

## FLESH AND SPIRIT IN 1 COR 5:5: AN EXERCISE IN RHETORICAL CRITICISM OF THE NT

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### I. THE INTERPRETATION OF 1 COR 5:5

“You are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:5, NRSV). Whatever interpretation one adopts regarding Paul’s disciplinary action against the incestuous adulterer in 1 Cor 5:5, that interpretation hinges on the meanings of flesh (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*) in the passage. The two clauses “for the destruction of the flesh” (*eis olethron tēs sarkos*) and “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (*hina to pneuma sōthē en tē hēmerā tou kyriou*) have been understood by interpreters to define the nature of the delivery to Satan (the *eis*-clause) and its result (the *hina*-clause).

Interpretations that have been promulgated by scholars range from the believable to the somewhat fanciful. Most commentators opt for one of three understandings of Paul’s disciplinary sentence (*paradounai tō Satanō*). (1) Some believe that the delivery to Satan will eventuate in a wasting physical illness suffered by the sinner.<sup>1</sup> (2) Others believe the expulsion to lead to the destruction of the transgressor’s sinful nature.<sup>2</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Some interpreters who take this view are W. Barclay, *By What Authority?* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1974) 118; M. Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1889) 118; R. A. Knox, *A New Testament Commentary for English Readers* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954) 2.140; H. Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1851) 90; H. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 471; W. G. H. Simon, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM, 1959) 78; M. E. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965) 40.

<sup>2</sup> Among those interpreters who subscribe to this interpretation are F. W. Farrar *et al.*, *I Corinthians* (New York/London: Funk and Wagnalls, n.d.) 167; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistles to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953) 123; M. L. Jeschke, *Toward an Evangelical Conception of Corrective Church Discipline* (dissertation; Northwestern University, 1965) 149; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1946) 217; J. J. Lias, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1888) 67; G. C. Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul* (New York: Revell, 1946) 83. A variation of the view is expressed by A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; 2d ed.; New York: Scribner’s, 1916) 99. They believe that Paul’s sentence would result in two destructions: the mortification of the flesh (fleshly sins or lusts), and physical suffering. For Satan to destroy the sinful nature means that the bodily flesh, as the seat of sin, also suffers.

either instance the repentance and ultimate salvation of the offender eventually ensue, even though Satan is the instrument of the effective discipline. (3) Still others regard the sentence pronounced by Paul to mean physical death at Satan's hand.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to the three major interpretations mentioned above are several minor ones. I designate them as minor because of the limited scholarly acceptance they have won. A delivery to the Roman civil magistrates,<sup>4</sup> a secret execution,<sup>5</sup> a self-atoning physical death,<sup>6</sup> and a delivery to purgatory<sup>7</sup> are all explanations that fail to win more than a few adherents at best. Hence the consensus of scholarship is that Paul's disciplinary sentence in 1 Cor 5:5 is a delivery of the Corinthian offender to Satan for the purpose of the destruction of the sinner's body by disease or affliction, perhaps even for the purpose of his death. Many regard the destruction of the flesh to refer to the elimination of the offender's sinful nature. Whatever the destruction is, the consensus view is that it will eventuate in the salvation of the sinner's spirit.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Promoting this view are BAG 614–615; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's, 1951–55) 1.233; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 97; S. M. Gilmour, "Pastoral Care in the New Testament Church," *NTS* 10 (1963–64) 395; J. C. Hurd, Jr., *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury, 1965) 137, 286 n. 5; G. W. H. Lampe, "Church Discipline and the Interpretation of the Epistles to the Corinthians," *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (ed. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 349, 353; H. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I–II* (HNT 9; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949) 23; E. Schweizer, "sarx, sarkikos, sarkinos," *TDNT* 7.98–151.

<sup>4</sup> The only proponent of this view known to me is Gräfe as cited by Olshausen, *Commentary* 90 n. 1. The view that Satan is a legal prosecutor is also explained by W. F. Orr and J. A. Walther, *1 Corinthians* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1976) 186. A variation of the theory is that "Satan" represents the legal and social sanctions of secular society. These sanctions would be the administrators of a penalty. See A. C. Thiselton, "The Meaning of SARX in I Corinthians 5.5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors," *SJT* 26 (May 1973) 218.

<sup>5</sup> J. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1946) 553 n. 19.

<sup>6</sup> W. Daskočil, *Der Bann in der Urkirche: Eine rechtsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Munich: Karl Zink, 1958) 64. Cf. *m. Sanh.* 6:2, which states that one to be stoned, upon confessing his sins, would die a death that would be an atonement for his sins (H. Danby, *The Mishnah* [London: Oxford University, 1933] 390).

<sup>7</sup> See R. Bohren, *Das Problem der Kirchengzucht im Neuen Testament* (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer, 1952) 110–114; E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1955) 212, 312–313 n. 696, 313 n. 697. S. D. MacArthur asserts a variation of the view that the sinner at Corinth is consigned to purgatory. *Pneuma*, according to MacArthur, refers to the mode of the adulterer's being after his death (destruction of the flesh), that state in the realm of the dead in which he faces what will certainly be an approbative judgment on the Day of the Lord ("Spirit" in Pauline Usage: 1 Corinthians 5.5," *StudBib 1978: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors* [JSNTSup 3; ed. E. A. Livingstone; Sheffield: JSOT, 1980] 249–256).

<sup>8</sup> Is the delivery to Satan a sentence of excommunication? Is it a severer sentence than excommunication? F. F. Bruce believes that the delivery is severer than excommunication (*1 and 2 Corinthians* [NCB; Grand Rapids/London: Eerdmans/Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1971] 54–55). But *paradounai tō Satanā* may define what excommunication is. The phrase may be epexegetic in relation to the other terms that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 5 to describe excommunication (*airō*, v. 2; *ekkathairō*, v. 7; *exairō*, v. 13). The phrases *mē synanameignymi* (vv. 9, 11) and *mēde synesthiō* (v. 11) probably describe the behavior for the community to exercise toward someone who has already been or ought to be dismissed from the church. They do not define the act of dismissal itself (as if social exclusion or exclusion from table fellowship constituted acts of excommunication). My assumption is that "deliver to Satan" = "excommunicate."

One curious feature of the Greek text of 5:5 is the absence of the pronominal genitive of definition/possession with *sarx* and *pneuma*. Hence the RV rightly translates: "to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." Could flesh and spirit in 5:5 refer to the flesh and spirit of some other person(s) than the incestuous man in Corinth? Donfried<sup>9</sup> believes so. According to him *sarx* refers not to the sinner's flesh but to "the works of the flesh"—fleshly deeds and corruption within the church. Donfried follows Thiselton<sup>10</sup> in regarding both *sarx* and *pneuma* as carrying an evaluative or ethical meaning for Paul.<sup>11</sup>

As for the spirit in 5:5, it is not that of the offender. The saving of God's Spirit in the congregation is in Paul's view. The apostle calls upon the Corinthians "to cast out the works of the flesh and to return them to their proper authority, Satan, so that God's Spirit may continue to be present and thus preserve the congregation for the last day."<sup>12</sup>

Von Campenhausen<sup>13</sup> also regards "spirit" to be the Spirit of God, "the divine power." Against Donfried, von Campenhausen regards the flesh to be that of the sinner, which suffers death. Hence that divine power may be saved and contribute to the eschatological wholeness of the body of Christ. Tertullian believes in the irremissible nature of the sin of incest and therefore assumes that the spirit of 5:5 cannot be that of the sinner. Consequently the *pneuma* in the church is that which is to be saved.<sup>14</sup>

Although none of the views of Donfried, von Campenhausen and Tertullian agrees with one of the other two, all three agree that we ought not to assume that flesh and spirit both refer to the adulterer whom Paul censures. Von Campenhausen and Tertullian understand *sarx* to refer to the man but link *pneuma* with God and the church respectively. Donfried connects *sarx* with the church and *pneuma* with God. All three call into question the more traditional definitions of *sarx* and *pneuma* in 5:5.

<sup>9</sup> K. P. Donfried, "Justification and Last Judgment in Paul," *Int* 30 (April 1976) 150–151.

<sup>10</sup> See Thiselton, "SARX" 204–228; *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 277–283, 403–404, 407–415. Also see H. Seebass and A. C. Thiselton, "Flesh: *sarx*," *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 1.671–682 (hereafter *NIDNTT*); Bultmann, *Theology* 1.235–243. Other interpreters who regard *sarx* as conveying an ethical/evaluative meaning in 1 Cor 5:5 are J. Cambier, "La chair et l'esprit en I Cor. V.5," *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 227–232; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 212; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1979) 42. All three maintain that "spirit/Spirit" refers to the whole person oriented toward God and "flesh" to the whole person oriented away from God. Thus they give the terms *pneuma* and *sarx* an ethical or evaluative interpretation.

<sup>11</sup> Donfried, "Justification" 150.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1969) 134–135 n. 50.

<sup>14</sup> See Tertullian *De Pudicitia* 13 (ANF 4.87–88). Tertullian regards 1 Tim 1:20 as making the same point as 1 Cor 5:5. In the former passage Paul speaks of "Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so they may learn not to blaspheme." "They" refers to "the rest" of the believers in the church in Tertullian's interpretation. Such an exegesis is possible, although the antecedents for the persons of the verb *paideuthōsin* would seem to be Hymenaeus and Alexander. For discussion of such verbs whose subjects are not expressed see C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (2d ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1959) 28–29.

Could *sarx* and *pneuma*, however, be united (as in the traditional view) in reference to the same subject but not the sinner (*contra* the traditional view)? Could they both refer to the church? Donfried has already suggested the possibility of *sarx* as meaning evil works of the church. Tertullian affirmed that the spirit in view is that *pneuma* within the church. Does the context of 5:5 provide any evidence for this point of view?

## II. RHETORICAL ARRANGEMENT IN 1 COR 5:1-13

In the present article I seek to apply classical rhetorical-critical analysis to 1 Cor 5:1-13 in order to discover whether *sarx* and *pneuma* might bear a reference to the church in Corinth, not to the offender. A rhetorical-critical analysis of a speech or text seeks to understand the persuasive strategy of a speaker or author. The manners in which a NT author elicits a favorable hearing, selects and arranges materials, states propositions, marshals proofs for her case, corrects misunderstandings, and summarizes an argument constitute some of the concerns of rhetorical criticism of the NT. A comprehensive description of NT rhetorical criticism that is based on Greco-Roman rhetoric is beyond the scope of this brief article,<sup>15</sup> as is a comprehensive rhetorical-critical analysis of 1 Cor 5:1-13. But I intend to demonstrate how an analysis of one part of the rhetorical unit—the proof—suggests a new interpretation of *sarx* and *pneuma* in 5:5. Paul may denote by those terms a self-sufficient orientation of the church (*sarx*) that must be eradicated and an orientation to God (*pneuma*) of the church that is to be preserved through eradication of the *sarx*. Proof is but one element in the arrangement of deliberative speech of which 1 Corinthians 5 is an example.

1. *Proem, exigence and narration.* Although 1 Cor 5:1-13 is a complete rhetorical unit in that it fully describes a situation, advocates a course of action, and furnishes supporting proofs for the rightness of the proposed

<sup>15</sup> Fuller treatments of rhetorical criticism of the NT are found in G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984); B. L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). Two commentaries that use rhetorical criticism are H. D. Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). An analysis of Jude and 2 Peter from a rhetorical-critical viewpoint is D. F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter* (SBLDS 104; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988). The analysis in the present article is based on the description of rhetorical criticism of the NT by Kennedy. I do not suggest that Paul purposely or consciously used rhetorical standards of the ancients, although he may have done so. Classical rhetoric seeks to classify the procedures of speakers' arguments that are effectively persuasive. For a brief description of the art of rhetoric see *The Basic Works of Cicero* (ed. M. Hadas; New York: Modern Library, 1951) 214-215. J. Smit effectively argues that Paul knows the conventions of classical rhetoric and utilizes them in 1 Corinthians 13. The chapter is an example of demonstrative rhetoric (i.e. rhetoric that seeks to praise or vilify). Hence the Pauline letters lend themselves to a rhetorical analysis ("The Genre of 1 Corinthians 13 in the Light of Classical Rhetoric," *NouT* 33 [1991] 193-216). The other types of rhetoric are the judicial (arguing the legitimacy or illegitimacy of an act) and the deliberative (which attempts to convince the audience to take some future action). For a description of the types of discourse see Aristotle *Art of Rhetoric* 1.3.1-9; Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* 3.7.1-11.28.

action, it lacks a proem. A proem typically serves to elicit the goodwill of the audience by means of encouragement and praise. Since 1:1–9 constitutes the proem for the whole letter, none is employed by Paul in chap. 5.

The rhetorical situation, the exigence, is forthrightly stated by the apostle in 5:1: A man is living with his father's wife, probably his step-mother.<sup>16</sup> Paul further describes the situation at Corinth that demands his apostolic response in a narration that comprises vv. 2–4. Despite heinous immorality in their midst, the Corinthian Christians were puffed up with pride in their freedom and their higher wisdom that gave them license to overturn universal sexual morals.<sup>17</sup> Paul is exasperated and aghast: "And you are arrogant!"<sup>18</sup> Without question the church should have expelled the offender in penitent sorrow. Indeed the community ought now to expel him,<sup>19</sup> as Paul makes clear in 5:13. The only recourse open to the apostle in light of the Corinthians' inertia has been to judge the sinner just as if he himself were in Corinth. The judgment that Paul has pronounced on the perpetrator of incest is to be duplicated by the congregation when it meets together in the name of the Lord Jesus,<sup>20</sup> either in worship or for the express purpose of excommunication. With the power of Jesus the adulterer is to be delivered to Satan.

2. *Proposition.* The center of Paul's argument is v. 5: "You are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." In rhetoric the proposition states the principle that the speaker wishes to prove or the action that he desires the hearers to perform. The intention of the apostle in 5:1–13 is clearly for the believers to take action and rid themselves of evil in their midst. Verse 5 states specifically how the purging of evil is to take place. Delivery to Satan is the action demanded by Paul, who defines both the proximate purpose (*eis olethron tēs sarkos*) and the ultimate purpose (*hina to pneuma sōthē en tē hēmerā tou kyriou*) of the action.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lev 18:8; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* 96 n. 25.

<sup>17</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians* 40.

<sup>18</sup> The presence of the pronoun *hymeis* denotes the emphatic nature of Paul's words: *kai hymeis pephysiōmenoi este*.

<sup>19</sup> The final *hina* is practically imperatival in 5:2, even if it is to be understood as beginning the final clause in a question that begins with *kai hymeis* (so *UBSGNT*). The question is rhetorical and expects assent to the notion of the sinner's expulsion. For a discussion of the imperatival *hina* see Moule, *Idiom Book* 144–145.

<sup>20</sup> The syntax of 1 Cor 5:3–5 is extremely difficult. The connection of *en tē onomati tou kyriou hēmōn Iesou* with *synachthentōn hymōn kai tou emou pneumatos* is suggested by the connection of *synagō* and Jesus' *onoma* in Matt 18:20, a passage also in a context of community discipline (cf. 18:15–17): *hou gar eisin dyo ē treis synēgmenoi eis to emon onoma, ekei eimi en mesō autōn*. The prepositional phrase *syn tē dynamei tou kyriou hēmōn Iesou*, I contend, modifies *paradounai ton toiouton tō Satanā* (JB). For discussion of syntactical alternatives see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* 97; C. H. Dodd, "Matthew and Paul," *ExpTim* 58 (August 1947) 293–298; Fee, *First Epistle* 206–208; J. Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians, V, 3–5," *RB* 84 (1977) 239–241, 244–245; Robertson and Plummer, *Commentary* 98.

<sup>21</sup> Lenski (*Interpretation* 216) identifies the *eis*-clause as the proximate purpose and the *hina*-clause as the ultimate purpose for the delivery to Satan. Hence he regards them both as final clauses. One could also regard the *eis*-clause as a consecutive (result) clause and the

3. *Proof.* Now that in the proposition Paul has affirmed for the church what he believes is its proper course of action he marshals arguments in support of his proposal. They constitute the proof of the rhetorical unit.<sup>22</sup> In v. 6a the proof is inaugurated with a further indictment of the Corinthians' arrogance: "Your boasting is not a good thing." The statement is important, for it suggests that the apostle restricts himself to the practices and the potential profit of the congregation in vv. 6b–11. The sinner's practices and future benefit are secondary. Paul's proof consists of argumentation that may be diagrammed as follows:

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|                       | <i>Argument I</i>  |
| (A) Premise           | "Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?" (v. 6b)  |
| (B) Conclusion/Action | "Clean out the old yeast" (v. 7a)  |
| (C) Purpose           | "so that you may be a new batch" (v. 7b)   |
| (A') Premise          | "as you really are unleavened" (v. 7c)   |
|                       | <i>Argument II</i>   |
| (A) Premise           | "For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (v. 7d)  |
| (B) Conclusion/Action | "Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil" (vv. 8a–b)                    |
| (C) Purpose           | "but [let us celebrate the festival] with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (v. 8c)                                 |
| (A') Premise          | "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons. . . . Do not even eat with such a one" (vv. 9–11) |

The verb *ekkatharate* is put forth by Paul as the necessary conclusion of two premises. "Clean out the old yeast," the immorality and the attendant arrogance that takes pride in such an expression of Christian freedom. Paul believed that only the expulsion of the sinner would suffice as an expression of genuine contrition by the church.

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*hina*-clause as final. The proofs of Paul's argument appear to define *eis olethron tēs sarkos* as a final clause. He has two purposes in view. See Moule, *Idiom Book* 70, 138, for discussion of prepositions and clauses. For a discussion of the proposition in Greco-Roman rhetoric see Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.3.7–9; Quintilian *Oratoria* 4.4.1–5.28. Quintilian's discussion of proposition is within the context of judicial rhetoric. A discourse such as Paul's in 1 Cor 5:1–13, however, has judicial elements (*kekrika*, v. 3; *synachthentōn*, v. 4; *paradounai*, v. 5). Since Paul endeavors to motivate the Corinthians to take some action, not just to make a judgment, I believe the passage is primarily deliberative.

<sup>22</sup> On the subject of proofs see Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.2.1–22; 3.17.1–15; Quintilian *Oratoria* 5.1.1–14.35.

Premise A is expressed in a maxim in which the permeating power of leaven becomes a metaphor for the insidious nature of sin that is tolerated within the community.<sup>23</sup> In view of that power, evil should be removed from the community.

Premise A' is an affirmation of the true unleavened state of the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 6:11). The command to cleanse themselves of wickedness in their midst is to call the Corinthians to be in practice what they are in their new Christian existence: Those sanctified in relationship to God through Christ ought to live holy lives.

The purpose of the conclusion/action *ekkatharate tēn palaian zymēn* is that the Corinthian church would then be a new batch of dough. Surprisingly, nothing is said of the effect of purging upon the one who is expelled. If the incestuous offender's *sarx* and *pneuma* are under consideration in v. 5, one would expect Paul to say something here about the effect that a delivery to Satan would have upon him. The requisite actions of the church are in view instead, as are the consequent benefits of those actions.

The second of Paul's arguments exhibits the same ABCA' pattern. Premise A is that Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed (v. 7d). The imagery of Passover, introduced with the concept of leavened and unleavened bread in vv. 6–7c, continues. The duplication of the same Passover motif in the two arguments of Paul's proof reinforces his case. The two arguments strengthen one another. Here, as elsewhere, Paul relies on the sacrifice of Christ to provide moral persuasion in his parenthesis (Rom 14:15; 15:1–3; 1 Cor 8:11–12; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:5–11; cf. Eph 5:2, 25). Paul's instructions in a previous letter<sup>24</sup> (Premise A') ought to prompt the Corinthians to repent, to celebrate the festival without the old yeast of malice and evil but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The verb *heortazōmen* is a hortatory subjunctive that functions as an imperative. Hence it parallels the imperative *ekkatharate* in Argument I.<sup>25</sup>

The symmetrically opposite pairs, malice/evil (*kakia/ponēria*) and sincerity/truth (*eilikrineia/alētheia*), are probably merely used in general reference and do not denote specific situations within the church. The

<sup>23</sup> The metaphor of leaven appears in the gospel tradition as an illustration of the miraculous power of God to create his kingdom out of small and insignificant beginnings (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20–21; J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* [2d rev. ed.; New York: Scribner's, 1972] 146–149). Leaven appears as a metaphor for evil in 1 Cor 5:6; Gal 5:9. In rabbinic tradition and Philo, leaven can connote either evil or good influences (G. T. D. Angel, "Leaven: *zymē*," *NIDNTT* 2.462). The maxim, a stylistic device used in ancient rhetoric, "is a saying drawn from life, which shows concisely either what happens or ought to happen in life" (*Rhet. ad Her.* 4.17.24).

<sup>24</sup> The verb *egrapsa* in v. 9 is aorist, but not the epistolary aorist of v. 11 where the same verb clearly refers to the present letter since it is combined with *nyn*. Cf. the NRSV of v. 11: "But now I am writing to you."

<sup>25</sup> Either the present subjunctive refers to an imminent or current Christian celebration of Passover at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 16:8) or to the Christian life as a Passover celebration. Christ's paschal sacrifice is an historical example, a type of proof that utilizes some past action for the purpose of persuasion (cf. Quintilian *Oratoria* 5.11.1–7). Both proofs in 5:1–13 are artificial proofs (viz. proofs constructed by the rhetor out of the facts at hand). Inartificial proofs are those not produced by the rhetor and include laws and contracts. See the discussion of both kinds of proof in Watson, *Invention* 14–20; see also Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.2.2.

wordplay of *ponēria* on *porneia* seems to suggest that the latter term is now expanded in Paul's discussion to incorporate all forms of evil.<sup>26</sup> The apostle desires that all appearances of evil would be exchanged by the church for multiple manifestations of goodness.

With the vice lists in 5:10–11 Paul not only mentions what he has already instructed the Corinthians about regarding Christian morality but further extends the forbidden characteristics that he identifies in v. 8b.<sup>27</sup> The church in Corinth is forbidden association (*mē synanamignysthai*)<sup>28</sup> with anyone who calls himself "Christian" and is "sexually immoral, or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber" (v. 11b). "Do not even eat with such a one" (*tō toioutō mēde synesthlein*) recalls the "such a one" (*ton toiouton*) of v. 5. What Paul says regarding the church's treatment of the incestuous sinner applies as well to the others described in v. 11.

The reasoning behind the prohibition on association is found in Argument I, Premise A: The infectious power of evil demands withdrawal from its source. Paul realistically exempts people of the world from his boycott. After all, to avoid unbelievers who exhibit the forbidden characteristics a Christian would have to leave the world completely. Where then would be the witness of the church? The apostle's precise identification of those to avoid (so-called brothers/sisters) may reflect his attempt to correct a Corinthian misunderstanding of the first letter. "To avoid associating with immoral people in Corinth means we would have to get out of the world entirely, Paul!" may have been an objection raised by some in the church. Paul now seeks to set things straight.<sup>29</sup>

4. *Epilogue.* In deliberative rhetoric the epilogue summarizes the argument and is the author's final attempt to sway the audience to take action. Verses 12–13 constitute that epilogue for Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5. The concluding appeal for the action of the proposition (v. 5) may be regarded as twofold. First, Paul, in what may be yet another attempt to refute a willful or unwillful Corinthian misunderstanding of former instruction, asserts that judgment upon those inside the church is necessary. That same judgment is inappropriately exercised upon those outside the church. God will judge them. Some of the Corinthians may have objected to Paul's prohibition of association with immoral Christians. "Who are we to be judging others? God is the judge!" may have been the protest. True, says Paul, God will judge those outside the church. Those inside, however, are to be judged by their fellow believers. The self-

<sup>26</sup> Stylistically the wordplay is an example of paronomasia, a "figure in which, by means of a modification of sound, or change of letters, a close resemblance to a given verb or noun is produced so that similar words express dissimilar things" (*Rhet. ad Her.* 4.21.29).

<sup>27</sup> P. S. Zaas, "Catalogues and Context: 1 Corinthians 5 and 6<sup>2</sup>," *NTS* 34 (1988) 626.

<sup>28</sup> "The verb can be used of dough being mixed together, and it is possible that Paul uses it here [5:9] to carry the metaphor about leaven in 5.6ff. even further" (*ibid.* 626 n. 2).

<sup>29</sup> For discussion of the intentional/unintentional misunderstanding of the Corinthians at 1 Cor 5:9–11 see Fee, *First Epistle* 222–223.



judgment of the church is a theme picked up and applied to a different situation (lawsuits) in 1 Corinthians 6.

The second part of Paul's epilogue cites the OT. Such an appeal would carry great weight with the Corinthian church. Even if there were not a significant Jewish element within it, the Corinthian church knew and valued the OT. Paul alludes frequently to it in 1 Corinthians.<sup>30</sup> The Scriptural allusion at 5:13 functions in Paul's argument as an authoritative witness and support for the proposition. By citing the text from Deuteronomy,<sup>31</sup> Paul is "invoking the original ethos defined by the quotation, an ethos that closely resembles the epistolary situation of this part of 1 Corinthians."<sup>32</sup>

### III. CONCLUSION: *SARX* AND *PNEUMA* IN 1 COR 5:5

Paul's argumentation in 5:1–13 is a deliberative rhetorical unit whose proposition advocates an action ("deliver such a one to Satan") whose purposes are proximate ("for the destruction of the flesh") and ultimate ("that the spirit may be saved"). The proof consists of two arguments, in both of which Paul desires that the Corinthians rid themselves of wickedness in order to be pure.

What does Paul's rhetorical pattern indicate to us regarding the meaning of *sarx* and *pneuma* in the perplexing fifth verse of 1 Corinthians 5? First of all, the apostle's pattern of stating a conclusion/action coupled with a purpose clause in both the proposition (v. 5) and in the two arguments (vv. 7b, 8d) suggests that a logical parity exists between the proposition and the arguments. That is, the conclusion/action of the proposition and the conclusion/action of each argument correspond to one another. Similarly the purpose of the proposition and that of each argument are parallel. They interpret one another. One may turn to the conclusion/action in either the proposition section or the proof section for clarification of the conclusion/action in the other section. In the same way the purpose statements define each other in logical correspondence.

The parity that exists between the proposition and the proof arguments in 1 Corinthians 5 is not strictly grammatical but logical. Although the

<sup>30</sup> Cf. 2:9, 16; 3:19–20; 9:9; 10:1–11; 14:21; 15:54–55. The excommunicatory sentence in v. 5 (*paradounai tō Satanā*) may itself be from Job 2:6.

<sup>31</sup> In the LXX of Deuteronomy the formula *exareis ton ponēron ex hymōn autōn* appears at 17:7 (idolater), 19:19 (false witness), 21:21 (disobedient son), 22:21 (bride found not to be a virgin), 22:24 (betrothed woman in adultery), and 24:7 (kidnapper). Paul changes the indicative of the LXX to an imperative plural: *exarate*. See P. S. Zaas, "'Cast Out the Evil Man from Your Midst' (1 Cor 5:13b)," *JBL* 103 (June 1984) 259 n. 2.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 259. Zaas believes that Paul does not use the Scriptural citation to buttress his apostolic authority but to provide a rhetorical framework (parallelism) for the case against *porneia*. The wordplay between *ponēros* and *porneia* strengthens the case for expulsion of the incestuous offender. The Deuteronomy text also recalls a situation analogous to that of the Corinthian community and prescribes the action to be taken by it (*ibid.* 259–260).

(ultimate) purpose clause of the proposition and that of the first argument both are introduced with *hina*, in the second argument the purpose clause begins with *alla*. It is grammatically an adversative clause. But since it expresses the means by which to celebrate the feast as well as the pure condition of the community that is Paul's goal (cf. the purpose clause in Argument I, a true parallel to the adversative clause of Argument II) the *alla*-clause functions in a purposive way.

The meaning of the conclusion/action statement of the proposition ("hand this man over to Satan") is therefore elucidated by the two conclusion/action phrases in the arguments. Argument I defines the delivery to Satan with the command to "clean out the old yeast." To celebrate the paschal feast without the old yeast (malice and evil) is, in Argument II, an expegesis on "hand this man over to Satan."<sup>33</sup> That delivery means to remove from the community the sinner and his attendant evil influence. Paul considers such a removal an abandonment of the offender to the destructive power of Satan.

The destruction of the flesh and the salvation of the spirit mentioned as purposes in the proposition find their parallels in the two arguments of the proof if, as seems very likely, a logical correspondence exists between the purposes of the proposition and those of the proof. Argument I has as its purpose the new and pure condition of the Corinthian church. In that condition the prideful orientation of the Corinthians and its accompanying expressions (supremely the immorality described in 1 Corinthians 5) will have been eliminated. In other words the flesh, the self-sufficient orientation of the church, will no longer be the defining feature of the community. In purging itself of the old yeast, such as malice and evil, the community shall be marked by sincerity and truth (Argument II).

The latter two characteristics are evidence of the true spirit of the church and, upon the occasion of the removal of the evil influences within the church, demonstrate that its very life has been preserved intact. For Paul the spirit of a person represents the dimension in which one encounters the Spirit of God.<sup>34</sup> The human spirit receives the Spirit of God and can thence receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:11-13). To be spiritual is to live—not in a self-centered fashion but in such a way that God's Spirit becomes the dynamic for one's existence. Life is not ordered according to the dictates of one's own selfish interests and desires but according to the will of God. The passions and desires are subordinated to the human spirit as it is actuated by the divine *pneuma*. As we have already seen, the terms "flesh" and "spirit" had already acquired an ethical

<sup>33</sup> Cambier ("La chair" 223-224, 230) observes four propositions in 5:1-13, each placed in one of four units within the pericope: *hina arthē ek mesou hymōn* (v. 2), *paradounai ton toiouton tō Satanq* (v. 5), *ekkatharate tēn palaian zymēn* (v. 7), and *exarate ton ponēron ex hymōn autōn* (v. 13). Cambier is doubtless correct in this observation but fails to consider that *hoste heortazōmen* (v. 8) is also parallel to the other propositions that are present in 1 Corinthians 5. A rhetorical-critical reading is alert to such a parallelism in 5:8, for it follows the (main) proposition of v. 5 and is part of the proof.

<sup>34</sup> See W. Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit: An Examination of Galatians 5:19-23* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1962) 13-14, 16.

meaning for Paul in 1 Corinthians when he addresses the issue of incest. Chapter 3 indicates that Paul regards flesh and spirit as the sinful and godly manners of life respectively (3:1–4).

Hence the arguments indicate that Paul, in the proposition, has the flesh and the spirit of the church in view when he calls for the destruction of the former and the salvation of the latter. The terms are given a corporate sense by Paul in a way that is analogous to the metaphor of the body of Christ defining the nature of the church in 1 Corinthians 12. Just as the Corinthians are “body,” so are they “flesh” and “spirit” in a collective sense (cf. the collective senses of *sarx* and *pneuma* in Gal 5:16–6:10). Rather than making reference to the destruction of the incestuous adulterer’s flesh, Paul identifies the sinful element within the church as that which is to be destroyed. Similarly the spirit to be saved is not that of the offender but the corporate life of the church lived in union with God through the Holy Spirit. The apostle desires that life to be preserved and thus found intact in the Day of the Lord. Thus it will be saved.

My interpretation borrows from the suggestions of von Campenhausen, Donfried and Tertullian. They believe that at least one of the elements of the flesh/spirit duality ought to be linked with a party other than the sinner. In my opinion the view that I have presented respects better the logical parity of Paul’s rhetoric than do the analyses of those three scholars. Furthermore my proposal seems to take into account the rhetorical relationship between Paul’s proposition and his proof, whereas the consensus view does not.

#### IV. POSTSCRIPT

Just as Paul summoned the church at Corinth to purity in the first century, so he summons us in the church today. The orientation of the church, whether to selfish interests (the flesh) or to God’s interests (the spirit, wherein the continued life of the church lies), must concern all Christians. Both orientations cannot exist simultaneously for long. A little leaven permeates the whole batch of dough. In the same way a little evil tolerated within the life of the church can infect the entire community. Immorality, dissension, jealous rivalry, substance abuse and materialistic greed are sins that are often allowed to continue within the church without any attempt by the members to confront them and remove them. Church discipline, properly exercised, could enable wrongdoers, their victims, and concerned brothers and sisters in Christ to address practices that could otherwise destroy lives.

I do not advocate witch hunts in the church, nor do I condone prying into others’ lives in order to find something to confront. But practices that are clearly and Biblically sinful and that are perpetrated publicly in such a way as to damage the welfare of the church and its testimony must be faced responsibly by the community of believers. Otherwise any claim by the church to mutual love is false. 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 upholds the necessity of church purity while not contradicting love, the church’s guiding principle (cf. 1 Corinthians 13).

Recalcitrant believers, Paul tells the Thessalonians, are to be avoided (an action that may be tantamount to a delivery to Satan). Yet ostracism from the fellowship of Christians is intended to produce a penitent shame. It is a warning to the sinner, delivered with the highest motives of love (2 Thess 3:14–15). The discipline that Paul advocates in 1 Cor 5:1–13 is an action that is taken only as an extreme measure for the sake of the entire church. Although Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians 5 seems to be for the community, one must not assume that he does not consider the welfare of the sinner as well.<sup>35</sup>

Current denominational discussions in the United States on what sexual practices are legitimately Christian ought also to consider church discipline. What should be the response of the Christian community (local or extended) to sexual behavior that it has determined to be immoral and inconsistent with Christian teaching? Without a constructive implementation of church discipline, moral guidelines issued by the church could easily become merely idealistic verbiage.

<sup>35</sup> One cannot be certain if the one who is to be forgiven and consoled in 2 Cor 2:5–11 (cf. 7:12) is the sinner of 1 Corinthians 5. W. G. Kümmel believes that the harsher tone of 1 Corinthians 5 makes it improbable that the milder words of 2 Corinthians 2 could refer to the same person (*Introduction to the New Testament* [rev. ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975] 283–284). On the other hand Lampe ("Church Discipline" 341, 353–354) believes that 2 Corinthians 2 reflects the remedial intention behind discipline in the early Church, including that in 1 Corinthians 5. Since Paul desired a corporate action in both the discipline and restoration that are called for in the two passages, both may refer to the same person. Lampe also sees a link between 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2 in the change of attitude that Paul mentions in 2 Cor 7:11–12 (cf. 2:9). This change is the very change that Paul desired of the church in 1 Corinthians 5. After all is said, no conclusive proof exists that Paul does or does not refer to the wicked man of 1 Corinthians 5 as he writes 2 Cor 2:5–11; 7:8–12.