

Use, Misuse and Neglect of Archaeological Evidence in Some Modern Works on 1 Corinthians (1Cor 7,1 – 5; 8,10; 11,2 – 16; 12,14 – 26)*

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I. Introduction

New Testament scholarship has proceeded throughout much of this century with little concern for and even less contact with the artifacts of the Graeco-Roman world. Writing almost half a century ago A. T. Olmstead observed, "During this generation in which archaeology was revolutionizing the classical world and Old Testament study, New Testament students remained virtually untouched"¹. Surveying the same period of history Robert Grant noted of New Testament scholars that they were guilty of "Neglecting the concrete actuality of the ancient historians, of papyri, inscriptions, coins, and other archaeological remains," while all the time attempting "to advance learning in their field by reading one another's books"².

Many reference works, manuals and books that fall under the rubric of "Archaeology of the Bible" reflect a clear diminution of quality in the chapters that treat the New Testament, especially those books other than the Gospels. These works show almost no acquaintance with germane corpora of archaeological materials. If they are treated at all, the photographs, site plans and bibliographies are often decades out of date. Although not everyone would state it quite so bluntly, the following quotation reflects a widespread sentiment about the perceived irrelevance of Anatolian and Aegean archaeology for New Testament studies, "Just as biblical archaeology inherently implies Palestinian archaeology, so early Christian archaeology refers primarily to [the city of] Rome"³. To date

* This article is presented in honor of Dr. Jack P. Lewis on the occasion of his 70th birthday and for years of dedication to the goals of academic excellence in the training of Christian workers at Harding Graduate School of Religion.

¹ History, Ancient World, and the Bible. Problems of Attitude and Method, JNES 2, 1943, 1 – 34: 21.

² G. F. Snyder, Ante Pacem. Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine, JBL 87, 1968, 42 – 50: 48.

³ G. F. Snyder, Ante Pacem. Archaeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine, Macon, GA. 1985, 3.

there is still no journal which serves as the primary outlet for archaeological research related to the texts and history of the New Testament; it is quite improbable that either *Biblical Archaeologist* or *Biblical Archaeology Review* could fill this lacuna.

However, fresh winds are blowing in academic circles. Topics related to New Testament archaeology have started to appear in various programs of the relevant professional societies. Within the past decade the Society of Biblical Literature has seen the creation of a *Consultation* and later a *Group* which focuses on the *Archaeology of the New Testament World*⁴. There is general cause to rejoice in the fact that for the first time in over two generations significant interest has been kindled in the value of epigraphical, papyrological, numismatic, and architectural materials for the study and interpretation of the New Testament⁵.

Two important problems require special and immediate attention. First, many of today's leading New Testament scholars, both in North America and Europe, were trained at a time and in institutions in which there was virtually no instruction in the archaeological resources available for New Testament studies⁶. Second, because this discipline is still in its infancy, there are important matters of methodology which still need to be discussed and refined. Since archaeological data are not self-interpreting, issues of methodology are essential to the responsible and productive use of these materials in the study and interpretation of the New Testament.

II. *1Corinthians*

This study engages the text of Scripture in a probative way on topics related to 1Cor that have suffered from a neglect or methodological misuse of archaeological materials. Even though Corinth's material remains are not as bleak as they appear to the typical tourist who walks quickly through the remains of the Roman city, the site is not as blest as Ephesus with an abundance of archaeological remains, e.g., epigraphy, coins, statuary, and architecture. Nevertheless, with the appropriate use of

⁴ This has been co-chaired by Drs. H. Hendrix and R. Oster.

⁵ Inscriptional and papyrological materials are being investigated in the series *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (henceforth *NewDocs*) ed. G. H. R. Horsley. Vols. 1, 1981–5, 1989. For numismatic materials see R. Oster, *Numismatic Windows into the Social World of Early Christianity: A Methodological Inquiry*, *JBL* 101, 1982, 195–223.

⁶ The projected multi-volume publication of slides and notes entitled *Archaeological Resources for New Testament Studies*, Philadelphia, edited by Profs. H. Koester and H. Hendrix, with significant contributions by present and former students of Prof. Koester, is an attempt to correct this. Volume 1, 1987, contains slides for the sites of Athens, Corinth, Olympia and Thessalonica.

artifactual evidence from Corinth and elsewhere, one can ameliorate some of the current deficiencies and errors in the interpretation of Paul's letter to this famous church in the Roman colony of Corinth.

This is more a representative rather than a thorough treatment of the use, misuse and neglect of archaeological evidence in the study of 1Cor. The focus is principally on the representative studies and commentaries by C. K. Barrett⁷, Hans Conzelmann⁸, Gordon Fee⁹ and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor¹⁰.

III. Continuity and Culture in Ancient Corinth

As New Testament scholarship slowly moves toward a fuller recognition of the need for an improved understanding of the cultural and historical matrix of nascent Christianity, it will become imperative to manifest a greater awareness of the various cultures in the ancient cities of the Roman Empire. This is nowhere truer than at Corinth. Barrett (pp. 1 f.), Conzelmann (p. 11) and Fee (pp. 1 f.) all begin with an overview of the city's history. They typically state that there were two Corinth, one Greek and one Roman, and then set forth a brief reconstruction of Corinthian history. This historical understanding of two Corinth — often followed by Classicists also — has been significantly challenged recently by archaeological research. Unaware of archaeological evidence, New Testament scholars often follow the exaggerated literary statements of antiquity which claimed that Corinth lay desolate for the century between its destruction by Mummius in 146 B. C. and its resettlement as a Roman colony in 44 B. C. by Julius Caesar. Barrett, for example, expressed the following opinions¹¹,

In 146 B. C. a sharp line is drawn through the history of Corinth ... After 100 years of desolation Corinth was refounded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. New Corinth naturally possessed the topographical characteristics of the old city; otherwise it bore little relation to its predecessor.

The archaeological evidence¹², however, clearly demands that one exercise caution when using the statements of ancient authors such as

⁷ The First Epistle to the Corinthians, HNTC, 1968.

⁸ 1Corinthians. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Hermeneia, 1975.

⁹ The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NIC, 1987.

¹⁰ St. Paul's Corinth. Text and Archaeology, Good News Studies 6, Wilmington, Del. 1983; cf. also The Corinth that Saint Paul Saw, BA 47, 1984, 147–159.

¹¹ 1Corinthians (above n. 7) 1 f.

¹² This issue is thoroughly discussed by J. Wiseman, Corinth and Rome I: 228 B. C. — A. D. 267, ANRW II 7,1, 491–496, and passed on in summary form to New Testament students by Murphy-O'Connor, St. Paul's Corinth (above n. 10) 43 f.; more recently see D. Engels, Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City, Chicago 1990, 93–95.

Antipater of Sidon¹³, Cicero¹⁴, Dio Cassius¹⁵, Livy¹⁶, Plutarch¹⁷, Velleius Paterculus¹⁸, and Strabo¹⁹ that the site was abandoned for a century. The material evidence clearly shows that life did continue at the site of Corinth during the period 146–44 B. C.²⁰

What does this ambiguity in the evidence mean for the debate over whether Paul's Corinth was "Greek" or "Roman?" What this archaeological evidence signifies is that New Testament scholars will need to look more carefully at the material evidence of numismatics, epigraphy and architecture as they postulate about the city's cultural continuity and its heritage. As one surveys the religio-cultural landscape of Paul's Corinth in order to seek antecedents and matrices for the issues that are treated in 1Cor, it would be a grave error to suppose that the inhabitants of colonial Corinth lived in a setting which was mono-cultural and homogeneous at the time of nascent Christianity.

IV. Synagogue Inscription and Jewish Presence

A very serious misuse of Corinthian epigraphy occurs in the case of the fragmentary "Synagogue of the Hebrews" ([Συνα]γωγῆ Ἑβραίων) inscription. Barrett states (p. 2), "The date of this inscription cannot be narrowly determined, but it gives sufficient confirmation of Acts xviii. 4 (he discoursed in the synagogue every Sabbath)." Conzelmann (p. 12) likewise believes that "The presence of Jews is documented" by this inscription, while Fee only makes passing reference (p. 3) to the inscription's existence. Murphy-O'Connor is somewhat noncommittal with the statement, "The lettering is very crude and the date cannot be fixed with any precision"²¹. As will be evident from the material below, it is very unlikely that he is correct when he judges that "this lintel [on which the inscription is preserved] may belong to the oldest synagogue in Corinth"²².

The misuse of this synagogue inscription, discovered in 1898, lies in the fact that its date is relatively late. The earliest Greek epigraphers

¹³ AnthPal IX,151.

¹⁴ AdFam IV,5,4; LegAgr II,87.

¹⁵ XLIII,50,3–5.

¹⁶ Per 52.

¹⁷ VitCaes 57,5.

¹⁸ I,13,1.

¹⁹ Geog VIII,6,23.

²⁰ Lists of buildings and sanctuaries in use during this period are given by Wiseman, *Corinth and Rome I* (above n. 12) 495; see also C. K. Williams, *Corinth 1977*, Forum Southwest, Hesp. 47, 1978, 21–23; R. Lisle, *The Cults of Corinth*, Diss. John Hopkins University Baltimore, Maryland 1955.

²¹ St. Paul's Corinth (above n. 10) 78.

²² *Ibid.*, 79.

and later New Testament scholars mistakenly regarded it as part of the synagogue which was contemporary with Paul's sojourn in Corinth²³. Adolf Deissmann, for example, believed, "It is therefore a possibility seriously to be reckoned with that we have here the inscription to the door of the Corinthian synagogue mentioned in Acts xviii. 4, in which St. Paul first preached"²⁴. More recently interpreters have assigned to it a later date of between A.D. 170 to the early post-Constantinian era. At this point it seems more prudent to go with the judgment of Meritt who stated, "the style of the lettering indicates that the inscription is considerably later than the time of St. Paul"²⁵. Accordingly, it is illegitimate to assume the presence of an architectural structure in the Julio-Claudian period on the basis of such a later dated artifact.

In addition to problems with its late date, this inscription must be used with extreme caution since it was not discovered *in situ*. The Corinthian epigrapher John H. Kent lamented the poor state of Corinthian inscriptions from the period of the Roman Empire²⁶.

The recovery of more than fifteen hundred texts from the Roman Imperial Period, of which more than twelve hundred come from the first two centuries after Christ, would be highly gratifying, if quantity alone were desired. But unfortunately the quality is as disappointing as the quantity is satisfactory, for it is difficult to think of any other ancient site where the inscriptions are so cruelly mutilated and broken. Of the fifteen hundred texts only fourteen have survived intact, less than a hundred can be fully restored with complete confidence, and more than half are tantalizing fragments that contain less than four letters.

Accordingly, even if the date of this inscription were to be dated with certainty to the Julio-Claudian era, it would still be hazardous to infer anything at all about the location of the meeting places of the Jewish community²⁷ or Paul's own personal ministry and work in Corinth²⁸. It

²³ B. Powell, *AJA* 2nd. ser. 7, 1903, 60 f., no. 40.

²⁴ A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, Grand Rapids 1978, 16 n. 7.

²⁵ B.D. Meritt, *Corinth*, Vol. 8.1: *Greek Inscriptions*. 1896–1927, ASCS (Athens), Cambridge, MA. 1931, 79.

²⁶ J. H. Kent, *Corinth*, Vol. 8.3: *The Inscriptions*. 1926–1950, ASCS (Athens), Princeton, N. J. 1966, 17.

²⁷ In a recent publication entitled *The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 C. E.: Its Import for Early Christianity*, *NTS* 36, 1990, 1–24, H. Kee on the one hand acknowledged that the "Synagogue of the Hebrews" inscription was not from "an archaeologically fixed location" but on the other hand wants to argue that "its recovery in a commercial district fits well the evidence that these meetings, Jewish and Christian, were taking place over the first and second century largely in the informal gathering places of homes and shops" (18 n. 29).

²⁸ A. J. Malherbe (*Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, Baton Rouge 1977, 75) makes inferences from the fact that this inscription was "found in the neighborhood of the agora, the area where small shops of artisans were located."

is, therefore, unjustified to suggest the setting of Jewish meetings in Paul's time on the basis of the location of the discovery of a fragmentary inscription found over eighteen centuries later.

It would, however, be equally erroneous to doubt Luke's picture of a Jewish συναγωγή in Roman Corinth just because there is no Julio-Claudian architectural evidence²⁹. One's conclusions are exceedingly vulnerable in this regard if they are based primarily on arguments from the silence of the architectural remains. There are no uncontested architectural remains of synagogues from the Jewish Diaspora that date from the late Republic or Julio-Claudian period of the Empire³⁰. Nevertheless, there is ample literary³¹, papyrological³², and epigraphical³³ evidence to substantiate the existence of numerous Diaspora³⁴ structures prior to and during the Julio-Claudian era. Only by an imperious use of the *argumentum e silentio* of the architectural record can one override the clear evidence from literary, papyrological and epigraphic sources of the Graeco-Roman era.

Accordingly, one's decision about Luke's reliability in Acts 18 and its contribution to understanding 1Cor cannot be decided on the basis of a late epigraphical reference to the "Synagogue of the Hebrews" on the one hand or the lack of Corinthian synagogal architecture from the early imperial period on the other. Rather, one must deal with this issue in light of: (1.) Philo's statement that there were Jewish colonists (ἀποικίαι) sent to, among other places, "Thessaly, Boetia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth and most of the best parts of the Peloponnese"³⁵ and (2.) Luke's narrative (Acts 18) which depicts Paul's work among the Jews in a Corinthian edifice called a συναγωγή.

We conclude, then, that the archaeological materials cannot fully supply the final answers to the questions posed by the historian and exegete concerning the extent and nature of the Jewish presence in Julio-Claudian Corinth. This is a very important conclusion methodologically,

²⁹ Acts 18,1 Μετά ταῦτα χωρισθεὶς ἐκ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ἦλθεν εἰς Κόρινθον ... 18,4 διελέγετο δὲ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον, ἐπειθὲν τε Ἰουδαίους καὶ Ἑλλήνας.

³⁰ A. T. Kraabel, The Diaspora Synagogue: Archaeological and Epigraphical Evidence Since Sukenik, ANRW II 19,1, 477–510.

³¹ Josephus, Ant XIV,258; Philo, LegGai XX,132; XXIII,156; VitMos II,216.

³² CPJ, Vol. 1 no. 134, col. 2–3; no. 138.

³³ B. Lifshitz, Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives, CRB 7, 1967, nos. 92 and 99.

³⁴ An instructive example of the presence of literary, papyrological and epigraphical evidence with the lack of architectural evidence is seen in the extant evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt, see A. Kasher, The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 7, 1985.

³⁵ LegGai XXXVI,281. Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of Classical authors are quoted or adapted from Loeb Classical Library.

since it demonstrates the limitations of archaeological materials in certain instances and underscores the fact that the mere presence or absence of artifacts cannot be the final court of appeal. Rather, artifacts can be used only after answers have been given to questions regarding their date, the specific location of their discovery, and their significance in light of the archaeological record at other appropriate sites³⁶.

V. Eschatological Women and Sacral Celibacy

John Hurd's *The Origin of 1Corinthians*³⁷ shows that it is an awesome task to sketch the numerous interpretations of 1Cor 7, not to mention the various nuances of interpretations. I wish to enter the discussion by mentioning some neglected cultural information.

I have chosen to focus my remarks on the "Eschatological Woman" paradigm for interpreting the opening verses of 1Cor 7. Before New Testament scholarship embraces this "Eschatological Woman" as she has been recently presented³⁸ and modified by later scholars³⁹, I would like to point out some other historical possibilities that deserve a hearing.

In the first place, we need to remind ourselves that just because Paul's solution to some Christian problem is worked out in terms of his own apocalyptic or eschatological thought, it need not necessitate the conclusion that the problem itself was one of eschatology. That is, one cannot assume that simple mirror reading of Paul's letters will lead to a reconstruction of the opposing views. By illustration, the Pauline Corpus contains many examples of the application of Christology to numerous issues such as asceticism (Col), Jew-Gentile relations (Rom), church strife (1Cor) and even fund raising (2Cor 8—9). One can thus see that an author can address a pastoral problem in terms different from those in which the problem was first formulated by Christians in his churches. Thus, even if one grants that Paul's consistent doctrinal response to the issues of 1Cor 7 were eschatological, that by no means predetermines the matrix

³⁶ E. M. Meyers and J. E. Strange (Archaeology, the Rabbis and Early Christianity. The Social and Historical Setting of Palestinian Judaism and Christianity, Nashville 1981, 30) observe, "It is important, however, to underscore again the limits of archaeology, for the archaeologist is really first and foremost a supplier of raw material for historical research."

³⁷ J. Hurd, *The Origin of 1Corinthians*, Macon, GA. 1965.

³⁸ R. Scroggs, Paul and the Eschatological Women, *JAAR* 40, 1972, 283—303. Prof. Scroggs demonstrates little interest in the historical origin of this Christian asceticism and describes it with the phrase "a group of Corinthian extremists" (295 f.).

³⁹ Fee, 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 266—357; W. A. Meeks (The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity, *HR* 13, 1974, 165—208) places emphasis upon the eschatological matrix of many of the gender related issues at Corinth.

and nature of the issue itself as it was expressed by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul (1Cor 7,1).

Regarding the issue of cultural backgrounds, Barrett rejects the possibility of Jewish heritage to the position Paul combats in 1Cor 7 as well as “parallels ... afforded by philosophers”. “The Corinthian attitude,” Barrett continues, “probably arose in a Christian setting”⁴⁰. Gordon Fee seems to concur with Barrett in the idea that the matrix of this aberrant Corinthian perspective should be located within the Christian community and not without. Fee states that the false view that Paul opposed in 1Cor 7 “scarcely fits Judaism, even Hellenistic Judaism”⁴¹. He is unimpressed by the potentially analogous emphasis upon celibacy “for Qumran and the Essenes”⁴². In addition, Fee emphasizes the discontinuity rather than the continuity between the Pauline strategy in 1Cor 7,5 — *μὴ ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους, εἰ μήτι ἂν ἐκ συμφώνου πρὸς καιρὸν, ἵνα σχολάσῃτε τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ᾗτε* — and the advice recorded in Test XII which states, “There is a time for having intercourse with one’s wife, and a time to abstain for the purpose of prayer”⁴³. To quote at length from Prof. Fee’s commentary on this point⁴⁴,

What would seem to lie behind this position is once again their present pneumatic existence, which has Hellenistic dualism at its roots and their own brand of ‘spiritualized eschatology’ as its repeated expression. As those who are ‘spiritual’ they are above the merely earthly existence of others; marriage belongs to this age that is passing away. One wonders further whether we do not have here the first evidence for the so-called ‘eschatological women’ in Corinth, who think of themselves as having already realized the ‘resurrection from the dead’ by being in spirit and thus already as the angels (cf. 11,2—16; 13,1), neither marrying nor giving in marriage (cf. Luke 20,35).

Contrariwise, Conzelmann is convinced that “Paul is thinking of continuous prayer carried out with the persistence of a rabbi’s study of the Torah” as depicted in the Strack-Billerbeck parallels and that “It is simply a case of the influence of Jewish custom”⁴⁵ as evidenced by the parallel text from the TestNaph 8,8.

In light of this disagreement regarding the matrix of the view that Paul challenges in 1Cor 7,1—5, what can the investigation of relevant archaeological data contribute to the study of this problematic issue? It

⁴⁰ 1Corinthians (above n. 7) 155; the philosophic backgrounds are advocated by D. L. Balch, 1Cor 7,32—35 and Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety, and Distraction, JBL 102, 1983, 429—439.

⁴¹ 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 4; cf. 275.

⁴² Ibid., 275 n. 36.

⁴³ TestNaph 8,8.

⁴⁴ 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 269.

⁴⁵ 1Corinthians (above n. 8) 117 and n. 26.

would be fanciful to hope that one would find epigraphical evidence from imperial Corinth that contained the wording and slogans of Paul (or his opponents) found in 1Cor 7,1–5. Nevertheless, it is long overdue to point out that the Corinthian context which engendered the issues Paul had to address in this section is more multifaceted than the traditional studies have revealed with their focus on either Jewish, Stoic-Cynic, imperial family planning⁴⁶, or Gnostic backgrounds.

Turning now to the archaeological evidence, the presence of Egyptian cults at Corinth is especially provocative in this matter of pagan religious celibacy as a background to 1Cor 7,1–5. It has been established from the archaeological data that Egyptian deities were worshipped in Corinth from the time of the Hellenistic period⁴⁷. By the mid-second century A. D. there were at least five temples to Egyptian deities there⁴⁸ and one dating from the first century A. D. at the nearby port of Cenchreae⁴⁹, a city known to New Testament students from Rom 16,1 and Acts 18,18. The second century Latin author Apuleius sets the scene of his own conversion to the goddess Isis in Cenchreae⁵⁰. In addition, he has⁵¹

left a vivid description of Marine Isis' procession to open the sailing season at Cenchreae on March 5th. The description ... gives us the most vivid picture of a religious procession in Corinth and, indeed, in virtually the entire ancient world ... The essential veracity of this description is suggested by Apuleius' accuracy in depicting other aspects of the city. This joyous and colorful procession gives us an indication of the wealth and popularity of the cult of Marine Isis for Corinth, where many depended on the sea for their livelihood. Well might a visitor watch the spectacle and believe he was in a veritable Egyptian colony.

While the Egyptian cults had no monopoly on the concept and practice of sacral celibacy among their devotees, Egyptian cults had a broad based following in the Mediterranean Basin⁵² and sacral celibacy was, as we shall see below, a continual part of the personal piety of these devotees.

⁴⁶ The sources for this phenomenon of Roman jurisprudence are collected and discussed by P. Csillag, *The Augustan Laws on Family Relation*, Budapest 1976.

⁴⁷ J. Leclant, *Aegyptiaca et milieux isiaques. Recherches sur la diffusion du matériel et des idées égyptiennes*, ANRW II 17,3, 1692–1709: 1703 f. for Corinth; D. E. Smith, *The Egyptian Cults at Corinth*, HThR 70, 1977, 201–231.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 225 f.

⁴⁹ R. Scranton, *The Harbor-side Sanctuaries. A. The Southwest End of Roman Harbor — Isis, Kenchreai. Eastern Port of Corinth*, Vol. 1: *Topography and Architecture*, by R. Scranton, J. W. Shaw, and L. Ibrahim, Leiden 1978, 53–78.

⁵⁰ J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, Leiden 1975, 14–20.

⁵¹ Engels, *Roman Corinth* (above n. 12) 104 f.

⁵² Fr. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, EPOR 26/1–3, 1973.

Once the presence of Isis in Julio-Claudian Corinth has been documented by archaeological research, then one can legitimately move into contemporary pagan sources elsewhere to enlarge the picture of the cult's activities and theology. For example, the acceptance of the Egyptian cults and the attendant practices of sacral celibacy by Greeks and Romans is well attested in ancient literature. Since both Roman and non-Roman men and women in the city of Rome itself submitted to this sacred demand of their faith, there is no reason to protest that such practices would be unacceptable in a Roman colony such as Corinth⁵³.

Propertius, a Latin poet who was born during the late Republic and died during the reign of Augustus, complains about the sexual abstinence forced upon him by his lover's devotion to the Egyptian goddess⁵⁴. In another text that gives advice to a courtesan⁵⁵ on how to improve her coquettishness, Propertius suggests that she, among other things, play hard to get.

Break all the laws of chastity! ... Pretend that you have a husband! ... Use every excuse! Love will return with added fire after a night's delay ... Then when he has paid for your embraces and you have promised him the satisfaction of your love, see that you pretend that the days of Isis have come and require abstinence.

The contemporary Roman poet Ovid gives similar advice. "Nor is there harm in pretended love," writes Ovid. "Often deny your sexual favours. On one occasion pretend you have a headache, on another occasion," he continues, "let the goddess Isis give you a pretext for denying your sexual favours"⁵⁶. In a soliloquy concerning the effectiveness of Isis's healing power, the Roman poet Tibullus mentions his mistress Delia, a devotee of Isis. He asks,⁵⁷

What help is there now for me in your Isis, Delia? what help in the bronze that was clashed so often in thy hands? Or what avails it that in thy dutiful observance of her rites, as I remember well, thou didst bathe in clean water and sleep apart in a clean bed?

It is important to keep in mind the amorous proclivities of the above authors and the somewhat lecherous nature of their advice and not to assume that such cynical exploitation was normally involved in practicing

⁵³ Epigraphical evidence is collected in L. Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae*, RVV 28, 1969, nos. 370–465 for the city of Rome. In general consult M. Malaise, *Inventaire préliminaire des documents Égyptiens découverts en Italie*, EPRO 21, 1972, and *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes Égyptiens en Italie*, EPRO 22, 1972.

⁵⁴ Eleg II,33,1–5; II,28A,60–62.

⁵⁵ Eleg IV,5,28–34.

⁵⁶ Am I,8,73.

⁵⁷ I,3,23–26.

the sacral celibacy that was mandated by the goddess Isis⁵⁸. Juvenal, for example, gives a different picture, though one intentionally satirical⁵⁹. Juvenal refers to wives who had to receive forgiveness and pardon from the Egyptian deities because they had participated in sexual intercourse with their husbands. By this conjugal behavior, these wives had violated their sacral celibacy during holy days supposedly devoted to the worship of and sacrifice to the goddess Isis.

Is there evidence, however, that male devotees of the Egyptian cults participated in sexual abstinence? As the following text indicates, Paul's words in 1Cor 7,1–5 explicitly reveal that his advise that one should observe moderation in the practice of sacral celibacy in marriage is addressed to both *male* and *female* Christians⁶⁰.

7,2 διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω
καὶ ἑκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἔχέτω.

7,3 τῇ γυναικὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἀποδιδότω,
ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ τῷ ἀνδρί.

7,4 ἡ γυνὴ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ὁ ἀνὴρ,
ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ἡ γυνή.

S. K. Heyob is of the opinion that⁶¹

Sexual abstinence was imposed not only on women, whose 'pure days' are learned of from the elegiac poets and Juvenal, but also on men, at least on male priests. It would be logical that ordinary male devotees should observe the same rules of

⁵⁸ Some scholars of the current generation have attempted to correct the libellous views, both ancient and modern, which have connected the cult and devotees of Isis with the demi-monde. Efforts to rehabilitate the depiction of Isis's cult can be found in I. Becher, *Der Isiskult in Rom — ein Kult der Halbwelt?* ZÄS 96, 1970, 81–90, and S. K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, EPRO 51, 1975, 111–127.

⁵⁹ Sat VI, 535–537: *Quotiens non abstinet uxor concubitu sacris observandisque diebus magnaue debetur violato poena cadurco*. Ovid, *Pont* I, 1, 51–54 depicts another example of the place of repentance and confession in the Isis cult: *Vidi ego linigerae numen violasse fatentem Isidis Isiacos ante sedere focos*.

⁶⁰ Fee misses this and, because of his penchant for the Eschatological Woman, disregards the active and voluntary participation of Christian men in this sacral celibacy, 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 290; more recently some have posited a reconstruction wherein "Paul did intend his comments on marriage and celibacy to transform and guide the behavior of the whole community — both men and women. However, it will be shown that his exhortations also disclose a special concern for the behavior of female members ..." M. Y. MacDonald, *Women Holy in Body and Spirit: The Social Setting of 1Corinthians 7*, NTS 36, 1990, 161.

⁶¹ *The Cult of Isis* (above n. 58) 119.

chastity as a female devotee, but it is impossible to find any concrete proof for this, except for the very general prescription of chastity mentioned in an inscription from Delos.

While I would disagree about the value of this “inscription from Delos” to support the idea of male involvement in sacral celibacy⁶², there are two ancient literary sources authored by males who indicate their own support of sacral celibacy. The two male devotees of the Egyptian cults are Apuleius and Plutarch, and there is no proof that the theology contained in these texts refers only to the élite of the Isiac clergy. Apuleius mentions that he engaged in religious asceticism, including both dietary and sexual deprivation. Regarding sacral celibacy he writes, “For I had taken care to ascertain how arduous was the service of the faith, how extremely hard were rules of chastity”⁶³. In Plutarch’s discussion of Isis and Osiris and the attainment of divine truth, he teaches that true religious consecration and practice of the cult of the Egyptian deities mandates “a strict regimen and ... abstinence from many kinds of food and from the lusts of the flesh (ἀφοροδισίων ἀποχᾶς).” When this life-style is truly followed, Plutarch states⁶⁴, it

curtails licentiousness and the love of pleasure, and induces a habit of patient submission to the stern and rigorous services in shrines, the end and aim of which is the knowledge of Him who is the First, the Lord of All, the Ideal One. Him does the goddess urge us to seek, since He is near her and with her and in close communion. The name of her shrine also clearly promises knowledge and

⁶² S. K. Heyob refers (erroneously in my judgment) to the following Delian inscription from Sarapieion A as support for male ritual celibacy (ibid.) and introduces it with the words “The rules of chastity in a very general way appear in an inscription from Delos” (p. 122) γυναικα μη προσάγειν μηδὲ ἐν ἐρεοῖς ἀνδρα. This inscription (discovered in 1911) was published in P. Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens à Delos du III^e au I^{er} siècle av. J.-C.*, Paris 1915–1916, 96 no. 16 (= *Inscriptions de Delos*, no. 2180 = M. Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte der Isis- und Sarapis-Religion*, SEpig 12, 1985, 149 no. 63). Since this inscription contains the formula κατὰ πρόσταγμα it is clearly one of many examples of *leges sacrae* in the cult of Sarapis and other Egyptian deities. Unfortunately, however, it contains no words that either denote or connote “rules of celibacy.” Rather, as F. Sokolowski observed, “Le règlement interdit aux femmes de participer aux banquets sacrés et défend aux hommes de porter un vêtement de laine” (*Lois sacrées des cités grecques. Supplément*, Paris 1962, 111 no. 56); in this regard Th. Wächter lists numerous literary references to this Egyptian practice and notes “Ausschließlich wurde die Leinwand für gottesdienstliche Zwecke von den Ägyptern benutzt, die die vom Tier stammende Wolle für unrein hielten” (*Reinheitsvorschriften im griechischen Kult*, RVV 9/1, 1910, 20). Cf. J. G. Griffiths, *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride*. Edited with an Introduction, Translation and Commentary, Cambridge 1970, 270 f.

⁶³ Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros* (above n. 50) 93, 273 ad loc.

⁶⁴ *De Iside et Osiride* 2,351F–352A. Helpful notes are provided by Griffiths, *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride* (above n. 62) 261 f.

comprehension of reality; for it is named Iseion, to indicate that we shall comprehend reality if in a reasonable and devout frame of mind we pass within the portals of her shrines.

In concluding this particular aspect of cultural background to a Corinthian problem as portrayed by Paul in 1Cor 7,1–5, it needs to be emphasized that the Egyptian cults were not the only ones that advocated sacral celibacy on specific occasions for their laity as well as clergy⁶⁵. Moreover, we must remind ourselves that this sacral celibacy was a *pattern* of religious devotion to these devotees⁶⁶ and not just one of their “acts of pagan idolatry.” As such, it is the type of religious behavior that is transferred so easily from one religion to another. Accordingly, it would be extreme to imagine that Paul required or expected his pagan converts to strip themselves of all of their cultural patterns of religious devotion at the waters of initiation. To be sure, some patterns of pagan devotion were unacceptable to Paul who himself has reservations about the lengthy practice of sacral celibacy among the Corinthians (1Cor 7,1–5). Once we are convinced, however, that we should look into the cultural heritage of Paul’s pagan converts in Corinth, the religion of the Egyptian deities is a major candidate for shedding important light upon the notion held by both female and male Corinthian Christians regarding sacral celibacy⁶⁷.

VI. Eating in an Idol’s Temple

It was no co-incidence that the remark of Hans Frh. von Soden that, “The real difficulty of Pauline theology lies in its antinomies, because

⁶⁵ E.g., the Bacchic cult in Livy XXXIX,10,1f.; in general consult E. Fehrle, *Die kultische Keuschheit im Altertum*, RVV 6, 1910; Th. Hopfner, *Art. Askese*, PRE Suppl. 7, 1940, 50–64; W. Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Cambridge/London 1987, 107f., esp. n. 118.

⁶⁶ M. Malaise, *L’expression du sacré dans les cultes isiaques*, in: *L’expression du sacré dans les grandes religions*. Vol. III: Mazdéisme, Cultes isiaques, Religion grecque, Manichéisme, Nouveau Testament, *Vie de l’Homo religiosus*, ed. J. Ries, Ed. Homo Religiosus 3, 1986, 25–107, esp. 79–82. The pattern of pious asceticism is manifested in the periodic sacral abstinence from *oinos* among devotees of the Egyptian deities. This is attested by an inscription which reads Ἀπ’ οἴνου μὴ προσιέναι (= IG. Vol. 11, pt. 4: *Inscriptiones Deli*, no. 1300 = F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques*, Paris 1969, no. 94 = M. Totti, *Ausgewählte Texte* [above n. 62] 150 no. 64) and by Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride* 6 (353B) which mentions that certain devotees of the Egyptian deities “have many periods of holy living when wine is prohibited, and in these they spend their time exclusively in studying, learning, and teaching religious matters”; cf. Griffiths, *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride* (above n. 62) 274f.

⁶⁷ This culturally sensitive approach also carries one beyond the vague observation that this problem of Corinthian asceticism was something akin to later apocryphal stories preserved in “early Syriac Christianity” (W. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians. The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, New Haven 1983, 102).

these create constant uncertainty for the expositor,”⁶⁸ was written in reference to the exegetical difficulties of 1Cor chapters 8–10. The difficulty for exegetes has been the ostensible contradiction between the attitudes of Paul expressed in 1Cor 8 and 10,1–22. In the former text he seems to oppose “dining in an idol’s temple” (8,10 ἐὰν γὰρ τις ἴδῃ σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον) only if a weaker brother is led into sin by emulating this action of the strong, while in the latter text he seems to forbid outright all participation in idolatrous cultic meals (10,14 Διόπερ, ἀγαπητοί μου, φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας, 10,21 οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων, οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων). Many interpreters have resolved the tension by positing different contexts and scenarios for the two distinct texts⁶⁹. Recently, however, Gordon Fee has forcefully promoted the view that Paul is not tolerant of eating at the temple site under any circumstances. He concludes, “Thus the two sections (8,7–13; 10,1–22) indicate that going to the temples is wrong in two ways: it is not acting in love (8,7–13), and it involves fellowship with demons (10,19–22).”⁷⁰ Since Fee’s conclusion can only be held by jettisoning the apparent freedoms granted by Paul in 1Cor 8, it seems best to search for alternative explanations⁷¹.

A possible alternative exists within the archaeological remains of the Corinthian Temple of Asclepius⁷² and the Temple of Demeter and Kore⁷³. Both of these temple areas contained dining halls. The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore contained dozens of dining halls. While not all of these specific dining halls were in use during the early Empire, some of them were in use during the time of Paul’s ministry in Corinth. For example, Building T (10.5 × 11.7 meters and containing several dining halls) at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was “rebuilt and used in Roman

⁶⁸ Sacrament and Ethics in Paul, *The Writings of St. Paul*, ed. W. A. Meeks, New York 1972, 257 (= MThSt 1, 1931, 1–40: 1).

⁶⁹ Various previous solutions are cited by G. Fee, *Εἰδωλόθυτα Once Again: An Interpretation of 1Corinthians 8–10*, Bib. 61, 1980, 172–197.

⁷⁰ 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 378.

⁷¹ B. N. Fisk (Eating Meat Offered to Idols: Corinthian Behavior and Pauline Response in 1Corinthians 8–10 [A response to Gordon Fee], TJ 10 NS, 1989, 49–70) cogently refutes Fee’s views on exegetical and philological grounds.

⁷² Excavation reports and site plans are available in the following: Roebuck, *The Asklepieion* (below n. 90), and Lang, *Cure and Cult* (below n. 97).

⁷³ N. Bookidis and J. E. Fisher, *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on the Akrocorinth*. Preliminary Report IV, Hesp. 41, 1972, 283–331, and *The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on the Akrocorinth*. Preliminary Report V, Hesp. 43, 1974, 267–307; cf. Wiseman, *Corinth and Rome I* (above n. 12) 471 f.

times, and a clear succession of strata was recovered from it ranging from classical to late Roman periods"⁷⁴.

While there was no thought of having "non-religious" meals in pagan temples, it must be remembered that temple dining halls were also used for ceremonies other than the official *cultus* of the deity. Accordingly, it is not difficult to imagine Christian attendance there (1Cor 8,10 ἐὰν γὰρ τις ἴδῃ σὲ τὸν ἔχοντα γινῶσιν ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον, οὐχὶ ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς ὄντος οἰκοδομηθήσεται εἰς τὸ τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα ἐσθίειν;) which would not necessarily involve idolatry. In light of the explicit Pauline encouragement for Christians to associate with pagan idolators (1Cor 5,9f.12), it takes little imagination to realize that believers would have been invited by pagan friends and would have attended numerous social and cultural events (e. g., meals, birthday parties)⁷⁵ associated with temple sites. This would not have necessarily involved the believer in active participation in the *cultus*. While this reconstruction appears implausible to some New Testament scholars, classical scholars familiar with the multiple uses of temple grounds and facilities in the Graeco-Roman world have reached conclusions similar to those I am here suggesting. Prof. Ramsay MacMullen, for example, noted⁷⁶

St. Paul provides the most familiar evidence for our subject in Greece. He speaks to the Christian community in Corinth about its members, or about people who are at least not devotees of some given pagan deity, joining the real devotees in that deity's temple grounds to share in the eating of sacrificial meat. His rather offhand reference to the scene as something quite everyday fits with the frequent epigraphic mention of dining rooms opening off the stoas that ran around sacral areas.

Accordingly, when the modern exegete investigates and compares the counsel of Paul in 1Cor 8 with 10,1–22 he need no longer bemoan that "Paul's argument appears to vacillate" or to wonder "whether Paul can argue both ways in the same breath"⁷⁷. The dining facilities at Corinth provide architectural evidence for a situation in which "monotheistic" believers (1Cor 8,4 οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἰς) could attend and participate in activities indigenous to their

⁷⁴ Bookidis and Fisher, The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, Hesp. 41, 299.

⁷⁵ In general see J. E. Stambaugh, The Functions of Roman Temples, ANRW II 16,1, 554–608. The social uses of dining hall in the Sarapis temples of Egypt is illuminated by extant papyri, L. Koenen, Eine Einladung zur Kline des Sarapis, ZPE 1, 1967, 121–126; J. F. Gilliam, Invitations to the Kline of Sarapis, Collectanea Papyrologica: Texts Published in Honor of H. C. Youtie, Vol. 1, ed. A. E. Hanson, PTA 19, 1976, 315–324; G. H. R. Horsley, Invitation to the Kline of Sarapis, NewDocs 1, 1981, 5–9.

⁷⁶ Paganism in the Roman Empire, New Haven 1981, 37.

⁷⁷ Conzelmann, 1Corinthians (above n. 8) 137.

religio-cultural matrix but which did not require overt participation in the central *cultus* and sacrifices of the religion itself⁷⁸. In the totally different situation of 1Cor 10,1–22 where cultic sacrifice to idols and gods (= demons) is occurring, Paul's policy is totally different, as one would expect from a Christian writer whose letters bristle with contingent policies and attitudes.

VII. Liturgical Head Coverings For Men

Because of its implications for a contemporary interpretation of Paul, 1Cor 11,2–16 has experienced an upsurge in interest among exegetes⁷⁹. The traditional view is that the text is so enigmatic that its original meaning is beyond recovery. This despair has opened the door for a proliferation of theories and suggested backgrounds. Even in this day of widespread caution about the misuse of "parallels" from Strack-Billerbeck and later Gnostic documents and the anachronistic reconstruction of Pauline opponents⁸⁰, one can find scholars who, with old-fashioned innocence like that of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, still try to interpret Paul with texts whose provenance cannot always be determined historically, geographically, chronologically or culturally. For example, Dennis R. MacDonald's work *There is No Male and Female* (see n. 79) goes about solving the enigmas of 1Cor 11,2–16 with insights he finds in Philo, Rabbinic tractates, Tertullian, later Gnostic writings, Joseph and Asenath, and even one Hindu perspective⁸¹. This Pauline text has engendered not only a variety of exegetical interpretations but also incongruous hermeneutical methodologies.

The specific practice mentioned by Paul in 11,4 of men having their heads covered during liturgical activities of prayer and prophecy — πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων κατασχῦναι τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ — has traditionally received little attention. Barrett fails to mention any pagan evidence, literary or archaeological, and leaves the

⁷⁸ If Pauline Christians at Corinth were not allowed the opportunity to live in the mainstream of their culture, then they would have had no choice but to portray themselves as members of sectarian conventicles withdrawn from their culture, a view Paul rejected (1Cor 5,10 ἐπεὶ ὠφείλετε ἄρα ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελεῖν).

⁷⁹ For bibliographic details see D. R. MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female. The Fate of Dominical Sayings in Paul and Gnosticism*, HDR 20, Philadelphia 1987, 72–111.

⁸⁰ See especially the recent work by J. L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents. The Question of Method in 2Corinthians*, JSNT Suppl. Series 40, 1990, 75–86.

⁸¹ *There is No Male and Female* (above n. 79) 72–111. B. J. Brooken, *A Response to Corinthian Veils*, in: *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism*, ed. K. L. King, Philadelphia 1988, 293–296, for additional methodological problems with D. R. MacDonald's work.

impression that whatever backgrounds there are should be discussed in light of the parallels given in Strack-Billerbeck⁸². Conzelmann is clearly more concerned to determine the origin of Paul's own thoughts and whether they reflect Jewish or Greek views than he is with determining the cultural matrix of this male liturgical practice among Paul's converts⁸³.

An interesting methodological approach to the ostensibly enigmatic nature of liturgical head coverings for men has been to label Paul's picture in 1Cor 11,4 as hypothetical! In many ways this interpretive approach functions in ways similar to "gloss" and "interpolation" theories that are employed to circumvent enigmatic texts. Over the decades the interpretive label "hypothetical" has been applied to this text by scholars such as Johannes Weiss ("es ist nur hypothetisch, gewissermaßen als Folie gesagt")⁸⁴ and F. F. Bruce⁸⁵. In his recent commentary Fee, after demonstrating that 11,4 does indeed refer to a head covering and not long hair, concludes⁸⁶,

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

One assumption which strongly influenced scholars to view the whole matter of male heading coverings as hypothetical was the conviction that the real issue of 1Cor 11,2–16 was certainly not men but only disorderly women⁸⁷.

In an effort to get beyond this neglect of the archaeological data, there have been recent publications that bring together numerous examples of literary and archaeological data that show the widespread use of male liturgical head coverings in the city of Rome, in Italy, and in numerous cities in the Roman East⁸⁸. This Roman custom can be documented for several generations before and after the advent of Christianity in Corinth. This custom is clearly portrayed on coins, statues, and architectural monuments from around the Mediterranean Basin. The magnificent Au-

⁸² 1Corinthians (above n. 7) 249 f.

⁸³ 1Corinthians (above n. 8) 184–186.

⁸⁴ Der erste Korintherbrief, KEK 5, 1910, 271.

⁸⁵ 1 and 2Corinthians, London 1971, 104.

⁸⁶ 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 506–508.

⁸⁷ For a critique of this one-sided approach see J. Murphy-O'Connor, Sex and Logic in 1Corinthians 11,2–16, CBQ 42, 1980, 483.

⁸⁸ C. L. Thompson, Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St. Paul. Portraits from Roman Corinth, BA 51, 1988, 99–115; R. Oster, When Men Wore Veils to Worship: the Historical Context of 1Corinthians 11:4, NTS 34, 1988, 481–505; D. W. J. Gill, The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-coverings in 1Corinthians 11,2–16, TynB 41, 1990, 245–260.

gustan monument *Ara Pacis* (Altar of Peace) and the later Column of Trajan depict this pious gesture. There is, in addition, a sculpture of the Emperor Augustus from Julio-Claudian Corinth which employs this pious gesture of the liturgical head covering⁸⁹. This evidence of the material culture patently demonstrates that the practice of men covering their heads in the context of prayer and prophecy was a common pattern of Roman piety and widespread during the late Republic and early Empire. Since Corinth was itself a Roman colony, there should be little doubt that this aspect of Roman religious practice deserves greater attention by commentators than it has received. As this happens, the current debate on Pauline attitudes toward issues of gender and culture will rest on firmer exegetical ground. In addition, it may be hoped that future interpreters will be more cautious to invoke the "it was only hypothetical" principle of interpretation.

VIII. Votive Body Parts From the Temple of Asclepius

The collection of votive body parts excavated decades ago from the Corinthian Temple of Asclepius is on view at the archaeological museum in Corinth. These anatomical artifacts are "life-size representations in terracotta of the members of the human body cured by the god"⁹⁰. Scholars have suggested that these are models of the various members of the human body which the devotee wanted the deity to cure⁹¹. Aelius Aristides, a prominent rhetorician in the Second Sophistic movement of the imperial era, furnishes an informative reference to the god's supernatural healing of diseased body parts and the devotees' response with votive monuments⁹². He notes,

But some, I mean both men and women, even attribute to the providence of the god the existence of the limbs of their body, when their natural limbs had been destroyed; others list other things, some in oral accounts, some in the declarations of their votive offerings.

This deposit of votive body parts from Corinth is one of the largest ever discovered at a Greek healing shrine.

⁸⁹ F. P. Johnson, *Sculpture 1896–1923*. Vol. 9: Corinth, ASCS (Athens), Cambridge, MA. 1931, 70–72. More recently, B. S. Ridgway, *Sculpture from Corinth*, Hesp. 50, 1981, 432f.

⁹⁰ C. A. Roebuck, *The Asklepieion and Lerna*, Vol. 14: Corinth, ASCS (Athens), Princeton, N. J. 1951, 111. In general see W. Eisenhut, *Art. Votum*, PRE Suppl. 14, 1974, 972–973.

⁹¹ F. T. van Straten, *Gifts for the Gods, Faith, Hope and Worship. Aspects of Religious Mentality in the Ancient World*, ed. H. S. Versnel, SGrRomRel 2, 1981, 102–104.

⁹² Oratio XLII,7: *An Address Regarding Asclepius*, in: P. Aelius Aristides, *The Complete Works*, Vol. II: *Orations XVII–LIII*, trans. by Ch. A. Behr, Leiden 1981, 248.

Two misinterpretations of these artifacts have arisen in recent times. Gordon Fee states that "there are a large number of clay votives of human genitals that had been offered to the god for the healing of that part of the body, apparently ravaged by venereal disease"⁹³. This first interpretation is a moralistic argument based on ancient as well as modern character assassination of the city of Corinth⁹⁴. To my knowledge there is no independent scholarly confirmation of this pejorative interpretation that has been given by Prof. Fee regarding the votive genitalia at Corinth⁹⁵. In fact, A. Krug has observed about these votive items, "Leider lassen die im Zeitstil gearbeiteten Votivglieder von Korinth keine pathologischen

⁹³ 1Corinthians (above n. 9) 2.

⁹⁴ New Testament scholars (and preachers) have misjudged and misused Strabo's statement (Geog VIII,6,20) about the 1,000 sacred prostitutes on the Acro-Corinth. Hans Conzelmann (Korinth und die Mädchen der Aphrodite. Zur Religionsgeschichte der Stadt Korinth, NAWG 8, 1967, 247–261) is usually credited with pointing out the frequent misuse of Strabo's statement which, in fact, was made about pre-Roman Corinth. After extensive analysis of the ancient sources Conzelmann concludes, "Die vielgastlichen Mädchen von Korinth waren sicher ergebene Dienerinnen der Aphrodite. Aber ihr Gewerbe war durchaus profan, wie in jeder anderen griechischen Stadt. Das Bordell zur goldenen Aphrodite, das zum Stil der griechischen Religion nicht paßt, hat nie existiert" (260). D. Engels (Roman Corinth [above n. 12] 97–99) also refutes the older interpretations and judgments of New Testament and classical scholars about Corinthian Aphrodite and the supposed moral degradation of Roman Corinth (e. g., S. E. Johnson, Paul in the Wicked City of Corinth, LexTQ 17, 1982, 59–67). The main point of H. D. Saffrey (Aphrodite à Corinthe. Réflexions sur une idée reçue, RB 92, 1985, 359–374) is that "In ancient times, the land of Corinth was not sacred to the divine Aphrodite, and the temple of this goddess had never been a place of sacred prostitution" (359). Contemporary scholarly thought is best reflected in J. Murphy-O'Connor's judgment in this matter that, "It is doubtful that the situation at Corinth was any worse than in other port-cities of the eastern Mediterranean" (St. Paul's Corinth [above n. 10] 56). It is unclear in the following vignette by Dio Chrysostom about Diogenes the Cynic how much of the description reflects Diogenes's fourth century context and how much Dio Chrysostom's Imperial context. In any case he relates that Diogenes went to the local Isthmian Games near Corinth because of the great number of fools who gathered there due to the harbors, the hetaerae and its propitious location in Greece (διὰ τοὺς λιμένας καὶ τὰς ἑταίρας, καὶ ὅτι ἡ πόλις ὥσπερ ἐν τριόδῳ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἔκειτο), Oratio VIII,5; O. Broneer (The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games, BA 25, 1962, 17–19) gathers other texts from Dio Chrysostom about the Isthmian Games.

⁹⁵ I could not find this interpretation in major works such as W. H. D. Rouse, Greek Votive Offerings. An Essay in the History of Greek Religion, Cambridge 1902, esp. 187–239; van Straten, Gifts for the Gods (above n. 91) 105–151, for an appendix containing a thorough catalogue of "Votive offerings representing parts of the human body (the Greek World)"; Roebuck, The Asklepieion (above n. 90); and M. P. Nilsson, Geschichte der griechischen Religion, 2 vols., HAW V/2,1–2, 1967.

Veränderungen erkennen, die über die Leiden ihrer Stifter Auskunft geben könnten”⁹⁶. Rather, in all probability these votive items reflect the suppliants’ petition to the deity to heal their lack of fertility, not their venereal disease. Instead of foisting a gross caricature of Corinthian immorality upon these devotees of Asclepius as Fee has done, one would be better advised to follow the suggestion of M. Lang who states, “The offering of these [i. e., eighteen complete examples of male genitals] may most often have been in gratitude for a return of potency”⁹⁷.

A second misrepresentation of these votive finds is seen in recent attempts to use these to explain the origin of certain facets of Pauline vocabulary and theology in the Corinthian correspondence. A. E. Hill seems to have been one of the first to advocate this. In brief, Hill believes that⁹⁸,

Paul, no doubt, was familiar with the practices of the Asclepium (since it was apparently Paul’s custom to visit the temples of the cities he ministered in if we can trust Acts 17,22–23); and this emphasis on the individual dismembered body parts, in contrast to the whole person, is probably at least a contributory influence on the thought and language of Paul who refers to such dismembered parts in 1Cor 12,14–25.

Since this article appeared so recently, it was not available for discussion by either Barrett or Conzelmann. Fee rightly dismisses such speculative ideas and finds them unconvincing⁹⁹.

Hill has, however, found support for this notion in the writings of Jerome Murphy-O’Connor. Murphy-O’Connor states that in light of the uniqueness of Paul’s body language in 1Cor 12,12–31 (e. g., hands, feet, eyes, genitals)¹⁰⁰,

Sound methodology, therefore, demands that we look first to Corinth for the source of his inspiration (p. 165) ... Against this background Paul would have seen the dismembered limbs displayed in the Asclepion as symbols of everything that Christians should *not* be: ‘dead’, divided, unloving and unloved (p. 167).

⁹⁶ A. Krug, *Heilkunst und Heilkult. Medizin in der Antike*, München 1985, 144.

⁹⁷ M. Lang, *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth. A Guide to the Asklepieion*, ASCS (Athens), Princeton, N. J. 1977, 23.

⁹⁸ *The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternative Source for Paul’s Body Theology?* JBL 99, 1980, 438. D. A. Carson (*Showing the Spirit. A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14*, Grand Rapids 1987, 42) seems to be in sympathy with this possible background to Paul’s language; G. G. Garner (*The Temple of Asclepius at Corinth and Paul’s Teaching*, BurHist 18, 1982, 52–58) is also supportive of Hill’s approach.

⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians (above n. 9) 602 n. 11.

¹⁰⁰ St. Paul’s Corinth (above n. 10) 165–167.

He concludes that the votive body parts in the Asclepius temple served for Paul as a "trigger experience" that "is necessary to explain the transfer of the Body concept to the church" by Paul¹⁰¹.

There are at least two points at which one must move with caution in this matter. The first issue, admittedly a minor one, is the implication that there is something special about the circumstances of the Asclepius Temple at Corinth and the votive body parts. Items such as these could have been seen by Paul at any number of locations in the Graeco-Roman world¹⁰². The second point is the apparent assumption that Paul and his converts would have seen these particular votive artifacts just because these artifacts have been excavated at Corinth. It is very improbable that anyone in Julio-Claudian Corinth, Christian or otherwise, saw these anatomical artifacts that are now on display at the Corinthian Museum. Virtually all of these terracotta body parts were found in closed deposits which can be dated "with some accuracy to the period between the last quarter of the fifth century and the end of the fourth" B.C.¹⁰³. This does not mean that healing activities were not going on at the Corinthian temple of Asclepius in the Julio-Claudian period. Rather, this should serve as a caution against leaping across generations in a single bound by collapsing centuries of time and diversity of cultures¹⁰⁴. A. Krug's comment that "Weder Inschriften wie in Epidauros noch Reliefs wie in Athen vertiefen unsere Kenntnis über den Heilkult von Korinth"¹⁰⁵ should promote caution in speculation about the details of the Asclepius cult in Roman Corinth. The Corinthian excavator Carl Roebuck was of the opinion that¹⁰⁶,

It is probable that cures were not performed on such a large scale as previously, for, in the late Hellenistic and Roman periods, the great healing centers of Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon were fully established and must have drawn many people who hoped that the god would listen more favorably to their prayers in his better-known sanctuaries.

The Corinthian cult of Asclepius *may* or *may not* have been especially famous and effective in healing during the time of nascent Christianity. Devotees of Asclepius in early imperial Corinth *may* or *may not* have regularly used votive items similar to those used centuries earlier. Accord-

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 167.

¹⁰² Cf. the catalogue given by van Straten, *Gifts for the Gods* (above n. 91) 105–151.

¹⁰³ Roebuck, *The Asklepieion* (above n. 90) 113.

¹⁰⁴ The fallacies of this approach have been adequately pointed out by H.C. Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World. A Study in Sociohistorical Method*, New Haven 1983.

¹⁰⁵ *Heilkunst und Heilkult* (above n. 96) 142f.; on p. 144 the author continues "Über die Besonderheiten des korinthischen Heilkultes fehlen uns die Zeugnisse."

¹⁰⁶ Roebuck, *The Asklepieion* (above n. 90) 155.

ingly, Paul and other Christians *may* or *may not* have seen such anatomical votive items. What can be clearly stated is that until these votive body parts are re-dated upwards of half a millennium, one should exercise caution in appealing to them for religious conditions and visual experiences contemporary with the Julio-Claudian era¹⁰⁷.

IX. Conclusion

It has not been the purpose of this overview to draw out the exegetical and hermeneutical implications of these historical and archaeological backgrounds. This survey has, however, highlighted both inappropriate assumptions that have been brought to the text of 1Cor and the neglect of artifactual evidence¹⁰⁸. From one perspective all archaeological and historical work is primarily *prolegomenon* to the final theological task of New Testament scholarship. The investigation of stones and bones cannot usurp the principal endeavor of hearing and interpreting Scripture. However, without the cultural and historical mooring of Scripture, provided in part by archaeological evidence, exegesis and subsequent theology will, as the history of the discipline so clearly demonstrates, accede to the fate of ideology masquerading as exegesis. Successfully steering the middle course between the Scylla of antiquarianism and the Charybdis of theological ideology has been difficult to achieve in the course of New Testament scholarship. I would suggest that texts such as 1Cor offer us the opportunity once more to try our hands at this formidable navigational task.

¹⁰⁷ An equally questionable use of the Temple of Asclepius at Corinth is V. P. Furnish's suggestion that "Paul may be thinking of Asclepius's cures when he speaks of his own 'thorn in the flesh.'" Three times he appeals to the Lord for relief, just as the pagans appeal to Asclepius" (Corinth in Paul's Time — What Can Archaeology Tell Us? BibAR 15, 1988, 26).

¹⁰⁸ There are, of course, some scholars who have been utilizing the Corinthian archaeological materials to improve our understanding of Corinthian Christianity. Recent use of Corinthian epigraphy includes G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth*, Philadelphia 1982, and D. W. J. Gill, *Erastus the Aedile*, TynB 40, 1989, 293–301.

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