PAUL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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PAUL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A Dialogue with the Father
of the Corinthian Community

Adrian Long

For Jenny

Without whom so many things
would not have been possible

Thank you

CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

> The language of rights has formed part of our moral, legal and political
> vocabulary for many centuries. The history of that language has not been
> one of unimpeded growth but it…has achieved a wider currency in our own
> age than at any previous time… Rights are so common in our world that we
> might suppose that they are woven into the very fabric of human existence.
> But there have been worlds without rights.[1]

It is unsurprising, given the general consensus that they are the direct
progeny of recent history, whatever their deeper roots, that Paul has nothing
explicit to say about human rights. That the actual notion of such rights
would have been unfamiliar to him, however, need not be understood as pre-
cluding Paul from making points or adopting positions pertinent to human
rights ideas. Indeed, his actions and teachings can be seen to impinge upon
aspects of life which the contemporary world considers largely, even pri-
marily, in human rights terms. Of course, that there is some overlap between
Paul's world and our own might reflect little more than that every human
culture manifests social and relational characteristics. One important criti-
cism of the human rights idea asserts that, despite the concrete connections
many like to draw from such overlaps, they are merely passing likenesses;
that the incommensurabilities of cultural distance render the whole notion
a grasping after impossible universals. If concurrent cultures are kidding
themselves in their efforts to share a global morality—if indeed human
rights are to be so described—how much more foolish is it to try to involve
a particular first-century Jew? Yet that is precisely what this project seeks to
do. The aim is to bring the self-styled father of the Corinthian community
into a dialogue with selected aspects of contemporary human rights debate,
using his relationship with, his teaching to and his impact upon that commu-
nity, as depicted in his Corinthian correspondence, to inform those debates
from without.

   This chapter outlines why such an attempt might be considered possi-
ble, appropriate and worthwhile, and how it is to be undertaken. Chapter 2
sets the attempt within a broader context by briefly discussing some other

   1.   P. Jones, *Rights* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 1.

theological interactions with human rights, develops the theology-human rights discussion, and begins to outline a descriptive definition of human rights. Such a definition is key if a Paul-rights dialogue is to be constructed, and needs not to be reductionist if that dialogue is to be at all representative. As such, the descriptive definition of human rights offered here will pay particular attention to the flexibility of the concept and to debates within rights thought. It will also seek a full and rounded account of human rights' political, social and relational value, as well as their historical and philosophical particularities. In so doing it will establish points of mutual interest with Paul, facilitating the possibility of and setting the agenda for dialogue.

The main dialogical interaction between Paul and human rights is developed in Chapters 3 to 6. Chapters 3 and 4 further develop the descriptive definition of human rights, focusing upon particular rights issues and exploring themes and texts within the Corinthian correspondence for a Pauline contribution to rights debates. Chapter 3 explores issues of relational power, especially as they were and are encountered in Paul's apostolic language and claims. In Chapters 4, 5 and 6, Paul's social impact is in view, with the initial discussions of Chapter 4 leading on to specific foci on women (Chapter 5) and slaves (Chapter 6).

To facilitate dialogue rather than monologue in discussing such controverial topics, the aim will be to hold reading and history in creative tension. But the nature of the task requires the reader to come first, at least methodologically. The rights-related ideas in view are brought to the text by human rights-aware readers, not read out of it. It therefore makes sense to begin interaction with the Corinthian letters with an explicitly synchronic and reader-centred exploration. Coming with specific human rights issues in mind, the texts will be scoured for possible relevance, with particular passages being identified and examined. This focusing of attention is not to be an isolation, however, as the themes embodied by these passages are echoed and developed throughout the Corinthian correspondence. It is thus important that any analysis does not divide them from their wider cotextual framework. Similarly, while these texts might be explored profitably from a solely readerly stance, the goal of dialogue requires that, once identified, they also receive historically-focused exegetical investigation. Taking the Corinthians' situation seriously, exploring Paul's inherited values, allowing authorial intent to inform textual reading where possible, all will ensure that while readers set the agenda they do not completely predetermine what will be found and the contribution to dialogue Paul might make. Questions about what that contribution might be receive initial assessment in Chapters 3-6 and are discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8. Those latter chapters aim to draw some initial conclusions and suggest ways forward in thinking about Paul in relation to human rights and other contemporary phenomena.

Before the dialogue can commence, however, there are important questions to be faced concerning whether the attempt to construct a Paul–human rights dialogue is valid and, if it is, what shape it might take.

1. *Why Attempt a Paul–Human Rights Dialogue?*

Although the possibility question has already been raised, the focus here will primarily be upon how worthwhile or appropriate a Paul–human rights dialogue might be, concentrating upon why we should bother with such a dialogue rather than whether it is attainable. For asking 'why?' inevitably also provokes questions of possibility, but places them within a broader framework. Methodological considerations about the shape of any possible dialogue will clearly have to be addressed, but will flow naturally out of decisions about its worth.

Of course, in one sense this whole discussion is somewhat after the horse has bolted. The fact that Pauline texts continue to be read, searched for significance, and applied as relevant inevitably means, within a world shaped by rights, that Paul is heard on human rights issues. But in seeking to make that hearing explicit and central, certain justifications need to be made.

a. *A Worthwhile Dialogue?*

In order for the proposed dialogue to be considered worthwhile, there has to be some possibility that involving Paul in an exchange with human rights thought might: (i) benefit rights thinking generally, or at least afford those reading Pauline texts an alternative handle with which to grasp key rights debates; and/or (ii) inform readings of Paul so that what he offers becomes both more clearly understood by and more relevant to those living within a rights-heavy culture. Fundamental to an expectation of positive results against either of these criteria, of course, is a willingness to accept both Paul and human rights as significant, as partners worth engaging in dialogue.

The first reaction for some will be an assumption of irrelevance. There are many quite willing to assume the inability of either dialogue partner to speak anything of value to the other. On the one hand this tends to be a dismissal of Paul as patriarchal oppressor, misogynist or anti-Semite. Paul 'often acts in ways which domineer and divide', as Shaw puts it.[2] On the other hand, there are those who dispute the existence or value of human rights, either for politico-philosophical reasons,[3] or because they construe

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2. G. Shaw, *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 183.

3. E.g. A. MacIntyre's oft quoted dismissal of belief in human rights as 'one with belief in witches and in unicorns' (*After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* [London: Duckworth, 1981], p. 67).

the idea as inimical to their beliefs about divine sovereignty, creation, human fallenness, and so on. The effect of such assumed irrelevance upon the value of the proposed dialogue will only be noted here,[4] for much of the material in the following chapters deal with whether one or other negative perspective holds water, and so a full assessment of the irrelevance issue must wait.

Linked to assumptions of irrelevance, however, is the common perception that human rights are necessarily liberal in character, and thus problematic for any theological dialogue. While tight liberalism-rights parallels are questionable,[5] their widespread influence makes the point of the exercise an issue. Is the aim of this Paul–human rights dialogue the legitimization or delegitimization of liberalism or one aspect of it? And does either qualify as a worthwhile end? Such questions are suggestive of the problems of doing theology within an essentially liberal cultural context, with which such notable theologians as Moltmann, Hauerwas and Milbank have struggled. Inevitably, their thinking will be touched upon, as will the mutual incompatibility of many of their conclusions. However, while they deal with the Christianity/theology—liberalism/modernity interface, this project has less ambitious goals. Its objective is to relate two lower level phenomena (selected biblical texts and particular aspects of human rights), assessing each in light of the other and asking what constructive and/or critical contributions Paul's Corinthian correspondence might make to certain debates within human rights thought. The intent is neither to baptize nor demonize human rights—both efforts being already over-subscribed— but to see if Paul can help us think about them more clearly. Whether this dialogue is worthwhile or not, then, stands less upon what it does or does not aim to legitimate and how successful it is in doing so, and more upon whether the issues with which it deals are of pressing significance.

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4.   Interestingly, one firm theological supporter of human rights, G. Newlands, makes a similar if opposite assumption about human rights' relevance. They matter, Newlands says, 'because they can inspire action to diminish man's inhumanity to man, to discourage the torture, genocide and other manifest evils which remain a continuing and endemic feature of human society. From a Christian standpoint, human rights issues are related intimately to central concepts of the gospel, to the understanding of humanity before God, to righteousness and justice. They embrace considerations of mercy, reconciliation and hospitality, and they focus on the treatment of the marginalized and of strangers. For Christians, they stem from the understanding of Christ as the centre of forgiveness, reconciliation and generosity' (*Christ and Human Rights: The Transformative Engagement* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006], p. 4). That Newlands asserts this *before* asking key questions about the nature and existence of human rights is suggestive of his assumptions about rights' reality and value in a similar manner to others' assumption that they lack both things.

5.   See the discussions in Chapter 2.

It would be a shame if Paul proved to have nothing to contribute on human rights, but that would not render the effort of asking him pointless, for clear thinking about them is an important goal. Human rights have become immensely significant for the ways in which people of almost all cultures value themselves, others, their institutions, nations and relationships. Whether used as trumps to claim whatever seems good to an individual or as assertions of justice for others, human rights have become a vital component of contemporary life. Furthermore, they have been key in the reshaping of international relations, and thus the world itself, since 1945.[6] Yet human rights are not straightforward things to think about. People in differing situations and with dissimilar values may have quite diverse conceptions of them, disagreeing over what counts as a human right, what constitutes and lies behind such claims, and how they should be enforced. Any insights Paul might offer, then, may prove more than useful.

It might be objected that as human rights are already a realm of much convoluted debate, involving an outsider like Paul is simply to muddy already murky waters. But objections of this sort overlook the point that the water *is* muddied; that those currently involved in discussing rights are having limited success in making it less so. Too much rights thought takes place within a reductionist liberal framework, where religious voices are relegated to marginal, private spheres. Even without their influence human rights—an allegedly objective, public good for liberals—are a contentious concept, claimed and construed in many different ways. The addition of Paul's voice may not help all, but it is not the cause of the confusion and may actually ameliorate its effects upon those who hold him (or at least the tradition of which he is a part) in high regard. Marty claims that introducing 'specifically religious voices' makes rights talk 'less comprehensible' for those who are not religious, but 'more vivid and satisfying' for those who are; raising 'everything to a new plane of complication or to a new depth of understanding', depending upon where you stand.[7] He adds that while many

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6.   As R.E. Howard states, 'It is now generally agreed that human rights have the status of international law…they provide a strong normative standard for the way states ought to treat their own citizens. The UN Covenants justify outside interest, on human rights grounds, in what had been formerly considered the exclusively internal affairs of a nation-state… Whatever the force of claims of national sovereignty, the evaluation of national human rights practices from the perspective of the international standards of the Universal Declaration is now considered to be appropriate. Similarly, from a legal point of view, the claims of cultural uniqueness or traditional practices cannot be taken to imply the illegitimacy of outside concern with internal human rights practices' (*Human Rights and the Search for Community* [Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995], pp. 11-12).

7.   M.E. Marty, 'Religious Dimensions of Human Rights', in J. Witte, Jr and J.D. van der Vyver (eds.), *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Religious Perspectives* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1996), pp. 1-16 (7).

rights theorists hesitate over involving the religious, to do so is to deny the lived realities of most of those to whom their thinking pertains.

> To believe that one can deal with issues of rights while neglecting religion is to lose power to deal with most human beings. To believe that one can deal with them from some supposed neutral point above the religious fray, for example in the name of secular Enlightened republicanism, is to show unawareness that the religions of the world regard Enlightenment reasoners to be one more set of competitors on the religious scene.[8]

Witte's stance is similar but goes further, asserting that the roots of human rights lie within the religious realm, indeed that rights are 'the modern political fruits of ancient religious beliefs and practices'.[9] This may be a much disputed claim,[10] but for those of religious conviction—including those most likely to be readers of Pauline texts—the suggestion is that rights thinking can be better expressed if it happens within a religious framework.

> There is…some value in religions simply accepting the current protections of a human rights regime—the guarantees of liberty of conscience, free exercise, religious-group autonomy, and the like. But passive acquiescence in a secular scheme of human rights ultimately will not do. Religious communities must reclaim their own voices within the secular human rights dialogue, and reclaim the human rights voices within their own internal religious dialogues… Religious traditions cannot allow secular human rights norms to be imposed on them from without; they must rediscover them from within. It is only then that religious traditions can bring their full doctrinal rigor, liturgical healing, and moral suasion to bear on the problems and paradoxes of the modern human rights regime.[11]

The agreement between Marty and Witte only reaches so far. Ultimately, Marty sees a worthwhile confusion, predicting incomprehension among non-believers if religious voices are introduced to rights debates, whatever the benefits for believers. Witte, on the other hand, believes that incomprehension can be overcome, that religious voices can not only reaffirm rights' religious heritage for believers but actually dissolve many of the issues with

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8. Marty, 'Religious Dimensions', p. 15.
9. J. Witte, Jr, 'The Spirit of the Laws, the Laws of the Spirit: Religion and Human Rights in a New Global Era', in M.L. Stackhouse and D.S. Browning (eds.), *God and Globalization*. II. *The Spirit and the Modern Authorities* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2001), pp. 76-106 (84).
10. See the discussion in Chapter 2.
11. Witte, 'Spirit of the Laws', p. 84. The claim that human rights are there within (all) religious traditions is an interesting one, and raises questions as to how much context shapes interpretation of tradition. Witte does provide evidence for his claim, particularly in relation to Protestant Christianity, but there is no room here to outline his case.

which secular rights thinking has confused itself.[12] Either approach makes a Paul–human rights dialogue worthwhile, though clearly Witte sees far more possible beneficiaries of it. Perhaps the worth of a Paul-rights dialogue, then, can only be measured by those who are willing to listen to Paul, whether initially because of his place in their faith traditions or finally because he offers a clarifying perspective. And that brings us back to the dual criteria of dialogical worth; does it contribute something of benefit to rights thought and/or to more accurate and contextually relevant readings of Paul?

b. *An Appropriate Dialogue?*

The appropriateness of a Paul–human rights dialogue can be judged by its handling of human rights, Paul and Pauline texts, and those who interact with both. A true dialogue allows interlocutors to have their say, be themselves, and respond to criticisms made of them. In seeking to construct a dialogue, then, it is imperative to avoid perpetuating distortions of either party and allow them, so far as is possible, to speak on their own terms. The importance of dialogical honesty will be explored further below, indeed it is a repeated theme throughout this project. An emphasis upon allowing interlocutors to speak on their own terms, however, raises particular questions about how Paul and Pauline texts are handled given the distinct reader-orientation of a dialogue with rights.

In order to be appropriate, a Paul–human rights dialogue must endeavour to read Pauline texts within an explicit rights framework but without undermining the integrity of those texts. That is not to say that they cannot be challenged or critiqued, but that such critique must treat them as contextual wholes; do justice to the sum and their setting, not isolate or abstract the parts. In order to read them in this way, it is clearly necessary to approach the texts first synchronically and in their canonical context.[13] It is an historical fact that Paul's Corinthian correspondence is accessed within a rights-aware context only as part of a larger whole and (outside of the academy) only with assumptions of its coherence. It is all too easy for professional

12. Witte blames the excision of the religious from rights thinking for four complicating distortions. Having no religious perspective, he says, means: [i] that many rights are cut off from their foundation in the right to believe and hence struggle to make sense; [ii] that there is no control over the expansion of rights and no natural linkage between rights and duties because they become an abstract concept when freed from a broader framework; [iii] that rights become captive to secular western ideals and all the particular claims and mistakes therein; [iv] that the state 'is given an exaggerated role as the guarantor of human rights', assuming an 'omni-competence' which is in fact beyond it and which minimizes the important role of other structures and bodies in the cultivation and realization of rights (Witte, 'Spirit of the Laws', pp. 86-87).

13. See W.A. Meeks, 'A Hermeneutics of Social Embodiment', *Harvard Theological Review* 79.1 (1986), pp. 176-86 (180).

interpreters to excise as interpolations passages they do not like when it comes to reading Paul on social issues,[14] and some of the least popular of such passages are to be found within the Corinthian correspondence (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.20-24; 11.3-16; 14.33b-36). However, though assessments can be made regarding the originality of such problem passages, whether or not Paul penned them is of limited import when it comes to assessing their current significance; 'If Paul did not write them, they do not cease to be the church's scripture'.[15] Though the intent is to construct a dialogue between Paul and human rights, we need to acknowledge the impossibility of true access to the historical Paul. The best that we can do is to read the Paul preserved in his letters, the canonical Paul or, more particularly, the Paul of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The attempt at dialogue, then, is less an effort to reach through time, picking Paul's rights thinking from within his subconscious, than it is an examination of texts we possess in particular relation to issues of human rights. This requires that we take seriously the texts as we have received them. It also means that textual function, rather than authenticity or syntactical precision, takes precedence in our thinking about what a text means. The impact Paul's Corinthian correspondence had and continues to have upon its readers is of primary concern.[16] Such impacts will, of course, themselves reflect both the readers' communal, cultural and historical settings, and their relationship with and perceptions of Paul. Hence, that rights-aware readings necessarily start with the synchronic should not be taken to imply the irrelevance of historical factors, anything but. It matters to an assessment of how the texts functioned that Paul's words were directed to concrete social situations, just as it matters that they are read within similar settings today.

Asking human rights questions of Pauline texts is to ask beyond anything Paul himself knew, at least in explicit terms, and might therefore be seen as inappropriate. Though this point links to issues of cultural incommensurability which are addressed in Chapter 4, its particular textual implications merit some comments here. Despite their lack of explicit rights references, a human rights-informed approach to Paul's Corinthian letters can be considered legitimate on grounds of textual character and interpretational practice. First, Paul wrote letters which addressed real situations, forcing his readers

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14. On this see, e.g., N. Elliott, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 25-54; D.G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 184-95.

15. E.E. Johnson, 'Ephesians', in C.A. Newsom and S.H. Ringe (eds.), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), pp. 338-42 (341).

16. Meeks, 'Hermeneutics of Social Embodiment', pp. 183-85.

to think about the contextually earthed implications of theological convic-tions in personal, relational and political terms.[17] The well-worn language of indicative and imperative makes little sense in the abstract, it requires a social setting. It is, then, wholly appropriate for later readers to come to these Pauline texts while thinking about their own lives and situations; the theological values the texts portray demand concrete appropriation in what-ever setting they are read.[18]

Second, appropriate interpretation must be recognized as containing more than mere textual autopsy. As Watson says,

> to interpret is *to use texts to think with*. To confine interpretation to the ever more precise reproduction or retracing of what the texts say is to neglect their canonical function, which is to generate thought, not to restrict it. Their genre as canonical texts demands that they be set *within broad hori-zons*, and not merely returned to an 'original historical situation' in the first century.[19]

It can be appropriate, in other words, to ask questions of the text about which neither original author nor original audience might have had much or anything to say. It being appropriate does not necessarily mean that useful answers will be gleaned from such questioning, but the opportunity, even the responsibility, to ask remains. Furthermore, the sort of text and author this dialogue seeks to draw upon are those which lend themselves to just this sort of interpretive appropriation. In discussing the alleged dangers of anachronistic readings of Marx, Burke and Bentham, Waldron asks:

> What sort of mistake is it suggested we are making when we adapt a theme or quotation…and use it in a modern debate? Is it that the author would have prohibited such a use of his material had he contemplated it in advance? That sounds crazy: for one thing, all these authors were aware

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17. As part of this, Paul demonstrates the same desire to shape the world, com-munities and individuals into 'something better' that human rights thought manifests. While their visions of that 'better' thing cannot be assumed to be the same, that they at least share a desire to improve the current by affirmation of certain underlying and yet overriding values eases the drawing of critical comparisons between Paul and human rights.

18. As E.A. Castelli says, while there is something inevitable about bringing our own agenda to a text, to do so need not be seen as a reading flaw: 'To varying degrees, we bring contemporary questions and interests to bear on history all the time, and not merely in a reductively pragmatic fashion. There is a thrilling expanse of space between the impossible goal of allowing texts to speak for themselves, on the one hand, and the posing of loaded anachronistic questions, on the other. In between is located the evoca-tive, resonant, if often contested terrain that Foucault calls "the history of the present"' ('Interpretations of Power in 1 Corinthians', *Semeia* 54 [1991], pp. 197-222 [199]).

19. F. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender: Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. viii, original emphasis.

of the transhistorical character of political writing. They drew deeply and sometimes explicitly on traditional texts which, by similar criteria, might have been regarded as anachronistic in *their* time; and they would have been pleased and inspired (maybe flattered) by the prospect of the enduring contribution their writing might make to controversies that would outlive their particular concerns.[20]

It is surely no different with Paul; that his writings deal with more than the political, that the traditions he drew upon were themselves transhistorical scriptures, and that today's controversies would be even stranger to him than to Bentham or Marx, do not make him a less likely source for an 'enduring contribution'. Waldron also warns, however, against forgetting a text's original setting in such readings. By 'failing to relate a text to its historical context, we may make it blander, less interesting, less meaningful, more mysterious, and therefore of less use to us than it would otherwise be'.[21] Thus, again, reading the Corinthian correspondence for a fruitful dialogue with human rights requires that its original context be taken seriously.

The appropriateness of a Paul–human rights dialogue can also be established according to its handling of readers. Most obviously, here, such a dialogue takes seriously contemporary readers' lived reality. Whatever decisions are adopted about the objective/constructed character of human rights, reading Paul in light of rights thought allows readers to interact explicitly with the context which shapes them, raising the likelihood of more relevant readings. Such relevance is more than simply pragmatic, it is of epistemological worth. As Patterson points out, there is a necessarily realist logic to Christian thinking; 'its self-consistency requires the upholding of certain central truth claims'.[22] At the same time, however, postmodern insights have taught us that 'language (and the language-user) has for good or for bad the power to construct a reality…and that both construction and discovery are not only inevitable and inherent in human linguisticality, but also inevitably partial, flawed, perverse and idolatrous'.[23] A Paul-rights dialogue brings this tension centre-stage, enabling readers to face up to the constructed and partial aspects of a human rights reality as they experience and articulate it, while not giving up hope that something objective might be said about their humanity,[24] perhaps in affirmation of human rights, perhaps

20. J. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 5, original emphasis.

21. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 6.

22. S. Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology in a Postmodern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 31.

23. Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology*, p. 31.

24. While an acceptance that postmodern ideas of cultural construction and incommensurability mean that nothing absolute can be said about the human condition is attractive, it cuts against the legacy of Christian tradition (including Paul's view of the

in correction of them. As Patterson summarizes, 'The world under human description seeks verification and redemption in terms of the world under God's description'.[25] Or, as Lindbeck articulates a similar thought, 'It is the text…which absorbs the world, rather than the world the text'.[26]

Thus, in taking readers seriously, by allowing one important facet of their world to impinge upon the reading act, the text can also be taken seriously, treated appropriately. Bringing the alien notion of human rights into dialogue with the Corinthian correspondence does not necessarily require it to stand over the text. On the contrary, the Lindbeck-Patterson approach assumes the text to be more authoritative than the world outside it, and so requires some level of faith—or at least commitment to the tradition—on the part of readers. But that, after all, is what most readers of Pauline texts bring to their readings anyway.

c. *A Dialogue with Paul?*

The question of 'why Paul?' has already been touched upon. He is, it has been said, a pertinent dialogue partner for human rights because of his concern for real socio-relational situations. That Paul would not have known the language of human rights has also been stated, however. And while there are some who would argue that ignorance of vocabulary does not necessarily mean ignorance of the concept,[27] it would seem somewhat fanciful to argue that Paul's knowledge of his own time suggests familiarity with concepts in ours, even if the one stands behind the other in some way. A less debatable justification of involving Paul with human rights can be found by continuing to think about the pragmatics of Paul's apostolic ministry.

It might be argued that it is the all-encompassing reach of human rights, rather than anything about Paul specifically, which makes a dialogue between them viable; human rights' inexorable expansion has seen them

world) as well as against much contemporary rights thought. Neither Paul nor human rights can easily be considered as passive, yet as S.H. Polaski points out, passivity can be the end of convictions of cultural relativism. 'Much postmodern theory has been subjected (!) to criticism for its failure to engage "real world" issues and concerns. Indeed, by insisting that there is no privileged position for interpretation, that even such ideals as truth and freedom are culturally determined constructs, postmodern thought harbors a dangerously quietistic bent' (*Paul and the Discourse of Power* [Gender, Culture, Theory, 8; The Biblical Seminar, 62; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 128).

25. Patterson, *Realist Christian Theology*, p. 31.

26. G.A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 118.

27. E.g. C.S. Layman, *The Shape of the Good: Christian Reflections on the Foundation of Ethics* (Library of Religious Philosophy, 7; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), p. 175.

envelop issues which Paul addressed within a very different framework.
On the other hand, as an historically earlier figure and apostle of a world-
view even more inclusive than rights, Paul's own teaching, relating and
actions might be said to have lain ready to interact with them. Either way,
it is in these three dimensions of his apostleship—what Paul taught, how
he acted, and the relationships he had and encouraged—that his signifi-
cance for rights notions is expressed. The same could, perhaps, be said of
anyone, for all participate in these rights-relevant activities. Paul's par-
ticular significance, however, lies in: (i) his status as key thinker within
the Judaeo-Christian tradition—itself foundational for the shape of con-
temporary society—and especially in his influential written legacy; (ii)
that his apostolic status gave all he did and said a weight which most do
not carry, a weight he was happy to use; and (iii) that he remains a figure
to whom many still turn as both teacher and model. Paul's dealings with
others, then, manifest authority on multiple levels. While both the modern
and the postmodern have found progress and truth in their challenges to
accepted authority and tradition—hence a dialogue with, not obeisance
to Paul—the necessity of relating to authoritative figures or positions has
never been in question. Thus Paul's relationships, use of power, claims to
truth, construal of humanity, handling of cultural norms, and so on, con-
tain considerable potential for human rights debates. Paul was and is a sig-
nificant figure; human rights do not lie beyond the reach of his influence.

Clearly, that influence is bound up with the Pauline texts we retain from
an earlier age, an age 'without rights'. This temporal placement is impor-
tant. When Paul speaks on rights issues, he does so as an outsider, as one
who neither knows nor uses contemporary language and ideas. There is,
then, no danger of reading Paul's references to human rights and assuming
that we know what he is saying, or that he agrees with us because we rec-
ognize his vocabulary. It also means that in reading Paul with human rights
in mind, we are compelled to reflect critically upon him, perhaps thinking
about his teaching and impact more rigorously than we might had he spoken
in the familiar terminology of rights.

I. *Why the Corinthian Correspondence?*
Paul's Corinthian correspondence provides an appropriate forum within
which to construct a dialogue between him and human rights for several
reasons. First, the very genre of Pauline texts is suited to some essential
characteristics of rights thought. As letters, Paul's legacy reflects an ongoing
relational conversation between himself and early Christian communities.
The letters demonstrate the nature of that relationship and the context within
which it existed to have been characterized by development and flexibility—
sometimes of a sort Paul appreciated, often not. Paul spoke into such flex-
ible situations in an effort to encourage appropriate, healthy growth, so that

the communities might gain both maturity and stability in their living out of the gospel (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.1-2; cf. Eph. 4.10-15). Sometimes Paul speaks affirmation to such ends (e.g. 1 Thess. 4.9-10), sometimes correction (e.g. Gal. 3.2-5), but always he deals with those capable of moving either toward him or away. The state of rights thinking is similar, exhibiting parallels in flexibility, growth potential and openness to affirmation or correction. Such similarities make it easy to appropriate Paul's speaking into one situation and direct it into another in a way that would not have been the case had he written pure doctrinal treatises or disinterested, impersonal texts.

The second point overlaps with the first, though emphasizing what Paul wrote and why rather than the intimately related issue of genre. As noted above, Paul wrote into community situations with largely communal inter-ests in view. One of many possible examples of this orientation is given by Hays who, in looking at Paul's use of the Old Testament, identifies the apostle's 'de facto canon within the canon'.[28] The issue for the communi-ties to whom Paul wrote, says Hays, was not Jesus' identity, as it became for later generations, but the church's communal self-definition. Thus Paul quotes from Isaiah significantly more often than from other Old Testament books. Hays explains,

> Isaiah offers the clearest expression in the Old Testament of a universalistic, eschatological vision in which the restoration of Israel in Zion is accom-panied by an ingathering of Gentiles to worship the Lord; that is why this book is both statistically and substantively the most important scriptural source for Paul.[29]

That Paul responds to communities' needs for self-definition by exploiting 'universalistic' traditions shows his concern that they understand them-selves within the framework of wider humanity. Paul rarely makes small claims about the teachings he propounds; they are true for all, saying something final about the shape of the world and all in it, and something determinative for those within believing communities as a function of that. While metanarratives and absolute truth may be unpopular concepts within postmodernity, they are still very much alive in much human rights thinking (sometimes even where the thinkers deny it). That Paul's letters and human rights share a 'big picture' perspective—including a utopian, even eschatological, vision—and do so in realms which impinge upon one another—placing the individual within the community and the com-munity within universal humanity—enhances the appropriateness of the proposed dialogue.

28. R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Univer-sity Press, 1989), p. 162.

29. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, p. 162. Hays says that Paul quotes Isaiah 28×, Psalms 20×, Deuteronomy 15×, Genesis 15×, no other Old Testament text more than 5×.

Third, beyond such broad considerations, the Corinthian letters are par-
ticularly appropriate for the dialogue in view. Putting aside the fairly obvious
point of Paul's interaction within them with rights-relevant issues, these
texts and the literature surrounding them offer particular opportunities. In
the letters Paul responds to the Corinthian community's uncritical or semi-
critical adoption of the values and practices of contemporary society and
morality. What Paul models in response is thus pertinent to efforts at relat-
ing to the hegemony of human rights in similar realms today. The quality
and quantity of information available about Corinth and its Christian com-
munity is impressive and has encouraged wide debate, bequeathing a large
and diverse secondary literature with which to interact.[30] One facet of that
literature is the diversity of Pauls it seems to be dealing with. Clearly, Paul
will contribute differently to a dialogue with human rights according to how
he is conceived. On one level, a variety of Pauls simply confuses matters.
However, such variety can also be taken positively, as a rich resource upon
which the dialogue can draw. And, of course, certain images of Paul will
appear as more or less likely through the process of this rights-aware exami-
nation; the dialogue may thus help readers of the Corinthian letters to envis-
age and interpret Paul more appropriately.

In addition, the Corinthian correspondence provides a helpful mix of
theological content and personal model; Paul focuses upon himself and his
relationships as well as (or as part of) setting out his theology. Human rights
require both praxis and theory. To reflect properly upon Paul's relation to
rights it is necessary to examine not merely what he taught, but also how he
related to and the impact he had upon the social values and structures of the
Corinthian community.

2. *On Dialogue*

Any purposeful reading of Paul requires the use of tools and models which
are appropriate to both text and task. There are, then, methodological rami-
fications inherent in the decision to construct a dialogue between Paul and
human rights, rather than a straight comparison of the two, or even a proof-
texting endorsement or rejection of either. The decision for dialogue reflects
a conviction that opportunities for insight will be greater if Paul and human
rights are both allowed to speak than if one is used as a stick with which
to beat the other, or they are simply held up against a light in order to spot

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30. See, e.g., the survey of sources and scholarship in D.G. Horrell and E. Adams,
'The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth: A Critical Survey', in E. Adams
and D.G. Horrell (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church*
(Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004), pp. 2-40.

differences.[31] Inherent to such a conviction is the judgment that both have something to offer—they are worth talking to—and yet also require close questioning. Human rights, while immensely powerful, are a concept of disputed value.[32] Many of the arguments against them apply only to certain aspects or conceptions of rights, however, so that a dialogue with Paul might perhaps point the way to a refined or streamlined version of them if he can be shown to speak insightfully into some of their disputed areas. Among the legion recent readings of Paul there has been an increasing tendency to acknowledge him as socio-politically significant, not 'merely' a theologian. Often such acknowledgements have been positive. Just as often, however, Paul has been depicted as an ambiguous or negative influence upon the communities to which he wrote,[33] upon the church down the ages, and even upon wider society to this day. As such assessments of Paul always stand at least partially upon contemporary criteria, it would seem reasonable to also use human rights thought as a backdrop against which to ask questions of his influence—it certainly enjoys greater prestige than some of the other schemes and values against which he has been judged.

Despite its potential, the idea of constructing a dialogue between two others entails inevitable problems. As a particular white, western and academic male, my presentation of both interlocutors is bound to be skewed, as is the dialogue which I construct between them. That remains true however aware of it I become and however much I try to view either interlocutor from vantage points not easily my own. Beyond such factors, skewing begins with the conviction—safe though it seems to me—that there is something shared by Paul and human rights which allows a dialogue to take place. It continues in shaping either partner around aspects of those shared

31. See Patterson's construal of the interdependence of text and world: 'There is a reality outside of texts and their interpreting traditions, a reality which awaits conversion to the text and the tradition, but which itself brings aspects of itself into a dialectical encounter with the special revelation. Reading is world-involving; if the text reads the world, the world also reads the text. We always view the world from a particular theological place—there is no God's-eye view, system-neutral position from which we can get at the truth—and yet this particular theological place is also a particular faith-traditional and particular cultural place. The theology indwells the context and the context the theology, and from this intermingling comes new facets of revelation' (*Realist Christian Theology*, p. 10).

32. As G. Newlands puts it, 'Human rights has been one of the most powerful concepts in socio-political thinking in the last fifty years. Yet like other powerful concepts—freedom, God, justice—it has been and remains much contested. Lack of an agreed definition, or even agreement on the existence of human rights, has been a cause of much frustration' ('Human Rights, Divine Transcendence', in W.F. Storrar and A.R. Morton [eds.], *Public Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Duncan B. Forrester* [London: T. & T. Clark, 2004], pp. 123-35 [125]).

33. Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', p. 33.

interests, inevitably minimizing any number of other factors equally impor-
tant to them but less relevant to my agenda. The Paul who emerges from
an encounter where human rights have set the readerly agenda is bound
to appear at least slightly different from other Pauls.[34] Similarly, certain
elements of human rights thought and debate will be judged more perti-
nent for a dialogue with Paul than others, delimiting the overall picture of
rights which emerges. Further such limitations will accrue from the deci-
sion to work from Paul's Corinthian correspondence. These texts do not, for
example, easily lend themselves to a discussion of whether human rights
are really only a forensic category, and so that aspect of rights debate will
not be emphasized. Clearly, the resultant skewing of either dialogue partner
entails an inherent risk of distortion, of allowing Paul to determine or be
determined by a concept of which he was unaware. While the inevitability
of this risk does not mean that the dialogue's results need be considered
either false or predetermined, nor will they tell the whole story. There is
more to be said of human rights and of Paul than can be explored or even
depicted here.

   Given that acknowledgement of this project's limitations, in order to
construct a dialogue it is necessary to have fairly clear ideas about the inter-
locutors involved. That Paul himself is not easy to tie down has already
been noted. Some contrasting images of Paul and his influence will have
to be raised and weighed as the dialogue proceeds. However, restricting his
contribution to the Corinthian letters, and then only parts of them, will in
itself limit the diversity of ideas about Paul which have to be dealt with. The
image of Paul with which this dialogue is constructed, therefore, though
neither straightforward nor uncontroversial, is at least relatively succinct.
The same cannot be said of human rights. Despite the inevitable limitation
and skewing mentioned above, that the dialogue is concerned with debates
within rights thought requires a somewhat fuller account of them.

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   34. This is not a particular characteristic of this project so much as an inevitable
facet of agenda-led reading, which more or less all reading is. As F. Watson puts it, 'In
exegetical practice, all interpreters work with…principles of selectivity and relevance
which lead them to highlight certain facets of the text and to minimize others' ('Christ,
Community, and the Critique of Ideology: A Theological Reading of 1 Corinthians
1.18-31', *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 46 [1992], pp. 132-49 [137]).

Chapter 2

THEOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. *A Limited Conversation*

Given the importance of human rights to the contemporary world, there has been surprisingly little theological interaction with them.[1] There is a body of literature, there are those for whom it is a recurring theme, and there are conferences devoted to discussing rights theologically. But, even so, they appear a neglected subject—at least to one already interested in them—especially in terms of their investigation from a biblical perspective. Perhaps it is because rights have received such limited theological attention, because there is little to interact with and be refined by, that much of the literature which does exist feels imbalanced, or at least lacking in nuance. Too often a priori decisions about human rights' worth, or lack of it, appear to determine the shape and conclusions of theological studies of them. The problem is partly one of generalization. The diversity, development and flexibility of rights thought is often ignored, a homogenized presentation of their use and/or foundations being preferred because simplified constructs are much easier to denigrate or praise. The resulting body of literature tends, therefore, toward monologue rather than dialogue, limiting opportunities for insight and development in the blinkered and fervent desire to state a case.[2]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the literature can be divided fairly easily between those, on the one hand, who view the human rights concept positively, and those, on the other, who make a negative assessment; relatively few seem able consider them ambiguous, capable of both good and bad contributions. While a simplification, it is not too much of a distortion to say that those on the 'rights as good' side tend toward a teleological focus—justice, equality and hope being rights' kingdom-of-God-compatible fruit—while 'rights as bad' thinkers prefer to focus upon their genesis and heritage, with

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1. This remains the case in spite of some recent contributions. See, e.g., Newlands, *Christ and Human Rights*, significantly part of the Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series.

2. There are, however, some notable exceptions to this trend, e.g. K. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics* (New Studies in Christian Ethics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

allegations of rights' roots in secular and individualistic liberalism deter-
mining their rejection.[3]

What follows is a very brief outline of selected theological stances for
and against human rights, and some equally abridged criticisms of such
thinking. The aim is to give a taste of the basic theological positions on this
issue, to inform the proposed dialogue through reference to others' work,
not to assess that work exhaustively.

a. *Human Rights as Bad*

Among the most influential of contemporary ethical theologians is Stanley
Hauerwas. His theological opposition to human rights thought springs natu-
rally from two broader themes: his basic anti-liberalism and his conviction
that correlating the church's moral values with those of wider society leads
to a loss of ecclesial identity and witness. As Fergusson summarizes this
latter conviction, Hauerwas is concerned that 'If the moral principles under-
written by Christian beliefs can be known and practised independently of
these beliefs, then the latter start to look redundant'.[4] This reflects Hauer-
was' most distinctive opinion, that ethics are necessarily done in and from a
communal setting, that it is the community's values which determine those
ethical stances it is possible for its members to adopt.

> Theologians, therefore, have something significant to say about ethics, but
> they will not say it significantly if they try to disguise the fact that they
> think, write, and speak out of and to a distinctive community. Their first
> task is not…to write as though Christian commitments make no differ-
> ence…but rather to show the difference those commitments make… Our
> task as theologians remains what it has always been—namely to exploit the
> considerable resources embodied in particular Christian convictions which
> sustain our ability to be a community faithful to our belief that we are crea-
> tures of a graceful God. If we do that, we may well discover that we are
> speaking to more than just our fellow Christians, for others as a result may
> well find we have something interesting to say.[5]

For Hauerwas, one of the main problems with liberalism is that it denies
the vital role of communities for ethical thinking, forcing all to buy into
a watered-down middle ground or to suppress their continued strong

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3.   This is not to deny either side's recognition of the other aspect of rights' trajec-
tory, but to outline an overall orientation which affects their presentation and handling
of human rights. Many theological advocates of rights emphasize their foundation in
humanity's creation as *imago Dei*, for example, while their opponents often point to
rights' atomistic impact upon society, but the generalization stands.

4.   D. Fergusson, *Community, Liberalism and Christian Ethics* (New Studies in
Christian Ethics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 50.

5.   S. Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (London:
SCM Press, 1983), pp. 35-36.

convictions as mere private beliefs. He insists that the autonomous and rational individual of liberal theory is mythic, that in reality all are shaped by their communities, and therefore that Christians should celebrate and focus upon the doctrines distinctive to their community, particularly christology.[6] Furthermore, Hauerwas claims that independence from the prevailing culture—one shaped by rights rather than christology—is vital for the Christian community to be and to flourish.

Inevitably, this stance has led to criticisms that Hauerwas' thought is little more than sectarian.[7] Whether or not that is fair, his emphasis upon Christian community based distinctiveness has made him largely unreceptive to rights talk which, he says, 'tends toward individualistic accounts of society and underwrites a view of human relations as exchanges rather than cooperative endeavours'.[8] In addition,

> Such language…seems to embody the highest human ideals. But it also facilitates the assumption that anyone who denies such rights is morally obtuse and should be 'forced' to recognise the error of his ways. Indeed, we overlook too easily how the language of 'rights', in spite of its potential for good, contains within its logic a powerful justification for violence. Our rights language 'absolutizes the relative' in the name of a universal that is profoundly limited and limiting just to the extent that it tempts us to substitute some moral ideal for our faithfulness to God.[9]

Hauerwas offers a powerful case for a distancing from all things foreign to the church, including human rights, and certainly there are aspects of his emphasis upon Christian community as the vital setting for theological ethics with which Paul would heartily agree.[10] However, there are some fairly serious

6. For S. Hauerwas, 'A christology which is not a social ethic is deficient' (*A Community of Character* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981], p. 37).

7. E.g. G. Newlands claims that Hauerwas 'avoids individualism only to fall into corporatism' (*Generosity and the Christian Future* [London: SPCK, 1997], p. 258). See also L. Sowle Cahill, 'The New Testament and Ethics: Communities of Social Change', *Interpretation* 44 (1990), pp. 383-95 (386). Hauerwas disputes the sectarian charge and some commentators, like Fergusson, see it as simplistic (*Community*, p. 65). However, Fergusson does accuse Hauerwas of over-emphasizing the church's distinction from the world, largely by his emphasis upon Jesus as moral exemplar at the expense of talking about him in incarnational terms or about his atoning and Spirit-sending work (*Community*, pp. 67-70).

8. S. Hauerwas, 'On the "Right" to be Tribal', *Christian Scholars' Review* 16.3 (1987), pp. 238-41 (238).

9. Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, p. 61.

10. An interesting point since, as R.B. Hays (*Moral Vision of the New Testament: Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997], p. 260) and Fergusson (*Community*, pp. 70-71) point out, Hauerwas's interaction with biblical texts is almost entirely limited to the Synoptics, with Paul playing very little role. This may largely be due to Hauerwas's particular christological interests. For

criticisms to be made of his thinking too. Leaving issues of liberalism on one side until Lockwood O'Donovan's thought has been discussed, these criticisms largely regard the sharp divide Hauerwas draws between church and world. Because he denies 'substantive moral discourse between narratives',[11] depicting the epistemology shaped by Christian convictions as incommensurable with that which is not, he is unable to find any real positives in secular thought. Yet, as Fergusson says, while secular thinking about human dignity may differ from Christian claims about creation in God's image,

> the latter claim is capable of recognising that there is some wisdom in the former. In the light of Christian convictions about the status of the world as created, it should not be surprising if there are secular affirmations of the dignity of the human person. Instead of casting such assertions aside, the theologian needs to rehabilitate them within a Christian frame of reference.[12]

The neglect of God as creator—implying something universal—to emphasize God as saviour—often associated with an elect community—is a common tendency in certain traditions, and has its own advantages. However, while it is unwise to 'minimise the noetic effects of our fallenness…enough of the divine image remains that we are able to grasp all sorts of truths even if our understanding is less than certain'.[13] To reject rights thought simply because it comes from outside the believing community and is sometimes used in unpalatable ways may, then, be an unnecessary ejection of baby with bathwater.

Among the most strident opponents of a theological affirmation of human rights is Joan Lockwood O'Donovan. She rejects rights thought outright for its historically determined dependence upon liberal philosophy.[14] Her 'impression is that theologians often engage in a naïve and facile appropriation of the language of rights',[15] not appreciating the full effects of its

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further thoughts on Hauerwas's opposition to liberalism as 'a thoroughly and authentically Pauline affair', see D. Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals: Pauline Theology beyond Christendom and Modernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2003), pp. 67-103 (p. 68).

11. Newlands, *Generosity*, p. 264.

12. Fergusson, *Community*, p. 74.

13. S. Rea, 'Christianity and Rationality', in M. Elliott (ed.), *The Dynamics of Human Life* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), pp. 34-66 (51).

14. J. Lockwood O'Donovan takes a broadly dim view of liberalism and is thus suspicious of its influence upon human rights. She claims, e.g., that 'the ideas and practices of modern liberalism are generally inadequate, and sometimes inimical to the reality of community' ('Natural Law and Perfect Community: Contributions of Christian Platonism to Political Theory', *Modern Theology* 14.1 [1998], pp. 19-45 [19]). This renders human rights a child of 'questionable parentage' so far as she is concerned ('Historical Prolegomena to a Theological Review of "Human Rights"', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 9.2 [1996], pp. 52-65 [65]).

15. J. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'The Concept of Rights in Christian Moral Discourse', in

heritage. While an astute assessment, Lockwood O'Donovan's own rejection of rights might be similarly questioned as naïvely reductionist. Her basic premise is that rights' historical foundations have 'invested it with lasting intellectual content',[16] that the concept inevitably carries unwelcome implications whatever the attractions it appears to have and however its language is used: 'the modern liberal concept of right belongs to the socially and disintegrative philosophy of "possessive individualism"'.[17] For theologians to dabble with such language, then, is worse than an unfortunate adoption of contemporary terminology.

> It may be that rights are indispensable tools in the legal field, but to bring them into essential theological and philosophical language about the community is to do what Wycliffe opposed the papal church for doing: bringing the tools of the institutions of fallen humanity into the most fundamental conceptions of what man was created to be. They are dispensations for sinful humanity.[18]

While Lockwood O'Donovan's genuine concerns about the impact of rights language within theology are worth hearing, and some of her descriptions of its unfettered role in contemporary society are insightful,[19] her accompanying blanket rejection of it is unconvincing. Thus George criticizes her 'purely historical' argument that because rights emerged with liberalism they can have no freedom from its values.

> [S]urely no mere historical connection is sufficient to establish that those who reject possessive individualism cannot now deploy the language of rights without thereby importing into their thought features of that philosophy that mark it as antithetical to the value of community and other important human goods.[20]

M. Cromartie (ed.), *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 143-56 (144). Also, 'Historical Prolegomena', p. 53.

16. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Concept of Rights', p. 146. Lockwood O'Donovan is particularly perturbed by what she rather debatably considers the 'paradigmatic' and thus 'decisively influential' role of property rights upon all rights thinking and developments ('Historical Prolegomena', p. 55).

17. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Natural Law', p. 20.

18. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Concept of Rights', p. 162.

19. E.g. 'The only limitations of rights-claims in liberal society come from the expanding horizons of human technological ingenuity together with the shrinking horizons of the public purse' (Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Natural Law', p. 22). And 'We may…be witnessing the bitter historical irony that the relativized striving in contemporary society for the substance of community, reciprocity, equity, and public trust is being undermined by its most trusted theoretical support' (Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Concept of Rights', p. 156).

20. R.P. George, 'Response to Lockwood O'Donovan', in M. Cromartie (ed.), *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 157-61 (157).

Fergusson picks up the same point, emphasizing its practical implications.

> [I]t is not clear that the concept of human rights is necessarily tethered to the assumptions of liberal individualism. One might attempt to appropriate rights language while stressing its limitations and the need to root it in some substantial moral theory. There are good reasons for doing this. The language of human rights is the only plausible candidate for a global moral language. It is the fundamental concept in the United Nations Declaration (1948); it is used by international courts…and it is increasingly a language employed in interfaith dialogue. To abandon it because of its inadequacies is to make the perfect the enemy of the good. The language of rights has an important function in articulating a moral consensus against some of the most flagrant abuses in our time.[21]

The point here is not whether human rights are fundamental to liberalism—they are—but whether that is all that they can be.[22] In fact, Lockwood O'Donovan herself acknowledges that the crisis in modern liberalism requires its fundamental concepts to be either retained but reinterpreted or abandoned.[23] Unfortunately, she opts solely for the latter, dismissing those who choose her other option, who would rather see a reshaped, positive concept of rights helping to transform society from within. This decision seems to flow, much as Hauerwas' thinking does, from a view of liberalism as unreservedly negative, even demonic.

But while there is much 'wrong'—incompatible with Christian theological values—with liberalism, such sweeping rejections may go too far by conceiving of that which they oppose as a simple monolith. Yet such is not an accurate description of any culture, and provokes overly simplistic notions of how Christianity or theology can and should interact with its context.[24] It may be true that contemporary liberalism is morally bankrupt,

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21. Fergusson, *Community*, p. 168.

22. George, 'Response', p. 159.

23. Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Natural Law', p. 19.

24. '[C]ultures are distinguished not by any single sort of relation…but by a variety of cross-cutting differences, by a series of different positionalities… This suggests … that in the Christian case relations with the wider culture are never simply ones of either accommodation…or opposition and radical critical revision…but always some mixture. Putting it crudely, the Christian response to a modern Western culture's affirmation of women's rights does not have to be the same as its response to that same culture's practice of sending Jews to concentration camps. Nothing is decided by the simple fact that both practices have figured in the wider culture; everything depends on theological judgments concerning the particulars. Systematic refusals or attacks on other cultures simply as such both underestimate the standing of those cultures and overrate the standing of Christian ones in the light of God's grace. They also err in making God's ultimate victory over sin a matter simply of Christian enforcement' (K. Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997], p. 119).

but simply rejecting it and the rights language which comes with it may not, as Newlands says, be as effective or as Christian as endeavouring to engage it in dialogue.[25] 'Liberal pluralism is anything but a utopian social order', asserts Lindbeck, it is 'a fragile and messy environment within which wheat and tares both grow'. But its 'advantage is that it is more open than any other kind of polity to criticism and correction from within'.[26] To reject human rights outright, then, simply because of their liberal manifestations is to miss an opportunity. It is also, as Witte spells out, to misunderstand rights' organic capacity to out-grow any setting.

> [T]he human rights regime is not static. It is fluid, elastic, open to challenge and change. The human rights regime is not a fundamental belief system. It is a relative system of ideas and ideals that presupposes the existence of fundamental beliefs and values that will constantly reshape it. The human rights regime is not the child of Enlightenment liberalism, nor a ward under its exclusive guardianship… It is beyond doubt that current formulations of human rights are suffused with fundamental libertarian beliefs and values, some of which run counter to the cardinal beliefs of various religious traditions. But libertarianism does not have a monopoly on the nurture of human rights; indeed, a human rights regime cannot long survive under its exclusive patronage.[27]

b. *Human Rights as Good*

That there are negatives inherent in modernity and liberalism is something of which Jürgen Moltmann is well aware.[28] It is not, however, an awareness which always adds nuance to his sweeping affirmations of human rights as a good, unproblematic notion. Rasmusson describes Moltmann's theological mission, in exact contrast to Hauerwas', as an attempt 'to give Christian legitimacy to modernity and at the same time show the relevance of Christian faith for the Enlightenment project'.[29] Moltmann's concern is with mediation and apologetics, to defend Christianity against its modern critics and to help Christians see their faith's relationship with contemporary culture.[30] Unsurprisingly, then, Moltmann is all too willing to adopt, more or less unquestioningly, the modern conception of human rights as both ally and means of attaining his ends.

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25. Newlands, *Generosity*, p. 264.

26. G.A. Lindbeck, 'Review of J. Stout's *After Babel*', *Theology Today* 46 (1989), p. 60.

27. Witte, 'Spirit of the Laws', p. 89.

28. E.g. J. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p. 25.

29. A. Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 248.

30. Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, p. 285.

At times this adoption of rights seems to be a pragmatic one.

> I believe the further knowledge, development, and advancement of human rights has become the framework of ecumenical politics and ethics. Liberation, development, passive and active resistance, the overcoming of racism, economic aid to developing countries, nuclear reactors, and the building up of a sustainable society are discussed today within the framework of human rights…church guidelines on political and social matters gain their universal significance only through reference to human rights. Through its relationship to human rights the church becomes the church for the world.[31]

Elsewhere, however, Moltmann appears to buy into the concept of human rights quite without reservation, treating it as an absolute, universal, self-evident and necessary concept.

> Human rights will…increasingly become the universally valid framework…by which humane policies are judged and legitimated. The recognition and realization of human rights for all human beings is going to be the factor which decides whether a global human community…develops out of this divided and perilous world, or whether human beings destroy themselves and this earth…the authority of human rights must be placed above all the particularist interests of nations, groups, religions and cultures. Today, the religious claims to particularist absoluteness and the ruthless implementation of particularist political interests are a threat to the continued existence of humanity itself.[32]

Indeed, Moltmann has even described all (including Christians) who do not submit their particular ethical stance to domination by rights ethics as 'enemies of the human race'.[33]

Moltmann is able to make such sweeping statements because his understanding of human rights has entirely theological foundations.[34] He sees rights

31. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, p. 21.

32. J. Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999), p. 117. See also J. Moltmann, 'A Christian Declaration on Human Rights' [http://www.warc.ch/dt/erl2/01a.html accessed on 18.03.2009], where Moltmann states that 'The Church, Christian congregations, and ecumenical organizations have the clear task and duty of identifying, promoting and realizing human rights', and 'Whoever honours human beings as the image of God, must acknowledge all human rights in the same degree'.

33. J. Moltmann, 'Human Rights: The Rights of Humanity and the Rights of Nature', *Concilium* 2 (1990), pp. 120-35 (134).

34. E.g. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, pp. 11-22, and 'Christian Declaration', where he claims: 'On the ground of the creation of man and woman in the image of God, on the ground of the incarnation of God for the reconciliation of the world, and on the ground of the coming of the kingdom of Cod [sic] as the consummation of history, the concern that is entrusted to Christian theology is one for the humanity of persons as well as for their ongoing rights and duties. The specific task of Christian theology in these matters is grounding fundamental human rights on God's right to, ie his claim

in terms of the *imago Dei*, biblical expressions of liberation and the divinely-intended destiny of all humanity.[35] He seems to largely miss the fact, however, that not all their advocates share this understanding of rights, and hence that to affirm the concept without qualification may not always enshrine the values he thinks it does. In addition, the elevation of human rights above other ethical language effectively relativizes Christianity, undermining his aim of mediation between it and modernity: 'What Moltmann in effect is saying is that Christian faith and ethics can be followed only as long as they are not contradicting the universal truth of the ethos of modernity', particularly as presented in human rights.[36] There are also times at which Moltmann ties human rights so closely to active participation in his theological principles—fulfilling duties to and being in relationship with the creator God—that he seems to turn them from an inclusive to an exclusive principle, suggesting 'that there are no rights…for unbelievers',[37] even that they are sub-human.

c. *Common Traits*

Despite the clear differences between them, Moltmann, Hauerwas and Lockwood O'Donovan share certain features in their interaction with human rights. Most obvious, perhaps, is their theological rather than biblical focus. Certainly, they all make appeal to biblical themes, but generally do so through proof-texting rather than exegesis, perhaps because it is more convenient to their purposes than having to investigate textual function. Of course, all three would claim to be theologians rather than biblical scholars, but as fairly representative exponents of theological interaction with rights, that they spend so little time actually dealing with biblical texts suggests some room for an alternative approach to this issue. Another common feature is that they present human rights as monolithic and homogeneous, mostly through isolating aspects of them which they find either particularly attractive or especially abhorrent, and generalizing from that point. There is very little apparent awareness of the dynamic flexibility of rights in their work, and this also seems representative of much of the literature (though not all, as some of the critiques of them show).

upon human beings, their human dignity, their fellowship, their rule over the earth, and their future'. See also Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, pp. 115-18.

35. E.g. 'In God's liberating and saving action…the original destiny of all human beings is experienced and fulfilled. In the designation of the human being to be the image of God, the right of God to all human beings is expressed. The human rights to life, freedom, community and self-determination mirror God's right to the human being because the human being is destined to be God's image in all conditions and relationships of life' (*On Human Dignity*, p. 16).

36. Rasmusson, *Church as Polis*, p. 118.

37. S. Rudman, *Concepts of Person and Christian Ethics* (New Studies in Christian Ethics; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 312.

Neither of these common traits would seem to be particularly helpful for a rounded understanding of human rights in theological perspective. Partly in response to such weaknesses, this study seeks to treat both rights and biblical texts more appropriately, taking them seriously enough to interact with them properly, and doing so by seeing them as wholes. As suggested in Chapter 1, the first step toward this end for human rights is an inclusive and descriptive definition of them.

2. *Defining Human Rights*

> [A]lthough it is notorious that definitions establish nothing, in themselves they do, if they are carefully enough constructed, provide a useful orientation, or reorientation of thought, such that an extended unpacking of them can be an effective way of developing and controlling a novel line of inquiry.[38]

Although written in a different context, Geertz's assertion nicely encapsulates the aims behind the human rights definition offered in this section, further developed in discussions throughout the following chapters. Simple definitions of human rights are beguilingly easy to produce. Their simplicity, however, serves inevitably to distort what is a complex subject. They clarify very little in doing so, 'establishing nothing', and tend instead to skew discussions, as, for example, they have done in the theological positions outlined briefly above. The intention of the definition offered here is, in contrast, to outline a careful, description of human rights which does justice to them as both debated and multi-faceted, and which can, through the unusual reorientation of dialogue with Paul, be unpacked and assessed fruitfully. Only when understanding and definition are careful and inclusive will the full critical and constructive potential of a Paul-rights dialogue be realized.

Admittedly, it would be easier to adopt an existing definition as an adequate basis for dialogue with Paul. But embracing one particular statement about human rights facilitates neither a dialogical interaction with the breadth of rights thought nor the evaluation of different rights notions.[39] A few examples illustrate the bewildering variety of human rights definitions on offer. Some, like MacDonald, are happy with vague description: rights are an 'obscure, but firmly held conviction'.[40] Slightly more specifically,

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38. C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic, 1973), p. 90.

39. According to J. Stout, 'Hobbes once said that when you get your definitions right, everything else goes right too' (*Ethics after Babel: The Language of Morals and their Discontents* [Cambridge: James Clark, 1990], p. 7). The problem with human rights is that one person's 'right definition' often seems quite wrong to others, hampering agreement on the broader issues involved.

40. M. MacDonald, 'Natural Rights', in J. Waldron (ed.), *Theories of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 21-40 (21).

Freeden describes rights claims as 'a type of emphatic shorthand', isolating attributes or values of 'overriding importance'.

> Hence, *a human right is a conceptual device…that assigns priority to certain human or social attributes regarded as essential to the adequate functioning of a human being; that is intended to serve as a protective capsule for those attributes; and that appeals for deliberate action to ensure such protection*.[41]

Others, like Häusermann, use more tangible language.

> Human rights are those rights essential not just for human security, but for human survival and dignity. They thus include the fundamental right to adequate food, shelter, and other necessities for life, as well as the rights to enjoy and participate in spiritual, intellectual, and cultural activities.[42]

While these definitions need not be mutually exclusive, their differences emphasize the breadth encompassed by a simple term. They also just scratch the surface, exploring only the most obvious aspect of human rights' range of meanings. To be useful for the dialogue in view, a definition must involve a more carefully inclusive description of human rights, covering more conceptualizations of them and allowing more room for their impact and shaping.

The first step in such a description is to explore the reasons why concise definitions of human rights provoke a dissent which, in itself, is an important facet of their character. Building upon that exploration, this and the following chapters will examine aspects of rights' nature and significance. Debates over rights' justification, shaping and genesis will also be addressed, and some characteristics with which Paul's Corinthian correspondence can constructively be brought into contact will be identified. In all this the aim will be to describe the state of human rights thought rather than to tie rights down definitively—better minds and more space have failed to achieve that end. This description will, of course, be skewed according to its place in the purposes of this project, coming as it does after the discussion of theological evaluations and appropriations of rights above and within a dialogue with Paul. That skewing, however, is but one aspect of human rights' definitional slipperiness.

Before proceeding, it perhaps behoves me to make clear my own view of human rights, mitigating against, if not disarming, the power of personal bias. I perceive human rights as a cultural and linguistic construct, both subjective and contingent. However, I also want to affirm that behind (and

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41. M. Freeden, *Rights* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p. 7, original emphasis.

42. J. Häusermann, 'Myths and Realities', in P. Davies (ed.), *Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 126-54 (126).

before) the linguistic construct there is something real. Human rights are a way of talking about the value of aspects of human life which reflects the objective good and worth of that life. They are themselves imperfect and finite—whatever the necessity of their absolute claims—but stand upon, are to be judged by and hedge around the vital, irreducible reality that is human dignity, that which makes humanity unique and thus precious. In doing so, human rights are the currently hegemonic manifestation of a common urge to preserve the unique value of human life. That this personal view is but one among many, standing upon one of numerous possible foundations, will now be explored.

a. *Human Rights: Universal and Slippery*

Absolute status is the largest claim that can be made for any idea or system, and inevitably brings that idea or system under close scrutiny. This is nowhere more true than with human rights, for which claims about absolute status take a variety of forms, multiplying both scrutiny and consequent opportunities for some level of rejection. All the absolute claims of human rights—explicit and otherwise—stand upon their attempt to say something final about human life; a reality so diverse in circumstance, value and experience that it is bound to undermine or qualify any success the attempt may achieve.

The universality of the rights endeavour currently takes three forms. First and foremost, although some aspects can be restricted, human rights are generally confined only by the limits of humankind. Second and consequently, human rights have become universally influential, world and experience shaping for much or all of humanity. Their inclusive appeal, manifest importantly in their (at least alleged) centrality for all UN action,[43] has brought them a preeminence which some conceive as marking out the world's first universal ideology or religion.[44] To the extent that such

43. That the various human rights statements upon which the UN acts (or at least claims to) are often considered sufficiently vague that all are able to agree with them, interpreting them in line with diverse other values, however, emphasizes the slipperiness of human rights alongside their universality (O. O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger: An Essay on Poverty, Justice and Development* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1986], pp. 107-108; D. Murray, 'The Theological Basis for Human Rights', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 56.2 [1990], pp. 81-101 [81]).

44. D. Weissbrodt, 'Human Rights: An Historical Perspective', in P. Davies (ed.), *Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 1-20 (1); M. de Blois, 'The Foundation of Human Rights: A Christian Perspective', in P.R. Beaumont (ed.), *Christian Perspectives on Human Rights and Legal Philosophy* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), pp. 7-30 (29). However, see M. Ignatieff's critique of this perspective, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (ed. A. Gutmann; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 53.

conceptions of human rights are correct, their form and substance are different from what they would be were rights just another parochial or scholarly idea. Third, and derivatively, the adoption of rights language into the vernacular of everyday existence manifests their universal appeal if not, necessarily, their universal validity. Such adoption also shapes perceptions of the world in which humanity lives: of relationships, duties, values and justice. The idea of universality suggests some sort of equal access or understanding for all humans in all situations. Yet rights' universal aspirations are accompanied by an equal measure of division and heterogeneity. Human rights are not the simple, universal notion that some thinkers and the unfettered use of rights language might suggest.

Indeed, despite universal pretensions and their increasing, evocative influence upon how human life is valued, human rights remain a slippery concept. There are numerous, interrelated reasons for this. Partly, it is because we stand too close to them. Whether in acceptance or rejection, human rights have come to play a vital, perhaps defining role in the understanding many have about what it means to be human.[45] As being human is something which rarely receives explicit attention, this shaping is usually implicit, subconscious. A related reason for their slipperiness is that rights ideas have changed while rights language often has not. The accepted absolutes of traditional rights formulae continue to be employed, but have in reality been left behind by the flexible ways in which rights are construed, applied and claimed.[46] Human rights have become, like 'the spirit of Christmas', a phenomenon which most suppose they understand and think would be easy enough to define, but find themselves disagreeing with others about. Of course, we are rarely called upon to explain our understanding of such things. We remain free to assume that our use and comprehension of the phrase, whether or not we are advocates of it, coheres with everyone else's.

The semantic value of the very term 'human rights' lies at the root of this problem. Appeals to rights are often made as claims to self-evidence, obviousness, or common intuition,[47] yet the words 'human' and 'rights' connote widely differing things for those who commonly use them. What does it mean to be human? Which characteristics of humanity are most important, and does a lack of them exclude some from being considered (fully) human?

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45. R. Williams, *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), p. 112. C. Douzinas goes somewhat further, declaring that 'Human rights construct humans. I am human because the other recognises me as human which, in institutional terms, means as a bearer of human rights' (*The End of Human Rights: Critical Legal Thought at the Turn of the Century* [Oxford: Hart, 2000], p. 371).

46. See, e.g., below for a discussion of the relativization of assertions that human rights are innate, inalienable and indefeasible.

47. R.G. Frey, 'Act-Utilitarianism, Consequentialism, and Moral Rights', in R.G. Frey (ed.), *Utility and Rights* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 61-85 (63).

Do rights primarily protect normative attributes or personal freedoms? Are they entitlements to choose, do, have, enjoy or have done? Are they limited by culture and legal system or are they universal? The diversity of answers given to such questions demonstrates the limits of agreement about human rights, and leaves the goal of exact definition an apparently distant prospect. In an effort to analyze rights language, Waldron describes three ways in which 'rights' might be understood. They can be considered as particularly important interests, as interests accorded 'lexical priority' over other interests, or as bases for 'strict constraining requirements on action'. In the first case, a right has more weight than another interest, but can be equalled or outweighed by enough of that interest. Alternatively, a right might be seen as sufficiently important that its promotion and protection must be maximized before other interests are even considered. Lastly, a right can be understood as a limitation on what sorts of other-involving behaviour can receive any legitimate consideration.[48] Understanding quite which of these (or other) meanings a particular claim about rights involves is key to understanding what is being said about them. Any failure to do so results in confusion.

Yet the slipperiness of human rights language is not limited to mere semantics. Wrapped up with decisions about what 'human' and 'rights' mean are value judgments about which is the more important, which should shape human rights the most. Those who prioritize 'rights' generally favour tight legal descriptions. They mean 'any legitimate claim advanced by an individual or group',[49] usually with concomitant duties or obligations on the part of those against whom the right is being claimed within an established legal framework. To prioritize 'human' does not necessarily move understanding in a non-forensic direction, but it does broaden the landscape across which rights might be claimed, and introduces prior understandings of humanity which set the agenda in place of legal frameworks. Though basic, these linguistic issues are important when it comes to defining human rights. They emphasize the potential for confusion within rights language, betraying fundamental divisions inside what can easily appear an homogenous, universal concept.

The retention of absolute language when talking of human rights produces similar fruit,[50] suggesting a unity that rights thinkers have not actually attained.[51] Clashes between and exceptions to rights claimed as absolutes

48. J. Waldron (ed.), *Theories of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 15.

49. A. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', in A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* (London: Aldwych, 1980), pp. 137-50 (137).

50. M.A. Glendon, *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 9.

51. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. 11.

have always been problematic for the concept; there can be no overriding of true absolutes yet rights are routinely compromised. To compensate, some have outlined exception clauses to otherwise absolute rights, making their description, application and comprehension almost impossibly complex. The alternative—keeping rights language simple—is to retain the failings of imperfect absolutes.[52] Some sort of middle way can be sought, but the variety of such attempts simply multiplies the nuances and valencies of rights language. The issue of absolute language is particularly significant as much rights thought, of disproportionate influence, comes out of the USA, a nation whose distinctive rights dialect—the product of forensic dominance and an original reliance upon property rights—tends more toward the individual and absolute than is true of some other rights traditions.[53]

The particularity of such contextual shaping of human rights language is another cause of their slipperiness. Indeed, the particular settings or theories within which people construe and claim human rights can by themselves enforce difference, even incompatibility, between their construals and claims. For example, whilst most popular human rights language tends toward emphasis upon the 'human',[54] the scholarly debate—shaped as much by lawyers and politicians as by philosophers and ethicists—has usually centred upon understandings moulded by 'rights' and legalities. Again, within the American context human rights' 'natural' setting is widely seen to be that of an individual-oriented constitutional framework. 'Rights' are thus prioritized at the expense of the 'human', as seen in the USA's unwillingness to ratify the UN's Universal Declaration because of its non-forensic communal and welfare aspects.[55]

Socio-political and ideological factors are also vital in the contextual determining of what human rights language means for those using and encountering it. The classic example of this came at one cold war summit where, though both sides called for human rights to be respected, the US delegates meant freedom of conscience, religion and movement, while their Soviet counterparts were concerned with the provision of employment, housing, education and healthcare.[56] Circumstances, needs, values, interests and conflicts all play their part in shaping understanding and acceptance of

52. Layman, *Shape of the Good*, p. 211.
53. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, pp. 12-13, 101.
54. Broadly speaking, such language operates in two directions: outward assertions of what is appropriate for often oppressed, suffering or disadvantaged others and inward claims for 'me and mine'. The former nearly always stand upon appeals to universal human standards. The latter, though often appearing to prioritize legal rights, usually show no actual understanding of such rights and base their appeal solely upon what ought to accrue because of certain notions of possessed status, human or otherwise.
55. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, pp. 13-14, 40, 72-74.
56. Häusermann, 'Myths and Realities', p. 129.

rights.[57] This is significant in looking at different contemporary statements and claims about rights, but probably even more so when differences across time are encountered. Human rights language today is not simply the rights language of the eighteenth century with a human prefix, nor is it identical with earlier twentieth-century conceptions of human rights. Such particularity is ironic—because diversity is thus ensured for a concept which aims 'to underscore what all persons have in common in spite of their differences'[58]—and dangerous—because in thinking about rights we may forget that none of us operates in a vacuum.[59]

The contextual particularity of human rights ideas reflects a further reason for their slipperiness. Human rights language is generally employed as part of the pursuit of a wider agenda; it is a tool used for ends—whether to assert a certain ideology or to press a certain claim—which are not always compatible and consequently construe rights in various hues. Though widely neglected, this earthing of rights thought in a wider practical and ideational context is important. Despite often being treated otherwise, especially in their vernacular usage, human rights are not best understood as a standalone concept.[60] For while the use some make of human rights as a sufficient account of human life must be acknowledged by a careful definition, most rights thinkers consider them better understood as merely depicting something *necessary* about humanity. They offer neither a complete nor a sufficient account of human life. Indeed, despite the significant claims they do make, in themselves human rights provide an insufficient consideration of everything they touch: morality, humanity, relationships, society, and so on. To say otherwise is to claim too much, to conceive human life too simplistically or to dismiss human rights for doing so when they are actually misconceived without some broader framework.[61]

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57. D.P. Chattopadhyaya, 'Human Rights, Justice, and Social Context', in A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* (London: Aldwych, 1980), pp. 169-94 (191-92).

58. A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* (London: Aldwych, 1980), p. 7.

59. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 2: 'All too often analyses of rights pay little regard to the concrete and variegated ways in which the concept is underpinned by a host of related terms that act crucially to establish its different meanings. The concept of a right is linked to concepts such as liberty, equality or individuality. Any actual usage of the word "right" will be connected to specific meanings, plucked from a spectrum of possible meanings, of each of its adjacent concepts. The resulting configurations will enable the content and role of "right" to be interpreted'.

60. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 7; J. Dunn, 'Rights and Political Conflict', in L. Gostin (ed.), *Civil Liberties in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 21-38 (29).

61. L. Henkin (*The Age of Rights* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1990], pp. 186-87) argues strongly for this sort of conception of human rights' place and value, affirming what he terms religion's rejection of them as a total ideology. 'It sees

Despite the apparent universals of their character, appeal and appropriation, human rights are a slippery, divided notion. They are, however construed, particular residents of a contingent world. The idea of human rights has a history; political and philosophical roots, popular and academic manifestations, an end that is not the same as its beginning, and variations between its enculturated expressions. The human rights notion is characterized both by unity and diversity; a family of ideas rather than an individual concept. As such, any definition of human rights cannot without distortion be reduced to a simple, pithy statement or list outlining their content, claimants or foundations.

Human rights' slipperiness ensures that universally appealing definitions of them are rare to non-existent. Complex and important concepts are not often as simple as their most popular expressions, and are usually distorted if those expressions are taken as telling the whole story. Fortunately, there are modes of definition beyond simple expressions of nature, and Cronin's analysis of types of human rights definition is particularly helpful.[62] He explores dictionary type definitions, approaches which distinguish human rights' defining characteristics from merely accompanying ones, denotative definitions (examples of rights, all possible examples being their entire denotation), and ostensive definitions (a generally non-verbal pointing to what rights entail). Cronin concludes that much disagreement on this matter stems from divergent thinking about human rights themselves: is their definition a matter of objective description or of language use? Either way, he says, human rights must be treated as an open-texture concept. No definition

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that human rights…do not provide warmth, belonging, fitting, significance, do not exclude need for love, friendship, family, charity, sympathy, devotion, sanctity, or for expiation, atonement, forgiveness. But if human rights may not be sufficient, they are at least necessary. If they do not bring kindness to the familiar, they bring—as religions have often failed to do—respect for the stranger. Human rights are not a complete, alternative ideology, but rights are a floor, necessary to make other values— including religion—flourish. Human rights not only protect religion, but have come to serve religious ethics in respects and contexts where religion itself has sometimes proved insufficient. Human rights are, at least, a supplemental "theology" for pluralistic, urban, secular societies. There, religion can accept if not adopt the human rights idea as an affirmation of its own values, and can devote itself to the larger, deeper areas beyond the common denominator of human rights. Religion can provide, as the human rights idea does not adequately, for the tensions between rights and responsibilities, between individual and community, between the material and the spirit'. See also J. Raz, 'Right-Based Moralities', in R.G. Frey (ed.), *Utility and Rights* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); J. Stott, R. McCloughery and J. Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 4th edn, 2006), p. 197.

62. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 4-5. Cronin's thinking builds upon J. Hospers's broader work on definitions (*An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967]).

is final until it covers all possible as well as actual instances of that being defined.[63] As there is limited agreement upon which individual claims can legitimately be called human rights, the chance of completing a full denotative definition is remote. Thus Cronin's open-texture approach is both more practical and more realistic than the simple but reductionist statements often used primarily to validate one perspective and/or proscribe another.

b. *Human Rights: Genesis and Development*

If there was a time without rights, or at least without rights formulations like ours, then it must equally be true that the idea of human rights began somewhere and grew out of some thing, situation or philosophy. As understandings of human rights vary, that there is disagreement over their shaping in history is unsurprising. Any inclusive definition of contemporary rights thought, then, must show awareness that changes have happened, take into account the various roles ascribed to history, religion, philosophy and politics in those changes, and also account for ideas about rights' initial establishment.

I. *History and Human Rights*

> A right will be contingent to those who see history as relativist, accidental and non-cumulative. It will, however, be quasi-contingent to those who regard history as evolutionary. For them, beliefs that only emerged at a specific point in time may become lasting even if their appearance depended upon a particular set of events that might not have come about. Both positions may be distinguished from the argument which regards equality as self-evident.[64]

One implication of this is that human rights' place in history is as important for the way in which they are perceived as for any concrete influence upon their shaping. For only at a certain stage in history would all these options be open to those thinking about rights, making historical placement key to the debates over nature and development which so characterize rights thought. However, their emergence at a certain time and with a certain heritage is also important for the actual content and character of human rights. Whether they are seen as accidental, objective, evolutionary, or some combination of those, their historical context shapes the forms and values

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63. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 10.

64. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 38. It should be noted that while ideas about human rights' objective basis and/or relationship to history are important, they should not be given too large a role in their definition. A conviction of human rights' objectivity is unnecessary for many of their advocates; at a pragmatic level, where human rights' influence upon and specific shaping in history are in view, ontological questions are only marginally significant for the rise of human rights ideas.

accorded to human rights. Thus matters of history must be incorporated in any definition of human rights which takes seriously both their substance and the complex character of thought about them.

There are, broadly speaking, three ideas about how human rights fit into a wider historical framework.[65] First, human rights can be seen as having evolved out of earlier ideas; rights thought developing to the point where, in a new context, rights are seen as depicting fundamental aspects of what being human entails. Human rights are, thus conceived, the latest stage of an important tool for thinking about humanity's social existence. Second, human rights can be thought of as a fresh discovery. They may have been implied by the logic of earlier rights concepts, but are explicitly revealed only now because the time is ripe. Human rights are thus considered as always having been there by virtue of the natural state of things, just not (fully) known about. Third, human rights can be seen as a novel invention, a fundamentally new concept for a new time, albeit one which draws upon the vocabulary of previous ideas. Evolution, discovery, invention; perhaps the most accurate description of human rights' rise would include elements of all three processes. Where descriptions insist upon them being confined to just one, it is likely that their definition is being restricted implausibly and/ or for particular ends.

If rights are better considered as a family than an individual, the proposition that all three historical processes have contributed to their development suggests *human* rights to be a particular generation in that family, shaped by the age in which they exist and by the genes they have inherited. As to their age, human rights are best considered a twentieth- and twenty-first-century notion. For while they resonate with and incorporate the genetics of earlier thinking—concerning both rights and human dignity—the widespread articulation of their distinctive form is really only seen from the latter half of the twentieth century onwards. That those decades saw the most profound and far-reaching changes in human history is important. First, because the manifold, contradictory situations which characterized those times contributed to rights' slipperiness. Second, and more specifically, because one of the twentieth century's major innovations was the spread of cultural and political democratization, the empowerment of ordinary people not least because of their simple status as human beings. In that environment the notion of human rights, or something very like it, was perhaps an inevitable development. It reflected the rejection, reworking and innovation of ideas about human worth and society which accompanied the new desires for and experiences of empowerment wrought by democratization.

In their twentieth-century location human rights can be seen as both a modern and a postmodern phenomenon, suggesting interesting continuities

65. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 26.

and discontinuities between those situations. Human rights owe much to modernity's metastructures and obsession with emancipation, but they also encapsulate a response to the same Enlightenment failings that sounded the death-knell of modernism. The historical, technological and ideological changes that gave the one impetus also contributed to the other. Awareness of living interdependently in an ever-shrinking global community, the apocalyptic threat of a nuclear arms race, recognition of inequalities within and between societies, increasingly apparent weaknesses in the dogma of progress;[66] all were significant factors in the shaping of human rights. So too was the bankruptcy of modernity manifest in Nazism generally and the holocaust in particular.[67]

This emphasis upon postmodern concerns roots human rights thought within a particular historical setting. To declare them a phenomenon of the late twentieth century and beyond is, perhaps, to suggest limits to human rights' historical influence. But differentiating the historically particular humanity and democracy of such rights from all that has gone before need not be read as dislocating them from the rights of other historical settings. An evolutionary transformation of rights thought is an equally valid interpretation, and perhaps one better able to cope with both sides of the debate over human rights' objective basis.

i. *Types of Rights*. One manifestation of history's influence upon rights can be seen in the various attempts to outline varieties and limitations of human rights. Such typological distinctions emphasize the significance of subdivision for what can too easily be seen as monolithic, ensuring nuance in the description of human rights.

There are numerous ways of cataloguing rights' subdivisions. Some simply distinguish between welfare and choice rights, or natural and positive rights.[68] Others advocate more exact taxonomies, distinguishing civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.[69] There are also approaches which distinguish between rights by the sort of enablements they provide rather than the field in which the provision is made.[70] Coming to such subdivisions with an awareness of history's role in shaping rights expressions, however, makes the sort of categorization offered by Levine particularly

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66. See, e.g., B. Goudzewaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997 [1979]).

67. See, e.g., Rosenbaum, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, pp. 22-23; Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, p. 65; Jones, *Rights*, p. 7.

68. E.g. Häusermann, 'Myths and Realities', p. 132.

69. E.g. Rosenbaum, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, p. 29.

70. See, e.g., R.S. Downie's distinctions between consumer rights (rights to have) and producer rights (rights to do) ('Social Equality', in A.S. Rosenbaum [ed.], *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* [London: Aldwych, 1980], pp. 127-36 [129]).

attractive.[71] One of its main strengths is the ability to highlight distinctions between rights theories of differing historical provenance as well as between rights articulations within a single model or situation. That this suggests the particularity of all rights thinking cannot be avoided. However, it is perhaps less important to note that human rights thought has developed contextually than it is to acknowledge that this means its use now encompasses a broader spectrum than was once the case, making reductionist definitions increasingly misleading, no matter what offers of clarification and easy analysis they appear to carry. The categories suggested by Levine are: liberty or noninterference rights, political rights and welfare rights.

The first clear articulations of rights, embodied for instance in the writings of John Stuart Mill,[72] are those asserting individual liberties to live, free from interference, lives of personal conscience. These are the rights of traditional liberalism: claims for free speech, freedom of worship, freedom of lifestyle (so long as others are not harmed), and so on. These claims, says Levine, 'imply a correlative duty on the part of all individuals, and particularly the state, not to interfere with individual behavior'.[73] That such rights claims would be included in virtually every contemporary notion of human rights should not blind us to the explicit limits placed upon them by their original proponents.

> Thus, for Mill, children, idiots, lunatics and…colonial peoples—that is all who have not developed moral and intellectual capacities in the framework of liberal institutions—are excluded from the blessing of liberty advocated for adult Englishmen in possession of their faculties.[74]

While the abhorrence of Mill's views to most contemporary thinking is clear, the sometimes implicit limitations still advocated for liberty rights are not always so obvious. Children and those society judges insane, for example, while undeniably human, are for various reasons denied some or all of their noninterference rights. So, while liberty rights are claimed as human rights, they usually carry an implicit understanding that their universality is only potential, an unattainable and in fact undesirable ideal. Most would prefer that way of understanding their restriction to the alternative: declaring certain groups to be sub-human (although there are conceptions of humanity which allow for such judgments).[75]

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71. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', pp. 139-41.

72. See, e.g., J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (ed. J. Gray; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

73. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 139.

74. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 139. See Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 14-15.

75. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 139. MacDonald, e.g., uses explicitly exclusive language regarding the beneficiaries of rights: '[O]nly at a certain level

As an extension of liberty rights, political rights—including the rights to vote and to a fair trial—are those human rights which developed when the liberal touch-stone of personal opportunity was considered within the bounds of political, institutional frameworks. Being a small cog in a large machine is to feel one's personal liberty under threat. Political rights prevent the system, majority, government or powerful others from crushing citizens, and impose correlative obligations to ensure their implementation and enforcement. In fact, if such rights are claimed as human rights, then 'citizenship itself, indeed, citizenship in a political community of a sort that maintains these rights, is being claimed as a human right. Citizenship…is not a liberty, a right to be left to do as one pleases, but a status incumbent with benefits and duties'.[76]

Levine's final, most recent and novel category of human rights, and perhaps where they become fully distinct, is welfare rights. Brought to the fore by the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration, this category recognizes that human rights claims sometimes express underlying convictions about basic human needs rather than about personal liberty. For example, article 25 of the Declaration states that

> Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.[77]

That welfare rights differ markedly from the liberty focus of noninterference and political rights has led some to question whether they can really be considered as rights proper. But the reality is that, whatever restrictions certain people might want to impose over what does or does not characterize a right, welfare issues have moved to the heart of rights thinking in both popular and official usage; rights ascriptions concern more than liberty or legal formulae, they concern understandings of humanity.

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of intellectual development do men claim natural rights. Savages do not dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. For they do not question what is customary. Neither do the very depressed and down-trodden. It was not the slaves who acclaimed their right to be free but the philosophers and lawyers. Marx and Engels were not themselves wage slaves of the industrial system…the doctrines of…rights…are individualistic. To claim rights as an individual independent of society, a man must have reached a level of self-consciousness which enables him to isolate himself in thought from his social environment. This presupposes a considerable capacity for abstraction' ('Natural Rights', p. 29).

76. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 140.

77. See *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html accessed on 11.12.2008.

> What claims for noninterference with individuals' activities, for citizen-
> ship…and for a minimal level of social goods share is respect for persons,
> for human dignity. These rights are claimed for persons just in virtue of
> their being human (exclusions apart), and not in consequence of voluntary
> agreements and social arrangements of any sort. Our humanity is bound up
> with these rights. Thus it is thought…that human life cannot be fulfilled,
> that 'powers'…cannot be developed, if liberty is unduly restricted. So, too,
> it is thought…that a fully human life cannot be achieved if citizenship is
> effectively denied, and if the availability of social goods is so reduced that
> life itself becomes nothing more than a struggle to survive. It is by articulat-
> ing these claims forensically, by claiming rights to the conditions for being
> fully human, that respect for persons is asserted. Within the dominant,
> liberal tradition, human dignity is asserted in no other way.[78]

Levine's assertion that claims based simply upon human status and for
the ends of human dignity are the core of any human rights notion, while
appearing tautological, contributes something important to our efforts at
definition. Whatever types of human rights may be identified and whatever
divisions construed between them, the human element must be common to
all. At least, that has been the qualifying criterion in recent times. Though
obvious from a particular historical situation, however, the tautology of
Levine's summary may not have seemed quite so clear in other times. Divi-
sions between types of rights may be retrospectively or externally under-
mined by this human focus, but that may not be or may not have been so
obvious to those claiming them on the basis of other criteria or concerns.
In addition, the concept of 'full humanity' is prone to a wide variety of
interpretations. Before moving on to think about that specifically, however,
some of the other factors Levine mentions bear exploration for their con-
tribution to a careful description of human rights, not least in their implica-
tions for ideas about humanity.

II. *Major Factors in Human Rights' Development*
   i. *Natural Law*. Levine's reference to forensically articulated claims takes
us to the first such factor. Human rights thought has always been entwined
with legal systems and values. The possible limits to human rights' legiti-
macy afforded by specific legal frameworks will be addressed in Chapter 4.
For now, a different sort of law-rights relationship is in view, involving the
place of natural law in human rights thought.
   Whatever their other ideas about human rights, nearly all accept that
natural law is, or has been, central to them. For some, this is an obvious

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78. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', pp. 140-41. See also A. Gutmann, 'Intro-
duction', in her edited *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton
University Press, 2001), pp. vii-xxviii (ix-xii).

ground upon which to attack rights, for the idea of natural law currently enjoys little support.[79] Others, agreeing about natural law's shortcomings, argue that rights thinking can be cut loose from old moorings, and float quite happily in more 'rational' waters.[80] But some, despite the unfashionability of natural law, continue to maintain its capacity to describe the way the world works, and thus human rights' natural home within it.[81]

   Natural law is the notion that 'over and above particular systems of positive law there is a higher law to which human beings can appeal and in terms of which they may judge the adequacy of existing systems'.[82] Clearly, such an understanding assumes the existence of a transcendent realm—of God or gods or a given order. Accordingly, human equality, the need for people to survive and thrive, and duties to facilitate them in this have their source in that realm.[83] Given secularization,[84] Enlightenment scepticism and the postmodern incredulity at ideas about reality being some sort of external given, legitimating and shaping cultures instead of being defined by them, many today are unwilling to accord natural law's inherent 'naturalistic fallacy'[85] much role in the shaping of human rights. Despite this, it is clear that the first rights thinking did develop out of the notion of natural law. Natural rights express natural law. They reflect the idea that there is more to law than can be contained in any contingent framework by recognizing rights which people possess simply because, as humans, nature accords them certain roles, statuses and values.[86] Natural law, then, in allowing its advocates to construct a seemingly invulnerable philosophical case for rights, permitted the characteristically absolute claims about 'self-evident' human nature common to political declarations from the eighteenth century onwards. Notions of natural law and rights consequently became fixed in the political realm, ensuring that political mechanisms would (or should)

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79. J.H. Burns, 'The Rights of Man since the Reformation: An Historical Survey', in F. Vallat (ed.), *An Introduction to the Study of Human Rights* (London: Europa, 1972), pp. 16-30 (29).

80. Henkin, *Age of Rights*, p. 2.

81. R.J. Henle, 'A Catholic View of Human Rights: A Thomist Reflection', in A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* (London: Aldwych, 1980), pp. 87-94 (92).

82. Downie, 'Social Equality', p. 127.

83. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 13.

84. Though it now stands as far less firmly established than it once did, secularization is still an influential and to some degree accurate description of cultural trends. Even the weaker, postmodern conceptions of secularization (e.g. D. Lyon, *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000]) tend to picture situations in which the absolute givenness of natural law would appear questionable.

85. Waldron, *Theories of Rights*, p. 3.

86. That such 'humanity' was often not defined in inclusive terms is another matter, discussed above and below.

guarantee rights observance, even if, over time, rights' theoretical founda-
tions became established elsewhere.[87]

Though there is division over the degree to which contemporary human
rights can be tied back to natural rights theories, to the extent that they share
common elements, criticisms levelled at one can also be applied to the other
and thus reveal something of its shape and internal dynamics. Common
to both, for example, is the idea that rights precede societal systems and
political legislation. While some theorists hesitate over this, most popular
understandings of human rights assert that they, like natural rights, 'are not
granted by any authority or government, but are derived from the essen-
tial nature of humankind. Just as the law is not the source of the rights,
neither can the law deprive humans of their fundamental human rights'.[88]
Freeden also outlines parallels between human and natural rights derived
from the classic dissection of the latter into four key elements. First is the
allegedly self-evident notion that human beings are born with rights; they
are part of our natural equipment. 'Specifically, a common core of human
nature is defined by encircling it with a succinct list of natural rights. Those
rights cannot be denied without a potentially critical loss of what consti-
tutes being human. They are hence innate, inalienable, and indefeasible, if
not inviolable'.[89] Second, natural rights are considered pre-social. Culture,
politics and society are their protectors not their creators. Third, natural
rights are thus seen as absolute and undiminishable. Lastly, natural rights
are held to be universal: 'In respect of being rights-carrying entities, as well
as in respect of the specific rights they are held to carry, all human beings
are equal'.[90] Each of these elements is prone to critical attack, and the per-
ceived efficacy of the assaults thus mounted continues to shape contempo-
rary rights thinking.

First, are we bound to conceive of human beings in a form that includes
rights-bearing? It is surely plausible that the self-evidence of rights might
be limited to those temporally and socially particular patterns of thought
about human nature and purpose which: (i) include rights, and (ii) occur in
conditions which make speculation about achieving certain standards pos-
sible. If so, then not only may human beings be conceived of without rights,
but, as Freeden suggests, the very notion may act conservatively as a buffer
against questioning society's norms and rules.[91] As for the alleged inalien-

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87. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 24.
88. Häusermann, 'Myths and Realities', p. 131.
89. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 27.
90. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 27.
91. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 29. It is, of course, more common to see human rights put
to a contrasting political use: they tend to function as claims against the status quo
and against authorities. But linkage to dominant ideology is an important step, and
Freeden is right to point out that rights could theoretically predetermine the acceptable

ability of rights, one might ask what sort of system denies people the ability to put their own interests on one side without questioning their sanity.[92]

The possibility of human existence in a pre-social state is, second, at best questionable.[93] That we are members of groups and communities from the moment of birth, and bound in dependent relations to at least one other even before that, suggests the claim of something prior in rights to be a claim beyond anything we might know. Later rights advocates have, indeed, included those who base the logic of their thinking in the very communal character of all human existence, and the shift from natural to human rights is at least partially motivated by this.[94]

That any rights are absolute, third, seems unlikely when clashes between them are considered: is my right to free speech absolute when I use it to incite violence which threatens your absolute right to life? Some have rather rashly suggested that in such clashes the whole plausibility of rights falls apart. Freeden offers a more measured response, however, suggesting that

> a slightly weaker form of a basic right may in fact be a more efficient way of promoting what it protects. It recognizes that human relationships cannot usually be sorted out neatly; indeed, that to insist on the absoluteness of a right is to allow a single counter-instance to nullify it. For a concept to be viable it must be allowed to bend slightly when an unbearable stress is exerted; otherwise it will snap.[95]

boundaries of both aspirations and actions in a society. At a theological level, this sort of objection characterized much early liberationist comment upon human rights. See M. Engler, 'Towards the "Rights of the Poor": Human Rights in Liberation Theology', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28.3 (2000), pp. 339-65; J. Sobrino, 'Human Rights and Oppressed Peoples: Historical-Theological Reflections', in M.A. Hayes and D. Tombs (eds.), *Truth and Memory: The Church and Human Rights in El Salvador and Guatemala* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2001), pp. 134-58 (135, 152).

92. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 32: 'The very need to assert the principle of inalienability…while designed to safeguard the attribute of human rationality, indicates a belief in the limits of such rationality and evokes a particular conception of a human being. It points to an implicit mistrust of individual intentions and to the potential self-damage that individuals could render themselves'.

93. As E. Frazer and N. Lacey put it: 'Human life outside the context of human society, interaction and interdependence is evidently impossible…the notion of the disembodied or pre-social individual is…an eminently unsuitable starting place for political theory, as is transcendence of our social being as a first political or ethical ideal' (*The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-Communitarian Debate* [Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993], pp. 56-57).

94. See below. Assertions of human rights' pre-social and trans-social character, though related, should not be confused. The former refers to something held prior to individual socialization, the latter to a commonality between all socially embedded individuals and value systems. Debate over the trans-social nature of human rights will be examined in Chapter 4.

95. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 36.

While some vernacular uses of rights language might suggest otherwise, such a flexible conception of human rights is typical of contemporary rights thought. The incompatibility of absolutes with experience have made doctrinaire positions untenable without denying the values and aspirations which lie behind them.

Universality is a further characteristic of rights no longer likely to be seen as convincing. Most (certainly in the postmodern west) simply do not view the wide mass of humanity in so uniform a manner. Again, Freeden suggests a moderated view which allows room for both unity and division in the human race.[96] And, once more, such a conception would seem to characterize most who currently use rights language to think about humanity.

To the extent, then, that the roots of all rights language stretch back, however distantly, to the idea of natural law, it retains something of the forensic. But while that is no small matter in careful descriptions of rights, nor is the capacity of contemporary rights thought to incorporate and respond to critiques of natural law and particularly of the natural rights which were seen to accompany it.

ii. *Religion and Revelation*. As already indicated, blanket assumptions about the compatibility or otherwise of rights and religion are key features of human rights' contemporary make-up. The dependence of human rights upon doctrinal notions can easily be assumed by those embarrassed by neither, and denied by those sceptical of either. Any careful description of rights, then, must reflect both division over religion's role and the place of assumptions behind it.

Of course, especially in the increasingly secular (if not aspiritual) west, there are limits to the number of those willing or able to assume that religion can make, or has made, a positive contribution to human rights. Indeed, of the various theoretical bases for rights, a metaphysical or theological orientation is now considerably less popular than ethical, political, or historical emphases.[97] That said, there are still those whose beliefs lead them to ground rights thinking in higher and deeper realities, even placing them within the traditions of biblical faith.[98] Thus, with particular relevance to

96. 'The notion of universality is better regarded as a moderate gravitational force that orders and attracts the concept of rights, rather than a powerful black hole that swallows up and annihilates them. An alternative formula would reflect both the fundamental character of rights as protecting key human attributes—interests, needs and capabilities—and the variety and possible evolution of such attributes' (Freeden, *Rights*, p. 41).

97. Rosenbaum, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, p. 31.

98. B. Halpern, for example, rather questionably describes early Israel as a realm 'in which local and private rights were at a premium', where tribal structures ensured 'their constituents inalienable rights to property and life'. He even describes the

Paul, many in the Judaeo-Christian tradition happily embrace human rights, detecting within them stirring resonances with—even a dependence upon—the dignity of created humanity in their own faith.

> Because man embodies the divine image, there is a certain equivalence between man and God. 'Wherever you come across a footprint of man, God stands before you', says a traditional aphorism. Man is to be treated, therefore, with something of the love and respect, not to say awe, which would be evoked by God Himself.[99]

However, rather than finding resonances with ideas of *imago Dei*, many rights advocates without prior faith commitments see little in rights for which to thank religion. For some, organized religion's prime contribution has been oppression and misery. In focusing upon certain aspects of (church) history they find it easy to deny any rights-religion relationship, or to construe human rights as an antidote to religious influences. For example, Schlesinger says:

> As a historian, I confess to a certain amusement when I hear the Judeo-Christian tradition praised as the source of…human rights. In fact, the great religious ages were notable for their indifference to human rights… They were notorious not only for acquiescence in poverty, inequality, exploitation and oppression but for enthusiastic justifications of slavery, persecution… torture, genocide. Religion enshrined and vindicated hierarchy, authority and inequality and had no compunction about murdering heretics and blasphemers… Human rights is not a religious idea. It is a secular idea, the product of the last four centuries of Western history.[100]

division of monarchy and priesthood as 'a logical consequence of the stress laid on humanity and human rights in Israelite ideology… Its primary value lay as an institutional barrier to the endemic aggrandizement of the Jerusalem regime' (*The Constitution of the Monarchy in Israel* [Harvard Semitic Monographs, 25; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981], pp. xxi-xxiii, see also pp. 234-35). For a more cautious account of human rights' relations with biblical faith, see Newlands, 'Human Rights, Divine Transcendence'.

99. A. Kaplan, 'Human Relations and Human Rights in Judaism', in A.S. Rosenbaum (ed.), *The Philosophy of Human Rights: International Perspectives* (London: Aldwych, 1980), pp. 53-86 (55). Kaplan also comments that, because humanity is made in God's image, 'It follows that…[human] worth is intrinsic; man is not to be valued for what we can do with him or make of him. The Judaic kingdom of God anticipates Kant's kingdom of ends, in which man is never treated only as a means' (p. 56). See also Stott, McCloughery and Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians*, p. 206.

100. A. Schlesinger, 'The Opening of the American Mind', in W.T. Anderson (ed.), *Fontana Postmodernism Reader* (London: Fontana, 1996), pp. 200-207 (202). Such pejorative assessments are not common. Most simply minimize the religious contribution to human rights, avoiding the accusations of generalization, bias and simplistic distortion that might be levelled at Schlesinger. For a secular humanist rebuttal of the sort of stance Schlesinger adopts, see Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, p. 86.

While Schlesinger's view may be extreme, criticism of the revelatory elements of religious rights thought is common.[101] Humanity's creation in God's image is no longer a given for most people, nor easily inferred from their experiences. It must, rather, be externally affirmed. While many are happy to talk of human dignity, they find external bases for that dignity implausible. Most, in fact, consider that concern for human dignity need not—rationally should not—stand on assumptions about the truth of such received externals.[102] Rather than appeal to disputed ideas of creation, then, they prefer to seek internal justifications for human rights. Instead of givens, rights are often seen simply as products of whatever conjecture about the way in which the world works is accepted at the time: 'encapsulated within any claim of right…[is] a tacit moral and political theory'.[103] Others root rights in what they consider as humanity's sovereign ability to will and choose, although the various nuances given to what shapes such choosing are almost limitless. However, while many internal justifications of rights deem appeal to the external as pointless—there are no natural and/or theological givens, or at least none that we can know about—this is not always the case. Some take less philosophically and epistemologically pessimistic stances, citing pragmatic reasons for their internal orientation.[104] Rawls, for instance, accepts the reality of moral givens, but considers such truths as less appropriate standards for political thinking than the pursuit of 'free agreement, reconciliation through public reason'.[105]

Freeden helpfully outlines what he considers to be the adequacy of internally-sourced justifications for human rights. His basic starting point is that when using rights statements not only do we declare certain characteristics

101. De Blois, 'Foundation of Human Rights', pp. 18-19.

102. 'Some modern philosophers still believe all men to have been created; and a few…presume that the more fundamental rights which human beings enjoy are rights with which they have been endowed by their Creator. But many…doubt that there ever was a Creator. Even more…doubt their capacity to infer the purposes of a Creator from the properties of the created universe; and more…still doubt the practical good sense of grounding their own political claims…on premises which…most of their fellow citizens confidently reject' (Dunn, 'Rights and Political Conflict', p. 24). For an alternative, secular perspective upon the need for non-religious rights thinkers to engage with religion on human rights matters, see D.F. Orentlicher, 'Relativism and Religion', in M. Igantieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (ed. A. Gutmann; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 141-58 (154-57).

103. Dunn, 'Rights and Political Conflict', p. 29.

104. E.g. A. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 98-99.

105. J. Rawls, 'Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14 (1985), pp. 223-51 (230). For a critique of Rawls's thinking on this, see J. Hampton, 'Should Political Philosophy Be Done without Metaphysics?', *Ethics* 99 (1989), pp. 791-814.

to be vital for human beings, we also, in expressing humanity's unusual importance through them, assert that the world in which we live would be 'inconceivable' were humanity's flourishing not ensured and encouraged.

> In this way the normative sense of a right is incorporated into the analysis. This is not to suggest that a right can be logically deduced from moral foundations but that optimal human functioning is a practical, common-sense desideratum inasmuch as we want human beings to exist and to exist well. The needs and capacities protected by rights are humanly functional and necessary for the rights-bearer, rather than logically entailed by our understanding of what is objectively right.[106]

Consequently, Freeden sees the denial or waiving of human rights as humanly destructive rather than as the logical impossibility of classical rights thought. And though this appeal to 'common sense' may raise expectations of external legitimation, that is not the direction Freeden takes. He claims that subjectively, rather than because there are things we *must* value and ways in which we *must* think, humans are prone to consider human flourishing, and a world in which that is possible, as important to safeguard. Freeden admits the anthropocentricity of this view, indeed he revels in it. For human rights can only 'be grounded on the affinity most of us feel towards other human beings over and above other objects', and upon 'the undoubtedly superior features of human beings…the empirical fact that human beings alone seem…able to control, adapt and modify their conduct according to rational criteria, as well as being capable of morality'.[107] In other words, 'human rights are a social phenomenon, a creation of the human mind. Human rights are human because humankind has decided they are. Human beings create their own sense of a morally worthwhile life'.[108]

Thus, either by their presence or their absence, ideas of religion and revelation are important for the shape of contemporary human rights thought. That both their presence and absence contribute to that shape emphasizes the slippery divisions which characterize it; not something easily admitted by many rights thinkers, preoccupied as they are by their advocacy of particular constructions of rights.

iii. *Liberalism and Beyond*. Given the specific historical provenance of human rights, the significance of western liberalism can hardly be stressed strongly enough, especially as it continues to dominate their usage. For liberalism, to be truly human is, above all else, to be a free individual.[109] Thus contemporary 'talk of rights in general, and *a fortiori* of human rights…presupposes a particular view of liberty; the dominant, liberal view, derived

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106. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 9.
107. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 9.
108. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 15.
109. Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community*, p. 53.

from Hobbes, that to be free is to be unrestrained by others in the pursuit of one's own ends'.[110] This does not mean that human rights are necessarily incompatible with other notions of freedom or humanity,[111] but any careful definition must acknowledge their being part of, and response to, the liberal shaping of western society.

Liberalism's focus upon the freedom of individuals—those it considers the ultimate constituents of social reality—to achieve personal goals gives it a teleological bent; the rational ends towards which people aspire are key. Though those ends need not be individualistic, they are more likely to be conceived so than as genuinely altruistic given liberalism's basic psychological profile of humanity: that we are fundamentally acquisitive rather than social. This view reflects liberalism's persistent use of economic models, particularly free markets, for understanding social behaviour.

> [E]conomic agents seek always to do as well for themselves as possible, to maximize utility without limit. …this stipulation is extrapolated from behavior in markets to behavior generally…and it is thus that society comes to be viewed as a collection of atomic individuals. …human beings are thought to be acquisitive by nature, seeking to appropriate both human and natural resources ceaselessly. In this way, a society of rational agents is seen generally as a society of acquisitive, rational egoists for whom others can only be a means.[112]

Indeed, for Levine, the only reason that human rights ever came into being was as the necessary means to short-circuit such acquisitive tendencies, relieving the dangers they pose to human dignity in their inherent reification of all and sundry.[113] Only in the unlikely event of the world becoming a different place—in which society exploited different models to value and organize itself—would rights' indispensable role diminish; until then they remain necessary to dampen the extremes of liberalism's conception of humanity.[114]

110. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 138.

111. See, e.g., K. Tanner's arguments for human value and rights as necessary functions of humanity's status as the creature of a good creator (*The Politics of God: Christian Theologies and Social Justice* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], *passim*).

112. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', pp. 143-44. See also Lockwood O'Donovan, 'Natural Law', pp. 20-21.

113. 'It is…by stipulating inalienable human rights that liberalism meets the challenge posed to human dignity by human nature (or what it takes human nature to be): a challenge aided and abetted by its concepts of freedom and rational agency' (Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 145).

114. 'Human rights save us from our institutions and their effects upon ourselves. Were our institutions otherwise, were they of a sort to promote social solidarity and respect for persons rather than atomic individualism and treatment of persons as means only, the need for human rights would diminish accordingly' (Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 146).

Unsurprisingly, the liberal perspective upon human life has not remained uncriticized. There is more to humanity than just the economic, for example, and people are more than autonomous, rational individuals. Thus, for Glendon, 'The lone rights-bearer…is an admirable figure in many ways. Yet he possesses little resemblance to any living man, and even less to most women'.[115] Indeed, Glendon thinks that the unrealistic depiction of humanity in liberal rights talk skews the very conception we have of ourselves: 'our visions of the rights-bearer as an autonomous individual channel our thoughts away from what we have in common and focus them on what separates us. They draw us away from participation in public life and point us toward the maximization of private satisfactions'.[116] Such socially destructive tendencies can be striven against, even within liberalism.[117] To the extent that they remain at all, however, and even to the extent that they are rejected by rights thinkers, notions of unencumbered individuality do shape contemporary human rights thought.

Liberalism's impact upon rights thinking is not restricted to its depiction of rights-bearers. As Frazer and Lacey point out, it also shapes the ways in which social power is conceived of, with important implications for how human rights are construed. First, within liberalism's ideal society power is largely seen as a necessary evil; required to ensure individual goods, but more fundamentally a threat to them.[118] Second, the distinction between public and private which flows from a focus upon individuals puts certain social phenomena (e.g. family, sexual relations, religion) beyond legitimate political intervention.[119] The use and abuse of power within those realms is thus not easily considered a subject for human rights by doctrinaire liberals. Third, absolute convictions of human equality conceal certain inequalities from liberalism—especially those involving racial, sexual, and religious power—hiding the disadvantaged from view.[120] And fourth, liberal human rights 'tend to be oblivious to the power of their own discourse and practice', to the way they construct what will and will not be considered a right, and which people are thus excluded by that blindness.[121]

To the extent, then, that contemporary human rights owe anything at all to liberalism, they are also moulded into a certain shape, projecting a skewed vision of individualistic humanity. That such moulding is not uniform across

115. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. 48.
116. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. 143.
117. Ferguson, *Community*, pp. 147-48.
118. Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community*, p. 76.
119. Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community*, p. 76.
120. Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community*, p. 76.
121. Frazer and Lacey, *Politics of Community*, p. 77.

contemporary rights thought,[122] however, reflects both the capacity of think-ers to look beyond the hegemonic model of social organization and the fact that there is more to human rights than simply the liberal agenda. For while liberalism's role should not be underplayed, nor must it be considered the only framework compatible with rights.[123] As has already been argued, lib-eralism does not determine all that can be said about human rights.

iv. *The Human in Human Rights.* Historically speaking, human rights are a late development or innovation within the broader stream of rights. However, while their chronological placement may not be denied, the pri-ority given to human rights by some makes it ontologically plausible to reverse the order; human rights become 'the most basic…while other cat-egories of rights are more specific, limited and…derivative'.[124] This rever-sal of priority is perhaps required if the innovation of talking about *human* rights is seen as significant for what it says about the holders of rights, rather than as a simple change in terminology. Not that these are the only possible interpretations. Waldron, for example, asserts that, rhetorically, 'the shift from "natural rights" to "human rights" marks a loss of faith in our ability to justify rights on the basis of truths about human nature. To call them human rights is…to characterize the scope of the claims being made rather than hint at anything about their justification'.[125] But, while that might be par-tially true for rights theory and certainly makes a valid point about assump-tions of universality, in practice most rights claims imply a statement, albeit contextually bound, about those for whom the rights are being claimed. And if that is the case, perhaps there are good reasons for thinking that much of what has been written—both before and since the rise of specifically *human* rights—focusing upon rights as a forensic phenomenon, tells only part of the story.

Obviously, this returns us to the matter of priority, specifically of placing 'human' over and above 'rights'—perhaps a logical step as we think about the rise of *human* rights, but also one fraught with uncertainty. As Kaplan puts it, 'Human rights are worth only as much as it is worth to be human'.[126] And while defining humanity is not easy under any circumstances, it becomes a minefield when approached within rights thought. Rosenbaum asserts that 'In basing human rights on human nature or personhood, one must have a defensible concept of the latter; otherwise, human rights will be

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122. See, e.g., Glendon's appeal for the contemporary American rights tradition to move away from liberalism's unfettered influence and adopt the less individualistic values of other rights traditions (*Rights Talk, passim*).

123. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, pp. 101-102.

124. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 6.

125. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 163.

126. Kaplan, 'Human Relations', p. 54.

arbitrarily defined, with no inevitable link having been established between the morality of being human and the facts of existence'.[127] But what is a defensible concept of human personhood? Particular, freighted answers to that not only shape conceptions of human rights but are reciprocally shaped by those conceptions. There is, of course, a certain inevitability to all this; language is never value-free. However, its significance in human rights thought is enormous in that the actual and potential impact it can have upon social systems—how individuals value themselves and the rights people are accorded—is virtually endless. One definition of humanity, in being different to another, might establish a whole system of norms, expectations and even legislation that would not fit elsewhere despite the fact that both systems take the notion and language of human rights very seriously. Thus, for example,

> The preference of [some] moral philosophers…for extolling the human capacities of choice and autonomy over other human attributes means that the physical, emotional, psychological and mental capacities of people are seen as mere servicers of the moral essence of the individual. On this understanding welfare-rights are complementary to choice-rights but operate on a subservient level. The stringent prioritizing of human abilities and characteristics is decodable in ideological as well as philosophical terms. Such a reductionist view of human nature will accord preference only to a basic equalization of opportunities, in which provision will be made for whatever is deemed sufficient for people to exercise their choice and autonomy. It will rule out any external assistance in the making of the choices themselves… And it will relegate many types of human activity to a lower status, as a means to an end.[128]

Significantly, then, prior decisions about human nature will define what content and legitimacy will be found in human rights. This is very much a two-edged sword. Without any understanding of human nature rights would be devoid of power, with one we have the 'argumentative threshold that gives human-rights theory its force'.[129] But to talk about human nature is, for many, to speak in culturally specific and particular terms,[130] leaving human

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127. Rosenbaum, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, p. 25.
128. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 52.
129. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 100.
130. E.g., MacDonald says that 'Men do not share a fixed nature, nor, therefore, are there any ends which they must necessarily pursue in fulfilment of such nature. There is no definition of "man". There is a more or less vague set of properties which characterize in varying degrees and proportions those creatures which are called "human". These determine for each individual human being what he can do but not what he must do… There is no end set for the human race by an abstraction called "human nature". There are only ends which individuals choose, or are forced by circumstances to accept. There are none which they must accept. Men are not created for a purpose as a piano is built to produce certain sounds. Or if they are, we have no idea of the purpose…

rights' universal aspirations looking extremely vulnerable. And if we are not talking in universal terms are we really talking about human nature? There is surely more than a little truth in Freeden's assertion that essential humanity is neither an objective nor a sharply defined concept. Indeed, he says, it is 'the product of human interpretation as much as of biological, chemical and environmental processes, although some attributes are more durable over time than others'. That this renders human nature a 'construct of the human mind', [131] as Freeden puts it, is perhaps not as final a statement as he imagines, although it is undoubtedly at least partially true. One could certainly, for instance, inflate the significance of external factors beyond Freeden's passing reference to 'environmental processes'—including faith, culture, convention and relationships for example—expanding the resources from which humanity constructs its self-definitions, and emphasizing processes other than the mental in that construction. To the extent that more emotional, intuitive and external factors are involved in humanity's 'interpretation' of itself, there is probably also room for elements of givenness in understanding human nature. That those in different times and places have at least some capacity to communicate with and understand one another in fact suggests that such 'interpretation' happens within a field confined by certain givens. Perhaps, indeed, such givens are the primary reason that particular values endure beyond others, despite fluctuations between definitions of humanity.

Such givens, for example, are seen in the widespread appeal to 'human dignity', even if that term can mean different, even contradictory, things for different people;[132] another aspect of human rights' slippery universality. The values of a theological or Pauline anthropology are certainly not common in contemporary rights discourse, yet some sense that humans are uniquely worth protecting does run as a thread through human rights thought. The seat of human worth was long identified with rationality, shaping resultant rights notions. Recent ideas have tended to undermine rationality's key role, yet, at a certain level, it remains vital for human rights. As MacDonald points out, there can be no rights thought without abstraction. 'To this extent natural rights, or the ability to claim natural rights, depends on reason. But it does not follow from this that reason alone constitutes the specific nature of man or that the worth of human beings is

All that exists, exists at the same level, or is of the same logical type. There are not, by nature, prize roses, works of art, oppressed or unoppressed citizens. Standards are determined by human choice, not set by nature independently of men. Natural events cannot tell us what we ought to do… Natural events themselves have no value, and human beings as natural existents have no value either, whether on account of possessing intelligence or having two feet' ('Natural Rights', pp. 30-31).

131. Freeden, *Rights*, pp. 61-62.
132. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 82.

determined solely by their Iqs. Reason is only one human excellence'.[133] It is how all humanity's excellences are put together that matters for the sort of human rights formulations that flow out of people's abstract rationalizations about themselves.

At this point, with our descriptive definition of human rights underway, it is appropriate to pause and consider how the slippery, world-shaping notion of such rights might be brought into constructive dialogue with the Paul of the Corinthian correspondence. This should not be taken to indicate that the definition as it stands is yet sufficient, anything but. However, the pragmatic, life-shaping characteristics of human rights and the nature of the dialogue in view make a further development and articulation of the definition worth exploring in closer conversation with Paul. As such, matters of universality, power, social structure, context and construction (amongst others) will be explored as part of the definition of human rights over the following chapters. For now, it is important to set out some factors (themselves part of the definition) which provide a framework within which a Paul-rights dialogue may be constructed.

3. *Keys For a Paul–Human Rights Dialogue*

Having begun with Geertz's statement about the potential inherent in careful definitions, we see that any such definition of human rights requires them to be conceived of as both fixed and flexible, a notion of established appeal yet difficult to pin down. Contemporary debate about rights returns time and again to certain central points, even if only to explore the breadth of disagreement about them. The centrality of such points sets boundaries for rights discourse, but such broad ones that its flexibility is certainly not impaired. There is plenty of room for creative manoeuvre, perhaps even that which facilitates new ways through current impasses. This flexibility means that while most accounts of human rights agree that they possess some core values or at least characteristics, perhaps the only true absolute they manifest is their capacity to insinuate themselves within and then dominate moral debate, spreading their influence inexorably into all spheres: 'Rights language not only seems to filter out other discourses; it simultaneously infiltrates them'.[134] This combination of rights' characteristics—flexibility, central concerns and an invasive discourse—is suggestive of their capacity to continue (re)shaping the world in which humanity lives and relates. Precisely what role a dialogue with Paul's Corinthian correspondence might play in how such (re)shaping evolves remains to be seen, but to have any input at all the dialogue needs to happen.

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133. MacDonald, 'Natural Rights', p. 29.
134. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. 177.

Behind the specific issues explored in the following chapters, there is a persistent awareness that they ought not to be isolated from broader rights concerns, or from the matrix of social, cultural, political, relational and philosophical convictions which shape the manifestation of those concerns. Yet practical considerations require that this project restrict its focus, making the resulting dialogue only a partial account and hence the conclusions to be drawn from it both tentative and limited. Such limitation can be mitigated somewhat, however, by selecting central points which reflect and rely upon other aspects of rights thought. As such, although other rights themes are persistent facets of it, the dialogue constructed here focuses upon human rights' concern with equality and its related understandings of appropriate power and social structure.

Notions of and assertions about equality are essential elements of all human rights thought, being implied by or easily inferred from it even where not explicit.[135] Whether rights are seen as founded upon human agency,[136] in creation as *imago Dei*,[137] in an abhorrence of human suffering,[138] or upon some other base, the inclusive, universal logic of rights language encourages a perception of human equality.[139] The slipperiness of human rights, however, is matched by the elusive polysemy of the language of equality, marked as it is by similar levels of blinkered assumption and agenda-led misunderstanding. A careful definition of socio-relational equality would need to parallel this definition of human rights, then, in inclusivity if not in length.[140] There is clearly no room for such a definition here, yet making equality central to a dialogue with Paul requires some statement of how it is conceived within rights thought.

135. Thus, e.g., Waldron (*Nonsense upon Stilts*) describes equality as being assumed to underpin human rights (p. 1), indeed that the articulation of such rights imply 'universality and a commitment to equality and non-discrimination, particularly across races and peoples' (p. 163). See also Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 113, 192.

136. E.g. Gewirth, *Human Rights*, p. 3.

137. E.g. de Blois, 'Foundation of Human Rights', pp. 18-19; Chattopadhyaya, 'Human Rights', p. 171.

138. E.g. F. Bergmann, 'The Experience of Values', in S. Hauerwas and A. MacIntyre (eds.), *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 127-59 (152-53).

139. Indeed, as Howard points out, this perception of equality is made explicit and concrete by the most influential of human rights-concerned bodies, the UN (*Search for Community*, p. 54).

140. This is not least because, in sociological rather than mathematical terms, 'straightforward equality is a very thin idea' (M. Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994], p. 33), requiring the fleshing-out provided by location within broader and often incompatible frameworks.

At a basic level, human rights imply the equality of all,[141] regardless of various individual statuses, properties or characteristics, and rebut any notion that humanity is properly arranged according to 'natural', 'ascribed' hierarchies.[142] Such equality is generally not taken as a denial or smoothing away of difference, but as a recognition, even celebration, of others' worth, and as such facilitates the valuing of communities as well as of individuals.[143] Mirroring the divisions within rights thought, recognitions of individual and communal aspects of equality produce as much discord as they do harmony.[144] However, one pervasive theme, albeit variously developed, concerns the capacity of established structures to facilitate or impair the realization of equality inherent within the logic of human rights claims.[145]

Reference has already been made to popular appropriations of human rights which fail to demonstrate the careful limitations and communal orientation which characterizes most rights thought, and these will be returned to in what follows. While not often an aspect of the debates within rights thought, the gap between some grasping, vernacular claims and more careful and theoretical articulations of human rights does reflect a division in attitudes toward and understandings of them which is part of human rights' contemporary character. The slippery, inclusive capacity of human rights means that short-sighted, egoistic uses of them, while perhaps not the best nor even necessarily representative, cannot simply be dismissed. Indeed, at one level, unsystematic and selfish rights claims are an essential facet of human rights' capacity to shape the world. This is nowhere more true than where assumptions and claims about equality are in view.[146] For some, the notion of human equality is easily transposed

141. '[A]ll human beings are equal on the grounds of their common humanity' (Forrester, *On Human Worth*, p. 43). See also Freeden, *Rights*, p. 27.

142. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 82.

143. 'Egalitarianism…does not mean a denial of particularity any more than difference implies subordination. Human beings are not simply equal irrespective of their identities…they are also equal in terms of such identities… Difference does not mean division and conflict, but the enhancing of community' (J.W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], p. 243). See also Forrester, *On Human Worth*, pp. 40-43.

144. E.g. Howard, *Search for Community*, pp. 221-22.

145. Thus, e.g., C. Villa-Vicencio states that 'in a world controlled and manipulated by dominant life-shaping social and economic structures, questions concerning full participation in life on the basis of freedom and equality involve more than the right to freedom of expression and choice or even the right to food and shelter. They necessarily involve questions concerning which ideologies and structures allow for the possibilities of these ideals being realised' (*A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-Building and Human Rights* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], p. 136).

146. I. Leigh, 'Towards a Christian Approach to Religious Liberty', in P.R. Beaumont

from a concern for the welfare of all into a selfish preoccupation with 'my equality';[147] human rights become a means of claiming what I am owed or desire, with little or no consideration of the implications such claims carry for others or for society. If Paul is to dialogue with human rights as they really are, rather than with some simplified or idealized caricature of them, then such negative appropriations of rights language must be included, even as they are also recognized as being anathema to most conceptions of human rights.

A focus upon human rights' concern with equality and its derivative interest in appropriate power and social structures provides the framework for this dialogue. In Chapter 3, the specific focus is upon patterns of relational power: how they are constructed, construed and especially their impact upon those involved. Paul's apostolic relationship with and self-presentation to the Corinthian community is examined in light of certain human rights assertions about which relations are and are not appropriate. In the following chapters, attention turns toward other relationships and the values Paul brings to bear in dealing with them. If not subverted by their cultural location, human rights have the potential to judge the social structures of all cultures. Paul's attitude toward his culture's power structures and particularly his handling of those at the wrong end of hierarchical relationships are explored with human rights assertions about social structures and also notions of universal humanity in view. That human rights are slippery and debated, rather than a monolithic given is borne in mind throughout the dialogue. Indeed, the openness thus suggested is part of what makes the dialogue worthwhile. That human rights are world-shaping realities, however they are seen and critiqued, and whether they are considered as objective values or cultural constructs, makes the dialogue all the more important. For whatever contribution Paul is able to make to debates within rights thought is potentially a contribution to shaping humanity's present and future understanding and valuation of itself.

(ed.), *Christian Perspectives on Human Rights and Legal Philosophy* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), pp. 31-72 (32).

147. See the parallel critique of demands for equality offered by J. Milbank, 'The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy', in L.P. Hemming (ed.), *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 33-45 (45).

Chapter 3

Apostolic Power

Both Paul and human rights thought employ language which shapes and defines lived realities, changing the structures and expectations within which people operate; it is effective and illocutionary. It is also affective: emotive, manipulative, aspirational, condemnatory, confrontational and inspiring. In both its effective and affective aspects, such language is entwined with and sits in judgment upon exercises of relational power. The majority of this chapter is concerned with exploring this interlacing of language and power, particularly as it is manifest in Paul's apostolic relation with and assertions to the Corinthian community. In preparation for that discussion, however, a consideration of some linguistic issues in the descriptive definition of human rights is in order.

1. *Human Rights: Language and Reality*

As explored in Chapter 2, human rights' slipperiness is tied up with linguistic factors, not least the polysemous capacity of the terms 'rights' and 'human'. The significance of language for a definition of rights can, however, be asserted in other directions too. Linguistics is often divided into syntactical, semantic and pragmatic elements, and human rights can be analysed along parallel lines. Syntactical analysis addresses relationships between linguistic forms, often 'without considering any world of reference or any user of the forms'.[1] A similar process is necessary in the careful description of human rights ideas, though the aim should clearly be to earth analysis in realities of context and user. Semantics investigates relationships between linguistic forms and the real-world entities to which they refer, and some confusions rooted in the semantic and lexical values of rights have already been outlined. Pragmatics, however, explores 'relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms', 'only pragmatics allows humans into the analysis'.[2] It is at the level of pragmatics, precisely

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1. G. Yule, *Pragmatics* (Oxford Introductions to Language Study; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 4.
2. Yule, *Pragmatics*, p. 4.

because it includes the human, that the most profound insights into the power of language emerge. Something similar can be said of human rights descriptions: only when the reciprocal influences of humans, their rights and their world are appreciated will certain aspects of human rights become clear.

One tool pragmaticians exploit to understand the impact of language upon its users is that of action or speech act theory. The most discussed aspect of this theory is illocutionary force: what a particular utterance 'counts as', its impact upon the world, the speaker and her hearers.[3] In order to utilize illocution as a category for thinking about human rights some stretching of the concept is necessary; however the potential of its contribution makes this acceptable.[4] That potential flows from the recognition that human rights language (its general presence as well as its specific occurrences) counts as an 'illocutionary act' (or series of acts). It is powerful, active language, inducing changes to the shape and character of humanity's world and existence.

That notion will be unpacked in more detail below. First, however, it is prudent to acknowledge that support for the notion of rights is procured from various places and from those whose thinking varies widely; human rights' capacity to shape humanity and its world is built upon broad foundations.[5] Perhaps the most striking aspect of this variety is that a positive belief in rights' objective basis is not required for them to be approved and advocated.[6] MacDonald is typical of those pro-rights thinkers who deny human rights' objectivity. As value judgments, she says, rights 'are more like records of decisions than propositions. To assert that "Freedom is better than slavery" or "All men are of equal worth" is not to state a fact but to choose a side. It announces *This is where I stand*'.[7] This contrasts with Paine's assertion that 'The rights of men…are neither devisable, nor

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3.   Yule, *Pragmatics*, p. 49.

4.   That the function of Pauline texts as an aspect of their meaning will be in view throughout the dialogue makes the use of the action theory category even more attractive. For illocution is an important aspect of language function and will be implicit throughout the discussion. Use of it here thus facilitates a further interweaving of Pauline and human rights language.

5.   This fact is sometimes taken as an indication that the notion of human rights is itself confused or even incoherent. As Gutmann argues, however, the plurality of arguments for human rights actually serves to establish their appeal more broadly and more persuasively within a pluralistic world, so long as those arguments are not advanced exclusively, as *the* ground for human rights ('Introduction', pp. xxii-xxiii).

6.   Neither is a rejection of rights' objective basis necessary for those who denounce them. There are those who see human dignity as an undeniable, irreducible fact, yet reject human rights for some of their accompanying baggage.

7.   MacDonald, 'Natural Rights', p. 35, original emphasis. See also Gutmann, 'Introduction', p. xi.

transferable, nor annihilable, but are descendable only'.[8] And Dworkin's assertion that 'Rights are best understood as trumps over some background justification for political decisions that states a goal for the community as a whole'[9] can be taken either way, allowing objective or contingent conceptualizations of rights, depending upon how it is developed. The point is that assertions and assumptions about human rights' objective reality do not determine their acceptance and approval. The notion and language of human rights possess power to shape human life whether or not they are believed to say something final about that life.

This illocutionary shaping of human life is both effective and affective. There can be no doubting the emotive power of rights rhetoric to affect those encountering and using it; shaping expectations, values and even self-worth. To claim something as a right is to make a considerably stronger statement than merely to say that it is good. Strong enough, in fact, to transform the value of whatever objects are claimed as rights: 'we shift them out of the realm of the merely desirable and into the domain of the morally essential',[10] making them universal goods. The emotive appeal of rights language is immense, as is the potential sense of obligation claims to 'morally essential' rights can impose. No wonder, then, that the scope of rights claims is burgeoning: trees, animals, smokers, consumers and cyclists are all now accorded special entitlements.[11] Some detect unfortunate repercussions in this expansion, in the place the provocative and bellicose language of rights enjoys within political and relational discourses.[12] While neither everything claimed as a human right, nor the confrontational tenor that such claims often take need be accepted, however, the spread of the concept into every imaginable area of life cannot be ignored. Rights language—in both its other-oriented and egoistic forms—is performing an ongoing redefinition of the world humanity lives and relates in; recognition of its affective appeal and power must be part of any careful definition of human rights today.

8.   T. Paine, *Rights of Man* (New York and London: Penguin, 1985 [1791, 1792]), p. 124.

9.   R. Dworkin, 'Rights as Trumps', in J. Waldron (ed.), *Theories of Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 153-67 (153).

10.   Jones, *Rights*, p. 4.

11.   Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. xi. For Lockwood O'Donovan, there is an 'inflationary logic' to rights claims which determines their inevitable expansion to match 'the objects of human desire and human possession', which are themselves ever extended through technology and wealth ('Natural Law', p. 22).

12.   'Disputes phrased in terms of rights often present us with little more than assertions and counter-assertions. They seem to exacerbate rather than ameliorate conflict. We are confronted with opposing sets of dogmatic claims which offer no means of resolution and no prospect of reconciliation' (Jones, *Rights*, p. 5).

Similarly, the effective power of human rights language is seen in its concrete impact upon numerous aspects of twenty-first-century life; its illocutionary force is reshaping humanity's world.[13] Of particular interest here are human rights' influence upon issues of power, social structure and equality, with which Paul's Corinthian correspondence also deals, facilitating the dialogue in view. Indeed, whatever assumptions might be made about the inherent truth of either Pauline or human rights thought, their shared capacity to influence human lives by (re)shaping perceptions of humanity and its world cannot be denied. The effect of such shaping by human rights can be seen on a number of levels, which have combined to reconfigure the underlying cultural values of many people and people groups.

Internationally, the establishment of the UN, EU and other bodies has redefined the global framework for acceptable behaviour. Court judgments, economic sanctions, even military action on the basis of human rights have become recognized forms of international relations.[14] Their influence can be seen upon whole nations—like the various pressures put upon apartheid South Africa—or individual people—as the arrest and trial for war crimes of Slobodan Milosevic illustrates. International bodies are joined by nations committing themselves to abide by the organization's values and constitution. When, as is preeminently the case with the UN, such values are founded squarely upon human rights, their effect upon the world can only be considered immense. As Rawls argues, for example, since 1945 the UN has effectively limited the acceptable use of war as state policy and, to the extent that it has been successful in doing so, has relativized the sovereignty of nation states: 'One role of human rights is precisely to specify limits to that sovereignty'.[15]

The influence of human rights is also evident at the intra-national level. Citizen-state relationships have been being reconfigured by rights thinking

13. Although the *idea* of human rights is important in this shaping of humanity's world, the appropriation, expansion and (re)application of rights *language* is perhaps more so. As E. Adams says of Paul's use of κόσμος and κτίσις, 'Social worlds and symbolic universes are constructed largely by *linguistic* machinery' (*Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* [Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000], p. 7, original emphasis).

14. Gutmann argues that this redefinition by human rights remains an as yet incomplete process (and may never be completed) because the enforcement of rights norms is not yet without flaws. She acknowledges, however, that the 'rights revolution' has changed the face of international relations ('Introduction', pp. vii-viii).

15. J. Rawls, 'The Law of Peoples', in S. Shute and S. Hurley (eds.), *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 41-82 (70). See also Douzinas, *End of Human Rights*, pp. 374-75; Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, pp. 6-8; Sobrino, 'Human Rights and Oppressed Peoples', p. 136.

since the time of the French Revolution.[16] This reshaping has recently
achieved new levels, partly because of the ability to appeal over the head
of national governments to international bodies and partly because many
nation states have introduced rights legislation to their statute books,[17] or
even written human rights into their constitutions.[18] The changes involved
cut into the unfettered powers of both state and citizen, entailing a variety
of judgments about what sorts of power count as legitimate from a human
rights perspective. As parents are constrained from or condemned for physi-
cally chastising their children and governments treated likewise for detain-
ing people without due legal process, the impact upon values, expectations
and ideas of appropriate power have literally changed the living conditions
of many people around the world.

16. France's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* (1789), for example,
includes the following strictures of limitation upon the state's power: 'Men are born,
and always continue, free, and equal in respect of their rights… The end of all politi-
cal associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man;
and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression… Political
liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another… The law
ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law,
should not be hindered; nor should any one be compelled to that which the law does
not require. The law is an expression of the will of the community. All citizens have
a right to concur…in its formation. It should be the same to all, whether it protects or
punishes; and all being equal in their sight, are equally eligible to all honours, places,
and employments, according to their different abilities, without any other distinction
than that created by their virtues and talents' (http://www.hrcr.org/docs/frenchdec.html
accessed on 05.03.2009).

17. Henkin, *Age of Rights*, p. 26. In the UK the major recent development came with
the Human Rights Act 1998 which, from October 2000, brought various European
legislation including the European Convention on Human Rights onto the domestic
statute books. See J. Wadham and G. Crossman (eds.), *Your Rights: The Liberty Guide
to Human Rights* (London: Pluto, 7th edn, 2000).

18. The American *Declaration of Independence* (1776) is the most famous such
inclusion of rights in a constitutional document: 'We hold these truths to be self-
evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with
certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Hap-
piness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving
their just powers from the consent of the governed' (http://www.ushistory.org/Dec-
laration/document/index.htm accessed on 11.12.2008). While the infamous, implicit
limitations originally carried by 'all men' in this statement have now been tran-
scended, more recent constitutional documents are much clearer as to their inclusive
scope. Thus, for example, Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) asserts
that: 'Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the
equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular,
without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex,
age or mental or physical disability' (http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/charter/ accessed on
11.12.2008).

Human rights' influence can also be seen at more local, communal and individual levels. Relationships, social and administrative structures, ideas of acceptable behaviour, all have been shaped by the burgeoning influence of human rights. Respect for one's neighbours is not a new notion, but it is increasingly hedged around by rights formulae, whether expressed legally, less formally understood, or both (for example, in the toleration of others' racial or sexual differences). The individualistic aspect inherent in a shift toward rights' domination of communal relations may not be universally welcomed,[19] but the actuality of the change cannot be disputed. Nor can human rights' illocutionary action to reshape ideas of humanness, person-hood and self-awareness be escaped; personal concepts have been changed by rights thought, fundamentally affecting attitudes toward individual rela-tionships, wider social structures and the conceptions of power and equality fundamental to both.

All these changes reflect the capacity of human rights to challenge and modify accepted norms in many different cultures. Their impact upon legal and constitutional frameworks, as well as upon less formal values, expecta-tions and mores, have made the world a different place. Human rights have demonstrated their ability to transcend culture in their pragmatic impact, even if questions remain over their cultural roots and thus boundedness, and even if different cultures allow themselves to be impacted in different ways. In their illocutionary force, then, their affective and effective impact upon the world, human rights can be seen as inescapable facts. And that, what-ever divisions over their basis, justification and content, must remain an aspect of their careful definition. Certainly, there have been 'worlds without rights',[20] but here and now human rights are very real. Perhaps, in fact, the only thing which might undermine their reality would be some radical shake-up of the way in which we view, treat and organize society, relation-ships and each other. Until such time, and the reconceptualizing of human-ity that it would involve,[21] human rights will remain and, in doing so, will continue to act to shape our world.

19. For example, S.L. Carter says that 'Respect for rules of conduct has been lost in the deafening and essentially empty rights-talk of our age. Following a rule of good manners may mean doing something you do not want to do, and the weird rhetoric of our self-indulgent age resists the idea that we have such things as obligations to others. We suffer…the elevation of self-expression over self-control' ('Civility: Manners, Morals and the Etiquette of Democracy', *The Christian Century*, 8 April 1998, pp. 366-71 [367]). See also the discussion of critiques of human rights in Chapter 4.

20. Jones, *Rights*, p. 1.

21. As Freeden says, human rights need not be seen to 'spring forth fully clothed from an objective, or even sharply defined, notion of human nature. Human nature itself is, in all of its aspects, the product of human interpretation as much as of biologi-cal, chemical and environmental processes, although some attributes are more durable

2. *Human Rights, Power and Paul*

Such world-shaping reality and capacity not withstanding, human rights also remain a slippery, debated concept. This slipperiness requires us to take great interpretive care whenever we are faced with rights language: neither to assume others' understandings as fitting our own nor to proceed as though rights are a monolithic construct. Similar care is required when power language is in view, for it too is elusive, freighted and polysemous. When thinking about power in Paul's Corinthian correspondence, then, it is important to be clear about what is meant: the sort of power being exercised, the framework it is deployed within, and the moral character (if any) it displays. These factors, alongside the relational and situational particularities in which he was working, combine to determine the impact of Paul's power upon the Corinthian community, and shape the contribution he makes to a human rights' understanding of (in)appropriate power.

Unfortunately, many of those who explore power motifs within Paul's letters do so with differing concepts of power in mind, creating a diverse literature which makes starting from an all-inclusive summary of scholarly thought somewhat unfeasible. Rather, and as befits this project, the capacity of power relationships to affect human rights, a pervasive if also divisive theme within rights thought, will set the agenda, with various select contributions from Pauline scholarship being addressed as appropriate. As such, there are aspects of Paul's thought about power which lie beyond this chapter's remit, though that is not to dismiss their potential bearing upon human rights issues. To focus upon Paul's relationships is largely, for example, to set aside his talk of principalities and powers, be they institutional, political, structural or spiritual. There will be some discussion of such matters in later chapters, but constraints of space prevent any full exploration of them.

Human rights thought has much to say about power and empowerment, oppression, equality and hierarchy. Human rights are, if nothing else, a way of thinking about how people can relate to one another without doing damage to, or suppressing, the fundamental human value of others or oneself. Consequently, all talk of human rights makes assertions, often implicitly, about what are and are not appropriate patterns of social power, about what sorts of relationships are compatible with the concept and thus, in a world shaped by rights, with being human. While the relations in view in much rights discourse concern the macro level—the roles of states and institutions—much

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over time than others. In this very significant sense the human nature on which rights are grounded will itself always remain a construct of the human mind, and rights will never be merely reducible to the bundles of human aptitudes and needs that constitute us as living entities' (*Rights*, pp. 61-62).

is also written of individual and group relationships, providing an easy point of contact with Paul's relations to the Corinthian community.

While some do use 'power' in an entirely pejorative sense, most rights thinkers recognize the necessary ubiquity of power structures and relationships within communal life. The need, then, is to determine which sort(s) of structures and relationships are appropriate; which sort(s) of power can be considered compatible with or do not do violence to human rights? Though widespread, discussions of such matters are generally less than precise or systematic, frequently relying upon 'common sense' statements of rights-appropriate relations and case specific examinations of rights violations. Often they serve to illustrate some higher principle of rights, rather than to examine the specifics of (in)appropriate power relationships. This tendency towards vague assertion of rights-appropriate relations might seem to limit the possibilities of substantive comparison with the relational outlines Paul provides. However, that possibility does exist, not least because Paul has similar tendencies himself; hinting at the shape and character of his own exemplary relationships rather more than he spells things out. This is, no doubt, partly explained by the knowledge of him which Paul could assume his readers enjoyed. But it probably also reflects his focus upon higher principles of his own. That focus left him rather more concerned with calls for conformity to a certain pattern than with detailing what that pattern involved, and with making general statements about appropriate behaviour rather than specific relational judgments.[22] Consequently, Paul's later readers are largely left to flesh out the detail and character of his relationships for themselves, and then to assess their reconstructions against either standards foreign to Paul or those relational principles he himself pressed upon others.[23] In addition, because both Paul and rights thinkers define appropriate human relationships according to higher principles, the patterns they either manifest or recommend also allow the weighing of such principles. The shaping impacts of their higher values upon people's lived realities provide sufficient evidence for at least some assessment of how constructive, or otherwise, those principles are for human life; and how confirming or challenging Paul's thought is for human rights.

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22. When he does make specific judgments Paul tends to do so on moral matters (e.g. 1 Corinthians 5) or issues of faith (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15), rather than upon appropriate power relationships. That is not to say that the former cannot also involve the latter, but Paul's concern is not primarily about the sort of relationship involved. The issue in Galatians, e.g., is not whether it is appropriate for leaders to press their ideas upon a submitting community so much as whether those ideas are themselves correct and the people involved the right ones to do the pressing.

23. There is clearly much room for speculation and disagreement here, and much of this chapter is inevitably concerned with picking a careful path through the various interpretations of Pauline relationships.

As stated, much rights discourse simply assumes standards of appropriate relationship and the patterns of power therein. However, there are some who, being neither pure rights theorists constrained by a primary focus upon 'higher concerns', nor involved rights activists motivated largely by 'obvious injustices', have found themselves the space to think explicitly about relational power and human rights. Cronin offers one such analysis of types of power, good and bad, which is helpful when assessing both Paul's own relationships and his possible contribution to human rights thought.

Drawing upon May's work, Cronin suggests that there are five sorts of power.[24] Exploitation (slavery, for example, or any use of brute force; always involving violence against another[25]) and manipulation (more covert and subtle than exploitation, but still aiming to do violence to another; the con-man to exploitation's gun-man[26]) 'are essentially destructive and morally wrong' expressions of power.[27] Competitive power and nutrient power are morally ambivalent and can be either constructive or destructive. 'Competition can give zest and vitality to human relations', but also tends 'towards exploitation and manipulation and can easily give rise to negative dispositions of envy and jealousy'.[28] Nutrient power (a force most readily seen in parental relations but also characteristic of the teacher-pupil axis) is essentially nurturing, but can turn into an enervating, 'unjustified paternalism'.[29] Lastly, and of purely positive character, integrative power is a typical characteristic of 'co-operative behaviour between equals or near equals', even when involving correction or criticism (critical, refining discussion after a lecture, for example, or non-violent opposition leading to changed convictions).

24. R. May, *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (Glasgow: Collins/Fontana, 1976). The concise definition of power with which May works is 'the ability to cause or prevent change' (p. 99). His relational concerns then expand this definition: 'power means the ability to affect, to influence and to change other persons. Each person exists in an interpersonal web, analogous to magnetic fields of force; and each one propels, repels, connects, identifies with others' (p. 100). May divides power's ability to change between the latent, potential 'ability to cause a change at some future time', and a present 'actuality' (p. 99). It is the latter, present power reality which May then analyses, producing the taxonomy of power (pp. 105-13) which Cronin adopts and adapts in his account of rights (*Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 189-92).

25. May, *Power and Innocence*, pp. 105-106. May describes exploitative power as 'the most destructive kind'; it 'always presupposes violence or the threat of violence'.

26. May, *Power and Innocence*, p. 106.

27. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 189.

28. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 189-90; May, *Power and Innocence*, pp. 108-109.

29. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 189-90.

> [C]o-operation is the central theme of integrative power, but…sometimes
> this type of power has to be pushed on another in the hope that he or she
> will ultimately see its constructive value. Obviously, correction and criti-
> cism may be welcome or unwelcome, while in itself being objectively valid
> and actually needed in a situation. Integrative power may at times look like
> nutrient power or even competitive power…whereas its ultimate rationale
> is different from these other types… Threats and sanctions are not used, but
> rather rational argument and the offer of respectful co-operation is depended
> on to achieve a harmony of purposes. The kind of power involved…[is]
> 'power with' another person. This differs from exploitative/manipulative
> 'power over' another; also from competitive 'power against' another; as
> well as from nutrient 'power for' another.[30]

While Cronin's explicit use of May's taxonomy is not widely replicated
amongst rights thinkers, the assessment that 'power with' is the most con-
sistently positive exercise of power and least likely to impair another's
human rights is echoed across the literature. As Cronin puts it, integra-
tive power is the ideal from a rights perspective because only power exer-
cised 'with' another is likely 'to explicitly recognise the equal dignity
and freedom of others'.[31] Though certainly not immune from critical
questioning,[32] such a broad analysis of power by means and ends offers a
way of assessing power-laden actions and language, including Paul's, for
its human rights compatibility. Indeed, Cronin goes so far in associating
'power with' actions with human rights that he even identifies rights claims
as an example of 'power with' behaviour, necessarily implying correlative
obligations as such claims do.

> The performance of the obligation is itself a form of power on the part of
> another which the right-holder needs for his welfare. Thus right-holders
> and the bearers of obligation wield power together, the former in claiming
> and the latter in responding to the claim. Claiming a human right is a good
> example of integrative power, which at one moment benefits the present
> claimant, but at the next moment may benefit the bearer of the obligation
> who changes sides and becomes a claimant in turn—that after all is the
> implication of the equality built into the meaning of the phrase 'human
> right'.[33]

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30. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 190-91. See also May, *Power and Inno-
cence*, pp. 109-11.

31. Cronin does allow competitive and nutrient powers 'some positive relation to
rights', but only in limited measure because of their failings on this point (Cronin,
Rights and Christian Ethics, p. 191).

32. For example, who decides when the paternalism of knowing what is best for
another will ultimately be power with rather than power over, against or for? Who says
when criticism and challenge become violent? Does exercising power with construc-
tive motives deny or mitigate the possibility of destructive outcomes?

33. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 191-92.

Clearly, as he did not know human rights, Paul could not himself have indulged in either side of the 'power with' dynamic which Cronin sees in rights claims. However, Paul's actions and language can be weighed against the sort of reciprocal and constructive fruit central to the notion of integrative power.[34] Moreover, as our goal is a Paul-rights dialogue, not simply a testing of Paul against human rights standards, it is valuable that he can also stand over against this sort of categorization, perhaps demonstrating that to neatly label certain power relations as 'good' and others as 'bad' is to simplify too far.

So then, the aims of this part of the investigation are twofold. First, to assess how Paul's relationships compare with those that human rights thought approves, particularly those that manifest the 'power with' dynamic, and are hence neither oppressive nor solely self-seeking. Second, to ask whether the Pauline model—particularly in its impacts upon others and in its basis in an alternative higher value system to that of human rights—has any constructive or critical contribution to make to human rights concepts of appropriate relational power.

3. *Power in Paul's Corinthian Correspondence*

a. *Identifying Power Themes and Clusters*

As outlined in Chapter 1, allowing human rights to set the agenda for this dialogue with Paul requires that the first stage in seeking a Pauline contribution on relational power be one of reader-focused exploration. With both the specifics of Cronin's power categories and the general relational commentary of most rights literature in mind, Paul's Corinthian correspondence must be examined for passages and themes which resonate for power-focused, rights-aware readers.

Although 'power' is a commonly identified theme within these letters,[35] interpretive subjectivity is an inevitable issue for such an examination. The quantity and character of power references, hints, claims and allusions a

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34. Interestingly, May observes that all five types of power are 'present in the same person at different times'. Someone who is domineering and manipulative in a work situation, e.g., may well exercise nutrient and integrative power in home and other social contexts (*Power and Innocence*, pp. 112-13). The question, then, is less whether or not Paul used one particular type of power described in this taxonomy—he almost certainly did—but rather whether his apostolic relations with the Corinthian community were characterized by it.

35. Thus, e.g., A.R. Brown ('The Gospel Takes Place: Paul's Theology of Power-in-Weakness in 2 Corinthians', *Interpretation* 52.3 [1998], pp. 271-85 [271]) describes the Corinthian correspondence as being 'where Paul's power (*dynamis*) terminology is more prevalent and power-related argument more integral than in any other part of the Pauline corpus'.

particular reader finds in the Corinthian correspondence will depend upon how broad a definition of power they come to the text with and how sensitive to certain issues they are. There is more here than the inevitably subjective aspect of all interpretation. Because the reader is intentionally approaching Paul with certain readerly questions to the fore, that subjectivity is inflated; an over-egging of the power pudding is a very real and ultimately distorting possibility. Certainly, there are those in recent Pauline scholarship who have found power references at almost every turn, often understanding them in a manner that does Paul few favours.[36] The justification of such readings has been questioned by others, however, and the analysis of how apposite they are for a good understanding of Paul will play a key role in this exploration of his relation to human rights constructs. Such analysis notwithstanding, what cannot be denied about such readings is that they highlight an important function of Pauline texts: that there are power issues at stake in all Paul writes.

Indeed, it is true to say that, at one level, Paul's Corinthian correspondence is itself an act of power, as are all acts of communication.[37] Paul writes in a certain capacity, using certain devices to address a certain audience with whom he has a certain relationship, and does so for certain ends. As such, almost any aspect of what Paul says can be considered an exercise of relational power.[38] For example, 'I rejoice that I can have complete confidence in you' (χαίρω ὅτι ἐν παντὶ θαρρῶ ἐν ὑμῖν, 2 Cor. 7.16) appears at first glance to be a fairly innocuous affirmation, and would likely be taken as such by most readers. Coming to the text with power issues in mind,

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36. Shaw's *Cost of Authority* is among the more notorious examples of such scholarship, but E.A. Castelli (*Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991]), S.D. Moore (*Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994]), Polaski (*Discourse of Power*) and D. Boyarin (*A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994]), to name a few, are also much discussed in this context.

37. Polaski draws this point out at length, using the insights of sociologist Anthony Giddens, who argues that 'power is a feature of every human interaction' (*New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretative Sociologies* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2nd edn, 1993], p. 118, cited in Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power*, p. 36) to assert that it is not only when his apostolic authority is on the line that Paul indulges in power claims. Rather, 'Paul (like any human being interacting with others) is *always* involved in relations of power' (Polaski, *Paul and the Discourse of Power*, p. 37, original emphasis).

38. See K. Ehrensperger's parallel insistence that power themes in Paul cannot be restricted to those texts in which the specific language of power—ἐξουσία, δύναμις, ἀρχή, etc.—are in evidence (*Paul and the Dynamics of Power: Communication and Interaction in the Early Christ-Movement* [Library of New Testament Studies, 325; London: T. & T. Clark, 2007], p. 12).

however, might make it appear a sarcastic put-down, a cynical attempt at manipulation or an expression of genuine joy which seeks a particular response. Even read as a simple affirmation, it could be construed as patronisingly paternalistic or as an important ploy in Paul's community-shaping strategy. The point is that how any such text is read depends upon more than its linguistic content. The function it had and has will be understood according to the reader's perspective on broader issues: on Paul himself, on the situation within the Corinthian community, on how power and appropriate relationships are conceived, and so on.[39]

However, it is probably neither sensible nor safe to find demons under every bed, to invest too much in every alleged power reference. Some interpreters of Paul apparently deem it appropriate to see his every use of power as unremittingly negative, oppressive and destructive. That is, perhaps, an inevitable temptation when reading Paul with contemporary power issues firmly in mind. However, and as Cronin's typology emphasizes, not all power need be seen as bad, even if it can be labelled as such. Indeed, it is precisely because power issues can be read in different ways that Cronin's typology of power is worth bringing into the equation. For, whatever its weaknesses, it does encourage us to think three-dimensionally about power, to consider the motivations, methods and fruit of each Pauline exercise of relational power, not simply to assume the worst.

The first, unavoidable impression when coming to Paul's Corinthian correspondence as rights-aware and power-focused readers, is that Paul talks about himself in striking terms, claiming a prominent, even pre-eminent position within the Corinthian community.[40] Paul is not only making power claims against other, rival leaders, as so much interpretive history has emphasized. He is also making clear assertions about his place within the community, and the implications of him not being accorded that place.[41] On

39. It is probably also significant that negative second/deeper readings of even such an apparently affirmative comment as 2 Cor. 7.16 are much easier to come up with than are positive ones. Whether this is taken as revealing Paul's hidden, manipulative heart or as indicative of a cultural tendency towards suspicion where all matters of power and authority are concerned will also influence readings of Paul.

40. An impression which makes W. Schmithals's assessment that Paul is naturally reluctant to place himself in the foreground at best simplistic. Schmithals bases his judgment upon 1 Cor. 3.5, 2 Cor. 4.5, 5.12 and 10.12, but clearly takes these texts only at face value and without appreciation of the broader apostolic themes within their epistolary context (*The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* [London: SPCK, 1971], p. 43).

41. Each of Paul's letters is, to use Castelli's loaded phrase, a 'discourse of power', a fact which she claims has too often gone unnoticed: 'There is a paradoxical, inverse relationship between the preponderance of references to, articulations of, and claims to power in early Christian texts, and the relative silence of interpreters in taking up questions of the power relations underwritten or enabled by these texts' (*Imitating Paul*,

the one hand, Paul spreads his assumptions and assertions of personal status throughout all he writes; unrelenting threads in the patterns he weaves to describe life within Christian community. On the other hand, there are places in which these threads seem knotted, concentrated into clusters of power reference. In order to investigate Paul's relational language, then, themes within it will be examined across the Corinthian correspondence as a whole before one particular power cluster passage (1 Corinthians 9) is explored in greater depth. Important questions to be asked will include: what roles and statuses does Paul claim for himself and why?, and what impacts does this have upon the *ekklesia* and those within it? Additionally, questions of compatibility with human rights thought or of perspectives alternative to it will be kept in mind throughout.

b. *Paul on Paul*

Παῦλος κλητὸς ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ (1 Cor. 1.1; cf. 2 Cor. 1.1). Right from the opening statement of his extant letters to them, Paul leaves his Corinthian readers in no doubt as to his status,[42] even if the particular import of that standing remains to be unpacked in the rest of what he writes. While it may say more, this opening assertion of Paul's position, with all its implicit authority claims, is at very least a statement of intent. And, however one chooses to reconstruct the power struggles within the Corinthian community, that intent would surely not have been missed by Paul's audience, whether they were for him or against. Yet the claims Paul goes on to make for himself, and hence the place within the community which he demands, are, if anything, even more arresting than this simple, introductory statement of apostleship. Again, in the following examples Paul is surely doing more than merely making power claims. But such claims are integral to his language and play no small part in whatever else he is trying to achieve. These examples by no means exhaust Paul's power claims. Indeed, they only focus upon certain more obvious aspects of such claims. They say little, for instance, about the power assumptions and implications inherent in the very act of writing instruction, encouragement

p. 14). While helpfully provocative, however, Castelli's claim is only partially true. There has actually been a great deal written on power in Paul—1 and 2 Corinthians included—at least tangentially or by inference. It might perhaps be more accurate to say that 'power' has been a surprisingly rare focus of scholarly attention given the sort of texts that these letters are. Yet even that assessment does scant justice to a number of power-focused studies (see below) which Castelli seems largely to discount because their terms and conceptions of power fail to fit her particular, explicit and Foucauldian framework.

42. M. Hengel and A.M. Schwemer, *Paulus zwischen Damascus und Antiochien* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 108; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Siebeck, 1998), p. 77.

and rebuke to a believing community,[43] or of the apostolic parousia dynamic which Paul seems to intend his letters to fulfil.[44]

  Paul is, he writes to the Corinthians, the community's master builder, whose foundational work is the standard against which all other contributions are to be judged (1 Cor. 3.10-11), and the remembrance of whose teaching determines praiseworthiness (1 Cor. 11.2). Paul presents himself as bringer, declarer and conduit of the gospel, any deviation from whose side risks an undermining of salvation. It is to Paul that the community owes its very existence,[45] being the fruit of his ministry and testifying in his favour (2 Cor. 3.3). Indeed, their continued existence as a community of the saved depends, he claims, upon their persistent adherence 'to the word I proclaimed to you. Unless you believed in vain'[46] (1 Cor. 15.2).[47] Paul is, in some sense, a mediator between God and the community;[48] his life, ministry and experiences benefit them, even at cost to himself (2 Cor. 1.3-7). He is one sent as an ambassador of Christ (ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν ὡς τοῦ θεοῦ παρακαλοῦντος δι' ἡμῶν, 2 Cor. 5.20) and one of God's fellow workers (συνεργός, 1 Cor. 3.9; συνεργέω, 2 Cor. 6.1), rendering his appeals to the Corinthians both difficult and dangerous to ignore. Should they choose to disregard him, he surely implies, they tread a perilous path. For if Paul is right—and, being divinely commissioned (ἀπόστολος…διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ, 2 Cor. 1.1; cf. 1 Cor. 1.1), he could hardly be otherwise—who are they either to stand against him or to minimize his claims? They are not much, seems to be Paul's verdict. He is happy enough, after all, to dismiss their spiritual

43. See, e.g., J.H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 8-9: 'The whole Pauline corpus is testimony to the fact that Paul had something to say to "his" communities and presumed both his right to say it and his effectiveness in doing so. In that sense authority is presumed'. Also Watson, 'Christ, Community', p. 133.

44. Hence J.C. Beker's description of Paul's letters as 'reluctant substitutes' for his apostolic presence (*Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2nd edn, 1984], p. 24).

45. As Polaski says of 1 Cor. 3.5, 'Paul is merely a διάκονος…serving God; yet—and the Corinthians cannot forget this—without the grace of God given to *him*, God's grace would not have reached *them*' (*Discourse of Power*, p. 110, original emphasis).

46. Or 'thoughtlessly'. See A.C. Thiselton's discussion of εἰκῇ, although he prefers the awkward translation 'without coherent consideration' (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000], p. 1186).

47. As Polaski puts it, 'To receive Paul's gospel is to receive Paul as proclaimer of the gospel; rejection of the messenger, Paul implies, is tantamount to rejection of the message' (*Discourse of Power*, p. 12).

48. S.J. Hafemann, *Suffering and Ministry in the Spirit: Paul's Defence of his Ministry in II Corinthians 2:14–3:3* (Biblical and Theological Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), pp. 227-28; Schmithals, *Office of Apostle*, p. 31; Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, p. 111.

standing as infantile and worldly (1 Cor. 3.1-4), of implicitly and occasion-
ally explicitly (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.1-3) inferior worth to his own. This superiority
over them is something Paul at times seems determined to establish.⁴⁹ Thus,
even when talking of the interdependent body, Paul is at pains to remind
the Corinthians that apostles are appointed first (1 Cor. 12.27-31). And it is
surely no coincidence that those appointed subsequently are also character-
ized by giftings he has, or that τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ μείζονα (v. 31) mirror Paul's
own. Indeed, even when relativizing the significance of tongues speech, Paul
makes sure his superiority over them in it is clear: εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ, πάντων
ὑμῶν μᾶλλον γλώσσαις λαλῶ (1 Cor. 14.18). Moreover, while Paul is happy
to weigh the Corinthians, he is not pleased with them weighing him (1 Cor.
4.3). His higher status in the spiritual economy allows him to call upon God
as a witness in his defence (Ἐγὼ δὲ μάρτυρα τὸν θεὸν ἐπικαλοῦμαι ἐπὶ τὴν
ἐμὴν ψυχήν, 2 Cor. 1.23). While he claims that this is not him 'lording it over'
the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1.24), it is plain that Paul is able to do so because
of his superior understanding and status. Ultimately, the Corinthians—at
least if they want to maintain assertions about their spirituality—must affirm
Paul's stance and standing, otherwise they will find themselves marginalized
(ἀγνοέω, 1 Cor. 14.36-38). In these, and other ways too numerous to mention
briefly,⁵⁰ Paul's language asserts the empowered and prominent place he felt
was his right within the Corinthian community.

   Despite the inherent potential of many of the above points to be construed
negatively—Paul's multi-faceted superiority over against the community
being perhaps the most obviously undesirable to contemporary eyes—much
of what Paul asserts about himself in the Corinthian correspondence can
also be read as little more than conventional, everyday statements about
relational power. He is the community's apostle after all, and perhaps needs
to remind them of that. In doing so he makes certain status and hierarchy
judgments inevitable, but that need not be taken to reflect anything beyond
normal and necessary authority structures;⁵¹ neither inherently harmful
for the Corinthian community nor excessively grasping on Paul's part.⁵²

   49. L.W. Countryman, 'Christian Equality and the Early Catholic Episcopate',
Anglican Theological Review 63.2 (1981), pp. 115-38 (129).
   50. The particularly significant language of Paul's fatherhood over the congregation
and his more explicit claims about being a model for them are addressed below.
   51. As Schütz expresses it, at a certain level authority is something which 'rests
within the social organization and is constantly being underwritten by those who
command and those who obey, presumably because the goals of the social organiza-
tion benefit, and are shared by, both… It may be that "the rationale of authority" is to
be found in those very factors which induce men to form associations in the first place'
(*Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, pp. 11-12).
   52. This rather forgiving perspective is hardly the most common among those inter-
ested in Paul's power-laden language, but neither is it unique. Polaski, e.g., reads Paul

Indeed, many, if perhaps not quite all, of these claims could be construed as potentially 'power with', although they might also be seen as working in other ways. Some scholars, however, have chosen to understand Paul's power claims less charitably, denying them the sort of positive connotations Cronin ascribes to 'power with' actions. Castelli, for example, claims that in 1 Corinthians Paul's promotion of himself silences and marginalizes the community.

> Power elides and becomes coterminous with the person and discourse of Paul; the multiple and competing voices in the Corinthian community, voices almost muted by the letter's rhetoric, are overpowered by Paul's…the reader is urged to see things from Paul's point of view, to view other positions in caricature, and so on. Paul claims discursive privilege explicitly in the content of his argument and implicitly by the persistence of his use of vocabulary and syntax which render him the active subject of speech and his audience its passive object.[53]

Shaw takes a similar line. Having distilled the New Testament witness about authority into two irreconcilable streams of good and bad,[54] he says

with a hermeneutic of suspicion firmly in place, ensuring that his power-related machinations are indeed laid bare, but without assuming, a priori, that they reveal an egoistic, manipulative heart. She says, 'I do not mean to vilify Paul's power claims from the outset, nor to dismiss them as deceitfully self-serving. To me it appears obvious that Paul's perspective is theological, that is, he writes to focus his readers' attention on God… The discourse in which Paul participates presupposes divine interest and intervention in human affairs' (*Discourse of Power*, pp. 21-22). Of course, as Polaski acknowledges, that Paul's discourse and concerns are primarily theological does not reduce the power-shaping potential he holds, nor does it mean that potential need necessarily be realized in positive directions. But allowing Paul to have more than simply his own status in mind when making power claims perhaps does better justice to him as a real, complex person and also to the text—acknowledging the significance of its 'surface' message as well as its underlying structures—than do readings in which suspicion dominates almost to the exclusion of all else, and certainly to denying Paul any truly positive role within the communities to which he wrote and which valued his letters enough to preserve them.

53. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 200. While undoubtedly insightful, Castelli's comments (deliberately?) overlook the necessity of Paul's active and agenda-shaping centrality as author of the sort of letter 1 Corinthians is. Could he have written in another way and still hoped to achieve his aims? The genre of the text should be afforded at least as much attention when assessing its impact as certain philosophical construals of power alien to it.

54. Starting from a recognition of Christianity's chequered history in matters of power, freedom and equality, Shaw (*Cost of Authority*) suggests that the roots of its ambiguous record lie in its unthinking reliance upon a supposedly 'pure' text (pp. 23, 185, 275) whose moral character is actually uneven: 'As long as the New Testament remains fundamentally uncriticized, it will function as a carrier of those destructive attitudes which have surfaced repeatedly in Christian history' (p. 12). Shaw recognizes

that to judge Paul against the good—that 'authentic authority which both frees and reconciles'[55]—is largely to find him wanting.[56] For Shaw, Paul testifies against himself, failing in his practice to measure up to 'the expectations which his own exposition of the gospel has aroused'.[57] Shaw's criterion for assessing Paul is not that of historicity—did Paul actually write the offending texts?—which others have used to rehabilitate the apostle's questionable reputation,[58] but of their impact as whole texts, synchronically read within a certain context. Shaw's approach, then, clearly resonates with a reading of Paul done with explicit awareness of human rights ideas: both evaluate the apostle against values from outside of his own milieu. The difference between Shaw's approach and this one, however, is that while Shaw treats his own socio-philosophical context as a given, its emphasis upon personal autonomy as an ultimate value,[59] and its inherent suspicion

that as 'primarily a religion of salvation' Christianity 'claims to bring deliverance and peace' (p. 13), but insists that its formative scriptures be tested against the goods of such salvation and, where found wanting, be marginalized. Where deliverance and peace are not found Shaw sees the inappropriate exercise of power. For example, 'The New Testament contains passages of venomous hostility towards outsiders, and a stress on sacramental forms of visibility, especially baptism, which effectively defines outsiders. These clear indications of insecure and therefore arbitrary authority are associated with an emphasis on obedience and a fondling of the sanctions which enforce it… In the New Testament some passages exalt uncritical obedience, which is then enforced by the immediate sanction of social exclusion, and by the ultimate if unusable deterrent of the last judgment' (pp. 18-19).

55. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 23.

56. Shaw's general marginalization of Christianity's truth claims is particularly pertinent to Paul's view of himself. To the objection that his evaluation ignores the inherent authority of the truth, and those who possess it, Shaw responds: 'the possession of the truth provides no justification for either the arbitrary and oppressive use of authority or the encouragement of divisive social attitudes… Quite simply, every [Christian] claim to truth…can only be established either by conceding a privileged status to a particular type of evidence, or by adopting uncritically the viewpoint of a certain social group. The whole weakness of traditional Christian teaching is that it rests on these two unsatisfactory foundations, which are of course in collusion with each other. On the one hand, acceptance of the special position of the Bible or the hierarchy defines the Christian community. On the other hand, the community insists on proclaiming as true propositions which it is claimed can only be properly understood and appreciated from within the group that is so defined. …a truth which can only be affirmed by espousing the viewpoint of a particular community is necessarily socially divisive. Truth which is dependent on belonging to a group can only be defended by refusing all social assimilation' (*Cost of Authority*, p. 277).

57. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 185.

58. E.g. Elliott's talk of the 'canonical betrayal of the apostle Paul' (*Liberating Paul*, ch. 2).

59. Shaw's complete conviction of individualism's superiority is seen, e.g., in his exceptionally negative assessment of Paul's body imagery in 1 Cor. 12. He says, 'in

of all authority structures as foundational, this study seeks to allow Paul to
critique values brought from the readerly context as much as to measure
him against them, and to take Paul's impact upon his own setting—the only
one in which he can be held truly responsible—seriously. Yet, despite the
lop-sidedness of Shaw's approach, his emphasis upon gospel as a category
against which to evaluate Paul is worth pursuing. Indeed, Paul himself is
adamant that love for others and concern for the gospel should determine
believers' relations with one another (e.g. 1 Cor. 8-10; 13). If his own use
of authority either demonstrates Paul to be motivated by factors other than
those he espouses, or encourages his readers to follow a destructive model
of power relations—imitating his practice rather than following his teach-
ing, as Shaw perceives it[60]—then a negative assessment of Paul must be
made, and some measure of responsibility for the less honourable episodes
in church history be laid at his door, as Shaw suggests.

I. *The Case against Paul*

For Shaw and others,[61] Paul's theological thought 'cannot be properly
understood if it is abstracted from…the political motives of his writing'.[62]
These motives concern Paul's relationship with his readers and provoke a
declaration of apostolic authority which is 'complex but unrelenting. The
apostle has both to gain his reader's attention and obscure his dependence
on his audience'.[63] Paul does this, Shaw says, both through the direct asser-
tion of his authority, and by numerous indirect tactics:

> Pauline prayers, for instance…have a blatantly manipulative function. The
> eschatological fantasies of the early believers are consistently exploited to
> inculcate an anxiety which only membership of the apostle's privileged
> community can allay. A rationale of persecution…makes Paul's position
> unassailable and provides him with fertile means of projecting his image…
> Repeatedly in writing to communities which he has founded, the privileges
> he accords to his readers compel them to assent to his own privileged posi-
> tion. His approach involves the pervasive inculcation of bitterly divisive

Paul's thought, as in others who have resorted to corporate social models, the indi-
vidual consciousness is suppressed. The individual's special social contribution is
recognized, but at the cost of surrendering his self-awareness. In Paul's words: "The
eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you'…" (12.21). Precisely: they cannot
"say"—they have no self-consciousness—so the use of the privileged analogy of the
body of Christ deprives its members of identity, and this is a heavy price to pay for the
eloquent exposition of mutual dependence with which it is associated' (*Cost of Author-
ity*, p. 91).

    60. 'Paul uses the rhetoric of deliverance and reconciliation; at the same time he
often acts in ways which domineer and divide' (Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 183).

    61. E.g. E. Stuart, 'Love is…Paul', *Expository Times* 102.9 (1991), pp. 264-66.

    62. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 182.

    63. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 182.

attitudes which he needs to provide both the sanctions which protect his authority and the privileges which make it palatable. This implicit social antagonism finds its cosmic expression in demonic dualism, and its psychological equivalent in the unresolved conflict of flesh and spirit.[64]

Shaw does not see Paul as deliberately manipulative, in the sense of being fully and cynically conscious of his negative impact, although he certainly thinks Paul knows what he is doing when it comes to getting his own way.[65] But such limited awareness is an inadequate defence, in Shaw's opinion, making Paul something of a victim himself, but also one to whom it would be unwise to 'look for truth'.[66] Thus the Paul Shaw perceives is neither the figure heralded by much church tradition nor one whose intent is actually evil.

> Paul's writing does not simply represent the anxious pursuit of power… For although the texts contain much anxiety, aggression and illusion, they also portray a man learning to exercise freedom and love. If that gospel is only partially applied, it is because we see in his writings the actual process of learning. They do not provide us with some abstract perfection. Instead we see the leaven at work. A transformation has begun, but it is incomplete. To…appropriate a difficult message inevitably involves frequent inconsistency and failure. The measure of Paul's honesty is that he has not suppressed the radical demands of freedom and reconciliation which, far from simply sanctioning his leadership, frequently provide the basis for criticizing it.[67]

Seen in this light, Paul appears a very human figure. He is one who does his best, but whose best is really not that good. Making Paul seem more human is no doubt a positive step for many who are accustomed to thinking of him as either spiritual giant, beyond their petty criticisms, or as abstracted theological mind. But such humanity is bought at a price. The human Paul Shaw depicts is neither one likely to have been valued highly by the communities to whom he wrote—and he must have been at least that for them to have preserved his letters[68]—nor one whose thought and character have been refined by time and experience.[69]

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64. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, pp. 181-82. Note again Shaw's unquestioned assertion of his own perspective as absolute. He simply assumes, for example, that a modern western perspective tells all there is to say, that anything outside of or which teleologically undermines such a perspective be considered 'fantasy', and thus a tool of manipulation rather than a shaper of lives/communities in line with the truth.

65. Shaw characterizes Paul's style as 'undisguised egotism' (*Cost of Authority*, p. 257).

66. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 183.

67. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 183.

68. See, e.g., S.M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (SBL Dissertation Series, 134; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 83.

69. See, e.g., B. Witherington III, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew*

Shaw's particular comments about Paul's Corinthian correspondence continue in much the same vein. He sees 1 Corinthians (excluding chapter 13[70]) as 'an exercise of magisterial authority', aimed at attaining unity within and obedience from the community.[71] Shaw repeatedly emphasizes what he presents as Paul's underhand creation of an indispensable place for himself within the community. 'Attention is carefully directed towards the message [in 1 Cor. 1.22-24]; only on reflection are the implications about the status of the messenger perceived'.[72] Again, in 1 Cor. 2.5-7 Shaw finds Paul subtly intertwining 'his own exaltation above criticism with the freedom of his readers'. They submit to Paul's arrogant claim because they are identified with it; 'Paul may speak the secret, but the reader shares it'.[73] Shaw even depicts Paul as appropriating powers and statuses which rightly belong to Christ, projecting himself as eschatological judge (1 Cor. 4.19-21) and drawing fairly blatant parallels of presence despite absence (1 Cor. 5.3-5).[74] The logic of such projections is, for Shaw, more to do with Paul safeguarding his pre-eminent place within the community than with any sort of liberating gospel. Shaw sees 1 Cor. 8–10 as fulfilling a similar function: '"Don't weaken other people's faith" has a tendency to become "don't rock

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of Tarsus (Leicester: IVP, 1998), p. 73: 'when we meet Paul in his letters, even in his earliest letters, he has already been a Christian for at least fifteen years. Paul's letters do not reflect the musings of a neophyte Christian; the author speaks to us as a mature Christian person, a seasoned veteran'.

70. Shaw largely exempts the love poem of 1 Cor. 13 from his discussions, despite its occurrence within a letter he describes as '*in other respects* an exercise in magisterial authority' (*Cost of Authority*, p. 62, emphasis added). Stuart ('Love is…Paul') claims that Shaw misses a trick here, that in 1 Cor. 13, 'Under the guise of a hymn of love Paul seeks to assert his authority over the Corinthian community by identifying himself with that divine, self-giving love (*agape*) whilst at the same time revealing how alienated the Corinthians themselves are from that love through having rejected the exclusive authority of Paul' (p. 264). Stuart's conclusion goes even further, culminating in what is, considering her clear conservative leanings, a somewhat surprising statement: '1 Corinthians 13 is Paul at his most manipulative. Its message is that it is only through Paul that the Corinthians can experience the love of God in Christ because only Paul, no other Christian teacher, possesses that love. In short, love is Paul' (p. 265).

71. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 62.

72. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 64.

73. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 63. Shaw also says, on 1 Cor. 1.29-31, that 'Because their sense of privilege, of consecration and freedom, is entirely dependent upon God's initiative, expressed through that of his apostle, the new believers have no possibility of properly asserting their independence of the apostle. They may be encouraged to boast of the Lord, because in practice that is indistinguishable from obedience to the man of his choice'.

74. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, pp. 69-70. Shaw accuses Paul of being 'quite happy to upstage…Jesus himself' in his 'cavalier attitude' to Jesus' teaching in 1 Corinthians 9 (p. 82).

the boat", a sentiment delivered by those…apprehensive for the security of their own authority and status'.[75] Indeed, Shaw deems such status protection to reach new heights in 2 Corinthians, becoming, if anything can be said to be, the letter's central dynamic.

> Paul's manipulation of his audience and his concern to establish his good standing among them is obvious. He invokes God in his cause…and refers indirectly to his risk of martyrdom, to compel them to regard his absence as a sign of his love. He soothes any suspicion of spiritual dictatorship on his part by flattering their grasp of the faith. His work and their happiness are boldly identified… On the one hand he speaks ruefully of himself paining them, of having offended them. On the other hand he appeals to their pity and sense of shame… Having earlier asserted their happiness as his objective, he ends by assuming that his happiness is theirs.[76]

Shaw's claims receive 'exegetical' support from Castelli's parallel work on Paul's inappropriate use of power.[77] The detail of Castelli's view of Pauline mimesis will be addressed below, but she has more to say than will be covered there. Particularly interesting, and indicative of the stance she takes, is Castelli's provocative use of 1 Cor. 4.20, that God's kingdom is a matter not of words but of power (οὐ γὰρ ἐν λόγῳ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει). Castelli views this statement as somewhat disingenuous, and rearticulates it as Paul claiming that 'The kingdom of God exists *as* a discourse of power'.[78] While this may well be an insightful spinning of Pauline language, that Castelli can render the 'true' meaning of Paul's words in this way comes as no surprise in light of her earlier claim that the New Testament as a whole embodies a discourse of power.[79] The question, then, is whether Castelli's rearticulation in fact penetrates to what Paul is really saying,[80] or whether she is simply changing his words to make him agree with what she already thinks.

75. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 80.
76. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, pp. 106-107.
77. Though concerned with a close understanding of the text, or at least the rhetorical situation it reflects, Castelli herself is clear that what she writes is not exactly exegetical in the traditional sense. She comes to Pauline texts with a predetermined agenda and assessment of Paul (which does him few favours) in order to judge him against philosophical standards which are not only strange to him, but which, on most readings, will judge him poorly simply because of his place within structures of power (see *Imitating Paul*, pp. 12-18).
78. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', pp. 198-99, emphasis added.
79. 'The literature of the New Testament is steeped in the discourse and ideology of power. It imagines a world, indeed a universe, in which power infuses every sort of relationship, social and supernatural. Its narratives and letters are full of descriptions of the highly charged effects of power and prescriptions for comprehending their meaning' (Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 197).
80. Although it has to be admitted that what Paul is saying is not something in

Castelli chooses to interact with and assess Pauline power texts from within a framework shaped by Foucault's ideas on power. As she says, this has the advantage of recognizing the power-laden significance of Paul's language in ways unconfined by conventional understandings of power as primarily something possessed by the few and imposed upon the many.[81] 'Power…is not a simple commodity, something that one group possesses and withholds from other groups. Rather, power is a quality that inheres in social relationships; it flows through the body politic as blood circulates through an organism, capillary rather than controlling'.[82] This understanding leaves open the possibility that centres of power might shift, but also focuses attention upon the efforts of the presently empowered to stop them from doing so. In terms of the Corinthian correspondence, it means that 'rather than looking for Paul's "opponents" one can look for his conversation partners…rather than assume that Paul is possessor of truth because he has authority, we can imagine that Paul is claiming authority because he is in a position which is contestable and contested'.[83] However, and as that quotation demonstrates, starting with Foucault—at least as he is generally used[84]—also means that Paul must automatically be regarded with suspicion;[85] he is, after all, the one seeking to defend himself and to define reality,[86] normalcy and deviancy for others.[87]

which Castelli is particularly interested. In fact, she opposes the textual effects with which she is concerned to 'any (fictional) inherent meaning in the text' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 18). Such a division of effect from meaning opposes the aims of this study, which sees a both-and approach as doing better justice to Paul's intention-ridden letters.

81. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 202.

82. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 203.

83. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 203.

84. For one perspective upon what a broader use of Foucault's thought might look like, see D.J. Leigh, 'Michel Foucault and the Study of Literature and Theology', *Christianity and Literature* 33.1 (1983), pp. 75-85.

85. Ehrensperger argues that Foucault is unable to see power as anything other than 'a means by which agents try to determine the choices of others, even though this is not necessarily pursued by means of coercion or even violence but through the compliance of willing subjects'. Within this restricted conception of power, which regards it as uniformly 'dangerous since it can easily turn into domination' (*Dynamics of Power*, p. 21), Paul is inevitably and easily seen in a negative light.

86. The emphasis Castelli places upon the social construction of reality by the empowered is typical of a Foucauldian, post-structuralist perspective. M. Foucault himself denied any possibility of objective reality or 'objects prior to discourse' (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* [New York: Pantheon, 1972], p. 47, cited in A.C. Thiselton, *Interpreting God and the Postmodern Self: On Meaning, Manipulation and Promise* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995], p. 132).

87. Castelli typically puts it more negatively, seeing Paul as pursuing a contingent, self-interested strategy to 'close off other competing discourses' ('Interpretations of Power', p. 198).

Castelli aims to give voice to 'the subjugated discourse of Corinthian Christians', to imagine that part of their conversation with Paul which his letters at once reflect and deny to us.[88] She claims, in other words, to be reconstructing the alternative to Pauline thinking and authority against which the apostle was striving within the Corinthian setting. Paul, according to Castelli, (re)constructs himself rhetorically in 1 Corinthians, underwriting his authority largely by presenting himself as active speaker (e.g. 1.12; 2.1; 3.1; 4.13; 7.10; 9.16; 10.15), authorizing his activities and the demands he makes of the community, while depicting the Corinthians as passive recipients (e.g. 1.2, 9-10; 3.4; 7.18-40), the objects of speech, 'acted upon and not acting'.[89] For Castelli, this recognition that power and speech are intrinsically linked within Paul's discourse is not simply an acknowledgement of his power claims.[90] It also reveals something of the situation into which his discourse is projected; that it too is characterized by speech-related claims to power, and equally valid ones at that.

> [W]hen he wishes to undercut counterclaims about relations to authority, Paul speaks of their logos as having no power. Furthermore…he tries to legislate levels of conformity within the worshipping community at Corinth…by trying to rein in unruly forms of speech: speaking in tongues and prophecy… Paul's insistence on the powerlessness of forms of speech he finds objectionable suggests that there are equally compelling claims being made that these discursive modes are infused with power. Furthermore, one might see in Paul's accusations a moment open to deconstruction: these discursive modes embody power to the same degree Paul denies their claims to do so.[91]

While this reconstruction undoubtedly highlights something of the problematic dynamic between himself and the community which Paul felt impelled to address, it is equally clear that the ideational framework against which Castelli projects her reconstruction is at least partially responsible both for the shape it takes and for the negative interpretation she is constrained to give Paul's response. Sameness—the insistence that one specific way/model/pattern is right and true—and all the power trappings which go along

88. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', pp. 204-205.

89. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', pp. 205-206. Castelli summarizes her reading of 1 Corinthians' rhetoric thus: 'Paul retains for himself the singular position of "father", a role replete with unique claims to authority. Power continues, then, to be reinscribed by Paul's discourse onto his own position, as speaking subject, as apostle, and as father' (p. 214).

90. Although she is sure that it is at least that: 'claims to power and discourse imbued with power mutually implicate one another and result in the collapsing of argument and content into a singular truth claim about power' (Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 198).

91. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 206.

with it, are considered by Castelli as unfortunate largely because of the way she perceives such unitary thinking to have negatively affected the world in which she lives.[92] This is a typically Foucauldian value,[93] and detecting sameness in Paul leaves Castelli assuming that those he seeks to 'correct' embody its Foucauldian alternative, difference or multiplicity—a fluid, variegated approach to truth and power. And thus, in being accorded by her the sort of power thinking she considers positively a priori, the Corinthians are spared Castelli's excoriating examination to much the same degree as Paul is subjected to it.[94] In Castelli's thought, the Corinthians embrace multiplicity without anxiety, for they have nothing to lose.[95] Paul, on the other hand, has his status on the line, and so argues, with a desperate vehemence which reflects the cogency of the alternative view, 'his case for power as inhering in role and social position and…[claims] authority for himself because he occupies these positions (apostle, father, authorized speaker)'.[96]

92. E.g., 'We occupy a historical moment when the West claims to have won the day, when "the end of history" has been brazenly proclaimed in a kind of apocalyptic Hegelian reprise, when the arrogant economy of sameness elides differences seemingly everywhere—most visibly, perhaps, in the arena of global consumerism. At the same time, cultural articulations contradicting the idea that Western hegemony is self-evident, questioning the proclaimed success of the teleological project, and challenging the assertion of sameness have also never been so eloquent or vibrant. So I write out of the recognition that the hegemony of the identical is a highly contested structure of power and also an ongoing theoretical problem' (Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 134).

93. S. Best and D. Kellner identify Foucault's antipathy towards 'the tyranny of globalising discourses' as both characteristic of his thought and as one of his great weaknesses. They accuse him of using generalization and totalizing concepts at the same time as he condemns them, and thus being guilty of Habermas' 'performative contradiction', violating 'his own methodological imperative to "respect differences"' (*Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* [Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991], pp. 72-73). A similar charge could perhaps be made against Castelli, with her own unrelenting impatience for sameness.

94. Castelli's assessment of Paul is shaped by notions of difference and sameness to such an extent that her dislike for the boring monolithism of the latter determines her evaluation of him as a person. Never mind Luke's accounts, the generally passionate tenor of his letters, or the historical fact of his impact upon early Christianity, for Castelli Paul is a dull figure, 'possessing precious little pizzazz' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 14).

95. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 216. Neither the assertion that the Corinthians embrace difference nor the claim that they do so without anxiety is supported with much evidence by Castelli. On the former, she seems to assume that Paul's commitment to sameness requires a difference alternative, rather than, e.g., a differently constructed notion of sameness. On the latter, she conveniently ignores the evidence that some in the congregation have written to and visited Paul at least partly due to their concerns over the diverse state of their community (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.11; 16.17).

96. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 209.

> Sameness serves the interests of the superordinate in a hierarchical relation-
> ship of power; multiplicity destabilizes the certainty of the very claim to
> superordinate status. Unity is most often called for by those whose author-
> ity will be undergirded by it, and matters most to those for whom identities
> are problematized and for whom boundaries are at risk.[97]

For Castelli, then, Paul's Corinthian discourse is less about solving prob-
lems which the community recognizes and struggles with, and is more a
manifestation of Paul's power-driven agenda, another example of the em-
powered defining reality in such a way as to cling on to what they hold. Paul
seeks to establish his place over the community through insistence upon
the factuality of his presentation; that reality really is as he insists and thus
that he has an important place in their understanding and experience of it.[98]
Clearly, this is not at all a 'power with' strategy. It is by turns 'power over',
'power against' and 'power for' as Paul attempts to maintain his own posi-
tion, suppressing the Corinthian community as too immature, ignorant and
endangered to stand alone.

   However, as has already been suggested, there are numerous reasons for
questioning the credibility of Castelli's reconstruction in its unadulterated
form. Both Castelli and Shaw present accounts of Paul's dealings with the
Corinthian community which have much going for them. But in their (pre-
supposed) commitments to frameworks which were always likely to find
Paul wanting they also present a somewhat lop-sided image of both Paul
and his relational values. That Paul is concerned with his own power—
sometimes at the expense of others'—seems beyond doubt from various
comments throughout his Corinthian letters. But before the case against
Paul can be properly assessed, the case in his defence must also be stated,
possible mitigations of otherwise grasping attitudes examined, and a more
rounded account of Paul's apostolic power explored.

II. *In Defence of Paul*

> [W]e do not have enough evidence to write a history…of the Corinthian
> church; still we have enough evidence to want to try. Two solutions to the
> dilemma are normal. One may declare the project impractical and with-
> draw, or one may attempt the project, inserting the word perhaps into every
> sentence. Both policies seem misguided. If we cannot write a history, we
> can at least write a scenario, a web of possibilities that can be argued to
> be likely. It is only by weaving such a web that the story of the Corinthian
> community can be brought into three-dimensional focus.[99]

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97. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', p. 216.
98. Castelli, 'Interpretations of Power', pp. 216, 217.
99. M.D. Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Mission in Corinth* (Peabody: Hen-
drickson, 2001), p. 222.

Interestingly, neither Castelli nor Shaw adopt either of Goulder's 'normal' approaches to the history of the Corinthian community. Both give some sort of account of what happened, and neither suggests their reconstruction to be anything other than a final word. That their overwhelmingly negative assessment of Paul in Corinth is not exactly the standard perspective, however, suggests that there is more to be said. Following Goulder's strategy, what follows should be read as a mitigating attempt to suggest a more balanced account of the early Corinthian Christians' relations with Paul.

Such a mitigating defence of Paul must operate on three levels if it is to be fully effective. First, as has already been begun in critical comments above, the presuppositions and methods of those who see Paul only negatively must be brought under close scrutiny. Second, alternative readings of the dynamics of Paul's relations with the Corinthians must be offered. This will lead, third, into an examination of Paul's statements to and dealings with the Corinthian community, a search for evidence against which to judge Paul's apostolic pattern as 'power with' or otherwise. It is with these three tasks that most of the rest of this chapter is concerned.

One problem with the approach toward Pauline relationships taken by Shaw and Castelli is their tendency to treat the apostle as something of an abstraction, a force acting upon the community but hardly a person in relation with it. They assess Paul very much from without and at arm's length, rather than from within and as those who actually know him. Of course, there are reasons for this. They recognize that contemporary readers cannot simply step into the shoes of those to whom Paul wrote, and both are explicitly concerned with the role Paul has played in shaping communities down through history, communities which by definition have not 'known' him as such. However, while understandable, this approach also creates problems; not least in the fact that it takes neither the text's original *Sitz im Leben* nor its genre seriously. Tomlin takes up one aspect of this point in his criticism that Castelli is a 'victim of the failure to contextualise Paul's discourse. She simply does not try to reconstruct the situation into which Paul writes'.[100]

Tomlin's emphasis is upon the ideational situation Paul addressed, but perhaps just as important is the relational matrix within which he wrote; the letters being part of an ongoing association and correspondence (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.11; 2.1, 3; 4.17-21; 7.1; 2 Cor. 2.3-4, 9).[101] Paul knows those to

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100. G. Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology and the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal* (Biblical and Theological Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), p. 98.

101. For broader perspectives upon the classical understanding of how letters functioned within different sorts of relationships, see, e.g., D.E. Aune, *The New Testament and its Literary Environment* (Cambridge: James Clark and Co., 1988); S.K. Stowers,

whom he writes and they know him.[102] Thus when he makes large claims about himself, the authority he carries and the deference he is due, he does so within the context of an established relationship. That does not necessarily make his power claims any more acceptable, but it does reconfigure the framework within which they ought to be examined, and does so away from the sort of abstraction with which Castelli and Shaw are concerned. Being claims made within the nuanced, textured reality of a fully fledged, faith sharing and, perhaps above all, ancient Mediterranean relational framework, gives them a certain character which ignoring their context denies. Similarly, both Paul's place within the community and the community's capacity to weigh his claims in light of their knowledge of him—not simply about him—sets his power claims within a much more complex, less absolute framework than Shaw's and Castelli's accounts are able to accord them. Ultimately, because the Corinthian believers actually know Paul, they are well able to judge his claims. Some or all of them may have rejected what he says is his due, his role, his right—as Castelli and Shaw suggest that they should—but they will have done so partly because the community's experience of Paul would have worked against them according him the place he thinks he deserves. And Paul would have known that both the power of his rhetoric and the feasibility of his argumentation would fail if his self-presentation and the claims associated with it did not match up with what the Corinthians knew and had experienced of him.

For example, in claiming that he had refused their financial support in order to maintain the purity of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9), Paul's argument is at least partially dependent upon the Corinthians recognizing the image he depicts of himself: a conscientious and self-sacrificing minister of that gospel. Had they not done so, or had they possessed an insufficient knowledge of Paul against which to measure his self-presentation, much of the force of Paul's argument would have been undermined; his offering of himself as a model for the setting aside of rights would have been futile. Yet Paul does offer himself as a paradigm for them here and elsewhere (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1), and does so in spite of the questioning of him which he clearly knows is going on within the Corinthian community (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.1-5; 2 Cor. 10.9-12; 12.2-3). Paul, then, evidently considers the Corinthians to have knowledge of him which is both sufficient for them

Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity (Library of Early Christianity; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), pp. 49-173; J.L. White, 'Ancient Greek Letters', in D.E. Aune (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study, 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 85-105.

102. This is especially true if Luke's account of the amount of time Paul spent in Corinth is to be taken seriously (Acts 18.11, 18), but even within the Corinthian correspondence there is evidence that Paul really knows and is really known by those to whom he writes (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.1-4; 2 Cor. 7.2; 10.10; 12.12-13).

to reach the judgment he desires and of a sufficiently positive character to make that judgment likely. This is not simply the manipulative rhetoric of sameness which Castelli is so eager to find in Paul, although there certainly is an affective intent in the ethos of Paul's persuasive self-presentation. As much as Paul wants to evoke a positive response toward himself, however, the means by which he does so stands or falls with his audience recognizing in his self-presentation the Paul whom they actually know. Had that Paul been the insecure, grasping figure presented by Castelli and Shaw, it seems unlikely that these letters would ever have been valued in the way that their preservation and canonical place suggest that in fact they were.

The tendency of both Shaw and Castelli to judge Paul against their own presupposed standards has already been mentioned; he, like all others, is vulnerable to attack when seen from an alien cultural standpoint. However, Thiselton for one has raised questions about the claims and coherence of the postmodern perspective which is so fundamental to many recent accounts of Pauline power, Shaw's and especially Castelli's included. Central to their descriptions of Paul as manipulating the Corinthian community for his own ends are the truth claims, explicit and otherwise, which he makes in the letters. But while this emphasis may illuminate one aspect of what is going on, it obscures another. For, insists Thiselton, Paul also uses 'truth' in conventional opposition to error and deceit. And

> equally characteristic of Paul is the notion that truth entails a match of word and deed, of language and life. This gives claims to truth their credibility and 'backing' (2 Cor. 4:1; 6:4-7)… 'Love of truth' leads to salvation (2 Thess. 2:10). Openness to truth, wherever it may lead, furthers the gospel (2 Cor. 13:8). Paul can do nothing outside the realm of truth. Purity of life constitutes part of the grammar of truth (1 Cor. 5:8).[103]

Again, it matters that the Corinthians know Paul, and that what he says about himself stands up to that knowledge.

Thiselton seeks less to dismiss the concerns characteristic of postmodernity than to outline its tendencies and their ramifications. Thus he depicts the postmodern predisposition toward assuming that one person's lack results from another's success or superior status:

> the loss of power, loss of privilege, or loss of well-being is now ascribed *to the manipulative power-interests of competing persons or competing groups*. Misfortune seems to be neither random nor unavoidable, but a by-product of the success of some other group. This group may take the form of some professional guild…or of some different social class, gender, or ethnic profile. At all events, *blame, accusation* and *hostility* come to absorb the concerns of the postmodern self.[104]

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103. Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, pp. 36-37.
104. Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, p. 131, original emphasis.

This is not to say that some other group is not (always?) to some degree responsible for our lack, but concentration upon the 'fault' of the empowered or high in status is bound, when brought into consideration of early church dynamics, to focus negative attention in Paul's direction. As Castelli in particular shows, Paul is never given a chance by such a stance; he is the apostolic definer of reality and normalcy and thus of suspect influence at very least. That he might instantiate the positive use of power by one in a privileged position is almost inconceivable to this perspective, not least because, despite Castelli's claims about the perspicacity of her Foucauldian approach, it evinces little awareness that power may operate 'with' another rather than just 'over' or 'against' them.[105] This links back to the previous points. For where Paul claims to be acting in the interests of (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.35; 2 Cor. 13.3-5) and for the up-building of the Corinthian believers (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.6; 2 Cor. 10.8; 12.19), offering the truths of right community conduct (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.10; 11.17-34), right attitudes (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.9-13; 13; 2 Cor. 2.7-8) and right thinking (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.26-31; 10.15-21), matching his language to what the Corinthians know of his life (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.1-5; 9.11-12, 15) lived at great cost to himself (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.26-27; 2 Cor. 11.23-28), Castelli finds only the (re)construction of apostolic authority[106] and Shaw blatant manipulation.[107] Yet the letters containing these claims are preserved. Were the Corinthians, despite their knowledge of Paul and their claims to wisdom, really so blind as to not

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105. This is not to suggest that Foucault himself was unaware of the 'co-operative' aspect inherent to many power relations. E.g., 'power is not to be taken to be a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others… Power must by analysed as something which…only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised…never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application' (M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* [ed. C. Gordon; Oxford: Harvester, 1980], p. 98). However, Castelli's use of Foucault emphasizes the limitations of advantage which he saw in power relations. In doing so, it also manifests the uncritical, unnuanced use of his thought with which Foucauldian readers of Paul tend to operate. They focus upon the linkage of truth with power—a 'régime of truth' (p. 133)—and the negative utilization of that linkage to enforce 'techniques and tactics of domination' (p. 102) rather than exploit the breadth of his insights without necessarily buying into all of his conclusions.

106. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, *passim*.

107. Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 181.

see what those outside the relationship and distant in time and culture perceive so clearly? Perhaps, rather, postmodern perspectives which have unmasked 'instances of manipulative power which disguise themselves as claims to truth' should be tempered by an awareness that such discovery does not reveal a somewhat un-postmodern universal; that not every truth claim is simply an egoistic bid for power.[108] There is then, for Thiselton, something of an irony in Castelli's use of Foucault to decry the power of the Pauline paradigm. For, 'Paul's call to the community to imitate a pattern of humility and servanthood is not for the purpose of "conformity" or "control". It is precisely to protect those who might otherwise be despised or considered socially inferior; in other words, precisely to protect the "social deviants" for whom Foucault shows concern'.[109]

c. *Apostolic Power*

It is almost universally accepted that Paul's leadership faced some sort of questioning by the Corinthian community, or at least elements within it.[110] However, the extent to which Paul pursues an apologetic defence of his apostleship in the Corinthian correspondence is a hotly debated subject, and not one that can be dealt with fully here.[111] Nevertheless, there are aspects of Paul's apostolic self-projection and behaviour in these letters which must have acted upon the community to shape their understanding of him and his status, and so carry power claims and implications for the community whether or not he is engaged in apologetics. To the extent that the Corinthians were affected by such apostolic manoeuvrings, Paul carries the potential to create an environment and shape relationships which impinge upon human rights type issues. But was Paul's apostolic power 'with', 'over', 'against' or 'for' the Corinthians?

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  108. Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, p. 135.
  109. Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, p. 142.
  110. On 1 Cor. see, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's New Testament Commentaries; London: Adam & Charles Black, 2nd edn, 1971), p. 5; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Hermeneia Critical and Historical Commentary; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), pp. 14-15; G.D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 4-15. On 2 Cor. see, e.g., P.W. Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 10; J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), pp. 4-7; R.P. Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Word Biblical Commentary 40; Waco: Word, 1986), pp. xxxiv, 55.
  111. Aspects of this debate will, however, be picked up at times in what follows, especially in the discussion of 1 Corinthians 9.

III. *Paul as Apostle*[112]

> From the first century to the present, he [Paul] became *the* apostle, the
> supreme theological authority for every conceivable brand of Christi-
> anity, including numerous groups that came eventually to be regarded
> as heretical.[113]

There is an interesting connection in this comment from Gager, which
undoubtedly reflects how many have come to see apostolicity but less cer-
tainly depicts Paul's view of himself. In dealing with the Corinthian com-
munity there seems little doubt that Paul did present himself as central to the
community's life and well-being; he is *the* apostle, or at least *their* apostle
(1 Cor. 9.1-2; 2 Cor. 12.12). Such a claim inevitably involved some asser-
tion of authority, even primacy (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.1, 14-16;[114] 5.3-5; 11.2; 2 Cor.
13.2-4),[115] and in that claim being canonically framed Paul has come to
play an absolute role for many attempting to justify the orthodoxy of their
theological positions. The questions for us, however, are first whether this
connection is one which Paul himself made; does his centrality afford him
an absolute or supreme role in determining how the community should
think and, therefore, the shape of its relational life? And, secondly, how did
Paul use whatever status his apostolic role gave him, centrality and primacy
included, to affect what today might be described as human rights issues?

    The shape or nature of apostolicity in the early church has been a focus
of considerable scholarly attention, much of it centred upon the Pauline
epistles because they represent our most immediate window into how

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112. Because it is the particular relationship between Paul and the Corinthians which
is in view here, there will be little or no reference to his depiction of apostleship outside
of the Corinthian correspondence and in connection with other believing communities.
Paul himself hints that his apostleship operated somewhat differently elsewhere, and
from what he says the Corinthians are also aware of this (e.g. 2 Cor. 11.7-9). Whether
such differences would substantially revise the pattern depicted here is perhaps ques-
tionable, but that is not an issue which can be explored in the present study.

113. J.G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 37,
original emphasis. See also Ehrensperger, *Dynamics of Power*, p. 65.

114. On 1 Cor. 4.1-21 as providing 'unparalleled' insight into Paul's apostolic
self-understanding, see S.C. Barton, '1 Corinthians', in J.D.G. Dunn and J.W. Rog-
erson (eds.), *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003),
pp. 1314-52 (1322).

115. B. Roberts Gaventa describes the 'profound connection' Paul asserts between
apostle and church in 2 Corinthians: 'God has, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, irre-
trievably bound together the apostle and his church. Neither party has the option of
abandoning this particular relationship. Proclamation of the gospel depends on this
connection, a connection that obtains until the eschaton itself' ('Apostle and Church
in 2 Corinthians: A Response to David M. Hay and Steven J. Kraftchick', in D.M.
Hay (ed.), *Pauline Theology*. II. *1 and 2 Corinthians* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993],
pp. 182-99 [193-94]).

early church leadership operated. While some accounts of Pauline leadership have drawn heavily upon contemporary sociological models, particularly Weberian concepts of charismatic as opposed to legal or traditional authority,[116] the emphasis has recently tended toward a more direct focus upon Pauline texts,[117] with sociology being drawn upon for illustrative insight rather than as foundational paradigm. Whichever approach is adopted, however, assessments of how Paul valued and understood his apostolic role produce widely divergent conclusions. Part of the problem here lies in the fact that Paul chose to emphasize his apostleship explicitly only relatively rarely, and then in relation to certain circumstances or debates. At other times he preferred to speak of his status and authority through different language.[118] For example, while not exactly hiding his apostolic claims in writing to the Corinthians, it is perhaps surprising, given the situation which he was addressing, that Paul does not place greater emphasis upon his status as apostle.[119] In contexts where an overt

116. E.g. H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesial Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); B. Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); M.Y. Mac-Donald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (SNTS Monograph Series, 60; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*.

117. This is partly because a Weberian emphasis tends to focus upon the charismatic nature of Pauline leadership without reference either to the content of the gospel within which Paul's status accrued or to the legitimacy of that status and Paul's use of it. As Polaski observes, 'refusal to consider the content of the message…skews one's understanding of the messenger. Attention to the *content* of Paul's gospel brings the recognition that Paul's proclamation is limited by, and limited to, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and his own authority is based absolutely on that authority. Without this acknowledgment of Paul's message the interpreter will not understand Paul, and without attention to this variation from Weber's charismatic authority type the interpreter will not speak accurately of Paul's authority among the churches he founded' (*Discourse of Power*, pp. 34-35, original emphasis).

118. Despite over-stating his case, E. Best ('Paul's Apostolic Authority—?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 [1986], pp. 3-25) offers two interesting summaries of when Paul opts to speak of himself in apostolic terms: [1] 'when Paul uses the term of himself it is in contexts where there have been those who have said that he was not an apostle or contexts in which he stresses the weakness of those who are leading Christians or contexts in which there is some connection with either the truth or the proclamation of the gospel. At no point do we find him issuing instructions to others on the basis of his apostleship' (p. 11); [2] 'When Paul is concerned with relations to his converts he does not employ the term apostle; he does so only when he is concerned with his relations with other church leaders. He may then only have used the term when it was politically advisable' (p. 22).

119. Paul uses ἀπόστολος of himself just seven times explicitly (1 Cor. 1.1; 4.9; 9.1, 2; 15.9; 2 Cor. 1.1; 12.11-12) and perhaps once more by inference (2 Cor. 11.5).

apostolic statement might perhaps be expected, Paul speaks of himself rather as father (1 Cor. 4.15), brother (1 Cor. 8.13), pattern (1 Cor. 11.1), builder (1 Cor. 3.10), sower (1 Cor. 3.6), servant (1 Cor. 4.1), or friend (2 Cor. 7.1).[120] This tendency to use other relational and authoritative expressions can be problematic for an understanding of how Paul himself saw and used his apostleship. The apostolic relation can, on the one hand, be all too easily assumed even when the explicit language is absent, or minimized, on the other hand, by taking texts only in their immediate cotext rather than as expressions within a communicative whole, addressed from the apostle to his congregation (1 Cor. 1.1; 2 Cor. 1.1). The situation is further complicated by the tendency of many to think of 'apostle' in terms of office and hierarchy rather more than function.[121] The danger is that the values and mores of various ecclesial traditions are assumed and projected back into a situation in which it is not at all clear that they pertained (Gager's identification of Paul's apostolic role today as one with his role in the early church, for example). That said, however, there can be no doubt that when Paul does use apostolic language of himself he is making some sort of claim about his power, status and authority;[122] defining his relationship with the Corinthians in a particular way.

Certain scholars have described Paul's apostleship in somewhat overbearing terms. Doohan, for example, portrays Paul as 'almost dictatorial' in his apostolic direction of how the Jerusalem collection should be handled (1 Cor. 16.1-4).[123] That may be a rather unfair assessment of his desire for things to be done appropriately,[124] but few would question that Paul is keen to assert his own uniquely important and authoritative role as the Corinthians' apostle. To that end Paul emphasizes: (1) the divine origin of his apostolic status (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.1); (2) his true and full apostleship relative to certain other leaders in the community (e.g. 2 Cor. 11.5-13; 12.11), as

120. Of course, each such claim involves its own implicit statement of Pauline authority, but they are not assertions of personal power made with explicit reference to Paul's apostleship. Some of these other aspects of Pauline language are examined below.

121. To say nothing of the various ideas about the origin of New Testament apostles (e.g. the *shaliah* in Rabbinic Judaism [Lightfoot, Rengstorf] or gnostic redeemer myths [Schmithals]) and how that shaped their function in the church.

122. As N.A. Dahl puts it, 'He does not separate between person and office, but identifies himself and wants to be identified by his apostolic ministry' ('Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21', in W.R. Farmer, C.F.D. Moule and R.R. Niebuhr [eds.], *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967], pp. 313-35 [331]).

123. H. Doohan, *Leadership in Paul* (Good News Studies, 11; Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 107.

124. See, e.g., R.B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation Commentary; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), p. 285.

demonstrated by his character, gifts and ministry (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.4-16; 9.6-12; 14.18; 2 Cor. 11.20-21; 12.12); and (3) his centrality to the community's initial (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.17; 2.4-5; 3.1-2, 6, 10; 2 Cor. 9.14) and ongoing (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.15-16, 18-21; 5.3-5; 9.2; 2 Cor. 2.9-11; 13.2) life in Christ.[125] Where any of these points is under question Paul is quick to set the Corinthians straight, making plain to them that, in Polaski's words, 'God who guarantees salvation through the act of sending Christ also guarantees Paul's position as interpreter of that saving act'.[126] This elevated apostolic status means, for Holmberg, that while Paul is alive he effectively denies the Corinthians any autonomy or 'independent leadership worth mentioning. …the real leader of these charismatic communities is Paul himself… In spite of the distance separating leader and group, Paul retains a strong hold over his churches'.[127] For Doohan, neither Paul's status as controlling apostle nor the techniques he uses to keep control are exactly beneficial for the community. She describes his general preference for persuasion and personal example rather than clear instruction in 1 Corinthians as likely to result in the subtle 'coercion' of the less sophisticated and articulate in the congregation. Second Corinthians, on the other hand, she sees as characterized by theologically accurate but personally defensive arguments which prevent the apostle from dealing with 'real issues' and mean that 'he frequently resorts to inappropriate behavior'.[128]

125. 'Das besondere Amt und Charisma des Apostels ist vor allem anderen die glaubenweckende und gemeindegründende Predigt des Evangeliums' (Hengel and Schwemer, *Paulus*, p. 447).

126. Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, p. 110. MacDonald goes further, saying that, so far as he is concerned, 'when Paul preaches it is as if God were the speaker (1 Thess. 2:2-4, 13; 4:15; 1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). Anyone denying Paul's gospel rejects God' (*Pauline Churches*, p. 47). Schmithals goes even further still: 'In every case his authority…is absolute: Whoever accepts Paul accepts Christ (Gal. 4.14); whoever hears him hears Christ (II Cor. 5:20); whoever rejects him is accursed (Gal. 1.8-9). And no wonder that things stand thus; for "the Lord is the spirit" (II Cor. 3.17), and the Lord is at the same time the gospel (Gal. 1.12, 16). The Lord himself is thus the authority of the pneumatic and of the preacher' (*Office of Apostle*, p. 42).

127. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 158. Holmberg also sees Paul as defending his hold over the church by diminishing 'rival' leaders such as the super-apostles and Apollos, albeit more subtly in the latter case. Thus in 1 Cor. 3, Holmberg claims, Paul depicts himself as sower and the layer of perfect foundations while Apollos merely waters and builds on top: 'No names are mentioned, but the apostle makes it clear to the church in Corinth that they have cause to carefully scrutinize the quality of the continued work of construction, while the foundation laid by himself is perfect and cannot be relaid' (p. 66).

128. Doohan, *Leadership in Paul*, pp. 114-16. These comments are somewhat undermined, however, by Doohan's focus upon how Paul measures up to modern leadership theories (clearly not well, in her view) and superficial attention to the dynamics of the situation into which he was writing.

Others, however, see Paul's apostolic claims in less oppressive terms. Thiselton, for example, considers that 'Far from striking an authoritarian note… ['apostle'] points away from his [Paul's] own personal wishes or initiative to a given task which he has been called to undertake'.[129] The link between divine calling and a non-authoritarian apostleship may not be immediately obvious but, when seen against Paul's overall presentation of his leadership in the Corinthian correspondence, Thiselton's summary does seem to reflect the tone Paul aimed for rather better than do Doohan's and Holmberg's.[130]

First, there are hints in what Paul says about the *ekklesia*, apostles and his relationships which indicate, without diminishing the hierarchical dimension of his apostleship, that he counts himself as part of the body rather than standing over (and against) it. That this is suggested by the familial imagery Paul is so keen on, although not in any straightforward fashion, will be examined below. Of equal importance, however, are Paul's depiction of himself as humble servant of the community (e.g. 2 Cor. 4.5;[131] 11.7-8; 13.4) and as sharing with them in the necessary dynamics of Christian life.[132] Thus both he and they, having been called by God (1 Cor. 1.1, 2, 9),[133] live and minister through grace (1 Cor. 1.4; 3.10; 15.10; 2 Cor. 6.1; 8.1), need to remain in Christ (1 Cor. 1.30; 15.22; 2 Cor. 5.17), and face the prospect of judgment (1 Cor. 11.31-32; 2 Cor. 5.10). Moreover, while the specific call (κλητὸς ἀπόστολος, 1 Cor. 1.1) and revelations (ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου, 2 Cor. 12.1) which denote his apostleship may mark Paul differently,[134] the giftings and the Spirit which characterize his role are one with those shared by all Christians, and unite him with them. As Schmithals summarizes,

> The special commission and the special authority which the apostles receive are functions of the congregation; for God set ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, and so on (I Cor.

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129. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 55.

130. Though, of course, as summary statements, all involve a level of generalization and thus distortion.

131. '[E]r sei unter dem Herrn ihr Sklave' (M. Karrer, *Jesus Christus im Neuen Testament* [Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament 11; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], p. 347).

132. See Ehrensperger's discussion of hierarchy and non-domination within a gospel-informed context (*Dynamics of Power*, pp. 186-87).

133. 'Paul is not the only one "set apart, consecrated and holy". All Christian believers have a divine vocation' (Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 64).

134. On both similarities and differences between the calls, see B.R. Braxton, *The Tyranny of Resolution: 1 Corinthians 7:17-24* (SBL Dissertation Series, 181; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), p. 41; S.J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2003), pp. 86-87.

12:28). By no means are all members of the congregation apostles, yet all apostles are obviously members of the congregation (I Cor. 12:29). τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα provides the charisma for the apostolate no less than all the other charismata in the congregation (I Cor. 12:7-11). No charisma, however, essentially elevates its bearer out of the community.[135]

Secondly, even Holmberg recognizes that, desiring a mature community (1 Cor. 3.1-2; 2 Cor. 10.15b), Paul leaves room for some level of Corinthian independence. He wants the believers to think and act rightly without him (1 Cor. 5.2; 6.5) and approves when they do so (2 Cor. 2.5-6).[136] Holmberg is surely also right in seeing Paul as not entirely trusting the Corinthians' judgment—they are, after all, not yet mature (1 Cor. 3.2-3)—and at times giving the impression that they have free choice while he in fact makes very clear what the 'correct' option is (1 Cor. 7.8-9, 28, 38; 2 Cor. 8.8-10).[137] But that need not, contra Holmberg, be read as Paul undermining their independence any more than his clear instructions about the right thing to do with the adulterous man removes his desire and expectation that they do that right thing without his prompting (1 Cor. 5.1-5).[138] Indeed, Paul's desire for a mature, independent Corinthian community is part and parcel of his larger aim of seeing the believers edified and united (1 Cor. 8.9-13; 12.12-27; 14.1-6; 2 Cor. 1.5-6; 4.15; 10.8; 12.19; 13.9),[139] an intent hardly in keeping

135. Schmithals, *Office of Apostle*, p. 22.

136. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, pp. 81-82. T. Engberg-Pedersen suggests that this desire for an 'independent' community has its basis in the message which causes the community's formation in the first place, and necessarily affects even the manner of Paul's communication to them: '*Because* Paul's teaching (the content of the gospel) is what it is, *therefore* his method of preaching must be of a certain kind…the content of the gospel demands a method of effecting changes in other people that acknowledges their freedom and independence in relation to the person who is trying to influence them' ('The Gospel and Social Practice according to 1 Corinthians', *New Testament Studies* 33 [1987], pp. 557-84 [572], original emphasis).

137. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 82.

138. J.K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup, 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), p. 180.

139. Schütz describes this edificatory intent in specific connection with Paul's apostolic commissioning, saying of 1 Cor. 3 and Rom. 15, 'What is noteworthy…is the way in which it is assumed that beyond the preaching of the gospel there is a continuing responsibility for the life of the community. This 'building up', like missionary preaching, is traced back to God's own activity… When, therefore, Paul says his ἐξουσία is οἰκοδομεῖν, he is claiming for himself the same authority which inheres in his commission to preach the gospel. The center of gravity of this figure is the activity of God, continuous and continuing in the life of the community' (*Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 225). See also A.D. Clarke, who concludes that 'the authority which Paul has over the Corinthians is precisely an authority for building up, rather than destroying' (cf. 2 Cor. 13.10c) (*Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], p. 231).

with domineering leadership and involving 'power for' or 'with' rather than 'over' and 'against'. These first two points, then, already suggest a more nuanced texture to Paul's view of his apostleship than is done justice by simple accusations of manipulation and control. But there are more important factors yet to be taken into consideration.

Thus we return to Thiselton's understanding of Pauline apostleship. Building upon the observation that, rather than simply an authoritative office or spiritual ministry, apostleship is characterized by '*the living out of the gospel substance of dying and being raised with Christ*', Thiselton proposes a 'fresh nuance' to our understanding of how Paul uses the term. That is, 'on one side (i) *apostles witness directly to the "that" of Christ's death and resurrection* (1 Cor 15.3-9; cf. 9.1)… On the other side, (ii) apostleship entails a practical *experience of sharing in the weakness of the cross of Christ and in the transforming power of Christ's resurrection*'. It is about proclaiming the facts and reality of the gospel 'both in word and in lifestyle',[140] and as such involves humble self-sacrifice rather more than it does a grasping after personal power. If Thiselton's 'fresh nuance'[141] gives an accurate account of Paul's apostolic values, then the possibility that his apostleship was not in fact oppressive is considerably improved.

The centrality of the gospel to Paul's thought about himself as apostle cannot be overstated, and it is the significance for him of that gospel's emphases—upon love, grace, sacrifice, Christ, and so on, rather than upon his own prestige—which seems to be the single most significant point missed by those who see Paul as a self-serving and exploitative leader. He maintains from the off, after all, that his apostleship is *of* Christ Jesus (ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 1 Cor. 1.1; 2 Cor. 1.1). While this need not be more than a statement of its source, given Paul's exploration of the apostolic theme elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence it perhaps also suggests something of his calling's orientation and character; Paul's apostleship follows the pattern of Jesus' messiahship. Paul also makes much early in 1 Corinthians of how he came to the community (1 Cor. 2.1-5) and what was achieved by his coming (1 Cor. 1.4-7).[142] These emphases upon Christ, weakness, humility and saving faith are hardly the obvious hallmarks of an oppressive apostleship, and while it is possible to view them as manipulatory—distracting the community's attention from the power games Paul is playing—such an assessment appears overly harsh given most of what else he writes.

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140. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 66-67, original emphasis.

141. Some of the studies noted below suggest that this sort of view of Paul's apostleship is not, in fact, fresh so much as unregarded in certain quarters.

142. Although perhaps not as much as he makes of it elsewhere, in 1 Thessalonians for example.

For the essential emphases of the gospel are persistent themes through-out Paul's Corinthian letters, and are such as characteristics of his life and experience, not just as the content of his message. Paul declares that he determined to know nothing but Christ crucified while with them (οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον, 1 Cor. 2.2), 'to provide a *transparent window onto the cross: not to parade himself*',[143] nor to rely upon his own power, which was, in any case, severely lacking (1 Cor. 2.3). Again, that Paul is embellishing the truth about himself for cynical rhetorical ends is not impossible, but is rendered unlikely by the Corinthians' knowledge of him; the apostle's self-presentation will only function rhetorically as he wishes if its ethos fits with the community's expe-rience of him.[144] An apostle, then, determined to know nothing but Christ crucified, Paul effectively binds his authority to the gospel.[145] In doing so he both undermines any apostolic claim which does not match authority with a living out of the gospel (2 Cor. 11.5-31), and also ensures his ongoing authority in the community, for the gospel is still vital to them.

> Paul's word…comes replete with power so that his word and his deeds together constitute his ministry. The gospel is fully preached by this power effective in word and deed. Moreover, Paul's concern for and authority over those whom he has begotten in Christ extends throughout his and their life in Christ, just as, and because, the gospel extends throughout their common life. Paul's continuing concern for the Christian community is but a facet of that power which has brought the fullness of the gospel. Just as the gospel cannot be confined to one point in the past but continues as the focus of God's weakness and power, so that weakness and power in Paul find con-tinued application in his relationship to the community (cf. 2 Cor 10:1-6; 13:4).[146]

The point is not that Paul's apostolic authority is in any way diminished by being bound to the gospel. He clearly expects the Corinthians to comply with what he writes, after all.[147] Rather, it is that his authority is constructed

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143. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 212, original emphasis.

144. 2 Cor. 1.12-14 and 7.2 provide good examples of self-presentational rhetoric which would simply fail if the Corinthians were not to recognise the relationship depicted.

145. As Schmithals puts it, 'for Paul the authority of the apostle is absolute; it rests however not in the office itself but in the message which is proclaimed by the office' and 'There is…no apostolic authority which the apostle might possess apart from his message' (*Office of Apostle*, p. 40).

146. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 240.

147. At least in 1 Corinthians, of which B. Witherington writes, 'Paul assumes that his converts will both hear and heed him with some persuasion. This means that we are not yet at the stage where Paul believes that his apostolic authority is in serious question and must be defended at length. He would hardly argue for the Corinthians to imitate him and assume (ch. 9) that his apostolic example could spur them to right

in such a way as to mark it out as Christ-like (1 Cor. 11.1). Despite her largely negative assessment of his leadership, even Doohan recognizes that 'For Paul, the life of an apostle should be a reflection of Christ crucified ([1 Cor.] 2:1-4)'.[148] And while some today, in not seeing this, misunderstand Paul's apostolic authority and role, that should not surprise us too much as it appears also to have been the case in Paul's day. For, from what he writes, it is clear that there was a questioning of Paul's apostleship among the Corinthians at least partly because of those things which did and did not accompany his authority and use of power (e.g. 2 Cor. 11.18-12.13).

Some recent scholarship has explored the rocky reception Paul's apostolic leadership received, especially in Corinth,[149] in light of Hellenism's expectations of those claiming power, authority or status. As Pogoloff summarizes, Greco-Roman society was characterized by a 'widespread cultural competition for status…a competition whose values diametrically oppose those of the cross of Christ'[150] and whose influence upon the Corinthian community alarmed Paul.[151] His response was to employ reverse or anti-rhetoric, undermining 'normal status hierarchies, while simultaneously re-establishing his status as servant. …he offers a paradoxical vision of strength through weakness'.[152] In other words, Paul turns cultural values on their head through a confrontational adoption of gospel themes in relation

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conduct if he believed he was dealing with a crisis of apostolic authority. The situation is markedly different when 2 Corinthians is written, which helps explain its more strident tone' (*Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 78-79. See also Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, pp. 74-75. For an alternative perspective, in which Paul's authority among the Corinthians is so diminished by the time he writes 1 Corinthians that he has to invent opponents rather than face the real, powerful Apollos grouping head-on, see A.C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), pp. 42-43.

148. Doohan, *Leadership in Paul*, p. 105.

149. Horrell, for example, says that Paul's leadership, indeed he as a person, is held in disdain by some in the Corinthian community: 'The main purpose of 2 Cor 10.1-11 is to warn, indeed to threaten, the Corinthians with the assertion that Paul has the power of God on his side to destroy (v. 4), to avenge (v. 6) and to impose authority (v. 8). The background of these assertions is the criticism recently made of him by some (τινας– v. 2) at Corinth. For he has been accused of being humble (ταπεινός– v. 1), weak and despicable (v. 10) when with them' (*Social Ethos*, pp. 221-22).

150. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, pp. 211-12. See Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 12-17, for a full exploration of how this was expressed within the Corinthian situation.

151. There are indications that the cultural preoccupation with status took a particularly extreme form in Corinthian society. See, e.g., D.A. deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 119; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 6-17.

152. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, p. 235.

to his apostolic leadership and example; whatever the Corinthians' back-
ground taught them was appropriate behaviour or imagery for their leaders
Paul undermined, insisting upon his Christ-like, gospel-infused pattern
instead.[153] Perhaps the primary means of this undermining was Paul's star-
tling insistence upon his own low standing, at least as the culture perceived
such things. As Marshall describes,

> Amazingly, Paul asserts that God has chosen the dishonourable to shame
> (*kataischynō*) the things held to be honourable [1 Cor. 1:26-29]… [In 1 Cor.
> 4:10] Paul assumes the position of someone who is socially disadvantaged
> or, possibly, of someone with status who has been humiliated and dishon-
> oured. He is socially inferior… Paul appears to be placing himself in the
> position of one who is the victim…the sufferer whose status or rank has
> been violated.[154]

Certainly the implication of such reverse rhetoric is that Paul's servant
pattern is the only one appropriate for the believers.[155] In that sense, it might
be possible to claim that he was imposing it upon them, removing their right
to choose, or denying them opportunities to better themselves.[156] However,
it is far from clear that the Corinthians themselves would have looked upon
Paul's declaration that he was their servant (1 Cor. 3.5; 9.16-19; 2 Cor. 4.5;
11.7-8) as a statement of oppressive control. Indeed, there are indications
that at least some of them, in keeping with cultural expectations, would
have liked him to show his leadership as more domineering or self-promot-
ing (e.g. 2 Cor. 11.19-21; cf. 2 Cor. 10.9-18).[157] Paul is aware that this is

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153. See Adams' parallel assertion that Paul used 'defamiliarization' to redefine
the Corinthians' conception of κόσμος in line with his gospel-informed understand-
ing: 'Paul takes up a familiar term, a word [or value or concept] of high emotive
meaning…uncodes some of its standard associations and recodes new links. In the
process he challenges the world-view and ideology borne by the conventional linkages
and encodes a different and new social meaning' (*Constructing the World*, p. 113, also
pp. 110-11, 114, 147, 239).

154. P. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the
Corinthians* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2/23; Tübin-
gen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987), p. 210.

155. As S.C. Barton puts it, Paul makes his culture-confounding patterning of Christ's
crucified servanthood fundamental to the community's existence and conduct: 'It is
what imparts the power for a new pattern of common life at the start, and it is what
imparts the power for consolidating that common life as it goes on' (*Life Together:
Family, Sexuality and Community in the New Testament and Today* [Edinburgh: T. & T.
Clark: 2001], p. 192). See also Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 195.

156. Although this latter option probably over-identifies the imagery of servanthood
with the reality of low social status. Paul was not necessarily against people improv-
ing their lot if the opportunity arose. See the discussion of 1 Cor. 7 in the following
chapters.

157. There was, in Horrell's (*Social Ethos*) terms, a 'conflict over the social ethos

how they expect him to behave and that his failure to do so leads to doubts about his apostleship (2 Cor. 12.11-13). However, his course is set, and it is one steered according to gospel rather than culture.[158] Thus Chow, reading with an explicit awareness of ancient patronage in view, finds Paul carefully downplaying any hint that his apostleship grants absolute authority over, or allegiance from, the Corinthians. Paul exhorts them to love and be loyal to the Lord, not just to himself (1 Cor. 16.22).[159] He is also concerned with building horizontal relationships of unity and edification rather more than vertical ones of his own patronal power.[160] For Horrell, Paul 'presents the gospel as radically opposed to the dominant social order' and its values.[161] He does claim a place of high status in the community, but that is based not upon cultural expectations that the honoured, wealthy elite lead,[162] but upon

which Paul presents to the Corinthians through his teaching and his practice' (p. 204). Horrell later identifies that 'the apostle's self-description is in conscious opposition to the values of the dominant symbolic order and expresses a degree of social lowering. One might expect that the strong and prominent members of the Corinthian congregation would indeed be highly reluctant to become imitators of the apostle who is the scum of earth (4.13) and the slave of all (9.19), as they are instructed to in 4.16 and 11.1' (p. 209).

158. 'The gospel determines how he will act in any given situation' (Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, p. 304).

159. According to Chow, Paul's use of φιλεῖν rather than ἀγαπᾶν here is an indication that he has a patronal allegiance to Jesus in mind. Chow claims that φιλεῖν can carry patronal overtones and that this is likely the implication in 1 Cor. 16.22, this being its only occurrence in the undisputed Paulines, perhaps reflecting a tradition or relationship the Corinthians would pick up on (*Patronage and Power*, pp. 169-70).

160. Chow (*Patronage and Power*, pp. 185-86) sees Paul constructing such relationships through, e.g., body imagery (1 Cor. 12.12-27), inclusive worship (1 Cor. 14.31) and inclusive giving (1 Cor. 16.1-4).

161. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 233. J.M.G. Barclay suggests that the Corinthians do not see this gospel-culture dialectic because, unlike many of Paul's other converts and Paul himself, their Christianity has actually served to enhance their social standing. They thus continue to value the status markers of their pagan past and to treat their Christian experiences as a means of climbing the status ladder ('Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 47 [1992], pp. 49-74). Paul's insistence upon lowering his own status and his harping on about gospel values would therefore have been incomprehensible, distasteful, or even offensive to them. On this point, see also Clarke (*Serve the Community*, pp. 216-17), who thinks that Paul intentionally adopted low status metaphors for his leadership (gardener, builder, servant) in order to 'expressly invert the significance of social status' (p. 217).

162. A.D. Clarke explores this at length in two books. For example, 'Pride of place was accorded on the basis of honour and wealth, rather than proven leadership skills, administrative ability or other qualifications' (*Serve the Community*, p. 148); 'In order to be involved in high positions of responsibility, it was a necessary pre-requisite to be among the wise, well-born and powerful… One of the major reasons for pursuing

spiritual grounds; Paul is their father in the faith (1 Cor. 4.15), role model in Christ (1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1) and divinely appointed apostle (1 Cor. 1.1; 2 Cor. 10.6-8).[163] Paul is elevated, then, but only because of God's grace and power flowing through his weakness (1 Cor. 2.3-5; 2 Cor. 12.9-10), servanthood (1 Cor. 3.5-7), obedience to the compulsion of God (1 Cor. 9.16) and conformity to the gospel (2 Cor. 13.4).

The cross stands at the heart of Paul's use of the gospel as a pattern for apostleship which confronts Corinthian expectations, implying a reversal of status and convention which he exhorts the Corinthians to apply in their estimation of one another and of himself. Paul clearly thought they should have 'understood this from the manner in which God had worked among them. But their insistence on the marks of conventional social honor had reinforced elitist boundaries within the group (1 Cor 1:13-17)'.[164] Thus Paul's early emphasis in 1 Corinthians, upon Jesus' crucifixion and the wisdom-defeating foolishness of the cross (1 Cor. 1.18-25; 2.1-6), acts both to challenge the factionalism he has heard about (1 Cor. 3.3-4) and establishes the sort of counter-cultural values which he expects the community,[165] and hence he as their apostle, to manifest. Rather than such values, however, Paul sees the Corinthians as prone to arrogance and self-inflation (φυσιόω, 1 Cor. 4.18; 8.1; 13.4). For Pickett, it is to confront such non-gospel attitudes that Paul

> draws attention to his weakness and unimpressive speech, both of which signified a lack of status in Greco-Roman society. The conscious reversal of socio-cultural expectations connoted by this depiction of the character of his apostleship and the style of his preaching is in conformity with the subversion of human expectations and judgments wrought by God in the cross of Christ ([1 Cor.] 1.18-29).[166]

Paul depicted himself to the Corinthians as their apostle exactly in the foolishness, weakness and shame that their culture taught them to despise because, as Paul saw, the cross—the instrument which brought the community into being and should, then, have been reflected in its life—itself existed as just

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leadership in the city was the inevitable accompanying honour and esteem that would be received. This would lead to increased status and grounds for more praise' (*Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993], p. 39). See also Countryman, 'Christian Equality', p. 136; C. Osiek and D.L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1997), p. 34.

163. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 236.

164. M. Strom, *Reframing Paul: Conversations in Grace and Community* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), p. 190.

165. See, e.g., Watson, 'Christ, Community'.

166. R. Pickett, *The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus* (JSNTSup, 143; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), p. 76.

such an offence (1 Cor. 1.23).[167] He was, therefore, unafraid of confronting their enculturated desire for and treasuring of power and status through his unrelenting expression of personal and apostolic weakness,[168] suffering[169] and even failure.[170] Fee notes the confusing ambiguity for modern inter-

167. As Pickett says, 'Since honour and strength were qualities highly esteemed in the Greco-Roman world, the cross is perceived to be foolish precisely because it symbolizes weakness and shame' (*Cross in Corinth*, p. 71). Also, N.T. Wright reminds us that 'crucifixion was such an utterly horrible thing that the very word was usually avoided in polite Roman society. Every time Paul spoke of it—especially when he spoke in the same breath of salvation, love, grace and freedom—he and his hearers must have been conscious of the slap in the face thereby administered to their normal expectations and sensibilities' (*What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* [Oxford: Lion, 1997], pp. 46-47). Neither of which comments say anything at all of the cross's particular offensiveness to Jews, of whom there were almost certainly some in the Corinthian community even if the majority were Gentiles (Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 6).

168. Marshall summarizes that Paul's 'power will be displayed in weakness rather than in any socially acceptable sense (13.2-4). Nevertheless, it is real power; it corresponds to the weakness of Christ which is not weakness but the power of God who gave him the "authority to build up and not to destroy" (13.10; 10.8) (as he implies his opponents have done)' (*Enmity in Corinth*, p. 376).

169. The clearest Corinthian expression of Pauline suffering comes in the peristasis catalogues (peristasenkatalogue) of 1 Corinthians 9, 2 Corinthians 4 and 2 Corinthians 6. J.T. Fitzgerald sets these catalogues within their Hellenistic context, in which, he says, *peristaseis* 'exhibit who he [the "suffering sage"] is, what he has become. His serene endurance of the greatest possible calamities is the definitive proof of his virtue and serves to distinguish him from every charlatan who merely claims to be "wise" ' (*Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogue of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* [SBL Dissertation Series, 99; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], p. 115). For Fitzgerald, Paul uses such catalogues both to reinforce his role as teacher—'the amplification of the sage's sufferings serves to magnify him as a person and establish him as a reliable guide for those who aspire to the life of virtue' (p. 203)—and to show the Corinthians that, despite their misgivings, 'he is a person of integrity in whom they may have both confidence and pride' (p. 206). Furthermore, they act polemically against those who would lead the Corinthians astray: 'since the *peristasis* catalogue was an established device for distinguishing true philosophers from false ones, it provided him with a tool in his task of establishing himself as a true apostle and distancing himself from the superapostles. His situation in 2 Corinthians is in fact very similar to that envisioned [in Hellenist philosophy] for the "foolish" righteous sufferer (6:8c; 11-12). He is perceived as the devious one, while his opponents put on the guise of being *diakonoi* of righteousness (11.13-15). Since his catalogues depict his serene (4.8-9) endurance (6.4-5) of a truly excessive number of hardships (11.23-28), they establish that it is he who is the truly righteous one, armed with the weapons of righteousness (6.7)' (p. 206). See also Barton, '1 Corinthians', p. 1323.

170. Paul's failure, as with his weakness, is always a personal matter, not a reflection upon his God-given and Spirit-empowered ministry. Thus, e.g., B.K. Peterson is one of a number of scholars who identify 2 Cor. 11.30-33 as Paul offering himself as

preters in Paul's self-presentation: 'he can be completely self-effacing…
he can be absolutely unyielding'.[171] And there might well have been some
similar confusion among Paul's first readers. For here is a man claiming
great authority in the community yet doing everything in his power to dem-
onstrate that he is neither powerful nor one who deserves to have power
invested in him, at least so far as their culture was concerned. Paul's point,
of course, was that the culture misunderstood the true nature of power, or
certainly the sort appropriate for those in Christ. For them, power, if its
potency was to be of the gospel, had to be married to personal weakness
and dependence upon God rather than to personal strength and self-concern;
it was God's power (1 Cor. 2.2-5; 2 Cor. 4.5-7; 12.9). The 'gospel itself is
weakness *and* power, grounded as it is in the event of Christ. In his ministry
Paul reflects this same weakness *and* power. Not only does he experience it
alongside all Christians, he makes it visible in himself'[172] (2 Cor. 13.4).

   Paul's communication of the gospel is a case in point. Despite clearly
being able to use the rhetoric which Hellenism and the Corinthians held in
such high regard,[173] Paul, as Marshall explains,

> opposed his own *dynamis* to traditional Greek rhetoric which is implied
> in the phrases, καθ' ὑπεροχὴν λόγου ἢ σοφίας and ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις
> (1 Cor. 2.1,4). Such eloquence is the substance of rhetorical *dynamis*. It

a parody of the brave and victorious soldier so valued in Greco-Roman culture. The
corona muralis was a highly esteemed prize given to the first soldier to scale an enemy
wall. Paul, however, depicts his escape from Damascus, over the wall in a basket, to
invert such concern with personal heroism: 'Rather than the conquering hero, Paul
appears here as the battlefield coward' ('Conquest, Control, and the Cross: Paul's Self-
Portrayal in 2 Corinthians 10–13', *Interpretation* 52.3 [1993], pp. 258-70 [261-62]).
See also, e.g., Barnett, *Second Corinthians*, p. 553; Thiselton, *Interpreting God*, p. 21;
Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 458-59; and Martin, who also sees Paul
drawing upon Prov. 21.22 ('A wise man attacks the city of the mighty and pulls down
the stronghold in which they trust') here: 'he is deliberately setting off his life of weak-
ness against the exploits of the "wise"…who exulted in their powerful presence and
wonderful deeds. Paul, by contrast, cut a poor figure. They scaled walls of the mighty;
he only managed to be let down in a fish-basket. They brought down the stronghold
of the enemy; he had to rely on others to assist him to escape from his enemy, Aretas'
guards. They were victorious; he suffered defeat. Yet that defeat was his glory, and he
uses the story as the evidence that it was the Lord who brought him through, and in him
he could boast (10.17, 18)' (*2 Corinthians*, p. 385).

  171. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 29.
  172. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 245, emphasis added.
  173. Despite his protestations in 1 Cor. 2.1 and 2 Cor. 11.6, there is now a general
acceptance that Paul was rhetorically gifted if perhaps not rhetorically trained. See,
e.g., M.M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investi-
gation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westmin-
ster/John Knox Press, 1991); Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*; Witherington, *Conflict and
Community*, pp. 39-48.

also helps us see what Paul means by preaching 'Jesus Christ and him crucified' in 'weakness (*astheneia*) and much fear (*phobos*) and trembling (*tromos*)'… Rather than speak with the persuasive, forceful eloquence of the rhetorician, he presents himself in terms of its antithesis, weak and fearful… His presentation and speech [in 2 Cor. 10.1, 10] are despised as servile (*tapeinos*), weak (*asthenes*) and contemptible (*excluthenemenos*)… [Paul's] shame and weakness are directly opposed to the values and interests of his enemies and are the instruments of God's display of power. In 1 Cor. 2:1-5 God's power is displayed not simply in the absence of Greek rhetoric but in its very antithesis. The final (*hina*) clause shows that this was precisely what he intended should happen and it initiates the often repeated idea that it is directly due to the shame of the apostle that the Corinthians owed their existence. Their faith (*pistis*) was not and could never be ἐν σοφια but only ἐν δυναμει θεου.[174]

Paul's concern to prevent any vestige of self-aggrandizement from obscuring the power of God at work in his apostleship is also seen in the notorious reference to his σκόλοψ in 2 Cor. 12.7. Just as he downplays the potency of his rhetorical ability, despite its blatancy to all who read him, so also Paul presents himself as having a level of revelatory experience which would undoubtedly have won him much kudos among the spiritually obsessed Corinthians. Paul clearly knows this to be the case—that is why he raises his vision in the context of boasting—but again inverts expectations by choosing to glory in the very things which, culturally speaking, deny him status: ὑπὲρ δὲ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐ καυχήσομαι εἰ μὴ ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις (2 Cor. 12.5). He is prepared to take on the Corinthians and superapostles in their competition for bragging rights, but not on their terms. Rather than glorify himself at the expense of others, he diminishes himself; his motivation is to honour God and Christ (2 Cor. 4.4-7, 10-11, 15), safeguard the gospel (1 Corinthians 9), edify the community (2 Cor. 12.19). Surely this suggests that if anyone was guilty of promoting self-serving, exploitative relationships, it was the Corinthians or their other leaders rather than their apostle. Marshall thinks that, though there is much confused debate about it today, the Corinthians must have known precisely what Paul meant by his thorn,[175] and that it was clearly 'deeply humiliating'; probably 'a socially debilitating disease or physical disfigurement, which in his society and especially in an enmity relationship would have prevented him from displaying excessive pride. He would simply have appeared more ridiculous'.[176] Others agree

174. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, pp. 388-89.

175. This is not, however, an opinion with which all concur. Barnett, e.g., says: '(1) the meaning of the word *skolops* is itself uncertain and, equally, (2) we can only guess at *who* or *what* Paul had in mind by his application of this word to himself. Indeed, it is possible that the Corinthians themselves did not know what he meant' (*Second Corinthians*, p. 568).

176. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, p. 380.

that the thorn is a physical impediment,[177] allowing them to speculate about its impact upon Paul's standing and power as apostle, and upon his use of it to make his point in 2 Corinthians. Thus, for example, Holmberg describes the 'offensive fact' that 'Paul was a visibly sick man and could not heal himself. Both his power and his sickness were conspicuous and the latter tended to throw discredit on the former',[178] although not, in Paul's mind, enough to deny it.

> In himself Paul is so weak and disease-ridden that nobody can believe that the mighty work he does is due to his own efforts—there is only one other available conclusion, it is God who works through His apostle. Thus, while the gulf between Paul's own person and the God-given work he performs never lessens, it is by no means true that he does not have the divine power with which to build up and, if need be, tear down (2 Cor. 13: 10).[179]

There is, then, even in Paul's most poignant confessions of weakness, suffering and failure, always an undercurrent—and often a strong one—that he is also imbued with power and authority.[180] But such power was, like Paul's apostleship, bound intimately to the values of the gospel, to being 'in Christ'. Schütz explores the importance of the 'in Christ' concept for Paul at some length.[181] Perhaps his most pertinent comment for this discussion of apostolic power, however, is:

> Understanding being 'in Christ' as referring to an existence which bears the shape of Christ's own death and resurrection, his own weakness and power, is crucial for Paul's understanding and defense of his apostleship. Paul makes this understanding normative for all Christians, normative for himself as an apostle. That means he does not really discuss the question of whether he deserves to be called an apostle; he assumes his claim to apostleship and tries to show how his way of discharging his responsibilities is determined by his being in Christ.[182]

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177. The most common alternative explanation being that the thorn was a relational issue. Thus, e.g., Barnett very tentatively suggests the rise of Judaizers within the church (*Second Corinthians*, p. 570).

178. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 76.

179. Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, p. 77.

180. Hafemann goes so far as to say that his 'suffering makes it evident that, as an apostle of the new covenant, Paul stands between, on the one side, the death and resurrection of Christ and, on the other, the "life" of his church (or the death of those who reject his ministry of suffering), in the intermediary role of a revelatory agent'. To the extent that the Corinthians question and reject Paul, then, they question and reject God as well (*Suffering and Ministry*, pp. 227-28).

181. He does so because he thinks it 'no exaggeration to say that being in Christ is a criterion, and a limiting criterion, of the apostle's self-understanding' (Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 215).

182. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, pp. 217-18.

Paul is, in other words, both conscious of that which makes him believer and apostle, and consciously endeavouring to live and lead in a manner which is consistent with that dynamic. In contrast to views which pit Paul against Jesus, therefore, he clearly sees himself as conforming to Christ's pattern; μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς κἀγὼ Χριστοῦ (1 Cor. 11.1). He was not working with a culturally defined understanding of power but within a gospel framework which redefined power such that, despite (some of) the Corinthians' expectations and certain scholarly assumptions of apostolic domination, he became the community's suffering servant (2 Cor. 13.4).

> The very notion of power has been reframed for Paul in the apocalypse of Christ, especially in…the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah… [Paul sees] a new configuration of what power is, whose it is, and how it works to recreate the world. The power he means is power radically redefined by the apocalyptic event of the cross. It is power manifested in apostolic weakness, demonstrated in afflictions suffered for the sake of the gospel, and legitimated by the crucifixion of Jesus as God's powerful invasion of the old world's enslaving convictions—including convictions about the use of power by human beings to divide and dominate the world.[183]

Thus Paul's status as the Corinthians' apostle is ultimately one of servanthood.[184] Paul is both servant of the Lord (1 Cor. 3.5) and servant of the community (2 Cor. 4.5). Rather than elevating himself to a position of dominance, Paul insists upon his servile status (διάκονοι, 1 Cor. 3.5; ὑπηρέτας, οἰκονόμους, 1 Cor. 4.1)[185] and even intensifies his imagery to depict himself as one who, like Christ, is condemned to a criminal's death (ὡς ἐπιθανατίους, 1 Cor. 4.9),[186] in an utter repudiation of accepted cultural values.[187] There is very little room in such language for an apostle who wishes to dominate and control; even if such a person used it, the chance of it backfiring would be very high. To speculate that Paul seeks dominance ignores the importance of the gospel for all he says about himself in the Corinthian letters. As Schütz puts it, 'all that Paul does is a reflection of what the gospel does; all that he is, is a reflection of what the gospel is. As the gospel is the manifestation of God's acting, so is the apostle'.[188] Certainly, there are elements of

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183. Brown, 'Gospel Takes Place', p. 279.

184. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, pp. 243-44.

185. As G. Lohfink puts it, Paul held his *exousia* and *diakonia* together. 'For this reason his exercise of apostolic authority raised no suspicions of dominating the community; it had the character of self-sacrificing service' (*Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* [trans. J.P. Galvin; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984], p. 118).

186. Tomlin, *Power of the Cross*, p. 94.

187. Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 124.

188. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 232. Also, 'The apostle illustrates the gospel he seeks to uphold, confirm and defend against assaults and attempted

power as well as of service in such a condition, but Paul's development of those themes is not along authoritarian lines so much as exemplary ones. He is concerned less with controlling the Corinthians than that they reflect him, and so the gospel, rather than their culture and the subjection inherent in its obsession with status.[189]

So, then, Paul's apostleship is not best seen as something which sets him apart from the Corinthian community, but something established in what he shares with them: the gospel and life in Christ. Moreover, those same things determine the sort of relationship he has with them, his communication to them and the exercise of his power in dealing with them. Paul's apostolic authority comes not from being more powerful, wealthy or privileged in himself, as the culture expected, but from his divine commissioning to be their apostle and from his personal appropriation of the gospel's Christ-like pattern as a paradigm for life and relationships. There are, as is inevitable in a conflict situation, places where the apostle's power stands 'over' or 'against' (some in) the Corinthian community (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.18-21; 10.9-12; 2 Cor. 11.4-15), and other places where his power is clearly 'for' them because of their immaturity (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.1-3). In these places, however, it seems that such use of power is determined less by Paul's drive to establish or maintain his own personal authority than by a concern for the community's well-being and for the honour of both God and gospel.[190] But Paul's

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perversions. He can do so because the authority of the gospel is the authority of the apostle' (p. 178).

189. As Pickett summarizes, 'Paul's rejection of Greco-Roman cultural conventions, the abandonment of the status which he had, especially as a Roman citizen, and the intentional debasement which was endemic to his idea of *diakonia* were all symbolic actions which represented an alternative set of values and social order to that of the larger society. These symbolic actions were legitimated by the Christ who "was crucified in weakness" ([2 Cor.] 13.4). For Paul the cross of Christ was a symbol of reversal turning the prevailing notions of weakness and power, and honour and shame upside down… Paul interpreted his own weakness in terms of the weakness of the crucifixion with a view to implementing in the Corinthian community the values symbolized in this event and embodied in his own apostleship' (*Cross in Corinth*, p. 211). On Paul's inversion of the Corinthians' cultural and philosophical expectations, see also Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 108-14, 124; B.W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists* (SNTS Monograph Series, 96; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

190. Although it has to be admitted that one effect of Paul binding himself so closely to the gospel is to make it at times hard to distinguish that which is in his personal interest from that which is for the gospel's sake. This judgment, however, may perhaps be harder at a distance than it was close up, for knowing their apostle may have allowed the Corinthians to deal with his claims with less suspicion than is common for some of his readers today. It may also have made them more suspicious, but then why would they preserve letters which make such high claims for Paul?

apostleship also evinces power 'with' the Corinthians (e.g. 1 Cor. 5.1-5;[191] 12.13; 2 Cor. 1.24; cf. 1 Cor. 13.1-3) and a desire that he may do so more (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.18-21).[192] Thus, while there should be no doubt that Paul was claiming for himself a particularly important, even defining role within the community, and, in doing so, legislating as to what was and was not acceptable thought and conduct for them, he was doing so in an other than self-serving manner. His Christ-like apostolic desire to serve an increasingly mature and independent community, to edify them at whatever cost to himself (2 Cor. 13.9), suggests one working to enhance what today would be termed the human rights of others rather than one aiming to exploit them.

IV. *Power Language*

As reflecting upon his apostolic status has shown, Paul's use of language in the Corinthian correspondence instantiates his self-understanding within a relational matrix and also demonstrates how he worked that out, relating to others in particular ways and with particular consequences for them. Paul's tendency to use metaphor and to draw upon cultural resources— even if only to invert their values—has also been seen. In order to understand these processes more fully, however, further examination of Paul's use of language as act of power and means of establishing his place within power relationships is required. While it has to be remembered that it is *as* the Corinthians' apostle that Paul writes everything in his letters to them, and thus our findings will reflect back into thinking about Pauline apostleship, the focus will now move from Paul as apostle per se to the power statements inherent in some of his other language.

   While he may not have thought of himself as inspired and infallible as the concepts have come to be understood, there is no doubt that when Paul writes, and particularly when he writes instruction, he does so as one who is confident in his own authority to speak divine truth and will into his audience's situation. Thus, for example, Paul gives commands in such a way

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   191. Despite often being taken as dictatorial, in this text Paul clearly wants to cooperate with the Corinthian community as they make the right moves in disciplining the adulterer. Note that, though a command, παραδοῦναι (v. 5) is also active; Paul wants the Corinthians to join with him in bringing the appropriate judgment to bear. As Barrett says, 'the act contemplated will be the act of the whole church, not of the apostle only' (*First Corinthians*, p. 124). Also Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 208; but contra Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 94.
   192. Remember that Cronin defines integrative 'power with' as largely cooperative, but not without the potential to include correction and critique. He even explicitly states that such correction need not be welcomed at the time for it to prove 'power with' in the long run (*Rights and Christian Ethics*, pp. 190-91). Thus Paul's at times harsh tone need not exclude the possibility that in desiring their mature independence in Christ he is using power 'with' the Corinthians in these letters.

that to ignore him clearly incurs the risk of thinking and acting contrary to the will of God (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.10; cf. 1 Cor. 1.12-16) as all other churches acknowledge it (1 Cor. 7.17). Indeed, at times he claims that his words carry divine weight: ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολη (1 Cor. 14.37; cf. 2 Cor. 5.20). And even when he acknowledges that his authority on a certain matter is exactly that, his rather than something higher (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.12, 25), Paul leaves his readers with little choice but compliance if they want to remain spiritual; he is, after all, 'one made trustworthy by the Lord's mercy' (ὡς ἠλεημένος ὑπὸ κυρίου πιστὸς εἶναι, v. 25).

Thus even a general reflection upon Paul's writing style reveals some-thing of his claims to power within the Corinthian community. However, taking a closer look at two aspects of his language sheds further light upon the power claims he made and the sorts of power which those claims involved: that it was, in line with the picture of Paul's apostleship outlined above, community serving and gospel-shaped rather than oppressive and exploitative.

i. *Mimetic Language*.[193] The concept of imitation, of believers needing to conform to the Pauline paradigm, has already been touched upon. However it is such a significant motif in the Corinthian correspondence—especially when power and status claims are in view—and it has been such a focus in recent study that it warrants closer investigation. While explicit in 1 Corin-thians only at 4.16 and 11.1 and not at all in 2 Corinthians, there does seem to be a general theme of Paul holding himself up as a model for the com-munity to follow throughout the letters.[194] Thus, for example, in 1 Cor. 7.7a

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193. As a general methodological point it should be noted that neither Paul's mimetic nor familial language in 1 and 2 Corinthians need be considered equivalent in either cogency or valency to his use of them elsewhere; the particularity of text and situation makes any one-to-one reading in from his other letters an uncertain business. Castelli, for example, points out that Paul's mimetic language in 1 Thess. emphasizes historical actuality (depicting what the Thessalonian believers are actually like, 1.6; 2.14) and is thus distinct from that in 1 Cor. and Phil. where Paul uses it to ensure compliance with his exhortation (*Imitating Paul*, p. 92). Thus, as with his apostolic claims, atten-tion will be restricted to the Corinthian correspondence. This is, however, a pragmatic measure. It is likely that Paul's use of parallel imagery elsewhere would, despite super-ficial anomalies, in fact prove more similar than it is different to that in these letters, and thus be of largely equivalent import for his power claims and for human rights discussions. But that is a subject for another study.

194. As B. Dodd points out, 'In every section of 1 Corinthians, except 11.2-34, Paul's self-presentation or his paradigmatic 'I' statement is at the heart of his manner of argu-mentation' (*Paul's Paradigmatic 'I': Personal Example as Literary Strategy* [JSNTSup, 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 33). Against some of the opinions noted below, Dodd sees Paul's self-portrayals as serving 'not autobiographical nor egoistic purposes but pedagogical and argumentative aims' (p. 32), although those aims vary as Paul's letter develops. Thus, 'Up to 4.13, Paul's self-portrayal provides a

Paul says 'I wish that everyone was like me' (θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ ἐμαυτόν). That he is allowing for variance is plain from what follows (ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἴδιον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὁ μὲν οὕτως, ὁ δὲ οὕτως, 1 Cor. 7.7b), but equally clear is the message that while being different from him is acceptable, it is also in some sense to be less (Λέγω δὲ τοῖς ἀγάμοις καὶ ταῖς χήραις, καλὸν αὐτοῖς ἐὰν μείνωσιν ὡς κἀγώ· εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται, γαμησάτωσαν, 1 Cor. 7.8-9).[195] And the separation in 2 Cor. 2.17 of Pauline 'sincerity' (εἰλικρίνεια) from the many who 'peddle God's word for profit' also suggests an example of one to be followed in opposition to those who should not be.

    As is to be expected, some scholars, amongst whom Castelli is probably the best known, regard Paul's call for Corinthian imitation with little enthu-siasm.[196] Consistent with her general attitude to Pauline apostleship outlined above, Castelli's understanding of Paul's mimetic language is founded upon suspicion. She rejects the idea that Paul is simply offering the Corinthians an appropriate spiritual and ethical example, emphasizing instead the social engineering inherent in mimesis. Castelli sees Paul as imposing a 'hierar-chical "economy of sameness"'[197] within which salvation may be had, but deviation from which risks judgment. Merely accepting Paul's message is thus insufficient, it is necessary to conform to Paul as well; the community is required to both accept and submit to his leadership.[198] As Polaski sum-marizes Castelli's position:

contrastive example for the haughty, but from 4.14 Paul, on a literary level, sets a very concrete, ethical example for almost every issue he treats' (p. 61).

  195. For more on 1 Cor. 7, see Chapters 4-6.

  196. A.D. Clarke finds that recent readings of Pauline mimesis can be divided into three broad streams: [1] those who see it as a means of Paul demanding obedience; [2] those who consider Paul's example to be one of self-giving for others' edification; [3] those who see Paul reinforcing his own (and his group's) power through it. Castelli is the main player in this last group (' "Be Imitators of Me": Paul's Model of Leadership', *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.2 [1998], pp. 329-60 [331-32]).

  197. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 17. This Foucauldian-type understanding of mimesis clearly dominates Castelli's account. While it does pick up some important aspects of imitation, however, the restrictive language of sameness also distorts if it is presented as a sufficient description of what imitation entails. Within the ethical and relational spheres in which Paul uses mimetic language, for instance, imitation involves the non-identical repetition of a pattern rather than a simple homogenizing sameness. Certainly Paul does not see the Corinthians as identical to himself (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.8-15), so when he exhorts them to μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε (1 Cor. 4.16; 11.1), he makes rather more than a straightforward demand for 'sameness'.

  198. Moore offers a similar perspective, saying of 1 Cor. 11.1 that 'To appeal to one's own exemplary subjection to a conveniently absent authority in order to legitimate the subjection of others is a strategy as ancient as it is suspect' (*Poststructuralism and the New Testament*, p. 110).

> To receive Paul's gospel is to receive Paul as proclaimer of the gospel; rejection of the messenger…is tantamount to rejection of the message. Paul does not simply point his congregations to God or Christ while removing himself…from the picture. Instead, that process involves Paul's human personality, his role in relation to the congregations, his place as an actor in the power dynamics that take place within and in relation to those communities.[199]

Castelli approaches the subject from a desire to reinterpret mimetic texts according to the postmodern insight that, in acting rhetorically, they inevitably shape the social context into which they are written.[200]

> Discourse is no simple reflection of social reality, but rather it performs a constructive role, creating the contours of social experience. There is no authentic social experience, per se; social relations and the way one thinks about them are constructed by discourse: discourse 'invents' social relations and is reinscribed by them… The discourse of the privileged speaker (Paul, for example) creates the contours of the social experience of early Christian communities.[201]

This Foucault-driven insight about the construction of social experience is a helpful one in our thinking about Pauline power, as is Castelli's concern to escape the anachronistic fallacy of assuming that early Christian social relations were either much the same as contemporary ones or reveal some benign, utopian ideal.[202] Indeed, Castelli says much that is relevant to this project. There are, however, questions to be asked about quite how balanced and revealing her account of Paul's mimetic language actually is.

Castelli does helpfully analyze mimesis in Hellenistic antiquity,[203] that being the natural background against which Paul and his audiences would

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199. Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, pp. 12-13.

200. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 36. Castelli sees such reinterpretation as necessary because of the paradox she finds when juxtaposing the 'self-evident observation' that any attempt to imitate a 'saint' must lead to failure, with concomitant hierarchical implications, to interpretations of Pauline mimesis. 'To read these interpretations, imitating Paul has nothing to do with power relations, and everything to do with social expediency or the benign observation that Paul was obviously a special figure to the early churches, so why should one not attempt to align oneself with his position?' (p. 13). She claims that much valuable historical work has been done uncovering the background of the Pauline motif, but 'little to illuminate the question of the systemic function of mimesis. Nor…how such exhortations might have affected…social formation' (p. 14).

201. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, pp. 55-56.

202. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 17.

203. However, Castelli's treatment also seems somewhat lop-sided: [1] in playing down Paul's Hebrew heritage (e.g. her focus upon Hellenist kings as imitators of the god(s) without mention of Israel's king being seen as YHWH's son in the Old Testament); [2] in emphasizing the political aspects of Greco-Roman mimesis, leaving little

have understood it. She outlines three 'generalizations' about such imitation which can then be applied to Paul's letters. First, mimetic relationships are always hierarchical; the copy is a mere derivation of the model and cannot aspire to be more. Second, mimesis valorizes sameness over against difference; unity is applauded, divergence and otherness shunned. And third, the authority of the model is fundamental to the mimetic relationship.[204] Clearly, these points are of considerable social significance *if* they can be shown to pertain within Paul's calls for imitation. Castelli is sure that they do, that Pauline mimesis simply reflects its Hellenistic context.[205] But such an approach requires Castelli to treat Hellenism as a monolith[206] which determines Paul's thought, allowing no room for innovation and enforcing an especially unlikely marginalization of his Hebrew heritage in view of Paul's claims to be a good Jew (2 Cor. 11.22; cf. Rom. 9.1ff.; 11.1ff.; Phil. 3.5-6). In contradiction of what we have seen above, there is no room in Castelli's reading for Paul to develop or even invert the culturally significant terms he takes up; he is bound to mean what Castelli has previously decided his culture determines him to mean.[207]

According to her Foucauldian perspective, Paul's letters do not merely describe mimetic relationships, they exhort them into being with normative force. Castelli's three generalizations are thus imposed upon the Corinthian community by the very fact of Paul using mimetic language. Not a process which can be described in positive terms, this is, rather: the reinscription and rationalization of power relationships;[208] the reinforcement of 'Paul's privileged position within the hierarchy as the mediating figure through

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room for it to be used in other ways. In critical relation to [1], see Ehrensperger's assertion that the Jewish scriptures should provide the primary context within which Pauline power language is discussed (*Dynamics of Power*, e.g. pp. 4-9).

204. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 16.

205. 'Paul has appropriated a notion of mimesis completely naturalized within first-century culture, so that the term mimesis would evoke for his original audiences the rich set of associations' of Greco-Roman mimesis (Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 16).

206. That, despite her repeated acknowledgments that the mimetic evidence is not univocal (*Imitating Paul*, pp. 16, 15, 59, 86), is effectively what Castelli does. In fact, it is less her account of Hellenism's 'complex weave of images and analogies' (p. 59) than her variety-suppressing generalizations which determine her reading of Pauline mimesis.

207. In fact, Castelli claims not to engage with the question of authorial intent because to do so requires admission to the 'inaccessible aspects of the author's psychology' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 120). However, [1] despite this she is happy to identify Paul's explicit discourse objectives, which just happen to fit her predetermined scheme (p. 122); [2] she insists upon the historically determined connotations mimetic language carried for author, audience and community, even though it did so at a largely unconscious and thus for us inaccessible level.

208. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 89.

whom the community might gain access to salvation';[209] and the suppression of difference and opposition by the imposition of a vague standard as the determinant of true community belonging.[210] If Castelli is right, then Paul's use of mimetic language has clear and negative implications for his power in and over the Corinthian community.

> Imitation is…a celebration of identity, in the sense that sameness implies the quality of identicalness. It is the struggle to write the identity of the model onto the copy. Further, imitation implies, then, a critical relationship of power, insofar as the model represents the standard toward which its copies move. The model sets the terms of the relationship, which is both hierarchical and asymmetrical.[211]

While her expression of them might be questioned as overly negative, there is perhaps little reason to dispute the basic accuracy of Castelli's first and third generalizations when applied to Paul. There clearly is, for example, some sort of hierarchical relationship in Paul's mind as he calls the Corinthians to be like him as he is like Christ (1 Cor. 11.1). And the implicit rebuke in his acknowledgement that some are questioning his apostleship probably does reflect what he considers to be the authoritative importance of his higher status (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.3-5). However, though not without merit, Castelli's second generalization can be regarded with greater scepticism, and questions asked of the power implications she sees in it. As was shown in the examination of Castelli's overall perspective on Pauline apostleship, her aversion to 'sameness' flows out of a particular postmodern stance which sees western culture as characterized by a 'hegemony of the identical'[212] which is wholly undesirable in its suppression of difference. In finding Paul advocating a similar homogeneity, the inevitable fruit of his cultural captivity to her generalizations about mimesis, Castelli's basically negative view of him is confirmed. In line with what she already 'knows' of sameness, Pauline mimesis involves, first, the proclamation of a uniform church which 'indicts the very notion of difference',[213] thus defining the community in oppositional terms from outsiders who are assured of destruction.[214] The implication of this, secondly, is that all those inside the

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209. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 96.
210. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 110. Castelli claims Paul's calls for imitation to be slippery and vague as a means of ensuring maximum compliance with minimum effort. They are 'self-policing' because they place 'the imitator in the position of perpetual unease as to whether s/he is acting in the proper mimetic fashion'.
211. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 22.
212. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 41. Castelli is citing B. Martin, 'Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault', in I. Diamond and L. Quimby (eds.), *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), p. 13.
213. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 116.
214. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 97.

community are controlled through fear of non-conformity; they struggle to be like Paul, suppressing differences because belonging and therefore salvation come through sameness.[215] Paul's privileged position within the community is thus, thirdly, reinscribed as natural,[216] reflecting the heavenly hierarchy, with Paul as both Christ-revealing pattern and mediator of the spiritual realm.[217] The net result, of course, is that Paul's status and power are unquestionable; he is to be submitted to and conformed with.

Castelli's work on Pauline mimesis has been critiqued on a number of levels, and while there is much in what she writes that helps this study's investigations, such criticism suggests that her account is not a fully reliable guide to understanding Pauline power. One fundamental weakness of her approach, as mentioned already, is that she allows a contemporary agenda to determine her reading of Paul without qualification. Thus her postmodern, liberal and individualistic values, especially in their shaping by a Foucauldian aversion to institutional order, see only repression and control in Paul's calls for unity (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.10; 3.16-17) in imitation of himself (1 Cor. 4.16; 7.7-8; 11.1). Paul's perspective, however, being theologically determined, is very different. For him, a shared corporate identity in Christ reflects his understanding of Christian faith as essentially communal (e.g. 1 Cor. 12), 'founded on the death and resurrection of Christ, which applies Christ and the cross as a *criterion and critique* of freelance claims to be "spiritual persons" ' such as the Corinthians were apparently making (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.1-4).[218] Castelli mistakes a theologically driven concern for unity, then, with the self-serving imposition of sameness. And in doing so,

> Castelli's critique reads more as a critique of modern society…than of Paul's theology, and she assumes rather than justifies her hermeneutic of suspicion. One must grant her presupposition that power-hungry authority figures often employ rhetoric to advance their own ends; it is not as clear that one must grant her presupposition that Paul was (consciously or not) a wolf in shepherd's clothing.[219]

215. Castelli states, 'it is the Christians' sameness that is their salvation, while it is the non-Christians' difference that is their damnation' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 115).
216. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 117.
217. Although speaking particularly of Philippians, the following summarizes Castelli's thinking nicely: 'the hierarchy, Christ-Paul-Christians, is invoked as a justification for the call to unity under Paul's aegis… First, it constructs the power relations that will give the community its identity as a monolithic social formation constituted by the unity it must maintain. Second, it reinscribes Paul's privileged position as the mediating figure through whom the community might gain access to salvation' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 96).
218. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 372, original emphasis.
219. C.D. Agan in an unpublished paper ('Moral Imitation in Early Christian Literature') cited by Clarke, 'Be Imitators of Me', p. 332.

Beyond such concerns, there are criticisms regarding basic but important aspects of Castelli's methodology. Thus, for example, Castelli seems to interpret data no less subjectively than those she accuses of committing the self-evidence fallacy; it is assumed that sameness was all bad then because her ideological framework declares it to be so now. Following on from that, if the ancients were not much like us, as her Foucauldian perspective assumes,[220] it is a little suspicious when Castelli finds that they are like us in precisely those ways which fit her agenda, in their struggles against oppressive sameness. That her insights are thus flawed or biased, however, does not fully remove the broad value of Castelli's work. Paul's mimetic language *is* entwined with power issues, and interpreters who spiritualize it or deny its social context neglect the importance of its epistolary setting. Paul may well have been writing with pastoral, edificatory ends in mind, but he did so as the Corinthians' apostle, paradigm and father; his mimetic demands could thus hardly be innocent of power implications. Paul also speaks as one who knows who is, or should be, included within and excluded from the saved community (e.g. 1 Cor. 5.3-5; 2 Cor. 11.12-15). Any call to conformity by one so empowered is likely to carry considerable coercive weight, whether intended or not.

Perhaps most damaging to Castelli's case that Pauline mimesis is socially destructive are those critiques which undermine her understanding of the dynamics of Corinthian community life.[221] While the above criticisms rightly leave her comments about mimesis involving power and hierarchy untouched, these suggest that she may have utterly misunderstood the sort of power involved. Castelli sees only power 'over' or 'against' because she has no expectation of Pauline power working in any other way. An examination of Paul's mimetic language within its cotextual setting, not simply its philosophical context, however, suggests that as their model Paul's power also operated 'for' or even 'with' the Corinthians. In this connection Tomlin's critique of Castelli is particularly telling. He describes her work as a 'victim of the failure to contextualise Paul's discourse'[222] because she pays

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220. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 37.

221. This is undoubtedly partly because Castelli fails to focus as Clarke recommends 'not simply on the injunction itself, but also on the content of the imitation'. Clarke continues, 'It may seem ironic that in a letter in which the pursuance of personality-cults is criticized, he, nonetheless, presents himself as an object of imitation. …however, the model which he is presenting is not one of power and influence. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul issues the imperative that the Corinthians imitate him, as he imitates Christ. The substance of this imitation is presented in the preceding verse, namely that they are not to seek their own good, but the good of many'. Thus, 'the categories of power, control and authority by which Elizabeth Castelli interprets…are diametrically opposed to the case which Paul is actually making' (*Serve the Community*, pp. 225-26).

222. Tomlin, *Power of the Cross*, p. 98.

insufficient attention both to what Paul says of his leadership elsewhere in the Corinthian letters[223] and to what is actually happening within the Corinthian community.

> She simply does not try to reconstruct the situation into which Paul writes, neither does she examine closely enough the nature of Paul's self-presentation. When it is understood that Paul is addressing not just theological disagreement, but competing claims to power within the congregation, the nature of his argument, as suggesting an alternative understanding of power becomes clearer. Paul's appeal for imitation is in fact an appeal to imitate his voluntary surrender of relationships based on social, spiritual or intellectual power or privilege. It is precisely the opposite of the power-seeking discourse which Castelli finds in the text, and is enjoined precisely to protect the poor in the congregation who would otherwise suffer rejection and oppression. Paul is actually very happy to celebrate difference in chapters 12 and 14, passages which oppose the desire of some in the Corinthian church to impose 'sameness' by insisting that they do not need those who are different from themselves (12.21-24).[224]

As such, Tomlin's reading of Pauline mimesis coheres with what we have already seen of Paul's apostolic self-presentation. The power which manipulates and exploits the Corinthians belongs not to Paul but to those whose leadership is moulded by the culture.

Moreover, Castelli's deficient contextualization of Pauline mimesis operates to her detriment at levels other than those which Tomlin highlights. She thus, for example, pays no heed to something which has been emphasized in this study: that the Corinthians knew Paul and that his letters to them need to be read with that relationship in view. Doing so results in a fresh perspective upon the tenor of Paul's rhetoric and thus upon the social implications of his discourse. Castelli rightly criticizes scholars who see Paul as a benign spiritual model but fails to ask whether her own perspective on him comes any closer to that of the Corinthians. This was, after all, a community with first-hand experience of the apostle, his values and his behaviour. It would have been extremely difficult for them to have read Paul's calls for imitation without their memories of him in mind. And Paul would have known that. Indeed he exploits it, reminding the Corinthians of how he had behaved (1 Cor. 1.2-5; 2 Cor. 1.12; 11.9) and what he had taught (1 Cor. 11.2, 23; 15.3), 'reinforcing the content of his teaching by referring to the conduct

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223. Castelli takes the methodological decision to focus only upon 'passages in which the word *mimêtês* actually occurs' (*Imitating Paul*, p. 90). She does not state whether that is for reasons of space or conviction, but either way it serves to limit the field within which her comprehension of Paul occurs.

224. Tomlin, *Power of the Cross*, pp. 98-99. Horrell is another who sees Paul as an advocate of diversity within the Corinthian community (*Social Ethos*, p. 177).

of his life'.[225] He is confident not only that the Corinthians will remember him, but that their memories will cohere with the image he now paints of one who has given much for them (1 Cor. 2.3; 9; 2 Cor. 6.3-13), served them (2 Cor. 4.5; 11.23), and whose example, most crucially of all, is Christ-like (1 Cor. 11.1; 2 Cor. 13.4). The paradigm he offers them is not, then, the indistinct pattern into which Castelli reads manipulatory intent. It is, rather, a practical, real life model brought into view from the memories of those who knew Paul.[226] Castelli ought to be impressed by such an understanding of Pauline mimesis for, as Mitchell points out, it draws upon some well-established themes within the Hellenistic rhetoric so important for her own views.[227]

The concrete model thus depicted is, consistent with what we have seen of Paul's presentation of his apostleship, shaped according to the gospel, Christ-like. Indeed, in 1 Cor. 11.1 Paul states explicitly that it is exactly *as* (καθώς) he imitates Christ that the Corinthians should imitate him.[228] Moreover, the precise nature of Paul's imitation of Christ, and thus what Paul desires to see in the community, is made apparent by the cotext of his call. Setting aside that which is his right, Paul serves the community and safeguards the gospel (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.12, 19; cf. Phil. 2.3-7; 3.17). He wants the Corinthians to grasp that their life in the body of Christ should reflect Christ's own pattern of self-giving and service,[229] and so uses himself as a concrete example of the conduct which that involves.[230] While this does,

225. Clarke, 'Be Imitators of Me', p. 342. See also V.A. Coppan, *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director: An Analysis of the Concept of the Imitation of Paul with Implications and Applications to the Practice of Spiritual Direction* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Bletchley: Paternoster Press, 2007), p. 108.

226. 'Paul's presence…left a concrete and specific model that he could refer to and expect them to remember, implying that his epistolary exemplification is only part of the content of his appeal' (Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*, p. 32).

227. '[D]eliberative argumentation is characterized by proof from example, and often includes an entreaty that the audience imitate the behavior of the esteemed example (or not imitate a negative example).This function of the παραδείγματα is distinctively to be found in deliberative rhetoric. The orator himself can become a natural paradeigma, because the moral character of the orator (ἤθου του λεγοντος) is an important part of the proof' (Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 46).

228. As Thiselton puts it, 'Paul draws his own lifestyle from that of Christ… Christ constitutes the supreme paradigm of one who did not cling to his "rights" but subordinated them freely to the welfare of others' (*First Corinthians*, p. 662). See also Barton, '1 Corinthians', p. 1323.

229. P. Carter, *The Servant Ethic in the New Testament* (American University Studies, Series VII: Theology and Religion, 196; New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 69.

230. L.L. Belleville, '"Imitate Me, Just as I Imitate Christ": Discipleship in the Corinthian Correspondence', in R.N. Longenecker (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 120-42 (140).

inevitably, mean that Paul is placed centre stage and accorded prestige, it need not be understood as a purely egocentric or self-serving move. Dodd points out that while Paul clearly invokes his own authoritative status from 1 Cor. 4.14 onwards, that follows 1 Cor. 1.1-4.13 in which 'Paul has depreciated himself' in order to focus the community upon Christ.[231] He has fixed in their minds that it is to Christ and the gospel (1 Cor. 1.13-24), rather than to Paul or any other leader (1 Cor. 3.1-7) that the Corinthians' allegiance belongs. Raising himself as a model, then, is designed to focus attention upon Christ through Paul, not simply upon Paul; throughout 1 Corinthians 'it is clear that the object of imitation is not exclusively Paul, but is always ultimately Christ'.[232] Similarly, Paul's calls for imitation come in the midst of confessions of weakness which also focus attention away from himself. For Schütz, weakness is, indeed, the only quality which can be read into Paul's example in 1 Cor. 11.1.[233] And in calling for the Corinthians to imitate him in the weakness which allows God to act (1 Cor. 2.3-4; 2 Cor. 12.9; 13.4), Paul, despite being the paradigm, effectively deflects attention away from himself, onto God and Christ.

> This is a highly qualified understanding of imitation… It is God's weakness and power which is evident in his life. It is God who is acting through Paul. The apostle is not so much the agent as the vessel of the one whose power really does shine through weakness. In short, Paul is of himself insufficient; his sufficiency comes from God. Thus the charge to imitate this 'pattern' cannot be thought of exclusively, or even primarily, in terms of man's own power. To imitate the weakness and power of Christ is to become the recipient of God's power in one's own weakness.[234]

The model Paul offers is not only gospel-shaped and self-depreciating, however, but is so 'in conscious opposition to the values of the domi-

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231. Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*, p. 65; also pp. 5, 61, 67 and 53 where he says, 'Paul's self-portrayal, while correcting false notions of wisdom or the value of speaking ability, functions to bring the message *about Christ* to the centre. This is of a piece with Paul's self-description throughout this section [1-4] to make a christological-soteriological emphasis' (original emphasis).

232. Clarke, *Serve the Community*, p. 228. Thus Pauline mimesis cannot be, Clarke continues, about Paul's own status and power, and so is at odds with leadership values in the Greco-Roman world at large.

233. 'There is no reference in 1 Cor. 11.1 to what, in fact, Paul imitates when he imitates Christ. Nor do his letters at all suggest any qualities or attributes of Christ which are normative, except the quality of weakness in which power is manifested. It must, therefore, be in this way that Paul imitates Christ and the Corinthians are to imitate Paul' (Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 230). Clarke agrees: Paul 'urges the Corinthians to conform to his own pattern of weakness, not of power, and in so doing to follow Christ' (*Serve the Community*, p. 215).

234. Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, pp. 230-31.

nant symbolic order',[235] part of the anti-rhetoric he aims at reversing the Corinthians' culturally-inscribed understanding of their existence, particularly where questions of status are concerned.[236] Horrell hammers this point home, showing that 1 Cor. 4.6 and 11.1, the only places where Paul's call for imitation is explicit, follow passages in which the apostle has spoken of himself as 'scum of the earth' (ὡς περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐγενήθημεν, 4.13) and 'slave of all' (πᾶσιν ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα, 9.19). In both cases Paul's rhetoric is focused upon the community's elite,[237] those with most to lose and least to gain from the inversion of cultural norms, and therefore those for whom Paul's status self-denials will be most difficult to stomach.[238] For Horrell, 'Paul's Christianity…is often critical of and offensive to the socially prominent members of the community. It makes strenuous demands upon them, demands which will have an impact upon their worldly position and social interaction'.[239] This is, of course, the complete opposite of Castelli's reading.[240] Paul is not attempting to grasp status and power, but encourag-

235. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 209. See also Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, p. 233.

236. This inversion of expectations is also picked up by Winter who says, with particular reference to 1 Cor. 4.14-17, 'The full weight of irony is to be seen in these verses, for whilst Plato disparaged the sophists as "imitators of realities", Paul ironically summons the Corinthians with their sophistic orientation to an altogether different form of imitation. They must not, like the disciples of a sophist, model themselves on their teacher's mannerisms and techniques of rhetoric. Instead they ought to emulate the apostles of the crucified Messiah with their low status and suffering—and the ignominy which that brings before the sophistic milieu of Corinth' (*Philo and Paul*, p. 200).

237. From 1 Cor. 4.8 Paul is addressing those who see themselves as full (κορέννυμι) and rich (πλουτέω), living like kings (βασιλεύω). In 1 Cor. 8.1-11.1 it is those who see themselves as distinct from 'the weak' (τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν) that Paul urges to follow him in the setting aside of rights.

238. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 209.

239. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 233. See also Clarke, 'Be Imitators of Me', pp. 344-45.

240. For Clarke, 'where there has been an Enlightenment or post-modern trend by some commentators to view Paul's relationship with his churches as suppressive and authoritarian, it may rather be argued that it was Paul's opponents who could often be accused of such arrogance. In contrast, Paul repeatedly adopts a line which is diametrically opposed to "worldly" ways of exercising authority. He views his own authority as deriving from Christ and being circumscribed both by the gospel and his specific commission. The nature of that ministry is characterized by weakness rather than power, and seeks to build up rather than suppress. Paul certainly has an authority over the congregations which he has founded. That authority is exercised as both an apostle and father, but is distinct from the false apostles and the mere guardians of the Corinthian church. As both father and apostle, Paul is concerned to see that the believers are living in accordance with the gospel with which he was commissioned. To this end he offers

ing others in the community to give up those very things in imitation of himself. Paul uses mimetic language, then, 'not as a power tool in order to bolster authority or to define his social group, but rather as an exhortation that believers ultimately model themselves on Christ. This does not deny that Paul is authoritative; rather his authority is exercised in a way which is not egocentric, or for personal gain'.[241] When properly seen in context, Paul's power-laden mimetic language turns out to be, just as his apostleship did, something far more positive and less domineering than some recent studies would have us believe.

However, others, in (over-)reaction to Castelli, appear to deny that Paul's mimetic language makes any apostolic power claims at all. Tomlin, for example, links Pauline mimesis to the cross which renders all human boasting vain (μηδεὶς καυχάσθω ἐν ἀνθρώποις, 1 Cor. 3.21). He then refuses to see any personal gain in Paul being the community's paradigm because he 'offers himself as a model…only in so far as his own apostolic career mirrors that of Christ crucified', undercutting any claim to power.[242] But, while making a worthwhile point about the cruciform character of Pauline apostleship, this 'undercutting' assertion ignores the fact that Paul puts himself forward precisely as one who *is* Christ-like (1 Cor. 11.1). He even does so in 2 Cor. 13.4 with explicit reference to weakness, power and crucifixion.[243] And because he *is* like Christ, Paul asserts that he is one to be imitated. The power claim is unavoidable. Castelli and others are correct, then, in seeing mimetic language as reinscribing Paul's privileged status within the community. Castelli is mistaken, however, in her assumption that such status need be accompanied by manipulation and control, the sort of human rights incompatible social engineering which suppresses others' difference for individual gain. When properly contextualized, Pauline mimesis, like Pauline apostleship, is to be seen within and infused with Paul's gospel message. It is thus defined by Paul's Christ-like, self-denying service to the community. While all such power can be used 'over' and 'against' others— and Paul's mimetic rhetoric undoubtedly has been exploited in such ways— that does not mean that it has to be so. Social engineering may well be going

to them a number of models which they should emulate. Chief amongst these is that of Christ, whom he also seeks to imitate. In addition he presents other examples, including himself; and commends those churches which successfully offer to their fellow churches appropriate models' (*Serve the Community*, p. 232).

241. Clarke, 'Be Imitators of Me', p. 359. Clarke is actually speaking of mimesis in Philippians here, but his comments apply equally well to the Corinthian correspondence. See also Coppan, *Saint Paul*, pp. 208-209.

242. Tomlin, *Power of the Cross*, p. 96.

243. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, pp. 223-26; J.W. McCant, *2 Corinthians* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp. 162-63.

on, but it is not simply of a sort wherein Paul is elevated at the community's expense. Indeed, it is more likely that an exactly opposite process, involving the diminution of the community's elite—Paul included—is what his mimetic language aims to achieve.

In one sense, the division of Paul's power language into two sections is artificial. For while the notions of Paul as paradigm and Paul as father are distinct, 1 Cor. 4.14-17 shows them also to be interwoven. Within these few short verses Paul describes the Corinthians as his 'dear children' (v. 14), himself as their 'father through the gospel' (v. 15), in contrast to those who merely correct them (παιδαγωγός,[244] v. 15), and then calls upon his 'children' to imitate their 'father' (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, v. 16). Paul is sending them Timothy, also a son whom he loves (v. 17), to remind them of Paul's values and behaviour (ὃς ὑμᾶς ἀναμνήσει τὰς ὁδούς μου), to demonstrate how his beloved children ought to follow him.[245] Thus Paul as father and as paradigm are two sides of the same coin.[246] In part, this combination is simply a reflection of normal family life, 'children always copy their father'.[247] However, it also expresses an understanding of the father's role common within the culture of the day; he was to set or impose an example for his children to follow.[248]

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244. Thiselton's decision to reflect the function of this slave/employee rather than give them a title as most translations do (e.g. 'guardians' [NIV, NRSV], 'instructors' [NKJ]) seems a good one given that, as he says, Paul is mid-way through applying the metaphor here (*First Corinthians*, p. 370), and it is the different levels of commitment/involvement with the 'children' which is in view rather than the titles of those involved. This dynamic rendering of παιδαγωγός goes against the majority of commentators who prefer 'guardians' (e.g. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 185; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 73; R.A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* [Abingdon New Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998], p. 72; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 147; although Conzelmann opts for the less sustainable 'school-masters' [*1 Corinthians*, p. 91]), but seems to capture Paul's imagery better. See also H. Lietzmann's comment: 'παιδαγωγοὺς ist geringschätzig (so auch Gal 3 24 f.) und weniger als unser "Schulmeister"; man nahm zum Erzieher der Kinder einen Sklaven und nicht immer den besten' (*An die Korinther I/II* [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul Siebeck, 1969], p. 21).

245. Cf. 1 Cor. 16.10 where Paul speaks of Timothy's 'imitation' in the Lord's work; τὸ γὰρ ἔργον κυρίου ἐργάζεται ὡς κἀγώ.

246. 'Paul's appeal that the Corinthians should imitate him (v. 16) is directly based upon his claim to have fathered them. The idea is that if the children want to grow into greater maturity they should observe and follow the ways of the parent' (Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 74). See also Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 72. On imitation as an expected feature of parent-child and fictive kinship relationships in both Hellenistic and Jewish settings, see Coppan, *Saint Paul*, pp. 54-57.

247. D. Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church* (Bible Speaks Today; Leicester: IVP, 1985), p. 68.

248. See, e.g., E. Best, *Paul and his Converts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), p. 63.

ii. *Paternal Language*. The postmodern tendency to distrust authority figures which has raised questions about Paul's self-presentation as apostle and example also comes into play where he takes up the language of father-hood. Just as in those former areas, interpreters who approach Paul's pater-nal language within a hermeneutic of suspicion—many but not all of them feminist scholars—have rightly brought into the open aspects of control and power claim which inhere within it.[249] But these same strengths are often accompanied by familiar weaknesses: the failure to properly contextual-ize Pauline language before assuming it is understood, for example. There will be no argument here that Paul's self-proclaimed role as father does not imply significant power claims and even an entrenching of his posi-tion within the community. What will be questioned, again, is whether that power need be seen in oppressive terms, destructive of 'power with' rela-tionships and human rights, and whether the bolstering of personal status necessarily reflects a Pauline preoccupation with control.[250]

While he exploits sibling language with apparent abandon, calling Chris-tians 'brothers and sisters' (ἀδελφοί[251]) at almost every opportunity and within a variety of contexts (e.g. Rom. 1.13; 12.1; 1 Cor. 1.10; 8.12; 2 Cor. 8.1; 13.11; Gal. 1.2; 2.4; 3.15; Phil. 1.12, 14; 1 Thess. 4.10; 2 Thess. 1.3),[252] Paul's broader use of familial imagery seems somewhat more circumspect or, perhaps better, more focused. Significantly, four of Paul's six uses of

249. Thus, e.g., R. Gordon asserts that 'In a kinship system which speaks of all Chris-tians as brothers and sisters and children of God…[1 Cor. 4.15] is paradoxical. Paul's alignment of himself with God, rather than with other Christians, is a strong authority move, one which implies definite obligations to Paul and imitation and obedience to his ways' ('The Veil of Power', in R.A. Horsley [ed.], *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997], pp. 126-38 [145]).

250. Clarke, *Serve the Community*, pp. 212-13.

251. On the (not always appropriate) gender inclusiveness of ἀδελφοί, see, e.g., Thisel-ton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 114-15.

252. C.A. Wanamaker describes ἀδελφοί as 'Paul's favorite form for direct address of his readers' (*The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], p. 77). This is, in D.G. Horrell's view, a significant preference given its implicit suggestions of equality: 'Paul both assumes and promotes the relationship between himself and his addressees, and among the addressees themselves, as one between equal siblings, who share a sense of affection, mutual responsibility, and solidarity' ('From ἀδελφοί to οἶκος θεοῦ: Social Transforma-tion in Pauline Christianity', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120.2 [2001], pp. 293-311 [299]). While not inaccurate, such assessments require tempering with R. Aasgaard's observation of Paul's reluctance to call himself 'brother' directly. His brotherhood is implied in his calling others ἀδελφοί, but when referring directly himself through kinship language Paul always chooses other (more hierarchical?) terms ('Brotherhood in Plutarch and Paul: Its Role and Character', in H. Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* [London: Routledge, 1997], pp. 166-82 [176]).

parental imagery to describe his relationship with a church come in his Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 4.14-15; 2 Cor. 6.11-13; 11.2; 12.14).[253] The fact that 1 and 2 Corinthians are characterized by quite distinct tones and a limited overlap in content suggests that his use of parental language is determined less by the sort of letter he is writing than by the relationship he has with the community addressed.[254] Whether or not the Corinthians appreciate it, Paul considers there to be something special about the bond he shares with them. His establishing of the church probably moves the relationship in this direction, and his one explicit expression of 'fatherhood' does come in such a connection (1 Cor. 4.15).[255] However, Paul had done the same for almost all of the other communities to which he wrote, yet tended not to address them in this way. Paul's language is likely, therefore, to reflect something particularly intimate or intense in the way he felt about the Corinthians, or at least the particular relationship he had with them.[256] This notion gains some tentative support from the tone of 1 Thessalonians,[257] the other letter in which parental imagery is exploited in a parallel way.[258] There

253. The others occur in Gal. 4.19 and 1 Thess. 2 where he refers to himself as 'mother' or, more likely, 'nurse' (τροφός, v. 7) and 'father' (πατήρ, v. 11). Those places where Paul refers to individuals in a parental capacity (e.g. his references to Timothy [1 Cor. 4.17] and Onesimus [Phm. 10] as his children [τέκνον]) are excluded here because the focus is upon his power relationship vis-à-vis communities.

254. This point is only marginally diminished by Peterson's observation about the surprising lack of ἀδελφοί references in 2 Corinthians, especially in comparison with 1 Corinthians. Peterson points out that in containing just three references to the church as brothers alongside a weighty three uses of paternal imagery, 2 Corinthians 'may well' reflect a relationship strained beyond that in which Paul wrote his earlier letter. Paul is playing down his sibling role and highlighting his superiority in order to impose his will; 'an appeal to the immense authority connected with the figure of the father in the Greco-Roman world' ('Conquest, Control', p. 262).

255. Although even here the specific term Paul uses to refer to his fatherhood is the verb ἐγέννησα (γεννάω, to father, conceive, give birth to) rather than the noun πατήρ.

256. A more suspicious reading might suggest that he saw them as peculiarly open to manipulation through emotive parental language. While this may be partly accurate—he couched his rhetoric in parental terms because he saw it as likely to have the desired effect—what we have seen of Pauline leadership thus far legislates against seeing his parental language as *simply* a cynical ploy.

257. Such support can be no more than tentative because comparisons between Pauline letters are notoriously malleable. Similarities and dissimilarities can be found at will to fit whatever case is being argued, and there is no room here to attempt anything like the sort of rigorous textual comparison required to make the comparison completely reliable.

258. Comparison with Galatians, where Paul talks of himself in motherly terms (4.19), is more difficult because: [i] Galatians' particular polemical flavour obscures Paul's broader understanding of his parenthood—the relationship may in fact be similar but the letter's tone prevents us from knowing that; [ii] the Galatian imagery is something of a

Paul talks of his love for the believers, of how he shared his very life and not just a message with them (1 Thess. 2.8), and how their faithfulness and reciprocating love mean that 'he lives' (ζάω, 1 Thess. 3.8). The Corinthian correspondence is also characterized by an emphasis on the love between apostle and community (e.g. 1 Cor. 16.24; 2 Cor. 2.4; 8.7-8; 11.11; cf. 1 Cor. 13) which costs Paul (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.8-9; 2 Cor. 2.4; 12.15) but which similarly results in some gain for both him and them (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.4-9; 2 Cor. 1.6-7; 3.2-3; 4.15; cf. 1 Cor. 8.1; 13). The sort of relational matrix within which Paul writes may, then, be significant for his use of parental language and tell us something of its social impact.

There has been some discussion as to how much of a Pauline innovation the use of familial imagery within the faith community was. Thus, for example, Witherington describes it as 'a rather unique development' given Judaism's reluctance to talk of Israel as God's family.[259] Others, however, detect more continuity, both with Paul's Jewish background[260] and with his Hellenistic context.[261] While the evidence clearly leans away from Witherington, the use to which Paul put familial imagery is rather more important for us than is whether or not he introduced it. However, one of the issues

'one off', with Paul preferring to emphasize his brotherhood with the Galatians (e.g. 1.11; 3.15; 4.31; 5.13; 6.18), whereas it is much more developed in 1 Thess. and the Corinthian correspondence; [iii] Galatians shows less interest in mimesis (although see 4.12).

259. B. Witherington claims that 'Nowhere in the Old Testament is Israel ever called God's family, and even at Qumran there is very little use of family language. There is something distinctive and perhaps almost unique in the household setting, family language and family responsibilities of the early Pauline Christians' (*Jesus, Paul and the End of the World* [Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1992], p. 81). This, however, seems a rather inflated claim. For while there may well have been innovative familial aspects to early Christian identity, the Old Testament's use of family in imaging YHWH's relationship with Israel is unmistakable (e.g. Deut. 14.1; 32.5-6, 18-19; Ps. 82.6; Isa. 1.2, 4; Jer. 3.19; Hos. 1.10), and surely provided resources upon which Paul and others drew.

260. For example, although recognizing that in Christian groupings it contributes to a new sense of identity and thus has new connotations, Wanamaker argues that ' "Brother" was used in Judaism to express group identity or a loose sense of group kinship (e.g. Deut. 15.3, 12; Philo, *Spec. leg.* 2.79f.; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.201), and it was undoubtedly from there that it was taken over by the early Christians' (*Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 77).

261. '[H]ousehold metaphors were applied…to political and religious positions of honour in the public world. In a very high profile way such language was also applied by Augustus and subsequent emperors to themselves in the self-description *pater patriae* ("father of the fatherland"). Thus, household terminology was not limited to the domestic sphere; and it should be of no surprise that we see it playing an important part also in early Christian texts as part of discussion of the church' (Clarke, *Serve the Community*, p. 101). For more on the use of paternal imagery by Rome, see E.M. Lassen, 'The Use of the Father Image in Imperial Propaganda and 1 Corinthians 4:14-21', *Tyndale Bulletin*, 42.1 (1991), pp. 127-36.

at stake in detecting how the imagery functioned for Paul turns upon the extent to which his use of it is determined by those who had gone before and their use of familial images. Questions of origin will therefore be a constant if background feature of the following discussion.

Unsurprisingly, given the close connections between mimesis and paternal language, one of the main features of recent discussions of Paul's fatherhood is the talk of social engineering. Quite how such engineering is seen depends upon the perspective and methodology of the interpreter. Particularly at the popular level, Paul's paternal language used often to be read through somewhat rose-tinted lenses. The romantic notion of the gentle, loving father uninterested in authority and discipline,[262] however, has largely been eclipsed by more rounded perspectives. Some scholars choose to invert the old view completely, depicting Paul as self-centredly manipulating others in his grasping after power, but most attempt to strike some sort of balance, with consequent, nuanced implications for the community.

Castelli is, again, a prominent standard-bearer for those wanting to see Pauline fatherhood as about control rather than nurture. She sensibly sets his paternal imagery within Paul's cultural context, where she finds it to be 'a role…possessing total authority over children' and 'delineated as ontologically superior to that of the offspring'.[263] Greco-Roman patriarchal culture established a father's power and status beyond any doubt. For Paul to claim such a role is, therefore, for him to impose his superiority over the Corinthians as somehow natural, divinely sanctioned.[264] Castelli accuses those who want to soften this hierarchical view with affectionate and reciprocal elements of vacillation,[265] claiming that Paul allowed relationships to flow

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262. For example, Prior emphasizes Paul's references to his 'beloved' children and stresses that he does not see his fatherhood 'as an authority-position, let alone one invested with status'. Prior does so, however, less because of Paul's example than out of a desire to critique the practice of 'certain denominations' giving clergy the title of 'father', which he associates with 'a paternalistic, over-dominant style of leadership' (*Message of 1 Corinthians*, pp. 67-68).

263. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 101.

264. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 117.

265. Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 101. S. Matthews concurs: 'Paul may insist that as a father he has sincere affection for his children, but from this position he also claims his right to punish disobedience and to coerce the congregation to adopt his own understanding of truth. To assume that Paul's parental claims to authority are "common sense" is to support relationships of inequality and to preclude leadership models that encourage honest debate, mutual respect and mutual responsibility within communities of faith' ('2 Corinthians', in E. Schüssler Fiorenza [ed.], *Searching the Scriptures* II. *A Feminist Commentary* [London: SCM Press, 1995], pp. 196-217 [213-14]). For a critical alternative to this rather monochrome reading of Pauline fatherhood, see C.K. Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth: Redefining the System* (Studies in Biblical Literature, 42; New York: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 156-63.

'in only one direction'.[266] Similar ideas are taken up by Schüssler Fiorenza in her depiction of Pauline rhetoric in 1 Corinthians. Schüssler Fiorenza claims that Paul is here introducing the notion of his unique, authoritative place within the divinely appointed hierarchy of Christian existence.[267] Her excellent summary of rhetoric concludes that, 'In short, in the rhetorical act speakers/writers seek to convey an image of themselves as well as to define the rhetorical problem and situation in such a way that both "fit" to each other so that the audience/reader will be moved to their standpoint by participating in their construction of the world'.[268] As far as Schüssler Fiorenza is concerned, then, Paul's talk of being the Corinthians' father is simply part of his attempt to resolve an exigency which he perceives (even if the Corinthians do not) by getting the community to reconstruct their world with him at the paternal centre, having power 'over' them.

> In 1 Corinthians Paul introduces the vertical line of patriarchal subordination not only into the social relationships of the *ekklesia*, but into its symbolic universe as well by arrogating the authority of God, the 'father', for himself. He does so in order to claim for his interpretation of divine power the authority of the singular father and founder of the community. He thereby seeks to change the understanding of persuasive-consensual authority based on pneumatic competence accessible to all into that of compulsory authority based on the symbolization of ultimate patriarchal power.[269]

Polaski adds a nuance of possession to such communal reconstructions; in keeping with cultural norms,[270] Paul's fatherhood asserts his ownership of

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266. 'The lines of relationship move in only one direction. Paul, by acting as intermediary between Christ and the gospel on the one hand, and the community on the other, has constructed a hierarchy which, above all else, undergirds and reinforces his own privileged position' (Castelli, *Imitating Paul*, p. 113).

267. E. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians', *New Testament Studies* 33.3 (1987), pp. 386-403 (397).

268. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation', p. 388.

269. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation', p. 397. For a firm rebuttal of Schüssler Fiorenza's ideas on father language in 1 Corinthians, see Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*, pp. 43-44.

270. See, e.g., S.J. Joubert's description of the father figure's legal power as 'owner' of the rest of the family: 'Members of the Roman *familia* were subjected to the life-long authority (*potestas*) of the *paterfamilias*, the oldest surviving male ascendant. His *potestas* over his ascendants and slaves was legally recognized and protected. Children had no power to own property in their own right and could not make valid wills, since the *paterfamilias* retained full power over all property in possession of the family… The status of a child in the power of his/her father was not much better than that of a slave. It was the *paterfamilias*' task to decide whether a new-born child would be reared or exposed to die. A father could also legally sell, imprison or even kill his children, although some paternal rights were limited as Roman society became more

the *ekklesiae* who are his children.[271] She and Petersen also both stress the ambiguity and even deception inherent in all family metaphors which allow Paul to entrench his superior status whilst communicating in egalitarian and reciprocal terms.[272] It should be noted, however, that Polaski sees Paul's use of such ambiguous imagery as more than simply self-serving. He is attempting, she thinks, to build the sort of community which its members have never seen before. Thus, while it does establish his power claims, Paul's language is also aimed at communal edification.[273]

As Polaski demonstrates, it is not only those who distrust Paul's leadership who see his claim to be the Corinthians' father in terms of social engineering and community construction. Thus Wanamaker describes Paul as taking the father's role of socializing his offspring by 'resocializing his "children in the faith" to the sometimes radically different demands of their new social existence as Christians'.[274] Strom concurs, acknowledging that

humane from the days of the empire onwards' ('Managing the Household: Paul as *Paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth', in P.F. Esler [ed.], *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context* [London: Routledge, 1995], pp. 213-23 [214-15]).

271. 'Paul is the authority in the congregation, beside whom there is no other; to reinforce the point he frequently uses the metaphor of fatherhood, with the church as his children. No rivals are to be tolerated. The churches Paul has founded belong to him' (Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, pp. 31-32).

272. Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, pp. 60-61; N.R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 124-30. Petersen describes father language as a means of 'masking' Paul's apostolic role without undermining his 'superordinate' status (p. 129). It also allows Paul to treat the community as a father would his children—in a variety of ways—without questions of consistency being raised. Paul prefers to use love but is fully prepared to chastise and even punish (1 Cor. 4.21) if the need arises. In doing so, 'He makes full use of the ambiguity of the metaphorical paternal role' (p. 130).

273. Although it aims only at edification of the sort in which Paul is central. Polaski says, 'Metaphors drawn from…the family circle may be egalitarian; these structures, though, also offer language for hierarchical relationships. Moreover, by using these metaphors Paul can make use also of the notions of mutual respect, sharing, love and voluntary sacrifice that are inherent in the various sorts of relations that he describes. Since the sort of religious and social community Paul seeks to create among his correspondents may not be immediately obvious to them, he uses metaphor to describe these power relations in terms with which they are certain to be familiar, so that there can be no misunderstanding' (*Discourse of Power*, pp. 60-61).

274. Wanamaker, *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 106. For an examination of how Paul's metaphor-driven resocialization of believers sought to effect new ethical norms in the community, see R. Aasgard, 'Role Ethics in Paul: The Significance of the Sibling Role for Paul's Ethical Thinking', *New Testament Studies* 48.4 (2002), pp. 513-30. Aasgard states that 'the social roles that people assume, or that are imposed upon them, can in fundamental ways shape their ethics: having a particular role means living

'Paul led his communities into a new process of framing their identities and purposes'. But his understanding, in contrast to Castelli's, is that this was 'a profoundly relational strategy, crafted…to demonstrate what it meant to choose the well-being of others in imitation of the dying and rising of Christ'.[275] There is, so far as Strom is concerned, nothing self-centred about such social engineering. Indeed, there is a clear reciprocal element to the Pauline metaphor. And this has already been hinted at by one of the features common to Paul's explicitly paternal letters. In both the Corinthian correspondence and 1 Thessalonians, Paul clearly depicts his interaction with the communities in reciprocal terms. Contra Castelli and Schüssler Fiorenza, the father-child relationship is two-way. Paul is loved, encouraged, strengthened and even vindicated by his children (e.g. 2 Cor. 3.2-3; 8.7; 1 Thess. 3.8), they are not simply passive objects in the relationship, and so its inherent dynamic cannot be one of simple exploitation or oppression.

While Castelli's dismissal of those who want Paul to be an empowered but loving father as vacillators may be too harsh, her concern that the authoritative aspect of the imagery not be overlooked is worth affirming. Perhaps a balance can be wrought in thinking about fatherhood in the Corinthian correspondence by appealing to two of Paul's other letters. 1 Thessalonians' stress upon parental love has already been mentioned. Paul says to the Thessalonian believers

> You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging (παρακαλοῦντες), comforting (παραμυθούμενοι) and urging (μαρτυρόμενοι) you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. [1 Thess. 2.10-12, NIV]

The fatherhood which demonstrates Paul's righteousness here is, then, characterized by a nurturing ethos which is hardly authoritarian even when μαρτύρομαι is involved. Yet in Galatians Paul describes children as within what seems to modern eyes a quite different relationship: 'as long as he is a child, the heir is no better than a slave' (ἐφ᾽ ὅσον χρόνον ὁ κληρονόμος νήπιός ἐστιν, οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου, Gal. 4.1). Clearly, the apostle expects his readers to recognize truth in each use of the metaphor or they would hardly aid his

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according to a certain range of rights and obligations' (p. 515), and this was surely part of what Paul's paternal language was about.

275. Strom, *Reframing Paul*, p. 194. On the important role which shared stories like that of Christ's death and resurrection play in the 'construction and preservation of group identity', see E. Adams, 'Paul's Story of God and Creation: The Story of How God Fulfils his Purposes in Creation', in B.W. Longenecker (ed.), *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 19-43 (38-39).

communication.[276] Therefore, unless we are to suppose that fathers in Galatia were very different from those in Thessalonica, both aspects—nurturing love and absolute authority—must be held together. This means that while Paul's love for his Corinthian children could hardly be in doubt (1 Cor. 16.24; 2 Cor. 2.4; 11.11), it must be seen alongside the weight of his authority over them.

Numerous interpreters manage to do just that and accept Paul as social engineer without sliding into the over-authoritarian emphases of Castelli and Schüssler Fiorenza.[277] Indeed, several scholars actually link the threat of paternal authority within Paul's language to the sort of leadership the community had without him. Just as Schüssler Fiorenza describes, Paul's self-presentation and depiction of the exigency 'fit' in order to rhetorically redistribute power. What others have seen, however, is that the 'fit' works not to give Paul more power, as Schüssler Fiorenza thinks, but to deny the grasping status-obsession of others. There is social engineering going on, but it acts to liberate the community not simply to entrench Paul's status.[278] Thus Clarke, for example, describes 1 Cor. 4.21 (ἐν ῥάβδῳ ἔλθω πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐν ἀγάπῃ πνεύματί τε πραΰτητος;) as

> a threat of judgment on those who were exercising leadership in an arrogant fashion. As a 'father', he can either come to them 'with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit'. …those in the congregation should [not] arrogantly assume that he carries no authority among them and will not come to them. He is a 'father', and not a mere guardian, and thus he will not, indeed cannot, ignore his paternal instincts. While the implication is that Paul would prefer to come to them 'with love and a gentle spirit', the choice is theirs. He insists on his authority as a father, without wishing to be forced to carry it out in an authoritarian manner.[279]

Pickett and Joubert make similar points, seeing Paul having to use his God-given authority to deal with an elitism which threatens the harmony of the

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276. This suggests that the paternal image was polysemous. As E.M. Lassen argues for all familial metaphors, it was capable of radically different significance within the culture, not just when moving from that culture to another ('The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in H. Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* [London: Routledge, 1997], pp. 103-20 [103]). See also Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul*, p. 130.

277. The temptation to generalize their approach into one common to all feminist interpreters should be resisted. Polaski (*Discourse of Power*) offers a good example of feminist scholarship which allows for a much subtler, more nuanced reading of Paul's parental language.

278. Seen in such positive terms, Paul's social engineering may be considered part of his nurturing construction of an all-embracing 'world' for the Corinthian believers; 'providing structure and meaning for every aspect of their lives' (Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 245) rather than seeking to dominate them.

279. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, p. 221.

Corinthian community.[280] Pickett recognizes that Paul is thus having to take up the very tools of superiority which he is trying to discourage, but says that, in Paul's mind, being motivated by love 'distinguishes him from outsiders who would also make claims to apostolic authority'.[281] This emphasis upon love, although it comes from Paul's own pen, fits with what has already been seen of his desire to edify the community, to honour the gospel, to conduct himself as a worthy servant both of the Corinthians and of his Lord. It is exactly this sort of selfless love which Paul commends to his readers in 1 Cor. 13, and being compelled by it shapes Paul's social impact. His superior status comes only in the fact of his weakness and service out of love, undermining the leadership values of the culture and of some in the *ekklesia*. As Horrell says,

> The social ethos conveyed by Paul's style of leadership is a radical and challenging one, for far from being one in which the strong rule benevolently from above, it is one in which the leaders themselves are enslaved to those they lead and the lowest of all in worldly status. However strongly Paul asserts his authority as their father in Christ (1 Cor. 4.15-21), he does not use this authority to legitimate the position of the socially strong nor to demand subordination from the weak. On the contrary, it seems that his stern criticism of those who are puffed up (ἐφυσιώθησάν τινες—1 Cor. 4.18) is an attack on the members of the community who consider themselves, in worldly terms, wise, powerful, and well-born.[282]

The impact of Paul's paternal language is, therefore, freighted with authority and power, but is so in a way which cuts against claims that he is seeking simply to reinscribe his apostolic superiority. Paul is attempting to get the Corinthians to follow him, but it is because his fatherhood leads them in much better directions than can those who merely correct them (παιδαγωγός,

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280. Joubert writes, 'His authority as their *paterfamilias* was beyond dispute. Members who threatened the cohesion of the new family of believers were therefore disciplined in order to instil subordination and obedience to himself and restore harmony within the household' ('Managing the Household', p. 222). See also Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, pp. 206-207.

281. Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, pp. 206-207.

282. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 216. Schütz uses the notion of *auctor* (one who calls something good into being) to develop a parallel understanding of Pauline fatherhood. He sees Paul as not unlike this *auctor*, 'the father…whose primary function is to augment the power at his disposal by seeing that it is diffused through those over whom he exercises authority, all the while guaranteeing the ultimate rightness and fitness of their actions so long as these are grounded in that power which he exhibits. It is a restricted view of authority which calls upon the *auctor* to assert not himself and his authority, but the primary source of power. When others perceive this power correctly and act accordingly, they share in the same power with Paul and are themselves authoritative. When they misperceive, he exercises power over them' (*Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 204).

1 Cor. 4.15), not least because his love causes him to expend himself on their behalf (ἐγὼ δὲ ἥδιστα δαπανήσω καὶ ἐκδαπανηθήσομαι ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν, 2 Cor. 12.15-18). Despite his authority, as their father Paul does not lord it over (κυριεύω, 2 Cor. 1.24), exploit (κατεσθίω) or abuse (πρόσωπον ὑμᾶς δέρει) the community as some do (2 Cor. 11.19-21a), but serves them in weakness (2 Cor. 13.4) that God might be glorified (2 Cor. 4.15; cf. 1 Cor. 10.31).[283] He takes up a role which they know and a metaphor with which they are familiar, but inverts their expectations, defining his fatherhood, as he does his apostolic and paradigmatic status, according to the gospel. The cross, as Peterson puts it, transforms Paul's imagery, guarding against any 'manipulative misuse of the roles Paul invokes'.[284] It is a sense of parental responsibility[285] rather than a craving for power which causes him to take up the authority inherent in the claim to fatherhood.

Despite the strong authoritarian elements to the cultural understanding of fatherhood, there are two further reasons for doubting that Paul's language is aimed primarily at entrenching personal power. First, although the legal authority of the *paterfamilias* is clear, there are reasons for thinking that other considerations came into play when family dynamics were under discussion. Joubert, for example, finds evidence to suggest that the extreme legal power of a father over his family was moderated in practice by: (1) social pressures (e.g. the relational expectations of his family); (2) contemporary morality (e.g. the tendency of the broader community to look upon overly-authoritarian fathers with disapproval); and (3) the

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283. Clarke summarizes: 'Although the model of father/child was inherently, and especially at the time of the early Roman empire, a superior/inferior relation, this does not necessarily entail an authoritarian relationship, however; and, in the case of Paul, this dynamic is clearly modified by love. The metaphor…is significantly juxtaposed… with much more menial titles. In 1 Corinthians Paul describes himself at once as a father and a manual labourer amongst them—indeed one whom God has placed last in line' (*Serve the Community*, p. 222).

284. For Peterson, Paul uses stereotypes and familiar language to gain his readers' attention, but then alters the imagery by infusing it with the values of the cross to say something more nuanced. In this way he ensures that his 'relationship with the Corinthians will not be built on society's models for power and authority. It is not on such authority, any more than it is on Paul's eloquence, that his ministry of the gospel depends' ('Conquest, Control', p. 268).

285. Roberts Gaventa identifies this sense of responsibility in 2 Cor. 11.2-3 and 12.14. In the former, she says, 'Just as custom makes the Jewish father responsible for his daughter's virginity until the finalization of the marriage, Paul understands himself to be responsible for the Corinthians, whose "sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (11.3) is threatened by the "superapostles"'. In the latter verse, Paul's fatherly desire to provide for his children suggests more than affection; he has a 'powerful sense of responsibility to God for the standing of the Corinthians' ('Apostle and Church', p. 195).

perceived willingness of gods to punish those who pressed their own authority too far. Add to this the common tendency of fathers to love their children rather than exploit them, and the result is, certainly from the late Republic era onwards, an increasingly sentimental view of the family. Harmony and affection are stressed, says Joubert, and though obedience is still expected, fatherly love is the relationship's most characteristic element.[286]

Beyond such family-value considerations, there are, second, linguistic reasons for doubting that 'father' was an entirely authoritative term for Paul to use of himself. What seems to have at times gone unregarded is that Paul is using paternal *imagery*, not stating his actual, physical conception of the Corinthian community. He speaks in metaphorical terms rather than of a real family relationship. As such, if anything is likely to have shaped his enculturated appropriation of paternal language, it is the use of 'father' as metaphor elsewhere in his background and setting. Rarely, if ever, does a metaphor bear all the nuances, aspects and implications of the actual object upon which its imagery draws; the point is to pick up a certain characteristic, applying it in a new context and to another object in order to say something about that object.[287] Although he appears not to notice the significance of it in this direction, the evidence Peterson offers of Paul being within a long line of those using 'father' metaphorically suggests that he would have been able to do so without importing all the authoritarian aspects of real paternal power to his talk of himself. Peterson shows that Paul was able to draw upon a considerable tradition of teachers, religious leaders and philosophers being spoken about in paternal terms. Within Judaism, for example, Prov. 1.8 and 4.1 display the links between teachers and parents; priests are pictured as loving all as fathers and carrying all as shepherds do distressed sheep (*Damascus Rule* 13); and a leader in the Qumran community states, 'Thou hast made me a father to the sons of grace, and as a foster-father to men of marvel; they have opened their mouths like little babes…like a child playing in the lap of its nurse' (1QH 7.20-22).[288] The evidence Peterson cites from Hellenism is equally nurturing and non-authoritarian. He quotes Epictitus' description of the good Cynic as approaching all and caring for all

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286. Joubert, 'Managing the Household', p. 215. See also Clarke's comment that 'It was enshrined in law that the *paterfamilias* had a significant rôle of authority over his entire household. Counterbalancing this theoretical authority, there was also a mutual bond of *pietas* between parents and children' (*Serve the Community*, p. 101).

287. 'Metaphors never express more than a part of the truth and possess only a limited area of appropriateness beyond which they should not be extended. They serve to bring out certain truths and must not be pushed beyond these truths' (Best, *Paul and his Converts*, p. 133).

288. Peterson, 'Conquest, Control', p. 263.

as a father (*Disc*. 3.22.82) and Quintilian's injunction for teachers to act *in loco parentis*: 'Let [the teacher] therefore adopt a parental attitude to his pupils, and regard himself as the representative of those who have committed their children to his charge' (2.2.5).[289] This suggests that while Paul does not hide the fact of his authority over the Corinthians, and even when it appears potentially oppressive (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.18-21; 5.3-5), we are not required to find the sort of absolute power 'over' and ownership of a real *paterfamilias* in his paternal imagery. That was not the prime implication in how parental metaphors were generally used, neither does it fit Paul's broader self-presentation within these letters. Indeed, the very fact that Paul's sibling language dominates his use of familial imagery[290] suggests a shaping, even redefinition of fatherhood away from the primarily authoritarian and toward more reciprocal, egalitarian relations.

The problem with interpreting the social impact of Paul's paternal language is its ambiguity. Invoking the image of a father is to expect those in the role of children to recognize and submit to its inherent authority claims. Social distance is created as one is lifted above others in honour and power. And all such power carries the potential for abuse, to be 'over', 'against' or paternalistically 'for' others. Yet it need not be like that. Fatherhood also implies strong mutual bonds of love and dependence; 'life is given and owed'.[291] The relationship can be integrative as well as oppressive, in which case paternal power may operate 'with' others, for their benefit. That the negative potential of Paul's language has been emphasized by some is not surprising given the chequered record of church history, experiences of patriarchal societies, and the continuing kyriarchal oppression of various groups in contemporary societies. However, even if this negative potential should not be completely dismissed, when contextualized within both the Corinthians' situation and especially within his self-presentation in the Corinthian correspondence,[292] it would seem safer to find in Paul's claim to be the community's father a statement of power which is gospel-defined; which aims not at self-aggrandizement but at the edification of the community through service and love.[293]

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289. Peterson, 'Conquest, Control', pp. 262-63.

290. Aasgaard, 'Brotherhood', p. 178.

291. Peterson, 'Conquest, Control', p. 267.

292. Robertson suggests, e.g., that concentrating upon Paul's more singular self-references in 1 Corinthians (father, planter, master builder) 'runs the danger of becoming skewed if not viewed within the context of his more prolific use of ἀδελφός imagery, which runs like a thread throughout the entire letter'. Indeed, one in three uses of ἀδελφός in the undisputed Paulines occur in the letter (*Conflict in Corinth*, pp. 142-43).

293. As D.B. Martin summarizes, Paul 'uses patriarchal rhetoric to make an anti-patriarchal point' (*Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990], p. 142).

d. *1 Corinthians 9*

As the various discussions above demonstrate, references to or at least themes which imply power are spread throughout Paul's Corinthian correspondence. The decision to focus particular attention upon 1 Corinthians 9 is, then, to some extent arbitrary; other texts would have served equally as well. However, there are certain considerations which make 1 Corinthians 9 of particular interest within the context of this study. First, there are power claims here; Paul defends himself and talks of his apostolic 'rights'.[294] Consequently, though perhaps not the most frequently mentioned text, the chapter has cropped up in each section of the preceding discussions. As this suggests, many of the themes already covered come together in 1 Corinthians 9, and so make it an ideal place to see them interacting. Not least of these themes is Paul's model of counter-cultural leadership. The idea that Paul was a cultural critic will be further explored in subsequent chapters, and so, secondly, 1 Corinthians 9 offers a convenient bridge between the discussion of Pauline power here and those of Paul's social impact to come. There is also, thirdly, the obvious if superficial link between this study's subject matter and 1 Corinthians 9. As human rights are the issue at hand, it makes sense to examine the one passage in which Paul talks at length of his own 'rights' (ἐξουσία).[295]

How interpreters understand 1 Corinthians 9 depends largely upon how they perceive the coherence of chapters 8–10,[296] Paul's purpose in writing

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294. Contra Prior these rights are real and claimed by Paul. Prior says, 'Rights, rights, rights—Paul had many, and claimed none' (*Message of 1 Corinthians*, p. 152). But the point is that Paul had them, argued for them and claimed them. What he did not do was exercise them. See R.A. Ramsaran, *Liberating Words: Paul's Use of Rhetorical Maxims in 1 Corinthians 1–10* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), p. 51.

295. However, this should not be taken as confusing or equating the two rights. The connection being drawn is lexical rather than ontological. There is no implication that the 'rights' Paul speaks of are human rights in the contemporary sense. His rights in 1 Corinthians 9 are those which accrue through his apostolic status, not through his humanity.

296. Thus, e.g., Conzelmann describes 'the state of the text' as suggesting 1 Corinthians 9 to be an interpolation from elsewhere; 'for in chap. 9 the freedom that is discussed is not the same as in chap. 8'. Conzelmann's subsequent description of 1 Corinthians 9 as 'apologia' comes, then, as no surprise. If different freedoms are in view, he cannot be using his own to talk about others' (*1 Corinthians*, pp. 151-52). However, Thiselton objects that 'such an interpretation entirely misses the point' (*First Corinthians*, p. 661) and A.T. Cheung provides an alternative reading wherein Paul's use of ἐξουσία forms a vital link between chaps. 8, 9 and 10. Being the key word in chap. 9, ἐξουσία 'harks back to the knowers' ἐξουσία to eat idol food in 1 Cor. 8.9. It also provides a link to the unprofitable ἔξεστιν in 10:23' (*Idol Food in Corinth: Jewish Background and Pauline Legacy* [JSNTSup, 176; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], p. 141). Barrett also considers 1 Corinthians 9 to belong between chaps. 8 and

the letter, and the background situation which gave his writing impetus.[297] Ramsaran, for example, sees 1 Corinthians 9 as exemplar. While this is not an uncommon view,[298] he appears bound to adopt it as his stated understanding is that 'Paul's discussion throughout 1 Corinthians is an elaboration of his personal example stated in 1 Cor 8:13'.[299] Indeed, Ramsaran sees this chapter as the heart of the letter. It looks back to 1–4 (life in cruciform shape) and forward to 11–14 (concern for others' place and participation within the community). Both themes, says Ramsaran, are modelled most profoundly by Paul as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11.1).[300] In view of what has already been seen of Paul's gospel-shaped power, if Ramsaran is right, 1 Corinthians 9 is a text of enormous significance. Even if he is mistaken about it being the heart of the letter, that 1 Corinthians 9 draws together cruciformity and community in Paul's paradigmatic example suggests much about the variety of power with which Paul was concerned, with implications for his impact upon the Corinthian community. Such a view clearly resonates with what has been said of Pauline power thus far, but some would question whether 1 Corinthians 9 really moves in this direction because they deny its exemplary status.

The most common alternative reading is to see 1 Corinthians 9 as apologetic. Paul's οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος; (v. 1) certainly suggests this, and Malherbe, for example, sees Paul pre-empting the objections he anticipates his teaching will receive.[301] Fee takes a different line, depicting the passage as Paul's response to the Corinthians' challenging of his earlier command for them to abstain from idol meat,[302] but also emphasizes apostolic apologia.

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10 but acknowledges that the transitions are not always easy: 'There is no ground here for the partition of the letter, though there is certainly evidence of a mind that was ready to digress, perhaps also of composition over an extended period' (*First Corinthians*, p. 200).

297. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth*, p. 137.

298. Thus Horsley describes 1 Corinthians 9 as 'an autobiographical illustration of the principle set forth in 8:13, that, for the sake of others, one should not make use of one's liberty/authority' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 124). See also, e.g., L. Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries; Leicester: IVP; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2nd edn, 1985), p. 129; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 663. Hays suggests that reading 1 Corinthians 9 as exemplar is an obvious step, given that Paul points to himself as example in the last verse of 1 Corinthians 8 (*First Corinthians*, p. 146).

299. Ramsaran, *Liberating Words*, p. 51.

300. Ramsaran, *Liberating Words*, p. 52.

301. A.J. Malherbe, 'Determinism and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9', in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), pp. 231-55 (240). See also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 78-79.

302. For Fee (*First Corinthians*) this is part of a broader challenge to his authority to which Paul responds throughout the letter (p. 50), but which he tackles 'head-on' here

The obvious question, of course, is cannot 1 Corinthians 9 be *both* exemplary *and* apologetic?[303] Mitchell answers with an emphatic 'No'.[304] But while many have appreciated her insight that Paul's use of ἀπολογία (v. 3) may indicate a 'mock' defence,[305] most have braved her ridicule to assert

(p. 393). Fee accepts that it is possible to see Paul as example in 1 Corinthians 9, but declares it unlikely because he considers that: [i] there is nothing in the main body that suggests Paul is appealing for the Corinthians to follow him (cf. 2 Thess. 3.6ff.); [ii] the vigorous rhetoric of vv. 1-14 cannot be fitted to the exemplar idea 'in any way'; [iii] vv. 15-18 are simply too highly personal and emotionally charged to be an effective call for imitation (p. 393). None of these points, however, appears to hold much water.

303. Alternatively, of course, it might be neither. E. Käsemann, for example, sees it as a simple digression due largely to Paul's emotional agitation (*New Testament Questions of Today* [London: SCM Press, 1969], pp. 218, 231-32).

304. Mitchell has famously accused those who want to see both functions in the passage of attempting to kill two birds with one stone. This task, she says, is 'rhetorically untenable. The two birds are not only separate but contradictory. Is it not naive (and rather more than coincidental) to think that the Corinthians' "charge" played so completely into Paul's hand?' (*Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 244). In Mitchell's estimation the text can only be exemplar, for there are none of the claims one might expect if Paul was reiterating his apostleship (cf. 2 Cor. 11.1–12.13). Indeed, she claims that 'all attempts to analyse 1 Corinthians 9 as a true defense against actual charges have failed' (p. 244). Mitchell acknowledges that Paul does outline his status, but says that he does so bluntly; presenting a base to build his argument upon, not the end toward which he works (p. 245). So far as she is concerned, the only charge against which 1 Corinthians 9 could be a defence is the improbable one that Paul is guilty of not taking the Corinthians' money. 'That such an accusation would ever have been made is, in my view, scarcely possible… But even if that unlikely charge were historically feasible, the argument in 1 Corinthians 9 does not constitute an appropriate rhetorical defense against it. 1 Corinthians 9 is no defense speech by Paul. Instead Paul calls it "defense" to justify rhetorically his use of himself as the example for imitation…because he is well aware of the risks he takes in using himself as the example for imitation' (pp. 246-47). Despite such protestations, however, not accepting (some of) the Corinthians' support does seem to be the charge that Paul was facing.

305. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 130. For example, Ramsaran (*Liberating Words*, p. 51) and Witherington, who says that 'If this chapter were a serious and substantive attempt to defend Paul's apostleship, it would look more like what we find in 2 Corinthians' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 203). This suggests that Paul's rhetoric here does not defuse the 'rumblings' against him and he has to construct a firmer apology for himself in the later letter (Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 148). Dodd makes a point parallel to Mitchell's, describing 1 Corinthians 9 as 'fictitious defence' rather than apologia. He says that Paul needed to talk about himself in order to make his appeal for selfless behaviour cogent, but had to do so in a way that would not alienate polite Hellenist society as self-praise tended to do (he cites Aristotle's *Rhet*. 2.6.11-12). Plutarch (*Mor*. 7.539-47) outlines various 'antidotes' to remove the shame of self-praise, and Dodd thinks 1 Corinthians 9 complies with three. Thus Paul's use of himself as good example is culturally acceptable because: (1) he is offering a defence against charges,

that in 1 Corinthians 9 Paul is undertaking both apologia and exemplar,[306] even if not in equal measure.[307] Thus, for instance, Witherington finds Paul utilizing the forensic rhetoric of apologia, but doing so for broader deliberative ends; his language is designed to persuade his readers into following his self-sacrificial example.[308]

Whether 1 Corinthians 9 is exemplar, apologia, or some combination of the two matters for our understanding of Paul's power moves within the text, and for assessing to what extent he is imposing those moves upon a resistant community. If, as seems most likely from the content and cotext of 1 Corinthians 9, there are both functions present, then all that has been said above looms behind Paul's words here. If it were purely apologetic it might be possible to find in it the sort of repressive reconstruction of social reality which some have detected in Paul's claims to apostolic status. And that there are elements of Paul highlighting his centrality and authority among the Corinthians should not be ignored. However, once again the notion that Paul was primarily motivated to defend or entrench his own position and power must be questioned. That view does not easily fit with either the balance of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9 or the ends towards which his rhetoric is working. In v. 2 Paul asserts his apostleship of the Corinthians, whatever his standing for others, with only their existence for supporting argument (εἰ ἄλλοις οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀπόστολος, ἀλλά γε ὑμῖν εἰμι· ἡ γὰρ σφραγίς μου τῆς ἀποστολῆς ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν κυρίῳ). This barely substantiated assumption of apostolicity suggests that, while there are elements of apologia present, Paul is speaking for rhetorical effect by emphasizing his status as they already perceive it—'if it's good enough for me as your apostle, it's good enough for you'—rather than to establish that status in the first place. As Witherington says,

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an ἀπολογία; (2) he has no choice but to do so; (3) his aim is to benefit others (*Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'*, pp. 103-105). That Paul is conforming with such mores in order to confront those most likely to be offended by his breach of them might make this argument unlikely if it were not for Paul's propensity to take up cultural patterns and turn them to his own ends.

306. See, e.g., Chow, *Patronage and Power*, p. 108; R.F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina, 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), pp. 350-51; G. Luedemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), pp. 67-68.

307. See, e.g., Thiselton's summary: 'the chapter appears on a superficial reading to constitute a defense of Paul's apostleship but in practice operates at a more fundamental level to support the logic of chs. 8–10' (*First Corinthians*, p. 663). Also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 78.

308. To that exemplary end, says Witherington, 'Paul is not defending his apostleship or apostleship in general. If he is defending anything it is his right as an agent of Christ to receive or refuse support' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 203).

> There is no hint here that Paul thinks that his apostolic office is seriously doubted… The real proof of this is that in this very chapter he holds himself up as an example of self-sacrificial behavior, using the very matter on which he is…being questioned as proof, maintaining that he practices self-denial in regard to his rights for the greater good and calls for his audience to imitate him. Thus, Paul is not seeking here to establish his rights but to reassert them.[309]

As such, claims like those made by Schüssler Fiorenza, that 1 Corinthians as a whole is Paul's attempt to introduce his unique apostleship, imposing his authority upon a situation which worked well enough without him,[310] appear rather tenuous. There are power claims being made, even if Paul is only 'reasserting' his apostolic rights, but they are of a quite different nature from those that might be involved in any attempt to 'establish' status.

Taking the cotext of 1 Corinthians 9 as important for the way the chapter is written not only safeguards the integrity of the letter, it also influences how the chapter itself is to be understood.[311] Chapters 8 and 10 famously address the issue of believers eating εἰδωλόθυτον, and particularly in chapter 8 Paul is seen encouraging those who may eat by right to forego their entitlement for the good of others;[312] διόπερ εἰ βρῶμα σκανδαλίζει τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἀδελφόν μου σκανδαλίσω (v. 13). That the first apostolic right Paul mentions, just a few verses later, is that to receive food and drink (μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν;) is surely no coincidence. Rather, it would seem that Paul is drawing emphatic lines of continuity between his own rights and those of the Corinthians; they are to follow his lead generally, but also very specifically in this matter.[313] In both cases Paul affirms that the rights in view are real. But, unlike so many of those who insist upon having their (human) rights satisfied today, he also encourages the setting aside of such genuine claims in the interests of others. Had Paul demanded that he be fed and watered by the Corinthians, that they put up his spouse as well as himself, and that they pay him what he deserved, then the image of a grasping, selfishly motivated apostle

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309. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 203.

310. Schüssler Fiorenza, 'Rhetorical Situation', *passim*.

311. See Thiselton's extended argument for the unity of 1 Cor. 8.1–11.1. He argues both for seeing these chapters as one piece and also for seeing them as intimately bound within 1 Corinthians' broader framework (*First Corinthians*, pp. 607-12).

312. 'An act that might be permissible in isolation can be deadly in the context of the community' (M.J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], p. 182).

313. If accepted, the significance of food in chapter 9 then points toward a stronger unity of chaps. 8–10 than has sometimes been accepted. The idol meat issue is the central issue which Paul is addressing from 8.1 through to 11.1, even if sometimes (e.g. 9.1-3) it slips from immediate attention.

might be possible to sustain in 1 Corinthians 9. Paul's point, however, is that he is not like that, indeed he puts his rights aside even though he has every entitlement to them. And if he can behave in such a way, so can the Corinthians, even though their rights are real too. Contra Mitchell, Cheung asserts that Paul is killing two birds with one stone here. On the one hand, Paul's apostolic example functions to make the rights he is setting aside appear particularly significant, rendering those he wants the Corinthians to give up as trivial by comparison and so easier to relinquish. On the other hand, Paul vigorously affirms his apostolic status and rights in order to enhance the power and security of his argument against any 'who might challenge him'.[314] But while he is, then, making power claims, this sort of argument, and especially the other-regarding ends towards which it works, displays Paul as creating for himself a rather different authoritative space from that which Schüssler Fiorenza and Castelli envisage. Yes, Paul is the Corinthians' apostle, but he is also the apostle who lays aside his own inter-ests (1 Cor. 9.12, 15),[315] who becomes weak and a slave for the sake of the gospel and the community it creates (1 Cor. 9.19-23, 27).

Thus the apostolic rights so important to Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 fit com-fortably alongside his other talk of himself as apostle, paradigm and father in the Corinthian correspondence. Superficially, Paul appears to emphasize things which bring him status, power and privilege within the community. But what he is really doing throughout is diminishing himself, or at least all those aspects of him which are about Paul the man rather than about that man in Christ, shaped by the cross and empowered by God. It is no coinci-dence that the section within which 1 Corinthians 9 sits and which shapes its meaning closes in 1 Cor. 11.1 with Paul's claim to be an example like Christ (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς κἀγὼ Χριστοῦ), for his consistent theme throughout the chapter is that that is precisely the pattern he is calling the community to fulfil.[316]

This gospel orientation reaches full expression in the climactic passage at 1 Cor. 9.19-23.[317] These verses illustrate to the Corinthians the servant ethic which shapes Paul's own life,[318] and which, by implication, he expects to see

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314. Cheung, *Idol Food in Corinth*, p. 142.

315. A. Lindemann, *Paulus, Apostel und Lehrer der Kirche* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/ Paul Siebeck, 1999), p. 104.

316. As Gorman summarizes, 'Paul sets forth his own pattern of life as the pattern for others to imitate in its essential character of status-renouncing, self-giving love. This is implicit in the juxtaposition of chapters 8 and 9…and explicit in 1 Corinthians 10.24–11.1' (*Cruciformity*, p. 181).

317. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 698. See Collins (*First Corinthians*, pp. 350-51) for a description of the pericope's unity and structure.

318. Carter, *Servant Ethic*, p. 57. Witherington describes these verses as Paul's apos-tolic '*modus operandi*'; 'He accommodates his style of living, not his theological or

in theirs. They show 'that standing in solidarity with "the other", as against autonomy or self-affirmation, lies at the heart of the gospel'.[319] Paul begins by reiterating his freedom (cf. 9.1), a logical point at which to pick up his thoughts after the 'digression' of his self-defence (vv. 3-18, see below).[320] But he immediately subverts that freedom, declaring his 'slavery to all' (πᾶσιν ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα). Martin describes this as a culturally 'shocking' assertion.[321] So why does Paul make it? The immediate answer is that his slavery serves evangelistic purposes (ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω). But this is not merely some clever Pauline mission strategy. Gorman sees the gospel's 'inner dynamic' within such slavery,[322] and Dunn describes it as the necessary gospel-conditioning of Paul's authority.[323] It is Paul following Jesus' self-lowering pattern,[324] becoming 'downwardly mobile' because that is life in cruciform shape.[325] There is, then, a counter-cultural ethic on display here; motivated not by self but by concern for others, by love which conforms to Jesus' death on the cross.[326] Paul pursues this ethic remorselessly (vv. 26-27) and calls others to follow him in doing so (vv. 24-25). Moreover, it is an ethic of love which denies self not just for the privileged or the religiously acceptable, but for the weak (v. 22).[327] Exactly who 'the weak' were may be obscure and much debated, but we can at least say that they are designated or seen as such by 'the strong',[328] marking them out as those who had some sort of lack, certainly not to be emulated within the status-obsessed culture

ethical principles, to whomever he is with so as better to win that person to Christ' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 211).

319. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 699.

320. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 392.

321. This shock value at least pertains for the Corinthian elite. As Martin says, 'To their ears Paul is admitting, in the worst way, that he is not, after all, a free man, a wise man, a true philosopher. He knows not philosophical freedom but rather servility and weakness'. Martin continues, however, that the same assertion might even have appeared 'positive to lower-class persons, because it portrays him in a high status-by-association form of slavery, as a slave of Christ' (*Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 76-77).

322. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 191.

323. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 576-77.

324. He is manifesting, as M. Volf puts it, the reality that 'the story of Jesus Christ… has become the story of the self' (*Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996], p. 70).

325. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 190.

326. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 182. This goes somewhat against Horsley's perspective that Paul is here speaking of self-enslavement only in opposition to the liberty-obsession of the 'enlightened Corinthians', and is not offering a pattern for all Christian discipleship (*1 Corinthians*, p. 131).

327. What Hays describes as 'a preferential option for the poor' (*First Corinthians*, p. 157). See also Elliott, *Liberating* Paul, pp. 87-89.

328. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 705.

of Corinth. Paul, however, is not only concerned for them but becomes as one of them[329] (ἐγενόμην…ἀσθενής) for their benefit; an adaptation which sacrifices rights in 'a form of self-enslavement'.[330] This, then, is the Christ-like, gospel-shaped, self-lowering example which Paul illustrates in 1 Corinthians 9. His power is thus 'with' and 'for' those whom he seeks to serve, particularly the weak. Again, it operates not to oppress those without position and influence but, in inverting cultural norms, enslaves the privileged apostle for the benefit of the lowly; an example of the sort of community he desires the Corinthians to be.

This counter-cultural impetus to the Pauline paradigm also explains why 1 Corinthians 9 operates as something more than just exemplar or even mock apologia. As mentioned, vv. 3-18 are effectively a self-defence by Paul, at least so far as one aspect of his apostolic conduct is concerned. While there may be more at issue (vv. 4-5), the main feature of Paul's self-defence, and thus by implication the attacks upon him, involves his financial independence.[331] Paul begins (vv. 6-14) by arguing from a number of angles for his right to receive support, perhaps most emotively within the community context by his appeal to the Lord's command (ὁ κύριος διέταξεν, v. 14),[332] and then emphatically lays that right aside. Paul's use of such strong and diverse strategies raises questions for us. As Chow asks, 'Why did Paul have to defend himself on the issue of financial support? What did such support represent? Who in the church would care about financial matters?'[333]

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329. Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, p. 246.

330. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 180.

331. Contra Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, p. 206) who dismisses Hock's arguments in this direction but offers no explanation for doing so. See R.F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 50-65. Hays concludes: 'Paul's slavish pursuit of a low-status occupation, taken together with his vacillating inability to take a consistently "strong" line on the freedom to eat, has suggested a disturbing conclusion to the Corinthians: perhaps Paul is not really a legitimate apostle at all' (*First Corinthians*, p. 147).

332. This is probably an appeal to the tradition rendered in the gospels by Mt. 10.10 and Lk. 10.8. Fee considers Jesus' original utterance to have been proverbial, but Paul is able to treat it as a command because that is the direction in which Matthew's redaction shows the tradition to be moving (*First Corinthians*, p. 413). G. Theissen terms it the missionary 'demand for charismatic poverty' (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1982], p. 42) and D.G. Horrell agrees, pointing out that Paul's close juxtapositioning of 'the Lord commanded' with 'but I have not used' suggests not only possible Pauline disobedience but that the apostle is establishing his right so strongly that his non-exercise of it takes on immense significance (' "The Lord commanded… But I have not used…" Exegetical and Hermeneutical Reflections on 1 Cor 9.14-15', *New Testament Studies* 43.4 [1997], pp. 587-603 [593]).

333. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, p. 108. See n. 304 for Mitchell's incredulity that this could be an issue on which Paul would actually need to defend himself.

One scenario which appears increasingly likely[334] is that Paul's renunciation of the right to support saw him distancing himself from particular patronal relationships.[335] If this were the case, Paul's refusal of Corinthian support would have been taken as an affront to those doing the offering,[336] and may well have resulted in criticism of him, including a questioning of his apostolic status. It would not have helped Paul's cause if others were accepting support, as appears likely (vv. 3-6). They, then, would be behaving in a culturally acceptable manner[337] and being obedient to Jesus' words, while he took the offensive and shameful route[338] of supporting himself (vv. 6, 12, 15) so as not to appear as some tame apostle, and in order to be no burden upon them (2 Cor. 11.7-9; 12.13). It follows that as Paul was being 'examined' by some in Corinth (ἀνακρίνω, v. 3) and felt the need to respond,[339] that he desired to emphasize his loyalty and obligations lay only toward God and the effective proclamation of the gospel, not to any rich benefactor(s).[340] For Chow,

> The conflicts between Paul and some of the Corinthians were probably generated by two conflicting loyalty claims. One demands loyalty to God the father, the other loyalty to human authorities. In face of these two claims, it is understandable that members of the Christian community in Corinth

334. It is certainly more likely than, for example, Theissen's conception of Corinthian anger over Paul's lack of 'charismatic poverty' (*Social Setting*, p. 43). For arguments against Theissen's view, see Chow, *Patronage and Power*, p. 108.

335. One common sophistic model of the day saw teachers seeking rich patrons to house and support them, provide a suitable teaching environment and reflect the value of their teaching in the income they paid (Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 190). However, Hock indicates that the appropriate source of support for teachers and philosophers had been a contentious issue within Hellenism for some time. There were various camps on the issue, and it is possible that Paul found himself at odds in this matter with other Christian leaders with whom the Corinthians had come into contact. The ongoing debate within Hellenism would certainly have informed Paul's thinking; he does appear to be drawing distinctions between himself and those who would not work, who thought themselves too high for manual labour (*Social Context*, pp. 50-65). Hock also suggests that Paul's long hours of physical work would have affected his appearance and energy levels such that his self-descriptions as 'weak' and 'slave' would seem doubly appropriate (p. 60).

336. Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 92; Chow, *Patronage and Power*, pp. 109-10.

337. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 49.

338. See Witherington's summary of why Paul chose to labour and the probable reactions which met his choice in different echelons of society (*Conflict and Community*, pp. 208-209).

339. Contra Martin, who thinks that Paul initiates attention toward his refusal of the Corinthians' support, knowing that it will be controversial, rather than takes up something about which they are already critical of him (*Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 78-79).

340. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, p. 172.

would have found it hard to get the balance right. It is also natural for some [to] have acted in accordance with the traditional norms, that is, to pledge loyalty to the human patrons. But in the eyes of Paul such decisions under certain circumstances were likely to be incompatible with the higher loyalty owed to their newly found master. They should be faithful to God, not to man.[341]

Horsley develops this thought in light of the 'stewardship' (οἰκονομία) spoken of in v. 17. Paul's combination of this with his mention of compelled commissioning (ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται, v. 16) may well be a statement that his wages are paid by the master of the house, not those he supervises or among whom he works.

> Paul is probably implying that he has been assigned a place in the divine economy, and is no mere house-philosopher of some Corinthian patron. His principal meaning, however, is that he is serving in the cause of divine authority, and precisely not willingly. With this he is countering the Corinthians' claim to possess an authority that enabled them to act with complete free will.[342]

1 Corinthians 8 is replete with Stoic terminology: 'knowledge' (γνῶσις), 'freedom' (ἐξουσία), 'weak' (ἀσθενέω, ἀσθενής), 'impediment' (πρόσκομμα), for example. In Stoicism, 'only the wise person is not compelled by necessity, and is able to act willingly, not unwillingly—in other words, possessing the "liberty/authority" to do all things and live as one pleases'.[343] That some Corinthian Christians had absorbed such thinking is suggested by ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν (8.9): 'the Corinthians' claim to have knowledge is inextricably tied to their assertion of their *exousia*. ...it is the person who is free who has *exousia*, freedom being defined as "the knowledge of what is allowable and what is forbidden, and slavery as ignorance of what is permissible (ἔξεστιν) and what is not"'.[344] The strong regarded the weak's stumbling as a simple fact of life, of their lacking the ἐξουσία which the strong enjoyed. Paul's response is to agree (οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς, 8.4), but to insist that for Christians love is more important than knowledge (ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ· εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἐγνωκέναι τι, οὔπω ἔγνω καθὼς δεῖ γνῶναι· εἰ δέ τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, οὗτος ἔγνωσται ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, 8.1-3), that the strong 'should surrender their *exousia* for the sake of the weak in order to promote the gospel'.[345] And that, then, provides

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341. Chow, *Patronage and Power*, pp. 174-75.

342. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 130. Horsley also sees resonances of this in the eschatological imagery of 9.24-27, where it is for the prize, and so the prize-giver, that the athlete trains and competes.

343. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 129.

344. Malherbe, 'Determinism and Free Will', p. 235. Malherbe is quoting Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.18.

345. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 148; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 79-80.

the impetus for his continued use of Stoic language (especially ἐξουσία) into 1 Corinthians 9, using himself to exemplify the re-ordered priorities he desires to see in the Corinthians. That Paul is able to utilize such philosophically-freighted language demonstrates his willingness to be 'all things to all people' (τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, 9.22) in order to get his message across. However, this flexibility is limited and biased. Paul adapts himself only in cruciform shape, requiring him to prefer some and offend others at times because the gospel favours those 'who are not' (τὰ μὴ ὄντα, 1 Cor. 1.28)[346] at the expense of those whose wisdom deems it foolishness (1 Cor. 1.23, 25; cf. 1 Cor. 3.19). Paul's weakness and labouring, therefore, place him among the least in Corinthian society; he becomes like them that he might save some of them (ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω, 1 Cor. 9.22).[347] His status as 'slave of all' (9.19) offends others,[348] but he is more concerned to avoid being an 'obstacle' (πρόσκομμα, 1 Cor. 8.9) to the least in the community, as he might well have been had he accepted patronage, alienating himself and, more importantly, the gospel from those unable to offer support.[349]

Thus throughout 1 Corinthians 9 Paul repeatedly points to the counter-cultural norms of the gospel. It is because that gospel, rather than the Corinthians' values, shapes his life and apostleship that some of them have such problems with him. Likewise, it is because their values are not his, not gospel-shaped, that he feels compelled to call for their imitation, to demonstrate in himself the sort of other-regarding ethic that being 'in Christ' involves. This imitation of Christ, while explicit only in 1 Cor. 11.1, is quite clear in 1 Corinthians 9. Thus Gorman, for example, identifies striking similarities between Paul's depiction of himself in 9.19 and that of Christ in Phil. 2.6-8: 'the *parallels are not accidental*. Paul views his own refusal to accept financial support as a manifestation of the status-rejecting, self-enslaving death of his Lord'.[350] And whatever debates there might be about 1 Corinthians 9, the one thing which cannot be questioned is that Paul's example is defined by his refusal of that which is his right for the sake of others, for the sake of the gospel. This renders the power implications of 1 Corinthians 9, then, as continuous with those already seen within Paul's depiction of himself

346. See Watson, 'Christ, Community', pp. 132-49.

347. While religious dialogue is clearly part of what Paul is concerned with in 1 Cor. 9.19-23, the broader context and some of the content of those verses (e.g. ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα, ἐγενόμην ἀσθενής) counts against limiting Paul's concern to a willingness for involvement in a Jewish–Christian interchange as Lindemann does: 'ein Indiz dafür, daß Paulus persönlich jedenfalls zu einem "Dialog" zwischen Judentum und Christentum bereit war' (*Apostel und Lehrer*, p. 127).

348. M.J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and his Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 260.

349. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 209.

350. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, pp. 186-87, original emphasis.

as apostle, paradigm and father. Paul seeks not to entrench his own power and status but to serve and to edify, often at cost to himself, out of love and because, being in Christ, he has no other choice.

4. *Cruciform Power*

a. *Domination and Servanthood*

> There is a power that is liberating and a power that is dominating. The person who is doing theology is exercising one or other of these types of power.[351]

Paul was the founder of the Corinthian community; their father and apostle. As such, his theologically freighted letters to them were noteworthy exercises of power, capable of entrenching his own place and status or empowering some or all of the community, possibly both. If certain scholars are to be believed, Paul's grasping after personal power and status meant that his impact upon the Corinthian community was largely or even entirely negative. Commencing their readings with a hermeneutic of suspicion—often shaped by particular postmodern perspectives on power[352]—these scholars are primed to find devious manipulation behind Paul's claims to service, humility, fatherhood and communal concern.[353] While such views reflect a commendable desire to question received traditions, penetrating behind texts (or at least accepted interpretations of them) to their true social significance, they also tend toward imbalance through lop-sided views of history, a downplaying of original context, and an over-inflated faith in the capacity

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351. D. Dorr, *The Social Justice Agenda: Justice, Ecology, Power and the Church* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1991), p. 144.

352. Castelli's use of Foucauldian ideas has been isolated repeatedly, but others manifest similar tendencies (see, e.g., Shaw, *Cost of Authority*, p. 62), taking up particular aspects of contemporary perspectives in order to make their points. This capacity to pick and choose raises questions about the insights claimed for such perspectives, however, as their application to Pauline texts appears to lack rigour and/or balance. Thus, for example, Paul's place within the Christian community has received Foucauldian-informed attention, but his place and use of power within a broader social context, the Roman empire, has not. It might even be asserted that in focusing upon Paul as the sovereign dominator of intra-communal frameworks, rather than upon capillary networks of power and the macro sphere, that some uses of Foucault's thought concentrate upon the very things from which Foucault himself sought to get away. For alternative approaches to utilizing Foucauldian insights, see Leigh, 'Michel Foucault'; Thiselton, *Interpreting God*.

353. Thus, for example, Shaw comes to the Corinthian texts with an assumption that, paradoxically, 'calls for unity are often most vigorously made by those whose activity is particularly divisive' (*Cost of Authority*, p. 62).

of contemporary perspectives to account for all exercises of power.[354] From the standpoint of this project, the failure of such readings to comprehend the relationship between Paul and the community is particularly damaging. Because they knew their apostle the Corinthians were ideally placed to judge his rhetoric and claims, especially about himself and his relationship with them. That the Corinthian correspondence survives at all indicates the value such readers found in what Paul wrote, and unless we are to judge them as gullible and/or self-abnegating then, against simplistically pejorative claims of Pauline manipulation, their assessment ought to be accorded some weight.

All of which is not simply to dismiss the notion that theology can be a realm of exploitation and domination,[355] and even that Paul himself indulged in power plays. Indeed, as an exercise of power the Corinthian correspondence contains considerable demands from Paul that he be accorded a prominent, even pre-eminent place within the community. In his assertions of apostleship, of being the Corinthians' father and a model for them to imitate, Paul cannot but be seen as thrusting himself centre stage, requiring the community to orient themselves around him and submit to his authority. However, although human rights-aware readers will almost inevitably be uncomfortable with the power claims Paul thus imposed upon the Corinthians, the true measure of his apostolic relationships is to be found in the character of those claims and in his motivation for making them, not in their palatability for those culturally and temporally removed from the situation.

354. See, e.g., Shaw's claims about the potential of critical readings: 'The uncritical reading of the New Testament manifests itself in different ways from the stubborn refusal to submit it to moral criticism, to its lazy adoption as an infallible book. It is that habit which is directly responsible for many of the horrors of Christian history. In the light of that history the gospel claims to freedom and peace have a new urgency. Only by reading the New Testament critically—believing in freedom and peace, and subjecting our most precious religious traditions to those demands—can we hope to transcend our own grievous Christian history, and in that experience of transcendence discover for ourselves the truth of the gospel' (*Cost of Authority*, p. 185).

355. For one helpful account of 'theologies of domination', see Dorr, *Social Justice Agenda*. Dorr outlines a typology of such theologies, all of which remove power from people, and in thus affecting their freedom also impinge upon the full expression of their humanity. Domination can involve: (1) unchristian theologies, where 'people are persuaded to believe something that contradicts their deepest human and Christian instincts'; (2) trotted-out theologies, in which 'sound' doctrine 'is imposed without giving people any real opportunity to appropriate it personally or articulate it for themselves'; (3) the ideological use of religious terminology to obscure the truth (e.g., where, perhaps half-consciously, religious language is used 'to reinforce the privileged position of a particular individual or group'); and (4) the restriction of theology to the qualified and/or clerical experts (pp. 154-57). Accusations reflecting all such dominating theologies have been levelled at Paul by various of the scholars dealt with in this chapter.

Paul's apostolic dealings with the Corinthian community were defined by the gospel (1 Cor. 2.2); it determined the character of his leadership (2 Cor. 13.4)[356] as well as the content of his message (1 Cor. 1.18). Indeed, though he undoubtedly did emphasize his own role, Paul's motivation for doing so lay in his commitment to the gospel and the flourishing of the community it established rather than in a self-serving desire for sameness,[357] power or prominence.[358] He recognized that (some of) the Corinthians were still conforming to the values of their culture, and so offered himself as a pattern of what life in Christ ought to look like (1 Cor. 11.1). That pattern, counter-culturally, was characterized by weakness, suffering and humiliation (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.3-4; 4.9-13;[359] 2 Cor. 6.3-10; 11.23-30; 12.7-10), service of the community and its Lord (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.5; 4.1; 2 Cor. 4.5; 11.8; 13.4), and a willingness to sacrifice his own rights for the sake of the gospel (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.4-15, 19-22). Paul's apostolic pattern was thoroughly cruciform, therefore, oriented away from self-service and the oppression of others which that often entails, even where it emphasized his central role within the community. It is certainly possible to see manipulation in Paul's self-abasing claims to weakness and servanthood. Indeed, if Paul is credited with any rhetorical skill then we have to acknowledge the intentionally affective power of his language. But when the gospel frame within which he made those claims is taken seriously, as determining Paul's stance and as a metanarrative he shared with the Corinthians, then he cannot be seen as just playing self-serving power games. His manipulations of the community were real, but were about establishing communal structures and characteristics which reflected the gospel and were thus for the community's good (as he saw it). Contra Castelli, Schüssler Fiorenza and Shaw, then, Paul did not seek to engineer a place of dominance over the Corinthians for his own sake, but sought to serve them whatever the cost to himself. Indeed,

356. Schütz thus describes Paul's 'conception of the apostolic self' as 'entirely different' from culturally derived notions. 'It is a "controlled" self, a self subordinated to something beyond it. It is the concept of a δοῦλος. As 1 Corinthians and Galatians show, that to which Paul's apostolic ἐγὼ is subordinated is the gospel' (*Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, p. 185).

357. Thus Horrell asserts that, generally speaking, in 1 Corinthians Paul 'seeks to legitimate diversity within the community' (*Social Ethos*, p. 177).

358. Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, pp. 206-207.

359. 'In clear contrast to the social harmony experienced by the Corinthians in their social context, Paul in 4.9 and 13 sets up a model of Christian existence exemplified by the apostles, in terms of social alienation and dislocation. The social acceptability of Corinthian Christianity within the wider Corinthian society (4.10) is completely at odds with the marginalized position of the apostles. Paul deploys κόσμος alongside θέατρον, περικαθάρματα and περίψημα in these verses to challenge the social and cultural integration enjoyed by the Corinthians and to construct an ideal of social disjunction' (Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 124).

Paul opposed those self-serving superapostles and members of the elite who imported cultural values to their dealings with other believers (e.g. 1 Cor. 8; 11.20-22, 33-34; 2 Cor. 11.19-21), and who, in effect, were attempting to justify their dominant status theologically.[360]

The impact of the gospel upon Paul's apostolic relations was, in direct opposition to cultural expectations of power relationships, to shape them in ways which largely affirm human rights values. Clearly this was not something with which Paul had any explicit concern, but in seeking to manifest and model cruciform servanthood Paul adopted an other-oriented stance which sought to affirm the weak and thus undercut the legitimacy of oppressive power relationships. In the terms of Cronin's typology, Paul's apostleship, while certainly capable of power 'over' (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.14-16, 18-21; cf. 2 Cor. 1.24) and 'against' (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.10; 2 Cor. 10.11-16; 11.12-23) others, was primarily oriented toward exercises of power which were 'for' and 'with' the Corinthian community.[361] Paul's personal power acted not to dominate those without position and influence but enslaved the privileged apostle for the benefit of the body, and defined the Corinthians' father in terms of integrative love as well as authority;[362] in his elevation Paul became a cruciform example of the sort of community he desired the Corinthians to be.

b. *Paul's Contribution to Human Rights Thought*

Perhaps, then, Paul's first contribution to human rights thinking about appropriate power relationships is one which, over against rights views that construe all exercises of power in negative terms, affirms the idea that power exercised 'with' others is most likely to sustain their humanity and rights. Despite his different starting point and framework, Paul adopted a relational standard which implies the worth of others. In doing so, and particularly in his concern for the community's weak and his determination to serve, Paul also manifested a rejection of relationships which selfishly minimize or impair what today would be conceived of as human rights. However, in

360. On the use of theology to justify the power of the socially strong and the dehumanizing potential it carries, see, e.g., Dorr, *Social Justice Agenda*, p. 154; Watson, 'Christ, Community', p. 148.

361. Even Paul's firm, rebuking instruction about the disciplining of the immoral man (1 Cor. 5.1-5) can be seen as Paul using power 'with' the Corinthians. He certainly tells them what to do, and is thus partly exercising power 'over' them, but his talk of being with them when the judgment is passed (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ συναχθέντων ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος, v. 4) suggests a cooperative dynamic which does not simply set the apostle above the community.

362. Gorman (*Cruciformity*, pp. 179-80) describes love, rather than personal power, as the driving dynamic of Paul's ministry (2 Cor. 5.14; cf. 1 Cor. 4.14; 10.14; 15.58; 16.24; 2 Cor. 7.1; 12.15-19).

as much as Paul's stance involved an insistence upon his own centrality
and was founded upon the gospel rather than upon convictions of human
equality per se, then he also represents a challenge to rights thought. The
striking power claims of the former suggest a destructive, oppressive arro-
gance to many shaped by rights thinking, perhaps explaining some negative
assessments of Paul. Yet this is mitigated when the cruciformity of Pauline
centrality is taken into account. The all-pervasive gospel shaping of which
such cruciformity is a part represents a stronger challenge, however, and
emphasizes that Paul's perspective upon power relationships is one from
outside of rights thought.

For even if a theological egalitarianism can be inferred from his rela-
tionships, the basis of Paul's other-orientation is not a human rights type
notion of equality, but a conviction that the gospel provides a relational par-
adigm as well as a means of salvation. This distinction is important, because
whereas a central conviction of equality might easily lead to relativism—
with each equal person or group free to define their own good—in Paul's
model he defines and exemplifies the good according to the gospel. Put in
those terms, Paul's value system sounds somewhat imperialistic, dominat-
ing. However, we must remember, first, that similar claims have also been
made about human rights, without undermining the broad approval which
they enjoy. And, second, Paul's emphases upon love and self-lowering act
as balances to the oppressive potential of his claims to centrality. In fact,
without those cruciform elements it is not truly Paul's pattern with which we
are dealing, but the self-promoting, status-obsession which he opposed in
others. In order for Paul to act as a cogent model of cruciformity, however,
it was necessary for him to occupy a prominent and empowered role, and
be recognized as doing so by the community. The principle of self-lowering
service requires a prior elevation if it is to be demonstrated properly.[363] And
while the Corinthian community had a knowledge of Christ, Paul clearly
considered them unable to perceive the socio-relational lessons of the cross
because of their immaturity and worldliness (1 Cor. 3.1-4; cf. 2 Cor. 5.16-
17). They were thus in need of his personal demonstration of what Christ-
likeness entailed (1 Cor. 11.1; 2 Cor. 13.4). The counter-cultural, world- and
experience-shaping character of Paul's pattern for the Corinthians, then, did
not inhere in his statements of personal centrality, as it might for a world
shaped by rights, but in his insistence that, despite the Corinthians' expec-
tations, he was right to humble himself for them: Ἢ ἁμαρτίαν ἐποίησα
ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν ἵνα ὑμεῖς ὑψωθῆτε…; (2 Cor. 11.7).

The problem with patterns of relational power organized around notions
of equality is that they all too easily slip into an emphasis upon *my* equality;

363. On the necessary interweaving of love and power, see Cronin, *Rights and Chris-
tian Ethics*, p. 194.

human rights can then become the servants of self-interest, justifying my demands or positions of power. This need not be the outcome, of course, and, generally speaking, human rights advocates are careful to build safe-guards against egoism into their theories. In pragmatic terms, however, the prominence of self-serving rights claims in contemporary society suggests a propensity for such developments in moral discourses focused upon equality. The gospel definition of Paul's apostolic paradigm, in contrast, requires relationships to be characterized by sacrifice, self-lowering and a love which 'gives of the self to edify others',[364] whatever the relative statuses of those involved. Cruciformity, therefore, provides for an other-orientation which is more robust than one founded upon bare convictions of equality because it is less tolerant of self-interest, less preoccupied with self-worth.[365] Paul's critical contribution to debates about relational power within human rights thought, therefore, is to suggest that the surest means of protecting others from oppression does not lie in an assertion of their equality, although that might well be inferred from the gospel. Rather, a determination to serve others through loving self-sacrifice—even to the surrendering of one's own rights—provides a more reliable means of assuring others' human rights through power relationships which do not seek domination.

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364. Gorman, *Cruciformity*, p. 180.
365. On Paul's conviction of his ongoing responsibility for serving and edifying the Corinthian community, see Schütz, *Anatomy of Apostolic Authority*, pp. 182-83.

Chapter 4

PAUL'S SOCIAL IMPACT

1. *Human Rights, Paul and Social Issues*

If, as has been argued, human rights can be considered a reality, an illocutionary presence which has shaped and continues to shape our world, whatever the discussions about their nature and basis, then they must also be seen as socially significant. From the level of the individual to that of the international organization, human rights values are central to conceptions of, aspirations about and judgments regarding social structures. Yet, as with so much within human rights' ambit, these conceptions, aspirations and judgments are not uniform; debate abounds. In a similar way, there can be no doubt that Paul had an impact upon the social circumstances and values of those to whom he wrote and amongst whom he ministered. This has been demonstrated at a certain level already, in the discussion of Paul's use of power and the character of his social engineering. Of course, and as also already discussed, the precise nature of Paul's social impact is much debated.

Any attempt to construct a dialogue between Paul and rights thought which sidestepped this contentious aspect of his stance upon social matters would be less than satisfactory. While no such attempt will be made here, there are certain complications when the dialogue in view aims to bring a Pauline contribution to human rights *debates*. For while Paul's social stance and impact are much disputed within New Testament scholarship, human rights thinkers are almost entirely united in accepting the capacity of established social structures to oppress many living under their auspices.[1] Yet a Paul-rights dialogue can be considered worthwhile even so. First, because traditional notions of Paul's social conservatism grate against rights thought's negative expectations of the status quo, and thus offer an alternative to them. Whilst such views no longer dominate Pauline scholarship,

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1.   Such unity, it should be emphasized, characterizes rights thinkers rather than all contemporary thought. Those less committed to or convinced about the existence of human rights do sometimes argue that traditional social structures are absolute goods, even if they marginalize some in the community. See Howard, *Search for Community*; A.E. Buchanan, 'Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Ethics* 99 (1989), pp. 852-82.

they remain important, provoking comparisons between the dialogue's interlocutors which may prove uncomfortable for both. However, even less conservative perspectives on Paul offer a dialogical alternative to the accepted rights norm because, second, its suspicion of the status quo reflects a more individualistic and forensic approach to social life[2] than that with which such perspectives see Paul operating. That Paul was shaped by social, cultural and theological frameworks alien to much human rights thought means that his contribution to a dialogue is from without, valuable because of its alternative perspectives. Third, rights scholars' general agreement about the negative capacity of social structures obscures their debates about some closely related issues, the cultural construction, basis, and/or universality of rights ideas in particular; issues upon which a Pauline contribution can also be sought.

This part of the attempt to construct a Paul–human rights dialogue (Chapters 4–7), then, endeavours to weigh Paul's impact upon the social life of the Corinthian community, evaluating the stance he took, the pattern he set and his reasons for doing so, in order to assess the contribution Paul might make to contemporary rights thought. There is clearly insufficient space here to deal with all aspects of Paul's social impact, and some important themes must therefore be left to one side.[3] In keeping with the reader-

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2.   While something of a generalization, these are particularly significant aspects of rights theory and practice in the increasingly litigious west, the realm in which human rights have their highest profile.

3.   Perhaps the most noteworthy theme not dealt with in any detail here is that of Paul's political significance, or at least the political connotations of his thought, language and rhetoric. There is a growing body of scholarship which emphasizes (sometimes too strongly) the confrontational stance Paul's apostleship took, usually, although not always (see, e.g., P. Lampe, 'Theological Wisdom and the "Word about the Cross": The Rhetorical Scheme in I Corinthians 1–4', *Interpretation* 44.2 [1990], pp. 117-31), toward the 'gospel' and structures of the Roman empire. Such confrontation is seen variously as primarily political, religious with political implications, or some combination of the two, but almost always as of social import to the communities established through Paul's preaching of a gospel founded upon a crucified Lord. See, e.g., R.J. Cassidy, *Christians and Roman Rule in the New Testament: New Perspectives* (New York: Crossroad, 2001); R.J. Cassidy, *Paul in Chains: Roman Imprisonment and the Letters of St Paul* (New York: Crossroad, 2001); Elliott, *Liberating Paul*; Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, pp. 105-49; Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', pp. 32-33; R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997); R.A. Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 2000); R.A. Horsley and N.A. Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997); M. Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 1994); Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 295-98; N.T. Wright, 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire', *Reflections* [http://www.ctinquiry.org/publications/wright.htm accessed on 07.02.2009]. For

orientation of this project, human rights not being a notion with which Paul was concerned per se, the decision to focus this part of the project upon Paul's emotive comments about women, slavery and, derivatively, issues of human equality reflects the concerns of rights-aware readers as well as the focus of considerable recent Pauline scholarship. Much of this part of the project is therefore taken up with a consideration of 1 Corinthians 7, a passage in which Paul addresses aspects of all these issues, although other texts are also explored. The following chapters focus upon what Paul says about women (Chapter 5) and slaves (Chapter 6). Those discussions are then drawn together in an overall assessment of Paul's social stance and impact in Chapter 7, which also sums up the contribution he might therefore make to human rights thought. However, in order to set all such discussions and that of 1 Corinthians 7 generally within an appropriate framework, this chapter makes some preliminary comments about the issues and problems inherent in establishing Paul's stance upon social matters, with particular emphasis upon claims of his social conservatism.

Before all of these issues are considered, however, and as a means of connecting them with debates within human rights thought, there are brief discussions of the role which constructed and universal notions of humanity play within both rights and Paul, and of critiques and justifications of the idea of human rights, with particular concern for the social implications and manifestations inherent to both. After all, presuppositions about the nature of humanity and how it is properly considered are bound to shape the evaluation of particular social structures and relationships,[4] and also contribute to the judging of those who adopt different stances on such matters or think about humanity in differing ways.

2. *Human Rights Debates*

a. *Critiques of Human Rights*

Because human rights are both current phenomenon and part of a long-established tradition, objections to them encompass recent socio-philosophical perspectives as well as critiques of earlier rights notions. The three classic critiques of the rights idea regard its rational claims, its legal standing and its individualism, and have been incorporated into and expanded by more

a critique of Paul's gospel as blind to its own political implications, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 187-92. In general critique of anti-imperial interpretations of Paul, see S. Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

4. See, e.g., Chattopadhyaya, 'Human Rights', pp. 169-70; de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, p. 17; Tanner, *Politics of God*, p. 88; and the various discussions in M. Cromartie (ed.), *A Preserving Grace: Protestants, Catholics, and Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

recent relativist and Communitarian thinking. To the extent that such critiques continue to be levelled at human rights, they remain important in shaping its expressions and social impact, and thus its definition, if only because thoughtful rights advocates are aware of the weaknesses and manifestations thus identified.

I. *The Rationalist Critique*

The rationalist critique of rights is two-pronged. First, it claims rights thinking is too optimistic in assuming that individuals can either understand or manipulate complex social structures.[5] Second, it attacks the inherent abstractions necessary for rights' universal application; the construction of universals from within one contingency which are then imposed or projected upon all others. As Waldron summarizes:

> Human rights…are said to apply to all…at all times, and in all the circumstances in which we live. They purport to reduce and distil into a few ringing principles all we know and all we need to know so far as the norms of social and political organization are concerned. They push aside all the detail of local custom, complex practice and ways of doing things that have evolved to suit particular environments, and replace them with norms of right that are supposed to apply uniformly and without exception across all the circumstances of human life.[6]

In this light human rights may appear arrogantly imperialistic as well as naïvely innocent of cultural difference and incommensurability. They may also embody an unrealistic imperative toward change. The abstract, simply because it is not earthed, engenders an 'ought' which cannot in reality be provided or done; it is an absurdity.[7]

While such criticisms certainly bear some weight and should give more enthusiastic rights advocates pause for thought, it is not clear that they are fatal blows for human rights. Unless we accept that societies are utterly incommensurable and completely beyond any human capacity to know or improve, then there is what Waldron terms a sense of 'inescapable responsibility' in thinking through the facts of our existence.[8] While as particular, bounded people we may only be able to do such thinking to a certain extent and from a particular place, that does not render the effort meaningless. For the application of reason to humanity's problems 'need not be paraded as a triumph of speculation' nor understood as the analysis of an all-seeing individual mind; it can be described in both more limited and more communal terms. But however it is seen, the possibility and responsibility of addressing

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5. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 175.
6. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 167.
7. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, pp. 168-73.
8. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 177.

humanity's problems are surely unavoidable.[9] Of course, such responsibility does not in itself imply human rights, but that they are currently an important tool for the tackling of humanity's problems has, pragmatically, to be accepted. The question as to whether they are the best or sharpest tool remains, but there is value, whatever its enculturated limits, in rights advocates' response that human rights' placement of human values centre stage is wholly appropriate if 'optimal human functioning is a practical, common-sense desideratum', if 'we want human beings to exist and to exist well'.[10] There will, in other words, always be questions to ask of rights' rationality, but their concern for human well-being, in all its skewed, contingent and subjective expressions, is also vital in any careful description of them.

II. *The Legal Critique*

Setting questions of natural law to one side,[11] there can be no doubt that rights thought has always been bound up with the legal frameworks within which it has developed. Many human rights thinkers stretch such bonds so that the relationship appears either one of parallel concepts or of the law confirming and enforcing what human rights have predetermined. Though a tendency common to some advocates of all rights ideas, this stretching has reached new levels under their human aspect. Even here, however, rights language is often riddled with forensic imagery.[12]

Some are happy to explain the forensic shaping of rights as simply a pragmatic phenomenon. Concern for liberty and equality is bound to propel those interested in socio-political structures toward expressions utilizing legal language and frameworks for the protection of such social goods.[13] The law provides rights' most immediate formal context and has also exploited them to make sense of and impose limits upon aspects of human existence, including social structures and relationships, which are a cause for concern: 'By identifying and distinguishing various aspects and crystallizing them in distinct concepts—concepts of rights—the law found a way to deal with the fluidity of human relations and the infinite variations of singular cases'.[14] The legal critique of human rights, however, construes the law-rights relationship somewhat differently, asserting that the statutes of particular legal systems determine which rights can and cannot be considered legitimate under those systems.

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9. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 177.
10. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 9.
11. See the discussion in Chapter 2.
12. See, e.g., A. Gewirth's use of precise forensic language to develop an almost mathematical formula for rights' essential dynamic ('Are There Any Absolute Rights?', in J. Waldron [ed.], *Theories of Rights* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984], pp. 91-111 [93]).
13. Dworkin, 'Rights as Trumps', p. 166.
14. Henle, 'Catholic', p. 89.

The premise of this critique is that rights talk sits naturally within a forensic framework, and becomes parasitic when cut loose from the law. The archetypal proponent of this position was Jeremy Bentham, the eighteenth-century utilitarian and social reformer. It was because of the gap he saw between natural rights ideas and concrete legal systems that Benham memorably claimed rights to be both 'nonsense upon stilts' and 'a son that never had a father'.[15] This sort of rights critique, though occasionally still advocated, is now rarely seen as convincing; mostly for the cart and horse confusions which 'human' prioritization detects in it, but also because of the wider sphere rights are now seen to inhabit. As Waldron states,

> Bentham and those who follow him…are right to point out the importance in establishing systematic relations between rights and other elements of the normative systems in which rights occur. But they have made a mistake… in suggesting that this cannot be done except in relation to the normative system embodied in the law of the land. Other normative systems, which are put about in a critical rather than a positive or descriptive spirit, may be vaguer or more contestable than systems of law, but by itself that is insufficient to show that they are therefore required to abandon one of their most fruitful and important critical concepts.[16]

No legal system, in other words, can be regarded as either self-evident or self-justifying; people will always question the legitimacy of forensic rulings and expect convincing answers.

> And, ultimately…they may challenge the dictates of all existing governments and the pressures of every society if they find them equally oppressive, i.e. if they deny what the individual considers his fundamental 'right'. But since, *ex hypothesi*, this 'right' is denied by every existing law and authority, it must be a right possessed independently of them and derived from another source.[17]

While debates about the relationship between human rights and the law continue, while forensic language is exploited in the expression of rights, and especially while the articulation and enforcement of human rights norms within real social contexts has any legal aspect, the careful description of contemporary rights thought has to acknowledge the shaping role of legal perspectives and critiques. However, to the extent that most now see human rights as before, beyond and (ideally) protected by legal systems, rather than finding their true home within them, that shaping has to be acknowledged as having taken a particular form, one which is impatient with the concerns of legal positivists like Bentham.

15. J. Bentham, 'Anarchical Fallacies', in J. Waldron (ed.), *Nonsense upon Stilts: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 46-69 (53, 69).
16. Waldron, *Theories of Rights*, p. 5.
17. MacDonald, 'Natural Rights', p. 23.

III. *The Individualism/Egoism Critique*[18]

> None of the supposed rights of man…go beyond the egoistic man…that
> is an individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself,
> wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with
> his private caprice.[19]

The most prevalent, powerful contemporary critiques of human rights con-
ceive them as 'purely self-interested, self-centered, and amoral'[20] on the
one hand, and socially destructive through their obsessive, atomizing ele-
vation of individuals over against communities on the other. As Waldron
comments,

> Recently more and more writers have expressed reservations about the shift
> away from pragmatic or utilitarian modes of political evaluation, about the
> fact that we no longer ask what is in the interest of all but, in every case,
> what individuals are entitled to as a matter of principle. Others are alarmed
> at what appears to be the ascendancy of an assertive and muscular individu-
> alism in this sort of theory at the expense of what they take to be a proper
> awareness of community, solidarity and civic virtue in human life.[21]

Clearly, an emphasis upon individual rights does provide opportunities for
them to be seized selfishly and waved demandingly by those with little com-
prehension of or care for any concomitant obligations. That human rights
have indeed borne egoistic fruit is an important facet of their definition, but
it does not follow that this is the only or best fruit they can bear. Indeed,
such selfishness reveals more about some users and communication of
rights than it does about rights themselves. To think otherwise is to confuse
saying that somebody has certain rights with encouraging them to selfishly
demand and acquire those rights. Perhaps that is what sometimes happens,
but that is not the fault of the right. Indeed, a rights claim might be con-
sidered to leave issues of morality and selfishness open; according a right
is not to comment upon the moral value of any action consequently taken,
but rather indicates the wrongness of that action being interfered with. The
need, then, is for rights to be placed within 'a richer moral vocabulary',[22]

18. Though different in emphasis (individualism: rights as atomizing; egoism: rights
as selfish), these critiques can be twinned together through their common concern with
the supremacy of individual rights holders.

19. K. Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in J. Waldron (ed.), *Nonsense upon Stilts:
Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 137-50
(147).

20. A. Gewirth, 'Common Morality and the Community of Rights', in G. Outka and
J.P. Reeder (eds.), *Prospects for a Common Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univer-
sity Press, 1993), pp. 29-52 (43). See also Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 190.

21. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 1.

22. A. Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities and the Commu-
nitarian Agenda* (London: Fontana, 2nd edn, 1995), p. 201.

not for them to be rejected out of hand. The vilification of rights because they can be put to egoistic uses has, however, added nuance to the presentations many advocates give of them, reshaping rights definitions through an increased stress upon their place within broader moral frameworks. As Waldron summarizes, 'To have a right is not to be insulated or protected from moral criticism about the exercise of one's rights'.[23]

Countering claims of inherent egoism, however, does not deny rights' individual bias. Experience teaches that they are prone to moving in the direction, or being used to the ends, of autonomous individualism. Partly and pragmatically, this may be because of rights' forensic leanings and vernacular usage. Demands for one's legal dues are often made without (explicit) concern for any affects others might suffer or for broader social impacts. It is also, however, because rights are usually expressed in individual terms. This should come as no surprise given their history and philosophical roots.[24] Yet, despite such individualistic tendencies, rights' necessary setting within social frameworks limits the damage this critique can do.

First, rights' internal reciprocity has to be accounted for. Within the economy of rights, all individuals have both duties and claims:

> The concept…thus entails a reciprocal universality: each person must respect the rights of all others while having his or her rights respected by all others…a mutual sharing of the benefits of rights and the burdens of duties. Human rights require mutuality of consideration and thus a kind of altruism rather than egoism.[25]

Second, while rights may not be reducible to duties as some have claimed,[26] they 'cannot be maintained without a network of duties attached to them',[27]

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23. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 194.
24. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, p. 12.
25. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 44.
26. Contra the traditional position of, e.g., Paine: 'A Declaration of Rights is, by reciprocity, a Declaration of Duties also. Whatever is my right as a man, is also the right of another; and it becomes my duty to guarantee, as well as to possess' (*Rights of Man*, p. 114). The expansion of rights claims amidst the messy complexities of a real world has produced rights which oblige no specific duty holders. For example, O'Neill isolates the right to food in a situation where there are no resources to purchase it. The right to eat remains but obligations to meet that right are spread too wide to qualify as actual duties to be met by any particular group or individual (*Faces of Hunger*, p. 100). For O'Neill, rights discourse provides claims for both justice and help (beneficence) in such a situation. But while claims for justice can be assigned, obligations of beneficence toward other human beings are different: 'unassignable, unclaimable and unenforceable' (p. 102). Cronin offers a broader horizon against which to make sense of such tensions: 'Even though we can distinguish rights from duties and obligations the doctrine of correlativity forbids a strict separation of these normative concepts either from each other or from their basis in freedom. What links all three concepts is the idea of "what is due to the human person" ' (*Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 176).
27. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 79.

and duties imply relational others. Indeed, for Freeden, 'the very idea of rights and duties…reflects the existence of associations between and among people'.[28] As creatures located within and defined by social networks, he continues, human beings can make rights claims against each other and also against those networks and even society in general. Reciprocally, society has the right to make claims upon and against individuals.[29] In similar vein, Levine asserts that

> Rights are possessed in relation to others; and rights claims are directed… to these others. To talk of rights is to presuppose the existence of a community in which rights claims are advanced and in virtue of which rights are 'possessed'. A human right, then, is a claim advanced within the 'human community', which is possessed by virtue of being human, and advanced to all other humans.[30]

This explicit recognition of rights' necessarily communal setting is relatively recent, a defining feature of contemporary rights discourse. Though all rights require some sort of social frame of reference, the recent shift toward thinking about rights in specifically human terms is important here. This change of focus has been construed by some as a shift which bridges the conceptual and ideological gaps between individualism and collectivism: 'Whereas individualism connotes a kind of personal identity, humanity intimates a basic community of human individuals'.[31] Admittedly, not all constructions of or claims about human rights appear to achieve this, but those which do require that the communal be taken seriously in that they give human rights a collective locus, 'and that locus must have some worth, or else the rights assigned to it will be devoid of significance'.[32]

At the same time, there is no denying the fact that, ultimately, rights concern individuals.[33] This, however, does not deny their wider context or implications, it simply limits the range of their usefulness. Rights are best seen as advancing certain sorts of claims about human reality, not as a sufficient framework for an exhaustive understanding of it. When seen as limited in this way, Waldron argues that a concern for rights need not reflect

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28. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 80.
29. Freeden, *Rights*, p. 80.
30. Levine, 'Human Rights and Freedom', p. 137.
31. Rosenbaum, *Philosophy of Human Rights*, p. 5.
32. Kaplan, 'Human Relations', p. 54.
33. Buchanan, 'Communitarian Critique', pp. 862-65; Dunn, 'Rights and Political Conflict', p. 28. Most see 'group rights' (which are increasingly claimed and cited phenomenon) as only making proper sense when understood as projections up from the individual level, when the communal whole is conceived of as a corporate individual. See, e.g., Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 187; L. Gostin, 'Towards Resolving the Conflict', in L. Gostin (ed.), *Civil Liberties in Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 7-20; Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, pp. 66-67.

any destructive or atomistic metanarrative: 'One is not guilty of some crass or misguided individualism simply for expressing moral concern about certain of the ills that may befall individual[s]…or the harm and neglect individuals may inflict on one another'.[34] Indeed, conceding their individual purview does not require that rights necessarily be thought of as inherently individualistic. First, because they can also be seen as socially constructive: 'The fight for and allocation of individual rights results in intense community-building'.[35] And, secondly, because concern for individual human dignity can be communally as well as atomistically oriented.

> When an individual stands in relation to… [their] community, the numerical superiority of the latter does not overwhelm the intrinsic value of the individual. Of course, individuals within communities have roles of service and sacrifice to play, but they cannot be reduced to a pure means for the benefit of the rest of the community… The level of intrinsic value in a group is no higher than the level of intrinsic value in a single human being.[36]

Thus human rights are not only set within a communal framework, to the extent that they are exercised responsibly, they are also exercised by the individual for the common good. Yes, rights do safeguard the individual in the wider scheme of communal activity, but that is partly a manifestation of the importance to healthy community of protecting individuals.[37]

IV. *The Relativist Critique*
This objection to human rights maintains that they pretend to say something universal when in fact they are particular[38] and incommensurable;[39] that the differences between people and cultures are sufficient to make any claim about truth or human value a relative and bounded statement:

34. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 187.

35. Z. Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), p. 76.

36. Henle, 'Catholic', p. 91.

37. As Waldron puts it, protecting the individual 'shows only that certain forms of individual security may be preconditions for communal engagement. We cannot participate in discussion if I am gagged and bound; they cannot live and thrive as a polity if she is under a banning order… Without wanting to be…reductivist about communal life, one can insist that there are certain things individuals can suffer which may make communal life impossible and which therefore anyone with a concern for community will want to prevent' (*Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 185).

38. Orentlicher summarizes this claim thus: 'Moral claims derive their meaning and legitimacy from the (particular) cultural tradition in which they are embedded. What we call "universal" human rights are, in fact, an expression above all of Western values derived from the Enlightenment' ('Relativism and Religion', p. 141).

39. See, e.g., MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, pp. 68-69. For critiques of MacIntyre on this point see, e.g., Fergusson, *Community*, p. 123; J. Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 103-104.

'cultures are not comparable'.[40] Further, some suggest that the particular culture out of which human rights speak—western liberalism—has less in common with other traditions when it comes to these issues than those cultures have with one another; democracy, individual rights and mutual respect are not common ideals,[41] and imposing them upon others is both futile and imperialistic.

There are various forms of the relativist critique, each with its own emphases and conclusions. Rorty provides an interesting example as one who makes the relativist criticism, yet still wants to promote human rights. His objection to rights' universality stands upon a conviction of their ethnic and historical particularity.

> Outside the circle of post-Enlightenment European culture…most people are simply unable to understand why membership in a biological species is supposed to suffice for membership in a moral community… Such people are morally offended by the suggestion that they should treat someone who is not kin as if he were a brother… They are offended by the suggestion that they treat people whom they do not think of as human as if they were human… The identity of these people…whom we should like to…join our Eurocentric human rights culture, is bound up with their sense of who they are not. Most people…simply do not think of themselves as, first and foremost, a human being. Instead, they think of themselves as being a certain good sort of human being…defined by explicit opposition to a particularly bad sort… Starting with the days when the term 'human being' was synonymous with 'member of our tribe', we have always thought of human beings in terms of paradigm members of the species. We have contrasted us, the real humans, with rudimentary, or perverted, or deformed examples of humanity.[42]

Gewirth for one takes umbrage at Rorty's one-dimensional presentation, asserting that there is more to the notion of rights than just what can be accorded to those 'like us'. He argues (using Greek, Roman, Feudal and Polynesian examples) that many nonwestern and premodern societies did and do acknowledge individual rights,[43] even if not for all. For Gewirth, the

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40. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 53.
41. Etzioni, *Spirit of Community*, p. 159.
42. R. Rorty, 'Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality', in S. Shute and S. Hurley (eds.), *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 111-134 (125-26).
43. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, pp. 101-102. L. Kolakowski (in an unpublished paper quoted by D. Little, 'The Nature and Basis of Human Rights', in G. Outka and J.P. Reeder [eds.], *Prospects for a Common Morality* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993], pp. 73-92 [74]) makes a similar point: 'When we extend our generous acceptance of cultural diversity…and aver, e.g., that the human rights idea is a European concept, unfit for, and understandable in, societies which share other traditions, is what we mean that Americans rather dislike being tortured and packed into concentration camps but Vietnamese, Iranians and Albanians do not mind or enjoy it?'

'historical universality of the concept of rights is compatible with the historical existence of markedly inegalitarian societies and drastic restrictions on the distribution of rights'. He argues that such inequalities and limitations do 'not contradict the thesis that all…implicitly hold that they ought to have these rights', for there is ambiguity 'between the effective and the normative, between that which is socially recognized or legally enforced and that which ought to be recognized or enforced'.[44]

Gewirth also argues for the compatibility of ideas and values with no common linguistic heritage, questioning the common relativist assumption that only explicitly expressed rights can be compared (and found different), based upon an overtly language-generated conception of human reality. Somewhat more pragmatically he asserts,

> It is…important to distinguish between having or using a concept and the clear or explicit recognition and elucidation of it. Not all concepts that are had or used are clearly analyzed, just as not all users of a language are theorists or analysts of it. Thus persons might have and use the concept of a right without explicitly having a single word for it; a more complex phrase might signify or imply the concept, such as that some persons have strict duties toward other persons, with sanctions for nonfulfillment, or that persons ought or ought not to be allowed to have or do certain things.[45]

That Gewirth is primarily dealing with 'rights' while Rorty's concern is with 'humanity', however, is important. Approaching the issue from different directions allows them to value relativist criticisms in different ways, and perhaps fail to fully answer each other's arguments. This talking past one another is a common characteristic in human rights discussions and adds to their slipperiness. That said, however, the need to take relativist criticisms seriously does not require that they be held too tightly.

For, '[t]he claim that moral concepts and standards are tradition-specific does not entail that we can never bridge traditions. By learning a "second

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44. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, pp. 99-100.

45. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, p. 99. Waldron agrees: 'We should take care not to confuse the idea that there are human rights with a view that a certain set of verbal formulations—for example those contained in the Universal Declaration or the European Convention—can adequately express the depth and complexity of even our strongest and most elementary moral concerns. A human right is a moral position in relation to a particularly important type of individual interest… But words…are much more closely tied to a particular society, to a particular historical period, and to a particular (though indeterminate) set of cultural resonances than the moral ideas of human rights are supposed to be. …it is in the theory and argument that lies behind the formula, not in the formula itself, that we find the sense and substance of the right as a universal aspiration… Only the argument with which we defend and elaborate the aspiration which the slogan expresses can make it clear how this formula relates to anything like a universal human concern' (*Nonsense upon Stilts*, p. 179).

first language" and by doubling back to enrich one's own tradition, one can connect the two'.[46] Relativists might claim that this attitude simply reveals a capacity for fooling ourselves about our powers. However, the expectation of being able to speak other cultural languages, even fluently, has better existential fit than do notions of unbridgeable cultural distance; it is something which people find themselves doing all the time.[47] To assume that they are wrong, and are locked in an unwitting monologue with themselves,[48] seems unnecessarily pessimistic.[49] Indeed, Howard claims that most people not only assume that they can understand others and experience themselves doing so, but believe that their cultural constructs embody universal moral principles and so say something absolute which others can relate to.[50] This is affirmed by the widespread adoption of human rights language in cultures which are neither western nor liberal. It also, however, resonates with Waldron's claim that for those who are both western and liberal, human rights are, at very least, a necessary starting point for thinking about humanity.

> [W]e must…do justice to our own moral traditions, and…we in the west have evolved mores that simply cannot be understood, even on their own home ground, if an attempt is made to restrict their wider applicability… To put the point provocatively: our local mores are intrinsically imperialistic; to attempt to limit that imperialism is to commit what for the relativist is the cardinal sin of doing violence to local understanding (namely ours).[51]

46. J.P. Reeder, 'Foundations Without Foundationalism', in G. Outka and J.P. Reeder (eds.), *Prospects for a Common Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 119-214 (200).

47. In T. Hart's words, human generality and particularity are not antithetical, but 'are woven together in the manifold of the real' such that 'there is sufficient that we hold in common with the other—not withstanding the uniqueness which characterizes both poles of the relation—for us to move out beyond our particularity into unfamiliar territory'. Otherwise we would never understand anything we did not already know ('Imagination and Responsible Reading', in C. Bartholomew, C. Greene and K. Möller [eds.], *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* [Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, 1; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000], pp. 307-34 [319]).

48. See O. Davies's critique of Milbank's notion of 'radical incommensurability' ('Revelation and the Politics of Culture: A Critical Assessment of the Theology of John Milbank', in L.P. Hemming (ed.), *Radical Orthodoxy—A Catholic Enquiry* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000], pp. 112-25 [123-25]).

49. Thus Stout argues that, despite difficulties in translation, any culturally-embedded belief can, with sufficient explanation and digression, be rendered intelligible in another language (*Ethics after Babel*, pp. 60-63; see also Fergusson, *Community*, p. 123). Patterson's theological perspective finds the notion of incommensurability to be more seriously flawed. She describes it as 'antithetical to the relational understanding of personhood and community central to the Christian doctrines of God and humanity' (*Realist Christian Theology*, p. 120).

50. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 54. See also Gutmann, 'Introdution', p. xi.

51. Waldron, *Nonsense upon Stilts*, pp. 169, 170.

Relativists, furthermore, run the risk of confusing principle with practice. Isolating cultures in which human rights have no obvious corollary does not necessarily undermine the universal value and appeal of the concept. Human rights are not a meaningless notion for those with no experience or knowledge of them, just as living under certain conditions does not deny an imagining that life might be otherwise. As Howard argues,

> [S]ocial movements for political change arise precisely because people do envisage a life in which more of their rights are protected… To claim that what is not present is irrelevant assumes that those who are denied rights do not have the intellectual capacity to articulate their suffering and to grasp the fundamental principles of justice that human rights imply. Such a claim reinforces the stereotype of the 'native' as a nonthinking, primitive being whose pain is part of the oneness of his existence.[52]

Relativists are right to point out that values can easily be projected and imposed upon others, but to assume humanity's dislocation is to make no less violent an imposition.[53] An awareness of operating between these awkward poles has become a fundamental distinctive of much human rights thought. As Farley puts it, 'The problem of representing particulars as universals is bound up with the problems of coercion and violence. But the problem of recognizing no universals at all is also a problem of conflict and power, and it limits or eliminates the possibility of a common cry for justice'.[54]

V. *The Communitarian Critique*.[55]

This relatively recent contribution draws upon many of the points made by other human rights critiques, calling for a radical rethink of cultural values because it perceives modern society to be on the wrong side of a dichotomous divide. For many Communitarians,[56] '"community of rights" is an

52. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 53. Rorty's assertion of human rights' cultural captivity (n. 42) certainly suggests a stereotyped, even patronizing perspective on 'primitive natives'.

53. Thus Davies suggests that all assertions of incommensurability licence 'polemical and oppositional' attitudes ('Revelation', p. 116).

54. M.A. Farley, 'Feminism and Universal Morality', in G. Outka and J.P. Reeder (eds.), *Prospects for a Common Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 170-90 (178).

55. It should be noted that many Communitarians are actually advocates of human rights, but see the need for more balance, 'for a judicious mix of self-interest, self-expression, and commitment to the commons—of rights *and* responsibilities, of I and we. …a strong commitment to the commons must now be added to strong commitments to individual needs and interests that are already well ensconced' (Etzioni, *Spirit of Community*, p. 26).

56. As with so many philosophical schools, generalizations about Communitarian thought mask considerable divisions between individual theorists. Thus Buchanan's claim that there are 'almost as many communitarian positions as there are

oxymoron'.[57] The two notions are held to be incompatible. Rights evince a competitive focus upon satisfying one's own desires and needs without regard for the greater good, while community 'signifies common interests, mutual sympathy, and fellow-feeling'.[58] The perception is that, in prioritizing individual freedom, liberalism defines good in terms of individual rights which ought not to be interfered with. Communitarians, in contrast, are 'more impressed by the essentially social nature of the human being. The self is formed by its roles, attachments, and relationships with other people, institutions, communities, and traditions'.[59] Good is defined, therefore, within a framework of communality; rights' ability to set individuals apart is accordingly perceived as less valuable,[60] even destructive. The dominance of individualistic approaches to human rights in contemporary society is thus seen as making for a 'morally thin atmosphere'.[61]

A major aspect of such thinness is the inability of many to think in terms of duties, obligations or responsibilities.[62] This is of more than merely theoretical concern. O'Neill, for example, asserts that in reality only those rights whose obligations can be allocated are taken seriously, leaving some yawning gaps.[63] These gaps—O'Neill's concern is specifically with claims concerning hunger and poverty—mean that needs and rights are failed because responsibility, in remaining unallocated, is only felt at a certain level by those whose actions might make a difference.

> A world in which rights discourse is thought the appropriate idiom for ethical deliberation is one in which a powerful theoretical wedge is driven between questions of justice and matters of help and benefit. Justice is seen

communitarian writers'. Buchanan continues, however, by outlining five fundamental critiques of liberalism which lend a basic unity to Communitarian thought. Liberalism, he summarizes: (i) neglects/undermines community, a fundamental aspect of the good life for humans; (ii) undervalues participation in political life as part of life within community; (iii) similarly undervalues other social ties and obligations (e.g. familial ones) which are not economically based; (iv) has a defective notion of personhood in its failure to recognize the importance of individuals being 'embedded' within groups, situations and communities (not necessarily by choice); (v) unduly exalts justice when it is better seen as 'a remedial virtue', required only when 'the higher virtue of community has broken down' ('Communitarian Critique', pp. 852-53).

57. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 43.
58. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 43.
59. Ferguson, *Community*, p. 139.
60. Ferguson, *Community*, p. 139.
61. Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 112.
62. Henkin, *Age of Rights*, p. 183. As O'Neill points out, 'Although serious writing on human rights acknowledges that any right must entail correlative obligations, we find no Universal Declaration of Human Duties, and no international Human Obligations Movement' (*Faces of Hunger*, p. 104).
63. O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger*, p. 100.

as consisting of assignable, claimable, and enforceable rights, which only the claimant can waive. Beneficence is seen as unassignable, unclaimable and unenforceable.[64]

As an alternative to such moral thinness, Communitarians suggest (a return to) much greater prominence for communities in social planning. Their thinking has been criticized as naïve, however. The romantic, utopian *gemeinschaft* communities which some Communitarians advocate are seen by many as 'a serious error'.[65] They contrast only the 'bleakest aspects' of modern life with an idealized picture of premodern communities, ignoring the goods of freedom, equality and differentiation on the one hand, and realities of marginalization and oppression on the other.[66] The alleged superiority of 'purportedly more integrated societies' providing stable social identities glosses over too much, and reveals the romantic, conservative agenda behind much Communitarian thought.[67] The reality is that all communities struggle to include, liberate and value every member. A community founded upon rights is a safer option for today, says Gewirth, simply because it is more realistic about such struggles.

> [W]hatever the merits that are claimed for more close-knit conceptions of human community, a community of persons, especially one that is to be feasible in large-scale societies, must protect the mutual and equal rights of all persons. …the reasonable self, within the community of rights, recognizes that it has obligations toward others as well as rights against others.[68]

Further, there are suggestions that Communitarianism manifests a somewhat one-dimensional notion of community, and not one which easily matches the societies Gewirth refers to above. For Howard, Communitarians see social solidarity as founded upon sameness or commonality, and that is an anachronistic model for contemporary life.[69]

64. O'Neill, *Faces of Hunger*, p. 102.
65. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 44.
66. Howard, *Search for Community*, pp. 7-8, 80, 91, 127. A. Etzioni responds that communal oppression is much less likely in a modern democracy. Interestingly, however, the particular groups he uses to illustrate the point are all religious gatherings—neither particularly modern and diverse, nor strongly democratic (*The Third Way to a Good Society* [London: Demos, 2000], pp. 16-17).
67. Frazer and Lacey level this criticism at MacIntyre's thought in particular (*Politics of Community*, p. 164).
68. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 46.
69. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 36. Howard also says: In modern society the similarities that create community can be…far more than ancestry, religion, or language: They can be…any number of common interests or merely…the belief that all human beings are equal. On the one hand, modern society has homogenized its population…created a thin community of citizens rather than a thick community of people sharing ancestry, religion, and custom. On the other hand, it has created the possibility

While damaging, such criticisms should not be considered fatal for Communitarianism. Its more careful proponents, for instance, do not just advocate naïve, simplistic social models; their vision may be somewhat utopian, but they recognize that any social goal will be both messy and hard won. Additionally, in offering an alternative vision of rights, Communitarianism contributes nuance and variation to the landscape of contemporary human rights thought. Against a backdrop which is often individualistic, for example, Etzioni envisions a 'community of communities' in which rights, though important, have a lower profile, and which thrives through the intercourse of diverse cultures regulated by a shared framework. He does not conceive of reduced roles for individuals and for human rights because the community always knows best,[70] but because mutual respect and the need to treat others as ends in themselves require protection. For Etzioni, individual freedom and diversity 'should not become the opposite of unity, but should exist *within* unity'.[71] That there are parallels to be drawn between such ideas and some of Paul's communal thought will be noted in what follows. For now it is sufficient to acknowledge that the Communitarian critique contributes significantly to contemporary debates within rights thought.

b. *Justifications for Human Rights*

Just as no careful definition of human rights would be complete without some account of criticisms levelled at them, so the efforts of influential contemporary rights thinkers at justifying their faith in human rights also need to be considered. Whilst other thinkers might profitably be examined here, the human rights conceptions of John Rawls, Alan Gewirth and Richard Rorty outlined below have proven significant contributions to the shape of rights thought. They also, in the diversity of justifications for rights which they offer, demonstrate again human rights' slipperiness, not least when it comes to conceiving of humanity as universal or otherwise. Furthermore, as these thinkers have been influential, shaping both theory and praxis for human rights advocates, their conceptions are freighted with implications for the sorts of social structures and aspirations which human rights thought can inspire and approve.

John Rawls propounds a powerful liberal justification of human rights. He adopts a deontological outlook,[72] arguing that liberalism's preoccupa-

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for a new kind of community, one that transcends antagonistic divisions among ethnic and religious groups (p. 42).

70. Etzioni, *Third Way*, pp. 28-29.
71. Etzioni, *Third Way*, p. 53, emphasis added.
72. S. Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 71.

tion with freedom and equality is appropriate,[73] and demonstrating rights' necessary role in upholding them. Equality, for Rawls, would be the rational structure to choose if we were constructing an ideal society, ignorant of what our own position might be in it.[74] And the primacy of freedom, he says, is reasonable, whatever inequalities may accompany it, as it can be shown to benefit all, even the disadvantaged.[75] Human rights, for Rawls, are safeguards ensuring the continuation of the goods he identifies as flowing from liberty and equality thus conceived: they embody and protect the justice of an ideal society struggling against existence in a less than ideal world.

That there is a certain circularity to his liberal thinking has been pointed out by many of Rawls's critics. As Gewirth says, 'the argument attains its egalitarian conclusion only by putting into its premises the egalitarianism of persons' universal equal ignorance of all their particular qualities. This ignorance has no independent rational justification, since humans are not in fact ignorant of all their particular qualities'.[76] There are also other dimensions to this liberal skewing. For instance, Rawls bases his claim that freedom is to be desired despite inequalities upon two principles of justice. First, that each person should have an equal right to a system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. Second, that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged both to benefit maximally the least advantaged and to accrue from positions open equally to all.[77] These principles, however, are not of equal value. The first enjoys absolute priority because Rawls doubts our capacity to know either what is good for other individuals or how to institutionalize that good in society. Social restructuring in favour of the disadvantaged has to wait upon the freedom of the better-off. The fundamental, noninterference rights of liberalism are what Rawls's rights and justice protect, then, not the broader rights of all humanity.[78]

73. Leigh points out that in doing so Rawls elevates liberty, freedom and justice to the point where they not only relegate religious and moral values as of secondary import, but actually replace such notions as 'the most serious and important truths' he holds ('Christian Approach', p. 36).

74. J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 11-12.

75. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 151; D. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 16.

76. A. Gewirth, *Human Rights: Essays on Justification and Applications* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 44. Also Layman, *Shape of the Good*, p. 182. See Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, p. 19.

77. Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, pp. 14-15.

78. 'Rawls thinks that this ordering should not be objectionable to the poor or… disadvantaged because they are guaranteed the same liberty as the well off, by the First Principle. At the same time the Second Principle assures them that whatever

By being tied so firmly to the principles of western liberalism,[79] Rawls's thinking on human rights thus embodies what many see as the cultural and philosophical boundedness of the whole notion, limiting its potential for greater significance. The justice Rawlsian rights defend is the liberal justice of the status quo, focused upon liberty not equality, upon the economic not the social. Liberty's importance is not at issue, but in an increasingly global society, socio-economic inequalities make inescapable questions concerning 'the legitimacy of restricting the economic liberty of the rich in the interests of those in extreme deprivation'.[80] For many, Rawls's rights thought cannot face such questions, and must thus be considered 'an inadequate foundation for developing a human rights policy for our world'.[81] Such judgments of inadequacy, however, do nothing to diminish the influence of Rawlsian conceptions, particularly in the USA, with concomitant implications both for the overall shape of contemporary human rights thought, and for the social agenda and impact of much rights rhetoric.

A second key rights theorist is Alan Gewirth, for whom 'human rights are of supreme importance, and are central to all other moral considerations, because they are rights of every human being to the necessary conditions of human action'.[82] While Rawls emphasizes liberal justice, the centrepiece of Gewirth's rights thought is the dignity necessary to human agency.[83] Each agent 'is necessarily committed to the free, purposeful nature of agency', presupposing 'the worth of the action of the agent', and hence the agent's worth.[84] The justification of rights, then, lies in a person's 'absolute or non-comparative condition' as agent. 'Wherever there is an agent…there is an implicit claim to have…rights',[85] and the rights claimed 'secure for each person a certain fundamental moral status'.[86] In effect, for Gewirth, agency is the key to being human. Those aspects of existence which preserve the human agent's ability to act, which Gewirth summarizes as freedom and

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inequalities exist in the economic sphere will be to their benefit, thanks to increased productivity, efficiency or some such mechanism… [For Rawls] the question of satisfying social and economic needs arises only after the basic liberal rights have been secured. There can be no trade off between the right of liberty and…rights…to food or housing or work. If push should come to shove it would appear that social and economic claims are not rights at all' (Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, p. 17).

79. D.B. Forrester, *On Human Worth* (London: SCM Press, 2001), p. 66.
80. Forrester, *On Human Worth*, p. 20.
81. Forrester, *On Human Worth*, p. 20.
82. Gewirth, *Human Rights*, p. 3.
83. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 43. See also Gutmann, 'Introduction', p. xix.
84. Rudman, *Concepts of Person*, p. 305.
85. Gewirth, *Reason and Morality*, p. 124.
86. Gewirth, *Human Rights*, p. 5.

well-being, are thus human rights,[87] and justifications for rights are, then, bound to that preservation.[88]

The centrality of agency also helps Gewirth explain clashes between rights[89] and the correct resolution of such clashes.

> [R]ights fall into a hierarchy according to…their needfulness for action and successful action, so that when the rights conflict, those must take precedence that are more needed for action. Thus primacy belongs for the most part to the basic rights whose objects are such segments of basic well-being as life, physical integrity, and mental equilibrium, so that they require for their fulfilment not only food, clothing, and shelter but also freedom from torture and similar disabling practices.[90]

For Gewirth, concentration upon agency allows logic, rather than circular assertion, to link human dignity with human rights:

> Now there is a direct route from the worth of the agent's ends to the worth or dignity of the agent… For he is both the general locus of all the particular ends he wants to attain and also the source of his attribution of worth to them. Because he is this locus and source, the worth he attributes to his ends pertains *a fortiori* to himself. They are his ends, and they are worth attaining because he is worth sustaining and fulfilling… He pursues his ends… because he has chosen them…he can and does make…decisions on the basis of his own reflective understanding. By virtue of these characteristics of his action, the agent has worth or dignity.[91]

Such dignity, however, does not necessarily cohere with what others mean when using the phrase. It certainly says nothing objective, theologically or otherwise, about humanity beyond our capacity for reflective action. Indeed, in making rationality, rather than either that underpinning it or that of which it is an aspect, the key criterion of humanity, it might be that Gewirth actually prioritizes rational agency at the expense of wider human dignity.[92]

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87. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 43.

88. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 36: '[A]ll persons, amid their different particular interests, logically must acknowledge, as necessary goods or interests, the generic features and necessary conditions of their action and their generally successful action. It is these features and conditions that take normative priority over the various particular interests or goods that they want to pursue or maintain by action'.

89. Gewirth, 'Absolute Rights', p. 93: 'It is because…moral rights are equally distributed among all human persons as prospective purposive agents that some of the main conflicts of rights arise'.

90. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 41.

91. Gewirth, *Human Rights*, p. 29.

92. That is certainly suggested by some, though not all, of Gewirth's comments. He says, e.g., that where 'capabilities for action are less…rights too are proportionately less', and that people's 'possession of…generic rights must be proportional to the degree to which they have the abilities of agency' (*Human Rights*, p. 55). Yet Gewirth

Gewirth's influence upon contemporary human rights thought, however, is less closely bound to the specifics of his formulations than to the flexibility that his focus upon agency provides. Thus Layman, for example, utilizes Gewirth's thinking to suggest a Christian teleological notion of rights. As agents, Christians must remain free to fulfil the duty-bound end of promoting the kingdom of God; if one has a duty to act for the kingdom, one also has the right to do so.[93] Layman explicitly acknowledges that it is the flexibility of Gewirth's thinking which enables his own and others' exploitation of it, not Gewirth's specific formulations. That thinking, he says, 'can be accepted by persons who have widely varying views about which rights humans actually have. It can even be accepted by those who hold that human beings have no rights'.[94] All can utilize Gewirth's justification of rights because it is less about rights' actual content than about their theoretical universality:

> For human rights are rights that belong equally to all humans, so that every human ought to be protected equally in the interests that are the objects of his or her rights. And since the human rights apply equally to all humans, the interests in question likewise belong equally to all humans.[95]

Richard Rorty's postmodernist estimation of human rights' foundations is quite different from Rawls's or Gewirth's. His starting point is the rejection of anything at all reminiscent of foundationalism, of any conviction that we can construe humanity objectively. Rorty is sure that 'there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality…that is not obedience to our own conventions'.[96] There is, for Rorty, no mileage in the idea of human dignity. It has no meaning now that all enlightened people (i.e. those who agree with him) perceive themselves as nothing more than animals, albeit animals with certain agendas.

> There is a growing willingness to neglect the question 'What is our nature?' and to substitute the question 'What can we make of ourselves?' We are much less inclined than our ancestors to take 'theories of human nature' seriously, much less inclined to take history or ontology as a guide to life. We have come to see that the only lesson of either history or anthropology is our extraordinary malleability. We are coming to think of ourselves as the flexible, protean, self-shaping, animal rather than as the rational animal or the cruel animal.[97]

also states that an agent's claims are 'not affected by degrees of practical ability or agency' (*Reason and Morality*, p. 124).

93. Layman, *Shape of the Good*, p. 186.
94. Layman, *Shape of the Good*, pp. 173-74.
95. Gewirth, 'Common Morality', p. 34.
96. R. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. xlii-xliii.
97. Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 15.

To declare something a human right, then, is to make a judgment founded upon pragmatic criteria, upon the purposes of our self-shaping, whatever they may be at the time.[98] Yet Rorty does want to advocate human rights and the sort of 'ideal' society of which they are part, seeing it as morally superior to other social conceptions.[99] Indeed, he affirms that, whatever their basis, human rights do exist; they are now part and parcel of global culture, the world has changed. However, neither that reality nor his preference for it 'counts in favour of the existence of a universal human nature'.[100]

Human rights are founded, for Rorty, upon the historical influences of security and sympathy. Security because only those living risk-free lives can afford to count personal difference as 'inessential to one's self-respect, one's sense of worth'. Only in the west, among those 'who dreamed up the human rights culture',[101] have sufficient numbers enjoyed such security, and been enabled to value others with sympathy.[102] Nietzsche, says Rorty, has taught us to sneer at ideas of universal kinship. Thus, to find a foundation for human rights, we have to turn to sentiment, to long, sad, evocative and sentimental stories. Such stories, he insists, induce us, 'the rich, safe, powerful, people, to tolerate, and even to cherish, powerless' others.[103]

While most who advocate and claim human rights would prefer to see their basis in something more than Rorty allows for, there can be no doubt that he does make some valid points. Security and sympathy have been and are important for the spread of rights.[104] That and the support which his

98. Little, 'Nature and Basis', p. 73.

99. Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 116. See also de Blois, 'Foundation of Human Rights', pp. 7-8.

100. Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 118. He continues: 'We pragmatists argue from the fact that the emergence of the human rights culture seems to owe nothing to increased moral knowledge, and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories… Since no useful work seems to be done by insisting on a purportedly ahistorical human nature, there probably is no such nature, or at least nothing in that nature that is relevant to our moral choices' (pp. 118-19).

101. Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 128.

102. 'Security and sympathy go together, for the same reasons that peace and economic productivity go together. The tougher things are, the more you have to be afraid of, the more dangerous your situation, the less you can afford the time or effort to think about what things might be like for people with whom you do not immediately identify. Sentimental education only works…on people who can relax long enough to listen' (Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 128).

103. Rorty, 'Human Rights', p. 133.

104. Though this can be pushed too far, and Rorty does do so. The truth is that many nonwestern, poor and unstable cultural situations are places where others are valued and protected, even at the expense of those protecting them. Rorty's reductionist generalizations come close to propounding a rather un-postmodern evolutionary, linear trajectory for 'civilization', along which the west is more advanced than are other

advocacy of rights in the very fact of their cultural construction receives requires some recognition in a careful description of the shape of contemporary rights thought.

3. *Culturally Constructed Universals*

a. *In Human Rights*

As already discussed and as the above justifications for rights suggest, 'the most heated debate' in current human rights thought surrounds rights' absolute, objective basis[105]—founded upon a fixed notion of human nature[106] which legislates for human rights' universal validity[107]—or their cultural construction[108]—assuming the multiplicity of human nature[109] and hence human rights' ultimately limited and relative value.[110] Either view has implications for rights' interaction with the status quo and hence their social impact. To view them as reflecting something universal about humanity is to bring human rights into critical contact with any given social situation, since their absolute standards will always detect failings on some level or

cultures, although they are bound to follow. For a similar idea, albeit one now long discredited for the obvious weaknesses of such mono-directional thinking, see the modernisation theory of national development as propounded by, e.g., W.W. Rostow, *Stages in Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).

105. Douzinas, *End of Human Rights*, p. 212.

106. E.g. Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*, p. 77.

107. See, e.g., Freeden's account and critique of the case for natural rights based upon convictions of human nature and natural law (*Rights*, pp. 24-41).

108. E.g. Howard, *Search for Community*, p. 15.

109. See, e.g., Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 36, 43. 'If we want to discover what man amounts to, we can only find it in what men are: and what men are, above all other things is various. It is in understanding that variousness—its range, its nature, its basis, and its implications—that we shall come to construct a concept of human nature that, more than a statistical shadow and less than a primitivist dream, has both substance and truth' (p. 52).

110. See, e.g., the discussion in M. Ignatieff, 'The Attack on Human Rights', *Foreign Affairs* 80.6 (2001), pp. 102-116. While he acknowledges accusations of cultural construction from beyond their western heartlands, Ignatieff sees the main challenge to human rights' universality as coming from within, perhaps the product of an increased sensitivity about western hegemony which rights thought has itself encouraged. 'Human rights are seen as an exercise in the cunning of Western reason: no longer able to dominate the world through direct imperial rule, the West now masks its own will to power in the impartial, universalizing language of human rights and seeks to impose its own narrow agenda on a plethora of world cultures that do not actually share the West's conception of individuality, selfhood, agency, or freedom' (p. 105).

other.[111] If considered as wholly cultural constructs,[112] on the other hand, human rights' definition in relation to the norms and structures of the status quo, while not making cultural critique impossible, does limit their capacity for radical challenge and their relevance for other cultural situations.[113] Of course, in practice (and despite many theorists' assertions) human rights are generally conceived of as being both-and rather than either-or; they reflect something absolute about human worth but do so in culturally specific terms, or at least partially so.[114] It is this level of cultural construction which, then, becomes important for the universal applicability of any rights statement.

b. *In Paul*

In addressing social matters in Corinth, Paul operated from assumptions which impinge upon debates about universality within contemporary rights thought. He thus offers a perspective from without which is alternative to many within rights thinking, both because of the social structures and roles he deemed appropriate and because that perspective relied upon a theological framework which, in being unquestioned, was effectively universal. As

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111. It is also, at least potentially, to define human rights in the image of a particular social group, and thus in opposition to other groups. Thus, e.g., 'Feminists resist theories of common morality primarily because they have been harmful to women (and to some men). In the name of universality, of a total view of human nature and society, such theories have in fact been exclusive, oppressive, and repressive of women and of men who do not belong to a dominant group. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the formulators of such theories have inaccurately universalized a particular perspective; as a result, the needs and moral claims of some groups and individuals have been left out, their roles and duties distorted, and their full voices silenced. What is thought to be "common" morality, when examined with an eye for gender bias—or for class, race, religious, or other deep-seated biases—turns out not to have universal extension and to incorporate seriously mistaken moral requirements' (Farley, 'Feminism and Universal Morality', p. 171).

112. This perspective enjoys increasing influence because, in a postmodern world, there are many who perceive humanity itself, and not just its rights, to be at least partially a cultural construction. Thus, e.g., Lyon describes 'postmodern selves' as constructed in a variety of ways: 'For some…self is the outcome of consumer choices, in which symbols such as brand names and Disneyesque merchandising logos feature strongly. For others, self is part of therapeutic regimes or a quest for intimacy. For cybernauts, self is construed as the digital personae developed within electronic communication. Either way, identity is not so much given—by family name or as the image of God—or ascribed, as produced, the result of a continuing process of discovery'. Notions of humanity and selfhood are thus seen as 'postmodern projects', the fruit of a particular cultural location (*Jesus in Disneyland*, p. 69).

113. Although see the discussion of Rorty above for a view of human rights as both cultural construct and basis for judging cultures.

114. Glendon, *Rights Talk*, pp. 66-68.

well as his concrete social actions and declarations and his often absolute language, this broad theological framework lends Paul's handling of the societal status quo a particular tenor which may be weighed against the often very different approaches of contemporary rights thought. Additionally, Paul too operated within a both-and tension; appealing to the higher, 'universal' principles of the gospel, but doing so within the cultural restrictions of what he was able to say, conceive of and do, and of the particular cultural situations and issues he was addressing.[115]

While such general points of contact provide sufficient basis for a Pauline contribution to the debates within rights thought, there remains the rather more pointed question of whether Paul conceived of humanity in universal terms, or at least whether he can be seen as doing so in his Corinthian correspondence. How far Paul's Corinthian teaching, targeted as it is at a particular believing community, has anything to say about matters of universal human existence is questionable. A coherent anthropology may certainly be drawn out of the Pauline canon, but finding one within specific Corinthian texts without reading it in from some systematic framework is rather more difficult. That said, there are certainly Corinthian texts which perhaps suggest that Paul did see something universal in both the human and the Christian conditions. His appeal to 'natural' hair length (φύσις, 1 Cor. 11.14) could surely be read thus,[116] and his statements about humanity's common temptations (πειρασμὸς ὑμᾶς οὐκ εἴληφεν εἰ μὴ ἀνθρώπινος, 1 Cor. 10.13) and particular (οὐ πᾶσα σὰρξ ἡ αὐτὴ σὰρξ), lowly (ἐν ἀτιμίᾳ, ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ) and perishable (ἐν φθορᾷ) bodies intended for transformation (οἱ νεκροὶ ἐγερθήσονται ἄφθαρτοι καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀλλαγησόμεθα, 1 Cor. 15.39-53) suggest an understanding of shared properties, values and conditions. Likewise, Paul's corporate imagery (e.g. body, 1 Cor. 10.16-17; 12.12-27; temple, 1 Cor. 3.16-17), statements concerning salvation (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.24; 2 Cor. 4.6; 5.17), and assertions about 'all believers' (πᾶσιν…ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ,

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115. See, e.g., Beker's classic discussion of contingency and coherence in Paul's letters (*Paul the Apostle*, pp. 23-36).

116. Morris asserts that while there are clearly exceptions, Paul is here affirming the general tendency for men to reflect nature by having shorter hair than women (*1 Corinthians*, p. 154). See also Lietzmann, who describes Paul's description of hair lengths as 'Naturordnung…was zwar nicht absolut, aber doch relativ richtig ist… Die Sitte hat sich nach der Natur zu richten' (*An die Korinther*, p. 55). Barrett takes a slightly firmer position, commenting that 'Paul is thinking of the natural world as God made it… *Nature* (i.e., God) has made men and women different from each other, and has provided a visible indication of the difference between them in the quantity of hair he has assigned to each; that is, in point of fact men have short, women have long hair, and though art can reverse this difference, the reversed distinction is, and is felt to be, artificial' (*First Corinthians*, p. 256, original emphasis). However, see also the discussions below.

1 Cor. 1.2; ἐκκλησίαις πάσαις, 1 Cor. 7.17[117]) indicate an assumption that all those 'in Christ' share (or should share) certain universal characteristics.[118]

From a contemporary perspective, Paul's apparent belief that gender-appropriate hair length is an objective given seems particularly naïve; clearly mistaking a cultural norm for a natural one. And the suspicion that if he can be wrong about something as basic as hairstyles then perhaps some of Paul's other 'universal' statements are also misguided is bound to arise. Indeed, this appeal to nature could be taken as embodying the culture-boundedness which all apparent universals betray when seen from a different cultural perspective. However, Thiselton suggests that Paul's appeal to 'nature' in 1 Cor. 11.14 may be somewhat less than it seems.[119] Thiselton admits that 'nature' is the usual meaning of φύσις, particularly in Stoic and Cynic thought but, drawing upon Schrage,[120] suggests that Paul's use is more ambivalent and relative than many metaphysical expectations allow for.[121] Thiselton prefers to translate οὐδὲ ἡ φύσις αὐτὴ as 'not even the very ordering of how things are', undermining suggestions of universality by clarifying,

> In Paul's sense of the term, 'natural' need not refer to a structure inherent in creation but may include 'the state of affairs surrounding a convention' or the quality, property, or nature (*Beschaffenheit*) of male or female gender and the order, or arrangement, or system of things as they are (*die Ordnung der Dinge*). Unless we take fully into account 'the ambivalence of "natural" ', we shall find insoluble problems with such historical counterexamples as the custom of Spartan warriors of wearing shoulder-length hair. Paul simply appeals to 'how things are' or 'how things are ordered' in the period and context for which he is writing.[122]

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117. The claim that women's worship roles are restricted in *all* Christian communities ('Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων, 1 Cor. 14.33) also fits here, although debates about its interpolation and authorship raise questions about how far it reflects Paul's thought.

118. Which is not to say that Paul believes Christians to be an homogenous mass (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.7; 12.4-11, 28-31).

119. See also Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 526-27. For one unconvinced by this argument, see C.S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), pp. 43-45.

120. W. Schrage, *Der Erste Brief an die Korinther* (Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, 7; Solothurn: Benziger Verlag, 1991/1995/1999), II, pp. 521-22.

121. Contra, e.g., Hays who sees Paul using φύσις in a parallel way to Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.16.10, 14), although he does allow for Paul being ironic in doing so (*First Corinthians*, p. 189). See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 413; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, p. 55.

122. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 844. He is citing Schrage: 'φύσις wird hier weder auf die anfängliche Schöpfung von V 7.9 verweisen, noch nur auf das durch

Seen in this light, Paul's assertion about 'natural' hair length is actually an appeal to the cultural construction of human existence rather than a truly universal statement;[123] he is making an argument 'of analogy, not of necessity'.[124] Although it would be a mistake to construe all of Paul's apparently universal language in this way, that he is capable of using universal terms to say that 'here and now this really is how things are' provides an unmissable parallel with human rights thought.[125]

In terms of Paul's truly universal perspectives, the distinction between Christian and wider humanity need not be over-played. While Paul clearly understands humanity 'in Christ' to be firmly separated from those who are not (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.4-16; 2 Cor. 5.16-17; 10.3),[126] that he is working within an overall framework in which humanity's purposeful creator (1 Cor. 8.6; 2 Cor. 5.5) is saving all who call upon Christ's name (1 Cor. 1.2), and in which the trajectory from judgment to salvation is plainly established (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.21; 2.12-14; 6.9-11; 12.2, 13; 15; 2 Cor. 5.14-15), allows the two groups to be held together even as the division between them is acknowledged.[127] Paul is, in other words, revealing his perspective upon the universal human condition as he talks specifically about the absolutes of Christian existence.[128] In fact, this perspective can be detected in all Paul writes, in

Herkommen und Gewohnheit Gewordene—*faktisch* handelt es sich aber tatsächlich um eine Konvention—oder ein Gefühl für das Naturgemäße, sondern auf die »natürliche« Beschaffenheit des männlichen und weiblichen Geschlechts und die Ordnung der Dinge' (*Erste Brief*, II, p. 521). Thiselton continues (*First Corinthians*, pp. 844-46) by outlining four views of φύσις in the history of interpretation of 1 Cor. 11.14, only one of which assumes a strict ontological referent in Paul's thinking. He admits that Paul at times uses φύσις ontologically, to speak of 'the very "grain" of the created order as a whole', but insists that here he refers to ' "how things are" in more situational or societal terms' (p. 845).

123. Interestingly, those who insist that this is not the case tend to do so in the sort of absolute language which betrays its own culturally constructed assumptions about humanity. See, e.g., the quotation from Barrett in n. 116.

124. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 527.

125. It perhaps also indicates that some of Paul's more socially freighted universal declarations (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.16; 14.33b-34) need not be seen as absolute statements about human existence.

126. Indeed, a large part of Paul's reason for writing to the Corinthians was to press upon them 'the *social distinction* between the church and the larger society'; between outsiders and insiders (Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 126, original emphasis).

127. There are parallels here to the particular and universal implications of believer identity which Adams finds Paul constructing in Romans ('Paul's Story', pp. 38-39).

128. E.g. the proclamation of new creation and reconciliation in Christ both requires and stands upon an old creation in which sins still count for judgment as a universal description of humanity outside Christ (2 Cor. 5.17-19). Indeed, for H.W. Robinson, Paul's assumption of universal sinfulness 'is the necessary presupposition of Pauline doctrine as a whole' (*The Christian Doctrine of Man* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 3rd

the way he values others and in his organization of relationships. There is, in Wright's words, a concern for 'genuine humanness' running throughout Paul's ministry; his interest is in each person 'worshipping the true God, and so reflecting this God *by becoming a more complete human being*'.[129]

> Paul articulated…*a way of being human* which he saw as the true way. In his ethical teaching, in his community development, and above all in his theology and practice of new life through dying and rising with Christ, he zealously articulated, modelled, inculcated, and urged upon his converts a way of life which he saw as being the genuinely human way of life.[130]

There was, then, a vision of humanity as it is meant to be within the gospel of Christ which Paul practiced and proclaimed.[131] That this gospel turns upon Jesus' crucifixion (1 Cor. 1.23-24; 2.2), thus shaping appropriate relationships (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.13; 13; 16.14-16),[132] leadership patterns (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.19; 2 Cor. 13.4) and even perspectives (2 Cor. 5.15-16) for the new creation's true humanity, reiterates the findings of the foregoing exploration of Pauline power, but broadens their significance. Paul's Christ paradigm is not simply an appropriate pattern for relational power, it communicates something fundamental about the shape of true humanity: that it should be cruciform, following (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς κἀγὼ Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor. 11.1) and called into fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1.9).

As believer-specific texts reflect universal dimensions within Paul's anthropology in this way, the tradition behind Gal. 3.28, which Paul includes

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edn, 1926], p. 112). On the eschatological orientation which this old-new dynamic gives Paul's view of all humanity, see D.E. Aune, 'Human Nature and Ethics in Hellenistic Philosophical Traditions and Paul: Some Issues and Problems', in T. Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), pp. 291-312 (304). On Paul's universal thinking about humanity as the product of his deeper theological convictions rather than a basic, foundational premise, see T.L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), pp. 161-62. On believer-specific texts having universal implications throughout the New Testament, see Bauckham, *Bible in Politics*, pp. 8-10.

129. Wright, *What Saint Paul*, p. 140, original emphasis.

130. Wright, *What Saint Paul*, p. 136, original emphasis.

131. This should come as no surprise given that, as Wright also points out, the Jewish metanarrative which Paul saw Jesus bringing to fulfilment was also about being truly human as defined by an appropriate relationship with God. '[H]e believed that humanity renewed in Christ was the fulfilment of the vocation of Israel, which unbelieving Israel was failing to attain. Paul was now zealous to promote this genuine humanity as the God-given answer to paganism, and to urge Jews who were missing out on it that this was in fact the true fulfilment of their history and tradition' (Wright, *What Saint Paul*, p. 136).

132. See, e.g., Witherington's comments about the relationality of being 'in Christ' as demonstrated in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6 (*Paul Quest*, p. 218).

a partial version of in 1 Cor. 12.13, is of considerable significance. Seen in this context it suggests a united, even egalitarian[133] vision of humanity; something which exists among those participating in Christ (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Gal. 3.27) and who have the one Spirit (ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες, 1 Cor. 12.13), but which is thus also the intended pattern for all.[134] Such a universal vision finds profound resonances within human rights thought, whether rights are considered as cultural constructs or absolute statements about human value. Before getting carried away with these resonances and what they mean for Paul's contribution to a dialogue with human rights, however, it has to be acknowledged that although Paul affirms the tradition behind Gal. 3.28, his application of it in concrete social terms has been interpreted in a multitude of ways, projecting images of Paul which range from the radical to the socially conservative.

4. *Paul and the Societal Status Quo*

As Chapter 3 shows, a consideration of Paul's use of power alone demonstrates his impact upon the social experiences of the Corinthian community. Yet Paul's social influence went far beyond his talk of obedience and personal status. Indeed, even a cursory reading of the Corinthian correspondence demonstrates Paul's desire to shape the community's understanding of all manner of social phenomena. For example, he holds forth upon: social

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133. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of this possibility.

134. Implicit within such talk of 'intention' is the eschatological dimension of all notions of true humanity. Thus U. Schnelle (*The Human Condition: Anthropology in the Teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996]) describes the conformity with Christ of Rom. 8.29 as an event 'completed in the resurrection of the believers, but at the same time it also has a present dimension: in baptism believers already participate in the essence of Christ as the image of God (Rom. 6.3-5), because they share in the work of salvation effected through Christ. Here, through the Holy Spirit, is the beginning of the salvific activity of God for humankind, which will reach its goal in the end event in the transformation of the σῶμα ψυχικόν ("physical body") into the σῶμα πνευματικόν ("spiritual body") [1 Cor. 15:44]. Then the believers will be fully shaped according to the image of their Lord, who as the archetype of the new being is the firstborn among many brothers and sisters' (p. 100). Schnelle goes on to talk of humanity being in God's image in similarly eschatological terms: 'As εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ("image of God"; 2 Cor. 4.4) Christ draws believers into the historical process at the end of which their own transformation will stand. Only in relationship to Christ as the archetype will human beings be equal to their destiny as εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ. Being human is not exhausted in pure creatureliness; rather, the Creator bestows on creatures the dignity to be and to live in accordance with his image. God constitutes human existence, and only in correspondence to God do human beings realize their created destiny as the image of God, a destiny that is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ as the archetype of God' (pp. 101-102).

groupings of various sorts (1 Cor. 1.10-12; 5.9-13; 6.9-10; 2 Cor. 10.12; 11.4-15); the importance or otherwise of ethnicity (1 Cor. 7.18-19), gender (11.2-16) and freedom (1 Cor. 6.12; 7.21-23); marital and sexual relation-ships (1 Cor. 5.1-5; 6.15-18; 7.1-16, 25-40); secular authorities (1 Cor. 4.3; 6.1-7); both Christian (1 Cor. 1.14-15; 10.16-17; 11.3-34; 12; 14) and pagan worship practices (1 Cor. 8; 10.19-21); the relational priority of love (1 Cor. 8.1; 13); servanthood within the community (1 Cor. 16.1-3; 2 Cor. 4.5; 6.3-10; 13.3-4); relating to those outside it (1 Cor. 10.25-33; 14.22-25; 2 Cor. 6.14-17); and his own exemplary social experiences (1 Cor. 4.8-16; 9; 2 Cor. 1.3-9; 4.7-12; 11.22-33; 12.7-10). Despite numerous depictions of him as spiritually individualistic and quietist, then, Paul was plainly con-cerned both with the church's internal social life and with its relations to its larger social setting, a concern which has reproduced itself in the shaping of communities and cultures his letters have wrought ever since.[135]

    Establishing Paul's concern with and influence upon social matters is much more straightforward, however, than is determining the precise char-acter of that concern and influence. That he wrote encouraging conformity (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.15-16) and obedience (e.g. 2 Cor. 2.9) implies Paul's approval of certain sorts of communal structures. Indeed, Kittredge suggests that the pool of hierarchical, household imagery upon which Paul naturally drew to explicate such themes makes some level of tacit endorsement of those structures almost inevitable.[136] Perhaps so, but whether such endorsement reflects the whole of Paul's social thought is somewhat less clear.

a. *Reading Paul*

Given his metaphorical use of household language and his assertions about power, pigeon-holing Paul as socially conservative has been all too easy for some. That most of Paul's more authoritative interpreters have had their own

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  135. This, however, should not be taken as implying that Paul's social influence has enjoyed uniformity in either importance or character. See, e.g., E.A. Judge's estimation of Paul's differing significance for ancient and modern societies, 'The Impact of Paul's Gospel on Ancient Society', in P. Bolt and M. Thompson (eds.), *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), pp. 297-308.

  136. 'The language of obedience is part of the language of social relations. Theologi-cal language about Christ obeying God or about obedience as a spiritual attitude of a Christian derives from the world of social relationships… The language of obedi-ence naturally occurs within the context of the marriage, slavery, and parent-child relationships that make up the kyriarchal family. In the ancient world the family was a hierarchical structure in which inferior members were linked to higher members by relationships that required obedience. ... Language about obedience to God as part of slavery to God, marriage with God, and being a child of God is metaphorical lan-guage that draws on the relationships within the classical kyriarchal family' (C.B. Kittredge, *Community and Authority: The Rhetoric of Obedience in the Pauline Tradi-tion* [Harvard Theological Studies, 45; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998], pp. 5-6).

positions affirmed by a Paul thus perceived, making it the line of least resistance, has eased the process even further, and made alternative readings of these and other Pauline themes harder to legitimate. The key issue is one of starting points. If I commence my interpretation of 1 Cor. 11.3-16 as a man within an androcentric culture and with assumptions of Paul's social conservatism based upon his claims to power, I am likely to find that passage limiting the ecclesial roles of women and endorse the finding as it mirrors what I know.[137] If, however, without assuming a given social structure, my reading begins with a conviction that Gal. 3.28 sets the gospel agenda, revealing what I perceive as a profound equality of all those in Christ, my interpretation of 1 Cor. 11.3-16 will be very different. I will, for instance, be more likely to dig below surface readings in search of Paul's egalitarian intent, or be liable to condemn his lack of commitment to the gospel, or to decide that he did not pen the passage at all. Hermeneutical factors, then, are vital for the contribution to a dialogue with human rights that Paul might make; the perceived character of Paul's social stance and actions depend upon reading decisions.

How Paul is read on social matters, and the slippery diversity of Pauls thus envisaged, reflects a complicated knot of interpretive issues. As already suggested, two of the most important are: (i) an assumption/assessment of whether or not Paul was socially conservative, which is indicated (ii) in the priority and interpretation accorded to the tradition of oneness in Christ prototypically seen in Gal. 3.28; οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Attitudes toward this text can be extremely telling. Was it the gospel standard towards which Paul worked unswervingly,[138] in critique of societal norms?[139] Or was it a theoretical ideal which Paul's practice failed to

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137. As Volf puts it, 'complicity with…our culture would not be nearly as easy if the cultures did not so profoundly shape us. In a significant sense we are our cultures and we find it therefore difficult to distance ourselves from the culture we inhabit in order to evaluate its various elements' and its influence upon us (*Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 36 n. 2).

138. E.g. J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human Together: The Pastoral Anthropology of St Paul* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1982, 2nd edn), p. 193.

139. For example, D.R. Cartlidge says that, 'Ethnic differences, the position and utilization of slaves, and male-female relationships were central building blocks in the edifice of hellenistic culture'. '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' ('1 Corinthians 7 as a Foundation for a Christian Sex Ethic', *Journal of Religion* 55.2 [1975], pp. 220-34 [221, 222]). Along similar lines, D.C. Duling describes Gal. 3.28 as 'Paul's goal', embodying his desire for 'the removal of customary social rankings' (*The New Testament: History, Literature, and Social Context* [Belmont: Wadsworth/Thompson, 4th edn, 2003], p. 175).

pursue consistently?[140] Does its egalitarian attraction for modern readers outweigh and/or distort its significance for Paul's own thought?[141] In speaking of a community's perfection in Christ, does it reflect the intended equality of all humanity?[142] Is it a radical manifesto for society[143] or a particularly Christian,[144] and perhaps only eschatological or spiritual,[145] standard?[146]

140. E.g. P.K. Jewett sees Paul as consistent upon the Jew-Greek issue, less concerned with slave-free, and 'more cautious still' on changes to the male-female relationship (*Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975], pp. 144-45).

141. E.g. D.E.H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St Paul* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), pp. 222-23.

142. For example, R.N. Longenecker depicts Gal. 3.28 as an expression of the gospel which lays upon Christians 'the necessity of treating all people impartially, regardless of race or culture, with a view to their present good and their eventual redemption. The cultural mandate of the gospel expressly excludes all human notions about respecting people because of race, culture, or merits, whether earned or assumed. Nor does it ask that people be treated as their common humanity deserves. Rather, the cultural mandate of the gospel lays on Christians the obligation to measure every attitude and action toward others in terms of the impartiality and love which God expressed in Jesus Christ, and to express in life such actions as would break down barriers of prejudice and walls of inequality, without setting aside the distinctive characteristics of people' (*New Testament Social Ethics for Today* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], p. 34). See also Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 211.

143. For example, H.D. Betz describes Gal. 3.28 as having 'social and political implications of even a revolutionary dimension' (*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* [Hermeneia Critical and Historical Commentary; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], p. 190).

144. For example, J.J. Meggitt describes Gal. 3.28 and its parallels as 'of more than "spiritual significance"' where slavery was concerned, but only for Christians: 'Within the eschatological community, the realm within which Paul's radical ethical precepts operated fully, slavery was *functionally* (if not technically) at an end' (*Paul, Poverty and Survival* [Studies of the New Testament and its World; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998], p. 181). See also K. Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women: A Case Study in Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p. 33; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 100.

145. E.g. P. Eisenbaum asserts that, despite the apparent egalitarianism of Gal. 3.28, Paul perceived social differentiation as inherent in 'the way God made the world', that the equality it speaks of is strictly limited: 'Paul never meant to reorder society at large; he simply meant that "in Christ", in the Church community, these distinctions are irrelevant. Such distinctions will continue to exist in this world—as Paul says, "Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called"—but they are of no consequence to God and have no bearing on one's salvation' ('Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Antisemitism?', *Crosscurrents* 50.4 [2000] [http://www.crosscurrents. org/eisenbaum.htm accessed on 02.03.2009]).

146. There are also views which combine these categories. Thus, for example, Lohfink considers the Spirit as vital for the equality in view but sees a broader end for that equality than this might initially suggest. 'Just as in Joel 3, it is the Spirit who

Variation in the answers to such questions reflect both Pauline ambiguities and a priori assumptions about Paul's social role which themselves signal the vested interests, or at least socio-cultural and confessional horizons, from which particular interpreters read him.

If it was only Paul's words that were subject to reading assumptions, the character of his social thought might be easier to tie down despite the mixed messages his letters send. However, the situation is made more slippery by those same interpretive biases casting the whole social setting within which Paul wrote in an array of different hues. Thus, for example, Roman society is depicted as anything from an utterly repressive[147] to an almost open and liberal regime.[148] Similarly, there are divergent ideas about the demographic profile of the Christian communities to which Paul wrote. Most now see a broad spectrum of society within those communities,[149] but some not insig-

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creates the new order… Only in the Spirit is it possible to dismantle national and social barriers, group interests, caste systems and domination of one sex over the other… In Gal. 3:28 and 1 Cor. 12.13 Paul speaks neither of the equality of all people in the sense of a general world citizenship, nor only of the equality of all believers "before God". He speaks rather of the "arrival of the new world of God in Christ, which has already begun in the community"' (*Jesus and Community*, p. 93).

147. See, for example, the articles in *Semeia* 83/84 (1998). Also H. Moxnes, who uses contemporary values to highlight the inequitable character of Greco-Roman slave culture: 'the free man was the only "full" human being with "human rights", slaves had few rights, they were not full human beings… A free man had access to honour and prestige, based on birth, citizenship, wealth, power, etc. the slave on the other hand, was a non-being without honour or shame' ('Social Integration and the Problem of Gender in St Paul's Letters', *Studia theologica* 43.1 [1989], pp. 99-113 [103]).

148. E.g. D. Tidball, *An Introduction to the Sociology of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1983), pp. 115-16.

149. As T.E. Schmidt summarizes, 'The emerging consensus is that Pauline churches represented a fair cross-section of urban society: few extremes on either end of the socioeconomic scale, and a preponderance of artisans and traders at various levels of income' ('Riches and Poverty', in G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid [eds.], *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* [Downers Grove: IVP, 1993], pp. 826-27 [826]). Such consensus, however, should not be understood to reflect a common mind on the significance of a socially diverse church. As W.A. Meeks says, 'To one observer the mixture of classes in the church simply shows that the Christian movement inevitably conforms to the social structure of the society as a whole; to another, it reveals a fundamental conflict between the values of the Christian group and those of the larger society' (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], p. 53). For a perspective which refuses to acknowledge the current consensus as a coherent position, see S.J. Friesen, 'Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the New Consensus', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26.3 (2004), pp. 323-61 (see also J.G. Barclay's critical 'Poverty in Pauline Studies: A Response to Steven Friesen', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26.3 [2004], pp. 363-66).

nificant voices maintain that they possessed a much narrower, poorer social base.[150] Clearly, evaluations of Paul's social impact will vary according to how the social situations upon which he was acting are perceived, with concomitant implications for judging him. If, for instance, Greco-Roman culture is conceived of in largely positive terms, then assertions of Paul's social conservatism are unlikely to be pejorative; not the case for those reading from a feminist or post-colonial perspective, who construe the patriarchal or kyriarchal character of the Empire somewhat differently and for whom a conservative stance is a betrayal of the gospel message. Part of the problem, of course, flows from the distance over which judgments are being made. Paul and his world are a very long way, culturally and temporally, from most who have read him.[151] And it is not just the distance but what lies between—the not always perspicacious interpretive traditions and the social and ideological uses to which Paul has been put[152]—which makes assessing both the man and his situation so difficult.

It has become commonplace to depict these social uses of Paul in largely negative terms. Both critics and proponents recognize the need to deal honestly with an unfortunate legacy, whether or not they see Paul as having been used positively as well, and whether or not they think the negatives truly reflect Paul's personal impact. Some, like Martin, make unforgiving assessments, finding both Paul's legacy and his personal impact to have been destructive.[153] Pixley and Boff take a similar line, although their assessment rests upon a conviction of Paul's theological imbalance, his emphasis upon spiritual rather than material or social poverty.[154] Elliott, on the other hand,

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150. Thus Meggitt asserts that 'The Pauline Christians *en masse* shared fully the bleak material existence which was the lot of more than 99% of the inhabitants of the Empire, and also…of Paul himself' (*Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 99).

151. The problem of distance also contributes to deficiencies in the evidence upon which conclusions are reached. As Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, p. 72) says of just one issue, 'The evidence…is fragmentary, random, and often unclear. We cannot draw up a statistical profile of the constituency of the Pauline communities nor fully describe the social level of a single Pauline Christian'. Different readers choose to emphasize different fragments and invest different meaning in them, leading to divergent results.

152. S.C. Barton, 'Biblical Hermeneutics and the Family', in S.C. Barton (ed.), *The Family in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 3-23 (22).

153. C.J. Martin, '"Somebody Done Hoodoo'd the Hoodoo Man": Language, Power, Resistance, and the Effective History of Pauline Texts in American Slavery', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 203-33. See also Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, pp. 9-11, 47.

154. J. Pixley and C. Boff, *The Bible, the Church and the Poor: Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Aspects of the Option for the Poor* (Liberation and Theology, 6; Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1989). They see Paul's focus upon the cross, upon a rich/powerful God's solidarity with poor/weak humanity as deficient 'in dealing with poverty as a social problem' (p. 55). 'Paul's concentration on God's action in Jesus Christ meant that…he showed a certain blindness to poverty as a social fact. For him,

affirms the man while condemning the legacy, describing Paul as unwillingly 'pressed into the service of Death',[155] and not at fault for the socially repressive use of his letters.[156] Accounts which acknowledge negatives within Paul's social legacy tend to minimize the positive impacts his letters have made,[157] reflecting a cultural bias toward making headlines from bad news but also the reality of social power structures. Even if both the empowered and the powerless draw upon Paul as a resource, the very fact of one group having power ensures the success of their vested-interest-serving, other-exploiting readings, at least in the short term. In a world where injustice and inequality are facts of life, Pauline texts will inevitably be used to serve the strong and entrench the status quo. That he has borne such social fruit undoubtedly influences subsequent interpretations of Paul, but is also a less than certain indicator of his personal stance and immediate impact.[158]

b. *Paul: An Ambiguous Cultural Critic*

That Paul's interpreters have their readings shaped by culture, tradition and social status is a reminder that Paul too wrote from a particular place within a particular cultural setting. 'It would be remarkable indeed if Paul did not reflect some of the prejudice, superstition and bias of his own time',[159] as

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true poverty was anthropological, inherent in the human condition' (p. 54). 'Paul… was so impressed with the inherent poverty of humanity compared to the greatness of divine favour that the problem of human differences between rich and poor was relegated to a secondary level in his thought' (p. 56).

155. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 22. Elliott depicts Paul's coercion to this end as 'made possible…by the betrayal of Paul in the New Testament…by generalizations about Paul's own privileged position within Roman society, and…by the way the theological tradition has mystified and depoliticized him'.

156. Elliott sees the use of texts to legitimize violence as largely 'due to the *misinterpretation* of Paul, the misreading of his letters, and the (often intentional) distortion of his voice', although he is careful to emphasize that 'Paul is not the chief victim when his words are perverted' in this way (*Liberating Paul*, p. 23, original emphasis). Thus for Elliott Paul was not an oppressor of women, 'any more than he invented male chauvinism or the patriarchal society. But the point remains that the canonical Paul has proved incalculably useful to patriarchy, sanctifying the intimate oppression of women (and children, and gays)' (p. 10).

157. See, e.g., Braxton, who finds both abolitionists and slave owners exploiting the same Pauline texts to very different ends in their theological analysis of a particular social situation (*Tyranny of Resolution*, pp. 236-37). For a fuller account of this, see W.M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1983), chapter 1.

158. Clearly, the same might be said of those who find in Paul the resources of social liberation and even revolution; Paul himself was not constrained by the diverse uses to which others have put his letters.

159. C.J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (London: SCM Press, 1983), p. 137.

well as utilize its social,[160] religious and philosophical resources.[161] A key question in the examination of Paul's social impact, then, concerns the degree of this reflection and utilization or, put another way, the degree to which Paul was able to stand over against his situation, status and heritage as cultural critic. That he did so has already been emphasized in the accounts of weakness, cruciformity and status inversion in Chapter 3.[162] Paul's use of counter-cultural imagery in advocating himself as model for the community can be seen as critical of the status quo, reworking certain values and relationships in ways which challenged accepted social norms, at least by inference.[163] However, if, for example, his servant leadership is seen in this way,[164] Paul's claim to be the Corinthians' father has to be acknowledged as something else given his patriarchal environment. Even if Paul's brand of fatherhood proved to be significantly different from that assumed by most of his original readers, the implicit assertion of paternal authority and priority in 1 Cor. 4.14-16 cannot easily be described as culture critical.[165] There is, therefore, a level of ambiguity in Paul's self-presenta-

160. MacDonald, for example, emphasizes the 'importance of the Greco-Roman household as a model for the formation of the ekklesia' (*Pauline Churches*, p. 236).

161. Fitzgerald, for example, shows how in 1 Corinthians Paul adopts Hellenism's sapiential *sophos* and *peristasis* language which is then adapted in light of his own experiences, Old Testament texts 'about the afflicted righteous man and suffering prophet, and…is transformed by his fixation on the cross of Christ. His *peristasis* catalogues thus…take us to the center of Paul's understanding of God and his own self-understanding, yet anchor him in the culture and conventions of his time' (*Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, p. 207).

162. Clarke, for example, points out that 'Paul does not cite as legitimation of his…leadership his own secular status or credentials. Indeed…he adopts a number of techniques which expressly invert the significance of social status. Paul's choice of agricultural, artisan and household imagery in 1 Corinthians 3–4…may well have been regarded as offensive to those within the Christian community who sought to base their own authority on such widely-held criteria as secular honour and status' (*Serve the Community*, pp. 216-17).

163. E.A. Judge even claims that 'Paul conducted a head-on personal assault on the status system which supplied the ideology of the established order' ('Cultural Conformity and Innovation in Paul: Some Clues From Contemporary Documents', *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 [1984], pp. 3-24 [5]). See also R.A. Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 153-200 (176).

164. I.A.H. Combes describes Pauline servanthood as 'an example to those who follow him…modelled on the kenosis of Christ himself. It is thus both a claim on leadership and a challenge to the popular notions of status and authority within his own world' (*The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* [JSNTSup, 156; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], p. 77).

165. In similar vein, Horrell says, 'While it is true…that in 1 Corinthians Paul does not legitimate the dominant social order—on the contrary, he undermines and inverts

tion, a characteristic perhaps shared by his thinking about the community's place vis-à-vis Corinthian society and certainly reflected in interpretations of his social agenda.[166]

Acknowledging Paul's ambiguity on social matters requires a recognition that conservative and radical elements coexist within the Corinthian correspondence, raising questions over how far Paul can be described as a cultural critic and, hence, shaping his contribution to a dialogue with rights thought. Indeed, just as human rights have been accused of appearing to criticize social inequality while in fact underpinning it,[167] Paul's ambiguous stance has led to accusations that, despite some laudable rhetoric, his impact was socially repressive.[168] As such, some prefer to describe Paul's social stance as inconsistent or contradictory, rather than merely ambiguous.[169] The terminology adopted to some extent reflects assumptions about Paul's capacity for coherence, however, and as the prospect of dialogue with an incoherent partner is less than appealing he will be given the benefit of the doubt here.

There are, admittedly, dangers in such a position. Wire's robust reconstruction of the Corinthian situation, for instance, presents Paul as pursuing consistent goals.[170] However, her reconstruction has been undermined by criticism,[171] leaving the Paul she depicts an unconvincing figure because

it—he does legitimate an ecclesiastical hierarchy in which he is at the top (at least in relation to the Corinthians). He outlines a hierarchy of leading functions (12.28-30), calls for submission to particular leaders (16.16), and presents himself as the Corinthians' only father—a position from which he is able (and willing) to threaten them with punishment (4.14-21)' (*Social Ethos*, p. 197).

166. 'Proceeding from the logic of Paul's cross-centered theology, one would expect the complete rejection of patriarchalism. Yet Paul, as has often been both bemoaned and celebrated, does not go that far. His use of patriarchal language and structures is not always clear and has led some scholars to paint Paul as a visionary egalitarian while others have insisted that he was a patriarchal conservative. Either conclusion, if stated without severe qualification, is incorrect' (Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 141).

167. See, e.g., the account of liberation theology's attitude toward human rights in Engler, 'Rights of the Poor'.

168. See, e.g., J.D. Gordon, *Sister or Wife? 1 Corinthians 7 and Cultural Anthropology* (JSNTSup, 149; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 119-20; D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 198-99.

169. E.g. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, pp. 183-85; E.H. Pagels, 'Paul and Women: A Response to Recent Discussion', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42 (1974), pp. 538-49 (544).

170. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, pp. 9, 15.

171. E.g. Witherington (*Conflict and Community*) accuses Wire of an 'overuse of mirror-reading' (p. 231) and of distorting the implications of Paul's teaching because she misunderstands his social context (p. 177). Wire's reconstruction also suffers from being determined by her presuppositions about Paul. Thus, for example, it is unlikely that anyone not working with an a priori assumption that Paul is a destructive, rigid thinker concerned with his own status over the Corinthians would find sufficient reason

his drive and definition rely upon the backdrop she paints. Assertions about Paul's consistency, in other words, are easily destabilized if just one aspect can be unpicked or cast in a different light. Yet, while the presence of tensions within Paul's social stance can hardly be denied, there are reasons for not overemphasizing them. They may, for example, be more striking for contemporary readers, looking in from afar, than they were for Paul's intended audience, knowing as they did the nuances of their particular situation and thus being able to handle Paul's comments with greater flexibility. Statements that appear one way today, or that have come to bear a certain interpretive weight, may have been written and received quite differently, affecting perceptions of Paul's social thought. On a related matter, for example, Horrell suggests that the οὐ πολλοί assertions of 1 Cor. 1.26 are more than simple indicators of sociological information, the end that they commonly serve today. While they do transmit such information—accurately if Paul wanted to convince those who would know—their aim is elsewhere, in the rhetorical impact Paul desires.[172] To see only the information dimension of this or any other Corinthian pericope, neglecting its rhetorical content and setting, is to run the risk of distorting Paul, of potentially pulling asunder statements which may in fact be held together in tension if their location within the rhetorical aims of the Corinthian correspondence is recognized. Talk of ambiguity also reflects an understanding that Paul's world was as complicated as our own,[173] not some 'pure' environment wherein right and wrong relationships were easy to assess. Every social situation imposes a tangle of factors—reinforcing, contradicting or acting without reference to one another—upon those living within it.[174] Such complications make a monolithic stance on social issues almost impossible. Paul cannot say and do the same things in every instance without losing touch with the social realities within which he is working, but that need not imply

to depict Chloe's people as telling Paul 'alarmist' tales about the community which he feels compelled to respond to (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 41).

172. 'To those all too conscious of their lowly status within Corinthian society and their inability to boast in their worldly position, Paul announces that God has chosen them…to shame the powerful who place great value upon worldly status' (Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 134).

173. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 104.

174. MacDonald, for example, identifies 'the beliefs and norms of Greco-Roman society', the formation of a distinct community, 'the "mystical" experience of salvation' and the need for unity as some of the forces acting upon one another and upon the early Christians as they sought to understand/articulate their new identity (*Pauline Churches*, p. 73). See also E. Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* [London: SCM Press, 1983], p. 81), who says that 'Christians do not shed their cultural mind-set totally at their conversion, they must integrate it with the new self- and group-identity'.

that he must be saying and doing contradictory things. Indeed, nuanced, ambiguous consistency seems a rather safer assessment of Paul than does outright self-contradiction, given the value which the Corinthians' preservation of his letters suggests that they accorded his thought.

While 'ambiguity' denotes a less radical discontinuity than 'contradiction', however, it also describes a real, perhaps unexpected absence of simple uniformity. Thus Beker claims that Paul's 'high ecclesiology' and conception of a 'messianic life-style' lead to expectations of social transformation which are 'not unambiguously fulfilled'.[175] Beker explains this uneven realization of Paul's social potential by reference to the apostle's focus. Paul's first concern, he says, was with 'the internal religious-social life of the church' rather than 'the social institutions and moral customs of his world'. Thus, in Gal. 3.28 terms, Paul was more concerned with the Jew-Gentile axis than with either male-female or slave-free relationships. For Beker, Paul

> insists on the importance of the 'Jew nor Greek' clause because it chiefly concerns life within the church and has no direct implications for society. Equality within the church is the supreme value, and the extension of that equality into the sphere of the secular family and the social mores of society is hardly discussed. The equality of Jew and Greek concerns the intramural life of the church, because their inequality would threaten its basic existence.[176]

While Beker's assertion that there are 'no direct implications' for society in a statement which relativizes ethnicity may be questionable,[177] there is something to be said for this sort of analysis of Pauline ambiguity. A parallel case can certainly be made, for instance, that Paul is most consistently critical of Corinthian culture when he is addressing issues through his Christ paradigm, where suffering service rather than self-promotion is the norm. Paul's use of this paradigm is largely targeted at flawed relationships within the community or between it and its leaders (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.1-5; 8.9-13; 2 Cor. 1.3-7; 13.3-9); factors which pertain to the community's 'basic existence'. Where Paul's attention is focused upon issues of social structure (e.g. 1 Cor. 7; 11.3-16; 14.34-35), however, his concern with the Christ paradigm is far less explicit than we might have expected given the inevitable overlap between such structures and the relationships of those within them.[178]

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175. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, pp. 318-19.

176. Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 319.

177. A fact which Beker himself recognizes a few pages after this comment (*Paul the Apostle*, p. 325).

178. That Paul draws upon Christ imagery to make his point in such passages cannot be denied (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.3). However his use of Christ in such texts drifts away from status- and power-inversion, becoming much more a confirmation of order and hierarchy as they are perceived.

Whether that makes these issues less pressing for Paul is another matter, as are whether he sees a Christ-like pattern as less relevant in such areas, or whether he is being a true social conservative in them. What can be said, though, is that it is within these latter texts that the conservative Paul has most often been found.

Because all his letters were written into fledgling Christian communities, addressing the particular issues they faced rather than setting forth an overall critique of and vision for society, it is difficult to judge exactly what potential for social change Paul saw his thought possessing. Certainly, Paul was convinced of the power of the gospel to transform lives and relationships within believing communities (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.18; 2 Cor. 5.14-19; 13.4), and, as Meggitt insists, there is no reason to think that he would have been blind to its broader potential: 'As a Roman citizen, a man who lived his entire life within the boundaries of the Empire, it would be ludicrous to assert that Paul would not have been aware of the subversive dimension to his teaching and the political implications of his words'.[179] There is a difference, however, between awareness of broader potential and being able to see every possibility. Perhaps what appears to later readers as Paul's reluctance to bring the gospel to bear upon social issues was actually the product of his vision being limited both by proximity to that which we would have him change and by his own particular theological focus.[180] Whether, in other words, Paul would have been able to conceive of an end to slavery or of true sexual egality is doubtful,[181] and even had he done so his perspective was perhaps such that they might have seemed relatively inconsequential goals; παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (1 Cor. 7.31).[182]

As has been shown, Paul's counter-cultural conception of power indicates a desire to see less of Corinth and more of Christ in the Christian community.[183] Robertson describes Paul's Corinthian correspondence as addressing a 'double dilemma': the need to bolster corporate unity and identity, reducing internal conflicts, 'while at the same time *heightening a*

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179. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 188.

180. Contra Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 323.

181. See, e.g., Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 699; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 42; O. O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 264-65; O. Patterson, 'Paul, Slavery and Freedom: Personal and Socio-Historical Reflections', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 263-79 (266-69).

182. S.S. Bartchy, *Μᾶλλον Χρῆσαι: First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians* (SBL Dissertation Series, 11; Missoula, MT: SBL, 1973), p. 174.

183. Thus Adams describes Paul's analysis of the Corinthian community's 'overarching problem' as 'a failure to maintain clear lines of distinction between the Christian group and the wider society: the Corinthians were not sufficiently differentiating themselves in terms of their practices, beliefs and attitudes and their social and religious participation outside the church' (*Constructing the World*, p. 93, also pp. 149, 243).

sense of conflict on the part of those within the church towards the outside world, thus fortifying and clarifying the church's boundaries'.[184] To be separated by boundaries, united in difference from the rest of Corinth, is clearly to be apart from and thus critical of the culture at some level. Yet Paul also shows some concern with fitting in, not being so different that shock and offence hamper the gospel's appeal (ἀπρόσκοποι καὶ Ἰουδαίοις γίνεσθε καὶ Ἕλλησιν καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, 1 Cor. 10.32).[185] Perhaps too much has been made of 1 Cor. 9.22 (τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα) in this regard.[186] However, the import and direction of Paul's thought there—his bending over backwards in order to save some (τινὰς σώσω) and for the gospel's sake (διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, 9.23)—does indicate a less absolute rejection of broader social opinion than some of his other Corinthian comments might suggest (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.3; 6.1-6;[187] 2 Cor. 6.14). Similarly, Paul's appeal to 'natural' hair length (1 Cor. 11.14-15), his recommendation about not confronting unbelievers with incomprehensible utterances (1 Cor. 14.23), suggestion

184. Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth*, p. 28, original emphasis. Barclay agrees: 'While allowing a degree of social contact with "outsiders", Paul still paints the starkest contrast between the church and the world. He understands the church as a community whose rules govern all departments of life and he expects the members to find in it their primary and dominant relationships: their ties to their fellow ἀδελφοί and ἀδελφαί are to be more significant than any others. The Corinthians, however, seem to understand the social standing of the church quite differently. They see no reason to view the world through Paul's dark, apocalyptic spectacles and are no doubt happy to enjoy friendly relations with their families and acquaintances' ('Thessalonica and Corinth', p. 60). See also Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 85-103; Barton, *Life Together*, p. 192; C.S. deVos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with their Wider Civic Communities* (SBL Dissertation Series, 168; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), pp. 205-25, 232.

185. Adams, while emphasizing Paul's desire 'to sharpen the distinction between the church and the surrounding society' (*Constructing the World*, p. 102), recognizes that as qualified by Paul's missionary aims. He thus helpfully outlines the ambiguous character of Paul's stance toward the community's social setting: Paul 'emphatically rejects the idea that the church should be a ghetto… ([1 Cor.] 5.10). He affirms that association with non-Christians is necessary and is to be encouraged (10.27), not least for the purpose of evangelism (14.23). He counsels believers in mixed marriages not to separate from their unbelieving spouses… (7.14). He recognizes that a degree of social identification with unbelievers is necessary in order to bring them to Christ, and he offers himself as a positive example of this (9.19-23)… He does, though, place certain constraints on their dealings with outsiders: by limiting some of the settings of their social interaction (6.1-11, 15-16; 8.10; 10.1-22); by advising unmarried Christians only to marry "in the Lord" (7.40); by warning them about the corrupting effects of spending too much time in the company of outsiders (15.33)' (pp. 97-98).

186. See Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, pp. 304-16.

187. Although even here Paul's concern is as much for the community to not be divided and 'defeated' (ἥττημα, 1 Cor. 6.7), and seen as such by outsiders, as it is with knocking the secular judges' competence.

that eating with unbelievers is acceptable unless the food's background is explicitly cultic (ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, Τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν, 1 Cor. 10.27-28), and assertion of the absurdity of withdrawal from the world (1 Cor. 5.9-10) also suggest some level of cultural openness and appropriation.[188] More significant for the purposes of a dialogue with human rights, however, is Paul's apparent endorsement of many of his culture's structures and standards, including those which rights-aware societies reject in principle and practice. How Paul deals with slaves and women, those least favoured by the dominant, kyriarchal cultural model, is of more immediate import for his contribution to a dialogue with rights thought than is his rhetoric about becoming 'all things', although both matter.

c. *Social Location: Paul Confronting Corinth*

Paul's rhetoric and action need to be seen in context, against their Corinthian backdrop, if their social significance is to be fully understood. Constraints of space and historical certainty legislate against any comprehensive account of life in Corinth being offered here, but some aspects can be highlighted as a basis upon which to build judgments of Paul's social impact. Prominent among reasons for choosing to dialogue with Paul's Corinthian correspondence are the insights offered by 1 Corinthians in particular into the community's social life. As Clarke summarizes,

> 1 Corinthians is a letter which, more transparently than any other in the Pauline corpus, sheds light on the social situation which prevailed in an early Christian community. What marks this congregation…is the range of social status represented amongst its members. Many of the root problems in the church derived from internal tensions between the relatively rich and the relatively poor. More particularly, Paul responded to those of high social status who were using that social status as a tool with which to alienate or crush the poor. It then becomes significant that this congregation, in contrast to many other Pauline churches, finds itself in little conflict with the surrounding Graeco-Roman culture. Indeed, theirs is a comfortable life in direct contrast to that of the apostle's. The reason for this is that so many of the church's leaders continued to imbibe the culture of their surrounding society.[189]

188. W.A. Meeks (*The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993]) thinks that this reflects the 'broader and more complex experience' of urban society enjoyed by Pauline communities than that of other New Testament groups, imparting a 'somewhat less unrelievedly hostile' tenor to Paul's dealings with 'the world' (p. 61). He accepts that Paul's views are far from simply pro-*kosmos* (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.18-29; 2.6, 8; 2 Cor. 4.4) but finds questions 'about practical participation in everyday affairs of the larger society' impinging upon matters of purely communal concern (p. 62).

189. Clarke, *Serve the Community*, p. 185. For more on the Corinthian community's unusually harmonious relations with broader society, see Adams, *Constructing the World*, pp. 149, 243; Barclay, 'Thessalonica and Corinth'. For more on differences

While not all agree with this reconstruction, finding less diversity in the community's demographic[190] or theological[191] profiles, Clarke's general position enjoys considerable support (although whether and how social tensions were *root* causes of the Corinthian community's problems is somewhat more controversial). Certainly, the account given in Chapter 3 of Pauline leadership as counter cultural, running against the expectations of the Corinthian elite, suggests that at least Clarke's description of status-driven Christian leaders holds water. Others concur, emphasizing the compelling priority of honour and social standing within Corinthian society. Thus, while deSilva comments that the whole 'culture of the first-century world was built on the foundational social values of honor and dishonor',[192] he sets Corinth apart, describing it as characterized by an 'especially prominent thirst for honor, and the desire for public recognition'.[193] Paul perceived such personal drives as a threat to the stability and unity of the believing community,[194] and challenged his audience to imitate his own dishonour and social lowering (1 Cor. 4.6-16[195]),[196] as well as reminding them that, counter culturally, honour was

in wealth being a factor in communal division, see, e.g., Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, pp. 204-14, Horrell, *Social Ethos*, pp. 104-105, Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 67-72, Theissen, *Social Setting*.

190. E.g. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, pp. 97-154.

191. Wire, for example, finds a singular, socially inclusive opposition to Paul behind the repeated use of various rhetorical strategies in 1 Corinthians. 'The basic argument remains the same…and indicates, not separate and unrelated problems in the church, but one problem: a wisdom, freedom, and fluency in the church—perhaps particularly among its prophesying women—that threatens Paul's gospel and leadership' (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 15).

192. D.A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), p. 23. See also Clarke, *Serve the Community*, p. 77; Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 12; Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, pp. 211-12.

193. DeSilva, *Hope of Glory*, p. 119. See also Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 6-17.

194. Moxnes, 'Social Integration', p. 101. See also Meeks' analysis of Paul's unease with the Corinthians' Lord's Supper practices (1 Cor. 11.17-34): 'the death of Christ for all, symbolized in the Supper, implies that participants in the Supper ought to put the needs and feelings of one another ahead of their private honor. That connection had evidently not been obvious to the Christians in Corinth' (*Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 97).

195. Barclay considers 1 Cor. 4.10 (ἡμεῖς μωροὶ διὰ Χριστόν, ὑμεῖς δὲ φρόνιμοι ἐν Χριστῷ· ἡμεῖς ἀσθενεῖς, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰσχυροί· ὑμεῖς ἔνδοξοι, ἡμεῖς δὲ ἄτιμοι) to be an 'ironic rebuke' of the Corinthian conviction that becoming Christian advanced one's status ('Thessalonica and Corinth', p. 57), an attractive notion given their desire for social enhancement.

196. 'Paul's rejection of Greco-Roman cultural conventions, the abandonment of the status which he had, especially as a Roman citizen, and the intentional debasement

not the criterion by which they were accepted into the community,[197] quite the reverse (1 Cor. 1.26-29).[198] Many of the key symbols Paul utilized in dealing with the Corinthians are polemical, at least in their opposition to the norms of a status obsessed culture. His emphasis upon the cross as the heart of his proclamation (1 Cor. 1.17-18, 23; 2.2),[199] for instance, as well as his reminders that Jesus' suffering servanthood was both model for and salvation of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1.18; 4.16-17; 11.12; 2 Cor. 13.4) confronted their notions of honour with, as deSilva puts it, a culture critical 'true basis for honor'.[200] This critique of cultural honour values in the content of the gospel is continued in Paul's references to the character of his proclamation: he preached Christ crucified without wisdom and power (οὐκ ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου), and not for his own ends (1 Cor. 1.23-25; 2.1-5; 4.9-12; 9.22; 2 Cor. 4.5-7; 13.4). Pogoloff connects notions of wisdom and rhetorical eloquence

which was endemic to his idea of διακονία were all symbolic actions which represented an alternative set of values and social order to that of the larger society' (Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, p. 211).

197. 'Paul argues that God's overturning of the world's system is evident in the social make-up of the Corinthian church itself. Paul contends that God's elect is not society's élite. God does not work with the canons of honour and value operative in the dominant culture. Indeed, he has shattered these conventional canons in the cross. The social composition of the Corinthian community thus bears witness to God's reversal of the world's estimations of wisdom, power and social worth' (Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 114).

198. H.H.D. Williams III describes Paul employing the cross as 'the first antidote' to the problems of a community wracked by status diversity and competition (1 Cor. 1.17-18); 'the message of the cross cuts across divisions based upon worldly claims of wisdom, power, and wealth and treats everyone the same in saving them' (1 Cor. 1.26-31) ('Living as Christ Crucified: The Cross as a Foundation for Christian Ethics in 1 Corinthians', *Evangelical Quarterly* 75.2 [2003], pp. 117-31 [121]).

199. Pickett (*Cross in Corinth*) says that 'For Paul the cross of Christ was a symbol of reversal, turning the prevailing notions of weakness and power, and honour and shame upside down' (p. 211). And 'Since honour and strength were qualities highly esteemed in the Greco-Roman world, the cross is perceived to be foolish precisely because it symbolizes weakness and shame' (p. 71). See also J.D.G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (New Testament Guides; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), p. 104; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 134; Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 65.

200. DeSilva, *Hope of Glory*, p. 121. DeSilva maintains that the Corinthians had largely missed the 'transvaluation of dominant cultural norms' inherent in the gospel of a crucified messiah, and that 'Paul's responses show that many…have not been adequately socialized into the ethos of the new group. They have, rather, imported their primary socialization, which included an emphasis on competition for honor and on displays of beauty, power, and charisma as marks of one's honor and giftedness, into the new social body. They have, moreover, imported other markers of precedence, such as wealth or social status, into the life of this new body, so as further to reconstruct the outside world's ladder of honor within the community. Paul seeks to complete their socialization into the culture of the new body'.

with divisive, elitist attitudes toward social status in Corinth, and finds Paul undermining them in denying that his preaching and baptizing conferred status (1 Cor. 1.12-31).[201]

Some suggest that the Corinthian preoccupation with honour was an outworking of the city's particular history.[202] While such claims are inevitably speculative, Corinth's unusual background would certainly have influenced the socio-cultural environment which was home to Corinthian believers and which Paul had to address.[203] An earlier settlement having been destroyed by Rome in 146 BCE, the Corinth Paul knew was a relatively young city, established as a Roman colony in 44 BCE[204] and populated by a larger than normal proportion of Roman freedmen.[205] Widespread experiences of servitude, the city's Roman character[206] and its burgeoning

201. Such denial reflects, for Pogoloff, a situation in which Paul has been judged by his rhetoric: 'Those "of Paul" have perceived him as possessing the status indicator of eloquence, while those "of Apollos" perceive Apollos superior in this regard' (*Logos and Sophia*, p. 119). For a broader perspective upon the intermingling of wisdom and social power which draws upon the Corinthian example, see Watson, 'Christ, Community'.

202. T.B. Savage, for example, asserts that, 'Since the Corinthians were largely of servile descent they possessed, on the whole, *greater* thrust and vigour than people living where freedmen were less dominant. Consequently, they placed a *higher* premium on social prominence and self-display, on personal power and boasting. Likewise, they were *more* inclined to honour success and reward primacy and *more* prone to ridicule the poor and humble. When Corinthians evaluated each other they looked for the same symbols of worth which they prized for themselves—wealth, assertive speech, abusive behaviour, a head carried high—anything which might elevate them above their neighbours' (*Power Through Weakness: Paul's Understanding of the Christian Ministry in 2 Corinthians* [SNTS Monograph Series, 86; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 52, original emphasis).

203. Polaski, *Discourse of Power*, p. 49.

204. Despite the century-long gap in habitation this suggests, there is an increasing scholarly recognition that Corinth ceased as a political unit between these dates rather more than it did as a settlement. However, the level of habitation and economic activity on the site at this time remains somewhat in question (see, e.g., Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', pp. 2-4).

205. McCant finds half the Corinthian names cited in the New Testament to be Roman (*2 Corinthians*, p. 25).

206. Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', p. 6. In 27 BCE Achaia was established as a senatorial province centred on Corinth which was itself growing so fast as to be acknowledged one of the empire's foremost cities and of distinctly Roman character. For more detail, see, e.g., R.M. Grant, *Paul in the Roman World: The Conflict at Corinth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001); L.F. deVries, *Cities of the Biblical World: An Introduction to the Archaeology, Geography, and History of Biblical Sites* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), pp. 359-68; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1-6; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 5-9; B.W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids:

economic well-being[207] almost certainly set Corinth somewhat apart from other Greek cities, providing unique challenges for Paul to address.[208]

Perhaps the most contested issue in discussions of the sociology of Pauline Christianity, and that of the Corinthian community in particular, is the role of 1 Cor. 1.26 and its notorious οὐ πολλοί clauses. While already described as more than just sociologically significant, this verse

Eerdmans, 2001), pp. xii, 7-28. J. Murphy-O'Connor even suggests that reading certain aspects of the Corinthian correspondence (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.17-34) within a framework of Roman customs helps to make sense of some otherwise puzzling details ('House-Churches and the Eucharist', in E. Adams and D.G. Horrell [eds.], *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004], pp. 129-38 [134-36]).

207. Savage (*Power through Weakness*, pp. 87-88) sees materialism as of particular significance for the Corinthian Christians and their relationship with Paul: 'The disappointment over Paul's "lack" is hardly surprising…in the first century material affluence was an important measure of personal worth. Consequently, people placed great value on money and wealth. It was axiomatic that leaders were drawn from the "financially sound and fit"… An impoverished leader was a contradiction in terms. Nowhere were these attitudes more prominent than in Corinth, that "great and wealthy" city (Str. 8.6.23), "everywhere full of wealth" (Aristid. *Or*. 46.27), "abounding in luxuries" (Alciphron *Ep*. 3.24.3), whose aggressive citizens were said to "pride themselves on their wealth" (D. Chr. *Or*. 9.8) and to be "ungracious…among their luxuries" (Alciphron *Ep*. 3.15.1). Here, more than elsewhere, wealth was a prerequisite for honour and poverty a badge of disgrace. It is unlikely that Corinthian Christians escaped this emphasis on materialism. Indeed they themselves seem to have been a prosperous group, at least in comparison to other churches. Paul contrasts their abundance (τὸ ὑμῶν περίσσευμα) with the poverty of Jerusalem Christians (τὸ ἐκείνων ὑστέρημα, 2 Corinthians 8:14), for whom the Corinthians are asked to produce a "sizeable" offering (ἁδρότης, 8-20). He contrasts them as well with the Macedonians, whom he "robs" for his mission in Corinth (ἄλλας ἐκκλησίας ἐσύλησα, 11.8)… The fact that these well-heeled Corinthians are now attacking Paul for his refusal of support would seem to underscore their indebtedness to the materialistic outlook of their day'.

208. Thiselton, for example, finds this combination giving rise to a '*self-sufficient, self-congratulatory culture…coupled with an obsession about peer-group prestige, success in competition, their devaluing of tradition and universals, and near contempt for those without standing in some chosen value system*' (*First Corinthians*, p. 17, original emphasis). Horsley reaches a similar conclusion, describing the socio-cultural ethos of Corinth as characterized by 'atomistic individualism, an obsession with status, and a competitive spirit' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 30). Witherington's description depicts the same sort of pattern: 'Corinth was a city where an enterprising person could rise quickly in society through the accumulation and judicious use of newfound wealth. It seems that in Paul's time many in Corinth were already suffering from a self-made-person-escapes-humble-origins syndrome. Corinth was a magnet for the socially ambitious, since there were many opportunities for merchants, bankers, and artisans to gain higher social status and accumulate a fortune in this city refounded by freed slaves' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 20).

is at least that. Opinions differ, however, as to what it actually meant for
Paul to describe the Corinthian community in οὐ πολλοί terms. Meggitt
claims that too many now read high social rank into σοφός, δυνατός and
εὐγενής in 1 Cor. 1.26, objecting that their semantic value need not be the
same for Paul as for various classical authors.[209] The thrust of Paul's rheto-
ric, however, seems to work against this position. Paul is rebuking those
who strain after what affords prestige in the world's eyes (cf. wisdom in
1 Cor. 1.16-31). In Corinth that certainly included social status,[210] making
these terms more likely to refer to high social rank than not, and thus the
οὐ πολλοί clauses actually to be describing the community's social shape;
'not many' meaning that some *were* wise, powerful and noble.[211] And if the
Corinthian community did include relatively wealthy, powerful members as

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209. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 103. He protests against the sort of con-
clusion Clarke draws, that 'Paul's use of these significant terms in 1 Cor. 1:26 clearly
implies that there were in the congregation some from the ruling class of society'
(*Secular and Christian Leadership*, p. 110). See also Strom, *Reframing Paul*, p. 180.
For Meggitt, the assumption that Aristotle's or Philo's use of language need deter-
mine Paul's reveals 'an unreflective, crudely denotative view of language' (*Paul,
Poverty and Survival*, p. 103). While his caution over a monosemous view of these
terms (p. 104) is commendable, Meggitt's assertion that the social description which
he admits they offer in 1 Cor. 1.26 is impenetrable (p. 105) seems less safe; denying
widely attested language use on limited evidence in order to fit his presupposed view
of early churches.

210. B.W. Winter (*Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citi-
zens* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994], p. 164) summa-
rizes Paul's rhetoric here as forbidding Christians from yearning 'to join the "class"
of the "wise, mighty and well-born" whose significance was most visible in the public
place… Their aspirations represent a failure thankfully to acknowledge what they
were by virtue of their calling in Christ (1.26-31). Their conduct…reflects a perception
of themselves determined by the concerns of those who sought mobility in *politeia*'.
Chester adds that Paul's 'intention is to undermine any notion that social status is of
ultimate significance before God', denying both low and high status 'as a qualification
for divine approval' (*Conversion at Corinth*, p. 91).

211. As Horrell points out, this coheres with other indications that 'some members of
the congregation had a degree of wealth and social power'. 'The references in 1 Cor.
4.8ff to the Corinthians being already full and rich are generally understood theo-
logically, as a reflection of their "realized eschatology", but Paul's description of their
present abundance (2 Cor. 8.14) in contrast to the poverty of the Macedonian believers
(2 Cor. 8.2), in a context which certainly refers to material things, suggests that at least
some of the Corinthians seemed quite prosperous. Similarly 1 Cor. 11.17-34 clearly
shows that some in the community could afford lavish amounts of food and drink, in
a way which contrasted them with other community members who are described as
τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας, 'the have-notes' (1 Cor. 11.22). 1 Cor 6.1ff reveals that some of the
Corinthian believers were pursuing cases of litigation, a legal procedure most likely
to have been pursued by those with some degree of wealth and status' (*Social Ethos*,
p. 95). See also Duling, *New Testament*, p. 176.

well as many who were not, then the implications for communal relation-ships were far-reaching, throwing up some inevitable problems, especially where Corinth rather than Christ was setting the agenda.

In Paul's world, patronal relationships[212] were the inevitable outcome in any situation where those who had wealth and/or power and/or social stand-ing came into contact with those who did not.[213] Recent literature on the Corinthian correspondence demonstrates a healthy awareness of the sig-nificance of patronage for all within first-century Mediterranean cultures,[214] especially those who, as in Corinth, lived under the sway of Rome.[215]

212. J.K. Chow describes patronage as 'an asymmetrical exchange relationship. The parties on both ends of such a tie are unequal in the control of resources, and so differ in terms of power and status. They are bound together mainly because their tie can serve their mutual interests through the exchange of resources' ('Patronage in Roman Corinth', in R.A. Horsley [ed.], *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Impe-rial Society* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997], pp. 104-25 [105]). For a summary of the characteristic features of patronal relationships, see Chow's *Patronage and Power*, pp. 31-32.

213. While somebody blessed in one area would often enjoy advantage in all three, that was not always the case, and roles within patronal relationships were not simply a function of individual wealth. Theissen argues convincingly against a purely theologi-cal description of the 'weak' and 'strong' groupings in Corinth (*Social Setting*, pp. 121-40). However, the temptation of following him into defining such groups primarily in economic terms (i.e. 'rich' and 'poor') is to be resisted. As Winter says, such terminol-ogy provides an 'imprecise and misleading description of the social dichotomy of any Roman colony or any Greek city in the first century'. Winter prefers the use of Pauline terms instead: the 'haves' and 'have nots' (τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας, 1 Cor. 11.22), where 'have nots' are the socially insecure, lacking the support provided by patronal ties whatever their economic standing and the 'haves' might not be wealthy but enjoyed relation-ships which guaranteed their protection (*Seek the Welfare*, p. 203). See also Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 40.

214. Although that is not to suggest that all agree about the detail of patronage's sig-nificance. See, e.g., Chow, *Patronage and Power*; deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity*; Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*; Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*.

215. Thus, for example, Dunn comments that 'Roman society, and we must bear in mind that Corinth was a Roman (re)foundation, was largely built round a patron-client structure. In this relationship patron and client obligated themselves to each other, the patron providing financial resources, employment, protection, influence… the client giving the patron his support, providing information and service and acting on the patron's behalf. The relationship was hierarchical, the patron providing access to resources (including power and influence) which otherwise would be unavailable to the client. Society was thus structured around a graduated hierarchy of patron-client ties… [S]ince patronage was endemic to the social order within which the church had to operate in Corinth, we can take it for granted that the members of the Corinthian church would function within such patronal relationships' (*1 Corinthians*, pp. 50-51). See also J.D.G. Dunn, 'Reconstructions of Corinthian Christianity and the Interpreta-tion of 1 Corinthians', in E. Adams and D.G. Horrell (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth:*

Although it should not be considered the only factor, those seeking a high or improved profile in an honour-obsessed city would certainly have been concerned about their place within various patronal networks.[216] However, the pervasiveness of patronal relationships meant that even those without social aspiration would have had their lives shaped by them to some extent:[217] they set the conditions for many clients' everyday existence and restricted the possibilities of mass movements among the non-elite.[218] Patronage was thus an inescapable factor as Paul sought to relate to the Corinthian community and to address their social questions (Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, 1 Cor. 7.1). His less than ringing endorsement of the patronal leadership model has already been noted, and while it would be going too far to claim that he opposed patronage without equivocation,[219] Paul shows little interest in affirming its

The Quest for the Pauline Church (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), pp. 295-310 (304); Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, p. 143.

216. As Chow comments, 'if one wanted to get ahead of other competitors, something more than wealth perhaps was needed. Good family background was helpful. But since most of the distinguished nobles were eager to honor the imperial house in one way or another a connection with the Roman authorities might have given an ambitious person the edge. By the same token, the support of influential men in the city council might also be sought by men who wanted to climb the ladder of power in Corinth, especially if they did not have a particularly good background. Proper public relations were an important factor contributing to one's success in the pursuit of fame and power. In short, patronage was *one* of the ways through which society in Corinth was organized. Because of such relations, people at different levels, from the emperor down to a citizen in a town, were linked together, even though their interests might not be the same' ('Patronage in Roman Corinth', p. 117, original emphasis).

217. While it would be a mistake to assume that every 'poor' person was bound to a patron, especially those with little to offer (P. Garnsey and S. Saller, 'Patronal Power Relations', in R.A. Horsley [ed.], *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997], pp. 96-103 [100]), the pervasive character of patronage meant that its influence was felt by all, even if only in the impact upon lifestyle and prospects wrought by omission. On patronal relationships as vital for life within Pauline communities, see H. Moxnes, 'What is Family? Problems in Constructing Early Christian Families', in H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 13-41 (25-26). See also the discussion of 1 Cor. 9 in Chapter 3 on Paul's reluctance to even appear as tied to Corinthian patrons.

218. Although Horrell is careful not to paint patronage as the only factor (*Social Ethos*, p. 67), he does identify it as significant in the prevention of anything like a class consciousness developing. 'Wider class unity', he says, was 'dissipated by the many "vertical" links which bound slaves and freedpersons not to one another but to their patrons and their households' (p. 68). See also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 29-30.

219. Paul's rhetoric is too nuanced and enculturated for such an assertion to hold water. His claims, for example, to be the Corinthian community's father (1 Cor. 4.15-16; 2 Cor. 12.14), to be owed their gratitude, allegiance and even obedience (e.g. 1 Cor.

guiding principles. Thus, for example, he encourages relationships of mutual respect and service (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.10; 8; 10.24, 32-33; 12.14-27; 16.15-16; 2 Cor. 9.12-13),[220] censures those whose concern is with social status and public recognition (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.26-31; 4.7-21; 2 Cor. 10.12-18; 11.12), and insists upon the capacity of all to contribute both within worship (e.g. 1 Cor. 12.7-11; 14.26-31) and in support of the impoverished believers in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16.1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9).[221] Additionally, while Paul used rhetorical tools, his disapproval of the status-driven and personality-led rhetoric tied up with the patronal system[222] through its obsession with honour is quite clear (e.g. 1 Cor. 2; 2 Cor. 10.9-18).[223] That Paul allows from himself things which he condemns in others (e.g. the boasting of 2 Cor. 11 and 12[224]) shows the pragmatic character of his apostleship. It also, however, highlights what he perceived to be a radical difference between his rhetoric—employed 'in Christ', serving the gospel for others' good (2 Cor. 11.7, 21; 12.15)—and

1.4-7; 4.14; 11.1; 2 Cor. 6.11-13; 10.8) show, as Martin says, that Paul 'himself uses patronal ideology to solidify his own position'. That he was doing so for 'antipatriarchal' ends, to undermine established relational patterns, may make his approach deconstructive but that is not quite the same as claiming Paul to be blanketly anti-patronage (*Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 141-42). Marshall (*Enmity in Corinth*, p. 147) also points out that Paul appears to have enjoyed more 'sponsors' in Corinth than in any other city: Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18.2), Justus (Acts 18.17), Crispus (Acts 18.8; 1 Cor. 1.14), Gaius (1 Cor. 1.14; Rom. 16.23), Erastus (Rom. 16.23), Quartus (Rom. 16.23), Stephanas (1 Cor 1.16), Chloe (1 Cor. 1.11), Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. 16.18). Quite how they and he saw their relationships is not always clear, but it is unlikely that at least the appearance of patronage could have been avoided completely.

220. Strom, *Reframing Paul*, p. 83.

221. 'Paul saw the church as a community with equal rights and honour and would want to build up the church as such. So, instead of asking one or two rich leaders to demonstrate their readiness for benefaction and thereby to reap a harvest of honour, Paul insisted on having everyone, even the poorer members if they could, contribute to the project' (Chow, *Patronage and Power*, p. 186). See also Moxnes's comment that, for Paul, 'Honour and status in the new community is not based on birth, nor on generosity or on fulfilling other functions within the community. That is, honour cannot be achieved, it can only be *ascribed* on the basis of the gift of the Spirit, which is the same to all believers' ('Social Integration', p. 105, original emphasis).

222. Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth*, pp. 210-11.

223. Pogoloff (*Logos and Sophia*) describes those who boasted of their status as 'a normal part of Greco-Roman culture. …these boasts often focussed upon competitions among favored rhetors. The status gained by association with a wise rhetor gave one greater grounds for boasting of one's own status in comparison with another's' (p. 223). Such '*Hybristic* behavior was enjoyable because it brought shame on others, emphasizing one's own honor by comparison' (p. 231).

224. This holds whether Paul's boasting is taken at face value or seen, as, e.g., Pogoloff suggests it should be, as his ironic parodying of the superapostles' rhetorical self-advertisement in order to make them look foolish (*Logos and Sophia*, p. 233).

the culturally approved model, where rhetoric was for self-aggrandizement and self-promotion (2 Cor. 11.12, 20).[225]

Paul confronted the values and practices of Corinth among the believers precisely because they were of Corinth and not of Christ.[226] The Christians' resocialization into their new community was flawed,[227] leaving them assuming Corinthian values to be appropriate in the body of Christ, indeed that they were the values of Christ. The Corinthians had, in other words, what Paul perceived as a christological deficiency: their understanding of Christ and what it meant to be 'in Christ' had been fundamentally polluted by Corinthian culture. As Savage describes,

> For many, influenced by the wisdom of the day…[being 'in Christ'] means championing a Christ who confers a showy status and honour. For Paul, drawing inspiration from the cross, it means conforming to a Jesus of humility and shame. On the one hand, few see anything impressive in the ministry of the humble Paul. On the other hand, Paul sees nothing impressive apart from humility. For the Corinthians, this represents an opaque paradox. For Paul, it is the mystery of Christian ministry.[228]

The inevitable consequence of such diverse perspectives is the sort of confrontational stance found in 1 Corinthians 1–4 and 2 Corinthians 10–12. Paul is clearly not advocating any adoption of socio-cultural values in such passages, yet the impression that he was socially conservative in some matters is a hard one to shake.

Much of the ground covered in the following chapters will turn attention away from issues which Paul addressed through his culture-critical Christ paradigm, and onto issues of social structure, which are where the conservative Paul has most often been found. First, however, and in preparation for

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225. Pogoloff (*Logos and Sophia*, pp. 172-97) suggests that part of the problem in Corinth was that (some in) the church did not appreciate this difference, opting either for or against Paul on the basis of how appealing they found him and his rhetoric because that was part and parcel of the cultural pattern: 'speakers contested not just *what* word but *whose* word would prevail' (p. 173, original emphasis).

226. See Chester, *Conversion at Corinth*, p. 317.

227. Thus Gorman states that the Corinthians' 'stories, ideologies and spiritualities of wisdom and power needed to be deconstructed and reconstructed—reshaped by the story of Christ crucified…1 Corinthians is…subversive of the status quo even within the church, whose values are being turned topsy-turvy' (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 237). This assumes, with Meeks, that Paul expected, but had not got, 'an extraordinarily thoroughgoing resocialization, in which the [Christian] sect was intended to become virtually the primary group for its members, supplanting all other loyalties' (*First Urban Christians*, p. 78). See also Meeks, *Origins of Christian Morality*, pp. 31-32, 109-10; Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, pp. 98-99.

228. Savage, *Power through Weakness*, p. 162. See also A.R. Brown, *The Cross and Human Transformation: Paul's Apocalyptic Word in 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 160.

the discussions to come, Theissen's assertion that a conservative Paul advocated love-patriarchalism as the standard for social relationships requires attention.

d. *Love-Patriarchalism*

Despite the various criticisms levelled at it, the notion of love-patriarchalism remains a significant standard in the scholarly assessment of Paul; providing some with a framework within which to earth their conception of his social conservatism,[229] and others an evaluation to be overcome in their arguments for a more radical Paul.[230] Leaning heavily upon Troeltsch's ideas about a form of patriarchy which 'receives its special colour from the warmth of the Christian idea of love',[231] Theissen presents Pauline Christianity as baptizing the inequalities of established social structures, dissolving their offensiveness through immersion in love. 'This love-patriarchalism takes social differences for granted but ameliorates them through an obligation of respect and love, an obligation imposed upon those who are socially stronger. From the weaker are required subordination, fidelity, and esteem'.[232] Theissen admits that this is a departure from the Synoptics' attitude towards social structures[233] and that its strongest New Testament expression comes with the deutero-Paulines.[234] However, he does find love-

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229. For example, Doohan describes love-patriarchalism as a 'realistic solution to social stratification, emphasizing an equality before God, solidarity and brotherhood', and finds in it the basis of Paul's attitude toward slavery (*Leadership in Paul*, p. 86). See also MacDonald who describes love-patriarchalism as a 'very useful' concept without offering any critique of it (*Pauline Churches*, p. 43).

230. As well as the comments below and in Chapter 7, see, e.g., Horrell, *Social Ethos*, chapter 4.

231. E. Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, I (London: George Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 78. See Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 118 n. 87.

232. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 107.

233. Theissen assumes that this departure is partly the product of Paul's limited knowledge of Jesus traditions and partly a sign that he was uncomfortable with the social radicalism of those traditions he did know. For Theissen, the move from rural, occupied Palestine to an urban Hellenistic context helps explain the more moderate convictions of Paul and his communities; they are removed from the tensions which set ruled against ruler in Palestine, enabling Paul to view all rulers as from God (Rom. 13) (G. Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* [trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978], pp. 115-17). Against this sort of perspective upon Paul's knowledge of and regard for Jesus traditions, see D. Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

234. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 107. MacDonald (*Pauline Churches*) agrees that Paul plays a central role in making love-patriarchalism fundamental to Christian social relations, although she also sees it as more clearly defined after Paul's death (p. 44). She identifies three levels of institutionalization within the Pauline canon which parallel

patriarchalism in Paul's authentic letters, most tellingly in 1 Corinthians 7 and 11,[235] effectively construing Paul as the bridge between an assertively culture-critical Christianity and one which can at most be said to undermine inequitable social structures from within. For Theissen, the great advantage of love-patriarchalism lay in its capacity to include a wide cross-section of society within brotherly communities: the rich found 'a fertile field of activity' while the poor enjoyed solidarity and support alongside 'a fundamental equality of status before God'.[236] That this equality was *only* before God, of spiritual and not social consequence, is a mark of love-patriarchalism's 'moderate social conservatism'; Gal. 3.28 expressed real equality, but only 'in Christ'.[237] Theissen explains:

> In the political and social realm class-specific differences were essentially accepted, affirmed, even religiously legitimated. No longer was there a struggle for equal rights but instead a struggle to achieve a pattern of relationships among members of various strata which would be characterized by respect, concern, and a sense of responsibility. Thus even in the face of increasingly difficult social circumstances … a new form of social integration was available. It held out the chance of a certain humanity to those who were becoming ever more dependent while at the same time it held fast to the idea of fundamental equality of status.[238]

Clearly, if love-patriarchalism did characterize Pauline Christianity and was advocated by Paul, then any human rights aware assessment of his attitude toward the societal status quo is going to draw certain conclusions.[239] So many scholars have questioned love-patriarchalism's place within the Pauline pattern, however, that such conclusions should not simply be assumed. While various of these critiques are briefly outlined below, the real test for ideas of love-patriarchalism offered here comes through the examination of specific Corinthian texts. The pattern of counter-cultural, servant leadership explored in Chapter 3 already raises questions about

the progress of love-patriarchal relationships: (i) the community-building institutionalization of Paul's authentic letters; (ii) the community-stabilizing institutionalization of Colossians and Ephesians; (iii) the community-protecting institutionalization of the Pastorals (p. 29).

235. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 107.

236. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 108.

237. See MacDonald's comment that 'Despite the theological exposition of equality in Gal. 3.28… Paul felt it wiser to advise that the existing order of society be maintained, although interpreting those states according to new life in Christ' (*Pauline Churches*, pp. 43-44).

238. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 109.

239. See, e.g., Schüssler Fiorenza's assessment that if Theissen is right about Christianity's survival, 'the church is not built on prophets and apostles…but on love patriarchalism, that is on the backs of women, slaves and the lower classes' (*In Memory of Her*, pp. 78-80).

love-patriarchalism as an exhaustive description of Paul's social stance,[240] but his dealings with particular social groups are of greater import. Although remaining in the background in much of what follows, then, the question of how far love-patriarchalism provides an accurate or sufficiently nuanced explanation of Paul's handling of women and slaves will be an important factor when considering his potential contribution to human rights debates.

Those who reject love-patriarchalism as an adequate description of Paul's social attitudes generally do so because, whatever its capacity to explain surface readings of certain texts, they judge it to be founded upon misapprehension and misreading. Thus, for Schüssler Fiorenza, Theissen does not find love-patriarchalism within but imposes it upon 1 Corinthians.[241] If she is right, then while it may reflect some later uses of the text, love-patriarchalism is not a reliable guide to Paul's social thought. In effect, Schüssler Fiorenza accuses Theissen of producing a formula to explain the survival and influence of Christianity which he then reads back onto the New Testament;[242] love-patriarchalism is grounded in (a specific sociological account of) later socio-political realities, not in Paul's theology, the spiritual experiences of believers, or the vision for community which flowed out of both.[243] Engberg-Pedersen's critique finds love-patriarchalism to provide a deficient explanation of Paul's teaching because of its focus upon social function and compromise with the status quo rather than a principle-driven stance: for Paul 'the gospel is *about* social practice, in fact about love as the only true "norm" of social practice'.[244] Love is central to Theissen's key Corinthian texts (1 Cor 6.9–7.40; 8.1–11.34), but as the driving dynamic

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240. Hence Martin's (*Slavery as Salvation*) assessment that Paul is actually opposing something very like Theissen's notion of love-patriarchalism within the Corinthian community: 'Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 9 suggests that love-patriarchalism is not the solution offered by Paul. On the contrary, he counters the benevolent patriarchal models of social structure and leadership held by the strong with his own alternative model of the enslaved leader. He uses traditional democratic rhetoric to call into question the benevolent patriarchal maintenance of normal social hierarchy and the appropriateness of normal status indicators. Further, he offers his own activity as a manual laborer as the concrete support for his rhetoric' (p. 129). 'Paul actually had become a manual laborer, although that role seems to have been below his normal social level… Paul does not imply that those of high status should simply care for those of low status; by offering his very real social self-lowering as a model to the strong, Paul implies that they should respond in kind. …to those Greeks and Romans whose symbolic universe was…informed by benevolent patriarchalism, Paul's advice was disturbing and unacceptable' (p. 128).

241. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 79.

242. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 79. Also Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 65.

243. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 79; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 706.

244. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Gospel and Social Practice', pp. 560-61, original emphasis.

of the Pauline gospel,[245] not primarily as an instrument for ameliorating the pain of inequitable social relationships. Paul's self-lowering leadership is patterned on Christ's sacrifice, not motivated by its capacity to maintain the status quo while appealing to both weak and strong in Corinth. Others suggest that Theissen has misunderstood both the social situation into which Paul wrote,[246] and the position he was taking.[247] Thus Horrell describes 1 Corinthians as 'a stark attack on the status and position of the socially prominent members of the community and on the values of the dominant social order'.[248] If so, then Paul is unlikely to have adopted a love-patriarchal attitude per se, even if he does appear to later readers to be sending some rather conservative social messages.

The great strength of the love-patriarchalism theory is its capacity to take what Paul has to say at face value,[249] not attempting to protect him from readings which suggest he had what to modern eyes are unfortunate social values. This is also a fundamental weakness of love-patriarchalism, however. For it leaves little room for more to be going on than the surface of certain texts suggest,[250] taking insufficient account of both cotext and context.[251] Whether it reflects Paul's thought accurately or not, however, love-patriarchalism certainly characterizes the way in which Paul has often been

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245. Engberg-Pedersen, 'Gospel and Social Practice', pp. 560-61.

246. E.g. Chow suggests that while love-patriarchalism fits a diverse social mix within the Corinthian community it can explain neither an apparently united opposition to Paul in 1 Cor. 5 nor deal with Paul's response as the critique of a socially prominent man which, in all likelihood, it was (*Patronage and Power*, pp. 22-23).

247. For example, Witherington thinks it unlikely that Paul adopted the standard model of social relations in the straightforward, uncritical way love-patriarchalism requires. Had he done so, (i) there would be more evidence of *haustafeln* in 1 Corinthians, Theissen's primary source text, and (ii) in those letters where *haustafeln* do appear there would be fewer comments 'modifying and mitigating' traditional patriarchal privileges. Witherington concludes, contra Theissen, that Paul 'does not simply adopt Greco-Roman codes, nor even adapt them and try to soften their harshness by exhorting everyone to love each other' (*Paul Quest*, pp. 266-67).

248. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 198. See also S.S. Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy: The Apostle Paul's Vision of a Society of Siblings', *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 29 (1999), pp. 68-78 (75-76); Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 706; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 129.

249. Or at least what appears to be face value to contemporary readers.

250. See, e.g., Elliott's observation that Theissen fails to engage with the exegetical problems of 1 Cor. 7.21, instead speaking 'quite broadly' of a Paul who takes established social divides as given (*Liberating Paul*, p. 65).

251. It perhaps also relies on a specific depiction of Paul as concerned with saving souls and church growth facilitated by social conformity, rather than as an eschatologically driven yet pastorally aware leader, committed to the application of the gospel whoever it happened to offend. There is probably truth in both images, but to the extent that love-patriarchalism marginalizes one it also fails to describe Paul accurately.

used. Each generation inevitably take up and employ Pauline teachings in ways which meet their needs,[252] whatever those might be and whether or not they cohere with Paul's original position. All too often, such uses have sanctified inequitable social structures without equivocation because a combination of Pauline ambiguity and a readerly inability or unwillingness to look a little deeper leave the impression that this was Paul's stance. While such uses affirm Troeltsch's dictum that 'Christianity will always instinctively fight shy of all ideas of equality' beyond the spiritual realm,[253] they perhaps do less justice to the breadth of Paul's thought, neglecting to balance his counter-cultural rhetoric against his apparent endorsement of the status quo. Within the Corinthian correspondence this endorsement is found most readily in 1 Corinthians 7, and it is upon that text's social pronouncements that most of the rest of this chapter and those which follow focus.[254]

5. *Paul and Social Structures: 1 Corinthians 7*

'Now, for the matters about which you wrote' (Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, 1 Cor. 7.1). Considering that 1 Corinthians is part of a dialogue (1 Cor. 1.11; 5.9; 7.1; 16.17-18), that it takes Paul until this point to address the Corinthians' concerns explicitly might be read as him making plain the low priority he places upon their agenda. Only after he has set them straight upon more important matters, it might be said, does Paul turn to the Corinthians' questions.[255] That these questions appear to revolve largely around social

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252. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 198.

253. Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, p. 76. Troeltsch describes Gal. 3.28 as outlining an 'inner equality' (p. 77) and justifies such claims thus: 'Since Christian individualism is only founded and completed in God, and since Christian universalism is based solely on the all-embracing love of God which leads to the love of one's neighbour, so this equality is definitely limited to the religious sphere. It is an equality which exists purely in the presence of God' (p. 72).

254. Clearly, there are other texts within the Corinthian correspondence with significant social implications (especially 1 Cor. 11.2-16 and 14.33b-36), and they will not be neglected completely. Constraints of space, however, alongside the unique combination of social issues within 1 Corinthians 7, make that text the obvious centre for the examination of Paul's social impact.

255. Hays, for example, describes it as 'striking that Paul takes up the Corinthians' concerns only after writing the lengthy discussion of chapters 1-6, in which he calls for unity, reasserts his authority, forcefully scolds the community, and calls them to new standards of holiness and community discipline. Plainly, he is not content to allow the Corinthians' concerns to set the agenda. He addresses their questions only after carefully rebuilding the foundation upon which he believes answers must be based' (*First Corinthians*, p. 111). This goes against Fee's suggestion that it was Paul, in his former letter (1 Cor. 5.9), who set the agenda to which the Corinthians took exception 'point after point' (*First Corinthians*, p. 267).

issues[256] might then be taken to indicate Paul's limited concern with such matters. As has been shown, however, there are socially, culturally and relationally critical themes running throughout the Corinthian letters, and while Paul does address new areas of social relations here, that should not be taken as a bald indication of his unconcern with the social sphere. Whether such matters are important to Paul or not, however, in addressing them at length he clearly acknowledges their pressing importance for the Corinthian community.[257]

   The interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7 is a notorious divider of Pauline scholarship. On one level, Paul's intent here is quite obvious: he 'is giving ethical instruction, and a rather large amount of it'.[258] Beyond the level of mere description, however, 1 Corinthians 7 contains sufficient potential to provoke wide interpretive rifts, with inevitable implications for the sorts of social impact Paul is seen as having and thus the contribution he is able to bring to a dialogue with human rights. Opinions differ, for example, over the question or questions which Paul was addressing, over the content and coherence of his response (particularly the role of vv. 17-24),[259] and over the social position that saw him adopting.[260] Arguably, at least so far as this

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256. Of the six times Paul uses the περὶ δέ formula in 1 Corinthians, two refer to relationships with believers outside of Corinth (16.1, 12), two address internal community relationships explicitly (7.1, 25), and two tackle issues which, while not wholly social, are approached with relational implications to the fore (8.1; 12.1). While there is some debate as to whether all of these περὶ δέ occurrences imply the ὧν ἐγράψατε of 7.1, at least this first one contains it (making it implied in the second?), showing the Corinthians to be concerned with social matters. On the significance of the περὶ δέ clause, see, e.g., Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 115, Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 110-11, Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, pp. 190-91, Schrage, *Erste Brief*, II, p. 50.

257. It is just this sort of concentration upon (allegedly) atypical Pauline themes which leads Horsley to describe 1 Corinthians as an ad hoc response to 'issues that arose in the life of a particular community at a certain point toward the beginning of its development' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 22).

258. P.W. Gooch, 'Authority and Justification in Theological Ethics: A Study in 1 Corinthians 7', *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 11.1 (1983), pp. 62-74 (65). See also A. Lindemann's comment: 'In kaum einem Abschnitt seiner Briefe geht der Apostel so detailliert und in geradezu kasuistischer Weise auf (individual-) ethische Probleme ein wie hier in 1 Kor 7' ('Die Biblischen Toragebote und die paulinische Ethik', in W. Schrage [ed.], *Studien zum Text und der Ethik des Neuen Testaments* [Festschrift H. Greeven; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986], pp. 242-65 [253]).

259. Thus Gordon describes 'a general sense of unease…about the style and content of Paul's arguments' in 1 Corinthians 7 as well as debate over specific exegetical questions (*Sister or Wife?*, p. 18).

260. For example, Winter's question 'Why was Paul so opposed to…social mobility in *politeia*?' assumes that this is Paul's stance in 1 Corinthians 7 without having discussed the alternatives (*Seek the Welfare*, p. 146). Mitchell adopts a similar position, finding social conservatism the inevitable fruit of Paul's concern with communal

endeavour is concerned, debate over whether 1 Cor. 7.17-24 is illustration,[261] digression,[262] illustrative digression,[263] or the tackling of real issues[264] is of limited consequence; Paul is taking a certain, socially significant stance whether in theory or earthed reality. As such, the question of coherence is probably more pressing: is Paul being consistent, advocating a logical, uniform (and thus replicable) stance on social matters?

Braxton bases his whole reading of 1 Corinthians 7 upon a conviction of its inherent ambiguities, claiming that those who 'prematurely resolve' them, making textual meaning self-evident, exercise 'a form of exegetical tyranny where the text is made to subserve preconceived notions' and ideologies. There is an inevitable loss of depth and texture because simplicity is imposed upon a passage which is not 'inherently lucid'.[265] Braxton's main claim is that 'Paul travels the middle way of ambiguity' on the matter of slaves seeking manumission because he was unable or unwilling to take a particular side.[266] The depth of Paul's vacillation is demonstrated, for

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unity (*Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, pp. 235-36). Swartley, on the other hand, categorizes 1 Corinthians 7 as a 'liberationist' text, like Galatians 3 and Romans 16, rather than a hierarchical text, like 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals (*Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, p. 164).

261. E.g. Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 140 n. 491; Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 307-308; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 100-104. Hays argues that Paul includes these particular illustrations in order to 'parallel precisely' the three 'binary polarities' in the Gal. 3.28 tradition which encapsulate 'Paul's perception of the human condition' (*First Corinthians*, p. 123). Gordon concurs, concluding that 'Paul wrote 7.21-22 not at the prompting of the slaves in the Corinthian congregation, but to provide a supporting argument to his understanding of how men and women were to view "no male and female" within the congregation' (*Sister or Wife?*, p. 165).

262. For example, C. Senft claims that 'Syntaxiquement ils sont (vv. 17-24) si peu ancrés dans le contexte, que leur disparation ne causerait aucune difficulté de lecture' (*La Première Epitre de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* [Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1979], p. 95). See also Prior, *Message of 1 Corinthians*, p. 129.

263. For example, G.W. Dawes locates 1 Cor. 7.17-24 within a tradition of classical rhetoric which used an apparent digression (Greek: *parekbasis*, Latin: *digressio*) to illustrate or further explain an argument. He thus finds these verses to be at the heart of 1 Corinthians 7 and to 'form a carefully balanced illustration of what it is Paul is trying to say about marriage and celibacy' (' "But if you can gain your freedom" (1 Corinthians 7.17-24)', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52.4 [1990], pp. 681-97 [683-84]).

264. For example, Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 3; Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 280.

265. Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution*, pp. 1, 16. For the opposite view, where Paul—a successful communicator who was known by the community—would have been read without ambiguity in Corinth, see D. Instone-Brewer, '1 Corinthians 7 in the Light of the Graeco-Roman Marriage and Divorce Papyri', *Tyndale Bulletin* 52.1 (2001), pp. 101-16 (101).

266. Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 4. Braxton goes on to say that 'The relationship

Braxton, by the fact that centuries later both slave owners and abolitionists appealed to 1 Corinthians 7 for an apostolic endorsement of their case.[267] And while later interpretation may be a questionable yardstick by which to assess Paul's thought,[268] there does seem to be something in Braxton's accusation that many discover coherence within 1 Corinthians 7 because they find there only what their expectations allow them to.[269] Yet assuming Pauline consistency (in whatever direction) because one's presuppositions expect it is surely no worse an interpretive stance than assuming inconsistency for similar reasons, as Braxton appears to. Gordon, who also finds Paul backing away from a clear stance on social matters,[270] suggests that readerly embarrassment over what Paul is apparently saying in 1 Corinthians 7 may also contribute to readings which minimize ambiguities.[271] But while ambiguity there undoubtedly is, there are also themes within 1 Corinthians 7 which lend Paul's writing the feel of unity—even if not of an uncomplicated variety—at very least.

of 1 Corinthians 7.17-24 to the rest of chapter seven is not at all clear, and this is partly the case because the argument in chapter seven itself is not clear' (p. 64).

267. 'There is no more compelling example of this passage's ambiguity than its overt use by *two ideologically opposed social groups*, slavery advocates and abolitionists, to support completely opposite positions, namely the perpetuation or abolition of slavery. The ambiguity sowed initially by Paul and cultivated by conditions in first century CE culture came to full bloom in a particular reception of this text by reading communities nineteen centuries later' (Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution*, pp. 236-37, original emphasis). Gordon finds similar ambiguity being expressed in readings of Paul's stance on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7, it having been used by both pro-marriage and pro-celibacy advocates (*Sister or Wife?*, p. 20).

268. This is not to suggest that later interpretation is the only evidence Braxton offers for Paul's ambiguity in 1 Corinthians 7, although he does seem to regard it as something of an argument clincher. He also claims, e.g., that 'Paul's argument…is not self-evident[, is]…more complex than previously acknowledged and could, in fact, be Paul's attempt to work out the relationship between membership in the ἐκκλησία and other social realities' (*Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 16).

269. In the later debates over slavery, Braxton claims, ideological commitment blinded readers to textual complexity: 'Regardless of the text's ambiguity, they found in this passage what they needed and discounted the rest' (*Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 264).

270. For example, on Christian-unbeliever marriages Gordon (*Sister or Wife?*) finds Paul passing the buck, leaving 'it to the unbeliever to decide whether or not the marriage continues' (p. 15). Whether Paul is encouraging or discouraging divorce remains opaque, for Gordon, through the ambiguity of 1 Cor. 7.16: if it refers back to vv. 12-14 it is a reason for Christians to remain with an unbelieving spouse; if it continues the argument of v. 15 it is a reason for permitting divorce (p. 15, n. 18).

271. This alleged embarrassment has a two-fold foundation: (i) that Paul does not use apostolic authority but appeals to the rather more tentative claims of his maturity and example; (ii) that Paul gives a less than enthusiastic endorsement of marriage (Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 18). On (i), see also Gooch, 'Authority and Justification', pp. 65-66.

The most obvious such theme is that Paul addresses matters of social relations throughout. Within this, however, there are also certain persistent characteristics to 1 Corinthians 7. For example, while there is no explicit mention of God's calling until v. 15, and there is debate over exactly what κλῆσις and its cognates denote,[272] that Paul repeatedly encourages a perspective on social matters which prioritizes such a call—emphasizing relationship with and witnessing service to God (vv. 5, 7, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 32-35)—over other considerations suggests a degree of unity. The widespread identification of the three pairings of Gal. 3.28 within Corinthians 7[273] adds weight to this reading, confirming that Paul is here dealing

272. Wire, for example, insists that κλῆσις refers to social situation (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, pp. 31-32). Similarly, Winter (*Seek the Welfare*, pp. 160-61) reads κλῆσις as 'career path', 'class' or social status in 1 Corinthians 7, citing 1 Cor. 1.26-29 and Dionysius (*Roman Antiquities* II.8-9; IV.18) for support. He can therefore summarize Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 7 as 'each Christian is to "remain in the calling", i.e. class, to which he has been called (ἕκαστος →μενέτω, v. 20)'. See also P. Lampe, 'The Language of Equality in Early Christian House Churches: A Constructivist Approach', in D.L. Balch and C. Osiek (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 73-83 (79). Chester describes Winter's account as 'unlikely'. He criticizes Winter for thinking that etymological influence can flow backwards, finding the meaning of κλῆσις in Dionysius's understanding of *classis* when the latter word is actually derived from κλῆσις (*Conversion at Corinth*, p. 99 n. 170). Chester prefers to understand κλῆσις as that which 'grants a new identity principally in terms of belonging to the people of God' (p. 90), wherein established human relationships are disrupted and new ones created (p. 62). Braxton concurs: 'The call is not equated with social states; rather, it creates a new social reality and a new identity for the believer. Verse 24 may be yet another exhortation for the believer to remain what he is before God as a result of his call, namely, a Christian' (*Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 63). Bartchy (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*) takes a similar line, arguing that 'Paul meant God's call to salvation' as he clearly does in Rom. 11.29 and Phil. 3.14 (p. 135). He rejects readings of κλῆσις as 'vocation', claiming that 'such an argument makes it necessary to postulate a completely unique significance of κλῆσις; it also obscures the full force of Paul's argument in 0717-24. For in 0717 he strongly stressed that each Christian should act in accordance with the fact that he had been called by God' (pp. 136-37). Thiselton (*First Corinthians*) broadly agrees, finding 1 Cor. 1.26 as determining the primary meaning of κλῆσις in 1 Corinthians (p. 552). He does, however, say that in 1 Cor. 7.20a (but not vv. 18, 20b or 22) there is a secondary hint of 'vocation' about κλῆσις. '[I]n v. 20a τῇ κλήσει comes very close to the notion of a *calling* to a specific state or role. The very use of the phrase ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος in v. 17a should make us wary of claiming that Paul did *not* regard some prior role in society as a matter of divine vocation. The Pauline logic seems to be that the call of the gospel (in the primary sense) can subsume within it a transposition and sublation of earthly circumstances which make a situation capable of becoming one in which *the call to service* can become (or remain) operative' (p. 549, original emphasis).

273. For example, Hays describes 1 Corinthians 7 as 'Paul's own explication' of Gal. 3.28, commenting that the three 'binary polarities provide the basic categories for

with the relative unimportance of social distinctions given a shared life
in Christ. Also favouring this interpretation is the sense of purpose and
direction to the Christian's 'call' which relegates every concern with or
desire to please (μεριμνάω, ἀρέσκω, vv. 32-34) any but God to secondary
importance and imparts an eschatological relativity to all current situa-
tions and relationships (παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, v. 31; cf.
v. 29):[274] 'Im ersten Briefe an die Korinther werden die Anordnungen über
Heiraten und Ledigbleiben der Erkenntnis unterstellt, daß die Zeit kurz
(1 Kor 7,29) und die Gestalt dieser Welt im Vergehen begriffen ist (1 Kor
7,31)'.[275] Indeed, there is throughout 1 Corinthians 7 an unequivocal insis-
tence from Paul that the Corinthians look beyond their current circum-
stances and aspirations,[276] especially where such aspirations cohere with
the status-obsession of Corinth.[277] Paul clearly feels it best for the Corin-

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Paul's perception of the human condition, but even such basic markers of human iden-
tity have been rendered meaningless in light of the gospel' (*First Corinthians*, p. 123).
Schüssler Fiorenza concurs, seeing Paul's references to God's calling as demonstrating
that he has the Gal. 3.28 tradition in mind throughout 1 Corinthians 7 (*In Memory of
Her*, p. 220). See also Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 160; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 100;
J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996),
p. 289 n. 139; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 546-47.

  274. As Witherington puts it, 'Paul injects a dose of eschatology, which relativizes
the importance of all social status. What is really important is not one's social position
but one's soteriological condition' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 179). See also Robin-
son's comment: 'Paul is so dominated by the consciousness that "the fashion of this
world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 31) that we cannot expect to find in his letters any
elaborate discussion of the transient forms of social life' (*Doctrine of Man*, pp. 134-
35).

  275. A. Schweitzer, *Der Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr/Paul
Siebeck, 1930), p. 54.

  276. This certainly contributes to so many finding Paul taking a quietist and hence
socially conservative line in 1 Corinthians 7. M. Bouttier, for example, says: 'It is from
within, through the work of Christ, who is all and in all in every one of these condi-
tions, and not through levelling down or squaring up, that all things are made new, and
that one day, much more certainly, slavery will perish and the status of women be com-
pletely transformed. Freedom comes through the incorporation of everyone in Christ,
with his human condition intact; it is achieved through the living strength of the Spirit,
the effective action of the Lord's Supper, the virtue of love, acting in harmony within
the communion of the brethren' (*Christianity According to Paul* [trans. F. Clarke;
Studies in Biblical Theology, 49; London: SCM Press, 1966], p. 112).

  277. This explains, for Winter (*Seek the Welfare*), Paul's pronouncements upon
becoming uncircumcised (v. 18) or a slave (v. 23). He says that Paul opposed epis-
pasm because in obscuring racial identity it gained a Jewish male social advantage,
or at least helped him avoid the disadvantages of his ethnicity. Selling oneself into
slavery was, similarly, a drastic means of gaining social advantage, the end goal being
Roman citizenship, commercial prowess and/or a secure future. Winter sees Paul for-
bidding such efforts because he deemed social status irrelevant for salvation (p. 162).

thians to remain as they are socially, rather than be distracted by a culture-driven pursuit of honour and status (ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη, ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω, v. 20). Yet Paul also repeatedly shows that he understands the importance of social relations and acknowledges the need, on occasion, for believers to move from one social state to another (vv. 9, 11a, 15, 28ab, 36, 39). While some such states and moves are not necessarily those favoured by Paul (vv. 8, 10, 11b, 13, 17, 20, 24, 26, 28c, 38, 40), he recognizes that all are different, and are so by divine intent (vv. 7, 17), that the ideal world towards which he sees his standards pointing is not yet one into which God has moved the Corinthians (v. 31). It is certainly possible to infer inconsistency from Paul holding a principled rejection of social mobility together with a practical acknowledgement that change may be necessary. However, such a negative assessment is not actually required. Indeed, Paul's repeated expression of a 'best' course coupled with softening exception clauses can in fact be seen as evidencing a persistent rhetorical strategy which reflects the unity within 1 Corinthians 7 (vv. 1-2, 3-5, 8-9, 10-11, 21, 27-28, 39-40).[278] For Mitchell, Paul's repeated use of this preference-exception motif reflects his over-riding concern for the Corinthian community's unity; communal harmony driving textual coherence as Paul attempts to give clear instruction on difficult, emotive issues without alienating facets of his diverse audience.

'Those Christians who yearned to join the "class" of the "wise, mighty and well-born" whose significance was most visible in the public place were forbidden to do so. Their aspirations represent a failure thankfully to acknowledge what they were by virtue of their calling in Christ (1.26-31). Their conduct…reflects a perception of themselves determined by the concerns of those who sought mobility in *politeia*' (p. 164). Bartchy also comments: 'for Paul religious and social-legal statuses are neither hindrances nor advantages with respect to "living according to God's calling" (0717, 0724). The really important thing is to keep God's commands and to continue in His calling. God's call had come to the Corinthians without regard to their various religious and social-legal situations. For Paul this fact meant that nothing was to be gained in God's eyes (παρὰ θεῷ) by any change in the religious or social statuses of the ones whom he had called. Within this perspective any attempt by the Corinthians to "improve" their relation to God by making a change in their social or religious status was tantamount to *not* continuing in God's calling. That is, to act as if religion or social status did make a real difference to God was to challenge the adequacy of that which God had already done, namely his distribution of faith to the Corinthians and his calling them through Christ' (*Μᾶλλον Χρῆσαι*, pp. 139-40, original emphasis).

278. Such unity fits within Thiselton's description of 1 Cor. 7.1–11.1 as a whole (unlike the clear-cut instruction of 5.1–6.20) being characterized by '*Paul's pastoral sensitivity to grey areas of difficulty*'. He goes on to describe the Paul capable of such sensitivity as differing greatly from many popular portraits of Paul (*First Corinthians*, pp. 483-84, original emphasis), a likely cause of some misinterpretations of the passage.

> [D]ivisions and conflicts within individual households contributed to
> factionalism in the entire group, as did the variety of opinions on…life-
> styles…which caused sufficient controversy that the Corinthians wrote to
> Paul for advice. Paul's argumentation here is adept. He will not address
> the various factions directly…but instead addresses, one by one, each of
> the marital (and later other) statuses which have come under question
> (7.8, 10, 12). In each case his oscillating argument, in which he shows a
> preference but will not demand it, serves his overall intention of concilia-
> tion. In fact, what many scholars have regarded as hopeless inconsistency
> by Paul in chapters 5–7 (and 8–10)…may very well be understood when
> all of 1 Corinthians is regarded as Paul's argument for Corinthian unity.
> His 'inconsistency' lies in his *rhetorical* strategy by which he agrees, as
> far as he possibly can, with the positions on both sides of the issues, so
> as to appease both and alienate neither, while at the same time calling all
> to reconciliation.[279]

An examination of the exception clauses supports this argument, although
'communal integrity' might summarize Paul's overall aim better than Mitch-
ell's 'unity'. Certainly, the exceptions in vv. 11, 21, 28 and 39 appear to be
Paul compromising for the sake of unity and conciliation as Mitchell claims;
he allows that paths other than his preferred one are acceptable and not sinful
(ἐὰν δὲ καὶ γαμήσῃς, οὐχ ἥμαρτες, v. 28a), even if they are also flawed (θλῖψιν
δὲ τῇ σαρκὶ ἕξουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι, ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμῶν φείδομαι, v. 28c; cf. v. 38).
However, in vv. 2, 5 and 9 Paul indicates that the avoidance of communally
destructive sexual sin[280] motivates the exceptions he allows,[281] suggesting
a concern with the Corinthian community's welfare which goes beyond a
simple desire for its harmony.

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279. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, pp. 235-36, original emphasis. There is
considerable support for the notion that, as well as a striving after honour and social
improvement, there was much animosity and rivalry between social groups and indi-
viduals in classical culture. Murphy-O'Connor's memorable summary of this view sug-
gests why Paul might have been so concerned with unity when addressing a socially
diverse community: 'Paul with great realism saw his world as fragmented into opposite
blocks. It was a dungheap of steaming resentment in which the flies of fear, the maggots
of mistrust, and the worms of envy abounded' (*Becoming Human*, p. 132).

280. Contra C.C. Caragounis (' "Fornication" and "Concession"?: Interpreting 1 Cor
7,1-7', in R. Bieringer [ed.], *The Corinthian Correspondence* [Bibliotheca ephemeridum
theologicarum lovaniensium, 125; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996], pp. 543-59
[545]), 1 Corinthians 7 is, therefore, a natural progression from Paul's concerns with
sexual sin distorting community earlier in the letter (e.g. 1 Cor. 5.1-13; 6.12-20), sug-
gesting an overall epistolary coherence. See, e.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, pp. 153-54;
Barton, '1 Corinthians', p. 1327; Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 267; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*,
p. 95; G.J. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage? Anti-sex? Ascetic? A Dialogue with 1 Cor-
inthians 7:1-40', *Evangelical Quarterly* 69.2 (1997), pp. 109-28 (114-18).

281. Since there is much debate about whether v. 1b (καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ

   Thus 1 Corinthians 7 contains ambiguous instruction from Paul upon various social relationships, and yet is not incoherent. Both the instruction and the ambiguities are products of Paul's desire to see communal integrity within a socially diverse body which struggled with the relational implications of such diversity. Paul's decision to touch upon issues relating to each couplet of the tradition behind Gal. 3.28 suggests that he saw his teaching as coherent, united in its explication of the baptismal liturgy. While explicit about what he considers 'better' (κρείσσων, 1 Cor. 7.38), Paul's stance is concerned with being 'in Christ'—God's calling and communal conciliation—more than it is with his own preferences. Having established the proper frame for decision-making, Paul leaves the Corinthians free to follow their consciences on these social matters, although certain of his comments (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.26, 40b) undoubtedly weighed heavily enough that such freedom felt curtailed despite Paul's acceptance of exceptions.

   It is against this backdrop of Paul's concern with communal integrity in the face of social diversity and cultural pressure that his specific instructions concerning manumission and marriage must be read if they are to inform an understanding of Paul's social impact. In what follows, that social impact will be examined with various human rights' notions of universal and constructed humanity, equality, and appropriate social structure firmly in mind, even if not always explicitly so, shaping the reading of, and perhaps being

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ἅπτεσθαι) originated with Paul or the Corinthians, the exception clause in v. 2 (διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας) perhaps ought to be isolated somewhat. However, that Paul is expressing a reason for not following one course of social action in v. 2 (i.e. remaining single) which coheres with the reasoning behind other exception clauses in 1 Corinthians 7 allows them to be treated together, whether the preference for abstinence is Paul's, (some of) the Corinthians', or both. On v. 1b as a Corinthian slogan see, e.g., Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 252-53; J.M. Gundry-Volf, 'Controlling the Bodies: A Theological Profile of the Corinthian Sexual Ascetics (1 Cor 7)', in R. Bieringer (ed.), *The Corinthian Correspondence* (Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium, 125; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), pp. 519-41 (522); Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 494, 498-500; O.L. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (SBL Dissertation Series, 80; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 93. On the more traditional view of v. 1b as Pauline in origin see, e.g., Caragounis, ' "Fornication" and "Concession"?', p. 546; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 115; Robinson, *Doctrine of Man*, p. 135; and H.F. Richter, whose assumption is that an ascetic Paul was opposing libertinarian Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 7: 'Innerhalb der christlichen Kirchen gibt es heute nicht wenige, die sich in der Frage der Sexualität gegen Paulus und für die Libertinisten in Korinth entscheiden möchten' ('Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth: Zur Literarkritik der Korintherbriefe [1 Kor 8,1-13 und 11,2-16]', in R. Bieringer [ed.], *The Corinthian Correspondence* [Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium, 125; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996], pp. 561-75 [566]).

shaped by, what Paul says to the Corinthian community. Debates and tensions within human rights thought will also be in view as Paul's impact is explored. Is it possible that he might inform our thinking on human rights issues, either on the formulation and justification of rights constructs, or on the social structures they deem appropriate, or both?

Chapter 5

PAUL ON CORINTHIAN WOMEN

Where matters of gender are concerned, the Paul of the Corinthian cor-
respondence is often accused (sometimes in contrast with other Pauls) of
being the conservative reinforcer of established hierarchies.[1] This accusa-
tion carries regrettable implications for those reading with human rights in
mind: such a Paul can only have entrenched Corinthian women's unfortu-
nate place within the inequitable social structures of the day,[2] with negative

1. Thus, for example, Boyarin describes Paul as *seeming* 'to have produced a dis-
course which is so contradictory as to be almost incoherent. In Galatians Paul seems
indeed to be wiping out social differences and hierarchies between the genders, in
addition to those that obtain between ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes, while
in Corinthians he seems to be reifying and reemphasizing precisely those gendered
hierarchical differences' (*Radical Jew*, p. 183). It should be noted that Boyarin is not
describing his own perception here; he rejects interpretations which find Paul con-
tradicting himself on women, despite what 'seems' to be the case. Boyarin goes on
to state that Galatians' 'theology of spirit' and Corinthians' 'theology of body' are
complementary, arguing a position of balance against those who would take either
extreme (pp. 184-85).
2. While any depiction of ancient society as uniformly oppressive of women
undoubtedly misses many nuances and exceptions, the general subordination of the
female gender within patriarchal society has to be acknowledged. Such subordination
was manifest in two main areas: (i) commonplace negative attitudes toward women,
and (ii) the enforcement of powerlessness by an inequitable structuring of society.
On (i) see, e.g., C.E. Carlston, 'Proverbs, Maxims, and the Historical Jesus', *Journal
of Biblical Literature* 99 (1980), pp. 87-105 (95-96): 'Women, if we are to trust the
ancient wisdom, are basically uneducable and empty-headed; vengeful, dangerous,
and responsible for men's sins; mendacious, treacherous, and unreliable; fickle; valu-
able only through their relationships with men; incapable of moderation or spontane-
ous goodness; at their best in the dark; interested only in sex—unless they are with
their husbands, in which case (apparently) they would rather talk. In short, women
are one and all "a set of vultures", the "most beastly" of all the beasts on land or sea,
and marriage is at best a necessary evil'. On (ii) both Paul's Greco-Roman context
and his Jewish heritage are significant. On Greco-Roman society see, e.g., Withering-
ton's summary of marriage under Rome: 'Though life was better for women during
the empire than during the earlier period of the Roman Republic, marriage was still
basically an asymmetrical relationship with the husband wielding greater power and

implications for those who followed.[3] This Paul sees 'Love and order…
as male provinces, while obedience and submission are the province of
women'.[4] Of course, others see the Corinthian Paul quite differently, trans-

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authority. The *patria potesta* had by no means disappeared. The phrase "buying a
wife" was still common… (Gaius *Inst.* 1.113)' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 170). On
Jewish attitudes toward women see, e.g., J.J. Scott, Jr, *Jewish Backgrounds of the
New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 248-51; and S. Dowell and
L. Hurcombe (*Dispossessed Daughters of Eve: Faith and Feminism* [London: SCM
Press, 1981]), who comment that 'Discrimination against women was inherent in the
religious and socio-political organization of Israel from its earliest written records'
(p. 25), especially in the law codes which, for example, legislated stoning as appropri-
ate for non-virgin brides; 'Female life, it seems, was very cheap, and stones handy'
(p. 29). Just as in Greco-Roman culture, Judaism treated women as items of male
property. 'The legal status of women in the Old Testament can be summed up in the
following way: she is dependent all her life, first and ultimately on her father, and
then on her husband when she marries. The laws by and large do not address her.
Her importance is circumscribed by her childbearing function and the law ensures
that the patriarchal context of that function is upheld' (p. 30). Although some dispute
this account of female oppression within Judaism, or at least aspects of the common
account of it (see, e.g., A.-J. Levine, 'Discharging Responsibility: Matthean Jesus,
Biblical Law, and Haemorrhaging Woman', in A.-J. Levine with M. Blickenstaff
[eds.], *A Feminist Companion to Matthew* [Feminist Companion to the New Testament
and Early Christian Writings 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001], pp. 70-87;
S.H. Ringe, 'A Gentile Woman's Story Revisited: Rereading Mark 7:24-31ᴀ', in A.-J.
Levine with M. Blickenstaff [eds.], *A Feminist Companion to Mark* [Feminist Com-
panion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings, 2; Sheffield: Sheffield
Academic Press, 2001], pp. 79-100 [88]), Duling insists that Jewish women actually
enjoyed less freedom than did their Greek and especially Roman counterparts (*New
Testament*, pp. 18, 249). While C.S. Keener disputes this claim ('Marriage', in C.A.
Evans and S.E. Porter [eds.], *Dictionary of New Testament Background* [Downers
Grove: IVP, 2000], pp. 680-93 [690-91]), he also cites numerous texts which indicate
the subordination of women within everyday Jewish life (e.g. Philo, *Hypoth.* 7.3; *Op.
mund.* 167; *Omn. prob. lib.* 18 §117; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.15; *Ag. Ap.* 2.25 §§200-201;
Sirach 42.9-14). Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, p. 177) and Wire emphasize
that Christian women 'were not immune from the radical systemic disadvantages of
women in that society as a whole—inferiority by age and possible slave heritage in
marriage, dependency on men in all civil and judicial matters and special vulnerability
to death at birth and again at giving birth' (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 75).

    3.   The end result of such entrenchment is, as Eisenbaum memorably summarizes
Boyarin (*Radical Jew*), to make Paul 'the father of misogyny' ('Is Paul the Father').

    4.   Dowell and Hurcombe, *Dispossessed Daughters*, p. 33. See also Martin (*Corin-
thian Body*), who finds that when it comes to women Paul makes a surprising depar-
ture from his strategy of status-reversal elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence
(p. 198), confirming rather than opposing the Greco-Roman gender hierarchy. He does
find Paul expanding ministerial opportunities for women, but concludes that Paul
'never makes the claim that the female is equal to, much less superior to, the male;
he never attempts to accomplish for women the kind of ideological undermining of

forming marriage by 'emphasizing the mutuality of the love relationship (1 Cor. 7:3-5)' and applying the oneness of the Gal. 3.28 tradition to domestic relations.[5] Chadwick describes the ease with which 'even the erudite' can misread 1 Corinthians, finding 'Paul as a misogynist with a psychopathic fixation about women's hair…and a deep-seated fear and hostility towards sex', while his rhetoric is in fact deployed in the opposite direction, against those who doubt the compatibility of marriage with Christian service.[6] For Eisenbaum, such diverse assessments of Paul's impact upon the social place and power of women cannot be fully explained by the skewing of interpretive assumptions; Pauline ambiguity is also to blame. 'He seems to speak out of both sides of his mouth; he has good as well as bad things to say about women'.[7] The problem with such an assessment lies less with its assertion of ambiguity—a relentlessly uniform stance on social matters being an unattainable ideal if life's complexities are taken seriously[8]—than with its simplistic categories: Paul is *either* good *or* bad for women. Forcing Paul's thought into such a black-and-white scheme is inevitably both reductionist and anachronistic. The imposition of a particular, *modern* view of what is good and bad for women may well produce some useful insights, but it leaves little room for Paul to operate in his own situation, or for the nuances of that situation to inform contemporary readings. Although his

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hierarchy that he has assayed with regard to socioeconomic status, educational privilege, or freedom and slavery' (p. 199).

    5.   Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 322. Beker continues, 'Paul does not abolish the distinction between male and female…but he does abolish value judgments based on sexual distinctions' (p. 323).

    6.   H. Chadwick, 'All Things to All Men (I Cor. i. 22)', *New Testament Studies* 1.4 (1955), pp. 261-75 (263-64).

    7.   Eisenbaum, 'Is Paul the Father'. See also Jewett (*Man as Male and Female*), who explains such contradictions by Paul's reliance upon both Jewish and Christian thought, with (what he deems to be) their incompatible perspectives upon women: 'The traditional teaching of Judaism and the revolutionary new approach implied in the life and teaching of Jesus contributed, each in its own way, to the apostle's thinking about the relationship of the sexes. So far as he thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created (1 Cor. 11.9). But so far as he thought in terms of the new insight he had gained through the revelation of God in Christ, he thought of the woman as equal to the man in all things, the two having been made one in Christ, in whom there is no male nor female (Gal. 3.28)' (p. 112). Jewett finds no way to harmonize these strands and quotes 1 Cor. 11.11-12 as Paul's recognition that his thought was irreconcilably inconsistent (p. 113).

    8.   R. Scroggs's assessment of Paul—'the only certain and consistent spokesman for the liberation and equality of women in the NT' ('Paul and the Eschatological Woman', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40 [1972], pp. 283-303 [283])—is not only overly optimistic, it also manages to iron out these complexities for the sake of a pithy summary.

final assessment may be overly optimistic, Witherington offers a more real-istic and potentially constructive approach to thinking about Paul's impact upon women, emphasizing the priority of the setting within which Paul himself worked.

> Paul was pragmatic and worked with social structures and networks as he found them, seeking to reform them within the Christian community. We need to take account not only of Paul's position but also the direction of his remarks given the context in which he operated. The categories 'chau-vinist' and 'feminist' are both anachronistic… Paul plays with the social cards he is dealt, but he seeks to slip some new cards into the deck and to rewrite the rules for those who play the game within his communities. The cards Paul was dealt reflect a strongly patriarchal culture which often had highly schematized roles for men and women. It is hardly surprising under these circumstances that when he discusses household management he bears witness to the existing patriarchal structure of the home and to existing male-female distinctions in forms of dress and ritual practices. The question is, What does Paul *do* with these preexisting structures and customs?[9]

From this perspective, Conzelmann's oft-quoted assessment that Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 7 is an embarrassment, 'Zum Kummer der mod-ernen Theologie',[10] appears questionable. Certainly, some Corinthian texts sit uncomfortably with contemporary values, including those of human rights. But establishing whether we should be 'shamed' by Paul requires readers to think a little more broadly. The contribution Paul makes to a dialogue with human rights ought to reflect, as Witherington says, what he did with the structures and customs of his own day, not just depend upon his compatibility (or otherwise) with modern values.[11] It is only when judged within his own situation, for example, that Eisenbaum's questions about consistency (Does Paul speak with a forked tongue?) and negativity (Does Paul say socially destructive things about women and the roles they may play?) can be asked with any hope of establishing Paul's impact upon *Corin-thian* women. And only when Paul's particular socio-historical location is taken into account can we move beyond questions about *what* Paul said, to ask *why*—for what ends and with what reason—he said such things. In all

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9. Witherington, *Paul Quest*, pp. 224-25, original emphasis.

10. Conzelmann, *Der Erste Brief*, p. 140.

11. This approach need not be considered as simply a means of justifying Paul's patriarchal tendencies, finding him to be radical *for his day*. It also allows Paul to be described as a cultural product—unable to conceive of a totally transformed social world—as well as a cultural critic. For example, Boyarin sees an enculturated Paul as unable to 'imagine that male and female bodies could be in any condition other than dominant and dominated when they were in sexual relationship with each other' (*Radical Jew*, p. 190).

that follows, therefore, the first concern will not be with how Paul's Corinthian comments measure up to human rights values about gender equality (although that will be impossible to avoid entirely), but with the extent to which Paul either affirmed or undermined the patriarchal status quo of his own social setting: what impact did Paul have upon the social power and place of the Corinthian community's women?

1. *Paul's Dynamic Context*

Contextualizing Paul's comments about women requires that they be seen against the background of both Greco-Roman society and the Christian community in Corinth. Neither dimension of their setting can be examined in full here, however some brief comments will provide insight into the situation within which the impact of Paul's teaching about women was first felt. Although these comments will focus upon society and *ekklesia* separately, in reality those spheres would have overlapped and affected one another. Tendencies within the society would have fed upon those aspects and interpretations of the gospel which suited them, just as many Christians would have adopted and baptized the social structures and developments which appeared to fit their gospel values or suit their situation. Paul's teaching, then, would have aimed to clarify just how appropriate such overlap was, correcting misinterpretations of the gospel and determining which social values really were proper for the believing community.[12]

All too often *ekklesia* and especially society are described in static terms, as inflexibly established objects upon or against which Paul holds forth. The reading of Paul's Corinthian comments on women offered here, however, relies upon them both being seen as dynamic and flexible, providing relational challenges and tensions as well as possibilities for new perspectives upon established values and structures. The assumption is that Paul is best seen as responding to the opportunities and threats which are part and parcel of such a dynamic context. While some of what he wrote was the simple proclamation of established gospel truth (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.23; 11.23-27), the Corinthian correspondence also shows Paul's capacity for flexibility, both in himself (τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, 1 Cor. 9.22) and in his teaching (e.g. the exception clauses of 1 Corinthians 7). Such flexibility is expressed in Paul's ability to argue toward his goal whatever his audience's starting position,[13] but also in his capacity to shape a developing situation; guiding change

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12. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 190.

13. See, for example, Boyarin's comments about the complementarity of Paul's teaching in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, which he contends differ only because the situations in those communities required Paul to argue his case from different directions (*Radical Jew*, pp. 181-85).

such that the community grows in the manner he desires.[14] Paul's comments about women in the Corinthian correspondence are best understood as part of this contextually-aware, community-shaping strategy, and understanding them as such informs both interpretation and perception of their impact.

a. *Gender Values and Social Stability*

That Greco-Roman society was capable of flexibility and change is now widely acknowledged.[15] The limits and sorts of its flexibility were perhaps different from those with which Paul's modern readers are familiar, but it is likely that change (or the threat of it) provoked anxiety about the future and social stability, as well as an anticipation of new opportunities, just as it does now. The patriarchal family[16] was the cornerstone of Greco-Roman society—'the primary unit of community'[17]—and anything which threatened

14. See Adams's conception of Paul's ongoing ministry as focused upon 'world-construction'. Paul sought to establish communities which would 'constitute for their members comprehensive "social worlds", all-embracing social orders providing structure and meaning for every aspect of their lives'. Paul, then, 'did not write to provide protective canopies for social worlds that had already been built. He did not write to maintain structures that were already in place. He wrote to communities in the course of construction, and he wrote to shape and direct the development' (*Constructing the World*, p. 245).

15. For example, W.A. Meeks describes a society 'in which many forms of social relationship underwent extensive change' ('The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity', *History of Religions* 13 [1974], pp. 165-208 [169]), even if he goes on to draw firm boundaries around what changes were considered acceptable (pp. 169-80). See also, for example, Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*; C.F. Parvey, 'The Theology and Leadership of Women in the New Testament', in R. Radford Ruether (ed.), *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Schuster & Schuster, 1974), pp. 117-49 (119); Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 19-35.

16. Gordon summarizes the legally entrenched power of patriarchy thus: 'Roman law reflected a rigidly patriarchal and hierarchical society. The only people with full rights were male citizen heads of family groups. Women had no political rights and could exercise civil rights only with the consent of a tutor or guardian. In law, the *familia* was a group of persons subject to the power of the *paterfamilias* for reasons deriving from nature (children and descendants) or from law (wives and slaves). The *pater* was an undisputed and absolute lord. His power had various designations according to the relationship between the parties: *patria potestas* was absolute power over his descendants both male and female; *manus* was the power of the *pater* over his wife' (*Sister or Wife?*, pp. 69-70). See also Lassen, 'Roman Family'.

17. J.D.G. Dunn, 'Household Rules in the New Testament', in S.C. Barton (ed.), *The Family in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), pp. 43-63 (56). See also Duling, *New Testament*, p. 18; Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 12; Lassen, 'Roman Family', p. 104; J. Stambagh and D. Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), p. 123. As Witherington points out, under

traditional family organization tended to be met with caution,[18] just as other threats or changes often elicited calls for the bolstering of family values and structures. Given their fundamental bias, the particular challenges of changing gender roles brought especially significant threats to patriarchal structures. Such challenges did exist, however, provoking questions and instability within the society.[19] For instance, Gordon describes the implications of many women enjoying more 'elastic', independent relationships[20] than were strictly allowed for in a system where men owned their wives through the legal power of *manu*.

> [T]he categories of male and female were in transition. Increasing pressure on the traditional roles of women and men created new opportunities for women to act independently, and this…had an effect upon the way people thought and lived out the established models of male/female relationships. The identification of what was properly feminine and masculine became the object of controversy. In some circles this brought about a bitter reaction in the form of misogyny; in others an emphasis on a sense of order and a preservation of the status quo became primary.[21]

such circumstances Paul's preference for celibacy over marriage can hardly be seen as social conservatism. 'Some emperors, especially Augustus, had done all they could to encourage Romans to marry and have many children. Augustus even put into law penalties on women who remained unmarried too long after being widowed' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 174).

18. This should not be taken as implying that such challenges were unknown. S.C. Barton points out, for example, that an undermining of familial ties was a common rhetorical theme in many traditions of the ancient world ('The Relativisation of Family Ties in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions', in H. Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* [London: Routledge, 1997], pp. 81-100 [81, 93, 98-99]).

19. See, for example, Meeks ('Image of the Androgyne'), who despite emphasizing the importance to Hellenism of oppositional social roles, finds that there were forces acting to reduce the 'sharp differentiation of role, particularly between men and women', contributing to a 'general weakening of social categories' (pp. 167-68). He concludes, 'The traditional social roles were no longer taken for granted but debated, consciously violated by some vigorously defended by others. While the general status of women had vastly and steadily improved over several centuries, the change brought in some circles a bitter reaction in the form of misogyny. The groups that made possible full participation of women with men on an equal basis were few and isolated; the Epicurean school is the only important example. Among those who advocated preservation of the status quo, the constantly salient concern is a sense of order: everything must be in its place, and the differentiation and ranking of women and men became a potent symbol for the stability of the world order' (pp. 179-80). See also Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, pp. 23-25; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 235; Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, p. 115; Stambagh and Balch, *Social World*, p. 123.

20. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 76.

21. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 84. Gordon also identifies an increasing number

Paul's assertions about sex, marriage and gender in 1 Corinthians undoubt-
edly echo the cultural connection of such issues with social stability and the
implications of rocking the boat, even if he also had another, theological
agenda in view. There are certainly parallels to be drawn between Paul's
discussion in 1 Corinthians 7 and the ongoing debate between Stoics and
Cynics as to the place of marriage,[22] although Deming is surely correct in
not wanting those parallels to be drawn too tightly.[23] That the cultural pro-
pensity for viewing marriage as a 'distraction'[24] probably influenced both
the Corinthians[25] and Paul (θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀμερίμνους εἶναι, 1 Cor. 7.32-

of marriages *sine manu*, where a wife remained more firmly bound to her father's
household than to her husband's, giving her more rights (to inherit and in divorce) and
thus limiting a husband's power (p. 90). See also Keener, 'Marriage', p. 688; Lassen,
'Roman Family', pp. 106-107; C. Osiek, 'The Family in Early Christianity: "Family
Values" Revisited', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58.1 (1996), pp. 1-24 (10).

   22. Broadly speaking, the Cynics rejected all institutions of the Greek city states,
including marriage, because they saw personal and cultural benefit in maximizing the
time and energy given over to philosophizing. The Stoics, on the other hand, advocated
marriage as the means of saving society from an otherwise inevitable decline away
from its traditional norms and shape. See, e.g., Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 253-55;
W. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Cor-
inthians 7* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 83; Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 2-3. Deming also identifies a hybrid position
which emphasized the moral obligations of marriage and procreation but allowed that
exceptional circumstances (e.g. poverty or war) might make sacrificing such things for
the pursuit of the philosophical life either acceptable or necessary.

   23. Deming (*Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*) acknowledges that Paul's position is
close to the hybrid view and that he uses terms (e.g. καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ, vv. 1, 26; ὁμοίως
δὲ καὶ, vv. 3, 4; σχολάζω, v. 5; ἀμέριμνος, v. 32) and ideas which show his understand-
ing of the Stoic-Cynic debates (3, 213, 216). However, he argues that because Paul's
topic is Christian celibacy not marriage per se (p. 5), because Paul's audience saw
themselves 'in Christ' rather than as members of a particular philosophical school
(pp. 211-13), and because Paul's use of philosophical terms and concepts is critical,
theologically focussed and ecclesiologically motivated (pp. 109, 220), that Paul should
not be seen as simply participating in an ongoing cultural debate. C.J. Roetzel goes
further, partially in critique of Deming, by emphasizing the role of Jewish celibacy
traditions over against Hellenistic ones in shaping Paul's thought (*Paul: The Man and
the Myth* [Studies on Personalities of the New Testament; Columbia: University of
South Carolina Press, 1998], p. 137). See also T. Paige, 'Stoicism, ἐλευθερία and Com-
munity at Corinth', in E. Adams and D.G. Horrell (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth: The
Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004),
pp. 207-218; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 493-94; and Horsley (*1 Corinthians*,
p. 106), who draws distinctions of eschatological perspective between Paul and the
Stoics.

   24. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, p. 220.

   25. The notion of marriage as distraction would, for example, fit with the sentiment
of 1 Cor. 7.1 (almost certainly a Corinthian slogan).

35)[26] requires his comments to be earthed within their culture, the social debates and tendencies of the day, as well as within a specifically Christian context.

One social tendency particularly pertinent to 1 Corinthians 7 is that which saw those who Meeks has characterized as the status-inconsistent[27] attempting to locate themselves within groups which afforded a sense of participation and power they otherwise lacked. Thus Schüssler Fiorenza speaks of mystery cults and voluntary associations as a third realm, between the patriarchally dominated home and state, in which 'role revolt' allowed some greater self-determination: 'for legally and economically independent women who were culturally and religiously marginal, these religious associations provided a means to overcome their status discrepancy'.[28] If Schüssler Fiorenza is correct,[29] then many converts to Christianity would have understood themselves to be 'entering a club' within which their status would be enhanced, or at least some personal tensions would be resolved, whatever their gender or background.[30] While not exactly social mobility in the conventional sense,[31] meeting some aspirations of the dominated in

26. Thus D.L. Balch, for example, finds parallels between Paul's thought in 1 Corinthians 7 and the Stoic insistence of Epictetus, Hierocles and Antipater that 'one should be "undistracted" from one's primary duty or call' ('1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety, and Distraction', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102.3 [1983], pp. 429-39 [434]). For Deming, despite many uses of 1 Corinthians 7 to the contrary, the promotion of sexual abstinence was not the point of Paul's advocation of celibacy, but rather 'a secondary feature…produced by (i) the desire for an unencumbered life, and (ii) Judeo-Christian limitation of sex to marriage' (*Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, p. 221).

27. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 54. See also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 42-43; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 12-13.

28. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 90. See also Witherington (*Conflict and Community*, p. 173), who looks beyond the gender divide and depicts such associations as surrogate families in their provision of a sense of belonging and ability to be one's self.

29. Some scholars question the extent to which voluntary associations were truly egalitarian or even status-affecting organizations. See, e.g., J.H. Elliott, 'The Jesus Movement Was Not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented', *Biblical Interpretation* 11.2 (2003), pp. 173-210 (187).

30. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 181: 'Those who joined the Christian house church joined it as an association of equals. It was especially attractive to those who had little stake in the rewards of religion based either on class stratification or on male dominance'.

31. Martin (*Slavery as Salvation*) says that 'few people in the Roman Empire actually experienced real social mobility', i.e. what social mobility means in contemporary terms (p. 42). He thinks, however, that there were opportunities for social movement—as, for example, when slaves gained status through being owned by an important person or through the holding of an important job (p. 137)—and that such social change could

a patriarchal society would have had an inevitable loosening effect upon social ties, or at least the perception of them. What for some was an opportunity to overcome status-inconsistency, therefore, seemed to others a threat to the basic structures which held society together.[32]

Any group concerned with both order and inclusion within this setting, as Paul's handling of the Corinthians' questions indicates that they were, would undoubtedly have tapped into and replicated many of the debates and prejudices surrounding social structure and stability which characterized the age. The 'changing patterns of marriage within the Graeco-Roman world and the debate…concerning its desirability would influence the Corinthian church as it sought to define its social structure and organization'.[33] The Corinthian community, in other words, was bound to face relational questions and challenges because such were part and parcel of the dynamic cultural context within which it sought to exist and expand. That its existence was founded upon theological premises which were easily construed as cutting across many of its culture's values simply exacerbated the situation.

b. *Baptism Challenging Status Stability*

Indeed, Paul's response to the Corinthians' inquiry about sex and marriage (Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι, 1 Cor. 7.1) is best understood when the community's theological bases are seen in relation to their socio-cultural setting. That Paul projected his response within an eschatological framework (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.29, 31[34]) is important here. It evinces an awareness that on some level the very constitution of the community moved its socio-relational standards beyond those recognized by and accessible to its culture. That Paul also allowed for the maintenance of cultural norms (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.9, 21) demonstrates the limits of this

provoke serious personal and communal tensions given the formal rigidity of imperial culture (pp. 42-43).

32. This is surely true of Christianity's discipleship of equals, even if its socio-political stance is less explicitly confrontational than Schüssler Fiorenza makes out: 'Women who belonged to a submerged group in antiquity could develop leadership in the emerging Christian movement because it stood in conflict with the dominant patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman world. Therefore, the struggle and interaction of women in the Christian missionary movement can only be reconstructed as an integral part of the struggle between the emerging Christian movement and its alternative vision, on the one hand, and the dominant patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman world on the other' (*In Memory of Her*, p. 92).

33. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 94.

34. Beyond these obvious references, Cartlidge also finds eschatological undertones in Paul's repeated instruction that the Corinthians 'remain' (μενέτω) as they are (1 Cor. 7.11, 20, 24; cf. v. 26), citing 1 Cor. 13.13 and 1 Esd. 4.38 as evidence ('1 Corinthians 7', p. 225). Also important is the eschatological trajectory inherent within the baptismal tradition upon which Paul builds his response.

transcendence, however, reflecting the ambiguities of 'now but not yet' in his rhetoric of social praxis.[35] The community is depicted, in effect, as one which is fully at home in neither 'this age' (1 Cor. 1.20; 2.6-8; 2 Cor. 4.4) nor yet the coming one;[36] it is in transition between the two, a dynamic, developing body (cf. 1 Cor. 3.6-10). Gundry-Volf thinks it strange that Paul used an eschatological tradition (Gal. 3.28) in his instruction that the Corinthians should, by and large, stay as they are.[37] But this apparent contradiction cuts to the heart of both the Corinthians' questions and Paul's response: 1 Corinthians 7 is his attempt at reconfiguring the connection they had made between their new identity in Christ, with all that it promised, and their lives in the present, with all that they entailed.[38]

As has already been discussed, Gal. 3.28 is seen by many as one key for the interpretation of Paul's social thought. Although there is considerable division over exactly what sort of key it is, there is a widespread acceptance that behind Gal. 3.28 (cf. 1 Cor. 12.13; Col. 3.11) lies a pre-Pauline baptismal formula[39] which expresses some particularly significant aspects of Christian conversion-initiation and experiences of life 'in Christ'.[40] It is, then, not

35. Thus Meeks (*Origins of Christian Morality*, p. 65) describes Paul outlining a balanced participation in the world 'without being defined by it' because of the certainty that it is passing away (παράγω, 1 Cor. 7.31).

36. Although Paul uses some fully-realized language and imagery of the believers (1 Cor. 10.11; 2 Cor. 5.17), this is balanced by talk of them living as yet unfulfilled (1 Cor. 15.21-24) and expectant lives (2 Cor. 1.22; 5.5) in an age whose rulers have not yet been overcome (1 Cor. 2.6).

37. J.M. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female in Creation and New Creation: Interpretations of Galatians 3.28c in 1 Corinthians 7', in T.E. Schmidt and M. Silva (eds.), *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry* (JSNTSup, 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), pp. 95-121 (97).

38. Because it is 'eschatologically conditioned', some, like Deming, have described 1 Corinthians 7 as an 'interim ethic' (*Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, p. 215). While not strictly inaccurate, however, that connotes a somewhat static, 'in-the-meantime' understanding of Paul's teaching. It is more appropriate to depict 1 Corinthians 7 in dynamic terms, as bound up with the community's transition from one age to another.

39. See, e.g., Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 103; Longenecker, *New Testament Social Ethics for Today*, pp. 32-33; Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', pp. 165-208. Against reading Gal. 3.28 as baptismal liturgy, see A. Perriman, *Speaking of Women: Interpreting Paul* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), p. 189. Against Gal. 3.28 being a pre-Pauline tradition, see Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, p. 142.

40. The experiences usually identified concern universal Spirit-reception and an egalitarian believing community. Thus, E. Schüssler Fiorenza describes how 'In baptism Christians entered into a kinship relationship with people coming from very different racial, cultural, and national backgrounds. These differences were not to determine the social structures of the community, nor were those of family and clan' ('The Praxis of Coequal Discipleship', in R.A. Horsley [ed.], *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1997], pp. 224-41 [227]). P. Brown

inconsequential that some perceive the tone of Paul's social comments in the Corinthian correspondence to clash with the apparent egalitarianism of the baptismal liturgy.[41] Given that Paul has been shown to be particularly critical of Corinthian culture's preoccupation with maintaining and advancing personal status, especially at the expense of others and of unity, this clash comes as something of a surprise.[42] However, 1 Corinthians 7 is one of the major texts used to contend for a Paul who maintains status hierarchies and, as has been indicated, that passage's male–female, Jew–Greek, slave–free references parallel the tradition behind Gal. 3.28 and may even be Paul's explication of it.[43] True, these pairings also reflect the fundamental social divisions of the culture,[44] and Paul may have employed them in order bolster his arguments about marriage by appeal to a broader stage. Even if that was his primary intent, however, for those who considered themselves new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5.17), who had undergone the resocialization (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.18; 3.14-16; 10.16-17; 2 Cor. 6.15-18) and spiritual experiences (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.4-5; 2 Cor. 12.12) which accompanied conversion, the use of these pairings would surely also have evoked the baptismal tradition and even their own personal experiences of conversion-initiation. As Paul was himself such a person, it seems unlikely that either author or audience could contemplate the relationships explored in 1 Corinthians 7 without the baptismal tradition being immediately called to mind, making Gal. 3.28 important for a considerations of 1 Corinthians 7.[45] This suggests, furthermore, that the

concurs, seeing Christian baptism as 'an explicit stripping off of the distinguishing marks on which the hierarchy of ancient society depended. Divested of these features, the believers were considered to have recaptured a primal, undifferentiated unity' (*The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [London: Faber and Faber, 1989], pp. 49-50). See also, e.g., Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 199, 210-11; R.W. Allison, 'Let Women Be Silent in the Churches (1 Cor. 14.33b-36): What Did Paul Really Say, and What Did It Mean?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (1988), pp. 27-60 (33); Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 186.

41. Hence the 'seeming' contradictions between Galatians and 1 Corinthians identified by Boyarin above (*Radical Jew*, p. 183). See also Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, pp. 144-45.

42. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 198.

43. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 123. D. Lührmann actually describes 1 Corinthians 7 as 'Paul's authentic commentary' on Gal. 3.28 (*Galatians* [Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], p. 77). This runs against Parvey's assertion that Paul's thought on social matters, and especially in relation to women, developed between writing 1 Corinthian and Galatians ('Theology and Leadership', pp. 132-33).

44. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 998; B. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), p. 271.

45. While 1 Cor. 12.13 is clearly a more proximate rendering of the baptismal tradition, the fuller version in Gal. 3.28 provides a broader basis against which to weigh Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 7, indeed the basis upon which those comments appear to

relationship between the texts is *not* contradictory, at least in any straightforward sense, but probably does reflect Paul's desire to articulate something of how the baptismal tradition was to be understood.

Within a culture that was both firmly structured and aspirational, the baptismal liturgy's far-reaching claims were bound to raise radical hopes among some and be understood more conservatively by others, especially where the socio-relational implications of oneness were concerned.[46] That Paul responds to the Corinthians' question about one social relationship (marriage, 1 Cor. 7.1) by exploring calling and aspiration within each pairing from the tradition behind Gal. 3.28 suggests two things. First, that (some of) the Corinthians understood being 'one in Christ' (πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) to affect their everyday relationships. That Paul is consulted on the matter indicates a lack of clarity or agreement over exactly what sort of affect it was to have, however, leaving the community divided in both understanding and aspiration and so, potentially, in relational crisis. Second, it suggests that Paul perceived (some of) the Corinthians to have a flawed understanding of the social implications of oneness.[47] His response was thus aimed to shape the community, developing socio-relational values and structures which embodied an appropriate understanding of oneness in Christ. Such a reconstruction perhaps sheds additional light on the awkward rhetorical style Paul adopts in 1 Corinthians 7. His open, conciliatory tone was inevitable given his desire for unity and his affirmation of the basic oneness which was at the heart of the Corinthians' discussions, just as misunderstandings of that oneness provoked his firm assertions of what is 'better' and where their first concerns ought to lie.

be founded. As Paul has the social ramifications of the whole liturgy in view, expanding as he does upon all three pairings, the fullest extant version of that liturgy provides our best frame of reference. It surely is significant that the male-female pairing is omitted from 1 Cor. 12.13, probably because Paul was concerned by the gender values of some in the Corinthian community (see, e.g., S.C. Barton, 'Paul's Sense of Place: An Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth', *New Testament Studies* 32 [1986], pp. 225-46 [234]; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 171-72; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, pp. 289-90; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 219; contra Elliott, 'Jesus Movement', p. 182), but that does not stop him from using all three pairings in 1 Corinthians 7. In fact, 1 Corinthians 7 may reveal Paul dealing with precisely the attitudes and actions which also led him to exclude the male-female clause from 1 Cor. 12.13 (Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 463).

46. Brown, for example, describes the impact of such liberating egalitarianism as particularly radical for the relatively well-off, educated Gentiles among Paul's urban communities: 'Leisured and sufficiently wealthy, they were in a position to change the tenor of their lives from top to bottom. Neither the permafrost of rural poverty nor the discreet disciplines of long Jewish practice held them back from daring experiments in social living', experiments which met with Pauline censure (*Body and Society*, p. 50).

47. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 158.

However, while accepting that Paul wrote at least partly in critique of the Corinthians' understanding of the baptismal tradition is a relatively straightforward step, comprehending the content of his critique is rather more problematic. The primary complication lies in the diverse ways in which Paul himself is interpreted as understanding the tradition, and thus the implications he draws for marriage and women from it. Banks, for example, describes 'no male and female' as the climax of Gal. 3.28. When it comes to a position '*vis-à-vis God*', he says, 'Paul is arguing that in Christ not only conventional distinctions of religious allegiance or social rank are banished, but even the primeval gender distinction has ceased to be relevant'.[48] Some object that such interpretations restrict equality in Christ to the spiritual sphere. Thus Schüssler Fiorenza says that those who deny the socio-political implications of Gal. 3.28 are 'prepared to state the opposite of what Paul actually says in order to preserve a "purely religious" interpretation'.[49] She goes on to assert that the 'full membership' which women enjoyed through baptism 'generated a fundamental change, not only in their standing before God but also in their ecclesial-social status and function'. Spiritual oneness, furthermore, had implications for 'communal behavior and social practice'[50] which crossed the gender divide.

> While the baptismal declaration in Gal 3:28 offered a new religious vision to women and slaves, it denied all male religious prerogatives in the Christian community based on gender roles. Just as born Jews had to abandon the privileged notion that they alone were the chosen people of God, so masters had to relinquish their power over slaves, and husbands that over wives and children. Since these social-political privileges were, at the same time, religious privileges, conversion to the Christian movement for men also meant relinquishing their religious prerogatives… The legal-societal and cultural-religious male privileges were no longer valid for Christians. Insofar as this egalitarian Christian self-understanding did away with all male privileges of religion, class, and caste, it allowed not only gentiles and slaves but also women to exercise leadership functions within the missionary movement.[51]

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48. R. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2nd edn, 1994), p. 111, emphasis added.

49. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 207. She accuses those who want to hold Gal. 3.28 together with the *Haustafeln* of dividing the order of creation (female subordination) from the order of redemption (equality in Christ) and being motivated by a desire to maintain inequalities in all but the spiritual sphere (p. 206). Beker offers a good example of such a stance, coming to the conclusion that Paul imposes female subordination 'on the basis of "the orders of creation" ', and that he 'does not address socioeconomic distinctions but restricts himself to attitudinal behavior' (*Paul the Apostle*, p. 323).

50. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 210.

51. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 217-18.

Others, however, dispute the extent to which baptismal assertions of oneness were really egalitarian.[52] Eisenbaum, for example, sees the Gal. 3.28 tradition as reaffirming prejudices Paul shared with the patriarchal society within which he was privileged. The social descriptors it mentions are not, for her, 'complementary pairs of equals. One term in each pair represents the ideal, the desired status for the believer (from Paul's perspective): Jew, free, and

52. For example, J.L. Martyn insists upon 'one in Christ Jesus' being equated with Christian unity not equality (*Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [Anchor Bible, 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997], p. 377). See also Elliott's 'Jesus Movement' (cf. Elliott, 'Jesus Was Not An Egalitarian, pp. 75-91). Elliott provides some important critiques of and correctives to those who over-emphasize utopian equality within early Christianity. However his own arguments are at times as over-stated and as prone to distorting, definition-led generalization as those he opposes. So while his concern that unity not be mistaken for equality in the tradition behind Gal. 3.28 ('Jesus Movement', p. 180) is valid, Elliott's insistence that there is not even a hint of movement toward equality in that tradition is somewhat implausible. Dunn comments that 'It is all too easy to idealise a text like Gal. 3.28 in an historically unrealistic and therefore unfair way' ('Household Rules', p. 61). Elliott would undoubtedly agree, but also treats the text unfairly, predetermining what it may and may not mean, when he insists that 'equality' and 'egalitarian' be conceived of as ideal, utopian concepts (in line with his limited definition of them), thus making their use in connection with Gal. 3.28 'historically unrealistic'. For alternatives to Elliott's rejection of any egalitarian aspects within either the Pauline communities or the baptismal tradition, see, e.g., S.S. Bartchy, 'Who Should Be Called Father? Paul of Tarsus between the Jesus Tradition and *Patria Potestas*', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33.3 (2003), pp. 135-47; R. Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), pp. 123-26; Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 319; Countryman, 'Christian Equality'; R.T. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test-Case for Biblical Hermeneutics* (Didsbury Lecture; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), pp. 89-91; Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 266; Lampe, 'Language of Equality', pp .77-80; K.O. Sandnes, 'Equality within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament Perspectives on the Christian Fellowship as a Brother- or Sisterhood and Family', in H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 150-65 (162-63); Moxnes, 'Social Integration', pp. 101-105; Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, pp. 45, 48; Watson, 'Christ, Community', pp. 132-49. Against the sort of distorting limitations which Elliott insists equality must always consist of see, e.g., E.S. Anderson, 'What Is the Point of Equality?', *Ethics* 109 (1999), pp. 287-337; J.B. Elshtain, 'Christianity and Patriarchy: The Odd Alliance', *Modern Theology* 9.2 (1993), pp. 109-22; A. Sen, 'Equality of What?' The Tanner Lecture on Human Values 1979 [http://home.sandiego.edu/~baber/globalethics/senequalityofwhat.pdf accessed on 05.03.2009]; and especially Forrester, *On Human Worth*. Against the sort of limited and loaded use of definition which Elliott employs to describe what equality and egalitarian *must* mean, see Adams, 'Paul's Story', pp. 19-20 (cf. also Geertz's observation about definitions [*Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 90], cited in Chapter 2).

male (which, by the way, equals Paul!)'.[53] Eisenbaum's concentration upon status as an either-or commodity, however, means that she neglects the relational dynamic between the poles of each pairing, a dynamic which πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε perhaps suggests is more the issue.[54] But this neglect possibly stems from Eisenbaum's desire to avoid interpreting Gal. 3.28 as Paul expressing the unity of 'human essence',[55] an elusive quality which lies between concrete manifestations of human existence.

One interpretation which certainly moves in the direction of such an essence, and which has particularly negative implications for assessing Paul's impact upon women, is found in the assertions of Meeks and Boyarin that Paul conceived humanity 'in Christ' as one with a restored androgyny.[56] Thus Boyarin describes Paul as 'motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One', which in terms of his anthropology meant a humanity 'beyond difference and hierarchy', 'undivided by ethnos, class, and sex'.[57] The baptismal liturgy, then, describes a spiritual experience which, although it carries social consequences,[58] is about modifying believers' 'ontological categories' rather than their social roles.[59] Paul is critical of the Corinthians, for Boyarin, not because of their androgynous ideals, which he shares, but because they overestimate their capacity to achieve those ideals in the present.[60] Meeks' account of androgyny draws upon similar gnostic and Jewish platonist sources (e.g. *Gen. R.* 8.1; 17.6; *b. Meg.* 9a; *Mek. Pisha* 14) which

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53. Eisenbaum, 'Is Paul the Father'.

54. Although an emphasis upon dynamic rather than status can also go too far. See, e.g., Jewett's assertion that sexuality and gender per se are not the issue for Paul in Gal. 3.28. 'It is not sexuality but the immemorial antagonism between the sexes, perhaps the deepest and most subtle of all enmities, that is done away with' in Christ (*Man as Male and Female*, p. 143).

55. 'I do not believe the dictum in Gal. 3.28 as used by Paul was meant to articulate the destruction of human categories of existence so that people might share the same human essence. Rather, he articulated the construction of new human social relations based on the model of family' (Eisenbaum, 'Is Paul the Father').

56. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*; Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne'. See also Betz (*Galatians*, pp. 196-200), who goes so far as to claim that Christian salvation was seen as removing the biological sex divide between men and women (p. 196).

57. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 181.

58. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 195.

59. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 186.

60. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 195. '[F]or Paul, just as much as for the Corinthians, a state of androgyny, a cancellation of gender and sexuality, would have been the ideal. The difference between them lies in the application of the principle. The Corinthians believe that they have already achieved a state of perfection that permits the acting out of the cancellation of gender difference, whereas Paul is skeptical of their achievements (cf. 4.8)'.

see humanity as originally created 'masculofeminine'.[61] The oneness of Christian baptism is a restoration of Gen. 1.27 humanity and a reversal of Gen. 2.21-22, such that 'man is no longer divided—not even by the most fundamental division of all, male and female'.[62] Differing in emphasis from Boyarin, Meeks finds Gal. 3.28 to be a powerful 'utopian declaration' of human 'reunification' with social implications: 'A factual claim is being made, about an "objective" change in reality that fundamentally modifies social roles'.[63]

Whatever the nuanced differences in their thinking, if Boyarin and Meeks are correct, Paul's affirmation of the baptismal tradition implies an attitude to gender which, though it sounds radical, is neither particularly culture critical[64] nor very egalitarian.[65] In effect, reading oneness as androgyny in Gal. 3.28 implies a Paul who facilitated the contemporary suppression of female gendered identity. That women will only become equal with men before God when they are no longer women, when humanity's androgynous restoration is eschatologically fulfilled,[66] suggests that any spiritual aspirations in the present require the censoring of their womanhood. True, men too are destined to suffer this loss of gender, but they have nothing to gain from it. Men are already biologically equipped to be υἱοὶ θεοῦ (Gal. 3.26),

61. Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', p. 185. Allison ('Let Women Be Silent', p. 32) critiques Meeks at this point because 'masculofeminine' is a category absent from the Pauline corpus.

62. Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', p. 185.

63. 'Reinforced by dramatic gestures (disrobing, immersion, robing), such a declaration would carry—within the community for which its language was meaningful—the power to assist in shaping the symbolic universe by which that group distinguished itself from the ordinary "world" of the larger society. A modern philosopher might call it a "performative utterance." …Thus, though we might suppose that the only possible realistic function of such language would be to inculcate an attitude, the form of the statement is not "You ought to think…" but "there is…"' (Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', p. 182).

64. Both scholars make much of androgynous philosophical tendencies within Hellenism. See Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, pp. 185-89; Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', pp. 185-97.

65. Martin, who also holds to an androgynous reading of the baptismal tradition, argues that for the ancients, 'androgyny does not imply equality' (*Corinthian Body*, pp. 230-32).

66. Boyarin says that for Paul new creation humanity—that in which 'all differences would be effaced'—is as yet unattainable (*Radical Jew*, p. 187). He thinks that in baptism Paul sees 'a momentary ecstatic androgyny', but otherwise life now is to be characterized by 'a moderate, "benevolent" domination of women by men' (pp. 190-91). Meeks also emphasizes the eschatological character of equality, asserting that the 'symbols' of gender differentiation still pertain, albeit without 'ultimate significance' ('Image of the Androgyne', p. 208).

are already at the favoured end of the gender spectrum,[67] while women must suppress their gender now if they are to experience any anticipation of their eschatological 'sonship'.[68] In critiquing Meeks, Allison asserts that, had Paul thought in androgynous terms, he would have conceived of an idealized 'male androgyny'[69]—in keeping with Eisenbaum's ideal statuses—and that certainly fits with the implications for women that such an understanding of Gal. 3.28 oneness carries.

However, while especially Meeks' ideas about androgyny have been influential, there are a number of reasons for doubting this interpretation of the baptismal tradition. Beyond the obviously questionable appeal to gnostic ideas,[70] perhaps the androgyne reading's most fundamental weakness lies, as Gundry-Volf points out, in the relationship it perceives between Gen. 1.27 and Gal. 3.28. Meeks and Boyarin follow the majority of scholars in depicting the baptismal liturgy as reliant upon Gen. 1.27, and then emphasize a particular androgynous reading of that Genesis tradition, assuming that Gal. 3.28 moves in the same direction.[71] But reliance need not mean agreement. Indeed, even if the androgynous reading of Genesis is correct, the οὐκ ἔνι clause clearly makes the liturgy Paul cites a reversal of that tradition: 'The whole interpretation of Gal. 3.28c as expressing the androgynous ideal falters once we take seriously "There is no 'male and female'" as an allusion to Gen. 1.27 *and, in some sense, its negation*'.[72] Additionally, while

67. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 230.

68. There is a lop-sided feel to Meeks's assertion that within the Spirit-defined community the 'symbols' of gender differentiation pertain but lack 'ultimate significance' ('Image of the Androgyne', p. 208), not least because he ignores these imbalanced consequences of androgyny.

69. Allison, 'Let Women Be Silent', pp. 32-34. Meeks ('Image of the Androgyne', pp. 194-95) actually acknowledges this characteristic of the gnostic thought upon which he bases his claims for Pauline androgyny, citing the need for women to become male in order to be saved according to the Gospel of Thomas (logion 114). However, as Martin points out (*Corinthian Body*, p. 230), Meeks conveniently forgets such inequality when it comes to Paul's use of androgyny (e.g. 'Image of the Androgyne', p. 230).

70. Thus, for example, France describes the androgyne interpretation as a 'bizarre idea' which 'owes nothing to either Genesis or Paul, but everything to *later* gnostic speculation' (*Women in the Church's Ministry*, p. 90 n. 14, emphasis added).

71. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 186; Meeks, 'Image of the Androgyne', p. 181 n. 77.

72. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 103, original emphasis. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 376. Gundry-Volf thinks that the issue of negation is ignored by many because Gen. 1.27 is now generally seen as saying something good about human equality ('Male and Female', p. 110). She speculates, however, that this was not the case for the early Christians. 'In the beginning God said, "Let *them* fill the earth and subdue it". But the woman's partner in subduing the earth became a master who subdues her. This, in short, is what it means to be created male and female *in human experience*, or so the early Christian readers of Genesis 1–3 could have thought. But now "there

Meeks and Boyarin enlist one tradition of reading the creation accounts, there were others just as likely to have influenced the early Christians. Thus, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza finds Gen. 1.27 to have been understood in Jewish exegesis as concerned with 'procreation and fertility', read 'primarily in terms of marriage and family'. It

> evokes the image of the first couple, and not that of an androgynous being…
> 'No longer male and female' is best understood, therefore, in terms of mar-
> riage and gender relationships. As such, Gal 3:28c does not assert that there
> are no longer men and women in Christ, but that patriarchal marriage—and
> sexual relationships between male and female—is no longer constitutive of
> the new community in Christ. Irrespective of their procreative capacities
> and of the social roles connected with them, persons will be full members
> of the Christian movement in and through baptism.[73]

For Schüssler Fiorenza, preferring the androgyne idea to this interpretation requires an 'unproven assumption' that 'gnostic beliefs and not…prophetic experiences' moulded the thinking of those who revelled in the Gal. 3.28 declaration.[74] On a broader level, Witherington sees the androgyne reading as completely missing the purpose of the text (and of Galatians as a whole), which he sees as a reaffirmation of the Christians' corporate identity over against both ethnic Israel and 'Gentile religions and social notions'.[75] For Witherington,

is no 'male and female' ''. Rather, "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away, see, everything has become new" (2 Cor. 5.17). Gal. 3.28c with its critique of the created order is formulated from the perspective of the redeemed order. It is now inaugurated. And it is a new creation. The Corinthians doubtless shared this perspective, given their highly realized eschatology and their sense of living according to new norms in the power of the eschatological gift of the Spirit as those already resurrected to new life (cf. esp. 1 Cor. 4.8-10; 15.12). This understanding of present Christian existence lent itself well to a rejection of the first creation's implications for marriage, sexual relations and procreation' (p. 111, original emphasis). See also Adams, 'Paul's Story', pp. 40-41. One alternative to this sort of reconstruction is offered by France (*Women in the Church's Ministry*, pp. 89-90). Not wanting to see Paul negating Gen. 1.27 and wondering why a specific marriage text is not cited if changing that relationship was the intent, he concludes rather lamely that Gal. 3.28 echoes Genesis without any intent to do so, and so cannot be seen as negating it.

73. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 211.

74. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 211. See also Allison's assessment of equality within Pauline communities as the product of: (i) convictions about the eschatological community; (ii) baptismal experiences and liturgy; (iii) receipt of the Spirit ('Let Women Be Silent', p. 33). F.J. Matera also objects to finding gnosticism behind the Gal. 3.28 tradition, but because he detects a greater subtlety to its understanding of gender unity than the gnostics evinced (*Galatians* [Sacra pagina, 9; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992], p. 147).

75. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 270.

> What Paul is *not* doing is offering up the idea of an androgynous Christ,
> or body of Christ, or androgynous individuals within that body as ought to
> be especially clear from the fact that Paul says there is no male *and* female
> combination in Christ, for all are one person (indeed εἷς is in the masculine
> here) in Christ.[76]

While such considerations suggest that the particular gender suppression
implicit in the androgyne reading is unlikely to have been in Paul's mind as
he brought the baptismal tradition to bear upon the Corinthians' marriage
question,[77] his understanding of that tradition and its social consequences
remains important. And whereas the androgyne reading assumes that the
baptismal liturgy picked up what it sees as widespread cultural values,[78]
that Paul is having to explain its social implications perhaps suggests that
it cut against the culture. Thus Cartlidge sees the tradition behind Gal. 3.28
as embodying a fundamental critique of Hellenistic society, declaring the
bankruptcy of its 'basic models' (male dominance, ethnic difference and
the slave economy) and thus inducing an inevitable confusion about social
organization.[79] Cartlidge conceives the Corinthian community as strug-
gling to come to terms with this confusion, casting about for new rela-
tional models with chaotic results.[80] Since one of Paul's main motivations
for writing to the Corinthians was the bolstering of communal order (κατὰ
τάξιν, 1 Cor. 14.40; cf. 1 Cor. 14.33a), explaining why certain relationships,

76. Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 271, original emphasis.

77. There may well have been some attempt at gender-obfuscation behind the hair-
styles to which Paul objects in 1 Cor. 11.2-16 (see, e.g., Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 498;
Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 182-86; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 829), suggesting
that gender was indeed an issue in the Corinthian community. But that does not require
that either the Corinthians or Paul understood the baptismal liturgy in androgynous
terms. M.Y. MacDonald sees the adoption of 'male' hairstyles by some as 'women imi-
tating the male appearance in an effort to become androgynous' and thus find liberation
('Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1 Corinthians 7', *New Testa-
ment Studies* 36.2 [1990], pp. 161-81 [166]). However, the drive toward sexlessness is
not a necessary explanation. Changed hairstyles/headcoverings could as easily be seen
as a female statement of equality without a complete sacrificing of gender identity.
Indeed, MacDonald's own understanding of Paul's response—that he emphasized the
'indispensability of women *as women* (1 Cor. 11.11-12)' (p. 167, emphasis added)—
could as easily be understood as a concern with the complementary value of femininity
as of one with gender per se.

78. See, e.g., Meeks' assertion that 'Myths of a bisexual progenitor of the human
race were very common in antiquity' ('Image of the Androgyne', p. 185).

79. Cartlidge, '1 Corinthians 7', p. 223. Also Martyn, *Galatians*, pp. 376-77, With-
erington, *Grace in Galatia*, p. 271.

80. Cartlidge suggests that 'the chaos in Corinth is the result of an attempt by the
Corinthians to establish new social patterns based on their understanding of Christian
freedom' ('1 Corinthians 7', p. 223).

behaviours and values were gospel-appropriate,[81] if Cartlidge's conjecture is accurate it would have been natural for Paul to address the community's social confusion.

Gordon offers what is perhaps the most compelling reconstruction of the confusion engendered in Corinth by the baptismal tradition; certainly more so than, for example, Schüssler Fiorenza's widely-cited notions of a changed organization of missionary activity,[82] because it allows for both external socio-relational pressures and intra-communal struggles.[83] Starting from an observation of Paul's careful balancing of male and female obligations in 1 Cor. 7.2-4,[84] Gordon suggests that he was even-handedly approaching a controversy within the community raised by the baptismal tradition which reflected a wider social debate about 'the marriage relationship with its unequal roles and functions'.[85] She sees confusion over the 'root metaphor' of the baptismal tradition—the inclusive sonship and thus kinship which is in Christ Jesus (Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Gal. 3.26)—which created social ambiguities and tensions within the community.

> Although Christians at Corinth were being called upon to live out a brother and sister role in the church, many also related to each other as husband and wife. Each of these relationships represented a distinct kinship pattern, reflecting a different set of roles, obligations and structures for organizing the community. …from an anthropological viewpoint, Christian husbands and wives in Corinth played two antithetical roles.[86]

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81. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 33-36; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 25-26; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 73-77.

82. Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*, p. 169) describes Paul taking issue with a shift away from the earliest Christians' pattern of missionary partnerships in which male and female were considered equal. However, while her emphases upon Paul's unconcern with missionaries' sexual status and gender roles and recognition of all as labourers is helpful, her reconstruction is both too general—being a broad account of Pauline values—and too narrowly focussed—upon missionary endeavours rather than communal existence within a cultural setting—to offer a convincing account of the Corinthian situation.

83. As Gundry-Volf points out, any reconstruction relies upon Paul's portrayal of and response to the Corinthian Christians' sexual ethics. Neither aspect is easy to read from 1 Corintians 7, however, and so 'we must avoid the temptation to simplify…through a simple "mirror reading" reconstruction' ('Controlling the Bodies', p. 520). That is certainly the trap which Wire (*Corinthian Women Prophets*) falls into, hence the lack of reference to her in what follows, despite her influence. See Adams, *Constructing the World*, for a view of Pauline language and argument as aimed to 'create'/'affect' rather more than 'reflect' Corinthian community (pp. 21, 105, 246). For a broad investigation and critique of the various theories put forward to explain the tendency toward asceticism in Corinth, see Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, pp. 5-49.

84. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 103.

85. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 110.

86. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 138.

Given this tension between fictive and actual kinship patterns[87] and the cultural debates about marriage and gender roles, the 'no male and female' clause of the liturgy was bound to raise confusing questions of social relationship within the Corinthian community.[88] Diverse answers brought conflicting understandings of the root metaphor, with each being championed as '*the* way of clarifying…ambiguous social experience within the group'.[89] One such kinship notion, strongly expressed in the absolute claim καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι (1 Cor. 7.1),[90] was idealistic and 'anti-structural', attempting to maintain initial, egalitarian experiences of Christian kinship as the ongoing standard for community life,[91] and thus excluding marriage.[92] The other, more realistic approach declared the 'patrilineal kinship structure' of marriage to remain pertinent, unaffected by the ecclesial, not social, declaration of the baptismal liturgy.[93] What Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7, then, is an attempt at mediation, outlining his understanding of the root metaphor's social implications in order to 'bring the disputants to "one mind" (1.10)',[94] finding common ground by undermining each side's

87. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 216.

88. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, pp. 113-14.

89. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 155, original emphasis.

90. Gordon thinks that some Corinthians were asserting Christian 'abstinence as an absolute moral good', a standard for all. She acknowledges that this need not be the meaning of καλός but thinks it more likely, given Paul's response, than either a 'purely utilitarian and pragmatic' assertion of goodness, or a statement of celibacy being one amongst several moral goods (*Sister or Wife?*, p. 111). See also Yarbrough, *Not like the Gentiles*, p. 95. Against reading καλός as an absolute, Caragounis argues that, both contextually (1 Cor. 7.8, 26) and in its broader New Testament usage (e.g. Mt. 18.8-9; Mk 9.42-47; Jn 2.10), 'better' is 'beyond possible doubt' a more accurate translation (' "Fornication" and "Concession"?', p. 546). However, Caragounis's assessment of καλός in 1 Cor. 7.1 is clearly shaped by the debatable assertion that this is Paul's view, not a Corinthian slogan (see Chapter 4, n. 281). For a similar stance without that assumption, see Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 115, 119-20.

91. This group's characteristics could easily be equated with what other scholars have seen as the Corinthians' over-realized eschatology. See, e.g., A.T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to his Eschatology* (SNTS Monograph Series, 43; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 33; A.C. Thiselton, 'Realized Eschatology at Corinth', *New Testament Studies* 24.4 (1978), pp. 510-26.

92. Gordon describes some married women in this group as determined 'to live as sisters to all men, including their husbands' (*Sister or Wife?*, p. 138).

93. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 114. Gordon identifies two further groups: those married to non-Christians who were forced to take sides by extremists in the anti-structural and/or realist camps (p. 121), and those bound by oath to virgins (p. 125). This (rather too?) conveniently accounts for certain details of Paul's argument in 1 Corintians 7.

94. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 139.

absolute understanding of Christian kinship.[95] Gordon goes on to state, following Schüssler Fiorenza and Wire,[96] that the ascetic, marriage-denying, anti-structural position was most likely to have been held by women.[97] This understanding implies that, so far as Paul relativizes the καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι claim, whatever his sympathies for it, he is taking the side of male heads of household in entrenching the status quo. However, while Gundry-Volf agrees that Paul's interpretation of the baptismal tradition in 1 Corinthians 7 can only be his response to an ascetic Corinthian understanding of that tradition,[98] she and others find good reason in Paul's mixed-gender language (1 Cor. 7.1-4, 11-16, 36-38) for thinking that he did not consider asceticism to be restricted to women in Corinth.[99] Indeed,

95. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 155.

96. Both perceive Gal. 3.28 as being about a new creation freedom from patriarchy. Freedom from patriarchal domination was attainable for women in particular by means of celibacy, which removed the biological determination of their roles as wives and mothers (e.g. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 213; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 125).

97. 'Since women were those to whom an anti-structural interpretation of the root metaphor, "no male and female", would have special appeal, and since it was a married woman who seems to have brought the issue into prominence in the community (vv. 10-11), it is likely that at least some married women, as status dissonants, have refused sexual relations with their husbands on the grounds that it negated their newly found status as children of God and sisters to their husbands' (Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, pp. 119-20). In similar vein Gordon thinks 'male heads of households' to be those most likely to argue for the retention of established social structures, roles and obligations (p. 120). See also Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 223; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 125. On there being a particular woman divorcing her husband as the focal point of Paul's comments, see Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 118. On the Corinthian ascetics being 'eschatological women', see also Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 270; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 109-11. For an alternative perspective upon the (un)desirability of patriarchal power, see D.L. Balch (*Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in I Peter* [SBL Monographs Series, 26; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1981], p. 140), who argues that by the late Republic the guardianship inherent in patriarchal relationships was 'a burden for men', but 'only a slight disadvantage for women'.

98. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 95.

99. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 112. Gundry-Volf also finds instances within Hellenism of men, who might be expected to benefit from and thus support patriarchal marriage, rejecting the institution. For example, the Epicureans' refusal of marital and reproductive duties in order to gain freedom from family responsibilities (Diogenes Laertius 10.118-19). In support of Gundry-Volf, Caragounis (' "Fornication" and "Concession"?', p. 548), although he disputes that Paul was addressing asceticism, asserts that the whole church inclusively is in view in 1 Corintians 7. Similarly, Hays contends that 'the formulation of the Corinthian slogan (v. 1b: "It is well for *a man* not to touch a woman") suggests that it was the men in the community who were urging the renunciation of sexual relations. Probably the call to asceticism found

for Gundry-Volf, an adoption of the ascetic, anti-structural understanding
of the baptismal liturgy was as likely to be spiritually motivated as it was
sociological,[100] and thus open (as was the conservative understanding) to
those of all stations and of both genders. While the potential of a radical con-
ception of 'no male and female' to attract women already culturally prone to
questioning gender roles suggests the simple 'pneumatic women versus tra-
dition' situation which Wire in particular depicts, Gundry-Volf's reminder
that life is rarely so one-dimensional provides some helpful balance. It also
allows a less black-and-white assessment of Paul's impact upon women,
tolerating as it does the idea that Paul's mediating rhetoric was aimed at
men *as well as* women on *both* sides of the disagreement over the baptismal
liturgy's social consequences.

2. *Women at Home*

Paul's stated preference for celibacy (θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς
καὶ ἐμαυτόν, 1 Cor. 7.7-8)[101] is often taken to indicate that his sympathies lay
with those in the anti-structural camp, for whom baptismal oneness carried
immediate socio-relational consequences.[102] If that group is understood
as (primarily) female, then Paul's decision to step back from supporting
them, and from his own beliefs, is easy to depict as negative, especially for
women.[103] He is seen, in effect, to be elevating the interests of the privileged
over those of believers already denied social power, and to be protecting

a sympathetic hearing among some members of both sexes in the Corinthian church'
(*First Corinthians*, p. 115, original emphasis).

100. Gundry-Volf ('Controlling the Bodies') finds evidence for the ascetics also
being pneumatics in 1 Cor. 7.40 (p. 529) and in the desire for spiritual depth which
must have lain behind 1 Cor. 7.5 (p. 532). She also cites parallel phenomena in both
Hellenistic and Jewish circles, where devotees would 'seek to facilitate divine inspira-
tion and communication with God through sexual asceticism' (p. 540).

101. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 192; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 158; A.T. Lincoln, *Ephe-
sians* (Word Biblical Commentary, 42; Dallas: Word, 1990), p. 390; Roetzel, *Man and
Myth*, pp. 135-36; B.S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians
5–7* (Biblical Studies Library; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), p. 152. Contra
Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 155; E.J. Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire:
Paul's Sexual Ethics in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1* (London:
T. & T. Clark, 2007), pp. 150-51.

102. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 78.

103. Wire (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 93) describes the option for abstinence
within both Greco-Roman and Jewish settings as one which brought women 'wider
and more direct participation in public life'. For Paul to oppose celibacy, then, Wire
sees as jeopardizing 'the structures of life through which these women have extended
their social roles'. See also Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 159.

communal stability at the expense of equality and of his own convictions.[104] This perspective is flawed, however, in its over-simplification of both the Corinthian factions (discussed above) and of Paul's own convictional framework, which ran beyond a simple preference for celibacy. Indeed, it is this broader framework which sets the conditions for his discussion of celibacy and marriage.[105] In doing so it limits his focus such that Paul neglects certain matters important to later readers—the procreative[106] and companionship

104. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 176. Brown has a somewhat different take on Paul's buttressing of established household structures. He comments that: (i) Paul was protecting his power base in supporting the household; (ii) Paul did so with missionary goals in mind. 'In coming down firmly on the side of allowing marriage to continue… Paul acted as he usually did whenever his converts were tempted to erect excessively rigid barriers between themselves and the outside world. …Paul sided with the well-to-do households who had most to lose from total separation from the pagan world. For it was they who would support his ambitious mission to the gentiles most effectively' (*Body and Society*, p. 54). In support of Brown's idea that the Corinthians were withdrawing from the world, see Murphy-O'Connor's contention about a movement to break-up marriages in which only one partner was Christian. 'The believers created a barrier against the influence of the world by the authenticity of their common life. An unbeliever was by definition inauthentic. He or she represented the world of Sin that they had left behind. By permitting such a person to remain in close contact with the community, therefore, the believers were putting their own freedom at risk' (*Becoming Human*, p. 162). For an alternative view of Pauline and Corinthian attitudes to broader society, see Barclay, 'Thessalonica and Corinth'.

105. Hence Barton comments: '*Paul's pneumatology and ecclesiology play a very large part in his instructions on marriage*. It is a matter of putting the gendered, sexuate body in the right context'. Paul's response to the Corinthians' question is, then, part of his larger attempt 'to offer a more adequate theological and eschatological framework within which the Corinthians may think and act' ('1 Corinthians', p. 1328, original emphasis).

106. Many see Paul ignoring procreation because he thinks that the End is so near (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν, 1 Cor. 7.29) as to make child-rearing an irrelevance (e.g. Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 200; Ellis, *Sexual Desire*, p. 152; Whiteley, *Theology of St Paul*, p. 215). However, Gundry-Volf offers an alternative reading. She thinks that the pervasive influence of Gal. 3.28, and especially its negation of Gen. 1.27, means that the procreation issue is in fact being addressed at some level here. She considers that the baptismal liturgy dissociated 'procreative *capacity* from procreative *duty* or *purpose*. Christian women and men were thus free to devote their time and resources to the "things of the Lord" (7.33-34) rather than to producing children'. This is, for Gundry-Volf, a significant culture-critical standpoint as both Paul's Jewish heritage and his Greco-Roman environment prioritized the procreative function of marriage ('Male and Female', p. 115, original emphasis). The same could be said if Paul neglected procreation because he saw eschatological judgment as imminent (1 Cor. 1.20; 2.6, 8; 2 Cor. 4.4), but is less plausible if Paul's focus upon other matters simply denies him the space to cover this aspect of marital relations.

elements of marriage, for instance[107]—but also locates Paul's comments within the wider context of his attempt to shape the developing Corinthian community.

Various and sometimes imaginative explanations have been proposed for Paul's failure to support celibacy as a communal norm despite his preference for it. Those which are most likely to persuade, however, are always earthed within the rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 7 itself, reflecting Paul's stated values and arguments.[108] The obvious starting point for understanding Paul's relativization of celibacy is the very statement with which he begins to put bounds around it: διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας (1 Cor. 7.2).[109] This concern about immorality demonstrates that 1 Corinthians 7 sees Paul continuing to address the impact of sexual behaviour upon the community,[110] albeit at a new level. It thus also indicates the broader framework within which he was thinking. It is all too easy for modern interpreters to assess 1 Corinthians 7 within a vacuum and on an either-or basis, whether that be a choice between marriage and celibacy or between asceticism and libertinism.[111] As MacDonald points out, however, Paul is less concerned with such poles in 1 Corinthians 7 than he is with the threat which *porneia* represents to the community.[112] He outlines the priority of appropriate and constructive

107. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, p. 5.

108. Thus, for example, Brown's argument (*Body and Society*, p. 56) that 'Paul saw celibacy as too precious a gift to extend to the whole church, even though some were, crushingly, only "half-Christians" without it' is fairly unlikely, not least because Paul does not consider himself to be the arbiter of which gifts are appropriate (χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, 1 Cor. 7.7). No more convincing is Chadwick's assertion that marriage was to be maintained because Paul considered it, 'like circumcision and slavery…a natural state which is not abrogated by grace' ('All Things To All Men', p. 266). The very idea of a gift of celibacy, and Paul's possession of that gift, suggest that grace could indeed overcome marriage, whether Paul saw it as a state of nature or not.

109. For example, Boyarin thinks that Paul desired an eschatological ending of marital relations as much as he did an ending of ethnic and class divisions, but recognized that to be an unrealistic hope 'for most people' because of immorality (*Radical Jew*, p. 200).

110. As J.A. Glancy puts it, his previously established 'preoccupation with sexual immorality inaugurates and governs Paul's discussion of marriage' in 1 Corintians 7 ('Obstacles to Slaves' Participation in the Corinthian Church', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117.3 [1998], pp. 481-501 [490]).

111. See, e.g., Richter's over-simplified assessment that 'Innerhalb der christlichen Kirchen gibt es heute nicht wenige, die sich in der Frage der Sexualität gegen Paulus und für die Libertinisten in Korinth entscheiden möchten' ('Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth', p. 566).

112. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit', p. 163. Also Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 122. As Barton puts it, 'Paul does not focus on sexual matters just for their own sake, but for the contributions they make to the larger task of creating an ordered, holy and life-giving society. …his sexual ethics are part of his *social* ethics…

behaviour by emphasizing that celibacy, his personal preference, be laid aside if adhering to it risked too much.[113] 'Celibacy might allow for a more perfect representation of the freedom of the eschaton, but marriage is also good, and for some, because of the temptation to immorality, it is the only desirable choice',[114] for the community as a whole if not for every individual. The danger of *porneia* to the community clearly revolves around issues of purity,[115] of avoiding sin and causing others to sin (1 Cor. 7.2, 5, 9), themes to which Paul returns repeatedly in the Corinthian correspondence (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.16-17; 6.15-20; 8.9-13; 10.14, 32; 11.28-32; 2 Cor. 7.1) and into which his emphatic denials (οὐχ ἥμαρτες…οὐχ ἥμαρτεν, 1 Cor. 7.28; οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, 1 Cor. 7.36) suggest that (some of) the Corinthians had mistakenly added marriage. While the celibate life was Paul's ideal (1 Cor. 7.38), he recognized that not all were divinely equipped for it (1 Cor. 7.7),[116] and that asking those who were not to conform to its standards would be to invite a damaging fall (1 Cor. 7.5; cf. 1 Cor. 8.9; 2 Cor. 6.3).[117] That some in Corinth thought otherwise is regularly seen as evidence for both their individualism, leading to a lack of concern for others and the community,[118]

part of his thinking about what it means to be both Christian households and the eschatological "household" of the church of God' (*Life Together*, p. 81, original emphasis).

113. Contra those who have seen Paul rejecting sex as a blanket measure for maintaining Christian purity. While no longer a common interpretation, there are still those who see Paul as anti-sex. For example, R.A. Atkins, *Egalitarian Community: Ethnography and Exegesis* (Tuscaloona: University of Alabama Press, 1991), p. 120; D.B. Martin, 'Paul without Passion: On Paul's Rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage', in H. Moxnes (ed.), *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 201-15 (202, 207). For critiques of this view see, e.g., Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, pp. 222-25; S. Wheeler, 'Creation, Community, Discipleship: Remembering Why We Care about Sex', *Ex auditu* 17 (2001), pp. 60-72 (68).

114. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit', p. 163.

115. Hence Martin's view that Paul allows Christian marriage 'as a mechanism for protecting the boundaries of the church's body from external contamination through sex with those outside' (*Corinthian Body*, p. 212) and as a safeguard against the 'hostile, polluting agent' of desire within the community (p. 217). See also Pagels's assessment that Paul saw the purpose of marriage as 'sexual *containment*' ('Paul and Women', p. 542 original emphasis).

116. Gundry-Volf ('Controlling the Bodies', p. 533) sees Paul's talk of gifting here as reflecting and reversing a Corinthian conviction that abstinence facilitated the Spirit's gifts to believers: 'Against these pneumatics…Paul argues that the capability of continence itself is a χαρίσμα… One needs to have this χαρίσμα in order to live a celibate life, rather than live a celibate life in order to attain χαρίσματα'.

117. Paul was clearly aware that for abstinence within marriage to work, both partners would have to be committed to and gifted in self-control. See MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit', p. 170.

118. See, e.g., Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35', p. 436. In critique of this view, Martin thinks

and an over-realized propensity to inflate their spiritual standing. Taking up both points, Gundry-Volf suggests that Paul is pitting Corinthian assumptions of spiritual ἐξουσία against a concern for the good and rights of others. If the non-ascetically gifted spouse has a right to conjugal relations, she sees Paul saying, 'it follows that the ascetic spouse has a duty' (1 Cor. 7.3), an obligation which takes priority over their own right to abstinence,[119] in keeping with Paul's broader insistence that the Corinthians serve and love one another (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.1; 12.7; 13; 16.14).

For Wire, Paul's teaching here flows out of 'his tirade against immorality' in 1 Corinthians 5–6,[120] and represents a request that women pay the price for male weakness. She objects to the common assumption that men and women thought about marriage in parallel ways, having as they did very different experiences of social relations,[121] and finds men to be the culprits of the immorality which Paul has addressed.[122] In doing so, Wire claims

that the Corinthian 'strong' viewed their sexual abstinence as a badge of their spiritual status, but one to which the 'weak' could aspire, encouraging the spiritual growth of the whole community (*Corinthian Body*, p. 208). He goes on, 'In my opinion, the Strong in Corinth had just as much sense of "relational responsibility" as Paul; they simply construed the proper expressions of that responsibility differently' (p. 291 n. 31). While this may be a useful corrective to overly negative perceptions of the Corinthians, however, it probably underplays the implications for individuals of the competitive, status-obsession of Corinthian culture. See, e.g., Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 30-31. For Horsley, to talk of Corinthian individualism is not to risk anachronism because he sees their views of individual freedom as largely similar 'to those of modern enlightenment liberalism. In both cases ethical liberty involves an almost absolute individualism and an abstract understanding of freedom, the point of which is precisely to transcend the contingencies of concrete social life or "necessity". Thus the effects of one's free actions on other people or on society as a whole receive little attention' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 145).

119. Gundry-Volf, 'Controlling the Bodies', p. 526. See also Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, p. 117), who describes equality as resulting from 'the limitation of freedom which is given with the presence of the partner'.

120. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 73.

121. 'Women in the Christian community were not immune from the radical systemic disadvantages of women in that society as a whole—inferiority by age and possible slave heritage in marriage, dependency on all men in civil and judicial matters, and special vulnerability to death at birth and again at giving birth' (Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 75).

122. This is mostly an argument about power and therefore opportunity. For Wire, the man in 1 Cor. 5.1 can take 'his father's wife' whatever her opinion on the matter because without the father she only has the options of submission and destitution (Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 75). Similarly, women were culturally unable to visit prostitutes (1 Cor. 6.15-16) while men could do so at will (p. 76). The matters with which Paul set up his discussion of marriage in 1 Corintians 7, then, demonstrate that the immorality about which he is concerned is 'male' (p. 78). See also Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 177.

that Paul identifies both the problem of *porneia* for the community and its solution. But while the former is male, it is the new-found independence of women opting out of marriage—a step which Paul acknowledges to be 'good' (1 Cor. 7.8)[123]—that must be sacrificed for the latter:[124] 'Paul sets out to persuade women to give up what they have gained through sexual abstinence in order that the community…may be saved from immorality'.[125] Even if, as argued above, the Corinthian factions were not quite so clearly gender based as Wire assumes, that many women had little to gain from marriage, and so may have suffered from Paul opposing their withdrawal appears to be a good point. However, that marriage also carried the potential for female gain should not be overlooked. Paul knew the culture, and although his emphasis is upon *porneia*-avoidance (1 Cor. 7.2, 9) and the distractions of marriage (1 Cor. 7.32-34), vv. 39-40 perhaps also hint at him understanding that some might choose to avoid the vulnerability that would accompany being cut loose from inclusion in a household (cf. 1 Cor. 7.33-34).[126] Certainly, Paul's emphasis upon marital reciprocity[127]—at least on sexual matters (1 Cor. 7.3-5)[128]—provided for a mitigated male dominance of the relationship, making marriage a less onerous price for women to pay for communal stability[129] and actually demanding that men pay somewhat more than was culturally expected of them.[130] Paul's model of the community

123. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 81.

124. Wire comments, 'The immorality he exposes is male. The solution he calls for is marriage', and because men cannot marry men 'Women are necessary in Paul's plan to put an end to immorality in the community' (Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 81).

125. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 79.

126. See, e.g., deSilva's argument that Paul's concern lay in part with safeguarding the honour of women whose culture would regard them negatively if their 'purity had no champion and defender' (*Hope of Glory*, p. 13).

127. As Wire states, 'There is no doubt that Paul is rhetorically accentuating the equal and reciprocal nature of sexual responsibilities. The lack of a common noun for "spouse" in Greek does not require Paul to delineate each responsibility twice in full. Paul goes far beyond the needs of clarity to stress in diction, tone, and repetition his own impartiality and reasonableness' (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 80).

128. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 224. Although see below for a critique of this limitation.

129. Witherington talks of Paul working to restrict male privilege and increase female security within marriage as well as bolstering women's capacity to choose singleness (*Conflict and Community*, p. 177). In contrast, Wire hints that Paul is being disingenuous by using a rhetoric of equal rights which he knows will attract women but which he has no intention of following through on (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 82). This, however, seems an unnecessary conclusion, cohering rather better with Wire's dubious reconstruction of the Corinthian situation generally and particularly of women opting out of marriage (p. 72) than it does with the text of 1 Corintians 7.

130. Gundry-Volf characterizes this change as a movement from the subordination

as a body (1 Cor. 12.12-27) clearly had some socio-relational implications which cost stronger members more than weaker ones (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.18-32), and that he expected a similar dynamic to pertain in matters of sex and marriage is not inconceivable. True, those with the most to gain from celibacy would also lose the most from marriage, and while not all such people would have been women, many would. It is speculative to suggest that, had this been put to him, Paul might have pointed to the particular sacrifices he made for communal well-being (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.19-22; 2 Cor. 1.6; 6.3-11),[131] but not unreasonable to think that he saw a denial of one member's preference for celibacy in the same light, as part of their cruciform servanthood.[132] Of course, many of Paul's sacrifices were of privileges already possessed. For women being encouraged into or to remain within marriage, the price was a denial of commodities that their culture was loath to afford them in the first place: autonomy and self-determination.

A second aspect of Paul's broad convictional framework expressed throughout the Corinthian correspondence and reflected in 1 Corinthians 7 is his desire for order within the community, partly so that it might be seen in the best possible light by outsiders (e.g. 1 Cor. 5.1-2; 11.13-15; 14.23, 26-33a, 40; cf. 1 Cor. 9.19-22; 2 Cor. 6.3-9; 8.20-21; Tit. 2.5, 8). This goal could easily have been threatened by the presence of *porneia* among the believers[133] or by a rash exercise of Christian freedom.[134] Paul's opposition to any withdrawal from an already established sexual relationship,[135] for instance, suggests a concern for how that would affect intra-community dynamics—hence the mention of marital reconciliation (καταλλάσσω, 1 Cor. 7.10-11)—as well as the community's reputation,[136] especially where a non-

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of wife to husband to a state of mutual subordination and equality ('Controlling the Bodies', p. 539).

131. See Countryman, 'Christian Equality', p. 117.

132. As Roetzel points out, when advocating himself and Jesus as models of servanthood for the Corinthians to imitate, Paul emphasized their self-denial, paradigmatically expressed in Jesus' death, not their celibacy (*Man and Myth*, p. 150).

133. Thus MacDonald links the 'seemly' behaviour of *porneia*-avoidance with Paul's instruction about: (i) the Corinthians remaining as they are, curtailing social disruption which 'could distract the community from its focus on the Lord'; (ii) the sort of 'disorderly behaviour [which] could bring unnecessary suspicion on a group which sought to embrace the whole world'. MacDonald goes so far as to suggest that celibacy and tongues speech were two central and bragged-about elements in the spiritual elitism of some Corinthians ('Women Holy in Body and Spirit', pp. 175-76).

134. Yarbrough (*Not like the Gentiles*, p. 104) suggests that Paul's concern for communal reputation takes concrete form within 1 Corintians 7 in his desire for an undiluted devotion to the Lord (εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως, v. 35), which Yarbrough interprets as an unrestrained witness (cf. 1 Cor. 9.5).

135. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 96.

136. As J.M.G. Barclay points out, communal reputation would have been especially

believing spouse was unwillingly divorced (1 Cor. 7.12-13).[137] Despite his advocacy of singleness (1 Cor. 7.8, 27, 32-34, 38, 40), which in itself challenged cultural values,[138] Paul would have appreciated the importance of the family as the basic building block of ancient society, and the negative response which any perception of Christians undermining marriage might have wrought for the community.[139] His repeated encouragement for believers to remain as they were (1 Cor. 7.8, 17, 20, 26-27, 38, 40), then, may have been motivated by more than a desire to distance social mobility and change from salvific calling. That such calling was completely entwined in his thinking with this preference for maintaining relational status (1 Cor. 7.17-24), however, cannot be ignored and is again suggestive of the larger agenda that Paul's Corinthian correspondence pursued; Christian calling and identity being repeated themes in his efforts to shape a developing community (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.2, 9, 18, 22-24, 26-30; 3.16; 4.15-16; 8.6; 15.1-2; 2 Cor. 1.21-22; 6.14-18).[140] Paul's concern for the priority of Christian calling is evident in his desire that the Corinthians avoid the distractions and pressures of marriage so far as was possible (1 Cor. 7.29-34). But that such

at risk where women were rejecting marital life ('The Family as the Bearer of Religion in Judaism and Early Christianity', in H. Moxnes [ed.], *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor* [London: Routledge, 1997], pp. 66-80 [75]).

137. That Paul allows divorce if an unbelieving spouse wishes to leave, and does so on the grounds of 'keeping the peace' (ἐν δὲ εἰρήνῃ κέκληκεν ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός, 1 Cor. 7.15) is suggestive of how important the community's unity and reputation could be for him, coming as it does amidst assertions of a believing partner being instrumental in the sanctification (ἁγιάζω, v. 14) and salvation (σῴζω, v. 16) of their family.

138. Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*) goes further, stating that Paul's preference for singleness was 'quite exceptional' (p. 224) because it also challenged imperial values. It was, she says, 'a frontal assault on the intentions of existing law and the general cultural ethos, especially since it was given to people who lived in the urban centers of the Roman empire. It stood over and against the dominant cultural values of Greco-Roman society. Moreover, his advice to women to remain nonmarried was a severe infringement of the right of the paterfamilias since, according to Roman law, a woman remained under the tutorship of her father and family, even after she married. Paul's advice to widows…offered a possibility for "ordinary" women to become independent. At the same time, it produced conflicts for the Christian community in its interaction with society' (pp. 225-26).

139. Meeks (*First Urban Christians*, pp. 105-106) and Dunn ('Household Rules', pp. 54, 57) make parallel points about the *haustafeln* being developed as a defensive ploy to placate external critics of Christianity's social impact.

140. Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 274. Indeed Harink goes so far as to claim that, having begun by reminding the Corinthians who they are through God's calling (1 Cor. 1.1-9), 'Everything that Paul says subsequently is said in the light of God's calling of the Corinthian community and of God's faithfulness to that calling' (*Paul among the Postliberals*, p. 232).

avoidance risked dangers with potentially worse communal implications than even distraction—*porneia*, disorder and disrepute—had him walking a fine line.[141] Paul encouraged singleness but was careful to stress the acceptability of marriage (1 Cor. 7.2, 28, 36, 38-39), especially for those whose thinking (1 Cor. 7.36) or gifting (1 Cor. 7.7) made celibacy difficult. Again, assuming that those advocating abstinence and the social changes it implied were primarily women, that Paul had broader concerns which forced him to mitigate his preference for celibacy might be seen as a gender-specific negative. But if, as has been argued, the abstinence party was not entirely female, and because Paul's stance was informed by a desire for communal unity, purity and reputation, then his denial of their thinking hardly manifests a gender bias. Even if some women would clearly have suffered individually because of it, so would some men, and all would have done so, in Paul's eyes, for a communal good which transcended individual interests and preferences (cf. 1 Cor. 9.19-27).

Paul's pervasive eschatological concerns (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.7-8; 2.6; 3.12-15; 5.5; 10.11; 15.19-28; 2 Cor. 1.13-14; 5.10) are a further aspect of his broader framework reflected in 1 Corinthians 7.[142] Paul desired the community to grasp the bigger picture; to view itself, its calling and relationships, and the dangers of *porneia* within their eschatological setting (1 Cor. 7.29-31).[143] Of course, the mention of eschatology throws up all sorts of preconceived notions about the Corinthian believers and how exactly Paul was responding to their eschatological claims. While only a few, cursory comments can be made here, that should not be seen as minimizing the importance of eschatology, either for Paul's thought or for scholarly debates about the Corinthian community.

One significant aspect of recent debate concerns whether Paul wrote into a crisis situation (ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην,[144] 1 Cor. 7.26), responding to the

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141. For Deming, Paul 'does not want to set the value of marriage too high and thereby discourage all forms of celibacy, nor does he wish to praise celibacy unduly, thereby undermining the institution of marriage' (*Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, p. 216).

142. Schweitzer, *Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, p. 54.

143. Thus, for Schweitzer, 'Grundsätzlich zwar steht Paulus auf dem Standpunkt, daß man sich von allem Irdischen frei machen solle, um bestens auf das Kommende bereitet zu sein. So stellt er mit Berufung auf die bevorstehende Not der Endzeit (I Kor 7,26) und auf das Vergehen der Welt (I Kor 7,29; 7,31) die Ehelosigkeit als Ideal hin (I Kor 7,1; 7,7; 7,26; 7,38). Er führt an, daß die Unverheirateten sich ganz der Sorge um die Dinge des Herrn und um ihre Heiligung hingeben können, während die Verheirateten eines durch das andere davon abgelenkt werden (1 Kor 7,32-34)… Die Forderung, daß man von allen irdischen Sorgen möglichst frei werden müsse, um die Gedanken ganz auf den Herrn gerichtet zu haben, hält er fest (I Kor 7,32)' (Schweitzer, *Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, p. 303).

144. Both words have debated meanings. Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, p. 132), for

Corinthian Christians' questions about how they should behave and relate given their current predicament.[145] Fee speculates that the sickness and death of 1 Cor. 11.30 (ἀσθενεῖς καὶ ἄρρωστοι καὶ κοιμῶνται) may be in view, but prefers, in light of the proximity of v. 28, to understand this predicament as simply the pre-parousia suffering of all Christians.[146] Winter, however, marshals considerable archaeological evidence to argue that a more particular crisis was afflicting Corinth;[147] a 'famine with the attendant social dislocation and anxiety it caused'.[148] He thinks that the Corinthian believers were opting for abstinence because, being eschatologically sensitive, they recognized famine as a 'sign of the times', and goes on to speculate that they desired to pray diligently (ἵνα σχολάσητε τῇ προσευχῇ, 1 Cor. 7.5) for

example, describes ἀνάγκη as 'an apocalyptic term', 'an established motif of apocalyptic expectation' (e.g. 4 Ezra 5.1-13; 6.18-24; 9.1-12; *Jub.* 23.11-31; Lk. 21.23). Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 162) and others point out, however, that ἀνάγκη need not connote anything eschatological, indeed that Paul often used it without any such implication (e.g. Rom. 13.5; 1 Cor. 7.37; 2 Cor. 6.4; 9.7; 1 Thess. 3.7). See also Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 574. Conzelmann reads ἐνεστῶσαν as 'imminent' in light of its cotext (vv. 29-31) and because he finds here the first indication that Paul's comments in 1 Corintians 7 are eschatologically conditioned (*1 Corinthians*, p. 132). See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 293. However, Adams (*Constructing the World*, p. 130), Fee, who says that Paul never uses ἐνίστημι in this way (*First Corinthians*, p. 329), and Winter, who rejects such a translation of a perfect participle, insist that 'the word "present" means what it says' (*After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 224).

145. Thus, for example, Rosner sees Paul expressing a preference for singleness because of the particular circumstances in Corinth rather than for more universal reasons (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 150).

146. Fee summarizes Paul as saying 'In light of the troubles we are already experiencing, who needs the additional burden of marriage as well?' (*First Corinthians*, p. 329). See also Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 175; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, II, pp. 156-57. Against this view, see Morris, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 112-13. Hays offers an alternative reading by linking Paul's use of ἀνάγκη here to his later use in 1 Cor. 9.16 (ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται· οὐαὶ γάρ μοί ἐστιν ἐὰν μὴ εὐαγγελίσωμαι). In light of that compulsion, says Hays, 'the "present necessity" to which he refers in 7.26 is the urgent imperative of proclaiming the gospel and doing the work of the Lord in the short time that remains. This interpretation links v. 26 with vv. 32-35 and explains more clearly why Paul regards celibacy as preferable to marriage: It frees the time and attention and energy of believers for the crucial work that is to be done in the precious short time before the *parousia*' (*First Corinthians*, p. 129). However, quite why that instance of Paul using ἀνάγκη is a more appropriate determinant of what it means here than any other instance (e.g. Rom. 13.5; 1 Cor. 7.37; 2 Cor. 6.4; 9.7; 1 Thess. 3.7) or the particular cotext of 1 Cor. 7.26, is not explained.

147. B.W. Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses to Corinthian Famines', *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989), pp. 86-106; *Seek the Welfare*, pp. 53-57; *After Paul Left Corinth*, chapters 10–11.

148. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 224.

their city (cf. Jer. 29.7).[149] Their questions to Paul (1 Cor. 7.1, 25), then, sought 'confirmation that sexual abstinence was the appropriate response' given the times and the undesirability of pregnancy which they brought (cf. Mk 13.17).[150] If Winter is correct, the Corinthians' abstinent prayer could be construed as culture critical, recognizing the eschatologically blind and ineffectual efforts of the secular authorities to cope with a crisis which heralded the judgment of 'this age' (1 Cor. 1.20; 2.6-8; 2 Cor. 4.4).[151] Paul's limitation of such prayer (πρὸς καιρόν, 1 Cor. 7.5), then, saw him either siding with those authorities, supporting the status quo, or relativizing a concern for wider society by giving a higher priority to internal communal purity (ἵνα μὴ πειράζῃ ὑμᾶς ὁ Σατανᾶς διὰ τὴν ἀκρασίαν ὑμῶν, 1 Cor. 7.5). Neither option paints the most flattering picture of Paul from a human rights perspective, although nor do they necessarily signify anything negative about his impact upon women. However, if accurate, the latter analysis perhaps does indicate something of the logic behind Paul's ambiguous stance toward societal structures and values; whatever investment is worth making in order to change society is always limited, for him, by the higher priority of the Christian community's well-being.

Laughery, for one, however, is highly critical of Winter's analysis. Although he cannot escape the proposition of famine in Corinth,[152] he asserts that Winter over-reads ἀνάγκη in 1 Cor. 7.26 'and the sociological context, at the risk of under-reading the epistle itself'.[153] Laughery maintains that cotextual, structural and situational considerations[154] indicate that

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149. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 225, 231. Contra Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, pp. 122, 220.

150. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 225; Winter, 'Secular and Christian Responses', pp. 93-94.

151. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 232. See also Thiselton's assessment that 'famine could well provide *a concrete instantiation of the eschatological question mark which stands over against the supposed stability, security, or permanence of lifestyles available in mid-first-century Roman society*' (*First Corinthians*, p. 573, original emphasis).

152. Laughery argues 'that while there may have indeed been a famine in Corinth, it is unlikely to have been the genesis of the Corinthians' questions' ('Paul: Anti-marriage?', pp. 111-12).

153. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 111.

154. While Laughery's cotextual (linking 1 Corintians 7 with Paul's previous comments on sex) and structural (analyzing Paul's rhetoric within 1 Corintians 7) arguments are fairly strong, both they and his analysis of 1 Corinthians 7 rely heavily upon a presupposed reconstruction of over-realized eschatology in Corinth. Unfortunately, Laughery offers less actual evidence to support that reconstruction than he does critique of those who view the Corinthians differently.

some Corinthians held an elitist,[155] over-realized eschatological[156] convic-
tion against the 'moral-spiritual validity' of marriage and sex for Chris-
tians.[157] Seen from this perspective, Paul's response is an argument for the
acceptability of sexual relationships—insisting that the marital state is also
a gift of God (1 Cor. 7.7)[158]—given that 'the future is yet to come', even for
eschatological people.[159] Paul's preference for celibacy parallels the Cor-
inthians' view, but for very different reasons[160]—concern over distraction
(ἀμέριμνος, 1 Cor. 7.32) rather than over sin (οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει, 1 Cor. 7.36)—
while his allowance of sexual relationships acts to correct their perspec-
tive upon their present existence.[161] But although sexual relationship meant
marriage for Christians,[162] Laughery does not see Paul as simply affirming

155. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 112. Yarbrough concurs, commenting that
these Corinthians 'regard abstinence from all sexual intercourse as a sign of participa-
tion in the resurrection, have made abstinence the standard of behavior for all believ-
ers, and look down on those who are unable to live up to it' (*Not Like the Gentiles*,
p. 119).

156. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 126: 'This spiritual enthusiasm led mem-
bers of the community to ignore or make light of life in the present age. As a result
some in Corinth claimed: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" (7:1b)'. See
also Dahl, 'Paul and the Church', pp. 332-33; Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*,
pp. 33-34, Thiselton, 'Realized Eschatology at Corinth', pp. 510-26.

157. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 111 n. 15. See also Gundry-Volf, 'Male and
Female', p. 111. Against this view see Deming's various critiques in *Paul on Marriage
and Celibacy*, p. 48.

158. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 121; contra Martin, 'Paul Without Passion',
p. 201. On this, Laughery cites F.L. Godet (*La Première Epître aux Corinthiens*
[Neuchatel, 1886], p. 300) who claimed that Paul 'déclare qu'il y a non pas *un* don
unique, mais *deux* dons différents. Si l'un est celui du célibat pour le règne de Dieu,
l'autre est celui du mariage aussi pour le règne de Dieu' ('Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 121
n. 49, original emphasis). See also Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 118; Schüssler
Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 223; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 606.

159. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 127. This runs somewhat against Barclay's
argument that Paul's preference for celibacy lies 'largely' in the eschatological convic-
tion of 1 Cor. 7.31, παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ('Family as the Bearer of
Religion', p. 75). However, Barclay's account presents Paul's attitude as perhaps more
negative than is necessary if v. 7 implies that marriage is a χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ even with
the time shortened.

160. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 270. Roetzel also emphasizes the other-serving, com-
munal orientation of Paul's celibacy, in line with Jewish tradition and his eschatologi-
cal framework: 'Paul was celibate at least in part for the good of the churches, while
the Corinthians found in celibacy a means of increasing their own spiritual status'
(*Man and Myth*, pp. 145-47).

161. Adams, *Constructing the World*, p. 139; Bartchy, *Μᾶλλον Χρῆσαι*, pp. 150-51;
Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 125.

162. It appears from 1 Cor. 6.15-20 that Paul understood this rather better than (some
of) the Corinthians. A point which the NIV's misleading translation of ἅπτεσθαι as

the status quo. Rather, Paul goes out of his way to depict marital relations in revolutionary terms:[163] the wife is no mere possession as she owns her husband's body (1 Cor. 7.4), and the woman no exchangeable object as she has the power to opt for singleness (1 Cor. 7.8, 39-40). 1 Corinthians 7 is, for Laughery, replete with the rhetoric of equality.[164]

That Laughery distances himself from Winter's reading, however, need not mean that the two perspectives are incompatible. Certainly Thiselton, to whose earlier writings Laughery appeals repeatedly, sees famine as 'by no means an alternative to an eschatological dimension'; it was more likely a '*concrete instantiation*' of the eschatological issues which loomed so large for both Paul and the Corinthians.[165] Laughery's reading is flawed in being too much of a 'one size fits all' interpretation, insisting that a hypothetical over-realized, elitist Corinthian faction provides sufficient explanation of Paul's comments.[166] Holding the notion of a 'present crisis' alongside Paul's imminence-emphasizing correction of the Corinthians' eschatology (1 Cor. 7.29-31),[167] however, provides a more rounded perspective, offering

'marry' in the Corinthian slogan (1 Cor. 7.1) is likely to obscure. Contra C. Osiek, 'Female Slaves, *Porneia*, and the Limits of Obedience', in D.L. Balch and C. Osiek (eds.), *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 255-74 (269-70).

163. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 128. See also, e.g., Pagels, 'Paul and Women', p. 542; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 175; and Hays (*First Corinthians*, p. 131), who describes Paul as offering 'a paradigm-shattering vision of marriage' within a patriarchal setting because of the mutual submission and service of the other's needs which he sought. Critiquing this sort of reading, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the equality Paul allows is of a sexual rather than relational nature (*In Memory of Her*, p. 224), but see below for an evaluation of that position.

164. Laughery, 'Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 128.

165. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 573, emphasis original. Similarly, Rosner comments that 'Paul's point is that the present distress in Corinth is *like* that of the End, which is approaching; the present woes are in some sense typical of the parousia woes' (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 162, emphasis original). Winter is also careful not to dismiss eschatology from his reading of 1 Corinthians 7 (e.g. *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 225, 257-60, 263, 268). He prefers, however, to explain items within the text by reference beyond it, to the broader Corinthian context (p. 27). Hence Laughery's criticism that Winter 'under-reads' 1 Corinthians itself. Winter's response would undoubtedly be that Laughery's focus upon supposed over-realized eschatology in Corinth actually *over-reads* the letter because it fails to look beyond textual horizons.

166. Laughery describes over-realized eschatology as 'the root' of the Corinthians' 'diverse problems' ('Paul: Anti-marriage?', p. 126; see also Roetzel, *Man and Myth*, p. 149). But while such imagery suggests room for other factors, if only as secondary causes, he allows them no space and thus provides a somewhat unbalanced and so unconvincing account of the community.

167. The notion of 'correction' can apply whether the Corinthians' eschatological convictions are seen as being of an over-realized variety or as something else. See,

a broader base upon which to comprehend 1 Corinthians 7. It perhaps also locates the text more firmly within Paul's broader framework. Thus, for Thiselton,

> It would be a mistake…to ignore the possibility (even probability) that certain specific circumstances instantiated the eschatological question mark over supposed present securities and stability… In such circumstances such **pressures**, *constraints*, or *distress* could be intensified by the commitments of marriage… This could have a negative effect upon a *calling*… Such concrete circumstances bring home the crumbling insecurity of a world order which stands under the apocalyptic judgment of the cross.[168]

When Paul's concerns about *porneia* and for communal order and reputation were combined with this eschatological perspective upon current circumstances, it is little wonder that his overall message in 1 Corinthians 7 is that the believers' calling was usually best served by remaining as they were (1 Cor. 7.26; cf. vv. 11, 20, 24).[169] Indeed, maintaining relational status (ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω, 1 Cor. 7.20) is probably a better summary of Paul's theme in 1 Corinthians 7 than is a focus upon his marriage-celibacy comments.[170] In response to the Corinthians' specific questions (1 Cor. 7.1, 25), Paul corrects their understanding of appropriate relational boundaries (1 Cor. 7.4, 28) and outlines where, given the time and their calling, the Corinthians' priorities ought to lie (1 Cor. 7.29-35).[171] He does so to aid their relational

e.g., Horsley's comment that 'Paul is not battling a realized eschatology in Corinth, but pressing his own eschatological orientation on those who do not think in the same way' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 106). See also Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', p. 26.

168. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 583, emphases original.

169. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 123.

170. See, e.g., Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 112; Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 268-69 (although both Hays and Fee choose sub-titles which emphasize 'marriage' rather than 'remaining' for 1 Corinthians 7); Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 94. Rosner (*Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 173) describes the basic principle of 1 Corinthians 7 as 'contentment in one's life situation', and says that Paul's message is that 'One should not be anxious to change one's situation of life when the call of God to salvation is received'. See also Winter (*After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 239), although he probably goes too far in describing Paul as wishing to maintain the ethnic, social and relational identity of Christians because they were 'the results of the providential oversight of God'.

171. See Witherington's analysis: Throughout 1 Corinthians 'Paul tries to inculcate in the Corinthians a sense of what it means to live in the eschatological age. Paul believes Christians are already living in that age begun by Christ's death and resurrection, and so are living on borrowed time. The past eschatological events are the dominant force creating the relativizing "as if not" advice… The Corinthians were very status-conscious people. As part of his argument against divisions and factions created by status stratification, Paul injects a dose of eschatology, which relativizes the importance of all social status. What is really important is not one's social position but one's soteriological condition' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 179).

decision making, however, rather than to lay down exact parameters for
their sexual relationships (1 Cor. 7.6-9, 25-28, 35-40).[172] That he allows
numerous exceptions to the 'remain as you are' standard and his preference
for celibacy (1 Cor. 7.2, 5, 9, 11, 21, 28, 39) demonstrates Paul's perception
that such relationships are part of a broader picture in which greater prizes
are at stake.[173] But those prizes *do* have to be at stake for him to be happy
allowing exceptions to the 'no change' policy.[174]

    In summary, Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians 7 is for the Corinthian
community's well-being. It is within the context of that concern, made up
of his desires for their purity, order, devotion and reputation—or, in other
words, for their faithful adherence to their calling—that Paul expresses
both his preference for and relativization of celibacy. He is not denying
his own convictions and opportunities for female freedom in a conser-
vative submission to the status quo so much as he is recognizing that
all individual preferences have to be sacrificed at some time if common
goods and goals are to be achieved. That is part and parcel of life within
a body (1 Cor. 12.12-27), especially one which appreciates that its time
falls within an eschatological trajectory (1 Cor. 7.29-31; cf. 1 Cor. 1.7-8;
2.6; 3.12-15; 5.5; 10.11; 13.12; 15.19-28; 2 Cor. 1.13-14; 4.4; 5.10)[175]
and which claims a calling beyond its enculturated propensity for self-
service (1 Cor. 1.2, 26-31; 8.1; 12.7; cf. 2 Cor. 4.5; 8.1-5). Paul was loath
to provide the Corinthians with easy answers to their questions because
he understood the complexity of the situation within which they found
themselves. So, while he could not affirm the slogan that καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ
γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι, nor did he give it an unambiguous rebuttal. As
MacDonald summarizes,

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    172. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 35; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 112.
    173. Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 97.
    174. This is true despite 1 Cor. 7.20-21, where, depending upon interpretation, an
opportunity for freedom may have been sufficient reason to justify an exception to the
'remain as you are' standard. See Chapter 6.
    175. That Paul was mistaken about the imminence of the End is interesting for modern
readers, and they can speculate as to how a realization that 'this age' would continue
for millennia would have reshaped his social thought, perhaps through a more tena-
cious pursuit of gospel 'equality'. For Paul and the Corinthians, however, the looming
End was an inescapable reality. To criticize Paul for not being able to see beyond his
eschatological convictions, therefore, is to criticize him for something he was unable
to change, and of which only the passage of time would provoke reconsiderations.
Which is not to say that Paul's 'remain as you are because of the time' attitude should
be followed today—indeed it stands as an example of the (destructive) conservatism
that can accompany convictions of eschatological imminence (although that is not the
only thing Paul had in mind)—but that he ought not be judged too harshly for conceiv-
ing communal life within the only framework open to him.

Paul is being cautious. He wishes to make known his preference for the freedom of celibacy in a world that is passing away without contributing to the unseemliness which might destroy the community. The ever-present threat of immorality leads him to reject any tendency in Corinth to advocate compulsory celibacy as essential to life in the Spirit. Moreover, the Apostle cannot ignore the difficulties faced by celibate believers in a society where marriage, the virtue of women, and the stability of the state are seen as inter-related. His concern is to promote order within the community and to stabilize the place of the group within the wider context of Greco-Roman society.[176]

But Paul would also have been aware that for some there was much to gain socially as well as spiritually (1 Cor. 7.29-35) from abstinence, and thus also much to lose from remaining as they were. Helping them to see that, whatever route they chose (1 Cor. 7.36-37) or were compelled to take (1 Cor. 7.10-13), the Corinthians had opportunities within their socio-relational circumstances for sin-free, faithful adherence to their calling was an important facet of Paul's strategy to shape a developing community within a dynamic cultural framework.

If, as has been argued, 1 Corinthians 7 is best seen as of a piece with the rest of the Corinthian correspondence, developing the same themes and continuing Paul's concern with the impact of sexual behaviour upon the community, it would be logical to expect Paul's critique of Corinthian culture to carry over into his comments about celibacy and marriage. There is certainly reason to assert with Horrell that Paul neither promotes patriarchal attitudes nor seeks the subordination of women in 1 Corinthians 7, addressing his comments to both sexes, and allowing wives authority over their husbands' bodies as well as vice versa.[177] However, that such considerations manifest Paul's cultural criticism within a marital context is keenly contested by some. For instance, Schüssler Fiorenza claims, not entirely convincingly, that from what he says, it is 'reaching too far' to assert that Paul thought 'women and men shared an equality of role and a mutuality of relationship or equality of responsibility, freedom, and accountability in marriage. Paul stresses…interdependence only for *sexual* conjugal relationships and not for all marriage relationships'.[178] Schüssler Fiorenza

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176. MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit', p. 179.

177. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, pp. 158-59. Also Bartchy, 'Who Should Be Called Father?', pp. 5-6.

178. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 224, emphasis original. See also Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35', pp. 438-39. Balch observes the similarities between Paul and certain Roman Stoics on the matter of wives as 'equals' of their husbands. He says that though Antipater, Musonius and Hierocles all developed such ideas in theory, they went on to maintain female subordination in practice. Upon that basis Balch makes the rather dubious assertion that 'Paul probably did the same', reflecting his cultural shaping

adds, betraying her interpretational bias, that Paul's description of married women as 'divided' (μεριμνάω), not fully devoted to the Lord because of their concern to please their husbands (πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ ἀνδρί, 1 Cor. 7.34), confirms patriarchal values through its limitation and definition of such women according to their marital condition.[179] That Paul forbids the Corinthian Christians from breaking established marital relationships (1 Cor. 7.10-11), making an exception only for certain untenable conditions (εἰ δὲ ὁ ἄπιστος χωρίζεται, 1 Cor. 7.15),[180] might well be taken as a broad affirmation of patriarchal marriage. However, while it is true that 'Paul did not enjoin any rupturing of existing…relationships',[181] he also redefined those relationships and portrayed them within an eschatological trajectory.[182] For a community for whom ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν (1 Cor. 7.29), the values of 'this age', including patriarchy, are no longer unavoidable, indeed they are destined to pass with the age (παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, 1 Cor. 7.31). It is easy to claim too much for Paul here, but recognizing that 1 Corinthians 7 explores marital relations within a framework set by the eschatological assertions of the baptismal liturgy requires that the equalizing oneness which it expresses be given some tangible place in our readings: 'Frau–Mann; Mann–Frau, wird die Totalität partnerschaftli-

under the influence of the inconsistent Stoics. Against seeing Paul placing limits upon marital equality in 1 Corinthians 7 see, e.g., Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 262; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 103. Barrett claims that the sexual reciprocity and equality expressed in v. 4 sets the standard for Paul's comments about marital relations throughout 1 Corinthians 7 (*First Corinthians*, p. 156). And, considering that Paul makes no effort to distance those later comments from v. 4 and continues to address both men and women along largely parallel lines, it does seem plausible that having set a precedent for equality in explicitly sexual terms, he expects that pattern to have obvious implications for the rest of marriage. To minimize Paul's assertion that wives 'own'/'have authority over' (ἐξουσιάζω) their husbands' bodies, as Schüssler Fiorenza does, surely misreads the significant symbolism of sexual dominance in patriarchal societies. That Paul is redefining the balance of sexual power requires him to be redefining the balance of the whole relationship.

179. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 226. Strangely, Schüssler Fiorenza does not seem to notice that Paul treats married men in exactly the same way. And surely defining a *paterfamilias* as needing to be concerned about his wife's happiness (ὡς ἀρέσῃ τῇ γυναικί, 1 Cor. 7.33) would have been culture critical rather than culture confirming.

180. That Paul refuses to suggest any grounds upon which such a move could be justified by the unbelieving spouse perhaps indicates the level of his disapproval (Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 268), and hence of his desire for marriages to be maintained.

181. Whiteley, *Theology of St Paul*, p. 229.

182. As Collins puts it, 'The call of God in Christ relativizes all social conditions' (*First Corinthians*, p. 275); relativizes but does not displace. See also Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 111.

cher ehelicher Gemeinschaft unterstrichen'.[183] While largely affirming the forms of the status quo, then, 1 Corinthians 7 also redefines them; marriage becomes characterized by some level of equality as well as submission, by both partners having rights and responsibilities, and by a level of choice for women which acknowledges the worth of an option for singleness (1 Cor. 7.34) that the culture would not give.[184]

In Chapter 3 Paul's presentation of himself and of Christ as models for the Corinthian community was shown to be a direct challenge to the power-related, status-seeking norms of the culture. A central element of this challenge was Paul's emphasis upon his own servanthood in imitation of Christ, whose self-denial is displayed paradigmatically at the cross (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.2; 3.5; 11.1; 2 Cor. 4.5; 6.4; 13.4).[185] That 1 Corinthians 7 contains parallel ideas—in both Paul's references to the free being 'as slaves' (1 Cor. 7.22) and in his characterization of one spouse being owned by the other (1 Cor. 7.4)—suggests that this culture critical theme is even present within the passage used more than any other to argue for Paul's social conservatism.[186] For although Paul advocates the maintenance of marriage, he also redefines it in ways which cut against his culture's self-serving and other-dominating[187] emphases.[188] There is, then, something

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183. C. Wolff, *Der Erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (THKNT, 7; Leipzig: Evangelisch Verlagsanstalt, 1996), p. 135, cited by Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 503.

184. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*, pp. 81-82; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 159; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 236.

185. As Barton puts is, within 1 Cor. 'the narrative of Christ crucified is…what imparts the power for a new pattern of common life at the start, and…what imparts the power for consolidating that common life as it goes on' (*Life Together*, p. 192). See also Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth*, pp. 136-37; Williams, 'Living as Christ Crucified', p. 121.

186. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, pp. 34-35.

187. Bartchy describes patriarchy as founded upon domination; not merely men dominating women but each man dominating as many other men as possible ('Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', p. 68). E. Schüssler Fiorenza has developed the notion of 'kyriarchy' to describe this domination by some men of all others, with reality shaping implications for entrenching a masculine construction of the world. She writes, '"Kyriarchy" means the domination of the lord, slave master, husband, the elite freeborn educated and propertied man over all wo/men and subaltern men' (*Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* [New York: Continuum, 2001], p. 95).

188. Thus G. Loughlin argues that 'Husband and wife are able to give themselves to one another, to be one another's sex slave, because they are already the slaves of Christ—"bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6.20, 7.23)—and thus no longer the slaves of this world… For Paul there is no real possibility of freedom from slavery; rather it is a matter of becoming the slave of that master whose service *is* freedom. In Christian marriage, as Paul imagines it, husband and wife are completely the slaves of Christ, in body and spirit, to be trained in the practice of dispossession, which is the very price

which even rights-aware readers can recognize as an impetus toward 'equality' in Paul's affirmation of social norms, because that affirmation is informed by a cruciform gospel[189] and expressed within a framework determined by the baptismal liturgy.

Despite recognizing that Paul redefined accepted norms, Gordon complains that 1 Corinthians 7 also contains 'the structural arguments used by later generations' to entrench patriarchy in both form and value.[190] Eisenbaum concurs, pointing critically to vv. 17-20 as evidence that Paul himself desired to maintain established social forms; the equality of Gal. 3.28, she says, was only ever spiritual, 'Paul never meant to reorder society'.[191] But while such summaries isolate elements of truth, they do not tell the whole story. Paul is better judged on his own impact than on his use by later generations,[192] and that impact would seem to be counter cultural *as well as* affirming of marital structures.[193] This both-and perspective is not easy for some contemporary interpreters to accept, but has the advantage of depicting Paul on his own cultural and theological terms rather than according to modern values. Seeing Paul in this way may not entirely spare his thinking about domestic gender relationships from contemporary critique, but it at least helps to explain the positions he adopted, and legitimates readings which, though possibly not entirely positive, do not render Paul as simply a social conservative.

by which they have been purchased. They own one another only to the extent that they are owned by a third, whose ownership constitutes the relationship of dispossession between them. They become the slaves of a slave, and must act as he does; giving themselves away in the way that he disposes of himself… Paul, at his most radical, imagines marriage as a partnership between sex slaves, where each disposes of his or her body for the use of the other, in imitation of their mutual master, who is the slave of all: a body entirely dispossessed for the want of the other' ('Sex Slaves: Rethinking "Complementarity" after 1 Corinthians 7.3-4', in D.F. Sawyer and D.M. Collier [eds.], *Is There a Future for Feminist Theology?* [Studies in Theology and Sexuality; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], pp. 173-92 [177-78], original emphasis).

189. For Loughlin, 'slavery is not abject submission to another when one chooses to give oneself to the other without thought of reciprocation' ('Sex Slaves', p. 189).

190. Gordon, *Sister or Wife?*, p. 214.

191. Eisenbaum, 'Is Paul the Father'.

192. See, e.g., Elliott's (*Liberating Paul*) repeated mantra that Paul cannot be held responsible for those who misrepresent him either within the canon (pp. 25-54) or through their agenda-led biblical interpretation (pp. 1-24, 55-90). See also Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 113 (although his comments here do not sit entirely comfortably with his reading of Paul's sexual politics in 1 Corinthians 7 [p. 112]).

193. See, e.g. Elliott's claim that the concession clauses in 1 Corinthians 7 demonstrate both Paul's flexibility and that his preferred stance was anything but socially conservative, being, as they were, concessions toward cultural norms and away from Paul's radical preferences (*Liberating Paul*, pp. 34-35).

3. *Women in Christian Community*[194]

Clearly, Paul's impact upon Corinthian women would have reached beyond the home and matters of marital relations. What he had to say about female roles and behaviour within Christian community is also important for assessing Paul's shaping by and critique of the culture. Pressures of space restrict the exploration of Paul's position upon such matters possible here, but some comment is required for a rounded account of his impact upon Corinthian women. As with 1 Corinthians 7, that Paul's attitude, practice and instruction betray his enculturation is less important for this project than is what Paul *did* with that enculturation and *why*: the motivations behind his attitude to the structures and standards which society would have expected to characterize a religious grouping and the roles women might play within it.

194. Thinking about Paul's expectations/requirements of women in the home and *ekklesia* inevitably evokes comparisons with ancient notions of gender roles and sexuality which shaped accepted usages of space; 'Public space and public functions such as commerce and politics were traditionally male, while domestic space and household functions were considered female' (Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, p. 216. See also B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* [Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 3rd edn, 2001], p. 47; M. Trümper, 'Material and Social Environment of Greco-Roman Households in the East: The Case of Hellenistic Delos', in D.L. Balch and C. Osiek [eds.], *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 19-43 [26]). Some have projected this spatial dichotomy onto Paul in order to inform their readings of his position on women. Thus, e.g., Barton sees 1 Cor. 11.17-34 and 14.33b-36 as demonstrating that 'Paul regarded certain kinds of [female] activity as "out of place" so far as…church was concerned and "in place" so far as… household was concerned… This was an exercise in *boundary definition* (or re-definition)' ('Paul's Sense of Place', p. 225, original emphasis). While Barton concludes that Paul sought to confirm the status quo by limiting women's public (i.e. church) roles, however, he also acknowledges a greater complexity in the church-household relationship than that might suggest (p. 242). Such complexity almost certainly reflects a more nuanced reality of gender organization than a simple 'public=male, private=female' formula implies (see, e.g., S.C. Barton 'Social Values and Structures', in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter [eds.], *Dictionary of New Testament Background* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2000], pp. 1127-34 [1130]; Duling, *New Testament*, p. 18; Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, p. 216). The extreme gender restrictions of an earlier generation of Greeks had almost certainly loosened by Paul's day, and may well have been rather more ideal than reality anyway, especially in cities where space was at a premium (Keener, 'Marriage', pp. 688-90; C.C. Kroeger, 'Women in Greco-Roman World and Judaism', in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter [eds.], *Dictionary of New Testament Background* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2000], pp. 1276-80 [1276]; Trümper, 'Material and Social Environment', pp. 27-28). Greek gender ideals were, in addition, rather more demanding than either Jewish (see E.M. Meyers, 'The Problems of Gendered Space in Syro-Palestinian Domestic Architecture: The Case of Roman-Period Galilee',

As much of what has been said about 1 Corinthians 7 concerns matters which transcend the domestic sphere, it is hardly surprising that a number of familiar themes are reprised when Paul deals with women in the communal setting, allowing some fleshing-out of the observations made above. The social ramifications of the baptismal tradition form a golden thread running through or behind all such themes, with Paul attempting to correct the misunderstandings, as he saw them, which it evoked among the Corinthians. This significance of oneness in Christ is most often sought by Paul's interpreters in the participation he allowed women in communal leadership and worship. Beyond possible references to those women known and esteemed as leaders by the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1.11; 16.19; Rom. 16.1-2), Paul's comments upon both areas coincide within two notorious texts: 1 Cor. 11.2-16 and 1 Cor. 14.33b-36.[195] Of these, the latter probably plays a more questionable role when it comes to determining Paul's contribution to human rights debates, because many see it as an interpolation of either non-Pauline origin[196]

in D.L. Balch and C. Osiek [eds.], *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], pp. 44-69 [68]; cf. Ringe, 'A Gentile Woman's Story', p. 88) or especially Roman culture required (Kroeger, 'Women in Greco-Roman World', p. 1277), indeed more demanding than Roman domestic architecture and family law—which pertained in Corinth—really allowed for (Osiek, 'Family in Early Christianity', pp. 10, 17; Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, pp. 10, 27; cf. B.B. Blue, 'Architecture, Early Church', in R.P. Martin and P.H. Davids [eds.], *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and its Developments* [Downers Grove: IVP, 1997], pp. 91-95 [93]). Such architectural restrictions (and the archaeological evidence which shows them to have pertained within the Empire's cities) have encouraged scholars to think rather more flexibly about space, with temporal divisions of function and gender being allowed more room (see, e.g., Meyers, 'Problems of Gendered Space', pp. 45, 58; Osiek, 'Family in Early Christianity', p. 12; Trümper, 'Material and Social Environment', p. 34). Such factors suggest that ideas of gendered space did not influence Paul in quite the ways that some have thought. However, to the extent that cultural gender divides (of whatever sort) were still relevant in the Corinth Paul addressed, that the (public) 'church' gathered within (private) homes was bound to see a clash or 'overlapping' of gendered spaces, producing tensions which Paul would have had to face (Dunn, 'Household Rules', p. 57), and which inevitably shaped the social teaching he brought to the Corinthian community.

195. Interpretive divisions leading to disagreement about these texts' coherence and lucidity indicate one facet of their mirroring of 1 Corinthians 7. Thus, e.g., Meeks describes them as 'not the most lucid passages in the Pauline letters' (*First Christians*, p. 70; see also Horrell and Adams, 'Scholarly Quest', p. 34), while J. Murphy-O'Connor sees 11.2-16 as 'a perfectly coherent multi-pronged argument' ('Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 [1980], pp. 482-500 [498]). Allison makes the interesting observation that the 'obscurity' of 14.33b-36 ensures that each interpreter with an agenda will be able to appropriate it for their cause until such time as the obscurity is undone ('Let Women Be Silent', p. 28).

196. As Duling puts it, '1 Cor. 14:33b-36 is the strongest indication of [female] subordination in Paul's undisputed letters, but it does not come from Paul' (*New Testament*,

or of such textual dislocation that Paul's meaning is difficult to ascertain.[197] While this may affect our estimation of Paul's impact upon Corinthian women, however, that 14.33b-36 appears in every extant version of 1 Corinthians[198] requires that its affect upon later readers balance any supposition that it played no original part.[199] Whether the Paul who penned these verses was the real, historical figure or the product of later redactive activity, there is little doubt that their enscripturation has borne negative fruit for many women in many situations. They are not easily compatible with any egalitarian notion, whether expressed in the baptismal liturgy's oneness, in human rights declarations, or elsewhere.

However, there have been efforts to rehabilitate 1 Cor. 14.33b-36, to interpret it in ways which minimize or remove its potential for restricting female freedoms. Rather than designate it an interpolation, and thus of

p. 250). This position is often taken by those who see more parallels between 14.33b-36 and the Pastorals than with the rest of 1 Corinthians. See, e.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 333; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 246; Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 699-702, 705; Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 246-47; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, pp. 194-95; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 188-89; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, III, pp. 481-87. Against this reading, Whiteley suggests that the non-Pauline 1 Tim. 2.11 is based upon 1 Cor. 14.33b-36, not the other way around (*Theology of St Paul*, p. 224). Allison describes the interpolation reading as unsafe, but 'gaining increasing support today among liberal and liberationist exegetes mostly because it sits easy with contemporary liberationist views and fits well with Paul's eschatological egalitarianism' ('Let Women Be Silent', p. 45). W.O. Walker (*Interpolations in the Pauline Letters* [JSNTSup, 213; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001]) defends a reading of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 as non-Pauline, finding eight types of evidence (text critical, contextual, linguistic, ideational, comparative, situational, motivational and locational) for interpolation (pp. 66-86), but does so on a questionable basis. He assumes that because interpolations were (probably) culturally widespread, and Paul's letters were preserved as part of a collection which shows evidence of alteration, that 'almost inescapably … simply on *a priori* grounds … the Pauline letters, as we now have them, are likely to contain non-Pauline interpolations' (p. 46). Nearly inevitably, on this basis, Walker also finds 1 Cor. 11.3-16 to be an interpolation (pp. 121-24). See also Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 152. For a critique of Walker, see Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 231 n. 2.

197. This is Allison's ('Let Women Be Silent') preferred reading. He thinks that v. 33b is a non-Pauline editorial transition intended to integrate a fragment from Paul's earlier Corinthian letter (p. 52) smoothly into the text (p. 48), but that the remainder, especially the questions of v. 36, provide 'a classic example of Paul's ironic sarcasm' (p. 51) in response to a position with which he does not agree (pp. 46-47).

198. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 699; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 246. Although there are texts in which vv. 34-35 are displaced beyond v. 40, this is probably the work of 'scribes who assumed that they were about household order, not order in worship' (Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 288). See also Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 151.

199. Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 331; contra Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 708.

little relevance to the real Paul's treatment of women,[200] the passage has, for example, been seen as a particular assertion about communal order, as a Pauline rebuttal of a Corinthian position, and as part of Paul's ongoing concern for communal reputation. The first suggestion takes λαλεῖν (vv. 34-35) as a reference to Corinthian women 'chattering' inappropriately during worship. If seen as such, Paul's prohibition is hardly, in light of 1 Cor. 11.5, 13, a culture-conforming limitation of female leadership,[201] although it surely does reinforce the patriarchal hierarchy within the home (ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν, 1 Cor. 14.35). Many object, however, that this reading requires a contextually unexpected, even if well attested, sense of λαλέω[202] and imposes anachronistic gender stereotypes upon Corinthian women.[203] The second suggestion, exemplified by Allison,[204] is that Paul is rejecting the hierarchical views of some socially conservative Corinthians, to whom vv. 34-35 can be attributed. He thinks that the rhetorical questions of v. 36 are Paul's 'sarcastic rebuttal' to those who would limit female eschatological freedom.[205] Clearly, if this reading is correct, then Paul's words would have had the exact opposite effect upon women to that which has been regularly propounded; he would be contending for equality and liberation and against the 'absurd' notion that the Spirit recognizes gender as significant.[206] Others respond, however, that 'this explanation is farfetched in the extreme' because Paul offers no hint that he is quoting others here,[207] because vv. 34-35 share much significant vocabulary with his preceding

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200. This stance is typically taken by Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, pp. 52, 203.

201. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 287.

202. Thus, e.g., Hart says that 'while *lalein* can mean "to chatter", its more normal sense is simply "to speak" and Paul uses it throughout the epistle to refer to the inspired or authoritative speech of those leading and participating actively in the congregation's worship' ('Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 331). See also Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 332. For Fee, it is hard to imagine any speech as 'disruptive' given the 'disarray' of Corinthian worship which Paul has described in 1 Cor. 14 (*First Corinthians*, p. 703).

203. Allison, 'Let Women Be Silent', p. 36.

204. See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 514-17; D.W. Odell-Scott, 'Let the Women Speak in Church: An Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor 14:33b-36', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* (1983), pp. 90-93.

205. Allison, 'Let Women Be Silent', p. 47. The basis of this argument is that Paul is using the disjunctive ἤ (v. 36) to introduce 'a rebuttal against a point of view or corollary implicit *in the immediately preceding clause* which presumably is not perceived or recognized by its proponents' (cf. 1 Cor. 6.2-3, 9), and that most commentators overlook this because of their focus upon cotextual concerns with order (pp. 46-47, original emphasis). Against this see, e.g., Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1151-52; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 287.

206. Allison, 'Let Women Be Silent', p. 51.

207. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 248.

comments,[208] and because his pervasive concern for communal order might well have led Paul to oppose those who took eschatological freedom too far.[209] Indeed, in asserting this last point, Thiselton moves toward the third rehabilitating reading of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36. He states, arguing against an oppressive view of the text, that

> For Paul…the concern is not to disempower women, but (i) to reflect in life and worship the dialectic of creativity and order which reflects God's own nature and his governance of the world; (ii) to keep in view the missionary vision of how any Christian activity…is perceived in the world still to be reached by the gospel (cf. 9:19-23; 14:23-25); and (iii) to avoid a merely localized or brazenly unilateral self-regulation … 'a church…turned in on itself, to the neglect of others'.[210]

Hart makes much of Thiselton's second point, tying his interpretation of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 into the letter's broader themes by emphasizing Paul's concern that, while the gospel may be a σκάνδαλον (1 Cor. 1.23), no additional barriers be erected for those who might otherwise hear and be saved (1 Cor. 10.32-33).[211] In imitation of his own pattern, Paul asks that the Corinthians sacrifice their freedoms in Christ, 'put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel' (1 Cor. 8.9; 9.12, 22-23),[212] which *in this instance* means women relinquishing freedoms which might, given the culture, have caused offence.[213] For

208. Thiselton, e.g., isolates four key terms (λαλέω, σιγάω, ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ and ὑποτάσσω) each of which appears in the surrounding cotext, sometimes repeatedly (*First Corinthians*, p. 1152).

209. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1154-55. In critique of Allison, see also Horrell, *Social Ethos*, pp. 187-88.

210. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 1159. Thiselton is quoting from J. Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (ET; Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd and St Andrew, 1960), p. 307.

211. Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 331.

212. Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 331.

213. 'Chapter 14 addresses the propriety of the exercise of spiritual gifts within the congregation, gifts which, Paul affirms, have been granted to everyone, and not to men alone (see vv. 23, 24, 26, 31). In v. 23 Paul expressly envisages a situation in which unbelievers come into the congregation, and asks how best the gifts of tongues and prophecy (which from 11.5 we know was something women were involved in) might be handled in this circumstance. His concern is that from what is seen and done in the congregation's midst, the unbeliever should only be encouraged and impressed, and perhaps even led to the point of belief and worship (vv. 24-25). What is vital is that such a person should not be offended by externals or things which are less than central to the gospel message… It is in this immediate context that the words…[of vv. 33b-36] arise. If we read them in the light of the flow of Paul's argument…and of his paramount concern for the gospel's welfare, then, by supplying a conditional clause which (as so often in Paul's particular style) might be assumed in what he says, we get the following: As is the case in all the congregations of the saints, *if there is a risk of serious offence being taken*, women should remain silent in the churches. They are

Hart, the conditional status of Paul's instruction is clear;[214] he is ordering 'a pragmatic accommodation…for the sake of keeping the channels of communication uncluttered', which need not last once this particular risk of offence has been overcome, and is certainly not a precept for every church in every age.[215] As with 1 Corinthians 7, then, if this reading is correct Paul's apparent bolstering of the patriarchal status quo is motivated by a desire to glorify God by protecting the gospel, not by any conviction of male religious priority. That the gender-freighted language he uses suggests otherwise, with only women having their freedoms restricted for the sake of appearances, is the product of Paul's particular patriarchal location,[216] and would certainly be reversed if the same standard were applied today.[217] While the apparent universality of Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων (1 Cor. 14.33b) might seem to contradict this reading, Thiselton argues that Paul's concern is, rather, that the Corinthians maintain a standard of communal order which: (i) reflects God's nature (1 Cor. 14.33a) and should therefore characterize all God's people (1 Cor. 14.40);[218] (ii) ensures that they avoid becoming a maverick faction within the broader church.[219]

While such readings are to be commended for looking beyond the surface of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36, locating it within a broader framework, that they require some level of special pleading against the text's plain sense should not be overlooked. Certainly, the suggestion that 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 may be read in ways which allow for its confirmation of inequitable patterns of gender role and power without construing Paul's impact upon women entirely in oppressive terms is helpful. However, that the text was intended to limit legitimate female freedoms[220] is too often neglected by those enjoying the

not (in this situation) allowed to speak, but must be in submission' (Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 332, original emphasis). See also Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 197.

214. Hence his paraphrase of Paul emphasizes that women should be silent '*if there is a risk of serious offence*' (Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 332, original emphasis).

215. Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 332. See also Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, p. 231.

216. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1158-61.

217. 'Unbelievers today are far more likely to be scandalized by a situation in which women are prohibited from speaking, or taking full part in the proceedings of worship' (Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 333). See also Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women*, p. 202.

218. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 1153-1155. See also Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 184.

219. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 1155. See also the comments about Paul's apparently universal language in Chapter 4.

220. This remains true even if we accept that at times it has been used rather more enthusiastically to that end than perhaps Paul intended.

warm glow of its rehabilitation. In human rights terms, this text requires women to accept the corporate and individual limitation, even sacrifice, of their legitimate powers for the 'greater good'. Such forfeiture of genuine rights is not necessarily unacceptable for rights thought, but Paul's communication of it may be. Elsewhere he clearly recognizes the legitimacy of women exercising such powers (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.5, 13; 14.23-31;[221] cf. Rom. 16.1-7), but in leaving their right to do so as only implicit here—retained from the inclusive language of the preceding verses (e.g. ἡ ἐκκλησία ὅλη, v. 23; πάντες, vv. 23, 24, 31; ἕκαστος, v. 26)—Paul failed to exclude notes of subordination and conservatism from this instruction.[222] It is impossible to specify just how much the Corinthians would have read into these words, knowing the situation and Paul's broader values as they did.[223] But Paul's strong language and failure to include elements of gender balance, as he recognized the Corinthians needed him to elsewhere (1 Cor. 7.2-4, 10-16, 32-34; 11.2-16), surely opened the door to gender oppressive readings of this text even among its first recipients. A rehabilitation of 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 may be possible, but even rehabilitation should not allow it to be read as unambiguously positive for Corinthian women.

Without rehabilitation 1 Cor. 14.33b-36 has often been seen to contradict Paul's earlier comments in 11.2-16. However, that text has also regularly been presumed to show Paul restricting female freedom within communal worship or worse,[224] with inevitably destructive implications for women.[225] For Elliott, it is precisely this assumption, a convenient androcentric blindness to what he thinks is Paul's real intent in 1 Cor. 11.2-16—challenging the status-seeking behaviour of those Corinthian men who had adopted inappropriate cultural norms[226]—that has provoked a plethora of contradic-

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221. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 189.

222. Indeed, Paul's appeals to both ecclesial practice (πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις, v. 33) and Jewish law (καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει, v. 34) suggest an element of explicit gender subordination however that may be mitigated by the nuances of balanced interpretation.

223. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 1147.

224. Thus, e.g., H. Schüngel-Straumann sees Paul deliberately drawing on traditions which misinterpreted Gen. 1.27 to limit women's creation in God's likeness because 'it fitted his Adam-Christ typology nicely. The devastating theological consequences for the Christian image of women are widely known' ('On the Creation of Man and Woman in Genesis 1–3: The History and Reception of the Texts Reconsidered', in A. Brenner [ed.], *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], pp. 53-76 [63]). See also Schnelle, *Human Condition*, p. 101.

225. '11:2-16, particularly 11:3, became one of the principal scriptural bases for the subordination of women in Christian culture' (Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 156).

226. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, pp. 210-11. For Elliott, Paul's concern is that the Corinthians acknowledge 'that customs of head adornment bring honor or dishonor to one's social "head" '. That some Corinthian men were adopting the common Roman practice

tory interpretations.[227] While Elliott could easily be criticized for an overly simplistic assessment of the exegetical issues, his location of 1 Cor. 11.2-16 within one of the Corinthian correspondence's major themes, Paul's opposition to the infiltration of the community by the culture's obsession with status, is helpful. That Paul is apparently furthering that opposition within a text which restricts female freedoms, and thus, paradoxically, conforms to the culture's norms indicates that his concerns lie beyond the sort of social agenda with which moderns are familiar. Paul is interested in the community's well-being, and if two measures of that, its reputation and Christ-orientation, are sometimes served by standards which do not sit easily within the modern categories of social radical or conservative, then that reflects their inadequacies for explicating his thought at least as much as it does his inconsistencies.

   This, however, does not diminish the fact that Paul is again asking more of women than he is of men, seemingly insisting that they accept a subordinate place[228] and perhaps even asserting that subordination ontologically (1 Cor. 11.3, 8-9). True, Paul does go on to qualify male-female relations with the language of interdependence (1 Cor. 11.11-12).[229] But while such qualification may well have been 'radical',[230] it is not entirely egalitarian;[231]

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of drawing their cloak or toga over their head when praying, emulating the piety of the emperors in order to associate themselves with those of high status, was, to 'dishonor the man's head, since that "head" is Christ (11.4)—the one whom Caesar's subordinate in Judea had crucified'. See also Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 121-23, 140-41.

 227. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 209. It is not necessary to agree with Elliott's reading, however, to think that much interpretation of 1 Cor. 11.2-16 has missed the point of the passage. France, e.g., objects to judgments being made on female leadership from what is said here. 'Paul is not…addressing the issue of ministry or leadership in the church, but simply how women should dress [in worship]. To use its language of "headship" in relation to the former subject, when Paul does not in fact do so here or elsewhere, is at least questionable' (*Women in the Church's Ministry*, p. 48).

 228. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 156; Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 232; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 130.

 229. Indeed, for Murphy-O'Connor, v. 12 disallows any reading of vv. 8-9 as Paul arguing for female inferiority ('Sex and Logic', p. 496), and Gorman argues that it is 'an explicit egalitarian affirmation' (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 266). See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 400, 403; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 196.

 230. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 181.

 231. Interdependence is, of course, fully compatible with hierarchical relationships. As Horsley comments, 'Verses 11-12 appear to have been added to mitigate the severity of verses 8-9 as a statement of the derivative, subordinate, and subservient role of woman. Yet, even as verses 11-12 remind men that they are interdependent with women "in the Lord", they also reinforce the argument that women should remain in their traditional subordinate position that reflects honor on men' (*1 Corinthians*, p. 155). This runs against Murphy-O'Connor's understanding. He describes 1 Cor. 11.11-12 as 'the first and only explicit defence of the complete equality of women in

the procession of man from woman being of a very different order to the relational orientation of woman towards man which Paul depicts in momentously freighted terms (1 Cor. 11.3, 7-9).[232] Those, like Elliott, who argue that Paul's concern is with men rather than women because he begins by addressing them (1 Cor. 11.4),[233] have to account not only for his lengthier comments to women but also for the content of what he says.[234] It may well be that Paul was challenging the status-seeking behaviour of both genders, but men are merely instructed not to cover their heads while women, though told to do otherwise, also seem to have their very humanity qualified by Paul's assertions about image and glory (1 Cor. 11.7). It is difficult to read ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστιν and καὶ γὰρ οὐκ ἐκτίσθη ἀνὴρ διὰ τὴν γυναῖκα, ἀλλὰ γυνὴ διὰ τὸν ἄνδρα (1 Cor. 11.9) as not reflecting the patriarchal values of the culture, which largely defined women according to their relationships with men. Indeed, Paul's affirmation of cultural headcovering values as the norm for Christian women (1 Cor. 11.5-6) suggests that such reflection was going on. Hart argues, as he does for 1 Cor. 14.33b-36, that this was part of Paul's concern that the community not drive unbelievers away by flouting cultural norms.[235] Perhaps so, but if Paul was also arguing against men in the

the New Testament' and goes on to claim that 'Equality is the issue here, not complementarity' (*Paul*, p. 290).

232. Even the ἐν κυρίῳ clause of 1 Cor. 11.11 may suggest that gender interdependence is fundamental only to new creation humanity.

233. Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 209. This argument conveniently ignores the fact that v. 3 precedes v. 4 and has already established women's subordinate status. Against Elliott's reading, see Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 505; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 154; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 118. It is as likely that Paul was concerned with what he considered aberrant behaviour among both men and women in Corinth as it is that he was using the accepted norms for one gender to argue about the other's behaviour (Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 209). See, e.g., Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human*, p. 193; Murphy-O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic', pp. 483, 487; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 805; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 238.

234. Thus Horrell describes the 'ideological potential' of Paul's teaching here as one which 'builds into the Christian symbolic order the view that woman has a secondary place, below man, in the created order. Paul's primary concern may be with what he sees as the appropriate distinctions between the sexes, but the potential impact of his instruction is anti-emancipatory. Although this theology is presented in a passage which relates to the context of worship, it may easily be taken to have wider implications; a social relationship of domination may be legitimised, "reified", by rooting it in the fundamental and God-given pattern of creation' (*Social Ethos*, p. 176).

235. Hart, 'Imagination and Responsible Reading', p. 332. See also Murphy-O'Connor ('Sex and Logic', p. 498), who argues that a desire to avoid the offence of blurred gender distinctions lies behind Paul's instruction about female headcoverings. J.D. Crossan adopts a slightly different assessment of the cultural norm being threatened: '*those wives who had rejected marital intercourse* [cf. 1 Cor. 7] *were publicly proclaiming their new "virginal" status by abandoning the veils of their marital status*',

community imitating cultural practices in pursuit of status (covering their heads in imitation of the Roman elite[236]) then even this concern was not an over-riding priority for him; Paul's counter-cultural devotion to, proclamation about, and imitation of Christ (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.18-29; 2.1-7; 9.19-23; 11.1; 2 Cor. 12.10; 13.4) were clearly more important for him than reputation, either the community's or his own (2 Cor. 12.10). That the pursuit of such higher goals could be expressed in inequitable demands upon male and female is unfortunate, but perhaps also inevitable given the cultural situation within which Paul was working. This inevitability and Paul's high ideals, not a conviction of female inferiority, mitigate against wholly negative assessments of 1 Cor. 11.2-16. Such mitigations, however, cannot entirely obscure the fact that Paul's teaching imposes considerable burdens upon women which he does not require men to carry.[237]

But while Paul cannot be seen as 'feminist' in 1 Cor. 11.2-16, there are reasons even beyond his obvious (if often ignored) affirmation of active female participation in communal worship (1 Cor. 11.5, 13), for thinking that this text was not all bad for women. As with 1 Corinthians 7 and 14, placing 1 Cor. 11.2-16 within its broader context helps to round our comprehension of Paul's instruction and impact. Thus Schüssler Fiorenza helpfully insists that the commendation of v. 2 be taken seriously in reading what Paul goes on to say. She thinks that the 'traditions' (παραδόσεις) which Paul praises the Corinthians for remembering would inevitably have included the freedom and oneness in Christ indicated by their possession of the Spirit and articulated by the baptismal liturgy.[238] That Paul feels the need to then rebuke and instruct them suggests that 1 Cor. 11.2-16 serves to introduce his correction of the Corinthian misunderstanding of that freedom's ramifications for the conduct of their worship (1 Cor. 11.2-14.40[239]). Paul's comments about headcovering and headship, then, fit within his broad concern for the community's reputation and well-being.[240] Both are items which a

much to the dismay of their husbands (*God and Empire: Jesus against Rome, Then and Now* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2007], p. 182, original emphasis).

236. See n. 226.

237. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 588.

238. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 228, 235. See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 396; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 182; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 169. It matters not that Paul's commendation here may have been ironic (see Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 395; Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 500). Its function—to remind the Corinthians of the 'traditions' as the backdrop against which his subsequent teaching is to be seen—does not depend upon whether Paul is really pleased with them or not.

239. Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 148; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 799. See Collins (*First Corinthians*, p. 392) for a view of 1 Corinthians' structure which divides chapter 11 from the subsequent material.

240. They are, contra Wire (*Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 19), aspects of Paul's concern for the 'common good'.

confusion about gender identity, whether real or perceived, might well have damaged, and so Paul's insistence that women look and behave as women were expected to has a wider context.[241] Some perceive androgynous tendencies to have influenced the Corinthians' inappropriate headcoverings,[242] but that is not a necessary explanation and is less likely given the arguments against an androgynous interpretation of Gal. 3.28 given above. More probably, the baptismal tradition's 'neither male and female' was taken by (some of) the Corinthians as a freedom to blur gender distinctions, flying in the face of accepted convention, and so running the risk of damaging the community's reputation[243] and possibly its inner dynamics.[244] The language of humiliating others (καταισχύνω, 1 Cor. 11.5) and of propriety (πρέπει, φύσις, ἀτιμία, 1 Cor. 11.13-15) suggest that it was Paul's eagerness to avoid such damage, alongside a conviction that cultural gender distinctions mirrored something vital in humanity's creation,[245] which motivated his affirmation of accepted standards here. He does not negate the eschatological equality suggested by the baptismal liturgy,[246] so much as encourage, as he has done elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence, an 'eschatological reservation': 'Attempts to transcend or eradicate the symbols of gender difference are premature and presumptuous', for Christians are still humans, and remain gendered as God intended.[247]

Paul's appeal to creation (and the confusion with cultural construction which it suggests to modern interpreters), especially his apparent redefinition

241. For Murphy-O'Connor this, and not female subordination, was Paul's sole concern in 1 Cor. 11.2-16 (*Becoming Human*, p. 195). See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 403; France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*, p. 48.

242. For example, MacDonald, 'Women Holy in Body and Spirit', pp. 166-67; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 240; Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 194.

243. Murphy-O'Connor, 'Sex and Logic', pp. 489-90. See also Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 498; France, *Women in the Church's Ministry*, p. 81; Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 182-86; Schnelle, *Human Condition*, p. 101; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 829, 832. On the importance of gender-appropriate hairstyles within Greco-Roman culture, see Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 396-99.

244. Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 404; Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 128-29.

245. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 236: 'For Paul, human duality…is good and is to be celebrated, just as the interdependence of male and female is to be appreciated. Maleness and femaleness are part of the order of creation and are also reaffirmed in certain ways in the new creation. In Paul's view, people are redeemed as men and women of God and are to continue to be men and women, not some neutered or neutral third sort of creature'. See also Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 255.

246. Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human*, p. 193.

247. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 191. See also Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 237. However, see also Pagels's estimation that 'the actual effect of this "eschatological reservation" is to relieve Paul and his contemporaries of responsibility for changing the present social situation of slaves and women' ('Paul and Women', p. 545).

of the *imago Dei* as particularly male (1 Cor. 11.7),[248] has proven unfortunate for women. That Paul makes the effort to balance notions of a created hierarchy with a more reciprocal perspective on gender relations (1 Cor. 11.11-12) suggests that he realized the negative potential such arguments carried.[249] And while some are tempted to dismiss this latter reciprocity as merely ἐν κυριῷ, of only spiritual significance,[250] that is both to misapprehend the broader implications of the baptismal tradition discussed above, and to forget that Paul was writing to those whose very identity was defined by their sanctification in and calling by this Lord (1 Cor. 1.2). For Paul to proclaim gender interdependence ἐν κυρίῳ for such an audience was to assert that, however the world valued women, they were not to be treated as inferior within the community.[251] The accusation that female subordination is inseparable from Paul's language of creation and headship[252] is impossible to evade entirely.[253] He was, after all, working within and shaped by a patriarchal culture. But Paul's forceful assertion (πλήν, 1 Cor. 11.11[254]) of interdependence in the new creation suggests that he conceived of gender relations at least moving toward

248. Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 151. Against this reading, see Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 515-16.

249. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 517; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 155; Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 184; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 229.

250. For example, Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, p. 194; J.A. Ziesler, *Pauline Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn, 1990), p. 125.

251. Hays, *First* Corinthians, p. 189; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 238. Murphy-O'Connor goes even further, asserting that the ἐν κυρίῳ of v. 11 takes up the παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστός in v. 3. He suggests that the woman-from-man and man-from-woman dynamics of the first creation were divinely intended but that 'the significance of this became apparent only in the light of the mission of Christ' ('Sex and Logic', pp. 497-98).

252. See, e.g., Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 183, 190; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 811-22; Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 117.

253. The argument offered, e.g., by Hays that Paul is speaking in hierarchical terms which require 'a symbolic *distinction* between the sexes' rather than female subordination (*First Corinthians*, p. 183, original emphasis) is only partially convincing. For the cash value of any such 'symbolic' hierarchy would always mean some level of subordination, especially within a patriarchal setting. Similarly, the argument offered by, e.g., Schrage (*Erste Brief*, III, pp. 501-504), Barrett (*First Corinthians*, p. 248) and Fee, that Paul uses κεφαλή not hierarchically but relationally, as 'source' (*First Corinthians*, pp. 502-504), although it may undermine the notion that κεφαλή necessarily implies subordination (Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 816; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, p. 47), does not remove the priority of maleness over femaleness which within a patriarchal context would almost certainly have found concrete social expression in the subordination of women.

254. Collins describes this as an emphatic 'on the other hand' by which Paul moves away from the tone of his earlier arguments to state the egalitarian character of new creation life (*First Corinthians*, p. 403). See also Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 842.

a position of greater balance.[255] That would certainly fit with his contention that the properly attired woman displayed *her* authority (ἡ γυνὴ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς, 1 Cor. 11.10) to participate in worship,[256] and as such men were required to attend to her contribution (1 Cor. 11.5; cf. 1 Cor. 14.29). Hays suggests that Paul might also have been redefining the 'symbolic connotations' of headcoverings for women. Within a dynamic social context he found the room to transform them from an externally-imposed sign of subordination into 'a fitting symbol of…self-control and orderliness',[257] affirming the character of the God to whom the community belonged (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, 1 Cor. 1.2; 2 Cor. 1.1) and from whom 'all came' (τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, 1 Cor. 11.12; cf. 1 Cor. 8.6). If so, Paul made female headcoverings a badge of spiritual status, the very thing which some see Corinthian women rejecting them to emphasize that they possessed.[258]

The significant sandwiching of the pericope between mimetic references (1 Cor. 11.1, 16) suggests that Paul is once more calling upon the Corinthians to follow his example[259] in imitation of the Lord who defines their being (1 Cor. 11.11; cf. 1.2).[260] He requires that they serve one another and the gospel by sacrificing headcovering preferences which damaged the community, motivated as they were by self-promotion.[261] As such, Paul asks

255. Thus, e.g., Richter considers the headcoverings which Paul presses upon women as of only symbolic worth, appeasing established norms and because 'Um Gal 3,28 voll zu verwirklichen, waren Befangenheiten und Widerstände damals zu groß' ('Anstößige Freiheit in Korinth', p. 566).

256. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, pp. 254-55; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 590; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 152; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 839.

257. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 188. See, however, T.W. Martin ('Paul's Argument from Nature for the Veil in 1 Corinthians 11:13-15: A Testicle instead of a Headcovering', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.1 [2004], pp. 75-84) who argues that headcoverings were connected with ancient ideas of sexuality rather than subordination. Hair was, he says, 'a functioning part of a woman's genitalia' (p. 82) and thus headcovering in worship was a matter of decency before God not an indication of female subordination as such (p. 84). While this may be true, that ancient notions of physiology and sexuality reflected the expectations of a patriarchal culture suggests that female headcovering would have served to emphasize women's lower status in addition to whatever they might have indicated about decency.

258. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 184; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 148.

259. Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 394.

260. Thus Thiselton insists that, despite the absence of any reference to the cross here, 'the respect or concern for "the other" in 11.2-16 does reflect a cruciform pattern' (*First Corinthians*, p. 811).

261. Paul's talk of each being another's 'glory', and needing to be attired properly in order for that to be evident, is important here. It requires a reorientation away from concern with self, and what a (lack of) headcovering says of one's status, putting the focus instead upon the other who is glorified through one's proper conduct/attire (Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 837).

women to conform with and men to dissent from accepted standards[262] so that healthy internal relations and the community's reputation might be maintained. In all these respects, Paul's limitation of female behaviour in 1 Cor. 11.2-16 can be seen as compatible with rights thought, motivated as it is by positive ends and given within a framework which assumes gender interdependence (v. 11) and female contributions to communal worship (vv. 5, 13; cf. 1 Cor. 14.26-31). But while some argue that neither Paul's headship language nor his appeal to creation necessarily imply a hierarchical subordination of women,[263] the ease with which they are read as doing so, even within a human rights-assuming, liberal context, suggests that in a patriarchal setting Paul's comments might well have served to reinforce the status quo. That Paul recognized he was asking much of women, and so hedged his request for social conformity with statements of gender interdependence and female authority and worth, means that the overall impact of 1 Cor. 11.2-16 need not be considered as wholly negative for Corinthian women. But to admit as much is not to imply that the text brought only positives. 1 Cor. 11.2-16, like 14.33b-36, contained a mix of both good and bad for Corinthian women; Paul's impact upon them was characterized by ambiguity, in implication if not necessarily in intent.

4. *Paul's Impact upon Corinthian Women*

Watson observes that Pauline texts about women have a tendency to slide easily between liberation and repression; exhorting mutual subjection at one moment, affirming female subordination the next.[264] Paul's talk of women's roles and authority in the Corinthian correspondence certainly seems to manifest this slippery, both-and dynamic. This is a problem for those coming to the text with simple, either-or expectations: is Paul for or against women?; does he affirm inequitable cultural structures or oppose them? Such black-and-white approaches are always likely to glean firm answers, but they are also liable to misread the direction and complexity of Paul's comments. The greatest weakness of such approaches is the assumption that Paul operated under the values which define their own bi-polar perspectives.[265] He did not. Paul's alien cultural location and

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262. See n. 226.

263. See n. 253.

264. Thus, he comments upon Eph. 5.22-33 that, 'The context of the subjection of wives…[is] *mutual* subjection to one another. Yet in singling out the subjection of wives without a corresponding appeal to husbands…there appears to be a shift from mutual to unilateral subjection' (Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, p. 228, original emphasis).

265. E.E. Ellis, e.g., describes the mind-set which opposes equality and subordination as a largely modern one, as is the perspective which views all 'distinctions of class and rank as evil per se' (*Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans;

orientation around certain theological convictions distance him from the restrictions of what many of his later interpreters see as 'good' and 'bad' for women. Declaring the ambiguity of Paul's impact upon women may not make judging his contribution to human rights debates easy, but it is more faithful to the Pauline evidence,[266] as well as being less blinkered about the value of assumed reading criteria.[267] Nor need the assertion of ambiguity be seen as a slur upon Paul. The consistency of his thought should be measured by the objectives *he* pursued; his agenda rather than ours. As has been shown, in the Corinthian correspondence the pursuit of those objectives required Paul to ask much of women. He seems, however, to have recognized this, and did not flinch from giving women much also—when, that is, it fitted with the objectives he was pursuing.

Negative assessments of Paul's impact upon women are not difficult to find. Some may be dismissed without problem, based as they are upon misapprehensions.[268] Others, however, offer more telling appraisals of Paul's thought. Perhaps the most forceful of such critiques isolate the value Paul seems to put upon male-female relations in distinction to his thinking about other social relationships. As Martin observes,

> Throughout 1 Corinthians Paul attempts to undermine the hierarchical ideology…prevalent in Greco-Roman culture…to make the strong weak and the weak strong… But when it comes to the male-female hierarchy, Paul abruptly renounces any status-questioning stance, accepting and even ideologically reinforcing a hierarchy…in which female is subordinated to male.[269]

Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1989], p. 57). While 'modern' carries largely pejorative connotations for Ellis (see, e.g., pp. 18-23), even those who affirm modern values—human rights included—should be able to appreciate the import of his comment.

266. Paul's impact upon women, as E. Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*) puts it, was 'double-edged' (p. 236). If either the good or the bad aspects of his influence are overlooked then Paul is misunderstood, 'alternately condemned as a "chauvinist" or hailed as a "liberationist" (p. 241 n. 99).

267. For Watson (*Agape, Eros, Gender*, pp. 229-30), too many readers use their evaluations of Pauline texts to simply affirm their own reading criteria. 'Measured against the prior criterion, the text may be judged to be "good" or "bad"; but either way, the prior criterion judges itself to be "good" and uses the text to reinforce and legitimate its positive self-image. The criterion is the basis for interpretation, the field upon which the interpretative game is played, and this excludes a priori…the possibility that the criterion is simply wrong', or inappropriate.

268. For example, Whiteley's assertion that Paul saw women as inferior (*Theology of St Paul*, p. 225) and Cartlidge's related observation that Paul assumed female liberation could only be gained by 'exorcizing' women's sexuality ('1 Corinthians 7', p. 234).

269. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 248. See also Moxnes, 'Social Integration', pp. 110-11.

From a human rights perspective, this would be difficult to countenance given the best of circumstances. That Paul was operating within a strongly patriarchal context, however, makes his affirmation of women's subordinate social place extremely unpalatable, and assertions of Paul's cultural criticism somewhat problematic. Yet it was perhaps also this very patriarchal context, and the destabilizing challenges it was facing, which forced Paul to affirm certain inequitable gender relations. For Schüssler Fiorenza, early Christianity found itself in a straightforward struggle between its 'alternative', egalitarian vision and the 'dominant patriarchal ethos of the Greco-Roman world'.[270] The reading of Corinthian texts given here, however, suggests that Paul saw things in rather less starkly oppositional terms, and that his priorities actually lay with matters which cut across the interests of social movements.[271] Indeed, those priorities caused him to take great care when it came to issues which might cause the community internal disruption or to be seen negatively by outsiders. Paul's affirmation of the status quo, then, was not motivated by a simple conviction that patriarchy estimated the socio-religious priority of men correctly,[272] it also reflects his desire to protect the gospel and to see God glorified through the relational shape and unity of the community.[273]

That Paul's motivations were not misogynistic certainly counts in his favour. That he allowed his desire for communal well-being to place greater demands upon women than it did upon men, however, let alone the destruc-

270. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 92.

271. This requires a more nuanced, or at least less pessimistic, perception of Pauline texts to that which E. Schüssler Fiorenza develops in later work, in which her notion of kyriarchy, where some powerful men dominate all others, male and female, through language, philosophy, worldview to the extent that the cultural construction of reality is inevitably masculine, is turned to particular hermeneutical ends. She describes Paul and his readers as 'ensconced in the rhetorical world projected by the kyriocentric text which seeks to maintain the status quo', and argues 'If there is no possibility of reconstructing a historical world *different* from the kyriocentric world construction of the text, or if it is impossible to take a reading position different from that engineered by the text, then historical interpretation is doomed to re-inscribe the kyriarchal reality constructed by the grammatically masculine text' (*Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Study* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999], pp. 139-42 [139], original emphasis). One question to be asked of this perspective, however, is whether the depth and texture of Pauline texts, as discussed here, is done full justice by such a monochrome and pessimistic reading?

272. The fact that some of Paul's comments are clearly shaped by and entrench patriarchal values (especially 1 Cor. 11.3, 7-9) should not be ignored. Nor, however, should some of the mitigating readings outlined above and Paul's advocacy of a culture-critical level of mutuality and interdependence (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.4; 11.11-12). See also Bartchy's articles, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy' and 'Who Should Be Called Father?'

273. Barton, *Life Together*, pp. 199-200; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, p. 230.

tive ends that his instruction would be put to by later generations,[274] demands that he be evaluated in less than wholly positive terms. Such an evaluation may be entrenched if Paul's social impact is seen as within a kyriarchal rather than a simply patriarchal field, where both women and some men are dominated by those males—usually the elite, leaders and husbands—who already possess power and status. That some subaltern men are likely to have been among those favouring the anti-structural understanding of the Gal. 3.28 baptismal liturgy, and so had their aspirations denied by Paul's affirmation of the status quo, albeit in redefined terms, is likely to strengthen misgivings about Paul's social impact.[275]

Such misgivings notwithstanding, positives may still be identified in Paul's stance on women, both in his willingness to allow them an active role in worship and ministry, and in his estimation of marital relations.[276] These, and Paul's advocacy of (a correct understanding of) the baptismal tradition's social implications,[277] require his impact to be seen as less than completely negative. Paul is, then, to be considered an ambiguous, 'double-edged' influence upon the lives of women, Corinthian and otherwise.[278]

If this ambiguity were to be evaluated as a contribution to the human rights of a group who suffered at the hands of the societal status quo, then Paul's affirmation of some destructive standards of gender relations would surely leave him found wanting. Taking such ambiguity, and particularly the motivations behind it, as offering a contribution to *debates* within human rights thought, however, allows what Paul has to say about women

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274. Murphy-O'Connor, *Becoming Human*, p. 194.

275. However, that some men *as well as* women were affected by Paul's stance in 1 Corinthians 7 also counts in Paul's favour, at least insofar as the negative aspects of his social impact should not be seen as falling exclusively upon Corinthian women.

276. Witherington, *Paul Quest*, p. 223; Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female', p. 116. This latter parallels the dynamic Watson finds in Ephesians 5. While the 'form of "patriarchal marriage" is maintained', he says, because 'the wife must submit to the husband as to her head … behind the facade, its substance is subverted and transformed' by its transference into a christological framework (*Agape, Eros, Gender*, p. 234). Against this sort of reading, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, pp. 390-94.

277. For France, Gal. 3.28 provides Paul with an end-point to the trajectory through which gender relations are moving: 'from the male-dominated society of the Old Testament and of later Judaism, through the revolutionary implications and yet still limited actual outworking of Jesus' attitude to women, and on to the increasing prominence of women in the apostolic church and in its active ministry. At all points within the period of biblical history the working out of the fundamental equality expressed in Gal. 3.28 remained constrained by the realities of the time, and yet increasingly the church was discovering that in Christ there was the basis, indeed the imperative, for the dismantling of the sexual discrimination which had prevailed since the fall' (*Women in the Church's Ministry*, p. 91).

278. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 235-36.

to be construed in rather more constructive terms. As previously outlined, although too often forgotten by those making rights claims, human rights are best seen not as a final or absolute value system, but within a larger moral framework. That was precisely what Paul was operating with as he commented upon issues of women's 'rights'. He was happy to affirm culture critical opportunities for increased female equality and participation in line with the eschatological vision of the tradition behind Gal. 3.28, but only to the extent that he could see their compatibility with his broader gospel framework and higher goals (communal unity, reputation and Christ-orientation).[279] If he perceived such interests as hampering the pursuit of those higher goals—through their undue focus upon individual status, for example—then he happily sacrificed them for the common good manifest in the pursuit of gospel values. While the suffering which accrued from such sacrifice was unfairly divided between the genders, women were not the only victims of it. Indeed, Paul might well have claimed that he did not ask them to undergo anything that he was not himself prepared to suffer. And while individual self-sacrifice and the imposition of socially-disadvantageous conditions upon a group are hardly the same, particularly from a human rights perspective, Paul's construal of both within the cruciform terms of imitation, servanthood and calling suggest that, according to his broader framework, they share a common dynamic.

Paul's willingness to see 'rights' sacrificed for higher goals bears a striking resemblance to the Communitarian valuation of human rights, where notions of common good act to constrain the extremes of individual self-interest. While the theological framework within which Paul was working makes his conception of the common good distinctively different, that both react against the 'morally thin atmosphere'[280] which pertains when people are overly concerned with their own rights, statuses and freedoms, suggests that Paul's contribution to human rights debates might well have paralleled the Communitarian one.[281]

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279. As Hays puts it, 'The aim of Paul's letters is to reshape his churches into cultural patterns that he takes to be consistent with the gospel' (*First Corinthians*, p. 190).
280. Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 112.
281. See the discussion of Communitarian perspectives in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6

Paul on Slaves

Within what Paul has to say with regard to women's social roles and aspirations in 1 Corinthians 7 sit some notorious comments about slavery and circumcision. As outlined in Chapter 4, these comments are widely regarded as being illustrative.[1] Paul wrote vv. 17-24, the argument goes, to support his

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1. See Chapter 4, nn. 261-64 for broad description of this and alternative interpretations. Glancy ('Obstacles to Slaves') offers an alternative to the illustrative reading which emphasizes the coherence of 1 Corinthians 5–7 as a unit concerned with the effects of *porneia* upon Christian community. For Glancy, an owner's sexual possession of Christian slaves was bound to be problematical for a community seeking purity, especially if those owners were not members and so were beyond communal censure (p. 481). Drawing upon the lack of concern with the prostitute in 1 Cor. 6.12-20—because she was 'not in possession of a body destined for resurrection'?—Glancy suggests that the sexual powerlessness of slaves provided difficulties for Christians (p. 494). 'Either the community excluded slaves whose sexual behavior could not conform to the norms mandated within the Christian body, or the community tolerated the membership of some who did not confine their sexual activities to marriage. The first possibility challenges the assumption that slavery did not jeopardize individuals' standing within the Christian community, the second suggests that Pauline communities viewed some sexual activities as morally neutral' (pp. 482-83). This conundrum, for Glancy, is exacerbated by Paul's insistence upon marriage being the only legitimate context for sexual relations: he assumes that people can choose to have sex, which slaves often could not, and had a spouse to turn to for it, which slaves were often denied (p. 497). Thus 1 Corinthians 7 sees Paul excluding slaves, and even accusing those without sexual choice of being *porneia*-bearing threats to the community (p. 496). Perhaps, Glancy concludes, this unfortunate construal of their powerlessness prompted Paul's recommendation that slaves take advantage of opportunities for freedom whenever they arose (pp. 499-500). The implication that Paul was more concerned with communal well-being than individual/group powerlessness certainly fits with his attitude to women's 'rights'. However, Glancy's assertion that Paul offered women something which he withheld from slaves—some egalitarian sweeteners to the bitter pill of continued cultural norms—suggests that he either regarded slaves as less important (unlikely given the shaping of 1 Corinthians 7 around all three social distinctions undone in baptism) or that Glancy's account of Paul's thinking is deficient. See below for an interpretation of 1 Cor. 7.20-24 which suggests the shortcomings of Glancy's conclusions. For arguments against Glancy's whole reconstruction, see Osiek, 'Female Slaves', pp. 269, 273-74.

analysis of the social implications of 'no male and female', not to address specific questions of slavery and circumcision raised by the Corinthians.[2] If correct, this reading assumes that Paul was able to argue for his position upon the contentious issues of marriage and status through appeal to uncontended matters, one of which was the place and appropriate aspirations of Christian slaves. Assuming that there were some slaves in the Corinthian community,[3] a lack of controversy about such matters seems almost inconceivable to modern readers, especially given the debates which have raged over these verses since Paul's time.[4] In the face of such an unlikely seeming situation, two major questions have to be resolved in order for Paul's social impact to be understood. First, what was the actual content of the common thinking about slavery to which Paul appealed? Did he assume that the Corinthians would expect Christian slaves to grasp or reject opportunities for freedom? Second, how does what Paul says about the social realities of servitude and freedom cohere with his perspective upon women's roles and authority? Does Paul offer a consistent approach to matters of social status and structure in 1 Corinthians 7? It should be noted that even if this reading is mistaken, and Paul was not merely using uncontentious illustrations in 1 Cor. 7.17-24, the same questions remain important. Paul was taking a certain, socially significant stance whether in illustration of or application to real issues; the direction and coherence of that stance indicates the character of his social influence, and thus the shape of his contribution to human rights debates.

1. *Reading about Slavery*

> It could be argued that … Christianity was an influence retarding the development of human-rights thinking by accepting the institution of slavery while teaching the slave that he was no less in the eyes of God than his

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2.   Gordon, *Sister or Wife*, p. 165.

3.   This, certainly, is what 1 Cor. 1.11, 16; 16.15 are often taken to suggest. See, e.g., Barrett, *First Corinthians*, p. 42; Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 59; Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 78, 280; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 21; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, pp. 103-104; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, p. 271. Additionally, what we know of Greco-Roman demographics indicates that there almost certainly were slaves among the Corinthian Christians. Dunn suggests that up to a third of the population of 'most large urban centres' were slaves (*Theology of Paul*, p. 699), while Duling argues that manumission and slave marriage/breeding meant that 'perhaps five-sixths of the population of Rome by the end of the first century was servile or had a servile background' (*New Testament*, pp. 251-52). Bartchy offers a similar estimation for Corinth, arguing that because of its history 'Life as a slave was or had been the experience of as many as two-thirds of the Corinthian population' (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 58-59).

4.   See also Dunn's assertion that New Testament epistolary beyond 1 Corinthians demonstrates that slavery 'raised important questions for early Christianity' (*Theology of Paul*, p. 698).

master. It could also be argued that what Christianity was all the time teach-
ing about the essential equality of all men in the eyes of God was in the long
run more influential in securing external freedom than would have been a
narrowing of interest to the abolition of the institution of slavery itself.[5]

Advocates of both these perspectives tend to identify Paul and his attitude
toward slavery as a, if not the, major contributor to Christianity's influence.
All too often, however, the assumptions which lie behind such judgments
are anachronistic and distorting.[6] Thus, for example, Paul has regularly
been depicted as 'the patron saint of the master class' because his 'exhorta-
tions to servile obedience'[7] acted as the '*linguistic, ideological, and reli-
giously sanctioned linchpins in the stolid and death-dealing institution of
American slavery*'.[8] Others reject the violently exploitative lens of antebel-
lum American slavery as anachronistic—Paul was not the 'architect of the
North American slave economy'[9]—and some herald Paul's positive influ-
ence in aiding slaves to look beyond their 'insignificant' social constraint
to the 'ultimate prize' of spiritual freedom and empowerment.[10] These last
interpreters are critiqued in turn for their naïve notions of ancient slavery,[11]

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5.   S.H. Evans, 'Christianity and Human Rights', in F. Vallat (ed.), *An Introduction
to the Study of Human Rights* (London: Europa, 1970), pp. 1-15 (12).

6.   Collins's description of this as the product of a tendency to read from within
one's social location (*First Corinthians*, p. 281) is insightful but, as indicated below,
only a partial explanation.

7.   A.D. Callahan, '"Brother Saul": An Ambivalent Witness to Freedom', *Semeia*
83/84 (1998), pp. 235-50 (235).

8.   Martin, 'Somebody Done Hoodoo'd', p. 208, original emphasis. Martin contin-
ues by identifying those Pauline texts (1 Cor. 7.20-21; Eph. 6.5-9; Col. 3.22; 4.1; Phlm.
10-18; 1 Tim. 6.20-21) which, 'more than any others' contributed to the legitimation of
slavery (pp. 213-14). He adds that, because of the 'impunity' which flowed from this
'"biblical sanction" for their slaveholding prerogatives', Christian slave owners were
often among the most abusive in the Americas (pp. 219-20). For a rather more nuanced
account of Paul's theological appeal to both slave owners and slaves, see O. Patterson,
Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University
Press, 1982), pp. 74-76.

9.   Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 9. Also Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, p. 37; J.G. Nor-
dling, 'Christ Leavens Culture: St Paul on Slavery', *Concordia Journal* (1998),
pp. 43-52 (46-48).

10.   Evans, for example, describes ancient slavery as 'little worse than domestic
service in large households in the nineteenth century ('Christianity and Human Rights',
p. 12). See also Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 110; Tidball, *Introduction*, pp. 115-16.

11.   See, e.g., Martin's attack upon Tidball's 'idyllic notion of the "happy slave"'
and conception of slavery as a 'largely innocuous institution' ('Somebody Done
Hoodoo'd', pp. 211-12). Tidball quotes with uncritical approval the assessment of
R.H. Barrow that 'slavery comes nearest to its justification in the early Roman empire:
for a man from a "backward" race might be brought within the pale of civilization,
educated, trained in a craft or profession and turned into a useful member of society'

often based upon the distorting accounts of classical scholars whose vested interests lead them to depict all things Greco-Roman as pure and noble.[12] As Barclay comments, the problem with both sides is that extra-textual preferences and presuppositions play too large a part within analyses of Paul and Pauline slavery texts:[13] 'It is extremely hard to describe the conditions of slaves without becoming emotive and partisan, stressing one-sidedly either the benefits or the disadvantages of being a slave'.[14] Add in assumptions about Paul himself—as spiritual hero, social radical or advocate of love-patriarchalism—and reading his comments about slavery becomes fraught with presuppositional pitfalls. If slavery is understood in negative terms and Paul as liberator, for example, then the exegete is likely to find the thorny clauses of 1 Cor. 7.21-23 as emancipatory, while those holding other assumptions read them quite differently.

  Providing a fair judgement of Paul's rhetoric about and impact upon Corinthian slaves requires his measurement against the backdrop of an accurate, coherent evaluation of ancient slavery. Clearly, anachronistic and contradictory, if widely held, characterizations of slavery are not an ideal basis for constructing such a backdrop. Some seek to brush past the stand-off thus produced by making sweeping statements about socio-cultural givens which avoid passing judgment on either slavery or Paul,[15] but this too is problematical. To do so is, first, for most interpreters to be somewhat disingenuous. For surely few contemporary readers, shaped by the values of human worth and rights, by democracy and liberal culture, can honestly regard slavery with equanimity. Concealing one's distaste in order to

(*The Romans* [London: Penguin, 1949], pp. 99-100, cited in Tidball, *Introduction*, p. 115).

  12. A.D. Callahan, R.A. Horsley and A. Smith, 'Introduction: The Slavery of New Testament Studies', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 1-15 (1-3).

  13. J.M.G. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon and Christian Slave-Ownership', *New Testament Studies* 37.2 (1991), pp. 161-86 (162). Such prejudiced analysis is not confined to Pauline slavery material. For example, Seneca's account of a nobleman feeding his slave to carnivorous fish (*De ira* 3.40.2) is construed as demonstrating both aberrant behaviour beyond the acceptable treatment of slaves (Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, p. 69) and normal exploitative cruelty by owners (Callahan, Horsley and Smith, 'Introduction', p. 5), according to the interpreters' presuppositions about ancient slave relations.

  14. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon', p. 166. The essays in *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), although valuable, provide an excellent example of such emotive bias. The collection is introduced by a quote from a former black slave who describes his captivity as 'Them days was hell without fire' (p. 1), setting the theme for all the following papers.

  15. For example, Dunn's cursory comment that slavery was not thought of as immoral or necessarily degrading, just as a source of 'labour at the bottom end of the economic spectrum' (*Theology of Paul*, pp. 698-699). See also O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 264.

'protect' Paul—and that seems more often than not to be the motivation—is certainly less than honest and perhaps does Paul few favours if it prevents his thought being evaluated rigorously. It is also, second, to push Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 7.21-23 into a theoretical realm which, even if they were mere illustration, divorces them from the social realities which their first readers would have known. Those who saw and experienced what it meant to be owned by another, who knew or were or owned slaves, would not have been able to depersonalize Paul's comments so easily. Slavery may well have been a cultural and economic given for classical society, but it was also life-defining for individuals, families and households, the very units which made up the Corinthian community to whom Paul wrote. More helpful analyses of the slavery Paul addressed reflect this human dimension by emphasizing the particularity of slave experiences, especially that both good and bad flowed primarily from slaves' relationships with their owners.[16] The position, wealth, interests and morals of the individual owner were key determinants of slaves' experiences. Torture, impoverishment and sexual exploitation could mark a slave's existence (as they could the lives of the poor free and freed[17]), but so could reward, respect and opportunity.[18] This last factor, though real enough, has perhaps been over-emphasized of late, especially because of Martin's account of 'managerial' slaves.[19] No doubt some slaves did enjoy opportunities for social mobility and perhaps Paul did exploit slave imagery to impose new perceptions of honour and status,[20] but that does not mean that all or even most slaves were of the 'elite' variety.[21] Indeed, if as much as eighty-five percent of the imperial population were or had been slaves,[22] then the vast majority could not have held 'managerial' posts, and few of those who did would have held them for owners whose own status would have raised their slaves' personal standing to any notable degree.[23] It is more helpful to emphasize the general rule than

16. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon', p. 166; Martin, 'Somebody Done Hoodoo'd', p. 212.

17. Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, pp. 40-44, 82; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 182.

18. D.B. Martin, 'Ancient Slavery, Class, and Early Christianity', *Fides et historia* 23 (1991), pp. 105-13 (107); Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 563. Hays describes Greco-Roman slavery as 'pervasive' but 'not invariably…oppressive' (*First Corinthians*, p. 124).

19. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 11-22.

20. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 68, 122-26. Also Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 124. For strong critiques of Martin's thought on this point, see Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, *passim*; and Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', pp. 173-75.

21. Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 69; F. Lyall, *Slavery, Citizens, Sons: Legal Metaphors in the Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), p. 27.

22. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 105.

23. R.A. Horsley for one is highly critical of Martin's 'naïve' perspective upon managerial slaves: 'Roman imperial society generally consisted of a static pyramid of

to isolate the few, and one general rule for Greco-Roman slaves was that their lives were so diverse as to make being owned the only thing which all had in common.[24] Paradoxically, however, the diversity-imposing influence of being owned also allows some generalizations—all slaves shared the condition of being another's possession—and this offers an alternative basis for a depiction of slavery against which to judge Paul's impact.

In seeking to move beyond old, anachronistic debates, a number of recent treatments of Paul's slavery comments appeal to Patterson (*Slavery and Social Death*), for whom one person's ownership of another is pivotal to slave relations.[25] Patterson's study of various slave-owning societies (including Greece and Rome[26]) leads him to regard slavery in terms of social domination rather than as legal category or cultural/economic phenomenon.[27] He identifies three aspects to the domination which ownership

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legally mandated orders and a relatively rigid hierarchy of statuses. For what minimal social mobility there was, slavery, even most "managerial" roles, would not have provided a very promising launching pad, considering the social stigma that still attached to the minority of slaves who became freedmen/women—unless we are thinking of a social mobility that happened over three or four generations. The experience of the vast majority of slaves cannot be mitigated by focusing on the unusual influence or atypical mobility of a "select few"… That some sold themselves into slavery says more about the condition of the masses of free people than it does about "the positive meaning of slavery"… Not only did slavery not mean "upward mobility" for the vast mass of slaves, but the masses of freeborn people were experiencing a downward slide in both economic circumstances and social-legal status' ('The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity', *Semeia* 83/84 [1998], pp. 19-66 [57-58]).

24. Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 68. On the diversity of slave experiences see, e.g., Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 38-72; Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 278-79; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 563-64; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 181-83.

25. See, e.g., Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*; Horsley, 'Slave Systems'; A.C. Wire, 'Reading our Heritage: A Response', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 283-93. Indeed, the whole collection of essays in Semeia are indebted to Patterson as the introduction makes clear: 'Slavery is a species of social murder. It reduces human life to a travesty of itself, sacrifices human beings on the altar of violent desire' (Callahan, Horsley and Smith, 'Introduction', p. 1).

26. Patterson (*Slavery and Social Death*) distinguishes between Greek and Roman slavery in ways impractical to repeat here, although the Roman domination of Corinth may have leant Corinthian slavery a particular, un-Greek character. Patterson characterizes Roman slaves as having 'more freedom in every part of their lives than Greek slaves' (p. 66). This was, however, a reflection of wider cultural values—Rome being a more inclusive society than Greece, where foreigners were excluded from the *polis* as much as possible—not a sign of Rome's greater philanthropy (p. 67). If anything, greater freedom was accompanied for Roman slaves by more cruelty and brutality (p. 68).

27. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 334. See Wire's summary of Patterson's perspective: 'the root of slavery's evil is not racism or even economic exploitation of

brings: violence,[28] natal alienation[29] and dishonour.[30] These then provide a framework against which all aspects of slavery can be construed; the apparently good and the morally abhorrent are both facets of the one system of domination, they need not be weighed against one another to find slavery's net worth. Clearly, there is an agenda to Patterson's work—he defines slavery as 'human parasitism'[31]—which carries the potential to distort Paul's situation.[32] Equally clearly, however, in taking a broader view, Patterson offers the hope of a less anachronistic account than those which *start* from atrocities in the American south or from the alleged superiority of classical

people as property, but the ritual dehumanization that deprives people of their natal identity in family and society… When some were determined by Roman military defeat for death, they were understood to be without the status and rights of living beings, let alone human beings' ('Reading our Heritage', p. 286).

28. For Patterson, slavery is a unique social relationship because of 'the extremity of the power involved' in violently creating and maintaining one person's dominance of another (*Slavery and Social Death*, p. 2). The violent suppression of slaves is further demonstrated in their absorption into another's life. Without the owner a slave has no existence (p. 4); they are 'a social nonperson' (p. 5) who is 'as imprintable and disposable as the master wished' (p. 7).

29. This is the cultural removal of slaves from their place within society and family, 'a secular excommunication' which reflects their symbolic death, having claims to neither forebears nor descendants (Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 5). The slave is deracinated, denied all bonds of heritage and blood (p. 7), and redefined according to an owner's will, being marked physically and socially (e.g. enforced changes of language and name) as existing only through the owner's mediation (p. 8).

30. Patterson describes this as the 'sociopsychological' aspect of slavery: 'The slave could have no honor because of the origin of his status, the indignity and all-pervasiveness of his indebtedness, his absence of any independent social existence, but most of all because he was without power except through another' (*Slavery and Social Death*, p. 10). Dishonour defined the lives of even 'elite slaves', who were owned and powerless before their owners, no matter their power over others. 'It was precisely because they were without honor that they had risen to their positions in the first place. And though honored, and no doubt craving honor, none of them were ever able to bestow honor or to confirm it, at least not to anyone who mattered… True honor is possible only where one is fully accepted and included, where one is considered by one's potential peers as wholly belonging' (pp. 331-32).

31. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, p. 335. As Osiek articulates this understanding of slavery, 'A relation of domination causes one to grow stronger as the other suffers, yet paradoxically creates a relationship of dependence stronger in the dominator than the dominated' ('Female Slaves', p. 258).

32. His analysis is a modern, anthropological take upon slavery in a number of cultures. It is an external perspective which, though valuable, is unlikely to understand slavery as those living with the reality of it in Corinth did. Certainly some of the language and concepts Patterson and his followers use (e.g. social mobility and dehumanization) would have been completely alien to the first readers of 1 Corinthians 7, but that is not to say that the underlying experience/reality of slavery would have been so.

culture.[33] For some who adopt his framework when reading 1 Cor. 7.21-23, Paul's failure to oppose a system which brought the evils Patterson finds running through all aspects of slavery is to be condemned.[34] For others, Patterson's perspective simply informs their analysis of Paul's context.[35] This latter approach offers much when seeking to understand Paul's impact upon the societal status quo and those living within it. But reading with human rights values in mind, as Patterson does, will also require some judgment of Paul's impact.

Manumission is of particular importance both to what Paul says of slaves gaining their freedom in 1 Corinthians 7 and to a perspective which finds all aspects of slave culture to be entwined in domination. There is no doubt that the promise or hope of manumission acted as part of the 'social control' of slaves;[36] faithful obedience being the only means by which it might be gained. The implementation of legislation to improve or even ensure the chance of manumission is seen by some as evidence of increasing humanitarian awareness in Greco-Roman culture,[37] excusing

33. That Aristotle defined slaves as pieces of 'living property' (*Eth. Nic.* 8.1161b; see Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 181 and n. 112 below) also mitigates the risk of anachronism somewhat; ownership is not just a modern concern when it comes to slavery. Indeed, among others, Lyall (*Slavery*, pp. 35-36), C.S. Keener ('Family and Household', in C.A. Evans and S.E. Porter [eds.], *Dictionary of New Testament Background* [Downers Grove: IVP, 2000], pp. 353-68 [363]), Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, p. 563), and Bartchy stress the status of slaves as things, possessions under the full dominion of another. 'Thus the slave of a Roman was an object of buying, renting and selling; damage to this slave was damage to property… The slave himself had no rights or duties' (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 38-39).

34. Thus Martin comments that 'Paul had admonished both masters and slaves to fulfil their obligations to one another without ever intimating that it was problematic that one human being owned another. Paul…never suggested that slavery was sinful, and…Paul was quite aware of the cruelties of the slavery practices of the Roman Empire' ('Somebody Done Hoodoo'd', p. 213).

35. Barclay, for example, notes that, 'As a system founded on force, slavery was inevitably accompanied by fear, both the owners' fear of their slaves' intrigues and the slaves' fear of the whim of their masters… Even in the most harmonious of households no master could forget that his slave might get slack or abscond (or worse), and no slave could be sure that his master might not stop his generous treatment and revoke, for instance, his promise of manumission' ('Paul, Philemon', pp. 167-68).

36. Wire, 'Reading our Heritage', p. 286. Combes describes manumission as being 'as much a part of the institution of slavery as the chain and the whip—simply another tool at the owner's disposal to motivate the slave to good service. …manumission may seem a kindness to individual slaves, but it also confirms the owner's right to possess the slave in the first place' (*Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 62). See also Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon', p. 169; Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 88; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 564-65.

37. Thus, for example, Tidball describes a situation in which freedom became

Paul's perceived failure to oppose slavery. But while that may be a partial explanation, and while the ultra-cynical readings of others may go too far,[38] offering the hope of freedom was at least a shrewd tactic for ensuring slave compliance,[39] and thus acted to maintain a societal status quo which is difficult to reconcile with any egalitarian conviction, whether one founded in human rights values, in the baptismal tradition, or elsewhere. Paul's talk of slaves being 'untroubled' by their situation (μή σοι μελέτω), and of opportunities for freedom (δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι) being met with the right response (μᾶλλον χρῆσαι, 1 Cor. 7.21), sees him grappling with this system of domination and its promises of freedom. That his words have been read in contradictory ways, and taken to reflect a plethora of Pauline attitudes to slavery is well known, and some of the main debates will be touched upon below. What has occasionally passed such debates by, however, is that Paul's comments about slavery come within the context of a response to the Corinthians framed in terms which evoke the baptismal liturgy. Indeed, the declaration of there being οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος in Christ (Gal. 3.28)[40] is echoed by the confusion of statuses in 1 Cor. 7.22 (ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν, ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλός ἐστιν Χριστοῦ). The question to be asked, then, is whether Paul is using the emotive power of the liturgy to undermine possible opposition to slavery, and, if so, for what reason, or whether his depiction of slavery and manumission is such that their domination is subverted by his intermingling of them with baptismal values: does Paul support an inequitable status quo or act as cultural critic?

2. *Paul Redefining Slaves*

It is of no small significance that Paul confines his brief comments about slavery in 1 Corinthians 7 within a framework which stresses his pervasive themes of calling and remaining: ἕκαστος ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη, ἐν ταύτῃ μενέτω (v. 20; cf. v. 24).[41] This both suggests that vv. 21-23 are illustrative

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increasingly easy to obtain and where owners often indulged their slaves. 'From a slave's viewpoint then, the Roman social system could be seen as working in his best interests' (*Introduction*, p. 114). See also Bartchy's more nuanced, less naïve account, where he argues that there was a move 'to guarantee more humane treatment' for slaves (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 67-68), but also acknowledges that mistreatment was bad for both individual owners and the slave-reliant economy as a whole (pp. 70-71).

38. For example, Callahan, Horsley and Smith, 'Introduction', pp. 6-7.

39. Granting manumission often also served an owner's economic interests, a higher priority for many than were humanitarian sensibilities (Schrage, *Erste Brief*, II, p. 140).

40. Cf. εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι (1 Cor. 12.13).

41. On a slightly broader, theme-setting note, Thiselton (*First Corinthians*) describes

of a larger theme and shows Paul's expectation that what he writes here fits with the rest of his response to the Corinthians' questions (vv. 1, 25). Where he has preferred celibacy but allowed marriage, and commended the maintenance of relational norms, Paul also encourages a particular attitude toward manumission amongst believing slaves. Although there is no indication in these verses of any motivation but belonging to Christ (1 Cor. 7.22) and being called by God (1 Cor. 7.20, 24), then, it makes sense to see in these a continuation of Paul's broader desire for communal well-being developed throughout 1 Corinthians 7 and the letter as a whole. Whereas his emphasis is perhaps upon communal purity, unity and reputation in his comments about women and marriage in 1 Corinthians 7, his attention in vv. 21-23 is turned exclusively to the matter of Christ-orientation; the community's allegiance belongs to the Lord who has freed them (ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου, 1 Cor. 7.22), to the Christ who owns them (δοῦλός Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor. 7.22), and to no other (μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων, 1 Cor. 7.23).

Paul was not merely making larger points about the community, however, he was addressing those individuals who happened to be slaves (1 Cor. 7.21)—however much in illustrative appeal to a position he assumed them to hold—and perhaps secondarily those he considered too impressed with their freedom, based in either status or Christ (1 Cor. 7.22b). As such, Paul addressed those for whom the conditions of enslavement and the hope of manumission were everyday realities, who would have appreciated both the benefits and costs of a change in social status. In doing so he projected an image of them and their situation which might not have been entirely expected. It is not that Paul offered fanciful assurances of comfortable freedom.[42] Rather, he depicted Christian slaves: (i) as more than passive objects, acted upon by powers beyond their control.[43] Paul portrays them as having the capacity to make choices which influence their future and status—not necessarily a slave's usual experience[44]—or at least actively choose the atti-

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1 Cor. 7.17-24 as having 'a quasi-chiasmic structure' so emphatic are the 'calling' and 'remaining' parallels between vv. 17 and 24 (p. 548). He describes v. 20 as 'the pivotal center' of this chiasm (p. 552). See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 274; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 122.

    42. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 127.

    43. 'Far from urging passive withdrawal or a simple affirmation of the status quo, Paul urges an active lifestyle that is in accordance with the social condition in which each Christian has been called' (Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 278).

    44. Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 316. Dawes, although not really disputing this point, adds that slaves were not simply passive recipients of manumission; they could choose diligent obedience in an effort to make it more likely, and hope that their owner was and remained disposed to freeing them ('But If You Can', p. 694). Against this, see J.A. Harrill, 'Paul and Slavery: The Problem of 1 Corinthians 7:21', *Biblical Research* 39 (1994), pp. 5-28 (27).

tude with which to face their situation (1 Cor. 7.21bc).[45] (ii) Paul portrayed their lives as defined not by human ownership but by divine calling and possession (1 Cor. 7.20-21a, 22-24).[46] And (iii) he encouraged them to see their value according to such realities, not by the worth society gave them (1 Cor. 7.21b).[47]

Some dispute the first point, arguing that it misunderstands the utter powerlessness which characterized slavery.[48] Their denials, however, require Paul's comments to operate *only* at a mundane level. And as the other points demonstrate, while he recognized the realities of the mundane (εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι),[49] Paul's view of slaves was not constrained by it; they underwent a complete redefinition when they became ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου.

In effect, Paul's rhetoric encouraged the Corinthians to regard slaves and their situation as he had learnt to regard all those in Christ (2 Cor. 5.14-17).[50]

45. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 558-62.

46. Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 111.

47. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 184. This difference, for Nordling, is encapsulated in Paul's treatment of slaves as 'responsible moral agents' rather than as pieces of property ('Christ Leavens Culture', p. 51).

48. 'Manumission…was not an act which was "accepted" or "refused" by the slave. It happened to him' (Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 111, 96-111). See also Callahan, Horsley and Smith, 'Introduction', pp. 5-6; Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 316. Dawes argues that δύνασαι in v. 21 shows that Paul thought that slaves did have some power to choose ('But If You Can', p. 693). Thiselton is more likely correct, however, in translating it as a passive ability, 'even if there is a possibility' (*First Corinthians*, p. 558). See also Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 176. Dawes and Thiselton are not, however, singing from completely different hymn sheets. Both recognize the capacity slaves had to influence opportunities for freedom. Thiselton rightly emphasizes Paul's concern with believers' attitudes toward their social situation, in this case that slaves not invest all their resources, energies and attentions in striving after manumission. Dawes, on the other hand, emphasizes that although slaves could not attain freedom simply by their own efforts, nor were they merely passive recipients of opportunities for manumission; they could choose diligent obedience to make it more likely, and hope that their owner was and remained disposed to freeing them. The choice of diligent obedience need not imply an all-consuming pursuit of freedom but does demonstrate slaves' capacity to shape their situation (cf. Eph. 6.5-8; Col. 3.22-24).

49. Thiselton sees a dialectical principle in Paul's thought throughout 1 Corinthians 7 which both recognizes and marginalizes the reality of the mundane: 'in one sense the distinctions male-female, Jew-Gentile, slave-free have been abrogated, while in another sense they have not' (*First Corinthians*, p. 559). For Fee, that Paul does not speak to slave and free in terms strictly equivalent to those he uses for male and female, circumcised and uncircumcised also shows his recognition of slavery's particular and remaining restrictions: 'the command is not "Stay as you are", but rather "Don't let it trouble you"' (*First Corinthians*, p. 316).

50. For Chester, Paul 'wishes the church to live in Christ, and to fulfil its calling by

Slaves were to stop seeing themselves κατὰ σάρκα (v. 16); their definition by social condition and human ownership was not to 'trouble' them (μή σοι μελέτω) because it was in some sense obsolete.[51] Participation in Christ's death and resurrection meant that their lives were now 'lived for him' (τῷ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀποθανόντι καὶ ἐγερθέντι, v. 15), defined by him. They were no longer merely human slaves but 'new beings in Christ' (ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά, v. 17), and as such had possibilities to act and choose (1 Cor. 7.21) as those freed from old constraint, ownership and loyalty, and given over to new ones (1 Cor. 7.22). Paul's emphatic rejection of new human slavery (μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων, 1 Cor. 7.23) confirms this reading. Those redefined by being 'in Christ' have been bought by him (τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε) and made part of his household (1 Cor. 7.22), with irreversible changes to their social place and obligations.[52] It is surely significant that Paul chooses not to describe status changes 'in Christ' in terms of a simple reversal. The ἐλεύθερος becomes δοῦλος Χριστοῦ but the δοῦλος becomes ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου, not ἐλεύθερος. Paul does not depict Christians as 'freed' to an allegiance-less autonomy but brought within Jesus' household, whatever their previous status and loyalties.

Verse 23 has often been taken metaphorically as referring to spiritual enslavement,[53] a reading not without merit considering Paul's concern with attitudes here (1 Cor. 7.21b).[54] That choosing to become a slave has recently

reflecting a set of assumptions about status derived from that reality, rather than from the status practices of Graeco-Roman society' (*Conversion at Corinth*, p. 105).

51. '[F]or Paul religious and social-legal statuses are neither hindrances nor advantages with respect to "living according to God's calling" (0717, 0724). The really important thing is to keep God's commands and to continue in His calling. God's call had come to the Corinthians without regard to their various religious and social-legal situations. For Paul this fact meant that nothing was to be gained in God's eyes (παρὰ θεῷ) by any change in the religious or social statuses of the ones whom he had called. Within this perspective any attempt by the Corinthians to "improve" their relation to God by making a change in their social or religious status was tantamount to *not* continuing in God's calling. That is, to act as if religious or social status did make a real difference to God was to challenge the adequacy of that which God had already done, namely his distribution of faith to the Corinthians and his calling them through Christ' (Bartchy, *Μάλλον Χρῆσαι*, pp. 139-40, original emphasis).

52. Dunn describes v. 23 as Paul depicting the Christians' relationship with their Lord as of a priority which relativizes all other relations: 'Neither slaves nor freemen should allow any dependency on and obligation to others to become more important than their dependency on and obligation to Christ' (*Theology of Paul*, pp. 699-700). See also Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 319; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 65; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, II, pp. 140-43; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 560.

53. For example, Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 320; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 111.

54. Barrett, *First Corinthians*, pp. 171-72; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 558-59.

been understood as a possible means of bettering oneself,[55] however, makes the assertion of v. 23 all the more understandable. Belonging to Christ means both freedom and honour—'for the slave represents his or her Lord'[56]—an advance in status[57] which makes the thought of selling oneself for self-improvement an insult to Christ as well as an illegitimate step for those who are not their own (1 Cor. 6.19-20).

Quite what the consequences of belonging to Christ were for those already in servitude is a much disputed question, and largely revolves around Paul's talk of a slave's proper response to the opportunity of freedom (1 Cor. 7.21). This is another text in which Paul uses ambiguous language to talk of socio-relational matters.[58] The ambiguity rests upon Paul's failure to provide an object for μᾶλλον χρῆσαι, allowing interpretive assumptions to dictate what Paul is understood as encouraging slaves to 'use',[59] and thus shape judgments over his social impact and, derivatively, his potential contribution to human rights debates. Thiselton suggests that Paul's elliptical ambiguity is intentional; he has spoken of such a variety of circumstances that he leaves readers to fill in whatever noun best fits their situation. No circumstance either promotes or impedes 'spiritual status' on its own, it is the attitude towards it which is key; hence μᾶλλον χρῆσαι.[60] If this is the case, however, it has been too subtle for most of Paul's interpreters. They have largely preferred to tie Paul into commending either freedom or servitude,[61] depending upon their expectations of him and their view of slavery.

The view which sees Paul advising slaves to make the most of their servitude need not imply Paul's support for slavery per se, as many see this stance reflecting his expectation of an imminent parousia.[62] This reading

55. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, *passim*; Winter, *Seek the Welfare*, p. 146.
56. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 561.
57. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 560.
58. S.K. Stowers, 'Paul and Slavery: A Response', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), pp. 295-311 (303). For a reflection upon Pauline ambiguity at a different level, see Martin's comments about slave of Christ imagery (*Slavery as Salvation*, p. 68).
59. See, e.g., Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 3-4; Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 183; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 553.
60. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 558; contra Harrill, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 6 n. 3.
61. Thiselton identifies two additional positions. The first, his own reading, is a 'middle' view close to the 'use slavery' interpretation, where Paul is seen as advocating the 'positive use' of '*present situations*' which remain '*deliberately unspecified*'. The second, close to the 'use freedom' reading, is Bartchy's notion that Paul applies χρῆσαι to Christian κλῆσις: '*If indeed you become manumitted, by all means live according to God's calling*' (*First Corinthians*, p. 554, original emphasis). See also Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 155-59.
62. Thus L.E. Keck describes Paul's ethic as being 'so thoroughly influenced by his expectation of the imminent parousia that it produces a "conservative" stance, for

does portray Paul as socially conservative,[63] however, concerned less with those on the wrong side of an oppressive social system than with 'more important' spiritual matters.[64] Such a Paul is difficult to reconcile with the culture-critical Paul who desires the strong to put their advantages aside for the benefit of others (1 Cor. 8), but perhaps not so hard to find in the Paul who asks women not to strive after liberation from patriarchal marriage (1 Cor. 7.10, 13). The other major view sees Paul counselling slaves to make use of opportunities for freedom; they are not to be overly concerned by their servitude (1 Cor. 7.21ab), but are encouraged to seize freedom if the opportunity presents itself (1 Cor. 7.21c). According to this reading, Paul is offering another exception to the general principle of not striving after improved social status (cf. 1 Cor. 7.5, 9, 11, 15, 28).[65] He flexibly applies that principle to the complex variations of real life, he does not impose it as an unyielding rule.[66] As such, Paul demonstrates a critical awareness of

he actually urges his readers not to change their roles in society' (*Paul and his Letters* [Proclamation Commentaries: The New Testament Witnesses for Preaching; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], pp. 94-95). See also Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 127; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 123. Bartchy, however, questions the relevance of eschatology for Paul's specific comments about slavery: 'Would it have been more difficult for a Christian slave to endure the travail of the "last days" as a freedman? Would it have been to the slave's "benefit" to remain in slavery, or could he more single-mindedly serve the Lord as a slave? These questions are appropriate because Paul, when urging the Corinthians to remain unmarried, does not simply point to his conviction that the "frame of this world is passing away". Rather he has a variety of specific reasons which he uses to support his admonitions, either for remaining unmarried or for remaining married' (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 14-15).

    63. It probably also rests upon a dualistic theological perspective, 'separating the spiritual…from the concrete social or worldly realm', allowing biblical texts like 1 Cor. 7.20-24 to be read 'in isolation from their literary and historical contexts' (Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 183).

    64. See, e.g., Schweitzer's conception of Paul juxtaposing being 'in Christ' over and against social change (*Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, pp. 191-93).

    65. Hays, *First Corinthians*, pp. 125-26; contra Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 282. For Witherington, Paul allows slaves in the awkward position of being owned by pagans to be an exception to his 'stay as you are rule' (*Conflict and Community*, p. 185). Horsley sees other reasons for separating the slavery comments in 1 Corinthians 7 from the rest of Paul's arguments, and thus for reading them as exceptions to his general principle. First, being an externally and violently imposed condition, slavery is not like marriage and circumcision, and thus an imminent parousia need not affect responses to it. Second, Paul does not find in an end to enslavement a threat to the community which matches the risk of *porneia* if celibacy becomes the norm, nor an opportunity for saving others to mirror that which a believing spouse might have when remaining married ('Paul and Slavery', pp. 186-87).

    66. Had Paul considered 'remain as you are' inflexibly, then we would read '"You were called a slave? Do not become free. You were called free? Do not become a

social reality and a willingness to see change where change is possible, even to insist upon it[67] given the redefinition that happens through God's calling (1 Cor. 7.22-23).[68] This Paul cannot be considered a social conservative, but nor, given his 'untroubled' perspective upon slavery (μή σοι μελέτω), can he be seen as an uncomplicated radical.

   Both readings and the depictions of Paul which accompany them have advocates and critics. Though something of a generalization, most contemporary readers prefer the 'use freedom' interpretation.[69] Although that may be as much because of the portrait of Paul it implies—one which need not embarrass modern sensibilities[70]—as because of its exegetical strengths, that it does have such strengths should not be overlooked. Bartchy comments that most of those who stress the 'grammatical' in reading 1 Cor. 7.21 prefer the 'use freedom' interpretation,[71] while most who stress textual and/ or theological context prefer 'use slavery'.[72] That is not to say, however, that grammatical arguments cannot be made for the 'use slavery' position[73] and especially that broader considerations cannot support a 'use freedom' interpretation.[74] There is no room here for a full exploration of the exegetical arguments on either side. Rather than embark upon a half-hearted presentation of the debates concerning κλῆσις, ἀλλα, εἰ καὶ, μᾶλλον, χράομαι and γὰρ in 1 Cor. 7.21-22, as well as the structures of Pauline argument,[75] therefore, it seems more sensible to limit comment to Paul's presumably intentional

slave". Instead we read: "You were called a slave? Do not be concerned. But if you are able to become free, rather use (the opportunity)"' (Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 103).

   67. As the imperative of χρῆσαι (v. 21c) indicates.

   68. For Schüssler Fiorenza, the baptism-evoking references to calling and the demand of v. 23 demonstrate that v. 21 'cannot' mean that Paul is happy for Christians to remain the slaves of others (*In Memory of Her*, pp. 220-21).

   69. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 182; contra Schrage, *Erste Brief*, II, p. 139.

   70. See Conzelmann's notorious assessment of 1 Corinthians 7: 'Zum Kummer der modernen Theologie' (*Erste Brief*, p. 140).

   71. See, e.g., Chester, *Conversion at Corinth*, p. 100; Dawes, 'But If You Can', p. 692; W. Deming, 'A Diatribe Pattern in 1 Cor. 7:21-22: A New Perspective on Paul's Directions to Slaves', *Novum Testamentum* 37.2 (1995), pp. 130-37; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 102; Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 184; Morris, *1 Corinthians*, p. 110; Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 174.

   72. Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, pp. 23-24. Barrett (*First Corinthians*, p. 170) provides a good example of the latter.

   73. For example, Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 57.

   74. For example, Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 316.

   75. For more detail see, e.g., Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι; Chester, *Conversion at Corinth*, pp. 93-100; Collins, *First Corinthians*, pp. 273-87; Dawes, 'But If You Can'; Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, pp. 32-40; Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 315-19; Harrill, 'Paul and Slavery', pp. 5-28; Horsley, *First Corinthians*, pp. 100-104; and especially Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 544-65.

use of an elliptical phrase and to the contextual considerations which make a bald instruction to remain in servitude unlikely.

For Horsley, an instruction to 'use slavery' and the rejection of an opportunity for freedom which it implies would have been 'simply unintelligible'. He finds it self-contradicting because of the mix of conservative and radical potential it embodies. The rejection of manumission would, Horsley says, have been reactionary to an unprecedented degree, for even slavery's strongest proponents (he cites Cicero and Seneca) commended the judicious use of manumission. However, it would at the same time have represented a revolutionary threat to cultural equilibrium, so important was the hope of manumission for societal stability.[76] But perhaps even more fundamental to the 'unintelligibility' of 'use slavery' is Bartchy's observation that it makes no sense for Paul to advise slaves to reject something which they were powerless to stop;[77] 'a manumitted slave could not in fact stay a slave in Roman culture'.[78] Paul may have been encouraging slaves to regard themselves as redefined in Christ, members of a new household, but throughout 1 Corinthians 7 he demonstrates sufficient awareness that the baptismal pronouncement is as yet only provisional, only partially determining believers' lives, that he should not be depicted as blind to the inevitabilities of existence in Greco-Roman society. Slaves were possessions, they had no power to oppose their owner's will if that will was bent on manumitting them. Paul's social comments might often be characterized by ambiguity, but that is no reason to see him advocating a contextually 'unintelligible' stance on slavery, especially if 1 Cor. 7.20-24 are an illustrative appeal to a position he thinks the Corinthians hold and understand. If Thiselton's suggestion that Paul intentionally leaves χρῆσαι without an object so as not to limit what is to be 'used'[79] has any value, however, then ruling out a 'use slavery' reading need not require 'use freedom' to be imposed. That might well have been the most obvious implication of Paul's words, but that he chose to leave it implicit does suggest that his concern is with slaves using whatever circumstance they found themselves in 'for living out the gospel in the everyday'.[80]

> Hope for freedom must not be a distraction; one can **use positively** one's present situation. But if, after putting it in perspective and 'waiting', freedom comes, then that now becomes the situation to use. Paul does not bind his

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76. Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 185. See also Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 85. On 'conservative' Greco-Romans favouring manumission, see Harrill, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 8.

77. Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 96-98. See also Collins, *First Corinthians*, p. 282; Fee, *First Corinthians*, pp. 317-18; Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 126; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, pp. 165-66; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, p. 102.

78. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture, and Ethics*, p. 174.

79. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 558.

80. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, p. 558.

> readers to remain in slavery; but neither does he want them unsettled by
> fantasizing about discipleship as a freedperson. Every **present** circumstance
> brings its own special privileges and drawbacks as a public sphere for living
> out the gospel in one's stance toward God, toward others, and toward life.[81]

By itself, such an interpretation of 1 Cor. 7.21 offers little support for views
of Paul which construe his social thought in simple conservative or radical
terms; he is saying too much for one perspective and not enough for the
other. When the verse is not isolated as an interpretational crux, however,
but read within its cotext as part of a larger perspective on slavery, then it
does complement the cultural criticism Paul evinces elsewhere in the Corin-
thian correspondence. In redefining slaves who are in Christ as those who
have worth, choices and freedom not necessarily afforded by the culture,
Paul suggests, as he does with eschatological language elsewhere in 1 Cor-
inthians 7, that the values of 'this age' are singularly flawed. While there
were those who were not ashamed of their slave status,[82] for many the dislo-
cation and dishonour of slavery was something to be avoided at all costs.[83]
That Paul can speak μή σοι μελέτω into such a setting confirms his critique
of a society in which the (dis)honour afforded by social status was vital for
determining a person's worth.[84] The subsequent encouragement that slaves
'use' their circumstances, whether the freedom implied or servitude if that
was their only choice, reinforces this critique. 'Using freedom' removed
slaves from the most extreme manifestation of social domination (symboli-
cally if not necessarily physically or materially) practised by their culture; it
carried an inherent denial of slaves' dishonour and reification as it reflected
the valuation of them expressed in the gospel.[85] To 'use slavery' would,

81. Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, pp. 558-59, original emphasis.

82. Martin describes many slaves as not hesitating to describe themselves as such.
'They used the term as a title and as an opportunity to link themselves to more power-
ful people. They seemed to feel no shame in their slavery as long as they could enjoy
this status-by-association' (*Slavery as Salvation*, p. 48).

83. Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, pp. 78, 82; Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 69;
Horsley, 'Slave Systems', pp. 57-58.

84. This goes somewhat against Bartchy's assertion that Paul's instruction for slaves
'not to worry' was parallel to all other contemporary perspectives. However, Bartchy
is working at a different level, comparing Paul's comment to a philosophical prefer-
ence for inner as opposed to legal freedom, and the widespread acceptance of slavery's
social indispensability (Μαλλον Χρησαι, p. 67). This latter point is widely asserted
and, in conjunction with the lack of recorded slave revolts, often taken to reflect slaves'
general acceptance of the institution (e.g. pp. 85-86; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*,
pp. 29-30; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, pp. 182-84). For an alternative to
this view, see Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, pp. 21-22.

85. While Horrell is certainly correct in asserting that 'use freedom' is 'hardly
"radical", given the widespread practice of manumission' (*Social Ethos*, p. 166), that
does not exhaust the culture critical potential of Paul's advice.

perhaps, have been even more culture critical. For slaves to acknowledge their status yet place positive worth upon themselves and their circumstances was to declare the irrelevance to their lives of certain key cultural values (cf. 1 Cor. 1.25-29). In other words, Paul's rhetoric in 1 Cor. 7.21-23 acted to undermine the culturally accepted symbolic order in which slaves were among the least valued and empowered members of society.[86] A person's status was of no consequence for their calling by God (cf. 1 Cor. 1.26-29) and was thus, counter culturally, not to be a matter of concern (μή σοι μελέτω) or an object of striving for them (1 Cor. 7.17, 20, 24). Slave and free were honoured beyond all human ambition by their calling into the Lord's household (1 Cor. 7.22), making irrelevant any attitude but one which 'used' present circumstances to full advantage. As Horrell says about the language of belonging in v. 22, 'The social significance of these affirmations should not be underestimated. In the alternative symbolic order Paul is (re)constructing the valuations are completely the reverse of those given to people in the dominant social order: the gospel counterbalances the differences in worldly status'.[87]

That Paul is again employing the rhetoric of reversal[88] suggests that he sees his instruction in these verses to be of a piece with the stance he takes throughout the Corinthian correspondence. Indeed, Paul's readiness to describe himself using slave/servant imagery which clearly also carries significant claims to authority (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.5-10; 4.1; 9.19-23; 2 Cor. 6.3-4; 13.4) demonstrates his capacity to turn expectations of slavery language on their head.[89] He can do so because the framework within which he speaks of his own servanthood and of the appropriate aspirations of slaves is informed not by the culture but by the gospel of Christ crucified (1 Cor. 2.2-3), which in fact demonstrates the futility of the culture's wisdom (1 Cor. 1.18-29). Certainly, there is a considerable difference between Paul's depiction of himself in metaphorical slave/servant terms and his address to those who actually were slaves, but both are shaped by counter-cultural gospel values, founded in Christ's kenotic willingness to serve in humility for a greater good,[90] and are thus linked by Paul's call for the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (1 Cor. 11.1).[91] Within 1 Corinthians 7, where Paul's

86. Hays, *First* Corinthians, p. 125. Martin's assertion, that within the Greco-Roman world 'slavery is a status—not class—category', is worth remembering here ('Ancient Slavery', p. 108).

87. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 160. See also Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 15.

88. Chester even sees v. 22 as establishing an 'inverse relationship between social status and status in Christ' (*Conversion at Corinth*, p. 102).

89. Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 77. On Paul's broader destabilization of social imagery, see Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 122-26.

90. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 92.

91. For a parallel discussion of servanthood, humility and imitation in Philippians,

response to Corinthian questions has emphasized the priority of communal well-being, the greater good most immediately requires a Christ-oriented (v. 22) and cruciform (v. 21ab) response to opportunities for social change that acknowledges God's call (vv. 20, 24) as an irrevocable redefinition (v. 23) which allows slaves to 'use' their circumstances in a denial of cultural expectations. Christian slaves need not be troubled by being another's possession, for they are owned and freed by Christ, in contradistinction to their culture's perspective upon them.

3. *Implications for Slaves and Slavery*

Patterson's analysis of slavery identifies three aspects involved in the domination of owning human beings: violence, natal alienation and dishonour. If this provides a less anachronistic framework for thinking about 1 Cor. 7.20-24 than certain other perspectives, then Paul should be judged according to his contribution in those areas.

On violence there is little to say from 1 Corinthians 7. Patterson's focus is upon the violence directed by owners toward slaves. Paul's words to Philemon or even those addressed to slave owners in the *haustafeln* (Eph. 6.9; Col. 4.1) might provide more insight on this, but the comments in 1 Corinthians 7 are spoken specifically to slaves.[92] That is not to say that what Paul writes is of no relevance to matters of violence, but such relevance is better dealt with when considering Patterson's other categories.

In terms of natal alienation, it could not be claimed that Paul's teaching would have undone a slave's racial, familial or cultural dislocation; severed bonds of heritage and blood cannot be remade. However, the redefinition inherent in being declared part of Christ's household would have offered a new family (cf. 1 Cor. 1.10; 4.15; 8.12; 2 Cor. 8.1; 13.11) and a new socialization which, though not changing every aspect of slave life, would surely have engendered a new sense of belonging and identity. That Paul is effectively exploiting the same dynamic as slavery, depicting one person as absorbed into the life of another and defined by their ownership (1 Cor. 7.23), may seem unpalatable. But his reworking of that dynamic according to gospel values again shows Paul's subversion of cultural expectations: being in Christ is an ownership characterized by belonging (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.16, 23; 10.16-17; 12.12-13) rather than exploitation; personal worth (e.g.

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see D.A. Black, 'The Discourse Structure of Philippians: A Study in Textlinguistics', *Novum Testamentum* 37.1 (1995), pp. 16-49 (23).

92. Perhaps the most that can be said is that in commending slaves not to worry about their status, Paul may have deflated the potential for a violent response to a violent situation. That, however, is a somewhat speculative assertion and does not really fit with the purpose of his μή σοι μελέτω as interpreted here.

1 Cor. 1.27-28; 9.19-22; 12.14-27; 16.24) and salvific freedom (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.2; 15.22-23; 2 Cor. 3.17; 5.16-21) rather than domination.[93]

The restoration of a sense of belonging, identity and worth are also important in the undoing of imposed dishonour. Patterson describes slaves as denied the sources of true honour: acceptance and inclusion by one's peers.[94] Paul's gathering of all within Christ's household, his insistence that all were to be valued (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.18-34; 12.12-27) and that none were members by virtue of their status or achievements (1 Cor. 1.26-31; 4.7), would surely have gone some way to restoring slaves' personal honour, at least within the community. It is perhaps fair to claim, then, that 1 Cor. 7.20-24 emphasizes the belonging and equality Paul saw in οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος (εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, 1 Cor. 12.13). He assumed that the Corinthians understood the theory of that, even if at times their execution of it left something to be desired,[95] and exploited it to answer their marriage and celibacy questions. The powerful imagery of 1 Cor. 7.20-24 suggests, furthermore, that Paul expected this to be more than theory, for it actually to affect the life experiences of those whose interests the wider culture held with least regard.[96]

Yet there is nothing to suggest that bolstering slaves' perceptions of their own belonging, equality and self-worth was matched by substantial changes to their everyday lives,[97] or that Paul married his intent for transformed experiences of slavery with a shaking-up of the institution itself.[98] Some explain this apparent failure of Pauline rhetoric by appeal to a mistakenly imminent eschatological framework. Thus Hays asserts that the paradoxes

93. Hence Paul's dismay at (some of) the Corinthians' preference for those who exploited them over his servant leadership (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.3; 9.19-22; 2 Cor. 11.20-21; 12.14-19; 13.4).

94. Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, pp. 331-32.

95. See Paul's correction of relations between different Corinthian social groups (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.18-34).

96. Thus Horrell speaks of 'the importance of language and symbol in shaping people's perceptions, valuations and interaction with one another. Paul's language cannot be dismissed as merely an illusory compensation for worldly reality. If taken seriously it requires people to view one another differently' (*Social Ethos*, p. 160).

97. Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, p. 66; cf. Schweitzer, *Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, p. 191.

98. As Harrill states, 'nothing in the passage implies that Paul was considering the question of whether the social institution of slavery ought to be abolished or not' ('Paul and Slavery', p. 5). See also Stowers, 'Paul and Slavery', p. 303; Wire, 'Reading our Heritage', p. 290. Meggitt sees things rather differently, declaring Paul's affirmation of the eschatological baptismal formula as bringing an end to slavery '*functionally* (if not technically)' in the community (*Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 181, original emphasis; also Bauckham, *Bible in Politics*, p. 9). Meggitt does not, however, offer much in the way of evidence for this claim.

of 1 Cor. 7.22 would have dramatically destabilized slavery: 'Paul expected the sociopolitical order of his day to be swept away in the immediate future by God's eschatological judgment'. The non-arrival of such judgment is compensated for, in Hays' view, by the text's longer term success in desta-bilizing the system, preparing 'for the withering away of slavery as a social institution in later Christian civilization'.[99] Others prefer to excuse Paul's failure to encourage the end of slavery by claiming that his concern was with 'the status of slaves rather than slavery in the abstract'.[100] Whether Paul could have thought of slavery in fully abstract terms is question-able, however. It is even more doubtful that he could have done so without emphasizing the impairment of status inherent in being owned by another.[101] Despite this weakness, such arguments do make a pertinent point. Paul was not commenting about slavery per se in 1 Corinthians 7, his interest lay with using it to illustrate appropriate social values and aspirations. Possibly, Paul was incapable of conceiving of a world in which some were not owned by others.[102] He clearly could conceive, however, of one in which slaves were both valued and served a worthy owner, which he seems to assume the

99. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 125. Also Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon', p. 184; Cal-lahan, 'Brother Saul', p. 249. Along similar lines see Schweitzer's comment: 'Wenn Paulus sich den Vorwurf gefallen lassen muß, daß er sich in Christi Geist nicht gegen die Sklaverei aufgelehnt habe und denen, die sie als mit dem Christentum vereinbar ansehen, durch Jahrhunderte hindurch, mit seiner Autorität Vorschub geleistet hat, so ist daran die Theorie des status quo Schuld. Seine Mystik erlaubte ihm nicht, anders zu denken. Und was braucht der, der in Christo Jesu ein Freier ist und gewärtig sein darf, alsbald als solcher in die messianische Herrlichkeit einzugehen, auch darauf bedacht zu sein, für die kurzen Augenblicke, die er noch in der natürlichen Welt zubringt, nicht mehr Sklave zu sein?' (*Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, p. 192).

100. A.A. Rupprecht, 'Slave, Slavery', in G.F. Hawthorne, R.P. Martin and D.G. Reid (eds.), *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1993), pp. 881-83 (882). Compare Martin's assertion that 'the abolition of slavery would not have appeared as a revolutionary move' because it would have affected individual status rather than the 'class' of a social group ('Ancient Slavery', p. 112).

101. See Martin, 'Ancient Slavery', pp. 107-12.

102. Bartchy, Μαλλον Χρησαι, pp. 116, 174; Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, p. 699; Lyall, *Slavery*, p. 35; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 42. This perhaps implies the unlikely situation wherein Paul did not know that the Essenes rejected slavery (e.g. Philo, *Omn. prob. lib.* 79; *Hypoth.* 11.4; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.21). There are, however, suggestions that the Essenes' was rather more an ideal than a realistic position—as they lacked wealth and tended to hold whatever property they did have in common (e.g. Josephus, *Ant.* 18.20; Philo, *Hypoth.* 10.4; 11.10-12; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 5.15.73)—and perhaps even the invention of Jewish apologists (Keener, 'Family and Household', p. 365). If so, and Paul knew about the Essene rejection of slavery, he probably also knew that it was an ideal, and perhaps thought it an untenable one given the overwhelming weight of the cultural situation.

Corinthians will see as making all the difference.[103] Patterson describes it as preposterous 'to criticize Paul for not calling for the abolition of slavery, or for taking the Roman imperial slave system for granted'. He finds clear evidence, instead, that in dealing with slaves at the only level open to him, Paul acted as a 'humane, caring soul'.[104] From a human rights perspective that sounds to be damning Paul with faint praise; a sensitive spirit does not undo an exploitative status quo.[105] It seems even more unfortunate if Meggitt is correct in asserting that Paul was aware of 'the subversive dimension to his teaching…the political implications of his words',[106] and yet did not follow them through. Such a negative assessment may be mitigated somewhat, however, if Paul's enculturated inability to imagine a society without slaves is taken seriously.[107] Given that Paul's subversive teaching was eschatologically framed, that he saw the *parousia*, whether imminent or not, bringing cosmic changes which no human movement could achieve, to affirm with love the humanity and worth of slaves itself manifests a proleptic challenge to a culture which accepted slavery's estimation of people's status and value. It may not have rocked the institution in the short term, but in redefining slave lives, and thus opening the possibility of new experiences, it could be that Paul was doing all that he was capable of.

To talk of Paul working within an eschatological framework is, furthermore, to acknowledge that his thought was shaped theologically as well as culturally. He was no more capable of seeing slavery divorced from divine jurisdiction than he was of seeing society without slaves; perhaps rendering him even less likely to encourage slavery's overthrow. This need not imply that Paul thought God created some as lower than others, but it does require us to recognize that he did not project a simple eradication of human diversity from the oneness of Gal. 3.28. This is perhaps more comprehensible today where ethnicity and gender are in view, but Paul's concern that married and unmarried, slave and free 'stay as they are' (1 Cor. 7.8, 10-11,

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103. Loughlin, 'Sex Slaves', pp. 177-78.

104. Patterson, 'Paul, Slavery and Freedom', p. 269. See also Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, pp. 53, 93.

105. Indeed, citing Aristotle, Euripides and Seneca, Barclay declares Paul's attitude to have been hardly remarkable in his own day: 'There was nothing especially revolutionary in the fact that Paul treated slaves as human beings and even called them "brothers", so long as he did not spell out any practical implications which could conflict with the continuing practice of slavery' ('Paul, Philemon', pp. 184-85).

106. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 188.

107. Patterson describes slavery's abolition as 'intellectually inconceivable, and socially, politically and economically impossible' in Paul's day. Indeed, he argues that it was only with the industrial revolution that the world found a superior alternative to various slave-based or derived economic models ('Paul, Slavery and Freedom', pp. 266-69). See also O'Donovan, *Desire of the Nations*, p. 264.

20, 24, 26-27) demonstrates that he saw social differences in much the same way. Thus Winter describes Paul as thinking that social identity markers resulted from 'the providential oversight of God (7.18, 21, 23)'.[108] Similarly, for Chester,

> The Christian slave is called to be a Christian, not a slave; yet, this calling cannot be fulfilled unless slavery is accepted… The social circumstances in which a person was converted do not constitute their calling, but Paul would think that an overt concern to change them was inconsistent with the call to be in Christ. Thus, Paul…teaches both that a person's circumstances cannot affect their standing before God, and that, however difficult, such circumstances are to be accepted.[109]

While broadly accurate, what such construals of Paul's thought tend either to neglect or to minimize is that there is more to 1 Corinthians 7 than v. 21; Paul does not merely expect Christians to accept their social lot with 'equanimity'.[110] He recognizes that a person's socio-relational standing can be a source of both desirable and undesirable fruit (vv. 9, 14, 16, 32-34), some of which may be avoided by adherence to his 'stay as you were when called' principle, but none of which is of such importance that exceptions to that principle are not sanctioned for the attainment or protection of higher goals: communal purity, unity, reputation and Christ-orientation. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to shape their relationships around those goals, mostly by 'remaining'—being unconcerned by social status—but sometimes by changing. When dealing with slavery, Paul commends a lack of distress, but, as his μᾶλλον χρῆσαι exhortation indicates, that does not equate with a simple, blanket acceptance of circumstances. Nor does he suggest, as others did, that some were 'gifted' to be another's possession as he saw some 'gifted' for celibacy (v. 7).[111] Paul gives no indication that he saw God taking a direct hand in the servitude of slaves, nor that the institution of slavery was a divinely appointed aspect of creation.[112] His concern,

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108. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 239.

109. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth*, pp. 98-99.

110. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth*, p. 105. Gorman sees an even more acquiescent standard behind Paul's words, describing 1 Corinthians 7 as an exercise in 'positive apathy', the product of his eschatological convictions (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 253).

111. See, e.g., Aristotle's observation: 'For he is by nature a slave who is capable of belonging to another (and that is why he does so belong), and who participates in reason so far as to apprehend it but not possess it' (*Politics* 1.2.13). See Braxton, *Tyranny of Resolution*, p. 180; Forrester, *On Human Worth*, p. 45; Keener, 'Family and Household', p. 364; Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 90; Osiek 'Female Slaves', pp. 262-63.

112. A fact which, as Bartchy points out, was exploited by abolitionist Christians in later centuries (*Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 174 n. 571).

rather, is that the Corinthian slaves make the most of their circumstances, and if those included the opportunity of freedom, a changed social standing, that they use that (v. 21).

In summary, Paul may be described as a cultural critic where the values of slavery were concerned, but not so where the actual institution was in view. While from a human rights perspective that appears as a failure, it is probably not one which Paul was capable of avoiding. Paul's attitude toward slaves, his adoption of slave/servant imagery for himself, and the redefinition of slaves' honour and identity he offers in 1 Corinthians 7, were all counter-cultural in as much as they required new, gospel-oriented perspectives on such matters. Those slaves who were in Christ, for Paul, really were new creatures, belonging to a new household and owner, enjoying new status, worth and capacity; each of which stood against slavery's values of domination. But in all this Paul's concern was not with slavery per se so much as with illustrating his stance upon status aspirations within key social relationships. That he chose to respond to the Corinthians' questions about such through the framework of the baptismal liturgy demonstrates the concrete social significance he saw in that tradition. However, that significance was clearly more relational than structural; making a difference to slaves because they too were one in Christ (1 Cor. 7.22-23a), not because their social status was actually changed or made obsolete.

4. *Slaves and Marriage*

The hypothesis that vv. 20-24 are illustrative of Paul's broader argument in 1 Corinthians 7 is supported by the significant continuities between that pericope and its cotext. While not entirely in repetition of his surrounding arguments,[113] there are sufficient points of contact between what Paul says of slaves and the rest of the chapter to provide useful insight into his overall impact upon the Corinthian community.

As with his comments upon women and marriage, there are some conservative elements within these verses (v. 21b; cf. vv. 10, 13), or at least arguments which laid themselves open to conservative exploitation in later centuries (v. 21c; cf. vv. 36-38). Such elements can be found because throughout 1 Corinthians 7 Paul's first concern is with calling and communal integrity, not with the social structures within which they had to be worked out. Paul was not, then, seeking a consistently radical or conservative stance on social matters, he was encouraging the Corinthians to adopt a consistent, gospel-appropriate attitude toward the complexities of social life, especially

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113. There is not, for example, the explicit preference-exception pattern of Paul's marriage comments here. This probably increases the likelihood of these verses being illustrative.

the question of status (vv. 21b, 22; cf. v. 4, 10-11). His instruction contains ambiguities because of this (e.g. v. 21c; cf. vv. 8-9); Paul provides a value-laden basis for decision-making, he does not (for the most part: v. 23; cf. vv. 10-11) predetermine the Corinthians' social decisions. These ambiguities do not render Paul's instruction incoherent because of the broader framework within which he is working, it is simply that what fits with that framework for one person's circumstances may not be the same for another's. Paul makes his preferences clear (vv. 20, 24; cf. vv. 7a, 26-27, 38, 40) but allows considerable flexibility (v. 21; cf. vv. 7bc, 28, 36-37) so long as the Corinthians adhere to his important higher principles (vv. 22-23a; cf. vv. 2, 15c, 35).

As throughout 1 Corinthians 7, Paul's slavery comments emphasize the irrelevance of social status to being in Christ, making a striving after status improvement both unnecessary and inappropriate. The imagery of Christ's household and ownership (vv. 22-23) affirm the rest of Paul's explication of the baptismal tradition. This is, on the one hand, a matter of liberation; oneness in Christ establishes a freedom from the culture's agenda and values which allows believers to remain 'unconcerned' (μή σοι μελέτω) by matters of social standing.[114] But there is also, on the other hand, a radical levelling of status in Christ (v. 22; cf. v. 4). Both these applications of the baptismal tradition are culture-critical. Paul's gospel, founded upon Christ's kenotic sacrifice, cuts against the values and aspirations of Corinthian culture.

There is no explicit call for imitation or eschatological appeal in 1 Cor. 7.20-24, but these verses resonate with what Paul has to say about such matters elsewhere in the chapter, indeed throughout the Corinthian correspondence. As those called by God to peace (1 Cor. 7.15), holiness (1 Cor. 1.2) and fellowship (1 Cor. 1.9-10), whatever their status (1 Cor. 7.20-23; cf. 1 Cor. 1.26-29), the Corinthians were to follow Paul's cruciform example (1 Cor. 11.1), not the values of the passing age (1 Cor. 7.31; cf. 1 Cor. 2.6; 3.18).[115] In concrete terms that meant forgoing aspirations for improved social status and prioritizing communal well-being; emphasizing a purity, unity and Christ-orientation befitting the relationships of those whose owner was rejected by the world (1 Cor. 2.8).

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114. See Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, pp. 151-54; Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 318.
115. Bartchy, *Μαλλον Χρησαι*, p. 182.

Chapter 7

PAUL'S SOCIAL AMBIGUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. *Paul's Social Stance*

Paul's social stance is both a significant and a contentious matter; first because of its capacity to shape the behaviour and values of those who esteem him, second because it elicits such strong and diverse opinions. Paul undoubtedly has to take some responsibility for both of these facts. He may not have known the impact canonization would have on his words, but he certainly wrote to the Corinthians fully expecting them to recognize and submit to his authority, following his pattern as well as his instruction. Paul's communication of at least the latter seems ambiguous,[1] however, opening the door for divergent interpretations. The preceding chapters have argued that this ambiguity is largely the product of our reading perspectives and of Paul's attempt to strike a balance, matching the gospel's radical impulses against the practical imperatives of life in an established cultural situation which, though dynamic, did not always welcome challenge and change. This sort of fence-sitting assessment is not one which many find comfortable, especially those seeking easy answers, pursuing particular agendas, or determined to locate Paul within simplistic modern categories. That such are all *our* concerns, rather than *Paul's* (or even the Corinthians'), and are often distortingly anachronistic needs to be acknowledged, however.

If a Pauline contribution to human rights debates is to be found, then Paul himself must be allowed to speak; the Paul who recognized his location ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, yet claimed behaviour and values which transcended it (2 Cor. 1.12;[2] cf. 1 Cor. 2.2). To see Paul like this is to acknowledge his humanity, and thus his limitations, as well as his capacity for innovative thinking. Paul was no more able to fully transcend his enculturation than we are, and was thus bound to reflect patriarchal (or kyriarchal) values even as

1. Although it was perhaps not always as strongly ambiguous for his first readers as it appears to those who are distanced from him temporally, spatially, culturally and relationally.

2. Adams describes Paul's use of κόσμος here as non-pejorative; Paul recognizes his location in and need to communicate with the world, he does not emphasize 'separation from the world' (*Constructing the World*, p. 234).

we are bound to reflect human rights ideas in a world increasingly shaped by them. That Paul demonstrated an ability to push beyond his culture at times, especially in his redefinition of slave and marital relations, is important; his social stance contradicted the logic of patriarchy's characteristic domination of others[3] because his cruciform gospel propelled him into servanthood and oriented his thinking communally and toward others, not around a preoccupation with self and status.[4] However, even readings which emphasize such culture-critical tendencies ought to concede that the 'new' realm of Paul's redefinitions is still distinctly patriarchal (dominating) in shape; there is no suggestion of an impending end to slavery, and women are expected to suppress whatever equality their oneness in Christ delivers for the sake of communal well-being.[5]

This acquiescence to some aspects of his patriarchal culture means that Paul cannot be taken as simply affirming human rights thought on the capacity of established social structures to oppress (some of) those under their auspices; he was neither social revolutionary nor primarily concerned with balancing social power.[6] That does not mean, however, that Paul was simply a social conservative, one whose position plainly opposes rights thought's estimation of societal status quos. Paul clearly desired the Corinthian community to depart from certain accepted norms, not least where self-less relational attitudes (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.5; 8.1; 13.4-5) were to be modelled upon his own imitation of Christ[7] (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.1; 2 Cor. 13.4),[8] and

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3.   Bartchy, 'Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', p. 68; Bartchy, 'Who Should Be Called Father?'.

4.   As Adams puts it, Paul sought to establish distinctive social standards among the believers, 'embracing alternative forms of sociality, patterns of living and community ideals' (*Constructing the World*, p. 149). See also Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, pp. 232-33.

5.   Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 323.

6.   Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, pp. 325-26; MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, pp. 43-44; Robinson, *Doctrine of Man*, pp. 134-35.

7.   Indeed, Paul's very focus upon Christ, and especially his crucifixion (1 Cor. 2.2), indicates his stance over against the values and order of the day. 'The claim that the cross is a place of divine action cannot but be a critique of the regime which labels its victim a common criminal and subjects him to a slave's death' (Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 294).

8.   Bartchy claims that, 'Appealing to the example of Jesus, Paul especially urged the "strong" to pay special attention to the "weak", gently empowering those who were weaker to become strong themselves, thereby creating a dynamic "horizontal" network of exchanges of spiritual power and material goods rather than affirming a fixed hierarchy of any kind. By undermining the values that reinforced patriarchal domination of most Greco-Roman families, Paul opened the way for persons of all ages and all prior blood-family positions to relate to each other as brothers and sisters' ('Undermining Ancient Patriarchy', p. 77).

sometimes hedged his affirmation of the status quo with distinctly counter-cultural comments (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.3-4, 21; 11.11-12).[9] Indeed, both Paul's rhetoric of reversal and his redefinition of relationships—inspired by the gospel of Christ crucified and reflecting the relational implications of the baptismal liturgy—render blanket assertions of his social conservatism somewhat unlikely.[10] However, alongside Paul's capacity to assume patri-archal structures, that such rhetoric and redefinition were focused upon the Corinthian community's internal relationships,[11] not presented as a means of reconfiguring the whole society,[12] suggests that the conservative appella-tion is not entirely inappropriate for Paul.

   While such conservatism may simply reflect Paul's inability to escape his enculturation, it might also be more; a conscious strategy or the product of his particular values. As argued in Chapter 5, when assessing Paul's social stance and thus his potential contribution to human rights debates, his posi-tion within an explicitly patriarchal culture is perhaps less significant than what Paul did with that enculturation and why. One common explanation of his failure to advocate radical change centres upon Paul's conviction of an imminent parousia, which limited his concern with the social structures of the passing age (1 Cor. 7.31).[13] However, while 1 Corinthians 7 demonstrates

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   9. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 184. Keck adds that in his indifference to food laws and circumcision, as well as in his acceptance of female leadership, Paul legitimated certain levels of social change, indeed created 'a new style of community' (*Paul and His Letters*, p. 97). See also Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, p. 203.

   10. Thus, e.g., Moxnes identifies Paul as undermining patronal expectations of honour and prestige in his conception of communal dynamics: 'Honour and status in the new community is not based on birth, nor on generosity or on fulfilling other functions within the community. That is, honour cannot be achieved, it can only be *ascribed* on the basis of the gift of the Spirit, which is the same to all believers' ('Social Integration', p. 105, original emphasis). Contra Elliott's assertions about communal equality ('Jesus Movement', pp. 188, 193-94), then, Moxnes sees Paul as accepting the differentiation of members by function but not status, even if the former inevitably entails some implication of the latter.

   11. See, e.g., Moxnes, 'What is Family?', pp. 31-32.

   12. Thus Horrell describes a 'continuing tension…between the character of life ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ and the life which continues in the world' (*Social Ethos*, p. 155). Even if, as seems likely, Meggitt is correct in asserting that Paul would have appreciated 'the subversive dimension to his teaching and the political implications of his words' (*Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 188), his capacity to distinguish between those within and without the community (e.g. τίς μερὶς πιστῷ μετὰ ἀπίστου;, 2 Cor. 6.15; cf. 1 Cor. 5.1; 12.2) suggests one whose concern is not with persuading those whose values did not reflect Christ (1 Cor. 1.17-31).

   13. Thus, e.g., Robinson describes Paul as 'so dominated by the consciousness that "the fashion of this world passeth away" (i Cor. vii. 31) that we cannot expect to find in his letters any elaborate discussion of the transient forms of social life' (*Doctrine of Man*, p. 134). See also Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 253. However Keck

that eschatological convictions played a part in Paul's social thinking,[14] unless only those aspects of his thought which are conservative are claimed to derive from his imminent eschatology, with his culture-critical ideas originating from some other, discrete source, then the relationship between Paul's eschatological and social convictions ought not to be described in quite such simplistic terms. Indeed, an examination of 1 Corinthians 7 suggests that, though important, eschatology was only one aspect of the theological framework impinging upon Paul's social thought. His broader convictions about who (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.2, 26-30), what (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.9, 18; 3.9b, 17c; 12.27; 15.1-2) and whose (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.21; 6.19-20; 7.22-23) the community were, and therefore of the cruciform character which their relationships ought to demonstrate (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.1, 13; 11.1; 12.24b-27; 2 Cor. 13.4), was at least as important, and is reflected in his decision to address the Corinthians' questions about marriage through a baptismal framework; being one in Christ and sons of God carrying implications which go beyond the eschatological. Taking Paul's concern with the community's reputation, purity and unity alongside his eschatological convictions provides for a more rounded understanding of why Paul at times affirmed the structures of an inequitable status quo. Each such factor reflects Paul's higher framework, the priority he accorded to the gospel of Christ crucified (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.17-18; 2.2; 9.12) and the community it established (e.g. 1 Cor. 1.2, 18; 12.12-13; 15.1-2; 2 Cor. 11.4), even though he recognized that such priority sometimes came at a personal and/or social cost.

Where Pauline scholars find a concern for communal well-being accompanied by an affirmation of established structures and a confinement of the gospel's radical potential to intra-group attitudes, assertions of love-patriarchalism are sure to follow. As noted in Chapter 4, although the idea of love-patriarchalism fits well with surface readings of certain texts, it is less compatible with those which seek to dig a little deeper,[15] acknowledge a genuine diversity within Paul's social teaching,[16] or assume the baptismal

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(*Paul and his Letters*) argues that, though it did push his thought in a conservative, 'don't change' direction (pp. 94-96), Paul only appears conservative because his later readers do not appreciate the implications of his eschatological horizon; Paul's thought was in fact culture critical, as was demonstrated by later generations. '[B]y depriving the status quo of its divine sanction, of its inherent rightness and permanence, Paul opened the way for Christians to change the world once they cease to rely on God's impending act to do so' (p. 98). See also Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, pp. 326-27.

14. See 1 Cor. 7.29-31 and the eschatological character of the baptismal liturgy around which Paul structures his comments.

15. See, e.g., Duling (*New Testament*) on Gal. 3.28 (p. 250) and 1 Cor. 11.2-16 (p. 251); Elliott on 1 Corinthians 7 (*Liberating Paul*, p. 62).

16. See, e.g., Barclay's assertions about the ambiguities inherent in early Christianity's construal of family ('Family as Bearer', pp. 72, 78). Rather than entrenching

formula as an important starting point for Paul—which his use of it in
1 Corinthians 7 suggests it was—with at least some egalitarian elements
within its focus upon oneness.[17] Love-patriarchalism accounts for the ambi-
guity within Paul's social thought by internalizing culture-critical elements
while allowing conservative ones to have concrete social form.[18] Though
partially valid—Paul is certainly concerned with believers' attitudes toward
one another—this fails to tell the whole story. Paul's culture-critical com-
ments are more than merely attitudinal;[19] while they may not invoke struc-
tural changes per se, they do require socio-relational manifestation (e.g.
1 Cor. 7.4, 21-23), and as such carry broader implications.[20] Perhaps not all
such implications would have been clear to Paul himself, but his assertion

traditional family structures as love-patriarchalism suggests, Barclay concludes that
'the practical effect of the early Christian movement was…to undermine family loy-
alties for a significant proportion of its adherents' (p. 74), a situation which was not
reversed until the development of the *Haustafeln* (p. 76).

   17. Contra Elliott's ('Jesus Movement') claims that 'the issue in both the [baptis-
mal] formula and as Paul understands it concerns the inclusiveness of the believing
community and oneness and unity of persons "in Christ", not their equality' (p. 178),
and 'The statement, "You are all one in Christ", affirms the ethnic and social inclusive-
ness of the Jesus movement and the unity of all who are in Christ but says nothing
about any equality of those included' (p. 180). While Elliott's assertion that Gal. 3.28
contains only oneness language (εἷς), not that of equality (ἴσος), is obviously correct
(although the parallels he draws with ἕν in Jn 10.30 are debatable [p. 180 n. 14]), his
claims that there is no element of a move toward greater equality in the inclusion,
oneness and unity which characterize the community through baptism is unconvinc-
ing. That Elliott finds extreme claims for egalitarianism disturbing is commendable,
but his insistence that equality must be explicit and absolute if it is to be considered
a reality at all (see his assertions about the existence of leaders disproving communal
equality [p. 180] and his image of a slightly pregnant virgin [p. 188]) is to take a doc-
trinaire stance which ejects the baby with the bath water. See also Chapter 5, n. 52.

   18. Theissen, *Social Setting*, p. 109.

   19. Beker follows a similar line to Elliott in seeking to avoid this point, restricting
social change to that which can be demonstrated in economic terms. '[T]he love prin-
ciple that regulates the life of the church does not question or upset basic economic
issues, that is, a redistribution of wealth between rich and poor. The equality of rich
and poor in the church discloses a patriarchalism of love…that is, a philanthropic
attitude toward the poor… However, this equality in Christ does not lead to an eco-
nomic equality. In other words, Paul does not address socioeconomic distinctions but
restricts himself to attitudinal behavior' (*Paul the Apostle*, p. 323). While not without
value, however, this observation is both reductionist and anachronistic; that Paul does
not shake up economic relations does not mean that he has no impact upon social
distinctions, indeed his *emphasis upon* (rather than restriction to) 'attitudinal behav-
ior' implies inevitable social fruit. Against Beker's argument that Paul did not seek
changes to believers' economic status, see Bauckham on 2 Cor. 8.14 (*Bible in Politics*,
p. 9).

   20. Bauckham, *Crisis of Freedom*, p. 14.

of christocentric oneness as pertinent to the Corinthians' present situation suggests that he did understand it as making an immediate and tangible difference of some kind.[21] Paul encouraged the sorts of relations which the baptismal liturgy taught would characterize the coming age,[22] even if he did not seek to overthrow those of the age he knew was passing, and even if he was mistaken about the imminence of its end (1 Cor. 7.29-31).

Because of his emphasis upon love (e.g. 1 Cor. 8.1c; 13.1–14.1; 16.14)[23] and his assumption that certain social structures would continue (as well as his claim to be the community's father [1 Cor. 4.15]), perhaps 'love-patriarchal' is not a wholly inappropriate (if only partial) description of Paul. However, the sort of love-patriarchalism which Theissen advocates gives a deficient account of Paul's social stance,[24] placing too much emphasis upon patriarchy and misconstruing Paul's valuation and conception of love. Patriarchy is fundamentally concerned with self-preservation; those with power seek to perpetuate their positions of dominance.[25] Theissen's understanding acknowledges this, making the preservation of the status quo a good which attracts the socially strong into the community.[26] Paul's

21. 1 Corinthians 7 deals with the framework and values within which believers ought to actually relate, not simply their attitudes toward one another.

22. See Witherington's somewhat over-stated case, *Conflict and Community*, p. 185.

23. The eschatological value of love as characterizing the relations of the coming age is particularly significant (1 Cor. 13.8-10).

24. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 155. Horrell says, 'Paul's criticism of the socially strong, coupled with the absence of any explicit demand for the subordination of weaker social groups, should surely lead us to question the appropriateness of the term love-patriarchalism as a summary of the social ethos of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians. It is not entirely inaccurate but does not convey the character of Paul's instruction. Certainly he does to a degree take "social differences for granted" yet his instruction does have a significant impact on the social interaction of the socially strong; it does not leave untouched the sphere of secular relationships and institutions. Certainly Paul does accept the continued existence of owner-slave relations, and presents a theologically-legitimated hierarchy in which women have a secondary place; but he does not require from the weak "subordination, fidelity and esteem" ' (p. 196).

25. See also Schüssler Fiorenza's broadening of the category into 'kyriarchy', where male dominance is reinscribed in the construction, articulation, experience and interpretation of the world in perpetuating the ascendancy of empowered men over all others, male and female. See Chapter 5, n. 187.

26. Theissen describes 'the upper classes' enjoying a 'fertile field of activity' in a community which included the lower classes without threatening the societal status quo (*Social Setting*, p. 108). Unless he is suggesting that the elite could not play the role of benefactors outside of the believing community, however, the implication is that love-patriarchalism was a means of buying-off the poor; that Christian groups were successful partly because they provided the rich scope for an enjoyable philanthropy without the inequitable situation which facilitated it ever being brought into question.

redefinition of relations within patriarchal structures, however, while assuming the only arrangements he knows, serves to undermine rather than to entrench dominating relationships. There is at very least an inherent trajectory away from patriarchy within Paul's redefinition of its characteristic structures,[27] and probably one which generated relational changes even among the Corinthians.[28] This undermining of the status quo reflects Paul's commitment to the gospel,[29] not to the preservation of social structures

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Contra Theissen's depiction, Chester describes Paul (in contrast to the Corinthians) as advocating a communal integration which did question the status quo: 'Paul, for all he is no social radical … desires [the integration of] … believers, in whose common life he wishes outsiders to find an alternative vision of reality. This means that status patterns and concerns within the church ought to be different from those within society, something which may require the abandonment of old social practices, and structures, and the adoption of new ones' (*Conversion at Corinth*, p. 265).

   27. Thus Forrester describes early Christian communities adopting 'an orientation which was quietly seditious' (*On Human Worth*, p. 105). See also Bauckham's assertion of the broader implications of Paul's concerns with racial, sexual and social equality within the community: 'such principles, *once recognized*, cannot be confined to the Church' (*Bible in Politics*, p. 9, emphasis added). Horrell perhaps perceives more concrete, immediate implications in Paul's rhetoric. '[W]here he is critical of the behaviour of the socially prominent members of the community (6.1-8; 8.1-11.1; 11.17-34) it would not be true to suggest that his instruction has no impact upon normal social interaction, outside the ἐκκλησία' (*Social Ethos*, p. 195).

   28. Thus, e.g., Horrell asserts that Paul's communal body imagery (1 Corinthians 12) invokes a symbolism with real social consequences. It 'contrasts strongly with the dominant social order. Indeed it is to some extent its reverse, as Paul insists that it is precisely those who appear to be weak and without honour who are given most honour (by God!) within this new community… Paul's use of the body analogy certainly does not legitimate the position or status of the socially prominent members of the community; quite the opposite. The language of divine ordering (ὁ θεὸς ἔθετο [1 Cor. 12.18]) is not used to legitimate theologically the dominant *social* hierarchy. Nor would it be fair to regard Paul's language as providing a merely illusory compensation to the socially weak. Rather it represents a demand that an alternative pattern of values and relationships be embodied within the ἐκκλησία. Paul does not demand that members of this new community withdraw from or even abandon their position in the world; to this extent the dominant social order is accepted. But he does not theologically legitimate this social order; indeed the symbolic order by which the life of the Christian community is to be shaped stands in sharp contrast to it' (*Social Ethos*, pp. 181-82, original emphasis, also p. 184).

   29. Martin adds that the gospel also shaped Paul's self-presentation in non-love-patriarchal directions. In 1 Corinthians 9, e.g., Paul 'counters the benevolent patriarchal models of social structure and leadership held by the strong with his own alternative model of the enslaved leader. He uses traditional democratic rhetoric to call into question the benevolent patriarchal maintenance of normal social hierarchy and the appropriateness of normal status indicators' (*Slavery as Salvation*, p. 129, also pp. 134-35, 148).

which love-patriarchalism suggests.[30] Additionally, love, as Paul perceived it through his commitment to the cruciform gospel, was not the benign, ameliorating qualification of patriarchy which Theissen propounds. Love-patriarchalism's depiction of love is as something like an opiate; disarming the objections to their situation of the socially weak such that they become happy in their weakness and thus also attract the strong into the community. This conception of love is rather more 'power-over' or 'power-for' than it is 'power-with', and, more importantly from a Pauline perspective, shows little or no sign of cruciformity. It is a long way from Paul's conception of love as kenotic, involving a self-lowering to the point of suffering for (e.g. 1 Cor. 4.9; 9.12, 19-22; 2 Cor. 1.6; 6.3-12; 11.23-30) and serving (e.g. 1 Cor. 3.5; 9.19; 2 Cor. 4.5; 13.4) others.[31] Paul's love upset social norms in the pursuit of a Christ-like pattern, rather than entrenched them; it did not simply make inequitable relationships acceptable for those suffering under them, it redefined those relationships, irrevocably altering the roles of those involved (1 Cor. 7.4, 22).

Thus Paul was not merely affirming the status quo, reframing patriarchy's oppressive relationships from above through love and below through submission. In bringing patriarchy into contact with the inclusive, cruciform gospel Paul may have allowed certain relations to persist but he also redefined them and thus, in both the long term (structurally) and the short (where particular relationships were concerned), began to push the community beyond patriarchy.[32]

2. *Paul's Contribution to Human Rights Thought*

That Paul's social stance was ambiguous, manifesting conservative and radical potential, either of which could be suppressed for the sake of his higher framework, is indicative of Paul's position outside of human rights thought. His commitment to the gospel of Christ crucified was such that social matters, though inescapable and worth addressing, were relatively insignificant, not something upon which a certain ideal could be deemed sufficiently important to warrant consistent pursuit. This is not always easy to comprehend for those who, not least through human rights' influence, desire Paul to adopt a radical social stance, or at least one which is

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30. Of course, this commitment to the gospel which undermines Paul's social conservatism also undermines his social radicalism. He was concerned with seeing the community proclaim, conform to, and provoke no criticism towards the gospel, and with social action or inaction only as they fitted with this higher goal.

31. Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 216.

32. See Bartchy, 'Who Should Be Called Father?'; Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, pp. 193, 199; Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, p. 181.

consistent—either good for the Corinthians or bad, not both. However, it is precisely in Paul's capacity to stand outside the social priorities and expectations of a rights-focused world that his contribution to debates within rights thought is to be found.

For Paul, matters of equality, of human rights and the judgments upon social structures which they imply are not ends in themselves. 1 Corinthians 7 demonstrates his concern with such issues, but also his willingness to forsake his preferences when more important matters are at stake. The gospel and the community which it creates are what drives Paul, and though he may well have seen certain social changes as reflecting or even characteristic of that gospel, they remain subsidiary goods, not the focus of his attention. Paul's first contribution to human rights assertions about the negative capacity of social structures, then, is neither to agree nor disagree, but to insist that there are more important matters, which themselves have social implications but which cannot be constrained by conventional social categories. This commitment to values which transcend the social affirms that stream of rights thought which considers them best understood when seen within a broader moral framework, not as a final statement about humanity.[33] However, it is also unlikely to satisfy those for whom human rights informed notions of equality provide an unquestionable basis for social organization. Paul's acceptance of inequitable structures reflects his higher gospel framework, but in its toleration of inequality that framework (at least as Paul understands it) may be unsatisfactory for those committed to the ideal of human equality.

The value of Paul's contribution should not, however, be judged simply according to his enculturated affirmation of patriarchal forms, nor only on the basis of a contemporary cultural commitment to equality. To do so is to ignore half of what makes Paul's social stance ambiguous. What Paul does with his enculturation, including his culture critical assertions, demonstrates his capacity for moving beyond the status quo. In that his culture was fundamentally inequitable, this move echoes human rights' emphasis upon social equality, even as it also, in critique of contemporary culture, demands that such equality be relativized by its subordination to the gospel. Both Paul's social ambiguity and his ability to stand over against enculturation derive from his gospel framework,[34] and his understanding of its

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33. Part of the contribution which Paul might be seen as making here, would be to move moral debates into a broader field than is allowed for within a solely rights-based discourse. As Jones indicates, too often disputes which only appeal to rights 'seem to exacerbate rather than ameliorate conflict. We are confronted with opposing sets of dogmatic claims which offer no means of resolution and no prospect of reconciliation' (*Rights*, p. 5).

34. See, e.g., Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 237; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, p. 233.

socio-relational implications provides the remainder of Paul's contribution to human rights debates.

Paul's clearest articulation of such implications comes through his christocentric focus; the insistence that believers' relationships be characterized by cruciform values and reflect their oneness in Christ. The concerns with servanthood and self-sacrifice which this inspires provide a relational model which not only cut against the values of Paul's cultural setting, but in its other-orientation also critiques contemporary culture and even some expressions of human rights. For while Paul's pattern might not be unique in emphasizing service to relational others, its foundation within a broader framework which stresses cruciformity, oneness and interdependence suggests a perspective upon social structures which convictions of equality lacking such an orientation cannot provide; it furnishes safeguards against an egoistic degeneration of ideals into a concern with 'my equality'.[35] Indeed, Paul's counter-cultural affirmation of his own weakness (e.g. 1 Cor. 2.3-5; 4.10; 2 Cor. 11.30; 12.9-10; cf. 1 Cor. 1.27-29) and commitment to a Christ-like pattern of servanthood (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.1; 2 Cor. 13.4) provide an alternative perspective upon personal priority which ought to ensure that attitudes to social structures are never entirely shaped by self-interest.

That Paul located servanthood and self-sacrifice within a particular community, and oriented them around the well-being of that body suggests, furthermore, that his contribution relativizes the claims of individuals and particular facets of the community;[36] suppressing the demands of special interest groups for the sake of the common good.[37] To the extent that this coheres with Communitarian thinking about human rights, Paul can be placed alongside a particular strand of contemporary rights thought and criticism. If so, however, he also has to face accusations regularly levelled at Communitarianism, not least that it depicts 'community' in unrealistic, utopian terms and that the common good is hardly common if it works against the interests of significant facets of a community.[38] Yet Paul's idealized conception of community departs from the Communitarian one in

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35. While such degeneration ought not to be considered an inevitable aspect of human rights, that they can be and are put to egoistic ends cannot be denied. Paul's insistence upon personal cruciformity provides much more robust defences against selfish manipulation, although both systems are inevitably vulnerable to any determined to abuse them.

36. See especially Paul's willingness to ask women to sacrifice new found liberties and equalities.

37. Paul's communal orientation—particularly his conception of all in an interdependent body—thus also stands over against those elements of human rights thought which emphasize forensic claims for justice, setting different groups within society or community at odds with one another in the pursuit of their rights.

38. See Chapter 4.

its eschatological and therefore future orientation,[39] involving a vision of harmony which can be proleptically expressed in the present, albeit at a certain sacrificial cost for all involved. Paul's failure to execute the fullness of this vision may disappoint, but the basic logic of his position provides an orientation for a contribution to human rights debates which can be pursued more consistently; convictions of a certain future oneness and harmony—even equality—require social structures which facilitate rather than suppress unity and egality now. Indeed, to the extent that current structures fail to reflect eschatological values, then this Pauline pattern affirms the rights consensus upon the negative capacity of societal status quos.

Because Paul's contribution flows from his commitment to a gospel which is not widely accepted amongst rights thinkers,[40] nor by many who claim human rights for themselves and others, its perspective upon societal structures will face inevitable questions. This is especially true because Paul's ambiguous position accepts inequalities abhorred by many shaped by human rights, and because his conception of humanity is absolute and universal,[41] intolerant of alternative perspectives. All constructed views of humanity appear absolute from within, however, even relativist ones. And while Paul's social stance certainly has weaknesses from a contemporary perspective, it also has strengths. His particular construction of human reality, for example, asserts a communality and a concern for the socially weak which resonate strongly with rights thought even as it challenges the individualism and prioritization of equality as absolute good evinced by many uses and conceptions of human rights.

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39. As opposed to the harking back to a supposed golden age of community (*gemeinschaft*) which glosses over the inequalities such societies actually involved.

40. Although see, e.g., Cronin, *Rights and Christian Ethics*; Villa-Vicencio, *Theology of Reconstruction*, for various construals of human rights in which the religion and even the gospel of Christ crucified play a major role.

41. Thus Harink talks of 'the scandal of the *universal*' within Paul's thought. 'Crucial to Pauline theology is the claim that the electing God of Israel and the church is the one God of Jews and Gentiles, the one God of creation and all nations, the one God whose singular and unsubstitutable cosmic-apocalyptic deed in Jesus Christ is finally the reconciliation and redemption not only of Israel and the church, but of all creation' (*Paul among the Postliberals*, p. 242, original emphasis).

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

This project has aimed at using Paul and human rights to shed light upon one another. Given that, whatever criticisms and accusations are levelled at them, both remain important influences upon at least some of contemporary humanity, the idea that something fruitful might come from a Paul-rights dialogue seemed worth pursuing. This conviction has been borne out by the exploration of elements of Paul's Corinthian correspondence undertaken here. The likely accusation that Paul and rights thought have nothing in common (because Paul is dismissed as patriarchal oppressor, because no value is found in human rights ideas, or because Paul lived in a 'world without rights'[1]) is weakened by the connections these explorations have been able to make. While still possible to maintain, the accusation of irrelevance requires a denial that Paul has been shown as concerned with matters which impinge upon human rights, and expressed that concern in the sort of emotive, utopian language which mirrors the vocabulary through which those rights have shaped humanity's world. The discussions of social and power factors in the previous chapters undermine any such denial, and suggest that a Paul-human rights dialogue might indeed be fruitful.

As stated from the start, the dialogue constructed here has by necessity been partial and preliminary. That this prevents it from reaching more than tentative conclusions, however, need not render those conclusions insignificant. While a more comprehensive dialogue would provide more robust findings, that even these initial explorations have thrown up some persistent themes suggests that at least some aspects of the contribution Paul and human rights might make to one another can be outlined with confidence. Before such contributions are sketched out, however, there are some observations about the value of a dialogical approach for those encountering biblical texts within loaded, contemporary contexts.

1. *On a Paul–Human Rights Dialogue*

Firm conclusions would, perhaps, have been easier to draw had the concern here been to judge Paul by human rights standards, or vice versa. As has

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1. Jones, *Rights*, p. 1.

been emphasized throughout, however, it is difficult to pursue simple eval-
uative undertakings without making a priori decisions about that which
is assessed, especially when some external criterion is the measure for
assessment. There is always a tendency in such cases to treat one's exter-
nal values as absolute goods,[2] and in so doing to simplify and distort both
the measure and the measured. Indeed, a desire to avoid abridged accounts
of Paul and human rights partially motivated this attempt to construct a
dialogue between them. For a dialogue opens valuable opportunities for
bringing biblical texts and contemporary phenomena together without one
simply predetermining the value of the other. The worth of such dialogue
lies not just in the critiques of one another which the interlocutors provide,
but also in the possibility of exploiting the perspective of one to facilitate
new perceptions of the other. This study cannot claim to have thus produced
novel understandings of either Paul or human rights, but its broad frame-
work perhaps does suggest the possibility of an integrated, complementary
perception of them.

Being as honest as possible about the interlocutors is key to this sort of
dialogue. For Paul (or at least the textual Paul of the Corinthian correspon-
dence), this means allowing him to be himself so far as that is possible,
recognizing that he spoke on his own terms and worked within his own
framework, even as he is read in relation to something that he did not know.
Reading is too easily an imperialistic activity. The text is encountered and
assessed from my perspective, for my ends and according to my encultured
values. But if the Paul of the dialogue is to be anything like the real Paul,
then, so far as is possible, his separateness from the reading agenda and sit-
uation must be respected. Where human rights are concerned, the desire for
honesty in this dialogue has primarily meant a pragmatic acknowledgment
of both their world-shaping reality (whatever the arguments about their phil-
osophical and objective bases) and their slippery, debated character. Thus,
in contrast to most theological interactions with human rights thought, this
study has sought to treat it as more than a monolith to be baptized (e.g.
Moltmann) or demonized (e.g. Lockwood-O'Donovan); rights thought is
a divided and developing realm, open to shaping and new ideas. Although
Paul should probably not be considered an open, developing commodity in
quite the same way, he too has suffered distorting violence at the hands of
those who prefer the convenience of simplified Pauls, good or bad, to more
nuanced readings. An openness to all ideas about Paul, and a willingness
to weigh them against the not always straightforward evidence of Pauline
texts, facilitates a greater honesty in dealing with him than do unbending
commitments to seeing Paul as oppressor, liberator or waverer between the
two.

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2. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender*, pp. 229-30.

Recognizing that neither human rights nor Paul are treated honestly by Procrustean generalization, however, is insufficient to facilitate dialogue. It has also to be assumed that a dialogue between them is worthwhile. This assumption may be unpalatable for those not already open to the worth of either interlocutor, who dismiss human rights for their enculturation (e.g. Hauerwas) or reject religious contributions to contemporary debates (e.g. Schlesinger). Yet while such unpalatability may hamper dialogue, it need not be seen as rendering it irrelevant. A better understanding of something or someone that enjoys a continuing and significant role in shaping the lives of many is surely worthwhile, even if such insights come from sources held in little regard by those seeking understanding. Contemporary perspectives upon the cultural construction of human life make it especially short-sighted simply to dismiss Paul or human rights; their influence over such construction is in no way diminished because questions can be raised over the impact of their provenance or because lop-sided caricatures can be drawn of them.[3]

If biblical interaction with contemporary phenomena is to be considered at all worthwhile, then, such interaction needs to be characterized by openness. Such a stance is pragmatic if nothing else: insight is more likely to flow when there is an acknowledgment of the reality, complexity and influence of whatever is under investigation. In terms of Cronin's typology of power, a dialogical approach is much closer to integrative power (co-operative, other-respecting, 'power with') than are approaches which manipulate through misrepresentation.[4] The openness and honesty of a dialogue allow interlocutors to be treated with 'dignity'; even when critiqued they have the option of 'answering back', putting their own perspectives and rebutting over-simplified images of themselves. This undoubtedly contributes to the tentative nature of conclusions drawn from a dialogue. But for those living within a world shaped by rights, or

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3. Nor, it must be admitted, is the equally distorting valorization of either as uncomplicated goods helpful.

4. The notion that theologians and biblical scholars can indulge in manipulation is clearly an emotive one. While most do not intend to manipulate their readers, the effect of misrepresenting Paul, human rights, or whatever is under investigation is that readers are exposed to arguments which, though seemingly compelling, are founded upon distortion. Readers won over under such circumstances have not been persuaded so much as conned; neither they nor the object over which they are misled have been treated with due respect. Such misrepresentation may, of course, just reflect a writer's limited understanding of their subject, but distorting simplifications are too often presented in a straightforward attempt to heighten the perceived cogency of an argument. In such cases, the writer effectively seeks to dominate readers, to operate as a 'power over', or at least with a paternalistic 'power for' them. On theology as a means of dominating and manipulating others, see Dorr, *Social Justice Agenda*, pp. 154-57.

those who value Paul's as an authoritative voice—and especially those for whom both are true—the flexible, provisional character of such conclusions is surely more useful and convincing than are blanket affirmations or rejections of either.

2. *A Pauline Contribution to Human Rights Debates*

Paul's attitude toward matters of power and equality differs from their valuation by many involved in rights thought's internal debates, not least because of his position outside of those debates and within a particular theological framework. Being an outsider, Paul's contribution was always likely to be somewhat at odds with human rights thought,[5] although it has proven to be less so than some would have believed. One interesting aspect of this contribution, however, is that Paul dealt with 'rights' in a manner which many rights theorists commend—within a broad framework, not as final statements about humanity—but often struggle to achieve because of their preoccupation with (particular construals of) human rights. Living in a 'world without rights', Paul was unconcerned with abstract theories and debates about them. To the extent that he dealt with matters impinging upon human rights issues, then, Paul did so without making rights the focus of his attention, without treating them as ends in themselves, and without considering them in isolation from either a broader convictional matrix or the socio-relational situation he addressed. As such, Paul's contribution is one which finds space for human rights related questions, but which does not allow them to set the agenda for or to define humanity. In neither knowing nor being overtly concerned with them, Paul offers a balanced perspective upon human rights' priority,[6] and so, perhaps surprisingly, provides a constructive model for their application.

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5. Whether in first-century Corinth or the twenty-first-century west, Paul's gospel-orientation 'cannot simply be laid softly upon a preexisting people or a preexisting culture. …the imperial power of God apocalypsed in Jesus Christ calls out…a new people…whose form of life is conformed to Jesus Christ and the Scriptures through the power of the Holy Spirit. This God, this people, this culture, cannot, in the first instance, be anything other than different in a fundamental sense from any other culture of another people and another god. And that difference precedes and sets the norm of discernment for any engagement with other religions or cultures' or ideas (Harink, *Paul among the Postliberals*, p. 239).

6. A situation is difficult to envisage, e.g., wherein Paul would be happy declaring human rights to be the world's first truly universal 'religion', as Weissbrodt does ('Human Rights', p. 1). Indeed, Paul's polemical interaction with 'gospels' other than that of Christ crucified (2 Cor. 11.2-4) suggests that he would have been highly critical of any such claims for rights thought, although he may well have found points of agreement with them. On Paul's treatment of the Roman imperial gospel, see, e.g., the collection of essays in Horsley (ed.), *Paul and Empire*.

However, the theological determination of Paul's perspective upon what it means to be human, concerned only derivatively with matters of equality and relational power, would certainly see him (and his example) censured by many rights thinkers. Yet while that emphasizes his position as outsider, the particular, cruciform character of Paul's theology also ensures significant continuities between him and the values of much rights thought. For, at their best, both Paul and human rights manifest a concern for others which demonstrates a conviction of their worth, a shared other-orientation which allows Paul and rights to be seen as having parallel interests. This is not to underplay the differences between them in any way (see below), but to recognize that sometimes those differences may be more of emphasis than of kind, that the Paul-rights relationship is a complementary as well as a critical one.

This both-and dynamic is not always easy to comprehend. It smacks of inconsistency for many convinced by human rights' emphasis upon equality or whose theological convictions mean that they desire Paul to adopt a uniformly liberating expression of the gospel, and who are therefore disturbed by Paul's language of apostolic power and his treatment of some groups within the Corinthian community. In contrast to such interpretations, however, Paul has been shown here to tread a largely consistent line on social matters, even if that consistency is of a sort which emphasizes his position outside human rights thought and the matrix of cultural values of which it is part. Indeed, it is the very theological shaping so particular to Pauline thought and so alien to most rights thinkers which determines the character and essential coherence of Paul's contribution to a dialogue with human rights.

The consistency of Paul's social stance, in other words, is not founded as readers shaped by human rights might expect, in an equitable treatment of all in the Corinthian community, nor even in a uniform handling of the individual groups with which Paul interacted. Neither really characterizes the Paul revealed by the Corinthian correspondence; he maintains a constant attitude towards only the social elite or 'strong', of whom he demands much, especially in view of cultural expectations. Paul's treatment of all other social groupings is uneven. He undermines social expectations regarding women at some points, but entrenches them at others, for example, and never looks to be pursuing a uniform social agenda, or at least not one that appears so in modern terms. Paul's consistency flows from his higher framework, his commitment to the gospel of Christ crucified as the pattern for all Christian existence, rather than from a drive to value and treat all with absolute even-handedness. The emphasis upon this Christ paradigm in Chapter 3 and the recognition of his inequitable handling of particular groups, particularly women, in Chapters 5 and 6 make it tempting to divide Paul's cruciform conception of power from his treatment of social structures, describing the

former in rather more human rights compatible terms than the latter.⁷ But while valuable insights might be gained by such a move, it represents too simplistic a generalization. The issues are inextricably entwined within Paul's gospel agenda, and both manifest aspects which grate against human rights norms as well as those which affirm them. Paul's redefinition of slave and marital dynamics can hardly be described as contrary to human rights notions of equality, for instance, but he still asks women to accept inequitable social burdens. The moves toward personal power inherent in Paul's paternal, mimetic and apostolic language are similarly ambiguous from a human rights perspective; they manifest all the indications and potential of oppressive, acquisitive leadership except that they are fleshed out by Paul to reflect his cruciform values of servanthood. In both cases, it is Paul's gospel orientation which drives his teaching and practice, and thus also the contribution he makes to a dialogue with human rights. Paul's claim to have known nothing but Christ crucified while with the Corinthians (1 Cor. 2.2) is expanded in his absence as key to the pattern he establishes for them which, in imitation of himself, is to characterize communal relationships. The centrality of Christ, the cross and the kenotic servanthood demonstrated thereon, is crucial to much of what Paul writes in his Corinthian correspondence, but especially to the patterns of appropriate power and relationship which he demands and demonstrates. It gives those patterns a fundamental orientation toward others, and opposes the self-promotion, self-protection and self-aggrandizement favoured by Corinthian culture.

Here, again, Paul's contribution to the dialogue demonstrates both his position outside of rights thought and his compatibility with aspects of it. For Paul's stance is characterized by the prioritization and valuation of relational others in much the same way that human rights are. To the extent that some rights thought and especially some popular rights claims can be critiqued as individualist and egoistic, Paul's other-orientation offers a critical alternative. However, as was argued in Chapter 4, that human rights can be put to atomistic, self-serving ends does not mean that those are their only, or indeed their most likely goals. A Pauline critique of rights, therefore, is not simply an emphasis upon responsibilities toward others, contrasted to human rights' inherent selfishness—that entails a distorting, simplistic view

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7. This temptation is exacerbated, perhaps, because particular weaknesses have been found in the lop-sided accounts of Pauline power recently offered by Castelli, Shaw, Schüssler Fiorenza and Wire. Critiquing their positions inevitably contributes to the positive evaluation of Paul found in Chapter 3. The scholarship surveyed in Chapters 5 and 6, in contrast, is characterized by greater overall balance, with numerous overly positive as well as overly negative assessments of Paul's social impact. The plotting of a middle way between such extremes makes for an easier recognition of Paul's less attractive influence, and hence a feeling that his commendable emphasis on gospel does not always find concrete expression in the social sphere.

of rights thought. Paul's critique is much better conceived of in terms of the sort of other-orientation which he models in his status as outsider. For though his, like human rights' other-orientation, has far-reaching implications for the way in which relationships are constructed, it is not primarily about those relationships nor the value of the others involved in them. Christ is the other upon whom Paul's pattern is founded and toward whom it is focused; hence Paul's capacity to relativize socio-relational changes enjoyed and desired by the Corinthians for the sake of the well-being, reputation and witness of Christ's body. In contrast to human rights, then, Paul was concerned with something which was for him of greater value than human equality and empowerment. He might well have considered those commodities as good, reflecting something fundamental about the gospel and the changes it wrought in human lives. Yet in and of themselves they were not the gospel, and here the exclusive claim of 1 Cor. 2.2 (οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον) can be seen as cutting against any absolute commitment to human rights and even the shaping of contemporary life and institutions around them.

Paul's commitment to the gospel carries further implications for his contribution to human rights debates in the construal of humanity which it implies. For the cruciform consistency of Paul's stance upon rights-related issues reflects his conviction that Christ set the standard for believers, and thus for humanity because Paul considered life 'in Christ' as the ideal, intended condition for all.[8] The notion of cultural construction, so contentious within rights thought, was undoubtedly alien to Paul; although aware that his perspectives were limited (1 Cor. 8.2; 13.12), Paul clearly considered his conceptions of humanity, right relationship and right living as final.[9] Paul's certainty over the truth of his christocentric perspective is unlikely to sway those who consider all views of humanity as constructed and thus relative. But, whether construct or not, it is certainly the case that Paul's convictions about the shape of 'true' humanity were reflected in his thinking about appropriate relationships and power structures, and manifest in his paradigmatic imitation of Christ.[10] As this suggests, and in keeping with the

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8. As argued in Chapter 4, a Pauline anthropology cannot be derived from the Corinthian correspondence alone. However, the letters provide sufficient evidence that Paul saw all within a divine plan that this claim of his universal perspective upon humanity is not unreasonable.

9. Even the exception clauses in 1 Corinthians 7 serve to illustrate that Paul had a definite understanding of what was 'best' (and acceptable, and unacceptable) for people, rather than to open up ethical decision making as a relative space.

10. Thus Wright comments, 'Paul articulated…*a way of being human* which he saw as the true way. In his ethical teaching, in his community development, and above all in his theology and practice of new life through dying and rising with Christ, he zealously articulated, modelled, inculcated, and urged upon his converts a way of life which

occasional nature of the Corinthian correspondence, Paul used his christo-centric template to say rather more about appropriate relational behaviour than about humanity's abstract nature. While he has little to contribute to rights debates about human nature as construct or absolute, then, Paul's christocentric perspective perhaps does require a re-examination of rights' relational notions. For although there are significant continuities between Paul and rights thought, the basic model of relationship, power and equality with which Paul works is quite separate, founded upon a particular model of perfect humanity and communal participation therein, rather than on an underlying conviction of human equality.

3. *A Human Rights Contribution to Reading Paul*

Reading Paul with human rights in mind ensures an awareness of both the continuities and discontinuities between his own and rights thought. That this facilitates an affirmation of Paul's other- and community-orientation is balanced by the questions which it asks of him, especially where his higher framework allows for the maintenance of social inequalities. Indeed, while traditional, 'spiritual' interpretations either skirt or remain unaware of the social impact Paul inevitably had upon the Corinthians, a perspective informed by human rights joins other critical approaches in emphasizing the human cost of Paul's commitment to the gospel and communal well-being and his failure to apply principles of cruciform relationship to societal structures and institutions.

   Despite the critiques of many recent critical readings of Paul made here, then, an emphasis upon human rights affirms the potential of such readings: they confront us with the destructive, oppressive influence which a commitment to theological values, even Paul's, may yield.[11] Indeed, many of them draw upon the unfortunate fruit that doctrinaire commitments to particular conceptions of the Pauline gospel have actually wrought. There is a line to be drawn, however, between raising an awareness of the potential for oppression, illustrated with examples of how Paul has been used negatively, and describing Paul's personal impact in simple, destructive terms. One repeated criticism of such readings is that they fail to contextualize, treating Paul in the anachronistic abstract rather than within the specifics of his cultural location and relationship with the communities to whom he

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he saw as being the genuinely human way of life' (*What Saint Paul*, p. 136, original emphasis).

   11. While the suggestion that ideological fervour can result in social oppression is hardly novel, the notion that even 'good' theological concepts/frameworks can be pursued to such ends is less widely acknowledged, especially among those with an interest in their pursuit or articulation.

wrote.[12] Paul's plea for the Corinthians to imitate him was not a call for them to ignore issues of slavery or patriarchal marriage because they were not as important as the gospel of Christ crucified (although Paul clearly thought they were not). His plea for imitation was, rather, a call for the manifestation of that gospel within relationships circumscribed by a culture which had slavery and patriarchy at its heart. And the pattern he speaks of setting is one characterized by concern for others at cost to himself (e.g. 1 Cor. 9.26-27; 2 Cor. 11.23-28), of a love which serves and edifies others (ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, 1 Cor. 8.1; cf. 1 Cor. 13), and as such was to some extent culture critical. Readings informed by the breadth of human rights thought are perhaps more likely to credit Paul with these goods as well as recognizing his flaws than are interpretations which proceed from narrower contemporary perspectives. For while rights' commitment to human equality will not sanction a glossing over of Paul's negative social impact, their resonance with his other-oriented concerns ought to allow a balancing of Paul's cruciform servanthood against the social costs of his preoccupation with the gospel.

Of course, rights-aware readers may find this pitting of service to the community and others over against the pursuit of social justice somewhat strange. Those who approve human rights' conception of equality as something which denies the givenness of hierarchies and affirms the worth of each individual are likely to seize upon Paul's redefinitions of social roles, but then be mystified by his capacity for accepting inequitable structures. Holding the two together requires a recognition of Paul's position as outsider; accepting that his enculturation limited his pursuit of human rights goods but also acknowledging that our enculturation makes a similar stance almost impossible to sanction. For just as dialogue asserts the importance of allowing Paul to speak on his own terms, it also requires an appropriation of what he says which acknowledges readerly context. In a world shaped by human rights, theological reflections upon values tied up with them—equality and social justice in particular—cannot be restricted, anachronistically, to Paul's conception and ambiguous pursuit of them. One contribution of human rights to the reading of the Corinthian correspondence, then, is an awareness that, whatever goods may be found in Paul's gospel orientation, the cultural location which his communication now inhabits requires that orientation to be developed in ways which depart from as well as parallel Paul's particular expression of it.

A human rights-derived awareness of cultural location, and the constructed aspects of humanity which go along with it, might also contribute to an acceptance that Paul spoke in limited terms about relational inequality, even where his language, like that of human rights, suggests absolute

12. See, e.g., Tomlin, *Power of the* Cross, p. 98.

statements (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.17; 14.33). Such a limitation of his language allows these texts to be held together with Paul's more radical social perspectives (e.g. 1 Cor. 7.3-4; 11.11-12), even while it preserves the ambiguities of his social stance. From a rights perspective, however, even ambiguity on social matters may be unacceptable, especially where careless communication facilitates the maintenance of inequitable norms. Again, the particular theological determination of Paul's stance is what divides him from human rights. To the extent that he thinks in egalitarian terms, Paul does so derivatively, as a product of his understanding of the gospel,[13] and as such is not preoccupied with equality. Human rights, however, are effectively founded upon an assumption of human equality. While significant parallels can be drawn between them, then, human rights' prioritization of equality is always likely to stand in criticism of Paul's commitment to a higher framework which saw him taking certain positions on social matters and communicating those positions in certain ways. Perhaps the largest contribution to reading Paul which human rights make, therefore, is to highlight both the continuities and discontinuities between Paul and twenty-first-century values, provoking readers to fresh assessments of him which carefully acknowledge that though we may have much in common with and much to learn from Paul, he also speaks to us from without. Paul is neither to be followed unquestioningly nor easily located within familiar frameworks of social action by those whose cultural location ensures that he is a stranger, even if a well-respected or influential one.

4. *In Summary*

Speaking of political correctness—the radical linguistic appropriation of human rights' concern with the value of all others—Barton describes the Bible as 'a "problem text" of irredeemable proportions'.[14] As perhaps the most influential of biblical authors, that verdict suggests Paul to be a problematic, unpalatable thinker for those whose perspectives are shaped by human rights. Indeed, alongside his cultural and temporal distance, some of the language and social judgments Paul adopts make it all too easy to dismiss any contribution he might offer to human rights debates. The potential worth of a Paul–rights dialogue, however, is found not in the proximity of Paul's thought to human rights, although they manifest some surprisingly similar perspectives at times. Rather, such worth inheres in their differences from one another; in each interlocutor having something to say which the other is unlikely to say to itself. Goudzewaard suggests that 'nearly all of

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13. R. Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Challenges in Contemporary Theology; Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 284-85.
14. Barton, *Life Together*, p. 50.

our societal problems', and, we might add, the solutions we find for them, 'are a reflection of ourselves—of what we are in our lifestyles, our culture, our outlook, our vision of life'.[15] If both problem and solution derive from within, however, then there is always the possibility that we are reflecting ourselves into a cul-de-sac, only finding those solutions which in fact repeat or exacerbate our problems. It is precisely because Paul's contribution to human rights comes from without, therefore, that it is to be valued. He brings insights stamped by an alien enculturation and defined by his culture-critical gospel to bear upon problems which are essentially familiar to us, offering fresh perspectives upon the knotty issues of rights thought and upon life in a world shaped by human rights. Similarly, precisely because Paul did not know human rights and because they operate from a different basis, reading his letters with rights in mind may allow us fresh perspectives upon him and especially his social stance.

As a slippery, divided and yet world-shaping phenomenon, human rights thought might well benefit from reflecting upon, even assimilating, Paul's gospel emphases upon other- and community-oriented servanthood. If it can do so while recognizing and yet without adopting his less equitable expressions of those values, and without dismissing Paul as dangerously obsolete because his first motivation was not necessarily equality, then the fruit of the dialogue will be that contemporary readers of Paul's Corinthian correspondence have their thinking—about both human rights and Paul— refined. And that, surely, would be rather more useful to them than would some 'victory' of Paul over human rights (which will carry on as world-shaping whether such a victory is claimed or not), or of human rights over Paul (whose influence upon most who read his letters will scarcely diminish whatever cultural values pertain). Both Paul and human rights are and will remain valuable resources for contemporary life; an ongoing dialogue in which an accurate understanding of one furnishes insights into the other offers much more than any simplistic demonization of either.

15. Goudzewaard, *Capitalism and Progress*, p. 247.

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