader, *Sexuality*, 216)

has in his heart already committed adultery with her.” He arrives at this translation by suggesting that *αὐτήν* is the subject of the articular infinitive (*πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν*), a translation that has other proponents as well. This translation would be the antithesis of the traditional translation, “Anyone looking on a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” The former moves away from the rabbinic position that adultery is almost always to be associated with the woman, and suggests that “what is being treated in our passage is not male instability in the face of a temptress, but male aggression which leads a *woman* into sin. Thus the responsibility for such sin is placed on the male, and consideration is given to the woman, often the weaker and more suspected part in a male-oriented society.”<sup>523</sup> He bolsters his point of view with Matt 5:32, where the responsibility for divorce as well as its outcome (causing the wife to sin if she remarries), is placed upon the man.<sup>524</sup>

Later, in his discussion about the adulterous woman in John 7:53-8:11, Witherington suggests that Jesus takes a similar stance. Here, the Jewish leaders attempt to trap Jesus by placing the woman’s fate into his hands. If Jesus simply absolved her of her offense without reason, he would be in opposition to Mosaic Law. If, however, he maintained the need for capital punishment, then he would place himself at odds with Roman law that forbade that such decisions should be made without Roman affirmation. Jesus’ response, “he who is without sin cast the first stone,” places the focus on the motivations of the antagonists, not the woman’s sin. “Jesus does not approve of a system where a man’s lust is not taken as seriously as a woman’s seduction...As in Matt 5, we see a critique of men who fail to live up to their responsibility of being examples of virtue for the community and we see a rejection of certain stereotypes in which women are treated as scapegoats responsible for social ills.”<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 20.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-8.

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

As we consider nascent Christian ideals on marriage, celibacy and divorce, it is important to remember that Christianity drew heavily from the apocalyptic tradition of the Jewish Scriptures as it developed in the centuries prior to the birth of Jesus. This focus on eschatological reality caused a dual—almost antithetical—perspective to emerge on these matters. On the one hand, Jesus is characterized as affirming the significance of the marriage contract. In Matt 5:31-32 and 19:3-12 Jesus defies the social order as seen in Hillel and others who placed absolute power in the hands of men. In both cases, divorce is considered invalid with the exception of marital infidelity (5:32, 19:9), presumably on the side of the wife since Jesus’ comments here are directed exclusively to men. In Matt 19:9, he says: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another woman commits adultery.” In fact, in this patriarchal context the husband “makes her commit adultery” (5:32). Jesus goes on to argue that divorce was never a part of God’s original intention in the first place; Moses only allowed it in an effort to accommodate their “hard-heartedness” (19:4-9). Mark’s gospel contains an expanded and adapted form of this statement to accommodate an audience in which both men and women had the authority to divorce; “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery (10:11-12).” The Markan tradition makes no mention of the exception.

On the other hand, Jesus recognizes celibacy as an equally valid option.<sup>526</sup> Jesus is depicted giving radical affirmation of marriage, but also making room for celibacy

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<sup>526</sup> I hold that Jesus was celibate his entire life and ministry. A number of modern scholars, however, argue otherwise and focus largely upon Mary Magdalene as Jesus’ probable companion. For a classical look at the pro-companion side of the discussion, see William E. Phipps’ *Was Jesus Married?* For a similar discussion on Paul, see J. Massingberd Ford’s article “Levirate Marriage in St. Paul,” in *NTS* 10 (1964): 361-365. For a pro-celibacy perspective on Jesus and Paul, see Loader, *Sexuality*, 143-148. Regarding quotations from the Gospel of Philip, the Gospel of Mary and the Gospel of St. Thomas, Loader writes, “These are overtly sexual references without parallel in the canonical gospels. They are not portrayed as

saying in 19:12 that some “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (ἐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν). It is important to note that many scholars view this tradition to be authentic.<sup>527</sup> Here, Jesus makes explicit the motivation for celibacy (i.e., the kingdom of heaven). This is consistent with earlier findings: “The motivation for accepting the celibate life...was eschatological.”<sup>528</sup> In this regard, Jesus’ teaching is similar to the Qumranites (and other Essene groups). Witherington’s observations, however, reveal ways in which Jesus’ views were distinctive. He says “...the reason for renouncing marriage or family in Jesus’ teaching has nothing to do with ritual purity or the idea that sexual relations made one unclean (as the Qumranites taught).”<sup>529</sup> Jeremias informs us that no parallels to ἐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν can be found among Jesus’ contemporaries.<sup>530</sup>

While some scholars hold that Cynic practice is the most appropriate parallel for understanding Jesus since Hellenism made significant inroads into the Palestinian region, Cynic ideals are incompatible with the eschatological motivations which Jesus explicitly establishes. Cynicism was completely devoid of the communal and sacrificial perspective of the Way, which required one to “value others above yourselves” (Phil 2:3); and which places the onus on the mature saint not to do anything that might cause someone else to stumble, even if it is not immoral (Rom 14:13-23, 1 Cor 8:1-13). As mentioned earlier, Scroggs demonstrates that the physical nature becomes an eschatological body when bodily acts build up the Christian community.<sup>531</sup> Diogenes, it should be recalled, quenched his sexual appetite with the prostitutes (i.e., Laïs) and

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anything other than appropriate behaviour. It was clearly possible for these later writers to imagine such relationships. It is a huge jump to take them as evidence that their imagination captured historical reality.”

<sup>527</sup> Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 12.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid. For a work that does see ritual purity and the need to refrain from sexual practices as an essential backdrop from understanding 1 Cor 7, see Poirier and Frankovic, “Celibacy and Charism,” 1-18.

<sup>530</sup> Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 376.

<sup>531</sup> Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological Body,” 14-21.

insinuated in his dialogue with Aristippus that such a practice was common among Cynics (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 588E-F). What is more, he performed lewd acts like public masturbation without any regard for the sensibilities of onlookers, whether young or old.

Jesus' eschatological understanding colored every aspect of his worldview, particularly his perception of family. His perspective ran counter to the standard household codes typical of the Greco-Roman context. Theissen goes so far as to suggest that Jesus' "praise of castration also indicates a disregard for family."<sup>532</sup> All three synoptic gospels recount that in the early phases of his ministry, Jesus' biological family went to "take hold" of him for it was being said of him that "he is out of his mind" (cf. Mark 3:20-21, 31-34; Matt 12:46-50, Luke 8:19-21). To this he is recorded saying: "'Who are my mother and my brothers?' Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.'" This reveals that Jesus' concern for eschatological realities caused him to bond with individuals outside of the traditional structures and subsequently to reject the force of social custom.<sup>533</sup> What is more, his preference for spiritual kinship may be behind the tradition of John 19:25-27; trusting a disciple with the care of his mother would have been well out of the bounds of social convention, especially since Jesus had other biological brothers.

Two other passages help to substantiate this point. In Matt 10:37-39 (par. Luke 14:26-27), Jesus is depicted saying, "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than

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<sup>532</sup> Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1978), 11.

<sup>533</sup> Cornelia B. Horn and John W. Martens *"Let the little children come to me": Childhood and Children in Early Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009). Horn and Martens seem to argue for the same idea when they write, "Yet the basic message remains that a disciple of Jesus has to subordinate every relationship to the primacy of his or her relationship to Jesus" (308). Loader says, "We only find him turning rather abruptly away from his family and declaring that he belongs to a new one. He challenged his followers as we saw to a resetting of priorities in which family did not take first place" (Loader, *Sexuality*, 218). Also see Kee's *Christian Origins*, 77-78.

me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” Jesus, and the long awaited kingdom that he inaugurates, command supreme allegiance over mundane relationships and affairs. Self-interests must be forsaken in the shadow of the cross and a new kind of familial bond takes precedent over the old. This idea is picked up on by nearly all NT writers. Believers took care of widows and orphans (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Tim 5:3-16; Jas 1:27), held everything in common<sup>534</sup> (Acts 2:42-47, 5:32-37; 2 Cor 8-9), converted their domiciles into places of worship (1 Cor 16:19; Phlm), died for their common beliefs (Acts 7:54-60, 12:1-4) and used kinship language.<sup>535</sup> Such a command would have taken on added significance after Jesus’ death and resurrection, since he sets the ‘bar’ for ‘losing one’s life’ and ‘taking up ones cross.’<sup>536</sup>

On another occasion, Jesus breaks with social convention when talking with a would-be disciple requesting to go and bury a loved one: “Follow me, and let the dead bury the dead” (Matt 8:22). Naturally, Judaism expected sons to tend to the burial of their parents; this is attested to in the Jewish Scriptures (Gen 25:9, 50:13, etc.) and apocryphal literature (Tobit 4:3, 14:10-11), both which base this expectation on the fifth commandment (“Honor your father and your mother...”). Some interpreters attempt to soften Jesus comments by suggesting that the disciple wanted to wait to bury an aging parent before adopting his itinerant lifestyle. It is also quite possible that Jesus, in typical

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<sup>534</sup> Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, 12. Regarding this, Theissen says: “The tradition says nothing about the way in which the families who have been abandoned are to find a substitute for the earning power which they have lost, but it does not conceal the unavoidable differences between the followers of Jesus and their families.”

<sup>535</sup> Paul’s encouragement to Philemon to honor his converted slave Onesimus—“no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a beloved brother” (v. 16)—may say volumes about the inevitable erosion of social convention within Christian contexts.

<sup>536</sup> D.A. Carson expounds upon this idea in his commentary on "Matthew" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. Frank E. Gaebelin; vol.8; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 257-8.

rabbinic fashion, uses hyperbole, intentionally overstating his case.<sup>537</sup> While these suggestions are plausible, the immediacy of Jesus' commands find examples throughout the gospels, including those to the disciples. Jesus calls for an instantaneous response from Peter, Andrew, James and John (Matt 4:18-22). It is significant that the latter "left the boat and their father and followed him." D.A. Carson connects these two passages (10:37-39 and 8:21-22), saying: "More likely vv. 21-22 are a powerful way of expressing the thought in 10:37—even closest family ties must not be set above allegiance to Jesus and the proclamation of the kingdom (9:60)."<sup>538</sup>

Some passages provide a glimpse into the logical effects of Jesus' eschatological perspective on marriage when they are drawn to their final result. Mark 12 depicts Jesus dismantling the assumptions of Sadducees about the afterlife and does so using the Mosaic Law, the Scripture they deem as valid. Jesus criticizes their ignorance of spiritual things as well as their misunderstanding of things in the age to come. He does this from two directions. First, He establishes that in the resurrection, people will "be like angels" (v.25). As spiritual beings, with an entirely new nature, and in a totally different age, marriage will not even exist. Other NT passages, like 1 Cor 15:35-58, affirm this. One does not necessarily have to follow Käsemann's point of view that Mark 12:25 lies behind the rise of ecstatically gifted women, who were preoccupied with glossolalia and sexual asceticism as expressions of angelic status (see literature review). It should be said, however, that conviction about the afterlife and its sudden appearance at the second coming, did impose a kind of hesitancy upon the early church to be overly involved in 'mundane' affairs that might be distracting.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Craig Keener, *...And Marries Another: Divorce and Remarriage in the NT* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 21-37.

<sup>538</sup> Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew*, 208-209.

<sup>539</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 121-126. In the age to come (or with the eschaton), NT writers held that the issue of marriage would change since it would no longer exist. Loader suggests: "At that time what he (Paul) and others embraced as their gift and calling in the present, in the new creation already inaugurated by the Spirit, would become the norm for all—but not until then" (153).



The social practices of Jesus' disciples bear striking resemblances to his. Disciples were required to abandon fathers at work as well as to break with ancestral traditions (e.g., burying one's dead, Matt. 8:22). On several occasions Jesus is portrayed as using hyperbole to get this message across (Luke 14:26). This attachment to a reconstituted family and detachment from one's nuclear family can be demonstrated most vividly in 1 Cor 7, where, on the one hand, newly converted believers are told to remain married to unbelievers who were willing to remain married. On the other hand, Paul encouraged them to accept divorce from an unbelieving spouse over against separation from the believing community (1 Cor 7:12-14). Disciples who endured the loss of "home or brother or sister or mother or father or children or fields for me (Jesus) and the gospel, will not fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecution) and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:29-31)." The end-time community of faith filled the void caused when early believers broke from their family systems and aligned themselves with the Jesus movement.

While NT writers argue for a pattern of radical disengagement from natural familial bonds (especially if these relationships frustrate one's devotion to Christ [cf. 1 Cor 7:15]), they encourage a pattern of radical engagement "in Christ" (John 13:34-35; Gal 6:10); and this is particularly the case in marriage relationships. It is safe to contend that 'taking up the cross' of Christ divided families in the manner suggested by Jesus (Matt 10:34-36). Luke's depiction of the response engendered by Paul's proclamation is realistic regardless of how one may feel about the historicity of Acts. Not only did Christianity call for new associations, but it also demanded a modification of old ones, with Jesus' sacrificial example as the basis for such change. In cases where one spouse was converted, the believing spouse is asked to act sacrificially towards the other in hopes that s/he might be converted. A similar sentiment is expressed elsewhere in the NT; 1 Peter 3:1 says, "Wives, in the same way, be submissive to your husbands, so that,

if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives...”

In cases where the husband and wife were converted, the goal seems to have been mutual submission (1 Cor 7:1-7; Eph 5:25). In a context in which women were accustomed to tolerating their husbands adultery, Paul tells husbands that ‘in Christ’ their bodies belong solely to their wives (7:4).<sup>540</sup> Furthermore, the husbands are called to love their wives “as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it.” Paul asks the husband to lead in the same manner in which Jesus did, through personal sacrifice and willful relinquishment of legal hierarchical rights. While Roman household codes addressed the *paterfamilias*, Paul’s letters were addressed to the entire church. For instance, in the case of Philemon, Paul’s words were broadcast to all household members along with other believers who were part of that congregation. Such a dynamic would have decentralized the patron/*paterfamilias*’ power, creating a sense of accountability and equality, especially since churches seemed to have been connected in a kind of network within which Paul’s letters often circulated.<sup>541</sup> Depending on ones’ handling of the grammar, it is possible that Paul’s directives in 1 Cor 7:25-28 would have usurped some of the

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<sup>540</sup> As mentioned earlier, Jeffers brings out, “We have little evidence of women divorcing their husbands for adultery. This may be because adultery for men applied only to affairs with married women in their social class. Affairs with slaves or lower-class free women were not considered adultery by the state.” (*The Greco-Roman World*, 244-245)

<sup>541</sup> This is explicit in Paul's correspondence to the churches (*ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις*, Gal 1:2) in Galatia. Furthermore, if we follow Ramsey's view that the Galatian region would have included the area covered by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, it serves to reason that each congregation would have had opportunity to have this letter read to them, perhaps in the same manner in which the ruling of the Jerusalem church on Gentile inclusion was carried to the Galatian churches by Paul and Silas (Acts 15). In the first half of the twentieth century, Goodspeed proposed that since Ephesians speaks in general terms “stripped of its local contemporary touches” it was likely a kind of introduction to the corpus of Pauline letters which had been collected and circulated shortly after the appearance of Luke-Acts. He goes on to say that “all the Christian writings of the following generation shows the influence of Paul's collected letters: the Revelation, Hebrews, 1 Clement, 1 Peter, the Gospel of John, the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp, and a few years later Timothy, Titus, and 2 Peter.” See Edgar J. Goodspeed's *How came the Bible?* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 58-66.

decision-making power of the paterfamilias since he writes directly to virgins who likely would have still been under the care of their fathers.

## CHAPTER 4 THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENTIATION: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPETUS BEHIND PAUL'S VIEWS ON GENDER RELATIONS

At this point, we reach the very heart of our subject, and our study of first century marital practices and sexual ethics from various points of view now becomes truly rewarding. The aim of any historical inquiry is not as much the enumeration of stages of development as the analysis and synthetic understanding of its subject-matter. Here, we attempt to sift the data presented in an effort to find which perspective(s) was (or were) most impactful on Paul's perspective on marriage, celibacy and divorce. Whatever the picture we attempt to draw, we would probably be wise not to try to make it too tidy.

On a basic level, a degree of discrimination has to take place in a cosmopolitan environment in order for philosophers and religious persons of all types to form groups that are distinguishable from others. Even Cynicism, though impossible to classify by a canon of sacred writ, distinctive practices and a homogeneous set of doctrines, was unique in its rejection of social convention. As mentioned earlier, Epicureanism remained largely unchanged in its rejection of a system of rewards and punishments in the hereafter, while Stoicism underwent an entirely different evolution.<sup>542</sup> These groups understood themselves against the backdrop of the other, being keenly aware of what made them distinctive.<sup>543</sup> The Apostle Paul reminisces concerning his days as a zealous Pharisee, but acknowledges that the revelation of God's Son “in” him changed his

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<sup>542</sup> See chapter 3 (above); specifically, the section entitled, *Hellenistic Philosophy: A Brief Historical Sketch*.

<sup>543</sup> In a real sense, much of the NT literature can be viewed as a concerted attempt to distinguish Christianity from Judaism while at the same time showing lines of legitimate continuity. See, for instance, Craig Keener's discussion on the intentions of the writer of the Gospel of Matthew in his *A Commentary of the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. 1999), 1-24; 45-51.

evaluation of the law as well as his understanding of Jesus and the means of achieving salvation (Gal 1:13-17).

At another level of abstraction, some groups derive from an entirely different foundation, but answer similar questions about life (i.e., gender roles, civil affairs, life after death, etc.) in similar ways. This occurs at times without interaction between traditions.<sup>544</sup> In such cases, it is possible to demonstrate the distinctiveness of each tradition and the actual derivation of each set of ideas, which may be grounded in the peculiar social realities facing each community. Lastly, when belief systems having these dissimilar foundations interact, a process of exchange occurs that results in multiple reactions. This is precisely what we see in the second temple period when Judaism was confronted with the radical efforts of the purveyors of Hellenism.

Hengel warns us about the fundamental problem of differentiation. With regard to Judaism, he establishes that the longstanding dichotomy between Palestinian Judaism, on the one hand, with its positive connotations, and Hellenistic Judaism, on the other hand, with its negative connotations, is imprecise and no longer meaningful.<sup>545</sup> He delineates just how much Greek language, education, and political and social norms affected the environs surrounding Judea. After Judea fell under Seleucid control, a succession of Jewish usurpers purchased the high priesthood from a desperate Antiochus IV Epiphanes, struggling to pay a severe indemnity imposed upon him by Rome. Besides financial payment, each usurper was intentional about speeding up the process of Hellenization. First, Jason displaced his brother Onias III, only to be dislodged in 171

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<sup>544</sup> For instance, with regard to religion, Keith Ward offers helpful analysis in his discussion of the disagreements and agreements of modern world religions. While he acknowledges that to claim basic agreement would be absurd, he identifies common assumptions at which some seem to have arrived independently. He claims that most world religions: 1) see the material world as unsatisfactory, 2) propose a better, truer existence attainable through religious practice, 3) forward the practice of an ascetic and/or disciplined approach to life, 4) seek to cultivate conscious states of happiness, 5) typically promote liberation from selfish greed and encourage the experience of selflessness (324-7). See Ward's *Religion and Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

<sup>545</sup> Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 20.

BCE by the even more eager Hellenizer, Menelaus (2 Macc 4:1-10, 23-25). In the following decade, the Jewish aristocracy founded a gymnasium in Jerusalem (2 Macc 4:9-12), gave their children Greek names and participated in Greek sports. Priests in Jerusalem began to neglect their sacrificial duties to attend and participate in wrestling matches (2 Macc 4), and some young men went so far as to have their circumcisions surgically removed since it was a shameful form of mutilation in the eyes of many Greeks (1 Macc 1:15).

Regions like Gadara were known for their output of great philosophical minds. In fact, Hengel says about this city, just six miles from the southern portion of Galilee: “In an epigram, Meleager praises the city as the Athens of Syria and an epitaph from Hippo calls it χρηστομοθσία, ‘an excellent abode of learning.’”<sup>546</sup> Gadara was the home of Menippus, the inventor of satire (third and fourth centuries BCE), Meleager, the founder of Greek anthology (second century BCE), the Epicurean Philodemus (first century BCE), the orator Theodore of Gadara who instructed emperor Tiberius (first century BCE), and the Cynic Oenomaus, positively discussed in the Talmud as well as in the works of Eusebius (second century CE).<sup>547</sup>

Also, Galilee was greatly influenced by the towns of Sepphoris and Tiberias.<sup>548</sup> For instance, in the first century BCE, Sepphoris was established by Rome as the locale for a council for Galilee (Josephus, *Life*, 30). This complex relationship with Rome seems to have led it to a more passive posture in the region.<sup>549</sup> In fact, on several occasions, Josephus discusses the pro-Roman sentiment that appears to have been pervasive in Sepphoris (also see *Life* 30, 38, 104, 232, 345f, 373-394f.). Freyne adds that in Josephus’ *War* it is mentioned “...where the people of Sepphoris greet Vespasian at

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<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>549</sup> Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE* (Wilmington: Glazier, 1980), 124.

Ptolemias and ask for his help, something he gladly grants, since he is aware of the strategic position in the heart of enemy country, and so sends Placidus his general to the area and lodged troops in this town.”<sup>550</sup> Freyne also suggests that it was not so much that this town was against Judaism—it was one of a few priestly towns in Galilee—it was simply unwilling to get “involved in the political turmoil that was developing.”<sup>551</sup>

As mentioned above, Tiberias, founded by Herod Antipas in *ca.* 13 CE, is also said to have exerted significant cultural influence on the region of Galilee. The attitude of this city can perhaps best be explained by the fact that it was founded on tombs—an idea confirmed by both Josephus and rabbinic sources—and that it was dedicated to the Roman Emperor Tiberius (Josephus *Ant* 18:36-38). While both facts might have deterred Jews of a more orthodox persuasion, the former fact most certainly did. This may explain its composition of Galileans who were “coerced” and “poor people from everywhere,” accepted by Herod Antipas.<sup>552</sup> Its leadership, however, was largely aristocratic and pro-Roman. This toxic mix would later be problematic since “Socially and culturally, its inhabitants represented a new and different type of Jew, and expression of similar Jewish beliefs at certain festivals was not likely to bridge the gap between them.”<sup>553</sup> By and large, the degree of Tiberias’ Hellenization could be visibly seen in the fact that it had a Greek-styled administration (*Life* 1.271, 278, 294; *J.W.* 2.639-641), a stadium (*Life* 1.92) and a royal palace with Greek-styled architecture and furniture (*Life* 1.65-68).

What is more, Jerusalem itself seems to have been affected by Hellenism in philosophical and religious ways. Herod was largely responsible for expanding the grandeur of Jerusalem (and other important Jewish centers<sup>554</sup>), such that Jerusalem

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<sup>550</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>551</sup>

Ibid., 126.

<sup>552</sup>

Ibid., 129.

<sup>553</sup>

Ibid., 131.

<sup>554</sup>

Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 38-44.

became known the empire over as a tourist attraction equipped with all of the amenities of any other Hellenistic town (theater, gymnasium, game-hunting, musical performances, etc.).<sup>555</sup> Herod created Greek coinage, but was mindful of Jewish sensibilities, a lesson that Herod Philip, Pontius Pilate and Agrippa I failed to take up.<sup>556</sup> According to Hengel, Jerusalem was so thoroughly impacted by Greek practices and culture that it is hard to say whether or not Jewish compositions written in Greek find their place of origin somewhere else in the Diaspora, as once held. Contrary to a previous consensus, he argues that major works, like the *LXX*, were quite possibly written or translated in Jerusalem.<sup>557</sup> Epigraphical data may also give the impression that the “most important centre of the Greek language in Jewish Palestine was of course the capital, Jerusalem.”<sup>558</sup>

In his concluding comments, however, Hengel acknowledges that in many regards, this impact was only superficial. He claims that “with the possible exceptions of Luke and the author of Hebrews, the NT authors, who were overwhelmingly Jewish Christians, had no deeper acquaintance with Greek secular writing.”<sup>559</sup> This includes the apostle Paul.<sup>560</sup> Greek-speaking Palestinian Jews, he asserts, had this in common with

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 12-13. Bernard J. Lee adds, “The grandiose Temple itself had been vastly enlarged in Hellenistic architectural style by Herod as a way of inflating his own international reputation and of ingratiating himself with his Jewish subjects.” See Lee’s *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus*, 142. Also, see Josephus’ *Life* 65-68 regarding the Greeks styled architecture in Palestine.

<sup>556</sup> On one occasion, Josephus recounts how Pilate, cognizant of the Jews’ unshakable commitment to the first commandment—which banned the manufacture or worship of any graven image—decided to slip Roman troops into Jerusalem with flags and shields inscribed with Roman images. Jewish infuriation with Pilate caused him to quickly remove the troops. Even after this gesture, some Jews followed him to Caesarea where he then threatened their lives. Unshaken by the threat, together they voiced their willingness to die for the sake of the Law. Pilate relented. To this Josephus says, “...they were ready rather to die than to transgress the law” (*J.W.* 2.169-174 [Thackeray, LCL]).

<sup>557</sup> Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 20-22. Fragments of Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible at Qumran and Wadi Murrabba'at suggest that Palestinian recensions of the *LXX* were widely used in Jerusalem proper.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., 9. Also, Roetzel argues that “...even though the translators may have striven to remain true to the spirit of the Hebrew text, certain Greek ideas inevitably crept into their translation.” See his work *The Letters of Paul*, 20-25.

<sup>559</sup> Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 55-6.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 55.



early Christians. Both were likely to have been exposed to synagogue training and to have read the LXX, along with other entertaining Jewish literature, but “access to higher education was confined to a very thin upper stratum.”<sup>561</sup> Be that as it may, the large number of philosophers in the Palestinian region convinces Hengel that Jesus was possibly influenced on some level by Cynic thought.<sup>562</sup>

Evidence from the NT may support the notion that cultural syncretism, while thoroughgoing in some regions of the Greco-Roman world, was minimal in others. For instance, Acts 14 records the people of Lystra identifying Barnabas and Paul as Zeus and Hermes, respectively, seemingly having no context for understanding the Judeo-Christian God. This is bolstered by the fact that in his message—as recorded by Luke—Paul begins with natural theology and not with a version of salvation history as Stephen does in Acts 7. On the other hand, the NT mentions God-fearers (i.e., Cornelius/Acts 10), who had embraced Judaism, supported it financially and were quite knowledgeable of its scriptures and traditions.<sup>563</sup>

#### 4.1 JUDAISM AND THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENTIATION

It is important to carefully consider the extent of Hellenism’s affect upon Judaism, and subsequently early Christian writers like Paul. First, it should be said that

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid., 56. Also, Bernard Lee in his book *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus: Retrieving the Jewish Origins of Christianity* says: “Galileans would have needed ‘some Greek’ for commercial purposes (though this is less the case for rural farmers). Learning some Greek for commercial purposes, however, does not acculturate a person very markedly in the world view of a culture... That kind of exposure and transformation occurred for Jews who lived in the diaspora in Greek cities, but not in Galilee. Given the cultural ties of Jerusalem to diaspora Judaism, as well as some commercial intercourse, knowledge of Greek was bound to have had a larger influence in the Judaism of southern Palestine than in Galilee. Even so Jerusalem was no Alexandria” (63-65).

<sup>562</sup> Hengel, *The 'Hellenization' of Judea*, 19-29.

<sup>563</sup> David A. Fiensy, “The Roman Empire and Asia Minor,” in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) 38-42. Here, Fiensy provides a good survey of perspectives regarding God-fearers in the Roman Empire. Also see, Grabbe, *Judaism*, 534-536.

while Hellenism did make significant inroads into Judaism, the degree of influence seems to have varied significantly from group to group. Scroggs reminds us that there were “vast cultural differentiations in the Greco-Roman society,” so that “It is precariously simplistic to lump all of these together as if all lived the same way and had the same attitude.”<sup>564</sup> While there were those within the ranks of Judaism who had fully embraced Hellenism (e.g., Jason and Menelaus), other groups within Judaism understood Hellenism as no minor threat to the sustainability of Jewish religion and way of life and reacted violently against it. Mattathais, for instance, rejected the radical Hellenizing efforts of Antiochus IV, who sought to replace the Hebrew cult and Torah observance with Hellenistic worship. First Maccabees 2:27 depicts Mattathais saying, “Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!” (NRSV) The Hasidim, who fought alongside the Hasmoneans, also played a significant role in the theological trajectory moving from the second century BCE into later rabbinic theology. Later a rupture in the Hasmonean and Hasidim alliance—instrumental in securing Jewish independence—arose when Simon, the fifth son of Mattathias, embraced the high-priesthood and accepted pagan endorsement.<sup>565</sup>

Again, the various sects within Judaism reflect unique responses to the inroads of Hellenism with the Jewish aristocracy, which included the Sadducees and high priests on one end of the continuum and sects like the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots on the other. The Sadducees appear to have been comprised of a few wealthy families along with the priestly aristocracy. Their rejection of tradition, as understood by the more radical Jewish sects, led to what some saw as a pro-Roman, anti-patriotic sentiment. Josephus recounts that the Sicarii slew Jonathan the high priest because of his affiliation with

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<sup>564</sup> Scroggs, *The NT and Homosexuality*, 17-18.

<sup>565</sup> There a sense that this rupture did not fully occur until John Hyrcanus, even though Simon's action of assuming the high priesthood would have been offensive to the Hasidim; after all, Simon was responsible for finalizing the ushering in of Jewish independence. Compare 1 Macc 13:14 with Josephus, *Ant.* 13.

Rome and that from that day on deaths occurred at their hands on a regular basis (Josephus *J.W.* 2.254-7). Significant differences also existed between the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots, but they were in agreement on certain theological matters. The roots of all three movements can likely be traced back to the Hasidim of the second century BCE, a fact that explains their theological compatibility and aversion to foreign rule in Palestine. The extant literature of these groups reflects an ongoing effort to ward off the impingement of Hellenization and to continuously define their identity in light of this perceived threat. This radicalization of most of Judaism went on for better than a century and a half before Jesus.

While it is true that Herod was a keen politician, garnering empire-wide attention for Jerusalem and its environs, it must also be acknowledged that his success was partly connected to the fact that by his time in many respects Hellenism no longer proved to be a threat to Judaism. As Hengel writes, “The king could not shake the strict monotheism of his people, bound to the Torah, which for all his ‘liberalism’ he himself shared, nor did he want to.”<sup>566</sup> Though some protested, their rants were short-lived “since the foundations of Jewish belief were not threatened, so that the protests did not find any widespread response among all the classes of people and enjoyed only modest political success...”<sup>567</sup> Unlike in the time of Mattathais and his sons, the Greek cultural agenda was largely purged—through years of violent reaction and silent negotiation in the minds of religious Jews—of its offensive elements by the time Paul. So, while Hengel pushes the point that even strict Jewish factions were inconspicuously impacted by Greek culture,<sup>568</sup> he misses the fact that faithful Jews embraced a far more docile version than what we see in the second century BCE. Fergus Millar’s point regarding “the spiritual power of the Judaism of that time” as Hengel calls it, is most telling: “One of the most

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<sup>566</sup> Hengel, *The 'Hellenization of Judea,'* 37-38.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-56.

successful achievements of Graeco-Roman civilization was the removal of the memories and identities of the people whom it absorbed. Alone of all the peoples under the Roman rule, the Jews not only had a long recorded history but kept it, re-interpreted it and acted on it.”<sup>569</sup>

Regarding the Hellenized cities that were supposedly influential on the Galilean cities traversed by Jesus, a great deal can be said. It should be noted that while influential segments of Galilee were thoroughly Hellenized, they were despised by the more orthodox brand of Jew. Josephus references this distaste for Sepphoris and Tiberias. He makes a distinction between the people of Sepphoris and “Galileans”—even though Sepphoris is clearly in the region of Galilee—since “...by his day attitudes had hardened to the point that this very specialized term ‘Galilean’ was justified without taking account of its purely geographic associations.”<sup>570</sup> On one occasion, Josephus has to start a rumor that the Romans were coming to stop the ‘Galileans’ from destroying Sepphoris. The motivation for their action appears to simply be the opportunity “to vent their hatred on this city which they detested” (*Life* 373-380[Thackery, LCL]). Sepphoris’ pro-Roman sentiment is characterized by Josephus as “abandoning of the Galilean cause” (*J.W.* 3.61),<sup>571</sup> with the result that it was plundered “...if not specifically by the Galileans, at least by Josephus’ soldiers” (*J.W.* 2.646 [Thackery, LCL]).<sup>572</sup> This same hatred was felt for Tiberias, as illustrated by Josephus’ effort to restrain ‘Galileans’ from destroying it when it defected to Agrippa (*Life* 381-389).

Justifiably, this has led some to the conclusion of a growing ‘revolutionary ethos’ in Galilee. Vermes contends that ‘Galilean’ pride was nourished by its relative wealth and self-sufficiency and its unbroken stability under the Herodian aristocracy; after Herod the Great, his son Antipas governed the region from 4 BCE to 39 CE, the entire

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>570</sup> Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE*, 125.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

span of Jesus' ministry.<sup>573</sup> He contends that during the century preceding the Christian era, Galilee proved to be a hotbed of revolutionary activity. If Judas the son of Hezekias is the same person as Judas the Gamala or Judas the Galilean, then "the inspiration of the whole Zealot agitation sprang from the same rebellious Galilean family."<sup>574</sup> In the middle of the first century BCE, Hezekias was the patriarch of revolutionary activity in Upper Galilee. In 47 BCE, he was executed by Herod, who governed Galilee at the time. His rebellious activity was carried on by Judas, who, at the death of Herod the Great, raided the king's arsenal in Sepphoris—the capital of Galilee—in 4 BCE. Josephus claims that he "became an object of terror to all men" (*Ant.* 17:271-2 [Marcus and Wikgren, LCL]; cf. *J.W.* 2.56). A decade later, Judas 'the Galilean' led a revolt at the time of the census, refusing to pay taxes to Rome, thus making a declaration of independence from foreign rule. He then became co-founder of the 'politico-religious' party known as the Zealots. Though Judas was later executed, as were his sons—Simon and Jacob—some forty years later, their revolutionary efforts were continued by other family members.

It is significant that while Hezekias and family may have been the frontrunners of the Galilean revolution, other 'Galileans' were a part of the resistance. Vermes asserts: "The struggle against the Empire was nevertheless not just a family business, but a full scale Galilean activity in the first century AD."<sup>575</sup> He bolsters his case by making reference to Galileans who in 49 CE told the "Jewish masses in Jerusalem to resort to arms, assert their liberty; for, they said, slavery was in itself bitter, but when it involved insolent treatment, it was quite intolerable" (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.120 [Felman, LCL]). He also recalls "the Galilean contingent," led by John the son of Levi from Gischala—one of the bloodiest leaders of the 66-70 CE war—and their wide notoriety in Jerusalem (*J.W.*

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<sup>573</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 43-46.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

2.585).<sup>576</sup> Josephus contends that they “always resisted any hostile invasion” and were “from infancy inured to war” (*J.W.* 3.41 [Thackery, LCL]). As mentioned earlier, the term ‘Galilean,’ “ceased to merely refer to a particular geographic area and took on the dark political connotation of a possible association with Judas the Galilean.”<sup>577</sup> This likely provides the backdrop for Gamaliel’s association of Jesus of Nazareth (in Galilee) with Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:34-39). On this latter point, Witherington suggests that, according to the synoptic gospels and John, Jesus seems to have avoided the secularized towns of Galilee, like Sepphoris and Tiberias, where Greek culture was most pronounced.<sup>578</sup> This would have been consistent with the practice of other Galilean Jews of the time. This does not preclude, however, at least superficial knowledge and contact with Cynics and other moral philosophers.

#### 4.2 FACTORS IN DIFFERENTIATION

Clearly, Judaism’s exposure to Greek culture and education led to a philosophical splintering of Judaism that forced the adherents of each sect to be precise in their understanding of what distinguished them from the outside world and even one another. This is precisely why Paul knows how to divide the Sanhedrin, by talking about receiving a revelation (Acts 23:6-11). Millar’s point exposes the fact that Judaism functioned with its own identity for centuries *before* the rise of Hellenism. Judaism, from a philosophical standpoint, was defined by its theological posture (monotheism), its sacred text (especially the law), its sacrificial system, its extensive calendar of memorials and festivals, along with other traditions. Such a point simply proves that Judaism was not an empty pitcher waiting to be filled. To the contrary, Judaism’s unique character could not

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid. Vermes references Hengel’s *The Zealot*, 57-61.

<sup>578</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Jesus Quest*, 61.

be easily displaced without the signs of such being detected and subsequently reacted against.

This philosophical divide cannot be minimized. The basis of much Hellenistic and Roman moral philosophy was an emphasis on a proper attitude concerning the gods, the fixed laws of the universe and/or situational ethics.<sup>579</sup> Since intellectuals argued their point of view from the perspective of its perceived sensibility and utilitarian value, philosophical inquiry, with its character of thought and rebuttal, resulted in canons of virtue that were always in flux. Judaism, on the other hand, placed emphasis on divine revelation. Even the more charismatic personalities of the Hebrew tradition (e.g., the prophets) viewed themselves and their message as being consistent with the ancient legal traditions. “The prophets, charismatic figures that they are, are not portrayed as innovators but as those who recall Israel to her authentic historical and legal heritage... There is in all this prophetic challenge no rational argument for the existence or the potency of Israel’s God; there is only recollection of the common tradition.”<sup>580</sup> This commitment to the Law as divine revelation homogenized, to some extent, the Jewish worldview and mores and accounts for many of the differences between it and the broader culture.

Other important factors played an important role the retention of the Jewish self-identity. First, a distinctive theological perspective grew out of the experience of exile. There existed a valid reason for the ‘perceived’ rigidity that we see in the most radical and dominant Jewish strands. Wright cogently writes that “...we should be aware of the positive and worthy motives that lay behind it [Jewish devotion to the Law]. Had not the exile, the greatest catastrophe in their history, been a direct judgment of God on the

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<sup>579</sup> Diogenes Laertius makes a similar claim about certain philosophical traditions. He says, “Such are the lives of the several Cynics. But we will go on to append the doctrines which they held in common—if, that is, we decided that Cynicism is really a philosophy, and not, as some maintain, a way of life”  
<sup>580</sup>

failure of his people precisely to keep his law? Was that not the message of the great prophets? Surely then they should learn the lesson of history and make every effort to live as God required, thus ... avoiding a repetition of such judgment...”<sup>581</sup>

Secondly, post-exilic Judaism remained a cohesive group even after exile. Bickerman claims that “Palestine united the dispersed members of the nation and gave them a sense of oneness,” a phenomenon “without analogy in history.”<sup>582</sup> He asserts that while it was common for people to break up and be forced to relocate throughout the ANE, with the result that “in due time, the offshoots lost connection with the main stock,” this was not the case for Israel.<sup>583</sup> Then, many dispersion Jews remained in exilic regions, garnered authoritative positions within the royal court, and used this authority to benefit “Jewry everywhere and impose a uniform standard of faith and behavior.”<sup>584</sup> Ezra reestablished “normative” Judaism in Jerusalem after the exile, enforcing the Law of God with a royal letter and as an official member of the royal court. Also, Nehemiah endangered his life securing the king's aid for Jerusalem and its inhabitants. “The Diaspora held to its unique God and to Jerusalem, the unique center of lawful worship...He was the sole God of heaven and earth, the so-called deities of the pagans were nothing but vain idols,” writes Bickerman.<sup>585</sup>

Arguably, the widespread acknowledgment—in Greek and Roman empires—of Jewish religious sensibilities is evidence of their distinctiveness.<sup>586</sup> Jerusalem's sacred

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<sup>581</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 32.

<sup>582</sup> Elias Bickerman, *From Ezra to the last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Postbiblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 3.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>586</sup> Besides the general identification of Jerusalem as a temple-state, Jewish sensibilities around graven images and participation in the Roman military, Aharon Oppenheimer shows how the Roman judicial system gave significant freedom to Jewish courts, even with regard to capital punishment. See his “Jewish Penal Authority in Roman Judaea” in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 181-191.



status as a temple city, for instance, was recognized by the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. Roman military standards, which bore the image of the emperor, were not brought into the city out of deference to Judaism's opposition to graven images. Jeffers says, "Judeans were allowed to use capital punishment only to protect the sacred temple from Gentile violators."<sup>587</sup> Jewish aloofness from the broader culture is well-documented in ancient literature and, at times, welcomed by those in power.<sup>588</sup> This helped to inspire an anti-Semitic sentiment among some (i.e., Sejanus).

The rise in anti-Semitism, however, appears to have been connected to frustration with Jewish privilege and with its preoccupation with self-interests, but also its intolerance of other religious views. Not only did it refuse to worship other gods, but certain forms of Judaism within the borders of Palestine sought to forcefully and systematically purge its sacred soil of foreign religions. Grabbe illustrates this in his statement about the actions taken by the Hasmonean leadership. He writes:

"...the Maccabees proceeded to eliminate all other forms of worship in the territory under their control. The Idumeans and Itureans were converted to Judaism. Non-Jewish cults and cult places were destroyed. Even later under Roman rule, there were occasional acts of aggression by the Jews against non-Jewish cults which were illegal under Roman law...It (this attitude) became the object of not just suspicion, but also of fear and even hatred...To the Greeks and Romans, the Jews demanded religious tolerance, then denied it to others."<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 117. Note Jewish reaction to Pilate's disregard for this policy, see note 554.

<sup>588</sup> Jews were known all throughout the Greco-Roman world to have their own communities—*politeumata* or *katoikos*—and were allowed to uphold their own traditions and to police themselves internally. See Grabbe, *Judaism*, 405-9 and Martin Hengel's work *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

<sup>589</sup> Grabbe, *Judaism*, 411.

This unrelenting effort at differentiation from the broader culture even shows up in the NT era. The early Apostles—who were all Jewish—were unclear about how to fulfill the Great Commission of Matt 28:19, given the great religious and cultural chasm that existed between them and the Gentile world. After Peter's revelation regarding Gentile inclusion in Acts 10 and his subsequent visit to the abode of the God-fearer Cornelius, he was fiercely scolded by members of the Jerusalem Church for fraternizing with the unclean (11:1-3). Despite his explanation, the matter is still not settled by the Apostolic Council (Acts 15), but continued to persist. Paul's solution perhaps finds its best articulation in Gal 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Jesus Christ." This attempt at removing what had separated Judaism from its Gentile neighbors for centuries was now—in the mind of Paul—the target of spiritual demolition. According to his perspective, God wanted to make "one new man" out of estranged groups (Eph 2:15). Despite all of this, it is not clear whether or not Paul's law-free doctrine was ever fully embraced by the Jerusalem church. This difficulty reflects just how deeply the lines of demarcation were carved into the psyches of many first century Jews.

### **4.3 PAUL, PHARISAISM AND DIFFERENTIATION:**

Efforts at differentiation are also explicit in view of the fact that Paul claims to be a zealous Pharisee, who is the son of Pharisees (Phil 3:5). Prior to his conversion, Paul explicitly claims to have followed an orthodox Pharisaic lifestyle, such that he was outpacing his contemporaries (Gal 1:14). Besides a few scattered autobiographical comments in his letters, our most thorough understanding of Paul derives from Acts.<sup>590</sup> Pharisaic popularity among the masses, according to Josephus, was well-established by

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<sup>590</sup> Martin Hengel argues for the historical value of Acts in his *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 34-9.

the first century CE.<sup>591</sup> This marks a reversal of fortune from the time of Alexander Jannaeus, who purportedly had eight hundred Pharisees crucified for the revolt of 94-88 BCE in which they solicited the aid of the Seleucid King, Demetrius III. From the time of Salome Alexandra on, Pharisees had a sure footing within the Sanhedrin and, though most were genuinely religious, did a considerable amount of political posturing at an earlier period. Concerning the Pharisees, Josephus says, “Now there was a certain Jewish sect whose members made themselves out both to be prudent in the great matters of the laws of their fathers, and to be favored in heaven. They brought the women of the harem under their influence. They are called the Pharisees, and they were especially shrewd in dealing with a powerful king and were quickly stirred up to fighting and making trouble. And so, when all the Jews had confirmed with oaths their good-will to Caesar and to the king’s government, these men, more than six thousand, did not swear. And when the king imposed a fine upon them, the wife of Pheroras paid the fine for them” (Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.2).

Neusner documents well that pre-70 Pharisaism placed substantial emphasis on purity laws. In fact, his research of 371 items, revealed that: “Approximately 67% of all legal pericopae deal with dietary laws: ritual purity for meals and agricultural rules governing the fitness of food for Pharisaic consumption.”<sup>592</sup> The NT writers were well aware of this, depicting Pharisees as preoccupied with Sabbath laws, tithing and ritual purity. In one instance, Jesus is recorded saying, “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. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel” (Matt 23:23-24).

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<sup>591</sup> See note 277.

<sup>592</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (vol. 1; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 304.

Importantly, James D.G. Dunn in his essay “Pharisees, Sinners and Jesus,” affirms the NT portrayal of Pharisaism using data from rabbinic traditions, Josephus, Paul and the Synoptic tradition.<sup>593</sup> Regarding Paul, he demonstrates that he was a radical Pharisee and identifies two consistent features among Pharisaism of the first century CE. First, Paul thinks of Pharisaism as being zealous for its ancestral laws and traditions about which he was most zealous (see Gal. 1:13-4; Phil. 3:5-6; Rom. 10:2-3). “In Jewish circles the classic examples of such zeal were well known: Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34; Jth. 9:4; Jub. 30: 5-20); Phinehas (Num. 25:10-3; *Sir.* 45:23-4, *1 Macc.* 2:54, *4 Macc* 18:12); Elijah (*Sir.* 48:2; *1 Macc.* 2:58) and the Maccabees (*1 Macc.* 2:19-27, 50, 58; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:27).”<sup>594</sup> Dunn adds that “in each case this zeal led to the taking up of a sword to maintain Israel’s distinctiveness as God’s covenant people.”<sup>595</sup> Second, and subsequent to the first, Paul affirms a sense of separateness in the minds of himself and his contemporaries on account of their righteousness that came through obedience to the Law, a privilege extended to no other people group (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:6; Acts 22:3; *Ant.* 17:41). Later on, he asserts that “the four strands of testimony” regarding the Pharisees reveal that “there were at the time of Jesus a number of Pharisees, and probably a significant body of Pharisees who felt passionately concerned to preserve, maintain and defend Israel’s status as the people of the covenant and the righteousness of the law, as understood in the already developed halakoth, must be regarded as virtually certain.”<sup>596</sup>

Although his bias against them may be reflected in his characterization, Josephus consistently portrays the Pharisees as aggressive and zealous for the Law and their ancestral traditions. On one occasion, two teachers—Judas and Matthias—emboldened young men to cut down a golden eagle that Herod had placed atop the Temple since it

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<sup>593</sup> James D. G. Dunn’s “Pharisees, Sinners and Jesus,” in *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), 61-88.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

was a violation of the Law. When Herod asked why they were so eager in the confession, they answered much like the brothers in 2 Macc 7, saying, “Because after our death, we shall enjoy felicity” (Josephus, *J. W.*, 648-655 [Thackeray, LCL]).<sup>597</sup>

Paul adds to the Pharisaic claim that he was a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (Phil 3:5). The context of this verse is purely polemical as he sees the need to delineate for his audience that, while he places “no confidence in the flesh,” he has reason to do so (vv. 3-4). In fact, he also claims to have been circumcised on the eighth day and to be blameless in carrying out the dictates of the law. This phrase (“Hebrew of Hebrews”) may suggest that even if Paul had been reared in the Diaspora, his family maintained strict religious, linguistic and cultural norms. One suggestion is that the key to understanding this phrase may be the conflict that emerges in the early church in Acts 6 between οἱ Ἑλληνισταὶ and οἱ Ἑβραῖοι.<sup>598</sup> The disregard experienced by Greek-Speaking Jewish converts at the hands of the Aramaic-speaking Jewish converts seems to be the byproduct of cultural and linguistic differences since the distinction in name is the sole reason given by Luke for the conflict. Paul’s affiliation with οἱ Ἑβραῖοι is perhaps an explicit claim to a more traditional brand of Pharisaic Judaism.<sup>599</sup> Bruce also lays out the possibility that οἱ Ἑβραῖοι of the Diaspora worshiped in synagogues where Aramaic alone was spoken, while οἱ Ἑλληνισταὶ worshipped in synagogues where Greek was spoken.<sup>600</sup> He then concludes that while Paul may have been born in the Diaspora, his family was extremely

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<sup>597</sup> Mason systematically demonstrates Josephus’ disdain for the Pharisees. He says, “What must impress the reader interested in the Pharisees is Josephus’s lack of interest in the group: *we* must go looking for Pharisees in Josephus. He does not highlight their presence or answer obvious questions about their leaders, activities, legal principles, group structure, social composition, relationship to ancient priestly senate... Apparently, he fails to answer obvious questions because he disdains the group and regrets their popularity, like that of the countless other demagogues in his stories...” See Mason, “The Narratives,” 31.

<sup>598</sup> Bruce, *Paul*, 41-52.

<sup>599</sup> Regarding the expression “a Hebrew of Hebrews,” Orr and Walther are in agreement with Bruce, saying: “This phrase may also indicate that he belonged to a more exclusive branch of the Israelite tradition rather than to those who were called Hellenists and who practiced assimilation to Greek customs.” See Orr and Walther’s Anchor Bible Commentary *1 Corinthians*, 3.

<sup>600</sup> Bruce, *Paul*, 42-3.

committed to its ancestral traditions, worshipping and speaking in Aramaic. At the very least, Paul's familial commitments ("...the son of Pharisees," Phil 3:5) make it clear that his deep-seated orthodox convictions were instilled in him at an early age. This would not have been unusual since Jews in Rome, for instance, lived together in ghettos and followed strict rules of communal governance.<sup>601</sup>

It is important to entertain the possibility that Paul calls himself a 'Hebrew of Hebrews' because he did in fact grow up in the more orthodox environs of Palestine. Over four decades ago, W.C. van Unnik forwarded a proposal based upon Acts 22:3 that argues that the Lukan Paul was (1) "a Jew, born at Tarsus of Cilicia," (2) "brought up in this city" (Jerusalem) and (3) "educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the Law of our fathers, being zealous for God..."<sup>602</sup> According to this reconstruction, it is possible that Paul grew up in Jerusalem and came under the tutelage of Gamaliel during his teen years. This would be consistent with Acts 26:4, where Paul is portrayed as claiming to have grown up in Jerusalem: "All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people in Jerusalem." Paul's statement in Gal 1:14 may validate these Lukan texts since he speaks of a zealous progression over time.

Paul's attempt to eradicate Christianity reveals his keen sense of what it meant to be a pharisaic Jew and what was an infringement upon that identity. As demonstrated, his response was no different than other Jews of his time and before. Not long after his conversion, Paul found his life in danger by zealous Jews, who were just as he was. After his extensive missionary efforts and subsequent arrest in Jerusalem, Luke suggests that some Jews banned together, taking an oath "not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul"

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<sup>601</sup> Grabbe, *Judaism*, 405-409.

<sup>602</sup> W.C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem*, note 228.

(Acts 23:12-15). As Dunn mentioned above, this behavior would not have been unusual for a significance swath of the Jewish population.

#### **4.4 DIFFERENTIATION AND SEXUAL ETHICS**

As mentioned, Cynic perspective is difficult to explain beyond its distaste for social convention. Such an understanding represents a radically different view to Judaism with its allegiance to the Torah, Sabbath observance, its priestly and sacrificial system and apocalyptic outlook. Without the knowledge of this system, the perspective and expectations of the historical Jesus becomes largely incomprehensible. While parts of Judaism shifted from these foundational building blocks, there would always be a radical movement within it back to the ancient traditions as concretized in the sacred writings and ancient festival traditions. The nature of philosophical inquiry as seen in persons ascribing to the same systems, like Musonius Rufus and Epictetus, was also a process of retraction and expansion; but unlike Judaism, no uniform point of reflection or normative core (like the Torah) existed to establish an ongoing consensus or to rein in beliefs.<sup>603</sup>

The ground under the Greek and Roman parenetic traditions, while often intersecting with Judeo-Christian morality, was constantly shifting to accommodate changing cultural norms and societal trends. As a result, commonalities among these groups do occur, but characteristically derive from different motivations. This is particularly the case in traditions regarding gender relations and sexuality. Like some Jews and Christians, Cynics generally ascribed to an ascetic posture. As might be recalled, Cynics frequented brothels (e.g., Diogenes and Cercidas) and often preferred masturbation to other forms of sexuality. It seems, however, that Jewish and Christian

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<sup>603</sup> This can be illustrated by Musonius' low regard for those who reject marriage, while Epictetus established a hallowed place for Cynics.

emphasis on the eschatological realities provided a different basis for sexual expression. What is more, practices outside of marriage would have been viewed as illicit sexual behavior.

As shown, the practice of pederasty, in its varied forms, was broadly known and accepted from the days of Sparta and well into the first century CE, with slight modifications over time. It should be remembered that at one time Mark Antony was likely an “effeminate call-boy” in the first century BCE, while in the first century CE, Nero castrated his favorite slave boy, Sporus, dressed him as a woman and married him in public ceremony (Suet, *Nero* 28,1).<sup>604</sup> Each scenario illustrates the passive and active roles within the pederastic relationship. At an earlier period, these roles were clearly defined, but at a later period it seems that either partner could play the passive or active role.<sup>605</sup> For instance, as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, Xenophon recounts the reversal of active and passive roles. He remarks that a lad “while still beardless, had a bearded favorite named Tharypas” (*Anabasis* 2.4.28 [Brownson, LCL]). Scroggs asserts: “Greco-Roman pederasty was practiced by a large number of people in part because it was socially acceptable, while actually idealized by many people as a normal course in the process of maturation. In short, the culture we are investigating can fairly be said to be

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<sup>604</sup> While Woods does not dispute the historical account, he argues that other factors are at play. He contends that Nero sought to humiliate young Sporus, holding that he posed a threat to his imperial status. See his article “Nero and Sporus,” in *Latomus* 68 (2009): 73-82. Referencing the work of Richlin, Swancutt adds, “It would really be fair to say that Suetonius describes Claudius as a ‘heterosexual,’ Galba as a ‘homosexual,’ and Caesar and Augustus as having ‘homosexual’ phases or episodes in their youth, and Nero as a no-holds-barred omnisexual Sadeian libertine” (“Still before Sexuality,” 15-16).

<sup>605</sup> For instance, the boy lover often became the dominate aggressor in the relationship. Above, we reference Plato’s recollection of Alcibiades’ attempt to seduce Socrates to no avail. In Plutarch’s *The Dialogue on Love*, this same Alcibiades is disrespectful and presumptuous in his treatment of his adult lover Anytus—Socrates’ chief prosecutor—storming into a banquet in a drunken stupor, taking half the goblets from the table, only to quickly exit again. Much to his guests’ surprise, the love-struck Anytus does nothing in response (*Moralia* 762C).



bisexual, since many adult pederasts were or would be married and carry on sexual relationships with both sexes.”<sup>606</sup>

It is likely that Scroggs’ comments do not go far enough in characterizing the situation. As might be recalled, the social ethos was such that bisexuality was commonplace among many and, as mentioned earlier, “affairs with slaves or lower-class free women were not considered adultery by the state.”<sup>607</sup> It is also important to remember Juvenal’s sharp criticism—quoted above—of Greco-Roman mores prevalent among the elite: “Besides all this, there is nothing sacred to his lust: not the matron of the family, nor the maiden daughter, not the as yet unbeard son-in-law to be, not even the as yet unpolluted son; if none of these are there, he will debauch the grandmother!” (Juvenal, *Satire 3*, 109 [Ramsey, LCL]). A similar criticism is leveled against Greco-Roman sexual practice by the author of the *Letter of Aristeas*, who claimed that Roman men “...not only procure the males, they also defile mothers and daughters. We (Jews) are quite separated from these practices” (Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 152 [Shutt]). On one occasion, Martial comments on a husband-to-be “whose sexual experience had been limited to slave boys, that heterosexual relations is *ignortum opus*, ‘unfamiliar work.’”<sup>608</sup> Both Juvenal and Martial criticized the hypocrisy of the social elite. In *Satire 9*, Juvenal criticizes Virro’s abuse of his male prostitute Naevolus. This scenario reflects a shift from an ancient conception of pederasty to a form of sexual expression tantamount to the modern vision of homosexuality since the patron Virro regularly played the passive role.

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<sup>606</sup> Scroggs, *New Testament and Homosexuality*, 27.

<sup>607</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 245.

<sup>608</sup> James Neill, *The Origins and Role of Same-Sex Relations in Human Societies* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2009), 253-254.

Hellenistic and Palestinian Jewish sentiment regarding Greco-Roman sexuality and gender relations is well documented.<sup>609</sup> Unlike the widespread bisexuality of the Greco-Roman world, Jewish law “in its official form was entirely opposed to male homosexuality and, presumably, to female as well.”<sup>610</sup> Even though Scroggs argues for significant philosophical differences between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, he acknowledges that “where it surfaces both are unalterably opposed” and “attack homosexuality as a Gentile vice.”<sup>611</sup> While Scroggs’ dialectic may not be entirely accurate his assessment of Jewish attitude toward, at least one aspect of Greco-Roman sexual ethics, is correct. As explained above, Jewish sexual ethics seems to have had a different starting point early on. Homosexuality is denounced as evil since: “a) it is against nature, b) it disagrees with the divinely appointed aim of procreation and, c) it was seen as a vice unique to pagans and related to idolatry. *Jewish writers speak of these Greco-Roman practices as if unheard of within their communities.*”<sup>612</sup> Scroggs says, “Either the greater danger felt by the Jewish minority in the Greek city led to stringent measures of rejection and protection, or the contrast continually made between the sexual purity of the Jews and the impurity of the rest of the world effectively silenced evidence to the contrary.”<sup>613</sup>

Gagnon goes a step further, correcting Scroggs’ position that Jewish writers “saw no wider reference to the Levitical law than pederasty.”<sup>614</sup> He goes on to say: “By

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<sup>609</sup> See, for instance, Robin Scroggs work *The NT and Homosexuality* (66-97). Scroggs draws out this distinction and provides helpful primary source material.

<sup>610</sup> Scroggs, *New Testament and Homosexuality*, 84.

<sup>611</sup> Scroggs, *New Testament and Homosexuality*, 97. Also see the *T. Naph* 3.3.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. The three reasons for Jewish dissent are drawn from Scroggs, but Gagnon has a much full explanation of these ideas along with additional insight. Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 159-183.

<sup>613</sup> Scroggs, *The NT and Homosexuality*, 97.

<sup>614</sup> Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 162. Hays makes a similar point in his work, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation: a Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 398. He says: “Scroggs, for example, argues that the New Testament’s condemnation of homosexuality applies only to a certain ‘model’ of

pederasty we mean erotic love between a mature man and a boy in the developmental stage between puberty and the spouting of body hair. But caution is required: ‘boy (*pais*) could be used of any junior partner in a homosexual relationship, even one who was full-grown.’”<sup>615</sup> A myriad of Jewish writers help to substantiate this claim. The Sibylline Oracles 3 predicts the result of Roman rule: “Male will have intercourse with male and they will set up boys in houses of ill-fame and in those days there will be a great affliction among men and it will throw everything into confusion” (Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 3:185 [J.J. Collins]). *Second Enoch* 34:1-2 says, “God convicts the persons who are idol worshipers and sodomite fornicators... that is, friend with friend in the anus, and every other kind of wicked uncleanness which it is disgusting to report” (Ibid., 34:1-2 [F.I. Anderson]). Regarding Jewish sexual ethics leading up to the first century CE and beyond, Gagnon observes: “They recognized that the laws in Lev 18:22; 20:13 applied to all male-male intercourse, regardless of the relative age, status, or active/passive role of the participants. So, while the Jewish critique is aimed primarily at pederasty, the arguments used cover a wider sweep of same-sex intercourse.”<sup>616</sup> This trend is evident in 1 Cor 6:9 where Paul’s vice list includes both the active (*μοιχοί*) and passive (*μαλακοί*) partners in a homosexual act.

In sum, these considerations affirm that in his pre-conversion life, the Apostle Paul ascribed to a zealous pharisaic way of life that was consistent with the point of view of other Jews of his time. Like many of his predecessors (Simeon, Levi, Phineas, Matthias, etc.), he was apocalyptic in his outlook and reacted violently against the

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exploitative pederasty that was common in Hellenistic culture... Scroggs, in my judgment, fails to reckon adequately with Romans 1, where the relations are not described as pederastic and where Paul’s disapproval has nothing to do with exploitation.” Also, see Hays’ article “Relations natural and unnatural: a response to John Boswell’s exegesis of Rom 1,” *JRE* 14, no. 1 (1986):184-215. For a contrasting perspective, see Dale Martin’s article “Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-32,” partially reviewed in note 407.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid.

infringement of outside forces upon what he viewed as Orthodox Judaism. His apocalyptic worldview affirmed that ultimately God sides with the righteous oppressed who advocate for the law, the holy land and the chosen people. What is more, a wide chasm existed between Jesus, Paul and first century Judaism—Palestinian and Hellenistic—and the sexual mores of the broader Greco-Roman culture. For the former, sexual ethics was circumscribed by the dictates of the Law. Prophetic divine revelation led to a further radicalization of the legal standards. This posture led to an outright rejection of the sexual ethics prevalent in the broader culture (bisexuality). The Apostle Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce appear to have been deeply influenced by his Jewish background. The next chapter will consider the extent to which Jesus tradition influenced Paul's overall perspective with special attention given to his views on marriage, celibacy and divorce.

## CHAPTER 5 PAUL'S DEPENDENCY UPON JESUS TRADITION FOR HIS VIEWS ON MARRIAGE, CELIBACY AND DIVORCE

Many have considered the question of just how dependent Paul was upon Jesus tradition. The results have in no way been harmonious, with some scholars seeing significant continuity and others seeing little, if any. The latter perspective resulted in the view that the Apostle Paul was the true founder of Christianity and that he advocated a religious perspective that Jesus in no way envisaged. This wedge between Jesus and Paul was a natural progression from nineteenth and early twentieth century portrayals of Jesus, which characterized him, more or less, as a sage and reformer of Judaism who Paul transformed into a supernatural Christ. Wrede, for instance, argued that Paul transferred unto the historical Jesus his pre-conversion belief in a heavenly messiah, while Bousset held that his depiction of Jesus drew heavily from mystery religions of the time.<sup>617</sup> A number of significant events occurred to displace this wedge. As mentioned earlier, Albert Schweitzer demonstrated that the renderings of Jesus by liberal critics said more about the authors and their presuppositions than about the historical Jesus. Their portrayals were the imaginative inventions of liberal scholarship: “The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and died to give his work its final consecration, never existed. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in a historical garb.”<sup>618</sup> From this work and

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<sup>617</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, 478.

others, a second consensus emerged that Jesus was indeed eschatologically minded and saw himself as playing a decisive role in ushering in the kingdom of God.<sup>619</sup> Significant for what follows is the fact that Paul's message coincided with that of the Jerusalem church on numerous matters as affirmed by the right-hand of fellowship received by him and Barnabas (Gal. 1-2). What is more, they preached in common places (i.e. Corinth, Antioch, etc.) and undoubtedly used common Jesus tradition.<sup>620</sup> The purpose of this section is to consider just how dependent Paul may have been upon Jesus tradition.

## 5.1 TRADITION AND THE EARLY CHURCH:

Naturally, stories about Jesus' early ministry began to circulate when he was still alive. On several occasions, the Synoptic tradition and the Gospel of John inform us that word quickly spread about his message and miracles.<sup>621</sup> Gospel criticism, while not uniform by any stretch of the imagination, generally holds to Markan priority.<sup>622</sup> The

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<sup>619</sup> As mentioned in the literature review, Weiss and Schweitzer argued that Jesus truly saw himself as an eschatological prophet who expected the imminent end of the world.

<sup>620</sup> C. H. Dodd writes convincingly that there is a common textual-hermeneutical tradition undergirding the NT. NT writers were able to access a common textual tradition consisting of OT passages linked together and serving as a source for understanding Jesus as the fulfillment of the OT. See C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures; the sub-structure of New Testament theology* (London: Nisbet, 1953), 126-127.

<sup>621</sup> John 4 serves as a good example of this. After a Samaritan woman is touched by Jesus' ministry, she goes back to Samaria saying, "Come see a man who told me all things I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (v. 29) The result was that many other Samaritans came and believed, confessing "this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (v. 42).

<sup>622</sup> Robert Stein is a major proponent of Markan priority. For his rationale, see his commentary, *Mark: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). A former student of the renowned Rudolf Bultmann, Eta Linnemann, forwards a radically different view. In her work, *Is There A Synoptic Problem?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1992), Linnemann denounces Bultmann's demythologizing approach as well as Markan priority. She claims that the gospels came into existence *without* any literary dependence. She suggests that the gospels went through four stages of evolution: 1) tradition, 2) a forgotten factor, 3) the transition from memory to manuscript and 4) the ancient testimony of Christians. Linnemann views *tradition as reliable written historical material going back to Jesus*. The word 'reliable' is what would differentiate her view from that of many other practitioners of historical criticism. She challenges form critics classification of floating bits of Gospel tradition as 'folk-tradition,' thereby emptying it of its credibility. She claims: "There was no period of oral tradition that

efforts of the Jesus Seminar, though highly contested, attempt to push the consensus away from this long held position to the view that the Gospel of Thomas and the hypothetical Q source should hold priority in understanding the historical Jesus. For the most part, however, both schools of thought allow for multiple sources of written and oral tradition. The Synoptic tradition conveys that Jesus was selective in who he told what. As mentioned, there were certain experiences and traditions that could only be remembered and shared by the three disciples, Peter, James and John (i.e., Mt. Transfiguration, Gethsemane, etc.). Other traditions were only known by the twelve disciples or perhaps a select few who were there from the beginning to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry.<sup>623</sup> Proponents for an early composition of the Gospel of Thomas suggest that Paul may have been exposed to this sayings tradition in one form or another.<sup>624</sup> The Gospel of Thomas, however, was unknown to Paul because it is a text

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preceded the formation of the Gospels. Tradition, in the sense usually ascribed to it, cannot even be assumed to have occurred.” She claims that the *forgotten fact is memory*. “Not ‘folk tradition’ but the recollection of eyewitnesses is the foundation of the four New Testament Gospels.” She argues that 40 years of holding the gospel in memory before writing down is not a long time. Eyewitnesses held onto their graphic memories of the words and deeds of Jesus. What is more, four matters helped to preserve the memories regarding Jesus words and deeds. They wanted to recall these memories. These memories were circulated within a community, thus broadening the base of those who preserved them. These memories were also preserved by antagonist who did not believe, and who talked about and wrote about their unbelief. These memories were preserved by their willingness to share them, even though they were not asked. She relegates the imprecision the gospels sometimes display to the standards of the cultural context in which they were recalled. She posits an original tradition that circulated eyewitnesses who proclaimed the gospel message repeatedly as well as those who only had occasional opportunity to pass their memories along. This original primary tradition was put into writing. In putting their accounts into writing, Linnemann suggests that they might have included previously written materials. Luke, who is not an eyewitness, admittedly uses several sources in the composition of his Gospel. Lastly, writers, like Papias and Irenaeus, recorded that Matthew was written first in the language of the Jew—Aramaic or Hebrew—and that Mark put down the memories of Peter. Also, Luke, who was a companion of Paul, composed a Gospel containing the inclusive message of Paul (See 181-185).

<sup>623</sup> This makes sensible the criteria used in Acts 1:21-26, when the remaining disciples sought to select a replacement for Judas; he had to be there from the beginning to adequately convey tradition about Jesus.

<sup>624</sup> See Stephen J. Patterson’s “Paul and Jesus Tradition,” 32.

dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and it is uncertain whether its formative traditions go back to the first.<sup>625</sup>

It goes without saying that NT writers later reflected upon the events of Jesus' life in light of the OT. In the same way, these writers were selective in how they appropriated the OT. On several occasions, John writes "and they remembered..." acknowledging that the act of making sense of Jesus' life and ministry was largely a post-Easter phenomenon (i.e., 2:17, 15:20, 16:4). According to these traditions, this is precisely how Jesus wanted it (i.e., Matt 16:20, 17:9, etc.).<sup>626</sup> The stories that circulated about Jesus were diverse in nature. Pre-Easter tradition related to his baptism at the hands of John the Baptist (Acts 1), his miracles (i.e., Mark 5), his selection and commissioning of the twelve (Matt 28), dealings with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and his teachings on the ethics of the kingdom of God (Matt 5-7).

Paul and other Diasporan Jews were uniquely suited to do what was likely impossible for the Jerusalem Church, namely, to take the gospel message and its traditions about Jesus and refashion them to accommodate a broadly inclusive audience. It is in this new context, away from the topography that informed Jesus' parables that Paul quite naturally distilled from and recapitulated Jesus tradition. It is noteworthy that Jesus' manner of life (i.e., occupation, lifestyle, etc.) as well as many of his illustrations may have been offensive to some of Paul's Roman listeners, making this recapitulation

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<sup>625</sup> Witherington, *The Jesus Quest*, 48-50.

<sup>626</sup> William Wrede was the first to argue for a Messianic Secret in the Synoptic tradition, especially in Mark. He suggests that the command of silence by Jesus in the Markan tradition to both his disciples and demons was not original to his ministry, but reflects the theological perspective of the author. Wrede claims that the so-called Messianic Secret covered up the fact that Jesus was not well known, by conveying that this is how Jesus wanted it prior to his death and Resurrection. See Wrede's *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J.C.G. Grieg; Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971). Schweitzer rebuts this view, asserting that Wrede's perspective, like many scholars in his day reflect his bias rather than the actual historical Jesus (see intro.).



even more necessary.<sup>627</sup> The evidence of such a practice by Paul is made explicit in 1 Cor 9 where he delineates his missionary practice of “becoming all things to all men that he might win some.” Clearly, he thought it vital to continually repackage the gospel message in a way that would be accessible to a vastly different audience. In fact, this seems to have been the general practice of nascent Christianity,<sup>628</sup> the result being that while the traditions that would later inform the Synoptic tradition were actually circulating during Paul’s lifetime, and while there is significant substantive agreement between the letters of Paul and the Synoptic tradition, only three direct quotes of Jesus are cited (1 Cor 7:10-11; 1 Cor 9:14; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

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<sup>627</sup> Paul’s limited discussion about the historical Jesus may be tied to Greco-Roman contempt of those who seemed to neglect their civic responsibility. It is likely that those on the dominate side of the social mechanism of the patron-client relationship, would have taken offense to the cynic-like character and practice of Jesus. What is more, Jesus’ emphasis upon servant leadership (Matt 16:24-26), might have been viewed as a subversive ideal in a Greco-Roman milieu in which aristocrats passed laws in an effort to preserve the upper class. On this point, Jeffers says: “Roman adultery laws were intended mainly to preserve the legitimacy of the upper-class family’s children and to promote the production of legitimate children” (Jeffers, *Greco-Roman World*, 246). A similar disdain for certain aspects of the culture, existed within Palestinian Judaism. Jeremias does a masterful job of laying out the professions that were looked upon unfavorably within Palestinian Judaism. He provides several overlapping lists from rabbinic sources, which include trades concerned with transport [i.e. sailor, ass-driver and camel-drivers], herdsmen and physicians. Transporters had a tendency “to embezzle some of the goods entrusted to them,” while herdsmen were notorious for leading their “herds on to other people’s property” and making off with the produce of the herd. “For this reason it was forbidden to buy wool, milk or kids from them (305).” Based on Rashi’s commentary on *b. Kidd82a Bar*, Jeremias also lists three reasons for an unfavorable view of physicians: a) they soothed patients and thus kept them from seeking God, b) they had many people of their conscience, and c) they neglected the poor [cf. Mark 5:24-34] (Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 303-312). The point is that Paul’s recapitulation of Jesus’ tradition and practice was quite possibly a necessary step in spreading the gospel in a different milieu.

<sup>628</sup> The much debated speeches in Acts reflect this practice. For instance, in Acts 7 Stephen is depicted recounting salvation history in his gospel proclamation. He builds his case beginning with the patriarchs, discusses Moses and the exodus, until he arrives at Jesus. On the other hand, in Acts 14:8-20, when Paul and Barnabas preach in Lystra, they start from the standpoint of natural theology. Similarly, at the Areopagus, Paul is depicted as building his case from an inscription on a statue to and “unknown god,” leaving out any discussion salvation history as such. Significantly, these features are found in Romans. In chapter 1, Paul uses natural theology as he recounts salvation history (Rom 2). For more on this, see F. F. Bruce “The Speeches in Acts—Thirty Years Later,” in *Reconciliation and Hope: NT Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L. L. Morris on His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (ed. R. J. Banks; Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), 53-68.

## 5.2 PAUL’S EXPOSURE TO JESUS TRADITION:

In Gal 1:15-17, the Apostle Paul claims that once Christ was revealed in him, his immediate response was “not to consult any human being”—not even the church in Jerusalem—but to go to Arabia. He then suggests that “three years later” he was still unknown to the churches in Judea (v. 21). How, then, might Paul have gained access to Jesus and the traditions surrounding his life? First, it would be a misstep to assume that nothing in Paul’s pre-conversion life prepared him for his vision of the resurrected Christ. If he had no knowledge of Jesus tradition, he would not have given such attention to destroying the church. In fact, such might suggest the exact opposite; after becoming thoroughly knowledgeable about Jesus’ movement, Paul sought to eradicate it as an unacceptable plague threatening to contaminate what he saw as pure Judaism. Since Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia is unquestionably polemical, it is easy to lose sight of such obvious facts. Patterson observes: “It is true that Paul claims not to have been known among the Judean churches (Gal 1:22), but this claim says nothing of Galilee, Syria, or the Transjordan (Arabia?). To think that Paul came into the ranks of the Jesus movement in this region and yet had no contact with those early Christians who used and preserved the tradition of Jesus’ sayings seems almost inconceivable.”<sup>629</sup>

What is more, if the characterization of Jesus’ ministry as unfolding against the defiant landscape of Pharisaism is true, it is likely that much had been said within that group about Jesus self-claims (Matt 9:2-8/Mark 2:3-12/Luke 5:17-26; Luke 4:14-28; John 14:6), inclusivity (Luke 15:1-7; John 4) and idiosyncratic perspective (Matt 19:1-12). Also, while it is likely that none of the Gospel accounts were completed prior to Paul’s death, the traditions about Jesus circulated orally as stories among those who accepted them and—as demonstrated above—also among those who rejected his message.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> Patterson, “Paul and Jesus Tradition: It is Time for Another Look,” 30.

<sup>630</sup> Furnish, *Jesus*, 21-39.

Before being written down, these traditions lived on in the preaching, teaching and liturgies of the early church. The kerygmatic content of early preaching always included some reference to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, substantiated by OT texts.<sup>631</sup> The Philippians' hymn of 2:6-11—tradition that many contend predate Paul—provides a helpful example of how liturgy contained Jesus tradition and about how this tradition was appropriated to address conflicts in the church.<sup>632</sup>

It must be acknowledged that Paul did have a very fluid understanding of Jesus tradition, such that at times he would give equal significance to traditions that had been “passed down” (παραδίδωμι) to him by others and to his personal revelations.<sup>633</sup> Although certain key verses have been debated, it is highly unlikely that Paul was acquainted with the earthly Jesus.<sup>634</sup> Despite this lack of direct interaction, the Pauline corpus contains a significant number of allusions and direct references to Jesus tradition; some of which is found elsewhere in the NT. Clearly, Paul knows more than the basic facts about the life and ministry of Jesus, which he possibly gathered from the Jerusalem apostles in one or more of his journeys to Jerusalem. In Gal 1:18, Paul claims to have visited (ἱστορήσαι) Jerusalem in an effort to become acquainted with and inquire of key apostles. It is significant that he meets Peter, James and John—whom he identifies as the ‘pillars’ of the Jerusalem church (Gal 2:9)—since, according to the Synoptic tradition, they were privy to more events in the life of Jesus than the rest of the apostles.<sup>635</sup> Many

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<sup>631</sup> For more on this, see C. H. Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1964).

<sup>632</sup> For a helpful discussion on the Philippian Hymn, see Roetzel's *The Letters of Paul*, 75-76.

<sup>633</sup> Furnish, *Jesus*, 27-30. Also, consider the entry of παραδίδωμι found under Martin F. Büchsel, “δίδωμι,” *TDNT* 2:166-73.

<sup>634</sup> Weiss and others of his era were wrong to draw from 2 Cor. 5:16 that Paul knew the earthly Jesus. It is likely that Paul is contrasting his current view of Christ with his prior attitude. See Furnish, *Jesus*, 1-4 and Bruce, *Paul*, 97-100.

<sup>635</sup> The Mount of Transfiguration, the healing of Jarius' daughter and the Garden of Gethsemane are just three instances where Jesus only brought along Peter, James and John. Significantly, the synoptic tradition records Jesus commanding them, at times, to withhold their unique experiences until after the resurrection. After the experience at the Mt. of Transfiguration, Jesus says, “Tell the vision to no one until

uphold that Paul's use of ἱστορήσαι means that he specifically 'inquired' about the earthly Jesus.<sup>636</sup>

Two additional points may further bolster the idea that Paul inquired of and received Jesus tradition from Peter. First, the fact that Peter eats with Gentile converts in Antioch before the messengers from James arrived, suggests that he shared a common theological perspective with both Jesus and Paul on the matter. Matthew records Jesus saying, "What goes into the mouth does not defile you, but what comes out of your mouth, that is what defiles you" (Matt 15:10-11), making table fellowship with foreigners possible for Christian Jews. Acts 11:1-2 is likely a realistic depiction of the Jewish-Christian response to Peter's revelation that Gentile believers were fit for table fellowship. Secondly, knowledge of the life and ministry of Jesus were essential for proclaiming the message of a crucified savior. Hengel asserts: "Precisely because of the scandal of the cross, it was impossible to be a missionary in the ancient world, proclaiming a crucified messiah and Son of God, without saying something about the activity and death of this man. Moreover, a need for information is a fundamental human characteristic, especially with a new revolutionary message."<sup>637</sup>

### 5.3 AGREEMENT BETWEEN JESUS TRADITION AND PAUL

In his provocative study, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*, Seeberg claimed to have identified in the NT literature a catechism constructed out of the sayings of Jesus,

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the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (Matt 17:9). Subsequently, they became the sole bearers of certain aspects of Jesus tradition.

<sup>636</sup> Longnecker suggests that "the verb ἱστορέω is used in classical Greek to mean 'make inquiry of' or 'inquire about'... There is as well, however, considerable evidence for ἱστορέω as meaning "get acquainted with someone." Richard N. Longnecker, *Word Biblical Commentary: Galatians* (Dallas: Word Press, 1990), 37. From this Bruce concludes that "the purpose of Paul's going to Jerusalem on this occasion was to make the acquaintance of the leading apostle—and not merely make his acquaintance but to inquire of him (for this is the force of the verb *historēsai* which he uses)." Bruce, *Paul*, 84. Also, see Furnish, *Jesus*, 25-27 on this point.

<sup>637</sup> Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: SCM Press, 1977) 19. See note 9.

the content of which was preached and taught to potential converts.<sup>638</sup> This is the means by which Jesus tradition passed on into the early Church, mixed also with Jewish parenthesis. Resch added to Seeberg's optimism, widely viewed as a significant contribution, by supposedly uncovering 1158 allusions to Jesus tradition; 925 in nine Pauline epistles, 100 in pastorals and 133 in Ephesians.<sup>639</sup> As one might expect, many questioned the validity of such an appraisal.<sup>640</sup> Half a century later, however, W. D. Davies used a modified version of Resch's conclusions to argue also for Paul's primary dependence upon Jesus tradition.<sup>641</sup> As mention, Davies held that Paul's exposure to Jesus tradition was so thorough that "what is found in the hortatory sections of the Epistles of Paul arises largely out of habit..."<sup>642</sup>

While these works do not focus solely upon 1 Cor. 7, they are important for any attempt to establish the viability of Pauline dependency upon Jesus tradition. Again, however, the problem is one of controls. Although Paul could have said considerably more about the life and ministry of Jesus, his comprehension of the essence of Jesus' thought and message is unparalleled by any other NT writer. Bruce points out several places of substantive agreement between Jesus and Paul. What follows is an expanded list of these allusions and parallels:

(1) **The Significance of the Christ-Event:** In the Pauline corpus and in the Gospels the Christ event marked the beginning of a new era in salvation history. Mark 1:15 records Jesus announcing his ministry with the words, "The appointed time has been fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand," while Paul says "when time had come, God sent forth his Son...so that we might receive adoption as his sons (Gal 4:4f)." The first

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<sup>638</sup> Seeberg, *Der Katechismus der Urchristenheit*.

<sup>639</sup> Resch, A. *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu = Texte und Untersuchungen 27* (Leipzig: 1904).

<sup>640</sup> See Schweitzer's entry in the literature review on this.

<sup>641</sup> Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 137-143.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

passage has a pre-Easter context, while the latter has a post-Easter context; both reference Easter as the decisive development in human history. The shift in perspective is to be expected since “the original Preacher has become the Preached One.”<sup>643</sup>

(2) **The Power of the Kingdom:** The Synoptic gospels record Jesus saying that some of his hearers on a certain occasion would still be alive to see “the kingdom of God come in power” (Mark 9:1). Luke records the resurrected Jesus saying, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Since Paul’s ministry takes place after the resurrection, this is an established fact. According to Paul, “Jesus was designated Son of God *in power* according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead” (Rom 1:4). Believers experience this power by the indwelling Spirit and authority over the forces of darkness, whose final demise will occur at the resurrection.

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(3) **The Lord’s Supper:** First Corinthians 11:17-34 contains Paul’s version of Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper. It is significant that in v. 23a Paul acknowledges that this is Jesus tradition passed on to him: “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on (παρέδωκα) to you...” Naturally, this has parallels in the Synoptic tradition (Mark 14:22-25; Matt 26:26-29; Lk 22:17-20), which affirm derivation from a common source. It is hard to determine which is more archaic, but such Jesus tradition highlights that the outline of the gospel story acquired a form from being repeated at celebrations of the Lord’s Supper. Paul shared the tradition of Christ crucified and buried with the other apostles, but expands or interprets this tradition—much like 1 Cor. 7—saying: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (v. 26); “.... nothing like it stands in the Eucharistic passages of the Synoptic

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<sup>643</sup> Bruce, *Paul*, 97.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

Gospels... Rather, it is the apostle's *interpretive comment* on the traditional words, and therefore on the meaning of the Eucharist itself."<sup>645</sup>

(4) **Justification:** Paul's notion of justification by faith is similar to teaching found in Jesus' parables. In Christ, God's eschatological purposes concerning the covenant are fulfilled, with the result that justification by faith—which was also preciously Jewish concept—is now more narrowly defined as faith in Jesus. Dunn suggests "...that with Christ's coming God's covenant purpose had reached its intended final stage in which the more fundamental identity marker (Abraham's faith) reasserts its primacy over against the too narrowly nationalistic identity markers of circumcision, food laws and Sabbath."<sup>646</sup> There are two reoccurring ideas related to justification found in both in the Pauline corpus and the parables of Jesus.

a. **Divine Grace:** Bruce illustrates Paul's dependency on Jesus tradition, and does so using tradition from Luke's special material and Matthew's special material. (a) In Luke 15, the story of the Prodigal son illustrates that divine grace receives the sinner into salvation. In this parable, the father refuses the son's requests to work his way back into his father's good graces, and in Gal 4:7, Paul says, "through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir." (b.) In Matthew 20:1-16, Bruce illustrates the same point with the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. Here, the last workers are given the same wages as those who were selected first. The merciful owner determined that "whatever is right" was equal wages for all who responded. This was seen visibly in the ministry of Jesus as he associated directly with women (Luke 10:38-42), lepers (Matt 8:1-4), god-fearers (8:5-13) and those generally considered to be *'am ha-aretz* (Luke 4:16-9, 15:1-3). Similarly, the equal standing of believers "in Christ" is a reoccurring theme in the Pauline corpus. Gal 3:28, for instance, illustrates this egalitarian perspective

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<sup>645</sup> Furnish, *Jesus*, 31. Also, see Bruce, *Paul*, 100.

<sup>646</sup> Dunn, "New Perspective," 115.

well since class, gender and ethnicity have no bearing on who can access God's grace and mercy.<sup>647</sup>

b. **Attitude Toward the Law:** Regarding the law, Jesus states: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." While scholars have deliberated extensively about the meaning of "fulfill" (πληρόω) in this passage, it at least means that Jesus fulfilled the sacrificial aspects of the law as well as certain facets of the prophetic tradition (i.e., Is 53, Suffering Servant passages).<sup>648</sup> In other words, Jesus' death and resurrection fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law thus opening the way to redemption through faith without restrictions. Similarly, Paul says: "The law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the custodian; for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal 3:24-26). In Rom 10:4, Paul says it this way: "Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified." Paul lived in a time "between the times" when "the coming of Christ and the completion of his redemptive work, the age of the law (specifically, circumcision, food laws and the Sabbath [author's insertion])<sup>649</sup> had come to an end for the people of God."<sup>650</sup> In addition, Bruce contends that Jesus' reduction of the law to the principles of love toward God, self and neighbor, and his focus on heart devotion should have signaled for many the diminishing role of the law for him.<sup>651</sup> While Jesus says nothing about the

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<sup>647</sup> Longnecker, *Galatians*, 150-9.

<sup>648</sup> For more on the term πληρόω, see D.J. Moo's "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law," *JSNT* 20 (1984): 3-49 and C.F.D. Moule's "Fulfillment Words in The NT: Use and Abuse," *NTS* 14 (1968) 316ff.

<sup>649</sup> See note 409.

<sup>650</sup> Bruce, *Paul*, 104.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-5.



need for circumcision because it never came up in his ministry, it was a decisive issue for Paul.<sup>652</sup>

(5) **Common Eschatology**: C.H. Dodd's discussion on a common scriptural basis shared among all of the NT writers is helpful at this point, especially with regard to eschatology.<sup>653</sup> Dodd cites Joel 2-3, Zechariah 9-14 and parts of Daniel as testimony. For instance, Joel provides a proof-text for the symbolism of a trumpet call so pervasive in Christian eschatology (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16; Acts 2), while Dan 7 provides the rationale for the characterization of Jesus as the 'Son of Man'; in Dan. 7:14, the 'Son of Man' is "given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." This assumption is basic to the Synoptic Gospels, John, the Pauline epistles and the book of Revelation. (See the discussion in Chapter 3 on the compatibility of Jesus' and Paul's eschatological perspective).

#### Paul's Use of Jesus Tradition in his Discussion of Marriage, Celibacy and Divorce:

First Cor 7 begins with Paul addressing a question being raised by the Corinthian congregation. Some are inquiring as to whether or not it is appropriate for Christians to engage in sexual intercourse. Many within the broader Greco-Roman culture argued that ἀφοροδίσια (erotic sexual desire) was inappropriate for the marital bed and that marital sex

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<sup>652</sup> Patterson argues for potential influences on Pauline perspective from the Gospel of St. Thomas. He says that "...there is little evidence from the synoptic side of the sayings tradition to indicate that Paul could have inherited this socially radical position on circumcision from members of the Jesus movement whom he encountered in the early years of his work in the East. For all we knew, the position was the work of Paul, created out of necessity as he moved into areas dominated by Gentile populations. *The Gospel of St. Thomas*, however, may indicate that such a position was not unique to Paul." After quoting *The Gospel of St. Thomas* 53, where it reads that "true circumcision in spirit has become profitable in every respect," Patterson suggests that "such an abrogation of the Jewish-Gentile boundaries may have been part of the radical tradition to which Paul was exposed already in the East" (Patterson, "Paul and the Jesus Tradition," 32).

<sup>653</sup> See Dodd's *According to the Scriptures*, 62-74.

should be reserved for the purposes of procreation. Other outlets were available for sexual pleasure (e.g., prostitution). In contrast to this, Paul asserts that the body of the spouse belongs exclusively to the other, making no mention of procreation whatsoever. Among the points that Paul makes in 1 Cor 7, three have direct ties to Jesus tradition:

(1) **Celibacy:** In Matt 19:12, Jesus is recorded saying “...there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of God.” Prior to this statement (v. 11), Jesus asserts, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given (δέδοται).” In the NT, the term δίδωμι is often used in reference to “a gift and not merely a disposition.”<sup>654</sup> What is more, the verbal tense is the perfect passive which is best translated “it has been given.” Jesus, then, seems to be suggesting that celibacy is a gift that God bestows upon particular people.<sup>655</sup> In fact, one writer makes the claim that δίδωμι is “used for the supreme gifts of God.”<sup>656</sup> This is precisely what Paul says in 1 Cor 7:7: “I wish that all were as I am. But each has a particular gift (χάρισμα) from God, one having one kind and another, a different kind. In 1 Cor 7, celibacy is a gift that is given in the same manner as the other χαρίσματα of 1 Cor 12 (i.e., “severally as the Spirit wills”). Furthermore, the motivation for exercising this gift is the ever present demands of the kingdom of God, the imminence of which almost necessitates singular devotion.<sup>657</sup> Paul says, “But I want you to be free from care. The unmarried man cares for the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the world, how to please his wife and his interests are divided” (1 Cor 7:32-4). In this same letter, Paul explains certain aspects of the Parousia and seemingly held that this complex of events would occur in close proximity to the letters composition. Loader says, “The same kind of tradition with the same kind of caution being found in Matthew should be taken as

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<sup>654</sup> Büchsel, “δίδωμι,” *TDNT* 2:166.

<sup>655</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 128-131.

<sup>656</sup> Büchsel, “δίδωμι,” *TDNT* 2:166.

<sup>657</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 132-133.

evidence that the core element, the preference for celibacy, is an early Christian tradition and probably stem from Jesus' own teaching, but was combined in both places with an affirmation of the place of marriage in the divine order."<sup>658</sup>

(2) **Marriage and Divorce:** Mark 10:2-12, Matt 5:31-32, Matt 19:3-12 and Luke 16:18 transmit tradition in which Jesus is depicted saying that God intended for marriage to be a permanent relationship. In the Markan account, Jesus claims that Moses permitted divorce because of the people's hard-heartedness. He then turns to Gen 1:27 and 2:24 to underscore the true intentions of God regarding marriage, asserting that the male and female would become one flesh; emphasis here is sexual union.<sup>659</sup> This suggests that God strongly affirmed sexual union from the beginning.<sup>660</sup> Mark goes on to prohibit men from divorcing their wives and wives from divorcing their husbands, saying, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery" (10:11-12). This is where the Matthean tradition appears to be more primitive since it is appropriately androcentric, as Jesus' comments would have necessarily been directed toward Jewish men. In view of this, the Markan account—at least with regard to the comments on divorce—appears to be an expansion of the tradition to address an audience in which both men and women had the legal right to divorce their spouses. In addition, the Matthean tradition inserts an exception clause (Mt 5:32 and 19:9) that is absent from the Markan version. The Lukan account bears strikingly similarities to the first Matthean divorce text of Mt 5:32, but not necessarily Mt 19:9 or Mk 10:2-12. This has led some to the

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 99-101.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 107. Loader makes this point when he says, "Both the argument from order and the argument from what God has done in the act of the man and woman coming together affirm that coming together, including sexual union. The implied affirmation of sexual union is to be noted. It is an affirmation of human sexuality and of its expression in human relationships, here as sexual union exclusively in monogamous marriage."

conclusion that Lk 16:18 and Mt 5:32 are versions of what the writers found in Q.<sup>661</sup> Loader contends that Matt 5:32 “is operating from a purity framework rather than primarily in an ethical framework” and that it reflects “an established cultural framework which is governed by the concerns of ritual purity.”<sup>662</sup> This is why reconciliation is never considered as an option in the case of a wife involved in πορνεία, which is perhaps best understood as adultery on the part of the wife.<sup>663</sup> It is telling that Joseph chose the most compassionate option for Mary to whom he was betrothed, “to divorce Mary quietly.”

Like the Synoptic tradition, Paul also views marriage as a permanent relationship. Like the Markan tradition, he condemns divorce for both parties citing Jesus tradition that is probably more primitive than the Synoptic tradition (1 Cor 7:10-11).<sup>664</sup> It is significant that Paul affirms the Synoptic view of appropriate sexual relations when he also refers to Gen 2:24 while condemning the practice of “becoming one” with a prostitute (1 Cor 6:16). Chapter 7 asserts that marriage is the context in which sexual passions should be fulfilled (v. 9). While it is incongruous to become with a prostitute and “united with the Lord” (6:17), it is incumbent upon believing husbands and wives not to deprive one another (7:5). The Apostle Paul makes no mention of the Matthean exception, but informs Corinthian believers that divorce is acceptable only if a pagan spouse is unwilling to remain in the marriage (7:15). Seemingly, although he expands the tradition to meet the growing demands of the church, he endeavors to maintain Jesus’ prohibition of divorce even in circumstances where one partner is an unbeliever. Niederwimmer

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 82-83.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 69-71. Loader lists three possible translations for πορνεία in the context of the Matthean exception: 1) extra-marital sexual intercourse, 2) premarital intercourse, and 3) incestuous relations. He concludes, “Others argue, in my opinion convincingly, that πορνεία should be understood in terms of adultery, pointing out that it was not uncommon to use this word and its root to describe sexual immorality (including adultery) when committed by women and its choice here may have been on stylistic grounds to avoid repetition.”

<sup>664</sup> Niederwimmer, *Askese und Mysterium*, 99.

suggests that “As Jesus’ prohibition came to be appreciated as *lex*, then that necessarily brought with it the question of exceptions.”<sup>665</sup>

(3) **Kingdom of God**: It is significant that in Matt 19:12 Jesus connects celibacy and the kingdom of God. He claims that some make themselves eunuchs “on account of the kingdom of heaven” (“δια τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν”). Much like some Qumran communities, the motivation for submission to a life of celibacy is the kingdom of God and the work that needs to be done in preparation for its arrival. Perhaps even more telling is the fact that the gift of celibacy and the Kingdom are linked in both Matthew and Paul. In addition, both express that for each believer, he/she must decide whether or not he/she has the gift (χάρισμα). Paul also links these ideas in vv. 25-35, promoting celibacy since the “present form of this world is passing away.” Winter adds that the urgency in Paul’s language is connected to a regional famine that he and other Christians interpreted as the beginning of birth pangs attributed to Jesus (Mark 13 and Matt 24:7-8).<sup>666</sup> Jesus is recorded saying, “...there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famine; this is the beginning of the birth pangs.” This proposal accounts for the impending ἀνάγκη of 7:26 and speaks of Paul’s in-depth knowledge of Jesus tradition which all NT writers seemingly had in common (Dodd).

When the different patterns of religion are more thoroughly compared, a fairly clear picture emerges. Based upon of these considerations, it would serve to reason that the precedent for pre-conversion Paul should be found in the apocalyptically-minded forms of Palestinian Judaism and Jesus tradition. This alignment is justified by Paul’s characterization of himself as a zealous Pharisee who meticulously followed the law and the traditions of his ancestors (Gal 2:9); and who sought to purge Judaism of a dangerous contagion—Christianity. What is more, whether Paul was married (Luther) or not, prior

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<sup>665</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>666</sup> Winter, “Secular and Christian Responses.”

to his conversion, precedent for his life as a celibate can reasonably be found in the example of Jesus himself and/or the Essenes, both of which argued that some are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of God. Either way, rationale for celibacy in the Jewish and Christian systems is found in the expectation of the coming kingdom of God. Cynics placed emphasis upon freeing oneself from the yoke of social convention for the pursuit of virtue on simple, non-materialistic terms. So Diogenes, free from the convention of marriage, frequented brothels and characterized such behavior as completely consistent with the Cynic lifestyle (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*, 588E-F). Therefore, the term celibacy may not adequately describe all forms of Cynic lifestyle since many continued to engage in sexual relations with prostitutes—a point which caused no moral reservations as within Jewish and Christian systems (1 Cor 6). Potential precedents must be sought elsewhere for Pauline celibacy life.

## CHAPTER 6      1 CORINTHIANS 7 AS EXPANDED JESUS TRADITION

Deming is correct in his assessment that “Corinth was a center for philosophical thought in the Hellenistic world, situated, so to speak, at a crossroad of other philosophical centers.”<sup>667</sup> This fact alone highlights the need for an explanation of the similarities that exist between Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce, and some of the moralists of his day. That being said, our contention all along has been that similarities do not necessarily mean dependency; the impetuses for certain ideas in one movement may be drawn from entirely different motivations in another. In addition, as we have attempted to show in chapter 5 and will endeavor to show below, arguments for dependency often fail to fully consider the questions of motivation and differentiation (patterns of religion) and are therefore often overstated.

Paul’s established evangelistic process was to first begin in the synagogues that were located throughout the Greco-Roman empire. Evidence of this practice is found in Acts and in his epistles.<sup>668</sup> Initially, he gathered around himself Jewish proselytes and

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<sup>667</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 105.

<sup>668</sup> Acts recounts that Paul and his band of co-workers began their missionary efforts in synagogues and then branched out to preach in different venues (Acts 13:5 [on Cyprus]), 14-5 [at Pisidian Antioch]; 14:1 [at Iconium], etc.). In fact, Acts 14:1 says that “Paul and Barnabas went as usual (κατὰ τὸ αὐτό) into the Jewish synagogue.” The typical response was that a remnant of Jews and/or godfearers from each crowd would embrace their message (i.e., 13:43). When their message was rejected, Paul would find other venues to share his message. According to Acts 19:9, on one occasion in Ephesus, Paul transferred his missionary efforts from the synagogue to the “lecture hall of Tyrannus.” Many scholars also hold that Paul did much of his evangelistic work while in a shop on the agora. Ronald F. Hock is a key proponent of this view, arguing that Paul’s preaching took place in church houses, synagogues, open-air meetings (i.e., Areopagus) and the workshop (see his article “The Workshop as a Social Setting for Paul’s Missionary Activity,” *CBQ*, no. 41 (1979): 438-450). Collins finds evidence in the Pauline letters for the latter case, suggesting that the force of the participial clause in 1Thess 2:9 should be read: “We worked night and day, while we proclaimed the gospel to you” (Collins, *The Birth of the New Testament*).

god-fearers who were acquainted with the basic structure of his argumentation on the grounds that they were regularly exposed to the Jewish scriptures and theological heritage (e.g., Acts 10). When outside of this comfort zone, the apostle ascribed to a kind of argument from the standpoint of natural theology; an approach to the question of ultimate reality not uncommon among other moralists. This too, can be thoroughly substantiated in Acts and Paul's letters.<sup>669</sup> Most importantly, Paul's letters reflect an attempt to address a number of concerns that grow out of the tension that existed between allegiance to Jesus tradition (and to a lesser extent, the Jewish Scriptures) and the mores of the Greco-Roman philosophical and religious milieu that helped to shape the pre-Christian thinking of each new convert.

Many reconstructions of the first Corinthian correspondence begin with 1 Cor. 1:11-12 and the apparent fragmentation around certain apostolic personalities. It stands to reason that Paul would begin his communication with pressing issues in his congregation which likely provided a seedbed for others. Some suggest that the differences between these groups do not appear to be doctrinal, since Paul does not issue

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<sup>669</sup> In Rom 3:21-26, Paul argues that both Jew and Gentile “have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Paul says, “He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” Paul especially resorts to the use of natural theology in Rom 1:18-20, where he says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” In Acts 14, Luke records Paul using natural theology when sharing the gospel with an audience that was oblivious to the Jewish framework of salvation history, calling Paul, Hermes and Barnabas, Zeus. Luke records: “Men, why are you doing this? We too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, he let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your heart with joy.” (vv. 15-17)



the same kind of curse (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω) here as he did over the Judaizers in Gal 1:8.<sup>670</sup>

The indictment of ‘preaching another gospel’ is nowhere to be found in the first Corinthian Correspondence. They do acknowledge, however, that there does appear to be significant confusion regarding matters of moral conduct which possibly grew out of confusion over Paul’s gospel (Weiss, Niederwimmer and Delling), blatant disregard for what they clearly understood or a combination of the two.

The assessment that Paul’s discussion as well as that of some in Corinth contained a measure of “veiled hostility” seems correct.<sup>671</sup> For while Paul does not harshly castigate his dissenters, he does bring into open question—since the letters were likely read aloud—their maintenance of the status quo (1 Cor 4; 11:17-34),<sup>672</sup> indifference around sexual misconduct (5-7), as well as their rejection of doctrines that were most basic to nascent Christian theology (15). It should be added that Paul had to remind the Corinthians that he founded the congregation and is therefore their father, as opposed to the other apostles, who only serve as tutors (παιδαγωγός; 4:14-15). While uncertainty persists regarding the practice of other apostles, it seems clear that Paul attempted to stay away from regions that had already been evangelized.<sup>673</sup> Furthermore, some in Corinth seem to have openly questioned Paul’s authority (4:18-21).

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<sup>670</sup> Since the Corinthians seemingly seek Paul’s direction on certain matters (e.g. food sacrificed to idols, marriage, celibacy, and others.), John Hurd suggests that “there is no evidence of any move to secede from Paul’s sphere of authority” (108-109). See his *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1983). This view, of course, takes lightly the deceptive character of their correspondence to Paul since a more accurate account of the goings on in Corinth had to come from Chloe’s people. Furthermore, some had clearly shrugged off what Paul had taught them (1 Cor 15:3) for a more esoteric understanding of the gospel.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>672</sup> In 11:17-34, divisions exist even in the setting of the “Lord’s supper,” where the wealthy seemingly share a meal before the actual bread and wine was shared. It is possible that the wealthy hosts invited other well-to-do friends for this preparatory meal, excluding the poor and slaves, who went hungry. On this point, see Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Text and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 153-161.

<sup>673</sup> See Joseph Fitzmeyer’s discussion on this in his *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 68 –80.

Given the rejection of a literal resurrection by some (1 Cor 15), it is perhaps best to concede significant doctrinal differences as well. It is important that Paul's delineation of the resurrection of the dead is a reiteration of what he had already shared earlier with the Corinthians. This is made clear in the very first verse of chapter 15, where he says, "Now brothers, I want to make known/remind you of the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, and in which you stand." He goes on in v. 3 to further bolster his case, arguing that this was tradition that he himself had "received" and had passed down to them. This would mean that those who rejected belief in a literal resurrection stood in direct opposition of apostolic doctrine.

In 1 Cor 1:11-12, Paul states, "...it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you... what I mean is, each of you says: 'I follow Paul,' another 'I follow Apollos,' another 'I follow Cephas,' yet another 'I follow Christ.'" From these verses, some scholars contend that two or more competing views lie behind the theological and social upheaval in the Corinthian church. Typically, however, one dominant point of view is reconstructed from the biblical data and placed in opposition to Paul's party.<sup>674</sup>

Also, it is certainly possible that the magnitude of this congregation's misunderstanding of Paul's gospel goes all the way to its foundation, the central figure. Textual clues may point to the possibility that the apostles were esteemed apart from Christ. First, the extended introduction of vv. 1-9 mentions *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, in one form or another, ten times (vv. 1, 2 [twice], 3, 4, 5 [by inference], 6, 7, 8 and 9). This may be a front-end attempt to address this confusion of devotion. Each instance points to *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* in an exalted sense.

In verse 1, Paul establishes that he was "called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ," and in verse 2, he greets the Corinthians as "those sanctified in Jesus Christ," along with

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<sup>674</sup> Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 96-107.

all other saints “everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...” It is significant that in the latter verse he alludes to the universal lordship of Christ saying “...their Lord and ours.” In verse 3, he confers grace and peace from “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul implies that this undeserved help emanates from beyond the human experience. In v. 5, Paul reminds in characteristic fashion that it is “in him (Christ)” that the Corinthians have been enriched in all speech (λογός)—referring to the charismatic gifts of utterance mentioned in 1 Cor 12-14—and knowledge.<sup>675</sup> The apostolic testimony about Christ (or 'of Christ')<sup>676</sup> was affirmed or proven by the Corinthians, who lack no spiritual gift (χάρισμα) as they “eagerly...wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.” In vv. 8-9, Paul confirms that God himself would continue to strengthen the Corinthians until “the day of Jesus Christ” to which God had called them into intimate fellowship (κοινωνία). Lastly, in v. 10, Paul appeals to the Corinthians “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” to dissolve their divisions.

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<sup>675</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1987), 39.

<sup>676</sup> Considerable debate has been stirred up among scholars over Paul’s use of the expression “πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.” Traditionally, this phrase has been taken as an objective genitive, denoting “faith in Jesus.” As of late, many scholars argue for understanding the expression as a subjective genitive and therefore as a reference to Jesus’ own faith or faithfulness. In Galatians, Paul uses this phrase three times: twice in 2:16 and once in 3:22. On the basis of syntactical considerations, noted biblical scholars like Wallace conclude that the objective genitive reading “has little to commend it.” Arguments for the objective genitive often do not allow for flexibility in the language; strictly arguing for the objective genitive when both nouns are anarthrous and for the subjective genitive when both nouns are articular this sentence is confusing. Wallace brings out that it is rare for the personal genitive to follow πίστις. Furthermore when this occurs, it is almost always a non-objective genitive. Significant is the point that the subjective genitive clearly seems to be used most in the NT. From a theological standpoint, the argument is made that reading πίστεως Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive violates the logic of Paul’s argument since it causes us to compare ἔργα νόμου and πίστεως Χριστοῦ—two human alternatives. If the subjective genitive is in view in Gal. 3:22, it would be rendered: “But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that the promise that is based on *the faithfulness of Jesus Christ* might be given to those who believe.” Such a rendering is in line with Paul participatory language (e.g., being crucified with Christ, dying with Christ, and so on) and aids our understanding of Paul’s view of faith in Gal 2:23-29. To some extent, however, it fails to acknowledge the obvious; one still has to *accept* the gracious gift of salvation. Paul’s use of Jesus as an example can be seen elsewhere in his letters (e.g. Phil 2:1-11).

Perhaps more significantly, the possessive genitive—used in v. 12 (i.e., I follow Paul...I follow Apollos, etc.)—is a particularly common way of defining the function of a relationship between two parties. Concerning this usage, Wallace suggests, “the substantive in the genitive *possesses* the thing to which it stands connected...that is, *in some sense*, the head noun (pronoun) *is owned* by the genitive noun.”<sup>677</sup> Using 1 Cor 1: 11-12 to illustrate his point, Wallace claims, “The proper name in each of these instances does not refer to the person, but to the sect that follows him. If it were otherwise, a possessive genitive might imply personal ownership. Once the figurative language is analyzed, however, the meaning is clear: “*I belong to the Pauline sect*, etc....”<sup>678</sup>

With these points in mind, v. 12 (“λέγω δὲ τοῦτο ὅτι ἕκαστος ὑμῶν λέγει· ἐγὼ μὲν εἰμι Παύλου, ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολλῶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ”) could be rendered, “But I am saying this, that each of you says, ‘I belong to the Pauline sect,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos’ sect’ or ‘I belong to the Cephas sect,’ or ‘I belong to Christ’s sect.’” This rendering attempts to closely follow textual clues of this verse, which—as mentioned above—is frequently used as a starting point for reconstructing the occasion for the letter. The possibility of parties confessing allegiance to Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, which could set themselves up against those “belonging to Christ’s sect,” would suggest that Christ—to some degree—played a dispensable role in the estimation of some, which would be a radical departure from Paul’s understanding of the gospel. This latter view, however, is not without considerable problems.<sup>679</sup>

A look at the broader context of chapters 1-6, may confirm the merit of this view. While Paul states his initial concern in 1:11-12, he does not attempt to solve it until 3:3-4 after systematically reiterating his gospel in terms they understand over almost two full chapters (1:18- 2:16). Moreover, when Paul does return to his initial concern in 3:3-4, he

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<sup>677</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub., 1996), 81-83.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>679</sup> Hurd, *The Origin of I Corinthians*, 101-107.

uses the same terminology as in 1:11-12. In 1:11-12, he says, "...it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels (ἔριδες) among you...what I mean is that each of you says, '...I belong to Paul's sect,' or 'I belong to Apollos' sect...' Then, in 3:4-3, after scolding the Corinthians for their carnality, he says, "as long as there is jealousy and quarreling (ἔρις) among you, are you not in the flesh..." Next, in v. 4, he restates: "For when one says, 'I belong to Paul's group,' and another, 'I belong to Apollos' group,' are you not merely humans?"

Even more telling, the discourse framed by these statements (1:18-2:16) is solely didactic. This is confirmed by the fact that 1:18-25 is clearly connected to 1:17 by γάρ, being used in an illustrative or pedagogical sense, one in a series of four in the same discourse (i.e., 1:17, 1:18, 1:19, and 1:26). After saying, "...for Christ did not send me to be baptized but to preach the gospel, not by wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power," in v. 17, he says, "...because 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." Thus, 1:18-25 proves to be a further description of the cross of Christ in v. 17. The frequency of this common teaching tool in chapter 1 reveals a progression, where each new point builds upon the last.

Chapter 2 is also didactic. After contrasting human wisdom with godly wisdom in chapter 1, chapter 2 explains the means of gaining a spiritual perspective [of reality], solely in terms of the Spirit. Paul reminds the Corinthians of his demeanor upon their first interaction: "When I came to you, brothers, I came not with eloquence of speech, nor (human) wisdom, when proclaiming the mystery of God. For I decided to know nothing when among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." It is as though Paul recognizes the need to *reintroduce* the gospel (chapters 1-2) before correcting faulty thinking patterns and subsequent behaviors. He extends a perspective that is somewhat peculiar since it is largely based upon the dictates of the Spirit. This understanding is not purely subjective, however, since life in the Spirit is necessarily synchronous with apostolic doctrine and a particular set of values which continually reoccur in Paul's letters (e.g. Gal

5:16-26). It is subjective in that the individual is left to determine which gifts are active in his or her life (see 1 Cor 7:7; 12:1-31). This personal claim, of course, was subject to apostolic endorsement or rejection as seen in apostolic affirmation of Paul and Barnabas (Gal 2:9; cf. 1 Tim 4:14). Naturally, Paul's emphasis on the Spirit might have been a source of confusion for many Corinthians deeply entrenched in platonic body/soul dualism (Weiss, Niederwimmer and Bultmann).<sup>680</sup>

After making his complaint (1:11-12), giving a full explanation of his gospel (1:16-2:16), and then returning to his complaint verbatim (3:3-4), it is interesting to note how he proceeds: "Now (with confusion behind us), what is Apollos [(s') actual role] and what is Paul [(s) actual role]...?" (v. 3) From here, chapter 3 and 4 provide the answers to these very questions. Paul makes it clear that apostolic efforts are worthless without God, who causes their work to be successful (v.5). By saying this, Jesus Christ is placed back in the center of the discussion as the very source of apostolic strength (cf. Phil 4:13). Furthermore, the Corinthians should not be confused over the fact that there is only one foundation and "that foundation is Jesus Christ" (3:11). In fact, 3:21 gives the finishing blow to 1:11-12 for while Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, the present and future belong to them [the body], they [logically including the aforementioned list] belong to Christ, and Christ to God (3:23, 15:28).

From here, Paul continues the process of defining his and Apollos' work in more illustrative terms. In chapter 3, he uses the imagery of a farmer (3:6-9) and a builder (3:10) to define those roles. But in chapter 4, he uses their examples as a way of characterizing proper Christian behavior. He employs this common epistolary method in other places,<sup>681</sup> but nowhere like he does in 4:8-13.<sup>682</sup> The tenderizing effect of v. 14, "I

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<sup>680</sup> See Roetzel's discussion on Paul's use of language and ideas broadly used within the Hellenistic context (25-32). Undoubtedly, the language of flesh and spirit was potentially a stumbling block for those who had once held to a depreciated understanding of the body as a kind of prison house for the soul.

<sup>681</sup> Benjamin Fiore, *Example in Paul's Letters*, 164-190. Initially, he gives a historical survey of the use of examples as a teaching tool (26-100) and then illustrates how Paul clearly uses it in his letter writing.

am not writing this to make you ashamed,” relays the idea that they simply did not understand, and that Paul is, once again, attempting to provide a proper understanding of Christian behavior through his manner of life.

In the midst of such fundamental misunderstanding of the Pauline gospel and the function of Christian ministers, it is understandable that the Corinthians maintained a strong reliance upon traditional social practices. In chapter 5, there seems to be a number of possible reasons for Corinthian complacency regarding sexual immorality: (i) the prevalence of the sentiment of 6:12, “... all things are lawful...,” (ii) arrogance, and (iii) misunderstanding. The first is almost certainly a theological slogan held by some within the Corinthian community.<sup>683</sup> It is possible that the ‘strong’ have used a Pauline principle and modified it to accommodate their own views, shaped by consistent exposure to a mixture of philosophical ideals.<sup>684</sup> In this regard, Lütgert may be correct in arguing that some in Corinth seem to have adhered to a kind of radical freedom that may be linked to the philosophical assumption that human behavior—good or bad—has no effect on God or one’s spirituality. Martin says, “They show little concern that bodily activities, whether eating meat offered to idols or visiting prostitutes, will pollute either themselves or the rest of the church.”<sup>685</sup> In such cases, morality, as advocated by Paul, is completely relativized.

Paul introduces a relational element in 6:12 that permeates his entire letter. He emphasizes not what is “lawful,” but what is beneficial. This practice of self-abnegation for the benefit of others likely finds its origin in the “suffering servant motif” that

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<sup>682</sup> See 1:17, 2:1, 3, 4: 8-11 and 14:18-19; also see John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 117-132. Fitzgerald considers Paul’s discourse in 4:7-13 as a peristasis catalogue.

<sup>683</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 251.

<sup>684</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 72.

<sup>685</sup> Ibid.

circulated in the testimonium of early believers regarding Jesus (Dodd).<sup>686</sup> In one instance, Paul argues that eating meat sacrificed to idols means very little. It is only when one consumes it while knowing that it is an occasion of stumbling for a “weaker” convert that it actually becomes sinful (1 Cor 8:12). The relational focus of Paul’s definition of sin here highlights the complex, contingent nature of his perspective, which often makes it difficult to distill a clear understanding of his perspective on a variety of issues.<sup>687</sup> Elsewhere, Paul foregoes his apostolic privileges, ‘so as not to make full use’ of them (εἰς τὸ μὴ καταχρησασθαι τῆ ἑξουσίᾳ μου ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ). By enslaving (ἐδούλωσα; 9:19) himself to all men, he was directly addressing the retention of the status quo patron/client advantage among Christian leadership prevalent in Corinth.<sup>688</sup> This is consistent with his insistence upon working and providing for himself while in certain regions. To accept patronage in Corinth, for instance, might have subjected Paul to the mindset prevalent among those who supported traveling teachers/philosophers, making him socially inferior in their eyes. What is more, accepting money from the wealthier members of the congregation may have given the perception, at least, that Paul had taken sides.<sup>689</sup>

Furthermore, it is possible that Paul’s solicitation of funds for the struggling church in Jerusalem made him more cautious concerning who he accepted personal offerings from. This seems particularly so when it came to the church in Corinth, since

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<sup>686</sup> For Dodd’s perspective, see section on ‘Common Eschatology’ in Chapter 5. Dodd, C. H. *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of NT Theology*. London: Nesbit & Co., Ltd., 1953

<sup>687</sup> Beker, *The Triumph of God*, note 361.

<sup>688</sup> Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary of 1 and 2 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. & Paternoster Press, 1995), 211-212.

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.*, 416. “An itinerant teacher or preacher like Paul could beg, like the Cynics, or accept personal patronage and become the in-house philosopher or rhetor of a wealthy person, or support himself by working at a trade. Paul sought to avoid accepting patronage in Corinth because it would commit him to the wrong sort of reciprocity, bind him to a particular location, and place him in a socially inferior position that would make it very difficult for him to “be all things” to people of varying social status. Such a relationship also means that he would be perceived as taking sides with one of the factions in Corinth, which were probably led and supported by some of the wealthy and socially prominent members of the congregation.”



he is quite intentional about delineating the process to be used for transporting and safeguarding the Jerusalem offering.<sup>690</sup> In addition, early Christians and pagans were well aware of the fact that this kind of hospitality was often abused by many false emissaries, making letters of recommendation necessary.<sup>691</sup>

Secondly, Paul addresses the re-occurring issue of boasting and “being-puffed up” in Corinth. While generally viewed as repulsive, moral philosophers did recommend boasting under certain circumstances: when the unfortunate seeks to reject pity, when defending your good name, when pleading for justice, for inspirational purposes, to humble the arrogant listener (2 Cor 12), and when attempting to sway an audience from an evil course.<sup>692</sup> This list did not necessarily curtail boasting and self-praise among those of a higher social standing with many clients, especially since maintenance of the social order was an integral part of the woof and warp of the patron-client ethos of the Greco-Roman context. Jeffers suggests that, “Public attendance on ones patron was required and often consumed the better part of a client’s morning hours if not the entire day. Clients provided an aristocrat with a retinue that accompanied him around the city or ornamented his receiving room, thereby announcing the aristocrat’s importance.”<sup>693</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> Second Corinthians 8 records the numerous individuals from various congregations who Paul had gathered around himself in an effort to avoid criticism regarding his efforts to collect and transport the Jerusalem offering. Along with Titus, Paul sends along “the brother who is praised by all the churches” who “was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering...” Then, in v. 22, Paul mentions another “zealous” brother who would accompany them. It is as if he acknowledges the potential threat of deception when he says that while Titus is his “partner and fellow-worker,” the other brothers were “representatives” of the churches. Lastly, Paul provides the following reason for assembling and sending such a group: “We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.” (v. 20)

<sup>691</sup> Abraham Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 101-3.

<sup>692</sup> This list was drawn from Duane F. Watson’s article “Paul and Boasting,” in *Paul and the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Paul Sampley; Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, PA, 2003), 78-81.

<sup>693</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 192.

Though he offers a critique, Seneca saw the patron-client relationship as the glue that held ancient society together.<sup>694</sup>

Bearing this in mind, in order to escape the pressure of this cultural reality, converted patrons would have had to acknowledge limits to their authority and yield to a paradigm in which the social norm is reconfigured in such a way that true leadership is tantamount to servitude; a reality in which the husband (or paterfamilias) must now “love the wife as Christ love the church and gave himself for it,” and in which he must not threaten his slaves “since you know that he [God] who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him” (Eph 6:1-9). On the other hand, converted clients would enjoy the liberties afforded them “in Christ,” but could not expect their pagan masters to ascribe to their new convictions. This is why Paul reminds those caught in the web of the patron-client reality to “remain in the situation which he was in when he was called. Were you a slave? Don’t let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.” Both sides of the spectrum require converts to embrace of posture of radical self-negation for the sake of the gospel.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul maintains that it is to overturn the traditional understanding of the social order that God chose the foolishness of the cross (1:18-25), so that no one can boast (1:28-31). In Paul’s theology, as with other Jews of his time and before, boasting was to be theocentric. Paul quotes part of Jer 9:23 to substantiate this view: “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17). A clue for understanding may reside in how Paul uses it in 4:6. Here, he says, “I have applied all of this to Apollos and myself for your benefit so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying ‘Nothing beyond what is written’ so that not one of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another” (1:11-12). This connection seems to expose the idea that

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<sup>694</sup> Seneca, *On Benefits*, 1.4.2 (Basore, LCL): “What we need is a discussion of benefits and the rules for a practice that constitutes the chief bond of human society; we need to be given a law of conduct in order that we may not be inclined to the thoughtless indulgence that masquerades as generosity...”

the individuals responsible for bringing members of the Corinthian body to faith became points of boasting (Note: this is in line with our earlier argument concerning 1:11-12). All previous references are consonant with this impetus for boasting (1:29-31, 4:4, 4:8-13, 4:18), while 5:2 and 5:6 seem to fit more precisely with the sentiment of 6:12.

Verses 9-11 of chapter 5 reveal that members of the Corinthian body were imposing the standards intended for themselves, solely on non-Christians.<sup>695</sup> Offering correction, Paul states that his position on sexual conduct was not to be applied to unbelievers, but to “...anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral...” (... εἰς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ὀνομαζόμενον ἢ πόρνον...). Again, misunderstanding such as this caused many deviant manifestations to occur in the Corinthian assembly.

Chapter 6 has a particular perspectival affiliation to chapters 4 and 8-11. Christians were taking one another to court when they should have been willing “to be wronged (6:7).” As in chapters 4, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13, Paul promotes the sacrificial perspective that is reflected in the “mind of Christ” (2:16; cf. Phil 2:5-11) which all believers have through the Spirit. This mindset is grounded in the understanding that God’s purpose is primary, even to the point of denying oneself of what he/she seemingly deserves – like temporal justice (6:7-8), marriage (chapter 7 and 9:5), meat sacrificed to idols (chapters 8 and 10), wages (chapter 9) – for the sake of the furtherance of the message to cross (9:19-23). Moreover, God is the master of the Christian life through the sacrificial act of Christ. Now, one is ‘free’ to glorify God in his or her body (6:7-8).

In all that has been summarized, one thing appears adamantly clear: Paul, in illustration after illustration, is trying to convey a proper understanding of his gospel to a

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<sup>695</sup> I make this statement because they obviously did not impose these rules on the young man in an affair with his stepmother (1 Cor 5) or the individuals engaged in sexual relations with temple prostitutes (1 Cor 6). Furthermore, Paul makes a point of clarification in 5:10, saying “...I did not mean stay away from the sexually immoral of the world...” Therefore, their unbroken affiliation with the young man and those soliciting temple prostitutes, in conjunction with their disassociation with pagans, may lead to this conclusion.

thoroughly confused and/or defiant audience. He continuously points the Corinthian church in the direction of a mindset compatible with their Christian ‘calling’ and not the broader society (e.g., harmony over ‘jealousy’ and ‘quarreling,’ seeking counsel from elders over pagan courts, the institution of marriage over prostitution, and love over boasting). The foolishness of the message of the cross to those ‘passing away’ and its practical implications lie at the heart of each point of encouragement and correction. In a very real sense, Paul conveys that the foolishness of ‘the message of the cross’ equates to a viewpoint of which the Corinthian church is commissioned to be a microcosm. As can be seen, chapters 1 and 2 provide a necessary point of reflection for the entire letter to the church in Corinth.

This work attempts to show that 1 Cor 7 should be viewed as expanded Jesus tradition. While he does creatively expand Jesus tradition (Schweitzer) in an effort to address new problems emerging within nascent Christianity, Paul stays within the parameters of Jesus tradition as he understood them. What is more, Bultmann and Furnish allow for what they see as “echoes” of Jesus tradition behind the Pauline discourses. This understanding, of course, must take seriously the arguments that attempt to view 1 Cor 7 strictly through the lens of the Greco-Roman world and its most omnipresent philosophies. Moreover, in the key issues addressed in 1 Cor 7—marriage, celibacy, divorce and eschatological perspective—unquestionable parallels can be found in the teachings of Jesus and the Jewish matrix out of which Paul came. Given Paul’s prior allegiance to the Torah and his ancestral tradition, the movement from Judaism to Jesus—as explicitly and implicitly established in 1 Corinthians (i.e., 4:12, 7:10-11, 9:14, 11:23-24, 13:2, 14:37)<sup>696</sup>—seems to be a more viable option than the movement from moral philosophy to his current position.

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<sup>696</sup> Consider Roetzel’s discussion on these references (76-79) as well as the chapter 5 of this work.

Given this assumption, when Paul cannot produce a dominical legion, he acknowledges such and offers his γνώμη (1 Cor 7:25, 7:40; 2 Cor 8:10), which can also be largely traced back Jesus tradition. If this is indeed the case, it is likely that Jesus' life of celibacy, is normative for Paul, and, while parallels exist in the Greco-Roman world (e.g., Cynicism and Apollonius), they do not fit the system that bears up his ideals. Importantly, outside of clear dependence upon Jesus tradition, more substantive correspondence can be found within the apocalyptically oriented forms of Judaism for Paul's general practice. In fact, this provides an important foundation for Jesus as well.

Such a view does not suggest in any way that Paul was not aware of the 'Stoic-Cynic debate' on marriage, as Deming calls it. To be sure, Paul's capacity to "become all things to all men" is connected to his broad exposure. Furthermore, it is likely that Paul addresses an audience in Corinth that largely understood marriage through the lens of the Stoic-Cynic debate. Paul's practice of agreement and correction in several chapters suggests a fairly close correspondence with their views in broad terms.

## 6.1 EXEGESIS OF 1 COR 7

Before interpreting this section, a couple of key observations should be made. First of all, one should be mindful of the contingent nature of Paul's discourse. For this reason, it should be recalled, Schrage cautions us not to construct a theology on Paul's views on marriage, celibacy and divorce strictly on 1 Cor 7.<sup>697</sup> Paul expresses his heartfelt desire for celibacy in light of the times, but consistently offers the disclaimer that the individual must determine whether he/she has the gift (χάρισμα) of celibacy or not. In addition, at key points the apostle expands the Jesus tradition at his disposal to fit the situation he faces. Given the shift in social context—from Palestine to the broader

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<sup>697</sup> See literature review on Schrage.

Greco-Roman world—Paul offers his ‘judgment’ or ‘opinion’ (γνώμη) in his efforts to re-contextualize the gospel message.

### 6.1.1 Paul on Marriage:

The slogan in 1Corinthians 7:1 is male-centered (“It is well for a man not to touch a woman”) and therefore likely reflect the patriarchal assumptions and sexual attitudes of its purveyors. Corinthian male perspectives on gender relations would have been consistent with the attitudes of the broader culture and may have ranged from the notion that women are inherently inferior to men to the more egalitarian ideals of the Epicureans. Many held that true friendship could only exist among men, a sentiment reflected in the attitudes of some of the greatest male thinkers of the time (e.g., Cicero). On one occasion, Protogenes, an outspoken pederast, characterized matrimonial love as “mere copulation” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 751B). Stowers affirms this, saying, “There is much evidence that the male bond was often stronger than heterosexual ones, especially among the aristocrats.”<sup>698</sup>

On the other hand, thinkers like Plutarch and Musonius Rufus proposed that lasting friendship and true love occurred within the marital bond between men and women (Plutarch, *The Dialogue on Love*, 770C; 769A - B). Musonius Rufus refuted the views of thinkers like Philo of Alexandria with his negative appraisal of women as “weak, easily deceived, causes of sin, lifeless, diseased, enslaved, unmanly, nerveless and mean.”<sup>699</sup> He held to a fundamental equality among the sexes since “women as well as men have received from the gods the gift of reason.”<sup>700</sup> As in Plutarch’s “Consolation to his Wife,” Seneca also openly exhibits great affection and care for his wife of many years

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<sup>698</sup> Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (ed. Wayne A. Meeks; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1989), 29.

<sup>699</sup> See note 436.

<sup>700</sup> Cora E. Lutz, ‘Musonius Rufus, “The Roman Socrates,”’ *Yale Classical Studies* 10 (1947) 38-43.

(*Helvia* 16.3). While these egalitarian views represent a minority viewpoint, it is likely that there were some within the Corinthian context who had an appreciation for such ideals prior to Christian conversion.

Clearly, there appears to have been a faction within Corinth that sought to abstain from sexual relations. Such a perspective would have been consistent with the attitudes of many thinkers of the day (e.g., Apollonius Tyana), even Paul himself. What seems to have been problematic and which Paul attempts to address, is that some sought to carry this out within the context of marriage. Some have resorted to Cynicism as the most appropriate lens through which to understand 1 Cor 7.<sup>701</sup> For men who followed the advice of Solon, consorting with their wives “not less three times a month” (Plutarch, *Moralia*, 769A [Minar, Sanbach, Helmbold, LCL]), such a radical move towards celibacy would have had to be prompted by an outside force. This first correspondence, however, gives no evidence of outside infiltrators.<sup>702</sup> It is in Paul’s second letter that he addresses the problems of outside influence (e.g., super apostles, Judaizers). Therefore, it seems likely that this perspective derived from longstanding pre-conversion assumptions brought into the church by its membership, combined with a misunderstanding on Paul’s views. It is possible that prior to conversion, some enthusiasts ascribed to a flesh/soul dualism in which sensual pursuits were considered evil. To make matters worse, this assumption may have—intentionally or not—led some to question Paul’s stance on certain issues or caused them to become grossly confused about their new found faith.

It is likely that 7:2 represents Paul’s expansion of the Corinthian question to include women. In line with more feminist interpreters, it is possible that women, under the control of men from the time of their birth, may have sensed “the possibility of freeing themselves from the bondage of patriarchal marriage, in order to live a marriage-

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<sup>701</sup> Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins*.

<sup>702</sup> Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 108-9.

free life.”<sup>703</sup> However one may feel about the feminist approach on this point, it cannot be denied that some women certainly felt that way (e.g., Procne’s lament). Among the elite, marriage in which the father retained authority over the daughter became increasingly common leading up to the first century. Marriage without *manus* limited the husband’s authority over the wife, but enabled both to retain their family’s wealth. This practice was instrumental in destabilizing the institution of marriage throughout the Roman Empire. As mentioned earlier, Pomeroy affirms this, saying: “The marriage without *manus* was a tentative arrangement and was largely responsible for the instability of marriage in the late empire.”<sup>704</sup>

This background by itself is limited since it overlooks the marital situation of many poor clients that were a part of the church in Corinth. This is important since Paul gives the impression that this church was comprised of a wide spectrum of individuals from vastly different backgrounds. In 1:26, he tells the Corinthians: “Consider your own call brethren. Not many of you were wise by human standards and not many powerful or of noble birth.” What is more, in 1 Cor 7:17-31, he speaks to slaves, circumcised, uncircumcised as well as to those who had possessions. Some scholars agree that this deeply rooted social stratification of which Seneca called “the glue that held together ancient society,” was a major source of contention for the Corinthian church.<sup>705</sup> The point is that marriage among the less fortunate functioned differently.<sup>706</sup> They were often informal and not governed by Roman law. Slaves, for instance, were often married despite the potential of the spouse or children being sold. In these instances, children born in informal marriages were considered to be illegitimate.

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<sup>703</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 222.

<sup>704</sup> Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 155.

<sup>705</sup> See, for instance, Ben Witherington’s *Conflict and Community in Corinth* and Gordon Fee’s *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>706</sup> Seneca, *On Benefits*, 1.4.2.



The most dominant Greco-Roman view—endorsed by the empire and emperor—was that marriage was vital to the well-being of society. This view was based upon the notion that an ordered home is a microcosm of the broader world. Certainly, there were those who stood against the wind of social convention and preferred a life of celibacy, but such an ideal did not seem garner widespread support. It is important to note, on another level, that marriage carried certain general connotations and limitations. Some within Judaism held that women were to be domestic goddesses who were to be watched closely (Ben Sira, Testament of Reuben). Many moralists seemed to advocate a kind of distant, top-down relationship between husband and wife; viewing friendship and genuine love as realities to be shared among men. While there were those who were strong, articulate proponents of friendship between husbands and wives, many held to the less favorable characterizations of women as being inferior. Lastly, widespread persistent promiscuity among the elite led to the Augustinian legislation that fined long term divorcees and widows. This approach to marriage and sexuality viewed sexually expressive women as inappropriate and set procreation as the marital goal for sex.

Paul's understanding of marriage appears to be closer to what is seen among many of his Jewish contemporaries. Sexual pleasure with one's spouse was encouraged in the Jewish scripture: "...rejoice in the wife of your youth...may her breast satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love" (Prov. 5:18-19). Ben Sira affirms this view in 40.20, "Wine and music make the heart merry, but sexual love is still better." Lastly, unlike Plutarch, many rabbis encouraged female participation in sex since this was considered necessary in order to conceive a male child (*bNidd.* 31a). While some Jewish sources allow sex solely for procreation (Damascus Document, cave 4), most held that husbands were obligated to provide protection, food, clothing and sexual intercourse for their wives (*mKet.* 4.4, 8-9).

Moral philosophy quite often viewed erotic passion or pleasure-seeking as inappropriate, even with marriage. The "Spartanization" of moral philosophy meant that it saw "the highly disciplined community of classical Sparta as a paradigm for moral and

political philosophy,”<sup>707</sup> with the result that the goal of ancient philosophy became “to make the practitioner impervious to physical hardship, weakness, and desire, to emotions and to human suffering.”<sup>708</sup> Regarding sexual expression, then, Musonius taught that there should be no erotic passion between a husband and wife, and that sexual intercourse was strictly for the purpose of procreation.<sup>709</sup> Plutarch rejects the notion of a sexually responsive woman, suggesting that a virtuous woman should be rather rigid in how she responds sexually to her husband. The husband, on the other hand, is not to be angry since he cannot have a woman who is both uncompromising and at the same time acts like an illicit lover (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 321). This marks a significant contrast from Jewish thinking on sexuality. It is likely, then, that the rejection of sexual pleasure was foreign to Paul, due to his Jewish heritage.

It is also important that Paul does not impose the strict parameters of procreation on sexual practice. In fact, emphasis on ‘a legitimate heir’ is not mentioned or alluded to anywhere in 1 Cor 7. This idea has no real precedent in any of the moral philosophy or the Judaisms that have been under consideration thus far. It is only in Jesus Tradition that we find this affirmation of sexuality within the marriage context, without any reference whatsoever to procreation. Quoting Gen 2:24, Jesus asserts that the male and female would become one flesh (Mk 10:7-8). The emphasis here is affirmation of sexual union apart from any mention of childbearing.<sup>710</sup> Paul upholds this Synoptic ideal using the same proof-texts (Gen 2:24) in 1 Cor 6:16. Establishing the converse of what we find Mark, Paul condemns that practice of “becoming one” with a prostitute. In the Jesus Tradition of the Synoptic gospels and Pauline literature (1 Cor 7), Marriage is the context in which sexual passions should be fulfilled (v. 9).

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<sup>707</sup> Mason, “The Philosophy,” 43.

<sup>708</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>709</sup> Ward, “Musonius and Paul on Marriage,” 285.

<sup>710</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 99-101.

Countering the Corinthian mindset, Paul states “the husbands does not have authority over his own body, but the wife” [...καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ἡ γυνή] (4b). His position was both restrictive and liberating. First, his position is restrictive in that it establishes the appropriate parameters of sexual expression within the Corinthian community and obligated both parties to accommodate the sexual needs of the other. Paul’s prohibition against πορνεία is understood to include all sexual relations outside of marriage, including incest (1 Cor 5) or relations with a temple prostitute (1 Cor 6). Undoubtedly, even though listed alongside πορνεία in the vice list of 6:9, μοιχοί and μαλακοί would certainly fall under Paul’s understanding of sexual immorality, which was closely connected to his Jewish upbringing. To avoid deviant sexual expression, Paul argues that each man should have his own wife and each woman, her own husband.<sup>711</sup> To bolster his point, he goes on to use the language of fair exchange or commerce in his efforts to describe the compulsory nature of sexual practice within the bond of marriage (v. 3). He suggests that both partners ought to ‘give what is due’ or ‘fulfill their duty’ (ὀφειλὴν ἀποδιδότω) by having ongoing sexual relations with his/her spouse. He describes sexual abstinence in marriage without agreement as ἀποστερέω, a term that is often translated as ‘defraud’, ‘rob’ or ‘steal.’<sup>712</sup>

Secondly, Paul’s views were liberating in that they empowered the female gender in an unprecedented manner since they restrained their husbands from quenching their passions in extramarital affairs with male and female prostitutes or slaves. He no longer had “authority” over his own body, to do with it what he pleased; the wife did. Paul’s claim is also mirrored in the Markan tradition, where Jesus declares that, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery *against her*.” One of the byproducts of Jesus’ emphasis on exclusivity in marriage was that infidelity was no

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<sup>711</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 154-156

<sup>712</sup> Ibid., 157.

longer an offense solely against the husband, but also against the wife.<sup>713</sup> Fee adds, “Not only are sexual relations a ‘due’ within marriage, but they are so because through the unique giving of oneself in Christian marriage one comes under the ‘authority’ of the other.”<sup>714</sup> This point is bolstered by Eph 5:21, where it reads, “Submit one to another out of reverence for Christ.” In both instances, “reverence for Christ” provides the ground for mutual submission. In this case, the need for female abandonment of the marital context becomes less appealing, since the voice of the wife must now be heard and honored.

Paul’s approach to sexuality and marriage begins with an assumption about the human condition. He prohibits extended periods of abstinence in the marriage context “because of your lack of self-control” [διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν] (v. 5). Paul acknowledges that sexual relations address a fundamental need among those who do not have the χάρισμα of celibacy. In v. 9, he asserts that “it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” The term πυρόω can be translated as making reference to burning with desire or burning in the judgment. Evidence for both can be found in biblical and extra-biblical sources.<sup>715</sup> Since the translation of v. 9 suggests that some are already involved in sexual sins (“if they are not exercising self-control...”), marriage, in this context, fulfills their desire and delivers them from a sinful state.

Paul’s view on marriage is greatly impacted by the assumption of the transitory nature of existence in an apocalyptic context. His understanding is most certainly filtered through the propinquity of the second coming: “...for this world in its present form is passing away (31b).” Marriage is not looked at from a social perspective (i.e., it is necessary for the furtherance of society), but from a theological. It is theological in the sense that Paul views marriage as prescribed for gender relations; he holds to the same

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<sup>713</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 351-352.

<sup>714</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 281.

<sup>715</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 347-374.

understanding as Jesus and other Jews of the time that God ordained the marital union and affirms the importance of human sexuality. What is more, this affirmation of sexuality ('two becoming one flesh') is made without emphasis on procreation. In Matthew, Jesus is recorded saying, "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate'" (Matt 19:4-6/Gen 2:24).

### 6.1.2 Paul on Divorce:

In 1 Cor 7, Paul addresses the issue of divorce in two particular directions unique to the circumstances found in Corinth. In the first instance, he uses Jesus tradition to bolster his command, saying, "To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord—that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does separate, let her remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife" (vv. 10-11). It is important to note the shift in Paul's tone since "he does not 'say' (7:6, 8), 'wish' (7:7), or offer a concession but issues a sharp command: 'I order [παραγγέλλω, *parangellō*] the married.'"<sup>716</sup> Paul puts forward a strong prohibition against divorce, strengthened by the Lord's command.

The Jesus tradition to which Paul refers in 7:10 is almost certainly parallel to the Synoptic tradition of Matt 19:3-12, Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18 (Godet, Lightfoot, Davies, Schrage, Orr and Walther, Tuckett). In Matt 19:3-12, the Matthean Jesus defies popular opinion as seen concretized in the interpretations of Hillel and others who placed absolute power in the hands of men. He contends that divorce was not a part of God's

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<sup>716</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 279.

original intention, making marriage dissoluble only in the case of marital infidelity (vv. 4-9). This, of course, assumes the Matthean exception. This tradition bolsters this claim by arguing that Moses only allowed divorce because of their “hard-heartedness.” Jesus is portrayed saying: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife except for marital unfaithfulness and marries another woman commits adultery.” Mark’s gospel contains an adapted form of this statement to accommodate an audience in which women and men both had the authority to divorce: “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery (10:11-12).” Both traditions characterize Jesus as indefatigably affirming the significance of the marriage contract.

Paul appears to know nothing of the Matthean exception, but like the Markan tradition prohibits both husbands and wives from divorcing their spouses. One should take into consideration Schrage’s contention that 1 Cor 7 does not contain all that Paul had to say about marriage, celibacy and divorce. It is likely that, as in other places, Paul builds upon assumptions established in previous visits and correspondences. First Cor 5 shows that on a previous occasion Paul had a great deal to say regarding sexual ethics, much of which was misunderstood. It may have been understood, then, that in the case of adultery, for instance, divorce was warranted by either spouse. This, of course, is impossible to know.

Some scholars suggest that Paul comes from a Jewish framework placing emphasis on the fact that Corinthian men were divorcing their wives. Murphy-O’Connor makes a distinction between the directive to the wife (‘do not accept a writ of divorce’) and the directive to the husband (who was forbidden to divorce his wife). He connects Paul’s discussion with the initial slogan of 7:1, saying, “The husband had been influenced by the ascetics who proclaimed, ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a women’ (v. 1b), but instead of simply abstaining, he decided to break up the marriage completely by divorcing his wife...Paul hoped that the husband would give serious attention to what he had just said in the previous paragraph (v. 1-9) and, if that did not

convince him, that he would respect Jesus' prohibition of divorce."<sup>717</sup> This perspective has merit but does not sufficiently fit the Corinthian context, where women most certainly held the right to divorce and where prostitution was a common fixture in society.<sup>718</sup>

Fee affirms aspects of what Murphy-O'Connor suggests, but holds that Paul extends this prohibition to both parties involved. He asserts that the need to find a distinction between Paul's prohibition for wives not 'to separate oneself from' their husband (γυναῖκα ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς μὴ χωρισθῆναι) and for husbands not 'to divorce' their wives (ἄνδρα γυναῖκα μὴ ἀφιέναι), "probably reflects our own urgencies for greater precision."<sup>719</sup> He goes on to say, "In this culture, divorce was divorce, whether established by a document or not."<sup>720</sup> Instone-Brewer makes the observation that the two verbs χωρίζω and ἀφίημι are effectively synonymous with slightly different connotations; the former carries the sense of 'separate,' while the latter carries the sense of 'release.' This could imply that one spouse was sent from the house, while the other remained.<sup>721</sup> Considering the distinction made by Josephus, Instone-Brewer forwards the possibility that χωρίζω relates to the less formal Greco-Roman approach to divorce and ἀφίημι to "a proper Jewish divorce with a certificate."<sup>722</sup> He concludes that even though this explanation does not fully work given the data, "Paul may be emphasizing here that marriage is an obligation and a bond which needs to be taken seriously, and it should not be ended at a whim, as often occurred in Graeco-Roman culture."<sup>723</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, 63.

<sup>718</sup> C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 162-3. Also see Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 278.

<sup>719</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 293. Also see Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 84.

<sup>720</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 293. Also see Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 278.

<sup>721</sup> David Instone-Brewer, "1 Corinthians 7 in the Light of the Graeco-Roman Marriage and Divorce Papyri," *TynB* 52, no. 1 (2001): 106.

<sup>722</sup> Ibid.

<sup>723</sup> Ibid., 108.

As mentioned earlier, Wire argues that there were women prophets who sought “liberation from male domination” and fully pursued “their new right (ἐξουσία) to freedom,” separating from or divorcing their husbands in light of a new autonomy in Christ advocated by Jesus and Paul. She contends on grammatical grounds that Paul had to be addressing an issue that was currently happening in the Corinthian context or else his comments would be in past tense.<sup>724</sup> Barrett brings out, “The parenthetical clause deals with the wife who separates, and there is no corresponding clause to state the duty of the husband who divorces his wife. The general run and balance of the paragraph suggest that Paul expects him to remain unmarried or be reconciled to his original partner.”<sup>725</sup>

This may mean that for some segment of the Corinthian community, women in marriages possibly without *manus* operated independently from their husbands, choosing a celibate lifestyle without consideration of his wishes. Likewise, husbands without the threat of loss of property could neglect their wives without concern for what she might do. What is more, in some cases, lower-class women may have left their spouses without being in complete financial upheaval since “A number of women in the urban lower classes, because they had to work, possessed a skill that might allow them to survive apart from their husbands.”<sup>726</sup> This reconstruction may affirm a view held by Dungan and others that Paul is likely addressing a real situation in Corinth in which a woman had already left her husband. This would make sense of Paul’s contradiction of the Lord’s command (v. 10), when he allows a women to separate from her husband, as long as she

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<sup>724</sup> Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 84.

<sup>725</sup> Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 163. Garland adds to this saying: “That Paul reverse the order of male and female found in his other injunctions in the chapter (7:2-3, 4, 12-12, 14-15, 27-28, 32-34) and addresses the wives first here and the husbands almost as an afterthought in 7:11b hints, to some interpreters, that wives were the ones behind the problem” (278).

<sup>726</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 246.



never remarries or else reunites with her original spouse (v. 11).<sup>727</sup> Barrett also suggests that a particular woman was in view here and asserts, “For the woman in question this means that a second marriage, while her husband is living, is impossible. She must either remain unmarried, or restore the previous relationship.”<sup>728</sup>

Divorce was quite pervasive in the Greco-Roman world. Among the aristocracy marriages were typically arranged and often fell apart for a variety of reasons, especially those without *manus*. In cases without *manus*, the minimization of material losses made divorce far less cumbersome and much easier to secure. Cases involving a dowry were far more difficult and often required intervention of the courts. As mentioned earlier, “Romans generally divorced for the following reasons: failure to have children (generally assumed to be the woman’s fault), political reasons like those that dictated many marriages, continued adultery by the spouse, and to initiate a desired new marriage.”<sup>729</sup> Among the lower-classes, divorce just as easy to secure since all one had to do was leave the home.

No doubt, Paul was familiar with Jewish views on divorce, especially those of the Pharisaic sect. He knew that divorce was a right granted exclusively to men and was therefore familiar with the sentiment expressed in the Mishnah, where it reads, “The man who divorces his wife is not equivalent to the woman who receives a divorce. For the woman goes forth willingly or unwillingly. But a man puts his wife away only willingly” (*mYeb.* 14.1 [Neusner]). This standard was upheld among the dominant Pharisaic groups. Paul would have understood the differences among Pharisaic perspectives on the basis of Deut. 24:1 and it is most probable that prior to his conversion, Paul’s perspective on

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<sup>727</sup> As mentioned earlier, it was Dungan who picked up on the fact that Paul immediately “turns this regulation into a permission”—assuming he made the decision at all; it is quite possible that he simply inherited this alteration ready-made. But whether Paul’s or not, this alteration is based on the realization that this regulation was no longer appropriate for every case” (Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul*, 32).

<sup>728</sup> Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 163.

<sup>729</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 244.

divorce paralleled those of the Hillel or Shammai. It is impossible to determine which view Paul would have held, but his perspective in 1 Cor 7 is most certainly similar to that of Shammaites, who limited divorce to a lack of premarital abstinence or marital adultery.

As mentioned, rabbis also discussed a number of circumstances outside of marital infidelity under which divorce was permissible. These included, but are not limited to 1) the very appearance of unfaithfulness (*bYeb.* 24b-25a), 2) public nursing, 3) a bad attitude/rebellious to husbands authority (Ben Sira), 4) an inability to have children (*mYeb.* 6:6; infertility, of course, was general held to be the woman problem), 4) the husband falls for another woman (*mGitt.* 9.10).<sup>730</sup>

Judaism did provide exceptions to the general rule of male-initiated divorce within Judaism. Again, the Mishnah makes allowances for woman-initiated separation in the following cases: “And these are the ones whom they force to put her away: (1) he who is afflicted with boils, or (2) who has a polypus, or (3) who collects [dog excrement], or (4) a coppersmith, or (5) a tanner—Also, it seems that wives could secure divorces from men who had physical defects or who had certain despised careers” (*mKet.* 7:10 [Neusner]). One must also consider the practices of wealthy Jewish women with Roman citizenship. Josephus, for instance, records that Herod’s sister Salome divorced Costobar after significant disagreement (*Ant* 15.259-60). Josephus brings out that “Salome, however, did not choose to follow her country’s law, but acted on her own authority and repudiated her marriage” (Ibid.). In a different scenario, Herodias appealed to the benefits of her Roman citizenship when divorcing Herod Phillip in order to marry his brother Herod Antipas. This situation was a direct violation of Jewish law (Matt 14:1-12).

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<sup>730</sup> Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 141-147.

While it is clear that Paul is deeply indebted to the apocalyptic forms of Judaism, he does not make room for any of these concessions apparently in an effort to faithfully uphold the Jesus tradition that he had received; a tradition that seemingly prohibited divorce altogether and—at an early stage—placed this injunction on both men and women. This tradition itself is an application of Jesus’ Palestinian ethic in a much broader cultural context. Again, of course, it is important not to rigidly restrict our construction of Paul’s view of sexuality solely to what we find in 1 Cor 7. It certainly is possible that Paul—like Matthew—did allow for divorce in the case of adultery.

In the second instance in 1 Cor 7 in which Paul talks about divorce, he appears to be addressing the question as to whether or not continuing in marriage with an unbeliever was really appropriate. Garland’s proposal may be correct, when he suggests that the Corinthians may have been asking, “Does being married to a pagan defile me in some way as a Christian.”<sup>731</sup> Paul assures this group that their Christian commitment actually sanctifies the unbelieving spouse. He maintains his original prohibition, allowing divorce only if the unconverted spouse is unwilling to remain with the believer. To this Paul says, “But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believer is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to peace (v. 15).”

An important point must be made concerning the religious synchronicity of the home in the Greco-Roman context. Juvenal, a late contemporary of Paul, argued that a good wife is “one who does not cheat on her spouse, but puts up with his affairs, who does not reject his friends, who does not leave behind his gods for foreign religions, and who does not make a public spectacle of herself but manages his household” (*Satire 6* [Ramsey, LCL]).<sup>732</sup> Here, Juvenal touches upon a critical issue regarding Greco-Roman views on marriage. Marriages with *manus* or in which full authority over the wife was transferred to the husband, typically involved a shift in her belief system. Pomeroy

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<sup>731</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 278.

<sup>732</sup> Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, 141.

informs that a “family’s religion was transferred through the males, and the *pater familias* was the high priest.”<sup>733</sup> Plutarch says something similar in his instructions to wives when he says: “A wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband’s friends in common with him. The gods are the first and most important friends. Wherefore it is becoming for a wife to worship and to know only the gods of her husband believes in, and to shut the front door tight upon all queer rituals and outlandish superstitions” (*Moralia*, 140D [Babbitt, LCL]).

Upon marriage, a young woman often renounced her father’s religion and worshipped instead at her husband’s hearth.<sup>734</sup> Naturally, this may not have been a smooth transition for some women who had grown accustomed to their father’s faith. Though from a much earlier period, the story of Rachel—who clings to his father’s gods—illustrates this phenomenon well (Gen 31:19). Despite the fact that widespread polytheism was the order of the day it serves to reason that brides would have had some level of difficulty making the transition. This is implied in the advice offered by Plutarch regarding women worshipping their husband’s gods.

The struggle undergone by some women leaving their father’s house and the father’s religion cannot be underestimated. We must recall Procne’s lament, “...often I pondered the status of women: we are nothing. As small girls in our father’s house, we live the most delightful life, because ignorance keeps children happy. But when we come to the age of maturity and awareness, we are thrust out and bartered away, *far from the gods* of our forefathers and parents, some to alien men, some to barbarians, some to good homes and some to abusive ones. And after one single joyful night of love, we are

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<sup>733</sup> Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 152.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

compelled to praise this arrangement and consider ourselves lucky” (Sophocles, *Tereus*, Frag. 583).<sup>735</sup>

The practice of changing religions was expressly forbidden in Judaism (Deut 6:4; Exod 20:2-3). Deeply embedded in the Jewish psyche was the ancient tradition of exclusivism. Mosaic tradition warned ancient Israel not to conform to the ways of the people around them. Deut. 18:9-14 says, “When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God. The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so.” After Babylonian exile, Ezra demanded that the Israelite men divorce their pagan wives or be cut off from the people of Israel (Ezek 9-10). What is more, by the first century CE, rabbis had even authorized women to divorce their husbands if they changed religious beliefs. Interestingly, Luther argues that this may apply in Paul’s situation. He suggests that Paul’s conversion may have led to his wife allowing him to remain in a state of perpetual separation after being called, which may explain his willingness to permit extended separation without remarriage (1 Cor 7:11).<sup>736</sup>

While Greco-Roman allegiance to particular deities and ethics was in constant flux, Judaism and Christianity (John 14:6, Acts 4:12) set religious exclusivism as a standard for marriage. Paul clearly follows the practice of Jesus and the more orthodox

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<sup>735</sup> Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 98.

<sup>736</sup> See Luther’s entry in the literature review.

strands of Judaism. While he encouraged Corinthians who were converted not to leave their spouses on account of their new found faith (vv. 12-14), Paul's exclusivism can be seen in his stance that the unbelieving spouse who wanted a divorce because of his/her beloved's Christian conversion, was to be granted such a wish in lieu of renouncing his/her faith. Paul says, "But if the unbelieving spouse separates, let it be so; in such a case a brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you" (v. 15). With some level of certainty, it can be assumed that this was an issue in every Corinthian family in which one spouse converted to Christianity and the other did not. The contentious issue of changing one's religion may provide the background for understanding why Paul permits divorce in the case of an unbelieving spouse who wants it (1 Cor 7:15). Later in this same chapter, he makes sure to address this issue of religious exclusivism on the front end when he gives similar counsel to widows considering remarriage: "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord (μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ)" (v. 39).

As mentioned, the social practices of Jesus' disciples bear conspicuous resemblance to his own and Paul is no exception to this rule. Disciples were required to abandon their trades, break with ancestral traditions (Matt. 8:22), live off of the generosity of others (Mk 6:7-11) and endure tremendous amounts of persecution. Being a disciple meant becoming attached to a reconstituted family made up of individuals from different walks of life (prostitutes, tax-collector and sinners), different classes and different ethnic groups. As shown, at times, a consequence of discipleship was detachment from one's biological family (Mk 3:31-35). Jesus ensured his disciples that those who willingly endured the loss of "home or brother or sister or mother or father or children or fields for me (Jesus) and the gospel, will not fail to receive a hundred times as

much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecution) and in the age to come, eternal life (Mark 10:29-31).”<sup>737</sup>

Lastly, divorce was often a by-product of continued adultery. As mentioned earlier, bisexuality was a cultural commonplace and adultery only applied to affairs with women from the same standing. Juvenal argued that nothing was safe from the sexual appetites of wealthy men—household servants, daughters, sons, etc. (*Satire* 3). Aware of this, Musonius instructs: “With self-control no one would dare to have intercourse neither with a courtesan nor with a free woman apart from marriage, nor by God, with his female slave” (*On Food* 86:12-14). Musonius’ comments affirm the reality that male promiscuity was widespread and accepted as normative behavior in most regions. Plutarch (*Advice on Marriage* 144D) and Juvenal (*Satire* 6) encouraged women to be tolerant of the husbands’ promiscuous behavior. Seneca adds, “What woman today is shamed by divorce when certain famous and noble matrons compute their ages not by the number of counsels but the number of their husbands” (Seneca, *On Benefits* 3.16.2).

In the end, Paul appears to be expanding Jesus tradition on the issue of divorce. He prohibits divorce making explicit reference to tradition that is similar to what we find in Matt 5 and 19, and Mark 10. As Garland says, “Jesus’ absolute prohibition of divorce is the presupposition behind Paul’s answer, but Paul applies the Lord’s command to this new situation with spiritual discernment and flexibility.”<sup>738</sup> Later he adds, “Paul relaxes the prohibition against divorce when it comes to a situation not envisioned by Jesus command: the case of a Christian joined to an unbeliever who insists on divorcing.”<sup>739</sup> Paul expands this tradition in two ways as his gospel spreads. On the one hand, if

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<sup>737</sup> On this point, Loader says, “In addition the saying coheres well with accounts of Jesus’ challenge to people to be involved in the kingdom of God in which family responsibilities are often given lower priority: leaving all behind, including family, letting the dead bury the dead, in relation to concerns of a son for his father, hating one’s parents. Jesus appears to have challenged some to a lifestyle which left local family responsibilities behind. He, himself, appears to have lived such a lifestyle.” (Sexuality, 134).

<sup>738</sup> Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 278.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

husbands and wives had divorced without just cause, they were instructed to either remain single or reconcile, while, on the other hand, as converts were forced to choose between faith in Christ and an unbelieving spouse, they were directed to hold to the exclusivism that Christianity had distilled from Judaism and “let them leave.” That Paul does not address the problem of adultery says little about his view on the matter. It may be that it is simply beyond the scope of what he is addressing. Paul’s responses evolve around a very specific set of questions being asked of him, which may strengthen our contention that 1 Cor 7 is not the sum total of what he holds to be true about divorce and remarriage.<sup>740</sup> It can be said that Paul would have looked at any sexual practice outside of marriage quite unfavorably and been diametrically opposed to the dominant views regarding extra-marital affairs.

### **6.1.3 Paul on Celibacy:**

First Corinthians 7 begins by making reference to a correspondence received by Paul from some in Corinth: “Now concerning (περὶ δέ) the matters about which you wrote.” Similar references to this letter are also seen in 7:25, 8:1, 12:1 and 16:1 (and 12), followed by a quotation of a slogan held to be true by some segment of the Corinthian body. As mentioned above, in the case of chapter 7, the slogan is: “It is good (καλόν) for a man not to touch (ἄπτεσθαι) a woman.” Many scholars hold that in 7:1 Paul is simply restating a question being raised by certain members of the Corinthian community and that the apostle is careful not to accept or decline, but moves quickly to qualify.

What might have motivated this mindset in Corinth? Any combination of ideas that circulated at that time might have led to such a view since—as mentioned earlier—“Corinth was a center for philosophical thought in the Hellenistic world, situated, so to

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speak, at a crossroad of other philosophical centers.”<sup>741</sup> Certainly it is also possible that Paul’s example as a celibate lies at the base of this questioning in Corinth (cf. Godet). It is likely, however, if this is the Corinthian inspiration, that something was lost in translation. The rationale for celibacy in Pauline theology appears to have grown out of an apocalyptic conviction that “the appointed time is short” (vv. 25-31). This radical posture of making oneself a “eunuch” for the kingdom has direct parallels in the Synoptic tradition (e.g., Matt 19:10-12), the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Scriptures (i.e., Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel [Ezek 24:15-27]) and radical Jewish sectarians (i.e., Qumran). Since some of the Corinthians rejected resurrection (1 Cor 15) and thus its apocalyptic impulse, celibacy in this context would likely have been modeled after others. For instance, the Neo-Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana—likely a contemporary of Paul—was a peripatetic philosopher who renounced association with women, eating meat, wine and marriage (Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 1.32; 6.42). He also let his hair grow on his face and head (Ibid.). Celibacy and rejection of social convention were indeed part of much broader trends in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>742</sup> Individuals like these would have provided similar models for the life of celibacy, but with an entirely different rationale all together. If this reconstruction is accurate, it is quite possibly this unforeseen crosspollination that proves to be a formidable opponent for Paul and his theological agenda. Furthermore, this appraisal is thoroughly consistent with our analysis of chapters 1-6, where it was surmised that the Corinthians may have been deeply confused regarding Paul’s gospel.

Up to this point, it has been suggested that some Corinthians questioned whether sexual intercourse is compatible with the Christian life even within the bounds of marriage. Paul neither accepts nor rejects this view, but qualifies it, lifting up possession

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<sup>741</sup> Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 105.

<sup>742</sup> For more on this, see Peter Brown’s *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity, Lectures in History of Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press.

of χάρισμα as the distinguishing feature between individuals who can wholly commit themselves to a life of celibacy for Christian service versus those who cannot. Paul says, “I wish everyone was like me, but each has their own gift (χάρισμα) from God...” (v. 7). Poirier and Frankovic bring out that this is the only instance in the NT where celibacy is defined as a ‘charism’ and go on to suggest that it is more likely that it is “Paul’s prophetic understanding” that necessitates an ongoing state of ritual purity or celibacy.<sup>743</sup> They suggest that those with prophetic gifts must realize that periods of fasting and prayer and self-imposed celibacy are necessary for receiving divine revelation.<sup>744</sup>

With regards to those already married, abstinence is expressly forbidden except for a time of fasting and prayer (1 Cor 7:5; “εἰ μήτι ἂν ἐκ συμφώνου πρὸς καιρὸν ἴνα σχολάσητε τῇ προσευχῇ...”). Interpreters handle the following passage and its relationship to 7:5 differently. In view of 7:2 and the problem of sexual immorality, some commentators see marriage as Paul’s concession for those who lack self-control; viewing it as an inferior option to celibacy (Godet).<sup>745</sup> Others understand the referent of the demonstrative pronoun of 7:6 (“and this [τοῦτο] I say by way of concession”) to be forward in 7:7a, where Paul says, “I wish everyone was like me...,” not backwards in 7:2-5.<sup>746</sup> Lastly, some see the referent as temporary abstinence in marriage mentioned in 7:5.<sup>747</sup> Poirier and Frankovic, for instance, hold that Paul’s instruction here for husbands and wives to separate for a time “has the force of an injunction, one driven by the concept of ritual purity.”<sup>748</sup> They substantiate this view by connecting the phrase “by way of concession” to the later part of v. 5, which reads “then come together again.” Lightfoot also identifies Paul’s period of fasting and prayer as the antecedent of “by the way of

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<sup>743</sup> Poirier and Frankovic, “Celibacy and Charism,” 16.

<sup>744</sup> Niederwimmer, *Askese und Mysterium*, 93.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>746</sup> Bruce W. Winter, “1 Corinthians 7:6-7: A Caveat and a Framework for ‘the sayings’ in 7:8-24,” *TynB* 48, no. 1 (1997): 57-65.

<sup>747</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 161.

<sup>748</sup> Poirier and Frankovic, “Celibacy and Charism,” 2.

concession.” Placing considerable weight on the expression ἐκ συμφώνου, however, makes short-term abstinence in this regard a suggestion (συγγνώμην) and not a command (ἐπιταγήν). Lightfoot sees this as the force of συγγνώμην in his translation: “I do not give this as binding. I state it as what is allowable.”<sup>749</sup> When Paul uses ἐπιταγήν concerning himself he uses it in a unique rhetorical fashion, generally choosing to refrain from making demands but announcing his right to do so.<sup>750</sup>

Regarding Paul’s views here on celibacy, there is unquestionable continuity with the Synoptic tradition. Paul’s perspective on celibacy is based on Jesus tradition that is similar to what we see in Matt 19 (Dungan). As shown, the same can also be said about his views on divorce. Paul’s understanding—far from a corruption and a byproduct of a “creative attitude” (Schweitzer)—appears to be a radicalization of this Jesus tradition in a new social context. This tendency toward radicalization is characteristic of Paul’s sacrificial approach to the gospel as well as apocalyptic Judaism in general (as shown above in chapters 3 and 4).

As mentioned in chapter 5, Paul’s views are thoroughly compatible with Jesus tradition. In 7:7, Paul says, “I wish that all men were as I myself am. But each has their own gift (χάρισμα) from God, one this (gift) and another that” (“θέλω δὲ πάντα ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ ἐμαυτόν; ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως”). Paul desires for all of the members of the Corinthian body to be as he himself, (i.e., celibate), but classifies his life as a celibate as a gift (χάρισμα). In chapter 7, he uses θέλω four times (e.g., 7:7, 7:32, 7:36 and 7:39), expressing his ‘desire’ that the unmarried and widows of Corinth remain that way. By using this term, Paul

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<sup>749</sup> Lightfoot, *Notes*, 224-225.

<sup>750</sup> In the book of Philemon, Paul makes it known that he has the apostolic right to command Philemon to accept Onesimus back with limited consequences, but prefers simply to mention the right without actually exercising it. He says: “*Therefore, although I have the full right in Christ to order you to do what is proper, I urge you out of love, being as I am, Paul, an old man, an now also a prisoner of Christ*” (8-9). Then, at the close of this letter, he writes, “*...I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say*” (21).

acknowledges the subjective nature of his view. Barrett argues that as in this case (7:7) Paul uses the imperfect when he “expresses a wish he knows to be unattainable...” (i.e., that all people be celibate as he is).<sup>751</sup> He also uses the term γνώμη twice, which indicates that Paul offers his ‘judgment’ or ‘opinion’ (see vv. 25 and 40) as one who has the Spirit, but allows individuals to choose the appropriate course of action for themselves; this stands in stark contrast to what he says in other places in 1 Corinthians where Paul asserts his apostolic authority (i.e., Chapter 5, the immoral young man). That θέλω does not carry the sense of compulsion in these instances can also be corroborated by what Paul says in v. 28 and 36, where he explicitly establishes that marriage is noble and that those who are engaged should execute their vows if they desire. Paul clearly grounds the rationale for his view on celibacy in the conviction that the Parousia was looming (7:29-31).

Along these lines, it should be noted that the tendency to offer a range of possible choices—using Jesus tradition as a kind of baseline—is characteristic of Pauline thought. For instance, in 1 Cor 9:14, after delineating the apostolic right to remuneration, he says, “In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel.” It appears that Paul is making reference to tradition that is similar to—if not exact with—Matt 10:10, where it reads, “Do not take gold or silver or copper in your belts, nor a sack for the journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, or a staff. For the laborer is worthy of his/her keep.” Earlier, Tuckett argued, “Practically all commentators agree that this is an allusion to (rather than an exact quotation of) the saying of Jesus in the mission charge ‘the laborer is worthy of his hire/food’ (Matt 10:10/Luke 10:7).”<sup>752</sup>

While he acknowledges this standard for apostolic work, he intentionally goes in the opposite direction given the reality of certain contextual issues. For some reason, it was simply not expedient to accept financial support from the church in Corinth. It is

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<sup>751</sup> Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 158.

<sup>752</sup> Tuckett, “1 Corinthians and Q,” 612.

quite possible that Paul wanted to evade being put in the same bag with the Sophists of his day, many of whom were viewed in a negative light as philosophers for hire. That contextual issues are in view here can be seen by the fact that Paul did receive financial support from some churches (i.e., Phil 4:15-17). This would prove to be problematic for some in Corinth, who did not understand Paul's unwillingness to accept gifts from their congregation (2 Cor 11:7-11). The point is, as in chapter 7, Paul establishes Jesus tradition as normative and then provides a range of other possible options that arise out of the social context that he addresses.

As mentioned, a most critical idea regarding Paul's views on celibacy is his reference to the celibate life as gift (χάρισμα). He also references the gifts in 1 Cor 12 (tongues, prophecy, healing, interpretation of tongues, etc.) with the term χάρισμα. It is possible—if not likely—then, that Paul would have viewed celibacy as being given by the Spirit in the same way as the other gifts in Chapter 12. This point is perhaps substantiated by a phrase at the end of v.7:...ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως. Here, Paul claims that while he wishes that all believers were as he is, he recognizes that ‘one individual has one kind (of gift, [χάρισμα]), and a different individual has another.’ What is more, this statement seems to have a parallel in 1 Cor 12:27-30 where Paul asserts, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”

The rhetorical nature of this latter pericope, as evidenced in the presence of the particle μὴ, argues for a multiplicity of gifts (χάρισμα) in the body of Christ which are not held by all. According to Paul, what binds the body together is a built-in dependency upon the other, whose gifts are also unique and complementary. This situation of dependency is orchestrated by the Spirit who gives gifts severally as the Spirit wills. This

point is made most vividly in Paul's body analogy. Factionalism separates out the very gifts from the body which are necessary to make it function effectively for God's purpose. It is the idea of celibacy as *χάρισμα* that is basic to his argument about it and makes him cautious about making celibacy compulsory in any way.

As previously shown, it seems obvious that Paul draws his views on celibacy from Jesus tradition and apocalyptic Judaism. In Matt 19:11-2, regarding a life of celibacy, Jesus says, "But he said to them, not everyone is able to comprehend this word, but only *to those to whom it has been given* (οἷς δέδοται). For there are eunuchs who have been that way from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who have been made that way by men, and there are eunuchs who make eunuchs of themselves for the sake of the kingdom." Here, the expression δέδοται has the same effect as *χάρισμα* in 1 Cor 7, with regard to celibacy. 'Given' in the sense of divine prerogative shows up several times in the gospel of Matthew. In 13:11, the disciples are 'given' (δέδοται) the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. That this is a privilege can be seen by what Jesus says next: "but to them it has not been given" ("ἐκείνοις δὲ οὐ δέδοται"). There are other instances where δίδωμι is used in this fashion in Matthew (7:11, 10:8, and 16:19) where distinctive spiritual abilities are given to some (see 11:25). Shocked by the stringency of Jesus' teaching on divorce (v. 10), his disciples reach the conclusion: "it is not advantageous to marry" ("οὐ συμφέρει γαμῆσαι"). It is in response to this that Jesus replies that the 'λόγος' (of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom) is 'given' to some.<sup>753</sup>

That this view of celibacy is unique to Jesus (i.e., celibacy for the sake of the kingdom) can be seen in the fact that there is no exact precedent within Judaism or the broader Greco-Roman world. In fact, Jesus himself seems to be the precedent, since he appears to be a celibate himself. Furthermore, that this 'giving' of celibacy is not necessarily the distinguishing mark of the most spiritual, even for Jesus, can be seen in

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<sup>753</sup> See 'λόγος' entry in BADG, 477.

the fact that the other apostles seem not have followed it.<sup>754</sup> This has significant implications for understanding Paul.

It must also be acknowledged that there is a level of ambiguity in what Jesus says in Matt 19:11-2. Certainly, the ability to operate as a celibate seems to be ‘given’ in the same sense as χάρισμα, but there is a measure of ambiguity in the phrase: καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωεῖτω. The idea that some *make themselves* eunuchs suggests that such a life is fully a matter of personal choice. It seems, then, that one chooses to live the celibate lifestyle because it has been given to him/her; this determination, however, has to be made by the individual.<sup>755</sup> This point is further clarified in what Jesus says next: “the one who has the ability to practice (the life of a eunuch), let him practice [it]” (ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωεῖτω). Even in Paul, δυνάμει is also often connected with God-inspired ‘capacity.’<sup>756</sup> This term also relates to the amount of suffering that one is able to endure for the sake of the gospel.<sup>757</sup> So, both God-induced and self-induced celibacy are within the semantic range of the term δυνάμει in Pauline thought. Most importantly, this same sense of choice is seen in 1 Cor 7, where Paul acknowledges that celibacy is a gift (χάρισμα), but leaves the choice in the hands of the individual to discern whether or not he/she has been ‘given’ such.

It was mentioned earlier that Paul bases his argument in 1 Cor 7 on Jesus tradition, and that Paul’s practice is toward intensifying and not diluting this tradition—it

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<sup>754</sup> Both the Synoptic gospels and Paul confirm that in the face of what Jesus says about celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, Peter and the other apostles were married (Mark 1:30-31; 1 Cor 9:5). See Loader, *Sexuality*, 136, 142 and 218.

<sup>755</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 144. Loader makes a similar point, when he says, “On balance, it is more probable that Jesus was not married and this was a matter of choice not accident, and reflected what he would have seen as ‘given’ to him, in much the same way as he saw it as something which might be ‘given’ to others, as Matt 19:12 indicates. It is unlikely that he would have espoused the idea that some might take the stricter celibacy option and not have chosen to do so himself”

<sup>756</sup> See Grundman, “δυνάμει,” *TDNT* 2:284-317

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*

is possible that he follows Jesus in this practice as well.<sup>758</sup> That is to say that this pattern of radicalization is quite apparent in the teaching of Jesus as well.<sup>759</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), Jesus radicalizes the law by focusing on motivations and the inward disposition of the heart. In 5:21-43, six times Jesus cites Mosaic law and then expounds upon it for his listeners, (“you have heard...but I say”). This parallels rabbinic practice, but Jesus takes a far more radical posture than many of his contemporaries would have considered. Paul’s comments in 1 Cor 9 provide ample evidence of this tendency of radicalization in Paul, particularly with regard to the church in Corinth. Here, Paul strongly affirms the apostolic right of financial support and marriage, comparing his and Barnabas’ practice with that of “the other apostles and the Lord’s brother and Cephas” (v. 5). They also have the right to “take a believing wife along” with them in their missionary efforts. What is more, Paul, through a series of rhetorical questions makes clear that he and Barnabas should be given financial compensation for their efforts. In the verses that follow, he bolsters this using Deut 35:4, claiming that its true referent is the minister of the gospel. Then, he uses a farming illustration, saying, “If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?” (v.11)

While marriage and compensation fall well within his apostolic rights, he declines such privileges: “But I have not used any of those rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me” (v. 15). He provides the following rationale for his peculiar apostolic practice: “What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the

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<sup>758</sup> In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus consistently intensifies the Law of Moses, saying, “You have heard in the law of Moses, but I say...” In so doing, he radicalizes the legal tradition in the same manner as other first century apocalyptic Jewish thinkers. On this point, see Hengel’s, *The Zealots*, 220-225.

<sup>759</sup> Loader, *Sexuality*, 68. Loader picks up on this tendency in Jesus’ discussion on divorce and its relationship to Deut 24:1-4. He sees in Jesus’ teaching not a rejection, necessarily, but a radicalization of the law. Loader says, “In doing so Jesus would not be understood as revoking Torah, but upholding it more rigorously, in much the same way as the prohibition of oaths in the fourth antithesis (5:33-34) upholds Torah while disallowing some of its provisions.”



gospel, I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it” (v. 18). So adamant is Paul about this that he claims: “...I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast” (v15). Indeed, Paul’s sincerity on this matter seems to have played out in dramatic fashion in real life; he seems to have had several lean times during his missionary efforts where he went without (Phil 4:10-13). He unambiguously connects his sufferings with those of Christ, desiring to “...know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the death.” In 2 Cor 11:16-33 and 12:7-10, the apostle flips the existing paradigm on its head, boasting in his sufferings for Christ sake.

It is being argued that the same principles seen in 1 Cor 9, are also seen in chapter 7. For in chapter 7, Paul makes clear his practice in v.8 that the life of a celibate is a χάρισμα, and then, in what immediately follows, suggests that not everyone has this particular χάρισμα: ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως. As mentioned earlier, this pattern of appeal to χάρισμα can also be seen in Jesus Tradition. We see here a radicalization of normative practice that grows out of Paul’s sacrificial approach to the gospel. Just as in chapter 9, Paul wants the Corinthians to be efficient preachers of the gospel and therefore encourages them to make similar sacrifices as himself. Again, however, it is important to revisit Paul’s clear acknowledgement that while he desires the Corinthians to be like himself (θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ ἑμαυτόν), he knows that only some have the God-given capacity to do so, and celibacy should be viewed in the same fashion as the other gifts (χαρίσματα) in chapter 12.

Paul and Jesus recognize marriage and celibacy as equal options. In Matthew 19, Jesus is depicted giving radical affirmation of marriage, but also making room for celibacy saying some “have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (ἐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς δια τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν). It is significant that Jesus’ motivation for celibacy is explicitly identified as the kingdom of heaven. Paul

provides the same philosophical basis for celibacy in 1 Cor 7, contrasting a married man, who must concern himself with what pleases his wife, and an unmarried man, who is singularly concerned about the affairs of the Lord (vv. 32-36). Loader affirms this, suggesting, “From the disciples’ perspective to choose celibacy saves them from torments which women’s immorality poses. In the saying, another reason is given: it is for the kingdom of heaven. In other words, these people abstain from such relations with women, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The saying could be understood as enjoining celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God in the sense of being thereby able to devote more time and energy to the task, a view not dissimilar to Paul’s about the hassle of being married in this age, and not reflect assumptions about the age to come at all.”<sup>760</sup> Clearly, Cynic practice is not the most appropriate parallel for understanding Jesus and Paul. Even though Hellenism made significant inroads into the Palestinian region, Cynic ideals on sexuality were often far afield from the eschatological motivations that we see within Jewish sectarianism and early Christianity. J. Carl Laney assesses correctly, in his article “Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7” when he argues that the Apostle to the Gentiles was “a first century interpreter of the words of Jesus.”<sup>761</sup> Apparently, he sees no need to offer methodological rationale for his assumption.

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<sup>760</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>761</sup> J. Carl Laney, “Paul and the Permanence of Marriage in 1 Corinthians 7,” *JETS* 25 (September, 1982): 283.

# **CHAPTER 7      CONCLUSIONS AND ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

## **7.1      ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS**

This work has attempted to make several contributions to Pauline studies in general and the letter to the Church in Corinth specifically. It has endeavored to answer the questions, “What is the most appropriate background for understanding Paul’s views on marriage, celibacy and divorce as found in 1 Corinthians 7?” and “How do we account for the unique features in 1 Corinthians that are not clearly delineated in the Greco-Roman works, Jesus tradition or in other NT writings?” It has been forwarded that Paul derives the substance of his perspective on marriage, celibacy and divorce from Jesus tradition and the Jewish Scriptures (LXX). Paul’s knowledge of Jesus tradition can likely be traced to first generation believers and his own revelatory religious experiences. This proposal does not suggest that the Apostle Paul was not significantly influenced by broader social context, but it does contend that he was deeply aware of the differences between himself and other philosophical and religious thinkers of his day. The Apostle uses Jesus tradition when the conflicts he sought to address mirrored those encountered by Jesus himself. What is more, he often expanded upon this tradition as new opportunities/conflicts arose within his missionary communities.

## **7.2      CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1.      The use of Jesus tradition in the early church: It has been a long debated question as to what extent NT writers were dependent upon Jesus tradition in their compositions. This work has attempted to demonstrate that even when Paul is not explicit about this

dependency upon Jesus tradition, the substance of his work corresponds closely to what is found in the Synoptic tradition.

2. Appropriate methodology for comparative literature: This work has made use of a modified form of E.P. Sanders' "patterns of religion" approach, which considers the 'patterns of religion' of a particular system of belief before making comparative statements. It has been shown that 'parallelomania' fails to fully consider the complex nature of ideas and their relationship to the system from which they are born. As Sandmel brings out regarding Paul: "Paul's context is of infinitely more significance than the question of the alleged parallels. Indeed, to make Paul's context conform to the content of the alleged parallels is to distort Paul. The knowledge on our part of the parallels may assist us in understanding Paul; but if we make him mean only what the parallels mean, we are using the parallels in a way that can lead us to misunderstand Paul."<sup>762</sup> This work has examined moral philosophy, Judaism and Christianity each on their own merits, around the issues of marriage, celibacy and divorce prior to considering the question of Pauline dependency.

3. Greco-Roman sexuality: This work has attempted to correctly portray the social relationships and their interaction in the first century and before. Men of the Greco-Roman milieu had a great deal of latitude with regard to sexual expression. Among the elite clients served a variety of purposes not the least of which was sexual gratification. The Apostle Paul found himself up against these sexual mores and sought to guide the Corinthians, many of which were deeply acculturated, in an entirely new direction, based upon Jesus tradition. This work has attempted to sketch out Paul's view on marriage, celibacy and divorce based upon 1 Cor 7. This effort has been an exercise in biblical theology since it makes inter-textual considerations, brings into the discussion various

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<sup>762</sup> See Samuel Sandmel's highly celebrated article "Parallelomania," in *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13.

perspectives (Christianity, Judaism and moral philosophies) and applies exegetically conclusions about the content and appropriate background of 1 Cor. 7.

4. This work should inform contemporary discussion about sexuality. Jesus' reference to Gen 2:24 is an explicit affirmation of the sexual union between a man and his wife. Jesus says, "...they shall become one flesh," which is a euphemism for sexual union. Paul also affirms the sexuality of both husband and wife, saying that husband and wife should not deprive one another. It is telling that no mention is made of offspring in either Matt 19:5 or 1 Cor 7:1-5. These points are important for a church that places a great deal of emphasis on celibacy.

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