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Forming the Mind of Christ: The Protreptic Unity of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1

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Abstract

Forming the Mind of Christ: The Protreptic Unity of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 By Edward P. Dixon

Scholarship on 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is yet to examine how Paul teaches a form of moral reasoning that he wishes the Corinthians to adopt. Scholars regularly anchor explanations of the argumentative coherence of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 in the practical instructions Paul gives the Corinthians. Whether Paul envisions total abstinence or some form of compromise, the locus of previous studies lies in Paul's practical advice.

In response to this shortcoming, the current study reads Paul next to Seneca, a first-century teacher of moral reasoning. Like other ancient moralists, Seneca's goal was to create *phronimoi*—i.e., wise thinkers who could reason well in practical decisions. Seneca ascribed to the common philosophical belief that right action begins with right reason and right disposition. In order to teach his students to think independently, Seneca taught core philosophical principles and how to apply those principles to practical affairs.

Reading Paul alongside Seneca invites modern readers to formulate a new way of viewing Paul's goals and strategy in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The purpose of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is not simply the practical advice Paul gives, but also the disposition and mode of reasoning he teaches. Paul shares Seneca's logic that right action begins with right disposition and right reason. For Paul, however, such a disposition and form of reasoning is not grounded in the virtues, but in *ἀγάπη* and *imitatio Christi*. Throughout 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, Paul teaches the Corinthians a new mindset and mode of reasoning that reflects these foundational themes. He teaches that true freedom does not depend on gifts and rights in the gospel, but on how an individual uses those gifts and rights. True freedom requires a humble, "other"-centered mindset that is oriented towards God and neighbor. The reasoning that accompanies this mindset gives attention to the beliefs, personality, and character traits of others and demonstrates a contextual awareness of the matter at hand. First Corinthians 8:1-11:1, including its doctrines, examples, and precepts, displays the disposition and mode of reasoning that embodies *ἀγάπη* and emulates Christ.

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To Mom, Dad, and Jamin

With Special Thanks to
Carl R. Holladay
Steven J. Kraftchick

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Paul writes 1 Corinthians in order to address practical problems either reported to him by Chloe's people or asked of him by the community. He responds to issues concerning factionalism, sexual conduct, lawsuits, idol meat consumption, wearing head veils, community meals, and spiritual gifts. Throughout his discussion of these varying issues, Paul exhorts the Corinthians with very specific pieces of advice: expel the immoral brother, do not take your court cases before unbelievers, be wronged by wrongdoers, do not have sex with prostitutes, eat idol meat from the market, do not eat idol meat if a weak believer is at a meal, do not eat at pagan sacrificial meals, do not wear head veils, eat your meals at home before coming together for worship, only speak in tongues if an interpreter is present. It is possible that Paul seeks nothing more than for the Corinthians to comply with his advice. In one sense, the letter would be a success if the Corinthians acted in accordance with each of Paul's recommendations. Yet such success would only be temporary. As the church grows and faces new challenges, both within the community and in its relationship with the outside world, new problems would arise. If Paul wants lasting change, a greater purpose must underlie these instructions.

This study proposes that Paul not only seeks compliance with his advice, but also to transform the Corinthians' hearts and minds. In his practical discourse on community life, we propose that Paul teaches a mode of practical reasoning that applies core theological thoughts to everyday practical decisions.

To demonstrate how Paul carries out this instruction, we analyze a portion of the letter that is traditionally viewed as a piece of Paul's practical advice: the idol meat issue in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. We choose 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 for two reasons. First, the section includes

general theological principles and models as well as practical advice for very specific circumstances. These aspects allow us to draw out the rationale of Paul's attempt to teach the new mindset and way of thinking he wishes the community to adopt. Paul combines various pedagogical devices—including theological doctrine and explanation, general exhortation, specific advice, and *exempla*—as a way of illustrating the mode of reasoning he wishes the community to adopt.

Second, 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is fraught with exegetical difficulties. In a letter that has been subjected to intense scrutiny, 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is a centerpiece. One major difficulty concerns the relationship between 8:1-13; 10:1-22; and 10:23-11:1. In 8:1-13 and 10:23-11:1, Paul appears to permit eating idol meat, unless a weak believer attends the meal, while in 10:1-22, Paul prohibits participation in demon sacrifices. Determining how these divergent instructions relate has led to multiple proposals.

A second crux is the role of 1 Cor 9. Does 1 Cor 9 function as an apology, an *exemplum*, or both? Does it relate to the idol meat issue or is it a digression that addresses a monetary conflict between Paul and the community?

In the discussion below, we examine how representatives of various methodological traditions negotiate 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The analysis includes representatives of historical-critical, socio-historical, rhetorical, and philosophical approaches to 1 Corinthians. We point out steps forward and hindrances that their proposals contribute to interpreting 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. Moreover, we demonstrate that most who examine the discourse conclude that Paul recommends a particular mode of conduct for the Corinthians to adopt (i.e., abstention from idol meat).

After presenting major contributions to interpretation of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, we highlight several studies on 1 Corinthians that encourage the examination of 1 Corinthians from the perspective of practical reasoning. Building on these studies, we propose that reading 8:1-11:1 in light of Paul's goal to instruct the Corinthians in a new mindset and mode of reasoning in practical matters most adequately accounts for the relationship between the various sections and the discourse's argumentative logic.

1. History of Research on 1 Cor 8:1-11:1

1.1. Historical-Critical Approach

Though the term "historical-critical" is broad enough to include the world that surrounds the text, we use it here to indicate a trend in studies of 1 Corinthians that focuses primarily on the history of the Corinthian community, the early Christian context, and the text itself. While these approaches do not exclude observations of the wider world, they primarily assess the text and its pre-history in order to account for the letter's present state. In contrast, the other approaches we examine look more significantly to practices and texts outside of the Christian context as a lens through which to read the letter.

1.1.1. Partition Theory: Johannes Weiss

Johannes Weiss's 1910 commentary offers a partition theory to account for the difference in Paul's viewpoints and abrupt changes in subject matters in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1.¹ Weiss observes the apparent contradiction between Paul's permissiveness regarding idol meat in 1 Cor 8 and his prohibition of idolatry in 10:1-22.² Weiss attributes the strict

¹ Johannes Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (9th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), 210-67. Other partition theorists include Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971) and Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth Press, 1962).

² Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 210-13.

prohibition of 1 Cor 10 to an earlier letter reflecting Paul's Jewish concern to keep the community away from the sphere of demons.³ He views their participation in idol meals as dangerously approaching idolatry through their contact with demons in real and personal ways. In the second letter, however, Paul adopts a more mitigated position as a result of the Corinthians' argument from *γνώσις* and the *adiaphora* nature of food. He is forced to acknowledge the correctness of their argument and so works through the issue on the basis of consideration for the weaker brother rather than on the basis of demons.⁴

In addition to Paul's disparate instruction, Weiss also recognizes breaks and abrupt transitions throughout the discourse. He points to an abrupt transition between Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 8 and the defense of his refusal to receive payment in 9:1-18. Weiss proposes that a later editor superficially connected these two sections with the phrase, "am I not free."⁵ Second, he suggests that 9:19-23 connects well with 1 Cor 8, but poorly with 9:1-18 and 9:24-27 because 9:19-23 picks up the practice of abstention that Paul highlights in 1 Cor 8.⁶ These verses communicate Paul's positive statement concerning his missionary strategy within the churches. Paul aligned himself with opposing viewpoints in order to build agreement and respect among diverse groups. His decision for abstention from idol meat reflects this practice. Finally, Weiss finds that 9:24-27 aligns well with 10:1-23.⁷ The image of the self-discipline of the athlete fits better with the hard work of abstention at sacrificial meals rather than giving up a spirit of freedom for the weaker community member's sake.

³ Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 212.

⁴ Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 212-13.

⁵ Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 231-32.

⁶ Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 231-32.

⁷ Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 246.

Due to these disparate instructions and awkward juxtapositions, Weiss assigns 9:24-10:22 to an earlier letter (Letter A), in which Paul instructs the Corinthians to refrain from eating idol meat in pagan temples, and 1 Cor 8:1-13, 9:1-23, and 10:23-11:1 to a second letter (Letter B), in which Paul adopts the more lenient stance.⁸

1.1.2. Unity: John Hurd

In the wake of Weiss and other partition theorists, John C. Hurd undertook a sustained defense of the letter's unity.⁹ Hurd both answers previous attacks on the unity of 8:1-11:1 and offers a positive proposal for the section's coherence. Our review focuses on Hurd's positive proposal.

Hurd looks to the letter's pre-history to explain the logic of 8:1-11:1.¹⁰ He argues that Paul's earliest preaching and practice at Corinth promoted Christian freedom in matters of idol meat. Paul taught that idol meat was permissible and ate it himself. In between his original preaching and the "Previous Letter" (1 Cor 5:9), Paul adopted the Apostolic Decree and so wrote, in conformity with the Decree, for the Corinthians to avoid unbelievers and to avoid idol meat. The impetus for Paul's adoption of the Decree contains a crucial component of Hurd's argument. Paul does not prescribe the regulations of the Decree because he agrees with its contents but "in order to keep peace within the Church." First Corinthians 8:1-11:1 reflects Paul's difficult task of acknowledging the teachings of the Decree while maintaining allegiance to his own view of Christian freedom.¹¹

⁸ Like Weiss, Schmithals locates 9:24-10:22 in an earlier letter and 8:1-9:23 and 10:23-11:1 in a later letter (*Gnosticism*, 92-93, 95). The earlier letter reflects Paul's stricter teaching on idol meat while the latter letter presents more lenient instruction. Héring, on the other hand, contends that 8:1-13 and 10:23-11:1 are part of Letter A and that 9:1-10:22 is a segment of Letter B (*First Corinthians*, xiii-xiv).

⁹ John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965), 261.

¹⁰ Hurd, *Origin*, 240-70.

¹¹ Hurd, *Origin*, 261.

The balancing act appears in Paul's two arguments against eating idol meat on the one hand (8:1-13—not offending the weaker believer and 10:1-22—not committing idolatry) and the two permissions granting freedom to eat on the other (10:25, 27). Hurd contends that 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 are hypothetical circumstances that do not currently confront the community.¹² Arguing that the Corinthians represent a unified front, Hurd finds that the weaker believer scenario in 8:7-13 is a Pauline construction. Moreover, he argues that Paul's "principle of loving concern for others" is nebulous because it may be applied in many ways.¹³ It bears no real impact on the community's behavior because the Corinthians could simply understand it to mean that they should continue to eat idol meat as their way of building up newer Christians. Accordingly, they would have not perceived this principle to encourage real change in their practice.

Likewise, Hurd judges that the prohibition against idolatry in 10:1-22 does not pose serious limitations on the Corinthians' practice. Hurd locates idolatry in the intent of the participant.¹⁴ Idolatry poses no real threat because the Corinthians agree with Paul that ascribing real worship to pagan deities would contradict their relationship with their new Lord. Thus, they did not consider themselves to be worshipping idols by eating idol meat, wherever they ate it.¹⁵

Paul does not address current community practices or reveal his true opinion until 10:25 and 10:27. He permits eating meat from the market (10:25) and at meals hosted at

¹² Hurd, *Origin*, 142-43 and 147-49.

¹³ Hurd, *Origin*, 148.

¹⁴ Cf. Hans von Soden, "Sakrament und Ethik bei Paulus. Zur Frage der literarischen und theologischen Einheitlichkeit von 1 Kor. 8-10," *MTS* 1 (1931): 1-40; repr. in *Urchristentum und Geschichte: gesammelte Aufsätze und Vorträge herausgegeben* (ed. Hans von Campenhausen; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1951), 239-75.

¹⁵ Hurd, *Origin*, 148.

pagan temples (10:27). He only limits their eating by the hypothetical scenario of the presence of a weak believer (10:28).

Hurd's assessment of 1 Cor 9 is difficult to reconcile. On the one hand, Paul is responding to a Corinthian suspicion that he takes some of the collection money for himself.¹⁶ The Corinthians did not offer him support because they witnessed the arrival of gifts from Macedonia, which made them question Paul's financial propriety. On the other hand, Paul is addressing a charge of inconsistency with respect to idol meat.¹⁷ He himself ate idol meat without inquiring about its origin while, at other times, forbade eating it. Even his instruction for them to not eat around the weak (8:13) could open him to a *new* charge of inconsistency, since he ate idol meat while in Corinth.¹⁸ He responds to the inconsistency charge by arguing that a single policy guides his diverse actions (9:19-23).¹⁹ Hurd does not explain how Paul defends himself against the community's suspicions over his financial dealings.

Hurd makes several insufficient observations regarding the logic of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. Relying so heavily on the letter's pre-history forces Hurd to fit Paul's argument into a prefabricated mold rather than allowing the text to speak for itself. This mold causes Hurd to adopt the awkward conclusion that Paul devotes a majority of the idol meat discourse to matters that do not even apply to the community's practice, while only attending to real issues in the final verses of the discourse. Paul does all of this just to give the appearance that he complies with the Jerusalem Decree.

¹⁶ Hurd, *Origin*, 204-05 (cf. 70-71).

¹⁷ Hurd, *Origin*, 126-31.

¹⁸ Hurd, *Origin*, 131.

¹⁹ Hurd, *Origin*, 128.

In addition to the unlikely proposition that Paul spends over ninety percent of the discourse on matters that are hypothetical and largely irrelevant, Hurd's discussion of 1 Cor 9, 10:1-22, and 10:23-11:1 contains several deficiencies.

First, Hurd does not sufficiently explain the role of 1 Cor 9 in Paul's argument. He is right to judge that Paul defends himself against suspicion with respect to money. Yet it is unclear how Hurd conceives of Paul's response as a respectable defense against the Corinthians' suspicions. If the Corinthians themselves chose not to offer Paul support because they questioned his propriety with it, why would they have a problem with Paul's decision *not* to request support from them?

Second, Hurd's discussion of 10:1-22 also contains a deficiency. Hurd attributes to Paul and the Corinthians the view that idolatry is in the subjective conscience of the believer. In contrast to Hurd, we contend that Paul's prohibition against idolatry pertains not to the subjective conscience of the Corinthian worshipper, but to the intent of the meal's pagan hosts. Paul writes 10:1-22 in order to show the Corinthians both *that* it is possible for them to 'fall' and to illustrate the type of meals that constitute idolatry.

Next, while Hurd rightly estimates that 10:23-11:1 is the concluding summary to the discourse, he also indicates that 10:25 and 10:27 are the first time Paul presents his true opinion. Hurd's proposal aligns with the popular notion that these verses are the permissive counterpoise to all that Paul has written. Hurd's observations end in contradiction. It is difficult to justify how the same text can function both as concluding summary of a discourse and introduce completely new teaching. These verses do not begin new thinking or content, but encapsulate all that Paul has argued throughout the discourse.

Finally, Hurd's remarks concerning the love principle reveal a need for interpretations of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 that remains today. Hurd's observation that the ἀγάπη principle is nebulous is absolutely correct. It is not a sufficient guide to conduct. We disagree, however, that the love principle is, therefore, not relevant to the Corinthians' context. A major goal of this project is to show both *that* and *how* Paul defines and demonstrates the ἀγάπη principle throughout 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The chapters teach the love principle and how it applies to the community's practical conduct. This concern is the central focus of 8:1-13, 9:1-27, and 10:23-11:1. Through exhortations, self-examples, and advice, Paul illustrates what it means to adopt a disposition, mindset, and way of thinking characterized by 'love.'

1.2. Historical-Grammatical Approach: Gordon Fee

Gordon Fee's examination of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is largely based on the term εἰδωλόθυτα in relation to Jewish and Gentile meal practices.²⁰ Though OT, rabbinic, NT, and other early Christian texts suggest that εἰδωλόθυτα can refer to marketplace food, Fee suggests that the term only refers to sacrificial food eaten in a pagan temple.²¹ First, he observes that it is doubtful that marketplace food would have challenged a Gentile convert's scruples about his commitments to Christ.²² This would only be a concern for Jewish converts, who clearly are not in view in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The problem is with Gentile converts who see others eating in idol temples (e.g., 8:10). This setting would compel them to return to their former customs. Second, sacrificial meals were a common

²⁰ Gordon D. Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα Once Again: An Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8-10," *Bib* 61 (1980): 172-97. In places where the article alone is cited, see Fee's commentary for parallel statements (Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 357-491).

²¹ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 181-82.

²² Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 182-83.

part of regular seasonal feasts and special celebrations, primarily in pagan settings.²³

While Judaism traditionally involved sacrificial feasting, the practice had largely died away by the first century A.D. These meals, however, remained a central part of pagan traditions. The abundance of opportunities for believers of all types to eat at temples and shrines to pagan gods would have made sacrificial food at idol temples a pressing issue.

Third, Paul closely connects εἰδωλολατρία with πορνεία in 1 Cor 10:7-8.²⁴ Both activities relate to Israel's practices in the presence of pagan idols. This point is significant for Fee's argument because every mention of εἰδωλόθυτα in the NT occurs with πορνεία.²⁵ If both idolatry and sexual immorality were thought to occur in the presence of pagan idols (i.e., in temples), and εἰδωλόθυτα only appears with πορνεία in the NT, then the natural location for these two activities is a temple.

In light of these findings, Fee determines that 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 focus on sacrificial meals at pagan temples and not marketplace food.²⁶ The two sections approach the idol meat issue from two different angles. Together, they lead to the prohibition against participation in these meals (10:14). The first section (8:1-13) argues that the knowledgeable Corinthians cannot eat at temples because doing so may destroy the weaker believers for whom Christ died.²⁷ The second (10:1-22) prohibits eating at temples on two grounds. First, the Corinthians' immunity view of sacraments is mistaken.²⁸ The Eucharist does not remove dangers of idolatry. Second, pagan sacred

²³ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 183-85.

²⁴ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 185-86.

²⁵ Acts 15:29; Rev 2:14, 20; and 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 (Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 186).

²⁶ Fee's general view has gained a following, including Peter D. Gooch, *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8-10 in its Context* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1993) and Gregory W. Dawes, "The Danger of Idolatry: First Corinthians 8:7-13," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 82-98.

²⁷ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 189-91.

²⁸ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 192-93.

meals constitute participation in and fellowship with foreign deities. They are not harmless social activities.²⁹

Fee claims that his position mitigates a significant problem for those who argue that both 8:1-13 and 10:23-11:1 refer to marketplace meat. Fee sees a significant divergence in Paul's instruction in these sections. First Corinthians 8:7-13 is argumentative and combative while 10:23-11:1 simply advises and lacks the urgency of the earlier sections. Moreover, the stumbling block principle receives different treatment in 10:23-11:1 than it does in 8:7-13. In the earlier section, Paul is centrally concerned with the weak consciences of fellow believers while in 10:23-11:1 there is no hint of concern that a weaker believer may fall by imitating another believer's actions.³⁰ A problem arises if both 8:7-13 and 10:23-11:1 address the same instance. Their similarity would mean that Paul undercuts the argument of 8:1-13 in 10:23-11:1.

Thus, Fee reads the final section (10:23-11:1) as an afterthought that ties up "loose threads."³¹ In these concluding verses, Paul switches contexts away from temple meals to marketplace food eaten at home and in a neighbor's home. These contexts are permissible so long as the Corinthians do not violate the edification of another (vv. 23-24, 32-33) or the glory of God (v. 31).³²

In the midst of these arguments, Paul responds to Corinthian accusations that question his ἐξουσία and ἐλευθερία as an apostle.³³ The Corinthians launch accusations against him on two fronts. First, his failure to accept monetary support (9:1-18) makes the Corinthians question his apostleship and authority over them. Second, they charge

²⁹ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 193-94.

³⁰ Fee does not take the 'informant' of 10:28 to be a Christian (*First Epistle*, 483-84).

³¹ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 194 (cf. *First Epistle*, 476).

³² Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 195.

³³ Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυτα," 191.

him with being of two minds regarding marketplace food. He ate in Gentile settings, but declined when interacting with Jews (9:19-22).³⁴

Paul defends himself in order to return authority to his teaching. The argument occurs in two parts. First, he argues for his ἐξουσία and ἐλευθερία as an apostle (9:1-2). Because he is an apostle, he has a right to support (9:4-14). He gives up that right, however, not because he does not possess it, but because doing so is an expression of the gospel (9:12b, 15-18). The refusal both constitutes his freedom as an apostle and exemplifies a “lived out paradigm of the gospel itself.”³⁵

In 9:19-23, he turns away from the financial matter to address the charge of vacillation with respect to idol meat. Paul is not a chameleon. “Apostolic freedom” for Paul means to become a servant of all for the sake of the gospel. One principle of conduct underlies all of Paul’s actions. In matters of indifference, such as idol meat, Paul does what best wins others for the gospel.

Finally, 9:24-27 is a transition in the argument from financial matters and idol meat in general back to the specific issue of cultic meals (8:1-13 and 10:1-22).³⁶ The section both concludes Paul’s defense and exhorts the Corinthians to self-discipline. The primary emphasis of the athletic imagery is the exhortation to exercise self-control in all things, particularly with regard to their insistence on eating idol meat in pagan temples. The section also demonstrates that exercising self-control (i.e., limiting his rights) in order to do “all things for the sake of the gospel” is Paul’s way of exercising freedom in the gospel.³⁷

³⁴ Fee, *First Epistle*, 393.

³⁵ Fee, *First Epistle*, 415; cf. Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυστα,” 192.

³⁶ See the discussion in Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυστα,” 192 and *First Epistle*, 433-441 (esp. 433-35).

³⁷ Fee, *First Epistle*, 435.

Fee accounts for the progression of Paul’s argument in two ways. First, the argument’s movement is dictated by the Corinthians’ letter to Paul. Paul works through their argument from γνῶσις and shows that Christian ethics—i.e., ἀγάπη—moves in a completely different direction than their theological thinking (8:1-13).³⁸ After a digression to defend his apostolic authority (9:1-27), he reveals his own opinion in the latter part of the discourse (10:1-22). Second, he responds in this way because he first seeks to correct their misunderstanding of the gospel (8:1-13) prior to issuing an imperative (10:1-22). The pattern aligns with the logic that the imperative follows the indicative. Paul begins with gospel and its “fruit of love” but concludes with personal conduct—cultic meals are absolutely forbidden because they are incompatible with life in Christ.³⁹

Fee’s solution is a major improvement over Hurd’s proposal. Fee recognizes that eating at sacrificial meals would have been a live and practical problem in the community, not a hypothetical construct. This observation allows the arguments in 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 to carry real, practical weight for the Corinthians’ thinking and conduct.

The greatest problem in Fee’s proposal is the weight he assigns to each of Paul’s arguments against eating sacrificial meat in pagan temples (8:1-13 and 10:1-22). On the one hand, Fee identifies the love principle of 8:1-13 as the central theme of the discourse. He emphasizes that the Corinthians’ “abuse of ἐξουσία based on false γνῶσις and issuing in failure to love is the far greater urgency” than the prohibition against eating idol meat (10:14-22).⁴⁰ Paul wants to address the problem at its “deeper level” (i.e., their

³⁸ Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυτα,” 188-91.

³⁹ Fee, *First Epistle*, 391.

⁴⁰ Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυτα,” 197.

understanding of the gospel).⁴¹ On the other hand, he highlights the prohibition in 10:14-22 as the climax of the entire argument. He promotes 10:14-22 as the main point to which the whole argument of 8:1-10:13 has been leading. The force of 10:14-22 is prohibition. Paul speaks to the Corinthians by “expressly prohibiting temple attendance as totally incompatible with the Christian life (vv. 14-22).”⁴²

Fee cannot have it both ways. Identifying 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 as two arguments that address the same context means that Paul’s primary intent must be *either* the love principle *or* the prohibition. Though it is not his intent, Fee’s logic effectively cancels out the practical force of 8:1-13, thereby rendering the love principle nearly as useless as Hurd’s reading renders it. Prioritizing the imperative in 10:14-22 means that the Corinthians would essentially *never encounter* the context Paul imagines in 8:7-13. If Paul prohibits participation in sacred meals on the grounds of obedience to Christ, then participation in such meals is never actually a ‘right’ (ἐξουσία) the Corinthians can freely give up for the sake of the weaker believer. They can never enact the central principle of ἀγάπη because they are prohibited from such meals on logically prior grounds.

Fee’s reading also encounters difficulty in 9:19-23. He states that *marketplace* food is the subject matter of these verses, yet does not allow these verses to have a substantive connection with 9:1-18 or, more importantly, with 8:1-13. Though even acknowledging that 9:19-23 is “an essential part” of the argument in 9:1-18, Fee

⁴¹ Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυσια,” 197.

⁴² Cf. Fee writes, “With this paragraph Paul finally brings to a conclusion the long argument with the Corinthians that began in 8:1 and that concerned their going to temple feasts” and “In any case, the argument of 8:4-6. . . , the specific expression of the problem in 8:10, and the immediately preceding argument (vv. 1-13) all lead directly to this paragraph” (*First Epistle*, 463). Cf., “He will finally say they may not [eat idol meat]—not under any circumstances. But he begins [the discourse] this way [i.e., with 1 Cor 8] because this is how *they* began” (Fee, *First Epistle*, 390).

disassociates 9:19-23 from 9:1-18 in his discussion of 9:19-23's function in 1 Cor 9.⁴³ Paul switches from the issue of patronage to the issue of vacillation. Fee is forced into this position because if 9:19-23 functioned as it should—i.e., as the *reasoning* that guides Paul's decision not to accept financial support—then this statement concerning Paul's practice on *marketplace* food (9:19-23) becomes attached to the larger discussion of 'rights,' which occupies both 9:1-18 and 8:1-13. Fee, however, cannot allow this to happen because of his claim that 8:1-13 pertains to sacrificial food in pagan temples. Thus, he awkwardly suspends 9:19-23 as a brief statement on marketplace food in between two sustained discussions of sacrificial food at pagan temples (8:1-13 and 9:24-10:22).

1.3. Socio-Historical Approaches: Gerd Theissen and Dale Martin

In the 1970s a concern for the quotidian social world behind the text emerged. In contrast to studies that focus primarily on the history and theology of the Christian movement, socio-historical approaches analyze the social and cultural dimensions of the text as they relate to the everyday life of the original author(s) and readers.⁴⁴ Socio-historical approaches examine these dimensions in order to understand and interpret the written text as a reflection and response to the settings in which the text was produced.⁴⁵

Gerd Theissen's pioneering essays on Pauline Christianity engage and interpret various portions of 1 Corinthians from the social matrix out of which the letter arose.⁴⁶

Among these, Theissen examines the Corinthians' divergent positions concerning idol

⁴³ Fee, *First Epistle*, 423-24.

⁴⁴ John Elliot, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), 7.

⁴⁵ Elliot, *Social-Scientific Criticism*, 8.

⁴⁶ Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen* (ed. and trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

meat through the lens of wealth and social standing.⁴⁷ In contrast to the theological divergences that scholarship before Theissen oft attributed to the cause of division at Corinth, Theissen proposes that the socio-economic distinctions engendered the divide. Wealth and social standing, opposed to theological viewpoints, most centrally affected eating habits.

The wealthier, higher stratum of strong community members reflects those who are more comfortable eating idol meat. These individuals would have encountered many social opportunities to eat consecrated meat—including both private and public “secular” contexts.⁴⁸ Higher stratum individuals may have routinely purchased meat from the market and accepted invitations to meals at the homes of their wealthy friends simply as a part of their daily social life. These private, non-religious encounters with meat would detach their conception of meat from a numinous, religious quality. The lower stratum (i.e., the weak), however, would have only had access to meat through occasional, public cult meals hosted by the city or state.⁴⁹ Because the weak only had interaction with meat at religious celebrations, eating meat and worshipping idols must have been closely connected for them.

Theissen’s observations influence his interpretive decisions about 1 Cor 8-10. First, he judges that both 8:1-13 and 10:1-22 constitute Paul’s sustained attention on official cultic meals, given that such publically sponsored meals would have been the only real opportunity for the weak to eat idol meat and, thus, the only occasion for conflict to occur.

⁴⁷ Gerd Theissen, “The Strong and the Weak in Corinth: A Sociological Analysis of a Theological Quarrel,” in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen* (ed. and trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 121-43.

⁴⁸ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 129-31.

⁴⁹ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 125-29.

Second, Theissen reads Paul's answer to the dilemma as a compromise.⁵⁰ Paul agrees in principle with the strong that it is acceptable to eat at temple meals with the appropriate mental reservations (e.g., 8:4-6). He only restricts such behavior when the strong are in mixed company with the weak (e.g., 8:9-13). In 10:1-22, he argues more forcefully by prohibiting those very cultic meals in which the weak have opportunity to eat meat.⁵¹ The final section (10:23-11:1) deals with meals that are attended exclusively by high stratum Christians and, thus, not a context in which concern for the weak applies.⁵²

Third, Theissen identifies Paul's ethic for the strong as "love-patriarchalism."⁵³ This ethic allows social inequalities to persist but infuses the high stratum of society with concern and respect for others. The strong are able to maintain their practices and standing in society so long as they exhibit concern and respect for the weak believers.

Dale Martin builds on Theissen's assessment by attributing an ideological voice to the weak in addition to the strong.⁵⁴ While Theissen refers to a silent group of weak Corinthians who are merely fearful of demonic infestation of meat, Martin develops and explains an ideology that coordinates with this fear. Martin aligns the ideology of the high status in Corinth with the moral-philosophical contexts of Greco-Roman society and that of the weak with views reflected in magical papyri.⁵⁵ The strong believed that γυνῶσις could be learned and taught. They believed that numinous spirits did not exist and, thus, could not infest food. They simply thought they could inform the weak of this

⁵⁰ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 121-23 and 138-39.

⁵¹ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 139.

⁵² Like Fee, Theissen avoids the problem of a weak fellow-believer appearing in 10:28 by identifying the informant as a non-Christian Gentile (*Social Setting*, 131).

⁵³ Theissen, *Social Setting*, 139.

⁵⁴ Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 179-89.

⁵⁵ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 184-89.

reality and the problem would be solved. The weak, however, thought of γνῶσις as a commodity that one possesses, or not. Teaching ‘knowledge,’ therefore, is impossible. Moreover, in contrast to the strong, they had a vibrant view of the numinous. They feared that ingesting sacrificial food would also mean ingesting a daimon into the body, thereby polluting it.

Martin accounts for the differences between 8:1-13/10:23-33 and 10:14-22 on the basis of two different groups being addressed. Paul addresses the strong in the largely permissive sections of 8:1-13/10:23-33 and the weak in the more forbidding section, 10:14-22.⁵⁶ This reading presupposes the logic that a person with γνῶσις (i.e., the strong) may safely eat in a cultic setting while it is dangerous for a person without γνῶσις (i.e., the weak) to do the same. Thus, Paul permits the strong to eat idol meat in cultic settings in 8:1-13 while forbidding the weak from eating in this same setting in 10:14-22.

The question for Martin becomes, why does Paul not simply instruct the strong to educate the weak and so instill γνῶσις in them? Martin appeals to two aspects of the social and intellectual landscape to explain why Paul does not respond in this way. First, Paul and the strong differed on the means of how an individual acquires γνῶσις. While the strong held the moral-philosophical view that it was possible to educate the weak, Paul viewed γνῶσις through the lens reflected in the magical papyri.⁵⁷ For Paul, γνῶσις is not ‘knowledge’ that can be taught or learned, but a prophylactic talisman that protects its possessor from external dangers. The magical papyri demonstrate the belief that γνῶσις was bestowed by a god or daimon. Thus, the acquisition of knowledge comes about through an individual’s possession of a knowledge-granting daimon and not

⁵⁶ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 182-83.

⁵⁷ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 184-89.

through education. If an individual does not *possess* the appropriate daimon, they simply do not possess γνῶσις, and have no alternative way of acquiring it.

Paul also viewed meat from the perspective of the papyri. Eating sacrificial food meant ingesting the particular daimon or god of the sacrifice, and so allowing it to invade the body.⁵⁸ Accordingly, eating food sacrificed to daimons without the protection of γνῶσις would bring about a κοινῶνια with daimons.⁵⁹ This danger forms the basis of Paul's intense concern for pollution and boundaries. Anything that is not "of Christ" may potentially threaten the purity and unity of the body.

Second, Paul's apocalyptic worldview also dictates Paul's solution concerning idol meat.⁶⁰ Martin places Paul first and foremost in a Jewish and Christian context. No matter how much Paul was influenced by Greek and Roman thoughts (e.g., magical papyri), his foundational experiences, the symbols he uses to describe the world, and his vision for community formation are primarily shaped by a Judeo-Christic, apocalyptic worldview. Thus, in 1 Corinthians, we also see at work a mind that applies this apocalyptic view—founded upon the crucified Christ who raises up the lowly and brings down the haughty—to the practical problems in Corinth. Accordingly, throughout the letter, Paul continually inverts the traditional value-system that governs the Corinthian community and calls the strong to identify with the weak and become 'low' themselves.

As a result of these two factors, Paul advises the high status in Corinth to refrain from eating idol meat around the weak. By advising the strong to comply with the needs of the weak, Paul both prevents the weak from incurring bodily pollution by ingesting

⁵⁸ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 188.

⁵⁹ Martin, *Corinthian Body*,

⁶⁰ Martin, *Corinthian Body*, xvii, 55-68, and esp. 75-76 and 86.

idol meat and promotes the strategy of status reversal that aligns with his apocalyptic worldview.

Theissen's and Martin's social-scientific analyses shed much light on the social and economic factors that influence the dilemmas in Corinth and the correspondence between Paul and the community. Their identification of the strong and weak as associated with the high and low strata of society, respectively, broadens the characterization of these groups beyond their theological viewpoints (e.g., Jewish-Christian vs. Gentile-Christian). It is natural to suppose that aspects of daily life, such as the availability of meat, would influence the contours of Paul's response.

Martin's identification of an ideological voice for both the strong and weak is also a positive development in studies of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. It is natural to suppose that various rungs of society would have different and, at times, conflicting ideologies. The issue in Corinth is not simply availability of meat and social practice, but also the ideological view that accompanies each rung of society, including Paul's own beliefs, not least, his apocalyptic worldview.

Among these positive contributions lies a potential hazard. Social-scientific approaches risk allowing the social and economic landscape *behind* the letter to dictate interpretation more greatly than the content *of* the letter. Theissen's and Martin's proposals fall prey to this hazard on several occasions. For example, Theissen accounts for the context of 10:23-11:1 and the role it plays in the idol meat discourse by means of the letter's background instead of its foreground. Doing so leads him to misinterpret its function in Paul's argument. Judging that the weak would never have the opportunity to eat meat outside of a public-religious context, Theissen proposes that the scenarios in

10:25-28 only pertain to the strong. The weak are not in view in these verses. This observation compels him, in a way similar to Hurd and Fee, to separate 10:25-28—and the whole of 10:23-11:1—thematically from the preceding sections of the discourse. In doing so, he ignores the many parallels in verbiage and theme to the earlier sections. As we argue in our chapter 6, the commonalities between 10:23-11:1 and 8:1-10:22 suggest that this final section may have a more intricate connection to the discourse’s prior sections than Theissen (or Hurd or Fee) allows.

Theissen’s study of the wider culture also influences the relationship he sees between 8:1-13 and 10:1-22. He judges that both sections discuss public, cultic meals because these are the only meals the weak could have attended. Thus, similar to Fee, he argues that Paul answers the question of “eating meat around the weak” in such contexts via a two-fold response. Unlike Fee, however, Theissen prioritizes 8:1-13 over 10:1-22. Paul finally prohibits pagan worship in order to ensure that the strong do not eat meat in occasions in which the weak may also have opportunity to eat it. While this reading alleviates the tension between the two sections more than Fee’s proposal by subsuming 10:1-22 into the theme of 8:1-13, it is odd that Paul fails to connect the instruction in 10:1-22 with the reasoning in 8:1-13. If the reasoning in 8:1-13 grounds the prohibition in 10:14, we would at least expect Paul to indicate as much. As Theissen leaves it, the Corinthians must make this connection on their own.

More significantly, however, subsuming 10:1-22 to 8:1-13 does not allow 10:1-22 to have its own voice. As we will see, the tone of 10:1-22 is more dire and authoritative than 8:1-13. It is more prescriptive than descriptive and exemplary. Thus, while it may

be that Paul feels this strongly about the strong not eating around the weak, it is more likely that he has a different type of matter in view.

Martin's account of the logic and unity of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 on the basis of competing ideologies also suffers difficulties. This lack is highlighted primarily by Martin's assignment of a "low-class" view to Paul's thoughts regarding food threats and γνῶσις. Martin's suggestion that Paul's view of γνῶσις as a commodity that cannot be taught, but that one either 'has' or 'has-not,' is out of sorts with the type of γνῶσις at issue in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The γνῶσις in question is not an esoteric knowledge reserved for a special group of Christians, but basic tenets of faith, namely, turning from idols by accepting wholly the omnipotence of God and the impotency of idols (8:4-6).⁶¹ The shortcoming of the weak is not that they do not have a commodity called γνῶσις (if anything Paul agrees that they do possess γνῶσις at some level, e.g., 8:1), but that they *have not yet* fully assimilated in practice and custom the belief that their former gods are truly 'nothings' in relation to the one God who is sovereign over everything (8:4-7).

A second aspect of Martin's reading is inconsistent with the letter. Martin suggests that Paul believes that food pollutes the body. While it is not even clear from the text that the weak hold such a view, it is even more questionable that Paul does. Martin oddly leaves out any discussion of 1 Cor 10:19, in which Paul appears to ensure that the Corinthians know he does not mean that the meat itself is a threat. The danger lies only in the setting in which meat is consumed (10:19-20; cf. 8:8).

These readings of the social landscape behind 1 Corinthians lead Martin to misread the role of 10:14-22 in particular. As we have stated, he solves the contrast in

⁶¹ Paul's basic teaching of the gospel to Gentiles includes turning from idols (e.g., 1 Cor 12:1-3 and 1 Thess 1:9).

Paul's teaching between 8:1-13 and 10:14-22 by arguing that Paul writes to the strong in 8:1-13 and the weak in 10:14-22. Paul, however, never indicates a shift in audience. He appears to address the strong in 10:14-22 just as he does in 8:1-10:13. Thus, Martin does not give a satisfactory explanation to the argumentative logic of 10:14-22 in relation to 8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1.

Theissen's "love-patriarchalism" and Martin's "status reversal" solutions both continue to focus effort on the behavioral instruction Paul gives the community.

Theissen's reading emphasizes Paul's judgments for the conduct of the strong. It is Paul who adjudicates the dilemma and who directs the Corinthians' action. The purpose of his instruction is not to teach the Corinthians how to think via "love-patriarchalism" but to ensure that they act accordingly in the contexts he addresses. Moreover, while Martin's theme of apocalyptic status reversal where the strong become low in order to raise up the weak comes closer to the core of Pauline thought, Martin does not explore the ways that Paul promotes this mindset and form of practical reasoning among the Corinthians. As in Theissen's analysis, Paul remains the teacher who instructs the community in appropriate behavior. Paul is the apocalyptic thinker; the community members are the actors.

1.4. Rhetorical Critical Approaches: Margaret Mitchell

In contrast to social-scientific methods that examine the historical backgrounds of the text, modern rhetorical studies of 1 Corinthians have turned attention more directly to the text itself, examining the letter for its rhetorical form and content and relationship to rhetorical practices in the ancient world.

While several studies of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 use rhetorical arrangement to account for the flow of the argument, Margaret Mitchell develops the rhetorical interpretation of

these chapters with the greatest sophistication.⁶² Mitchell argues for the unity and logic of 1 Corinthians on the basis of the letter's affinities with deliberative rhetoric. Among the several features of deliberative discourse that Mitchell identifies in 1 Corinthians, two features, the theme of 'concord' (ὁμονοία) and the appeal to advantage (τὸ σύμφερον), are of most interest for our discussion.⁶³

First, political discourse commonly urges various factions in a city or confederation to alter their divisive ways in favor of unity and concord.⁶⁴ Mitchell's argument shows how this theme is present in the letter's vocabulary and how Paul executes his unifying strategy in an analysis of the letter's compositional arrangement.

Paul's major challenge with respect to idol meat is to maintain the community's internal unity in the face of disagreement that is pulling them apart.⁶⁵ Paul encounters a divided Corinthian community, which consists of a group that believes eating idol meat is permissible and a group that believes eating idol meat is idolatrous. Paul responds by adopting a "reconciliatory strategy" in which he allows eating idol meat, but condemns idolatry.⁶⁶

The argument progresses as follows. In 8:1-8, Paul makes it clear that eating idol meat in itself does not constitute idolatry and, thus, cannot be condemned by those who

⁶² Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991). Other rhetorical studies of 1 Corinthians include, Joop F. M. Smit, *About the Idol Offerings: Rhetoric, Social Context, and Theology of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (Leuven, Peeters, 2000); John Fotopoulos, *Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-Rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1* (WUNT 151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

⁶³ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 60-64.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 1-2. Mitchell extends the earlier work of Laurence Welborn, who had already identified the connection of 1 Cor 1-4 to ancient discourses on factionalism, by judging that all the debates at Corinth—not just 1 Cor 1-4—can be subsumed under the theme of factionalism (see Laurence L. Welborn, "On Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient Politics," *JBL* 106 [1987]: 85-111).

⁶⁵ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 237.

⁶⁶ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 238.

believe the contrary.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, in 8:9-13, he demonstrates that this ‘right’ should be avoided for the sake of the “harmonious upbuilding of the church community.”⁶⁸ First Corinthians 9 functions as Paul’s example of one who gives up a ‘right’ for the sake of unity.

In 10:1-13, Paul switches from idol meat to idolatry. The negative example of Israel illustrates the problem of rebellion through factionalism.⁶⁹ Tragedies befell the Israelites when factions appeared as members of the community sought their own advantage. Like the Israelites, the Corinthians are in danger of being divided by factions and, thus, of facing total destruction.⁷⁰ The general conclusion of the example in 10:12 echoes the letter’s prominent building metaphor promoting concord: “even if you think you yourself stand, you will indeed fall if others do”—meaning, “all stand or fall together as one building.”⁷¹

The second half of the argument against idolatry (10:14-22) equally focuses on the social unity of the community. Paul makes two arguments against such activity. First, 10:16-17 focuses on the horizontal aspect of *κοινωνία*. The community’s unity and concord is rooted in their common participation in Eucharist. Second, participating in cult meals makes the participant a partner with demons (10:20-21), which directly contrasts membership in the body of Christ.

Finally, 10:23-11:1 recapitulates the entire argument. It summarizes the oscillating character of Paul’s response throughout 8:1-10:22. Paul wants to mitigate the

⁶⁷ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 255.

⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 255.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 252.

⁷⁰ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 252-53.

⁷¹ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 254.

effects of “both eating and disapproving of others who eat on the unity of the church.”⁷² This hope is expressed in 10:23-24 by the principle, “seek the good not of oneself, but of the other.” Mitchell contends that the principle applies to *all* factions in the community (i.e., to both the strong and the weak). Individuals on both sides of the controversy should adopt the principle of seeking the advantage of the other over oneself. The strong should not eat around the weak and the weak should not disapprove of the strong when they do eat in permissible contexts. By doing so, the community becomes a unified whole and gives “no offense” to on-looking Jews and Greeks who might become saved.⁷³

Mitchell’s study of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 also identifies the “appeal to advantage” as the second characteristic of deliberative rhetoric that appears in 1 Corinthians.⁷⁴ Deliberative speeches and letters aimed to influence the decision-making framework of their audiences. At the heart of every deliberative argument is the goal of persuading the audience of the course of action that is in their best interest. Sometimes, this requires the orator to alter the audience’s notion of what is most advantageous. Arguments dealing with factionalism often urge the audience members to re-orient their decisions around the communal advantage rather than around their own self-interests.

Like deliberative arguments urging concord, Mitchell determines that Paul must redefine the basis of the Corinthians’ decision making from self-interest to communal-interest in order for them to adopt his behavioral recommendations.⁷⁵ In 8:1-13, Paul advises the principle, “building up the church community in harmony through love.”⁷⁶

⁷² Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 256.

⁷³ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 257-58.

⁷⁴ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 25-39.

⁷⁵ E.g., Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 35-36 and 37-38.

⁷⁶ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 241.

The correct use of freedom gauges its impact on others.⁷⁷ In 1 Cor 9, Paul redefines μισθός and κέρδος as the common advantage that the Corinthians should pursue with their ἐξουσία.⁷⁸ In 10:1-13, Mitchell observes that the exhortation against ‘grumbling’ (10:10) prioritizes group unity over individual quarrels and that the warning against ‘falling’ (10:12) connotes a building metaphor in which those who seek their own way may cause the whole building to crumble.⁷⁹ In 10:14-22, Paul reminds them of their social unity as he warns them against participation in outside cultic associations.⁸⁰ The new τέλος becomes particularly apparent to Mitchell in 10:23-11:1.⁸¹ Both 10:23-24 and 10:32-33 redefine τὸ συμφέρον from individual to community. The building metaphor (10:23), the negative appeal to be “without offense” to others (10:32), and the positive appeals to do all things for the glory of God (10:31) and seek to please others in all things (10:24 and 33) subject decision making to a new τέλος.⁸²

Mitchell’s thesis advances interpretation of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 by highlighting decision making as an important aspect of the discourse. She rightly focuses on Paul’s concern to reorient the community’s decision-making principles from self-interest to communal-interest. She highlights “love builds up” in 8:1 and “seek the advantage of the other” in 10:23-24 as a principle of decision making that seeks the good of the whole community. We will build on her notion that 1 Corinthians is tasked to reorient the decision-making framework of the community.

⁷⁷ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 242.

⁷⁸ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 248.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 253-54.

⁸⁰ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 254.

⁸¹ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 36-37 and 256-58.

⁸² Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 256-58.

We have two points of disagreement with Mitchell's argument, however. First, Mitchell's lens of reading 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 as an argument for concord misconstrues several aspects of the discourse. Factionalism is not the major threat idol meat poses to the community.⁸³ The danger of idol meat is the harmful effects it imposes on the community's relation to Yahweh. The weak suffer destruction if they eat idol meat (8:12) because they will revert to their past commitments to idols. The strong are to abstain around the weak not for the sake of concord, but for the sake of saving the weak from destruction.

Similarly, the entire community faces the danger of destruction if they participate in cultic meals (10:1-22). The example of Israel illustrates the dangers of idolatry, not factionalism. The wilderness generation experienced destruction because they entered into fellowship with foreign gods, not because their behavior was factional. Likewise, Paul does not write 10:14-22 as a part of a reconciliatory strategy. The prohibition of idolatry is not simply a convenient command in service of a larger concern for unity. It stems from an inherently Jewish-Christian conviction about commitment to the covenant community and to the commands of Yahweh, just as the example of Israel illustrates.

This deficiency arises as a result of reading Paul too intently as a political statesman. Mitchell derives Paul's principle of compromise from political speeches.⁸⁴ She moves away from proposals—such as those by Theissen and Martin—that rightly recognize that Paul integrates his own symbolic world into the Corinthians' social

⁸³E.g., "Paul's overriding concern...is not merely idol meat themselves, but the impact of conflicts over idol meat on the concord of the church community" (Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 238).

⁸⁴E.g., the principle of slavery in 1 Cor 9:19; see *Rhetoric*, 133, ft. 408.

problems.⁸⁵ Paul's impetus for recommending "concern for the other" and "avoidance of idolatry" as principles of decision making first and foremost comes from his commitments to Christ and God. Paul urges servitude toward others because service of others embodies Christ's incarnation and cross.⁸⁶ Paul advises avoidance of idolatry because it breaks covenant loyalty with God. In Paul's thought-world, political themes and solutions do not logically precede the cross of Christ or covenant loyalty. The life and death of Jesus and loyalty to God are primary to the political realm.⁸⁷

Our greater disagreement with Mitchell pertains to the deliberative lens through which she reads the role of decision making in 1 Corinthians. When deliberative speeches and letters attempt to re-orient an audience's framework of decision making, the primary purpose in changing the audience's view of what is 'advantageous' is to persuade or dissuade them of a particular course of action. As Mitchell observes, appeals to advantage and other ideals are ways by which "an orator can convince his audience to follow his proposed course of action..."⁸⁸ She contends that this is the purpose of Paul's argument as well. For instance, commenting on 1 Cor 15, she states, "As is common in deliberative rhetoric, Paul here appeals to future advantage against present, fleeting advantages to urge the Corinthians to adopt the course of action for unity which he proposes."⁸⁹

In contrast to Mitchell, we contend that Paul's ultimate purpose for changing the community's decision-making principles is not just to persuade them to adopt his

⁸⁵ Theissen recognizes this for the Lord's Supper (*Social Setting*, 165-68). For Martin, all of Paul's recommendations arise from his apocalyptic views.

⁸⁶ E.g., Phil 2:5-9; Gal 2:19-21.

⁸⁷ And even in contradiction to it (e.g., 1 Cor 2:6-16).

⁸⁸ Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 38. Cf. "If one wants to convince people to pursue a particular course of action in the future, one must demonstrate that it is to that audience's advantage" (*Rhetoric*, 25).

⁸⁹ *Rhetoric*, 38. Cf., on 1 Cor 7:35: "This is exactly what the deliberative speaker or writer must convince his audience, that the course of action he urges is to their advantage" (*Rhetoric*, 36).

recommendations, but to educate them in a mindset and way of thinking that will enable them to make decisions on their own. The reason Paul prescribes the principle, “seek the advantage of the other,” is not primarily to promote anti-factional behavior, but to teach the mindset and way of thinking of Christ. The final verses of the idol meat discourse suggest that 8:1-11:1 primarily aims to compel the community to adopt a Christic mindset and behavior. The goal is not simply for them to abstain from idol meat and idolatry, but for them to be able to imitate Christ in all of their practical decisions.

Our disagreement does not deny Mitchell’s claim that Paul desires the community to change its decision-making criterion permanently. Certainly Mitchell gives us the sense that he does. Our lens, however, allows us to explore how Paul uses the components of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 to teach a new mode of reasoning that coincides with the new decision-making criterion. Mitchell merely supposes that the principle is sufficient. When we read Paul’s instruction in light of this new τέλος, the features of Paul’s argument assume new functions.

1.5. Comparisons to Philosophical Schools: Clarence Glad

Clarence Glad argues that 1 Cor 9:19-23 belongs in a widespread psychagogic tradition that highlights the importance of adaptability in conduct and speech in light of human diversity.⁹⁰ Glad puts himself in the influential stream of thought of Abraham Malherbe, who did much to draw out parallels between Paul and the philosophical schools.⁹¹ While Malherbe argues for Cynic parallels in Paul, Glad contends that Paul’s adaptability most clearly resembles the Epicurean “philotropeic method,” which

⁹⁰ Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (NovTSup 81; New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 1.

⁹¹ E.g., Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC 4; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986); *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); and “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” *ANRW* 26.1.267-333.

emphasizes concern for the disposition of those pupils in the psychagogue's care.⁹²

Epicurean psychagogy stresses the importance of adopting language that is appropriate to the specific characteristics (e.g., age, sex, disposition, aptitude) of the student. The technique of adaptability in speech was then used in the community's mutual evaluation and correction of one another. Varying amounts of gentleness and harshness were required based on the contingencies of the situation, including the state of those being led.

Glad argues that the Corinthian letter should be read in this light. It is instruction for a Christian community in which mutual education occurred and more advanced members functioned as educators of the weaker ones. The difficulty Paul encountered in Corinth was due to the improper psychagogic guidance of the weak by the wise. In Paul's view, the wise adopted too harsh an approach toward the weak in the debate over idol meat. The wise members decided to teach the weak that "no idols exist" by eating idol meat in front of them.

Paul writes 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 to correct this ineffective and destructive pedagogical strategy. The discourse encourages the wise to devote themselves to the benefit of the weak by abstaining from idol meat so as not to destroy their commitments to Christ.⁹³ In 1 Cor 8, Paul observes that the tactics of the wise wound and destroy the weak (8:11-12). These verses accentuate the condition the weak experience when they eat idol meat in an effort to suggest that the wise abstain.

In 1 Cor 9, Paul defends his decision to refuse support from a wealthy patron as a way of displaying appropriate obligation and friendship with the many, not with the

⁹² Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 4.

⁹³ Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 289.

few.⁹⁴ This decision reflects Paul's desire for the wise to associate with those of inferior moral standing by abstaining from idol meat. The decision also embodies Paul's positive statement of how he interacts with both potential recruits and members of the community (9:19-23). Adopting a strategy of adaptability, he bases his words and actions on the characteristics of the individuals with whom he interacts. Thus, in 9:1-18 and 8:13, he exemplifies the proper form of psychagogic guidance the wise should adopt—i.e., abstention—as they lead the weak.

In 10:25-30, Paul returns to the issue of psychagogic guidance by giving three scenarios where questions of conscience may occur regarding idol meat.⁹⁵ These scenarios represent Paul's specific advice on how to act in various situations.

Amidst discussion of locales in which eating idol meat is inherently permissible, 10:1-22 places limits on how much the wise can associate with the outside world.⁹⁶ While the community ought to engage in recruitment of outsiders, there are limits to such accommodation. They can neither engage in sexual immorality nor idolatry. He warns them against putting their desire in evil things in 10:1-13. Verses 14-22 indicate the social occasion which can lead to idolatry.

Glad's project makes several worthy contributions to 1 Corinthians. First, he rightly identifies the importance of recognizing the dispositions of recruits and newly initiated into Paul's instruction. Paul encourages the wise to engage in abstention because of the weak disposition of those who continue to believe that idol meat is spiritually charged. Second, Glad properly approaches 1 Cor 9 both as apology of Paul's refusal to accept financial support and as self-example that Paul desires the community to

⁹⁴ Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 263-72.

⁹⁵ Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 290.

⁹⁶ Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 262.

emulate. Third, Glad correctly judges that 10:14-22 points out a social occasion in which eating idol meat violates the limits of acceptable behavior with outsiders. Fourth, Glad appropriately reads 10:25-30 as scenarios where questions of conscience may occur (as Paul discusses in 8:1-9:27).

Each of these aspects of Glad's project will appear in our analysis of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, though each in a modified form. We agree with Glad that a teacher's proper assessment of his or her pupils is necessary in order for the teacher to know how to act appropriately. Nonetheless, Glad concentrates on Paul's correction of the psychagogic strategy of the weak by the wise while we contend that the wise are not thinking about weak individuals at all. Glad presumes that the wise have already assumed psychagogic responsibility and that Paul must simply redirect their efforts. The wise judge that the appropriate method to help the weak overcome their fear of idol meat is to eat in front of them. Paul indicates that this strategy wounds the conscience of the weak and destroys their morality. Thus, the wise must adapt their practice to conform to the weak so that the weak do not break commitment to their faith. Adopting this strategy allows the community to exist with differing levels of dispositions and beliefs.

In contrast, we propose that the wise are not attempting to educate the weak, but selfishly focusing on their own rights in the gospel. Far from attempting to guide the weak, the wise have not even recognized that their actions impact others in the community in any way.⁹⁷

Thus, Paul's focus is not on providing an alternative psychagogic strategy for the wise, but on reforming the mindset and way of thinking the wise use to make decisions regarding their 'rights' in the gospel. This thesis shifts the instructional focus of 1 Cor

⁹⁷ See pp. 126-29 below.

8:1-11:1 from the precepts it teaches (e.g., abstain from idol meat) to the mode of reasoning that leads to such action. In Glad's model, Paul is the sage who discerns the characteristics of his pupils while the Corinthians are simply the recipients of his precepts. Paul defines for the wise the characteristics of the weak in order to explain that they must adopt a new *practice*. They must cease to eat in front of the weak and, instead, abstain with them in their company.⁹⁸

In our model, Paul shifts the intellectual responsibility of decision making to the Corinthians. He calls the Corinthians to imitate a way of thinking that results in various ways of acting rather than only providing actions as solutions to the current dilemmas. He aims to reconstitute the wise Corinthians' mindset and mode of reasoning so that they can become independent Christic thinkers who do not need to write to him for advice, but can discern appropriate action on their own. The problem in Corinth is not their psychagogic strategy, but their fundamental mindset and way of thinking that governs their practical decisions. This venture requires more than adjusting their course of action or offering a character portrayal of others; it requires a total reconstitution of the way they approach one another.⁹⁹ The second major distinction between Glad's study and our own indicates why this is the case.

Glad's proposal overwhelmingly locates Paul's strategy of adaptability in the Greco-Roman, and specifically Epicurean, moralist tradition. Though he mentions on several occasions that Paul is living out Christ's adaptable example, Glad's project

⁹⁸ E.g., Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 197-98, 215, 289, and 294. Ultimately, Glad's proposal makes Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 but one more piece of advice in a series of behavioral recommendations spanning 1 Cor 5-14.

⁹⁹ While Glad does view the Corinthian church as a community of psychagogues who mutually edify one another and briefly notes that Paul's character portrayals have a didactic function, he does not explore how Paul's instruction in 8:1-11:1 contributes to a mode of reasoning that would be appropriate for mature psychagogues.

explores Paul's adaptability in light of the moralist psychagogic tradition and not from the perspective of Christic imitation.¹⁰⁰ Glad's work so ensconces 1 Cor 9:19-23 in the moralist tradition that it severely underplays the centrality of the incarnate Christ for the mindset, way of thinking, and identity that Paul both embodies and teaches. Paul's decisions and actions stem from his self-identity as one who displays Christ incarnate, not from a moralist strategy concerning recruitment of outsiders and care of the young in the community. Paul does not have the goal of teaching psychagogues, but of teaching the community how to embody Christ, God's message of redemption, to one another and the outside world.¹⁰¹

2. Practical Reasoning and 1 Corinthians

While no modern study has thoroughly examined 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 for the way it teaches a mindset and mode of practical reasoning, several recent studies have begun to identify the intricate connection between moral behavior and moral reasoning in Paul's pedagogy. These studies recognize that Paul seeks to form practical wisdom in his congregants. Traditionally, studies in Pauline ethics explore Paul's theological foundations that lead to his exhortations of the community's behavior. In spite of the continued dominance of these approaches, the perspective has begun to emerge that Paul intends his own moral reasoning process to be learned and reproduced in his

¹⁰⁰ Compare the relatively sparse references (each with little to no elaboration) Glad makes to the role Christ plays in Paul's thinking (e.g., 216, 224, 258-59, 294, 332) to the abundant comparisons he makes to the role Greco-Roman traditions in Paul's thinking (e.g., 65-69, 229, 240, 243, 251-52, 253, 254-55, 259, 272-74, 328).

¹⁰¹ Glad's overrepresentation of moralist influence on Paul also accounts improperly for several terms and phrases in the idol meat discourse. For example, Glad reads the terms ἀπολλύμι, σώζω, τύπτω, ἀσθενής, τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον, and τοῖς ἀνόμοις through a moralist lens. This reading flattens and distorts important images in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. (For his readings of ἀπολλύμι and σώζω, see Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 214-15, 230, 275-77; for ἀσθενής, see pp. 275-77; for τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον, and τοῖς ἀνόμοις, see pp. 256-58; for τύπτω, see pp. 277-83). We can only preview our disagreement here, but ἀπολλύμι and σώζω most likely refer to eschatological destruction and salvation, not moral degradation and maturity. Likewise, as we will see (pp. 211-13 below), reading τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον, and τοῖς ἀνόμοις as morally mature and morally suspect misses a key point about Paul's self-identity in relation to *adiaphora* identity markers.

communities. Mitchell's and Glad's studies move us in this direction, but neither goes far enough. Mitchell identifies new principles of reasoning as a central part of Paul's persuasive tactics and Glad focuses on the practical advice Paul gives the wise to make their psychagogy more effective. Several studies, however, emphasize Paul's attempt to teach practical wisdom to the community. We examine works by Hans Dieter Betz, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and William Beardslee.

2.1. Hans Dieter Betz

While Hans Dieter Betz's essay, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," looks to ancient rhetoric as a window into 1 Corinthians, he does so from a different standpoint. He approaches ancient rhetoric from its role in ancient education rather than from its practice in civil discourse.¹⁰² Betz examines the ancient rhetorical sense of 'speech' or 'eloquence' as the outward verbalization of 'knowledge.' Rhetoricians like Isocrates, Quintilian, and others wanted eloquent speakers also to be moral thinkers.¹⁰³ That is, the true rhetorician is not simply to be a good speaker, but also a "good man."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² The dominant approach by rhetorical critics such as Mitchell and others has been to read the letter as a deliberative speech addressed to a public assembly. Locating the letter in an educational setting, Betz proposes a crucial shift in the letter's *Sitz*. He reads 1 Corinthians not as public orator addressing an assembly, but as teacher writing to students in order to instruct them in the way to think and behave in public life.

¹⁰³ Isocrates believed that the truly educated person is one who is knowledgeable in practical conduct and displays virtues, not just in the rules of oratory that enable a person to string together effective speeches. He considers educated: those who manage well the circumstances which they encounter day by day, and who possess judgment which is accurate in meeting occasions as they arise and rarely misses the expedient course of action; next, those who are decent and honorable in their intercourse with all whom they associate...furthermore, those who hold their pleasures always under control and are not unduly overcome by their misfortunes, bearing up under them bravely...Those who have a character which is in accord, not with one of these things, but with all of them—these, I contend, are wise and complete men, possessed of all the virtues. (*Panath.* 30-32 [Norlin, LCL])

Isocrates' complete orator displays what would become some of the core Roman virtues, including 'prudence.' The able orator is not a mere expert at persuasion, but an individual who "possesses judgment" and "manages well the circumstances which [he] encounters." His faculty of judgment enables him to

The connection between speech, knowledge, and morality is useful to characterize the discrepancy between the Corinthians' apparent giftedness with "eloquence and knowledge" (1:5) and deficient *praxis*. The Holy Spirit has endowed the community with λόγος σοφίας and λόγος γνώσεως (as evidenced by 1 Cor 12:8), but community members fail to use their wisdom and knowledge appropriately in decision making. Betz implies that the community's missteps in practical conduct arose from an improper base of knowledge. The community enacted its gifts of speech and knowledge using the mindset of Hellenistic religiosity and the general culture of the city rather than through the Jewish-Christian ethos of the gospel.¹⁰⁵ By expressing its spiritual gifts, including speech and knowledge, in an incorrect way, the community reveals a gap between expressions of the spirit on the one hand and practical conduct on the other.¹⁰⁶

Paul writes 1 Corinthians in order to bring the community's *praxis* into conformity with its giftedness in speech and knowledge. He attempts to correct the Corinthians' practice by also correcting their knowledge. The letter's structure follows this two-pronged approach. Paul corrects the community's conception of speech and knowledge in 1:18-3:23 and reforms its conduct in chapters 5-15. The three subsections from 1:18-3:23 (1:18-31; 2:1-16; 3:1-23) lay out a corrective to the Corinthians'

make just, honorable, and expedient decisions in practical affairs—both for himself and for the commonweal (*Antid.* 284-85. Cf. *Nic.* 29).

¹⁰⁴ Quintilian's vision of a great orator was a figure who could combine eloquence and virtue in the shape of Cato's ideal, "a good man, skilled in speaking." Between the two, Quintilian emphasizes that the true orator must be "a good man" (*vir bonus*) first and foremost (*Inst.* 1.pr.9; 12.1.1). As Isocrates before him, Quintilian connects excellence in oratory to virtuous character. His definition of "speaking well" includes "all the virtues of oratory and the *character of the orator* as well, since no man can speak well who is not good himself" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.15.34 [Butler, LCL]; my italics).

¹⁰⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, "The Problem of Rhetoric and Theology according to the Apostle Paul," in *L'Apôtre Paul: personnalité, style et conception du ministère* (BETL 73; ed. Albert Vanhoye et. al.; Leuven: Leuven University Press; Uitgeverij Peeters, 1986), 24-25.

¹⁰⁶ Betz connects Paul's critique of the Corinthians in 1 Cor 1-4 to Isocrates' and Cicero's critiques of sophistry unfounded upon knowledge of conduct. Paul admonishes the Corinthians for founding their faith on eloquence of speech and worldly wisdom rather than on the *logos* of the cross.

epistemological foundation. The first section stresses that the Christian λόγος (rhetoric) is not human wisdom, but ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ which turns the wisdom of the world on its head. The second section re-characterizes the type of rhetoric (λόγος) that is appropriate for the proclamation of the kerygma. The kerygma requires a “rhetoric of demonstration” of spirit and power (2:4) rather than a “rhetoric of persuasion” reliant on philosophical dialectic. The third attacks the self-delusion of those who claim wisdom but fail to demonstrate it in their conduct.

Betz considers the force of Paul’s corrective to be complete with 3:23. The section reorients the Corinthians’ thinking in a way that gives them a proper interpretive lens for their Christian experience. From 3:23, the reader could move to 15:58 on the presumption that correcting “speech and knowledge” also corrects conduct. Nonetheless, Betz notes that Paul writes 1 Cor 5-15 “with its advice on practical matters”¹⁰⁷ in order to ensure that “conduct” accords with their new level of speech and knowledge.

Though Betz gives little consideration to chapters 5-15, his thesis raises the question of the place of practical wisdom in 1 Corinthians. He argues that the Corinthians’ conduct was built on an improper epistemological foundation (human-based λόγος γνώσεως) and that Paul must correct this foundation in order to correct conduct. What Betz points to, yet leaves unexplored, is the way 1 Cor 5-15 and its apparent focus on conduct continue to coordinate γνῶσις and *praxis*. We take up Betz’s thesis that knowledge is the foundation for action and propose that much of Paul’s instruction in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 does not simply point the Corinthians to right conduct, but helps them develop a mode of practical reasoning that applies knowledge to action.

¹⁰⁷ Betz, “Rhetoric and Theology,” 33.

2.2. Troels Engberg-Pedersen

Troels Engberg-Pedersen's essay, "The Gospel and Social Practice According to 1 Corinthians," explores the relationship between "believing and living," in Paul's thought.¹⁰⁸ Paul understands Christian wisdom not as "knowledge in some specious sense that is not felt to be directly relevant to living," but as "knowledge that directly determines behavior."¹⁰⁹ This understanding of knowledge and behavior grounds both the problem Paul identifies in Corinth and Paul's response in the context of practical or applied knowledge. Engberg-Pedersen finds that the Corinthians' inexperience, youthfulness, and continued attachment to the wider culture hinder their ability to apply their gospel knowledge to the practical life of the community. Rather than interpreting the gospel principles through the full message of the gospel, the community interprets their practical conduct through the normative system of the world.¹¹⁰ The interpretative breakdown manifests itself practically in areas such as the fractured state of the community as a result of Apollos' activity in Corinth. First Corinthians 4:19b-20, for instance, displays Paul's expectation that certain behavioral patterns accompany theological belief.¹¹¹ Paul seeks to know not the professions (i.e., the λόγος) of the community, but how their professions determine their actions (i.e., their δύναμις), especially regarding the factional controversy caused by Apollos.

First Corinthians 1:10-4:21 corrects the community's deficiency by teaching the appropriate gospel message through a combination of theological and practical discussions. Paul adopts the strategy of reorienting their theological center on the one

¹⁰⁸ "The Gospel and Social Practice According to 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 33 (1987): 557-84.

¹⁰⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 571.

¹¹⁰ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 567-68.

¹¹¹ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 571.

hand and demonstrating what theology looks like in practice on the other. Such a strategy is necessary for individuals whose state precludes them from making the connection on their own.

The heart of Paul's theological discourse lies in 1 Cor 2:6-16. In contrast to the human expectations of wisdom, Christian wisdom is identical with the word of the cross. On one level, Christian wisdom is mere knowledge that God's act in Jesus' cross ("that God let his own son die in order to save those who believe") is God's wisdom (even if this wisdom is perceived as foolishness).¹¹² On another level, for those who understand that the word of the cross is true wisdom, the cross is an act of love that determines the 'norm' of social life.¹¹³

Paul does not write strictly in theological prose because it risks the community misunderstanding what *ἀγάπη* looks like in Christian social praxis.¹¹⁴ Thus, Paul presents himself as an example of how *ἀγάπη* looks practically in order to demonstrate concretely and empirically the content of Christian wisdom.¹¹⁵ First Corinthians 3:4-9 and 4:1-13 are examples of Paul's voluntary 'subordination' in relation to the Corinthian community. In 1 Cor 4, Paul presents himself as radically superior to the Corinthians at the chapter's beginning (4:1-5), but by the end of the passage Paul represents himself as radically subordinate to them (4:9-13).¹¹⁶ This example of Paul as one who subordinates himself to others becomes a pedagogical aid that brings belief into practice for Paul's audience.

¹¹² Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 564 and 569.

¹¹³ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 566.

¹¹⁴ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 568.

¹¹⁵ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 568.

¹¹⁶ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 570.

As Engberg-Pedersen examines Paul's use of self-example in other parts of the letter, the portion of the thesis we have outlined for 1:10-4:21 gives way to another aspect of Engberg-Pedersen's thesis. Though stating that 1 Cor 9 exemplifies what type of radical behavior being a full Christian amounts to in practical affairs, Engberg-Pedersen does not explore any further how 1 Cor 9 bridges theological principle and practical context.¹¹⁷ Rather, he emphasizes the thesis that Paul uses self-example because it is the method the gospel demands for exhortations to radical conduct. For example, Paul uses a self-example in 1 Cor 9 because *ἀγάπη* dictates that a teacher should issue radical exhortations in a way that acknowledges the audience's freedom and independence as autonomous agents.¹¹⁸ Command to radical behavior does not respect their independence and so does not 'love.'

Nonetheless, this divergence does not mitigate Engberg-Pedersen's observations concerning 1 Cor 1-4. In these chapters, Paul identifies practical knowledge as a crucial aspect of the Corinthians' growth and maturity and crafts 1 Cor 1:10-4:21 for the purpose of bringing abstract theological concepts into concrete, practical visualization.¹¹⁹ We take up Engberg-Pedersen's observations of 1 Cor 1-4 and explore the way Paul teaches theological concepts in practical ways in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1.

¹¹⁷ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 575.

¹¹⁸ Engberg-Pedersen, "Gospel and Social Practice," 577.

¹¹⁹ Wolfgang Schrage also challenges the notion that Paul's ethical commands and duties are unrelated to his gospel message. The gospel is becomes seen "in concrete duties and acts" (*Die konkreten Einzelgebote in der paulinischen Paränese: Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Ethik*, [Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, Gerd Mohn, 1961], 60; cf. Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968], 276).

2.3. William Beardslee

William Beardslee's short pastoral commentary analyzes 1 Corinthians for the relationship between faith and action.¹²⁰ Beardslee observes that the letter's structure never permits a neat divide between the two. Unlike traditional readings which note the letter's progress from faith (1 Cor 1-4) to action (1 Cor 5-14), Beardslee's commentary argues that the letter intricately binds faith and action. Like Engberg-Pedersen, Beardslee observes that action appears from the outset of the letter. First Corinthians 1:10-4:21 is equally a "faith" treatise on true wisdom and a practical exhortation against factionalism. Moreover, later arguments in the letter, usually thought to deal strictly with application, continue to draw in elements of "faith" that inform practical conduct.

In these later sections (e.g., idol meat, marriage, speaking in tongues), Beardslee notices that Paul often does not answer the questions put to him in the expected "yes" or "no" format. Rather, he gives the community different theological elements to take into account when making their decisions, but leaves much of the decision making to them. For instance, concerning 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, Beardslee observes that Paul gives a complex response to a "yes" or "no" application question—i.e., whether or not to eat idol meat.¹²¹ Rather than instructing the community simply to eat or to abstain, Paul's practical advice considers certain theological truths in light of the particular circumstances of the situation. In the confines of the community, it is often appropriate to eat meat because evil has been neutralized in the Christ event. In external environments, eating meat is harmful because the believer still exists in a hostile world. Beardslee does not think that Paul is necessarily imagining all possible contexts. The scenarios Paul offers are a few

¹²⁰ William A. Beardslee, *First Corinthians: A Commentary for Today* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1994).

¹²¹ Beardslee, *First Corinthians*, 7.

examples of how faith elements apply to real-life settings. The chapters connect theological principles and practical advice in a way that helps the community learn how to think about their problems.

Paul proceeds in the manner in which he does out of a conviction that the gospel promotes an ethic of “responsible freedom” in decision making.¹²² In complement to Paul’s authoritarian side is a Paul whose convictions of freedom in the gospel compel him to transfer moral responsibility and decision making to his communities. His ethic leaves “yes” and “no” behind and offers general ways of thinking about various issues in order to aid the communities in their own discernment.

3. A Positive Proposal

In light of these movements toward the role of practical reasoning in Paul’s letters, we examine 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 for its contribution to the formation of practical reasoning. Our central thesis argues that 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 teaches the Corinthians a mindset and way of thinking that Paul wishes them to adopt. This approach contains two key aspects. First, Paul seeks to reorient the community away from an arrogant and puffed up disposition that defines Christian freedom on the basis of *possession* of rights and privileges in the gospel toward a realization that true Christian freedom is characterized by *how* one uses those rights and gifts. This aspect of the discourse promotes a humble and servile mindset that is necessary and preparatory for deliberating practical decisions well. Humility and a servant mindset dispose the community to use their gifts and rights freely. At the risk of creating false divisions in the discourse, we observe that 8:1-3; 9:15-18; 9:24-27; and 10:1-13 highlight this aspect of Paul’s instruction.

¹²² Beardslee, *First Corinthians*, 7.

Second, Paul teaches the Corinthians the way of thinking that should characterize how a community of God in Christ uses its gifts and rights. Two major rubrics of thought dominate the mode of reasoning Paul teaches. Displaying the love of Christ incarnate to others occupies 8:1-13; 9:1-14, 19-27; and 10:23-11:1 while displaying loyalty to God is the rubric of thought that governs 10:14-22.

Within this second aspect (i.e., how to use their gifts and rights), the weight of Paul's instruction in 8:1-11:1 concerns the mindset and way of thinking that displays the love of Christ incarnate to others. This effort consumes a majority of the discourse (8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1) and is highlighted in the discourse's final, summative statement in 10:31-11:1.

Paul's central goal, "become imitators of me as I am of Christ" (11:1), though universally valid, is general and undefined if it stands in isolation. Thus, Paul defines it in greater detail with the exhortation and self-example in 10:32-33.¹²³ The verses illustrate that a primary way to imitate Christ is to seek what is salvifically advantageous for outsiders and for the "church of God," without regard for one's personal advantages and disadvantages (10:32-33). In 10:32, Paul exhorts the community to be "without offense" to "Jews, Greeks, and the church of God." The linking of the imperative in 10:32 with Paul's self-example in 10:33 by καθώς shows that the Corinthians give no offense to "Jews, Greeks, and the church of God" by seeking the advantage not of themselves, but of the many in order to save them.

¹²³ The exhortation in 10:31—"do all things for God's glory"—is even broader than *imitatio Christi*. Thus, though 10:32-33 defines *imitatio Christi*, Paul also uses all three verses (10:32-11:1) to define 10:31. Glory of God extends to sexual immorality (e.g., 6:20) and so likely encompasses in a general way 10:1-22 as well. In this context, however, Paul primarily narrows the exhortation to address the community's imitation of Christ to others (e.g., 8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1).

The exhortation and example as the content of imitation give 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 its pedagogical shaping. The general theme, “seeking the advantage of others” appears not just in these final verses, but also in two additional key locations in the discourse. First, the *imitatio Christi* motif, and its defining exhortations in 10:32-33, is closely akin to *ἀγάπη* in 1 Cor 8:1. The discourse draws *imitatio Christi* and *ἀγάπη* together in 10:23-24. In the very first verse of the discourse Paul writes, *ἀγάπη* οἰκοδομεῖ. In 10:33, Paul defines *imitatio Christi* using the phrase, μὴ ζητῶν τὸ ἑμαυτοῦ σύμφορον ἀλλὰ τὸ τῶν πολλῶν. The two defining terms, οἰκοδομεῖ and συμφέρει, appear together in 10:23-24. Paul writes, πάντα ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει · πάντα ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα οἰκοδομεῖ. Joining together *ἀγάπη* οἰκοδομεῖ and *imitatio Christi* in the general maxims of 10:23-24 shows that *imitatio Christi* includes a disposition and mindset of *ἀγάπη* as that which seeks the upbuilding and advantage of others. Paul begins and ends the discourse with this common concern.

This theme also appears in a set of verses that is commonly regarded as central to the idol meat discourse: 1 Cor 9:19-23. First Corinthians 9:19-23 is Paul’s example of “becoming all things to all people in order to save them.” Similar to 10:32-33, 9:19-23 includes a focus on many people types (i.e., ‘Jews,’ “those under the law,” “those not under law,” and “the weak”) and an emphasis on seeking to ‘save’ ‘all people’ in ‘all things’ (9:22b). Moreover, Paul’s ministry principle in 9:23, πάντα δὲ ποιῶ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, echoes the final phrase of 10:31, τι ποιεῖτε, πάντα εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ ποιεῖτε.

If these brief observations allow us to grant that Christic imitation, as defined by 10:32-33, is an overarching goal of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, we are forced to acknowledge the inescapable reality that imitation at the level Paul envisions involves more than emulation

of behavior. It requires moral reasoning. First Corinthians 10:31-11:1 casts a vision that is broader than mere abstention from idol meat around the weak. Paul's two commands and two examples in these verses are still very general. He exhorts the Corinthians to do *all things* for the glory of God and to not give offense to *any group of people* (Jews, Greeks, and the church). He offers himself as an example of one who pleases *everyone* in *all things* by not seeking his own advantage but that of the *many*, in order that they may be saved. Thus, Paul wants them to learn more than whether to eat idol meat around the weak. He expects them to be able to seek the advantage of *everyone* in *every circumstance*.

Second, as we will argue in chapter 4, Christ's decision to "become like" humans in order to save humans is central to Paul's thinking. Paul understands Christ's decision to give up his equality with God and become human for the sake of humanity as *the* paradigm for the way he thinks about how he may use his rights as an apostle in his relationship with others. In the "human" context, "becoming incarnate" is not a single act but a continual process of discerning how best to "become incarnate" to a variety of people in a variety of contexts. Paul implies this in both 10:31-11:1 and 9:19-23.

We might say that Paul is after something similar to what Stephen Fowl calls "non-identical repetition."¹²⁴ The idea of "non-identical repetition" is that "the basic shape of the moral exemplar is given, but what conformity to this paradigm will require can only be determined in the context of particular situations and relationships."¹²⁵

Fowl's concept illuminates a gap between paradigm and imitation that requires further

¹²⁴ Stephen Fowl, "Christology and Ethics in Philippians 2:5-11," in *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (ed. Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 148. Cf. David G. Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark International, 1998), 243.

¹²⁵ Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*, 243.

reasoning in order to connect the model of the *exemplar* to the practical circumstance facing the imitator.

Using Fowl's language, 1 Cor 10:31-11:1 gives the basic shape of moral exemplar—Christ—as one who seeks the salvific good of others, but whose example must be applied by the copier to particular situations and particular relationships. Thus, if Paul's goal is truly for the Corinthians to “imitate Christ,” he must teach them the way of reasoning that fills in the gap between Christ's incarnate model and the practical dilemmas that confront the community.

This mode of reasoning is what Wayne Meeks identifies in an earlier article on Philippians 2 (that Fowl cites) as *phronēsis*.¹²⁶ Meeks argues that Paul's letter to the Philippians seeks to *shape* the community in a Christian *phronēsis*—i.e., in a practical moral reasoning that conforms to Christ's death and issues a civic life that is “worthy of the gospel of Christ.”¹²⁷

If our estimate of the relevance of 1 Cor 10:31-11:1 to the idol meat discourse and of the type of imitation Paul envisions (“non-identical repetition”) is correct, then the text itself demands a reading of the discourse from a perspective that teaches the Corinthians not only *what* to do in the case of idol meat, but *how* to fill in the gap between general example and practical context for all practical decisions—that is, how to reason with a Christian *phronēsis*. In this way, the various components of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1, including its doctrines, general exhortations, specific advice, and examples, not only instruct the

¹²⁶ Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Paul's Letter to the Philippians,” in *The Future of Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. Birger A. Pearson; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 329-336.

¹²⁷ Meeks, “Man from Heaven,” 333. Cf. Fowl, “Christology and Ethics,” 145.

Corinthians in *what to do*, they also function as exemplary components of a way of thinking that Paul teaches the community.

There is also a second aspect of Christian *phronēsis* that Paul teaches the Corinthians. In addition to imitating the mindset of the incarnate Christ in their relationships with others, the Corinthians must also think about practical decisions from the perspective of their standing as a community that constitutes Christ's body. The community is not only responsible to emulate Christ's incarnation to others, it also is called to be a dwelling that is worthy of God's Spirit. Paul addresses this aspect in 10:14-22.

This section builds on a collection of themes and images throughout the letter that characterize the Corinthians as a unified body now hosting God's Spirit on earth. In 3:16-17, Paul calls them a "temple of God" in which the Spirit of God dwells (3:16-17). In 6:12-20, a section that closely parallels 10:14-22, Paul identifies the Corinthians collectively as a 'body' of Christ and a "temple of the Holy Spirit" that should glorify God (6:19-20).

Moreover, Paul connects these images of body and temple to holiness, purity, and righteousness. Prior to characterizing the community as a body of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit in 6:12-20, he identifies the Corinthians as a community that was "washed, made holy, and justified by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God" (6:11). These realities are not just statements *about* the community; they are also principles that Paul desires the community to adopt as they think about their practical conduct.

Paul connects these principles both to wisdom and to practical issues facing the community. In 1:30, Paul identifies these principles as defining features of the wisdom of Christ, which also ought to be the wisdom of the community. Christ ‘became’ (ἐγενήθη—cf. 9:19-23) wisdom for the community, a wisdom Paul characterizes as ‘righteousness,’ ‘holiness,’ and ‘redemption.’¹²⁸ As the community thinks about becoming wise in Christ—these parameters define such wisdom. Moreover, this connection of wisdom to righteousness, holiness, and redemption suggests that the recurrence of these types of principles in 6:11 (e.g., ‘purity,’ ‘sanctification,’ and ‘righteousness’) intends to set a framework of thinking about the practical issues he lists in 6:9-10, including sexual conduct and worship practices (e.g., the two themes that occupy 6:12-11:1).

Though Paul does not use terms such as purity, holiness, and righteousness in 10:14-22, the connection of the body of Christ imagery in these verses to the body of Christ imagery in 6:12-20 suggests that these same principles—e.g., purity, holiness, righteousness—underlie 10:14-22. Just as 6:12-20 continues the thought of purity, holiness, and righteousness from 6:9-11 with respect to sexual immorality, so too does 10:14-22 once again pick up on this same mindset in the practical context of idolatry.

Thus, like 6:12-20, we characterize Paul’s advice and teaching in 10:14-22 as a contingent expression, or practical manifestation, of a core understanding. The implied framework of thought that founds his command to “flee idolatry” is to live as a Christic body, i.e., a body worthy of God’s Spirit. By appealing to them as φρόνιμοι, Paul

¹²⁸ Cf. 3:16-19. After characterizing the community as a holy temple of God, he exhorts the Corinthians that all who think themselves to be wise ought to become fools in order to become wise. That is, they ought to adopt the foolish mindset of the cross in order to gain wisdom.

indicates that he wants them to adopt the ensuing “body of Christ” framework (10:16-17) as a way of thinking about idolatry and meal practices. The discussion of bodily forming meal practices (10:16-22) helps the community gain a phronetic sensibility of the types of idol meat meals that constitute idolatry.

4. Methodology

To draw out the way 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 shapes the Corinthians’ practical reasoning, we read Paul beside Seneca, a moralist contemporary of Paul who teaches practical reasoning to future public figures in the Roman Empire. Ancient teachers were strongly cognizant of the need to create competent moral agents. Morality was at the heart of what it meant to be a responsible adult and a good citizen. For many ancient teachers, responsible adulthood meant more than behaving appropriately. It meant possessing practical wisdom—that is, the ability to *discern* appropriate moral behavior in the context of daily life.

Our decision to read Paul next to Seneca rather than next to another moralist or a teacher of rhetoric is conceptual, not historical. Our purpose is not to locate Paul in the context of ancient moral education. Unlike Malherbe, Glad, and others, we do not engage the moralist tradition for the purpose of identifying ways Paul shares the thought world of the philosophers.¹²⁹ Our goal is different. We contend that while Paul uses philosophical concepts and terminology as he interacts with a Corinthian community that is filled with philosophical wanderlust, the mindset and mode of thinking that he teaches—

¹²⁹ Because our study does not attempt to locate Paul in a philosophical way of thinking, it is not dependent upon the popularity or widespread nature of a Seneca’s mode of instruction or framework of thinking. This is a distinct contrast to Glad, whose project directly depends on the connection between Paul and Epicurean thought (e.g., *Paul and Philodemus*, 4-12)

and that he himself embodies—is Christic, not “philosophical,” in origin, form, and content.

We read Paul next to Seneca because we think Seneca offers a helpful lens for *modern readers* to see Paul’s goal and mode of teaching in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. Seneca shows that moral conduct is closely connected to a disposition, mindset, and way of thinking that guides conduct. He teaches his students a type of practical wisdom that applies core doctrines and values of Stoic thinking to the everyday affairs of life in the Roman Empire. To instruct the way of reasoning he wishes his students to adopt, he uses various modes of moral exhortation, including general precepts, specific advice, and *exempla*.

Two things are true of these modes of exhortation. First, separately, the various modes are insufficient guides to moral thinking. General exhortations are too general for a student to apply appropriately to practical affairs. Specific advice, while immediately applicable, does not easily translate to other spheres and so does not help the student see beyond the immediate.

This observation leads to a second one. Seneca’s instruction demonstrates that these modes of exhortation, when in the service of teaching a certain mindset and way of thinking, no longer have solely a prescriptive function. They also serve as components that illustrate the mindset and way of thinking Seneca teaches.

We contend that Seneca’s means of instruction is also an appropriate way to read Paul’s goal and instruction in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. Like Seneca’s *Epistulae*, 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 contains theological statements, general exhortations and maxims, *exempla*, and specific advice. Also like Seneca, Paul *applies* the theological doctrines, general exhortations,

and examples to various practical scenarios and circumstances. In light of a third aspect of Seneca's instruction—that he does not always offer exhortations, examples, or specific advice for prescriptive purposes—we contend that 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 does not apply theological doctrines and general exhortations to specific scenarios in order simply to tell the Corinthians how to act in different circumstances involving idol meat. Rather, these elements aid Paul's central goal for the Corinthians to adopt a mindset and way of thinking that glorifies God and imitates the mind of the incarnate Christ.

5. Overview of Argument in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1

Before turning to a fuller discussion of Seneca and 1 Corinthians, we offer a brief overview of Paul's argument as it appears in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. We highlight the ways these chapters reorient the Corinthians' self-understanding and mindset and teach them how to reason in a mode that embodies Christ and honors God.

First Corinthians 8:1 directs the wise away from their individualistic mindset and invites them to adopt the mindset and disposition of 'love,' defined—like "imitation of Christ"—as "what builds up" (8:1). In 8:2-3, Paul exhorts the wise to adopt a mindset of humility with respect to their wisdom and urges them instead to think about their relationship to God not in terms of their gifts (i.e., 'knowledge'), but in terms of a mindset that seeks display standing in God by acts of love.

First Corinthians 8:4-13 introduce the way of thinking that is characterized by 'love.' After affirming the Corinthians' theological 'right' to eat idol meat (8:4-6), the section delineates the various circumstantial components that the wise need to consider as they decide what action best 'builds up' others (8:7-13). Paul reflects on the qualities and characteristics of others in the community (i.e., that some are 'weak' and in the custom of

idol worship) (8:7), the significance of the issue in question (8:8), the influence the actions of the wise have on others (8:10), the consequences others suffer when the wise act improperly (8:7, 9, 11), and the theological value that accompanies causing others to stumble (8:12). The chapter also offers a concrete scenario in which the general principle applies to real-life settings (8:10). In the last verse, Paul evaluates these circumstances in light of “what builds up others” in a self-example, thereby creating a general principle that applies to the idol meat issue: if what is *adiaphora* causes a fellow believer to stumble, I will forgo my right in the gospel (8:13 [cf. 8:9]).

In 1 Cor 9, Paul defends himself against questions about his apostleship and apostolic freedom in a way that also illustrates the mode of reasoning he teaches. The chapter functions both as defense and example because the same mindset and reasoning—that of the incarnate Christ—underlies *both* decisions. Though he is very aware that he possesses a certain standing and rights in the gospel, he does not define his apostolicity on the basis of his possession of rights, but in *how* he uses such rights. In 9:15-18, he shows that he does not consider that his response to his apostolic calling incurs reward. He views himself as a compelled steward who has been entrusted with a commission. He gains reward, thus, not simply by carrying out his calling, but from *how* he exercises the rights that accompany his calling.

The rubric of thought that guides his decision making (i.e., *how* he exercises his gifts) is Christ’s mindset to “become like” humanity in order to save them (9:19-23). The mark of true freedom in Christ and true apostolicity is not about the possession of rights, but about using rights in a way that displays the incarnate Christ to others. Such a

mindset guides both his refusal of financial support from the community (9:1-18) and his decision to abstain from idol meat around the weak (8:13).

First Corinthians 9:24-27 functions both as conclusion of 1 Cor 9 and bridge to 1 Cor 10:1-22. Using athletic imagery, Paul reinforces the idea that merely being in the race does not gain one a reward. All compete, but not all win. Reward depends on *how* the athlete competes in the games. Thus, the theme of 9:24-27 echoes 9:15-18.

Appropriate self-understanding in the gospel does not depend on what one possesses but *what* one does with his or her possessions.

As Paul transitions from contexts in which eating idol meat is *adiaphora* to contexts in which it is idolatrous, the same self-understanding remains operative. In contrast to the athlete who competes effectively in the games, however, the account of Israel (10:1-13) illustrates a community that relied heavily on its spiritual privileges and gave no regard for *how* they ‘competed.’ They committed sexual immorality, idolatry, tested Christ, and grumbled, and, as a result, encountered destruction in the wilderness. In light of this negative example, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to adopt a humble mindset and consider *that* they will fall if they do not use their gifts responsibly.

First Corinthians 10:14-22 shift from an emphasis on self-understanding in the gospel to *how* the Corinthians should exercise their gifts. This progression resembles the trajectory of 1 Cor 9:15-18 and 9:19-23. Just as 1 Cor 9 shifts from an appropriate disposition in view of an individual’s calling in the gospel (9:15-18) to *how* an individual should exercise their ‘rights’ in the gospel (9:19-23), so does 1 Cor 10. In the case of idolatry, the appropriate course of action is to ‘flee’ (10:14). In 10:15-22, Paul attunes the Corinthians’ minds to the types of meals that constitute idolatry. They cannot do

anything that violates their participation in the body of Christ. Because sacrificial meals—such as the Eucharist—are “body”-forming activities, meals devoted to pagan gods are to be avoided.

Finally, 10:23-11:1 returns to the contexts Paul addresses in 8:1-9:27 and summarily concludes the discourse. The two initial verses (10:23-24) transcend a way of decision making that depends on rule-following and establish categories that demand independent reasoning. Decisions are to be made on the basis of the benefit and upbuilding of others, not on the basis of lawfulness. In 10:25-30, Paul finally offers the community specific advice on practical conduct. Yet, as we will demonstrate, rather than simply serving as ‘rules’ for the community to follow, the advice takes on an additional role in light of Paul’s overarching goal to shape the community in a form of Christian *phronēsis*. As the Corinthians progress from rule-following to independent reasoning, the advice in 10:25-30 functions more and more as *demonstrations* of practical reasoning, and less and less as *prescriptions* of action. The four concluding verses (10:31-11:1) assert the general principles that guide the mode of reasoning Paul teaches. All things are to be done with the glory of God and for the upbuilding of others unto salvation. This mindset and way of thinking defines *imitatio Christi*.

These varied components of 8:1-11:1 contribute uniformly to Paul’s goal for the community to embody the love of the incarnate Christ to one another and outsiders and to be a body that is a worthy dwelling of God’s Spirit. Our ensuing discussion explores Paul’s way of teaching this goal. After discussing Seneca’s purpose and means of instruction (chapter 2), we examine Paul’s argument in the order it appears in 1 Corinthians. Our chapter 3 establishes the background of the letter, the Corinthian

argument for eating idol meat, and Paul's response in 1 Cor 8. Chapter 4 discusses 1 Cor 9's function as both apology and example. Chapter 5 focuses specifically on 10:1-22, while chapter 6 analyzes how the various components of 10:23-30 fit into the logic of 8:1-10:22. Finally, the concluding chapter revisits Paul's argument in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 as a whole and provides an overview of the unifying logic of the discourse.

Chapter 2: Moral Education in Seneca

1. The Goal of Moral Formation

The Stoic understanding of the goal of life pertains to practical living. Stoic ethics was not about assent to propositions or theoretical doctrines alone. It was fundamentally concerned with the enactment of Nature's propositions in the realm of moral conduct. Individuals achieved the goal of life by carrying out the propositions of Nature in and by their actions.¹ Accordingly, the purpose of Stoic moral education was to help students become independent thinkers who "live in agreement with Nature" (commonly referred to by the Stoics as the Supreme Good or "living virtuously") in their practical affairs.² With this in mind, Stoic teachers brought students through programs of study that would enable them to apply their theoretical knowledge to the ever-changing circumstances of practical life. The area of philosophy devoted to this process was identified as *phronēsis*.

Phronēsis was not tied to any single philosophical school. As common philosophical parlance, it could signify (1) the realm of philosophy that applies the consistent, never-changing principles of the Laws of Nature to the ever-changing decisions of daily life and (2) an individual's capacity to exercise choice between things that are consistent with, and contrary to, Nature.³ Whether an area of philosophy or a

¹ From their beginning, the Stoics believed that the universe, including humans, was governed by a rational and intrinsically good natural principle, variously called Nature, Right Reason, God, Law of Nature, etc. (Diogenes Laertius 7.87-88); see Brad Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 107. The principle established the natural constitution of humans and their position in relation to one another and to universal Nature. Belief in the inherent goodness of this principle urged the Stoics to live in agreement with its end.

² Diogenes Laertius 7.87. The formulations mark a shorthand way of stating that life's end is to do everything in line with human nature and with Nature as a whole (Diogenes Laertius 7.87-89).

³ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.31. Cf. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 107. The "things that are consistent with and contrary to nature" is Cicero's way of stating that *prudentia* involves both knowledge of the principles of

capacity, *phronēsis* was consistently characterized by philosophers as the field of practical decision. Aristotle describes it as “a knowledge of general principles” that “must take account of particular facts, since it is concerned with action (*praxis*) and action deals with particular things.”⁴ Similarly, Epicurus defines *phronēsis* as the virtue that judges what to select and avoid in practical affairs.⁵ Latin authors, too, shared the Greek concept of *phronēsis*, using the term, *prudentia*. For instance, Cicero has Cato declare that *prudentia* is the “knowledge of the working of natural causes, choosing what is in accordance with nature and rejecting what is contrary to it.”⁶ Cicero’s statement focuses on the connection between knowledge of Nature and practical selections and rejections of objects and affairs. The statement highlights the important role practical decision making plays in Stoic ethics. Stoic moral development, and its goal of the Supreme Good, depends on how an individual interacts with objects and circumstances in the course of daily life—and *prudentia* is the capacity that makes this possible.⁷

In relation to other Stoics, Seneca does not use the term *prudentia* regularly and only occasionally names it as the virtue of selection and avoidance. In the few places he does use it, he, like his moralist colleagues, equates it with the aspect of virtue that is

Nature and the ability to know what choices in practical conduct are consistent with these principles and which contradict them.

⁴ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1141b (Rackham, LCL).

⁵ “For what produces the pleasant life is...sober reasoning which tracks down the causes of every choice and avoidance...Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is prudence” (Diogenes Laertius 10.132; trans. Anthony A. Long and David N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1: Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 114).

⁶ Cicero, *Fin.* 3.31 (Rackham, LCL). Cf. *Off.* 1.153: “by prudence, which [the Greeks] call φρόνησις, we understand...the practical knowledge of things to be sought for and to be avoided” (Miller, LCL).

⁷ Cf. Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.59.4 and 2.60.9, “prudence [φρόνησις] is the science of what should and should not be done and of neutral actions, or the science of things that are good and bad and neutral as applied to a creature whose nature is social...To prudence [φρόνησις] are subordinated good sense, good calculation, quick-wittedness, discretion, resourcefulness” (trans. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 380). Cf. Plutarch, *Comm. not.* 1071B: “the prudent [φρονίμως] selection and acceptance of those things is the goal, whereas the things themselves and the obtaining of them are not the goal but are given as a kind of matter having ‘selective value...’” (Cherniss, LCL).

responsible for conduct. Letter 120 names ‘prudence’ as the part of virtue that “discerns action” and subsequently describes the virtuous man as the one who does not lack in *prudencia* “in actions to be done.”⁸ In *Ep.* 74, Seneca illustrates prudence’s role in practical conduct by narrating a decision that requires sensitivity to circumstantial particularities. The case involves selecting objects that generally accord with Nature (food and money) in the context of a festival dole. The selection of food or money would require an individual to participate in the quarreling and craving of the masses.⁹ Though the general policy of selecting natural advantages directs the individual to seek out the distributed items, the prudent person will recognize that the special circumstances of the situation (i.e., competition with others) make the normally appropriate choice ill-advised. The attendant circumstances of the situation deem the normally expected behavior unwise. The *prudens* possesses the capacity to exercise proper choice by weighing practical circumstances in light of more general Stoic principles. The gain of money and food is little reward if it requires a sacrifice of honor.¹⁰

These references make up the bulk of Seneca’s discussion of the actual term. However, if we can rightly assume that Cicero’s definition of *prudencia*, (determining “what is to be sought” and “what is to be avoided”), is true for Seneca, *prudencia* begins to appear much more frequently in his letters. The phrase, “what is to be sought or what is to be avoided,” and variations of it, appears so regularly that *prudencia* is a central

⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 120.10-11 (Gummere, LCL). All translations of Seneca are from Gummere, LCL, unless otherwise noted.

⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.7-9: “Therefore, the most prudent man, as soon as he sees the trifling gifts being brought in, flees the theatre; he knows that he must endure great things to receive these small gifts” (*Ep.* 74.7; my translation). Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.7.19-24.

¹⁰ In many cases, the *prudens* will seek out things that are beneficial to his nature. He does so, however, with the belief that attaining the preferred indifferent does not add to his happiness (*Ep.* 85.21). The good that results from seeking a preferred indifferent is that it accords with human nature to select it (e.g., *Ep.* 92.11-13). Seneca also discusses *prudencia* in *Ep.* 74.15, 77.6, and 85.2.

pedagogical concern of the letters.¹¹ The clearest expression of this goal occurs in *Ep.* 71. The letter responds to Lucilius's continual request for advice (*consilium*) in particular situations. Rather than acceding to the request, Seneca proposes to show Lucilius how he may discover answers to such practical questions on his own. Seneca chooses to describe these practical questions with the same basic phrase Cicero uses to describe the object of prudence's discernment, *quid fugiendum sit aut quid petendum* ("what is to be avoided or what is to be sought").¹² The phrase occurs in the letter's thesis: *Quotiens, quid fugiendum sit aut quid petendum voles scire, ad summum bonum, propositum totius vitae tuae, respice.*¹³ The placement of this circumlocution for *prudencia* in the letter's thesis suggests that 'prudence' is the objective of the letter. The letter proceeds to detail the nature of the Supreme Good in order to teach Lucilius how to determine appropriate courses of action in his daily affairs.

Letter 89 discusses theoretically what *Ep.* 71 displays practically. The letter explains that the moral side of philosophy has three parts: the 'theoretical' (θεωρητική; *inspectio*), the 'impulsive' (ὀρμητική; *impetus*), and the 'practical' (πρακτική; *actione*).¹⁴ The first and third parts are of most interest for our present discussion. These two describe the interplay between knowing the principles of Nature and deploying those principles in practical conduct. The first part, the 'theoretical,' assigns valuations to everything encountered in the world (e.g., objects, qualities, events, etc.). The third part,

¹¹ E.g., *Ep.* 66.6, 19; 94.12; 104.16; 117.21. Similar phrasing occurs at *Ep.* 59.14 (*adpetere*); 67.9 (*petedere*); 80.5 (*petedere*); 92.11-13 (*petedere*); 94.48 (*facienda ac vitanda*); 94.50 (*hoc vitabis, hoc facies*); 116.3 (*petedere* alone); 118.9 (*petedere*); 121.3 (*quid faciendum tibi, quid vitandum sit*); 122.8 (*vitandus*). For occurrences of *fugere* or *petedere* in relation to conduct, see *Ep.* 58.36. Seneca attributes this role to *sapientia, philosophia* (*Ep.* 16.3), and *ratio* (*Ep.* 84.11).

¹² Cicero, *Fin.* 3.31: *seligentem quae secundum naturam et quae contra naturam sint reicientem* and *Off.* 1.153: *quae est rerum expetendarum fugiendarumque scientia*.

¹³ Seneca, *Ep.* 71.2: "As much as you want to know what is to be avoided or what is to be sought, consider the Supreme Good, the purpose of your whole life" (my translation).

¹⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 89.14.

the ‘practical,’ deals with knowing exactly “when, where, and how” to put valuations into action.¹⁵ As exemplified by *Ep.* 71, speculative knowledge is prior to, and necessary for, practical reasoning to be carried out properly. When Lucilius asks for *actione*, Seneca teaches him the nature of the Supreme Good (an aspect of *inspectio*) so that he can apply it to *actione*. *Inspectio* is essential if Lucilius is to reason through practical decisions on his own.¹⁶

The rubric between theoretical knowledge and practical application reflects the common Stoic belief that right perception leads to right action. Accordingly, moral education involves more than *praecepta*, the area of philosophical training commonly associated with *πρακτική/actione*. The advancing student must also have a framework of reasoning to determine appropriate action in practical circumstances.

This holistic framework of decision making reveals the Stoic position concerning the role of precepts in moral education. The Stoics explicitly denied that precepts alone could create ‘prudence.’ Before examining the Stoic criticism of precepts, we must first establish a sufficient nomenclature for the discussion.

Excursus: Classifications of *Praecepta*

Seneca identifies *praecepta* with *paraenesis*, the department of philosophy that concerns conduct.¹⁷ The systematic discussion in *Ep.* 94 delineates various classes of precepts, such as *consolationes*, *dissuasiones*, *adhortationes*, *obiurgationes*, and

¹⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 89.15: “What benefit is there in having checked your impulses and in having your desires in your own control, if when you come to action you are unaware of the proper times and seasons, and if you do not know when, where, and how each action should be carried out?”

¹⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 94.45: “virtue is divided into two parts—into contemplation of truth and conduct (*actionem*). Training (*institutio*) teaches contemplation, and admonition (*admonitio*) teaches conduct (*actionem*);” *Ep.* 94.47: “Virtue depends partly upon training (*disciplina*), partly on practice (*exercitatio*); you must learn first, and then strengthen your learning by action (*agendo*);” and *Ep.* 94.48: “philosophy is divided into knowledge and state of mind. For one who has learned and understood what he should do and avoid, is not a wise man until his mind is metamorphosed into the shape of that which he has learned.”

¹⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.1, 3. Cf. 94.45. While Seneca uses *praecepta* interchangeably with *monitiones* (a reminding, advice, admonition, warning [Lewis and Short, rev., enl., s.v. *monitio*]) (e.g., *Ep.* 94.12, 21, 24, 39, 55) and *admonitiones* (recalling to mind, suggestion, mild admonition [Lewis and Short, rev., enl., s.v. *admonitio*]) (e.g., *Ep.* 94.31-32, 44-46, 50), he appears to conceive of *praecepta* as the medium by which *admonitio* is given (94.44).

laudationes, as well as various functions, including reminding the mind of things it already knows, organizing appropriate duties, correcting false beliefs, and prescribing action.¹⁸ While Seneca names the classes and functions of precepts, he does not distinguish between their *forms*. He distinguishes neither between descriptive and prescriptive nor specific and general forms of precepts. His discussion displays several forms of precepts, such as prescriptive, general “rules,” descriptive maxims, and specific advice, none of which he systematically classifies.

In response to this problem, Ian Kidd’s 1970s investigation of Seneca identified two subsets of precepts: *proēgmena*-type rules and instructions.¹⁹ *Proēgmena*-type rules refer to the general directives that derive from the Stoic classification of ‘preferred’ (*proēgmena*) and ‘dispreferred’ (*apoproēgmena*) indifferents.²⁰ Preferred indifferents are natural objects and states that are generally preferential and beneficial for individuals to select, such as life, health, wealth, noble birth, fame, and natural mental ability.²¹ Dispreferred indifferents refer to the category of “unnatural” objects and states that are typically harmful, such as death, sickness, poverty, low birth and lack of mental ability.²² Kidd argues that *proēgmena*-type precepts are the corresponding general guidelines for selection and avoidance of objects and states that are on the list of preferred and dispreferred indifferents.²³ Such rules prescribe actions that are generally preferable (e.g., *proēgmena*) and prohibit actions that are typically discouraged (e.g., *apoproēgmena*). For instance, a *proēgmena*-rule instructs an individual to choose health and wealth in situations where he or she has a choice between health and wealth and sickness and poverty.

If *proēgmena* rules are general prescriptions, “instructional” precepts advise particular actions.²⁴ They provide advice when the preceptor has full knowledge of the

¹⁸ For the classes see, *Ep.* 94.39; cf. 94.21, 44. For memory (*Ep.* 13.15; 94.21, 26); organizing (*Ep.* 94.21 and 29); casting out false opinions (*Ep.* 94.33); prescription (*Ep.* 94.23).

¹⁹ Ian Kidd, “Moral Actions and Rules in Stoic Ethics,” *The Stoics* (ed. John M. Rist; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 247-58. These categories are Kidd’s. Seneca does not classify precepts according to their prescriptive function.

²⁰ The term, ‘indifferent(s)’ (in noun form) is used by classical scholars to translate the Greek term, ἀδιάφορα (Latin: *media*). The Greek term denotes the morally neutral (i.e., indifferent) category of objects, circumstances, and actions between virtue and vice or happiness and unhappiness (e.g., Diogenes Laertius, 7.101-05). Hicks translates ἀδιάφορα as ‘indifferent,’ using only the adjectival form (Diogenes Laertius 7.102, 104-05 [Hicks, LCL]). Later scholars would use ‘indifferent’ as a noun to denote the class of morally indifferent things (e.g., Margaret E. Reesor, “The “Indifferents” in the Old and Middle Stoa,” *TAPA* 82 [1951]: 102-110; Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 358-59; Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotion, Duties, and Fate* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005], 144; Brad Inwood, “Rules and Reasoning in Stoic Ethics,” in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy* [ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 101; Rachel Barney, “A Puzzle in Stoic Ethics,” *OSAP* 24 [2003]: 303-40, esp. 307-19; Nicholas White, “Nature and Regularity in Stoic Ethics,” *OSAP* 3 [1985]: 289-305).

²¹ Diogenes Laertius 7.106.

²² Diogenes Laertius 7.106.

²³ Kidd, “Moral Actions,” 251-52.

²⁴ Seneca does not specify “instruction” as a sub-category of precepts. The term he uses most commonly for advice or counsel for specific decisions is *consilium*. For example, the term, *consilium*, in *Ep.* 71.1 refers to prescriptive advice that depends on the circumstances of a situation. Though Kidd does not cite *Ep.* 71, this reference best reflects the “instructional” function of precepts. Cf. 10.2, “*Nemo est ex imprudentibus*, who should be left alone; in such cases he makes bad *consilia* (‘decisions’) and heaps up future dangers for himself;” 14.6, “the wise man considers the *consilium* (‘strategy’) for all his deeds, not the results;” 16.3, “countless things happen every hour that call for *consilium* (‘advice’);” 17.2-3 where

details of a particular occasion. This type of precept is the kind Lucilius seeks in *Ep.* 71 (see p. 60 above). It concerns situations that are to be addressed “at short notice.”²⁵ The teacher can only advise what should be done if he has knowledge of the time, place, and person in each particular occasion.²⁶

Kidd’s classification offers a more specific and systematized nomenclature for the forms of Seneca’s *praecepta*. We find Kidd’s analysis helpful, but with two qualifications. First, Kidd amalgamates *proēgmena* rules with the closely related Stoic concept of *kathēkonta* by defining *proēgmena* rules generally as lists that prescribe *kathēkonta*. While the *proēgmena* category of precepts bears close association with the Stoic concept of *kathēkonta* (Latin: *officia*; English: ‘appropriate action’), *kathēkonta* are not identical to *proēgmena*. *Proēgmena* and *apoproēgmena* lists focus on the preservation of the individual. While *kathēkonta* include self-preservation, they also focus more broadly on an individual’s moral responsibility that extends beyond self-preservation.²⁷ All beings possess a natural tendency toward self-preservation, but adult humans also possess a level of rationality that demands personal morality and social responsibility.²⁸ In many cases, what is appropriate for self-preservation aligns with universal Nature. In these cases, selecting a *proēgmena* is also a *kathēkon*. However, circumstances may arise when the demands of virtue counteract the demands of individual self-preservation. These circumstances may include displays of temperance such as refusing luxurious possessions or positions of power, self-sacrificial acts of justice or bravery that benefit one’s fellow humans or country, or other duties that fulfill moral obligation. In such circumstances, it may become appropriate for an individual not to select a *proēgmena*—and, instead, select an *apoproēgmena*—because doing so best fulfills moral duty.

Thus, while *kathēkonta* include *proēgmena*-lists, the terms are not equivalent.²⁹ *Proēgmena*-rules are not always *kathēkonta*. Certain *kathēkonta* may require selection of

wisdom provides *consilium* (‘council’) not to sit “forever at your ledger;” 22.1 where the gladiator makes his *consilium* (‘strategy’) in the arena; 67.10 (*bis*) where *prudētia* enables action; 77.5 where Marcellinus’s friends give him *consilium* (‘advice’) on whether to commit suicide; 94.20, “the physician’s art supplements remedies by *consilium* (‘advice’); 104.6 “*consilium* (‘prescription’) of travel” to cure illness; 109.14, the wise man will apply to others for *consilium* in state and domestic duties; 121.21, animals seek that which helps them and shrink from what harms them without *consilio* (‘advice’). Seneca does not use the term solely in the sense of “advice for specific circumstances;” *consilium* can also refer to general council (e.g., *Ep.* 19.12; 22.2; 109.15), general plans of action (*Ep.* 47.13; 52.1; 67.12; 68.1; 74.11; 83.2; 98.7; 115.17; 120.21), a guiding purpose (e.g., *Ep.* 23.8; 88.9), and judgment (116.1; 120.10).

²⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 71.1.

²⁶ E.g., Seneca, *Ben.* 1.12.3, concerning the bestowal of benefits.

²⁷ Stoics derive *kathēkonta* for adults through observations of the virtues. “Moral responsibility” includes an awareness of individual (e.g., temperance and bravery) and social aspects (e.g., justice) of virtue. *Proēgmena* and *apoproēgmena* precepts, on the other hand, are preliminary value assessments of items, and their corresponding actions, on the basis of natural preservation. They derive from what Nature sets as beneficial for an individual’s self-preservation, but do not consider moral responsibility.

²⁸ Temperance is a personal virtue. It concerns “good discipline, seemliness, modesty, self-control” (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.60.9; trans. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 380). Justice, on the other hand, refers to social responsibility. It is “the science concerned with distributing individual deserts” and concerns “honesty, equity, fair dealing” (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.59.4; 60.9; trans. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 380).

²⁹ *Kathēkonta* are not a list of moral duties. The term signifies types of conduct that are appropriate for the level of innate rationality a being possesses. For instance, plants, animals, and infant and young humans

an *apoproēgmena*. This distinction helps us to see that the Stoics offer three classes of precepts (opposed to Kidd's two). First, we may speak of "self-preserving *kathēkonta*" as precepts that consist of general recommendations for an individual's self-preservation. This class of precepts constitutes Kidd's "*proēgmena*-rules." These rules are the baseline standard for what is appropriate as long as an individual's actions do not impede moral obligation. Second, "moral-preserving *kathēkonta*" are precepts which derive from the Stoics' sense of moral rectitude.³⁰ These *kathēkonta* maintain the virtues, including one's responsibility to self (e.g., courage, self-control) and to others (e.g., justice). Finally, Kidd's category of "instruction" remains intact. This category issues advice for particular situations.

Second, like most modern scholars, Kidd misrepresents *praecepta* as "rules."³¹ While *praecepta* certainly take the form of prescriptive rules, they do not always do so. This mis-classification occurs mainly in the *kathēkonta* subset of *praecepta* (so, Kidd's *proēgmena*-rules; my "self-preserving" and "moral-preserving" *kathēkonta*).³² When these general precepts remind the mind of things it already knows, organize appropriate duties, and correct false beliefs, they can appear as general, prescriptive rules or descriptive maxims that are not rules at all, but pithy truisms or pieces of knowledge.³³

This misrepresentation highlights a shortcoming in Kidd's assessment of how both types of precepts function. The term, "rule," too closely aligns the prescriptive capacity of precepts with the idea of a command to follow. The rigid equation of precepts with rules too greatly simplifies and distorts the function of rules in moral education. A key focus in the later pedagogical analysis of *praecepta* will be to show that *prescriptive* precepts also function demonstratively.

(i.e., non-reasoning beings) function properly by partaking in self-preserving actions, namely, seeking out the essentials of life. Their reasoning faculty and social awareness are not yet developed enough for them to do anything but act impulsively to protect and preserve themselves. Hence, anytime a plant, animal, or child acts out of self-preservation (i.e., the types of items infants and children seek form the basis of *proēgmena* lists), it performs a *kathēkon*. As the child becomes an adult, however, two important changes occur: rationality replaces instinct and a social awareness develops. An adult may choose the same items as a child (e.g., the things of self-preservation), but now the adult *rationaly selects* those items because he *reasons* that they are beneficial for his natural constitution (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.59). At times, he might decide that selecting an item on the basis of self-preservation violates a sense of moral rectitude—e.g., courage or self-control. In these cases, he may select items that harm his body. A similar reservation may arise from an adult's social awareness. Since adult humans have a consciousness that extends beyond the self (e.g., to family, friends, and country), an adult may choose to act against self-preservation for the sake of a social benefit (e.g., Cicero, *Off.* 1.12). Accordingly, at the adult stage of human development, *kathēkonta* for adults are no longer defined as they are for young humans. For an adult's action to be a *kathēkon*, it must fulfill the criteria of moral propriety and not simply self-preservation.

³⁰ Seneca writes that precepts set in order the 'duties' (*officiis*) which 'prudence' and 'justice' (i.e., the virtues) require (*Ep.* 94.33). Similarly, Cicero introduces his *De officiis* stating that *officia* are the duties laid down on the basis of the "Supreme Good" (*Off.* 1.7).

³¹ Kidd, "Moral Actions," 250-52.

³² "Instructions" typically occur in *prescriptive* form.

³³ For precepts in the form of general, descriptive maxims, see *Ep.* 94.43-44, 46. For instance, Seneca classifies as a precept the maxim, "The greedy mind is satisfied by no gains" (94.43), which is not a rule, but merely a truth statement. For precepts in the form of general or specific prescriptive commands, see *Ep.* 94.50.

As we examine the role of precepts in moral pedagogy, we proceed with a three-fold classification: self-preserving *kathēkonta*, moral-preserving *kathēkonta*, and instructions.

2. Problems with Precepts in Paraenesis

2.1. Self-Preserving Precepts

The Stoics generally agree that all three classes of precepts are insufficient. The first category, self-preserving *kathēkonta*, is often too rigid to account for possible exceptions. Occasionally, self-preserving *kathēkonta* conflict with moral-preserving *kathēkonta*. In circumstances where an individual's advantage ceases to fulfill moral duty (e.g., the situations discussed in the *excursus*), the self-preserving *kathēkonta* does not direct the individual to select the appropriate course of action.³⁴

Cicero's treatise *De officiis* includes many examples where seeking one's own advantage is delimited by moral obligations to others. In one example, an Alexandrian grain shipper arrives in Rhodes in the midst of a famine. The shipper is aware that another boat will arrive a day or so behind him.³⁵ Cicero questions whether it is more appropriate for the shipper to seek the highest price he can obtain for the grain or to inform the Rhodians that another ship is soon arriving, which would drive down the price of grain. The example places a *proēgmena* item (i.e., wealth) in the context of a broader social framework that requires the shipper to consider others. Cicero determines that the shipper acts most appropriately if he does not seek his own interest, but considers the good of the other by informing the Rhodians of the second ship. In this case, pursuing the *proēgmena* item—as directed by a self-preserving *kathēkonta*—would not be the ideal

³⁴ Cf. Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 358: "The role of moral judgment is to decide whether, given the objective preferability of health to sickness, it is right to make that difference the paramount consideration in determining what one should do in the light of all the circumstances."

³⁵ Cicero, *Off.* 3.50-53.

course of action. Mindfulness of the Rhodians' needs overrides the individual's pursuit of his self-advantage.³⁶

Seneca, too, finds *proēgmena*-precepts lacking. In the earlier discussion of the food and coin distribution at a festival gathering (*Ep.* 74), a *proēgmena* list would direct individuals to acquire the distributed items. Yet Seneca determines that the special circumstances of the situation render the normally appropriate choice ill-advisable. Acquisition of food and money would require the individual to compete among the quarrels and cravings of the masses; thereby subjecting himself to vicious and dishonorable acts. Thus, the wise person chooses not to act on a self-preserving *kathēkon*. Doing so would violate moral decorum.³⁷

These two examples demonstrate modes of moral deliberation in which self-preserving *kathēkonta* are insufficient for decision making. In each case, the moral-preserving *kathēkon* qualifies the self-preserving *kathēkon*. In the Rhodian grain problem, the advantageous act for the seller—selling grain at a high price—is ill-advised because it violates the virtue of justice by seeking the good of self over the good of others. In Seneca's example, participation in the quarrels and cravings of the masses for food and money demonstrates lack of temperance. The moral-preserving *kathēkon* that directs the individual to live with temperance compels the *prudens* to refrain from selecting an object he is generally permitted to accept.

³⁶ In addition to the grain example, Cicero highlights the dilemma of disclosure in the sale of an unsound house. Is the appropriate course of action to sell the house at the highest price, not disclosing any of the problems if the buyer does not ask, or to inform the buyer of the problems and sell at a fair price? Cicero favors the latter course of action (*Off.* 3.54-56). In both cases (the grain and the house), the general mandates of justice dictate that everyone may pursue what is essential for the conduct of life (i.e., self-preserving *kathēkonta*), but may not seek to do so by impeding what is beneficial for another (*Off.* 3.22).

³⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.7-9. Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 4.7.19-24.

The shortcoming of self-preserving precepts extends even to situations where there is no violation of moral rectitude. Occasionally individuals are forced to decide between two choices *within* a group of preferred or dispreferred objects (rather than between them). A well-known Stoic example is the tension between the general injunction to choose life over death and the advanced student's prerogative to commit suicide. The Stoic preference of life to death is based on human nature's impulse toward self-preservation. For most rational agents, it is more proper to remain alive than to remove oneself from life. The wise man or the advanced student, however, may judge death to be the preferred course in certain cases. The Stoics permitted a wise man to commit a well-reasoned suicide in the face of a preponderance of things that are contrary to Nature—such as servitude, severe pain, or persistent illness.³⁸ Seneca lauds Cato's preference for death over servitude and a Spartan boy's decision to commit suicide rather than succumb to slave duties.³⁹ In another instance, Seneca tells of the chronically ill Marcellinus who decided to commit suicide rather than persist in sickness. Seneca regards each of these figures as an ideal moral thinker and judges their respective decisions for death as proper.⁴⁰

These three examples illustrate cases in which a person must decide between two items in the same category of indifferents. Sickness and slavery qualify the normally preferential option to choose life. In such circumstances, *proēgmena* precepts do not provide any basis for deciding the appropriate action because "life" is no longer a clear *proēgmena*. It becomes defined by *apoproēgmena*—e.g., sickness or servitude. Thus, the

³⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.130, "[The Stoics] tell us that the wise man will for reasonable cause make his own exit from life, on his country's behalf or for the sake of his friends, or if he suffer intolerable pain, mutilation, or incurable disease" (Hicks, LCL). Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.60-61.

³⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 77.14-15.

⁴⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 77.5-9.

choice is now between two *apoproēgmena*: sickness/servitude and death. For this reason, the Stoics judge that it is the prerogative for the wise man, alone, to commit suicide.

Performing the appropriate action in situations where no general rule supplies the answer requires the ability to discern the particular circumstances of the situation. This ability is possessed by the prudent person only.

2.2. Moral-Preserving Precepts

The Rhodian grain and food distribution examples bring to light an inadequacy of moral-preserving precepts. These precepts, including broad commands such as “live justly,” “live with temperance” and related maxims, are general injunctions that give little purchase on practical affairs. In the Rhodian grain example, the moral-preserving precept, “live justly,” overrides the self-preserving one. On its own, the command gives little practical guidance to the decision maker. The shipper must still assess the particular circumstances of the situation in order to reach a just decision. He must judge that famine is sufficient cause for him to forgo his normal right to seek a high price for his grain.⁴¹ Likewise, the *prudens* at the festival distribution must read the particular contours of the situation to determine that seeking food and money violates the Stoic ideal of temperance.

Letter 22 presents another instance in which fulfilling a moral-preserving precept requires knowledge of details. The letter addresses Lucilius’s question concerning retirement from the business world. Lucilius expects Seneca to give him a moral-preserving maxim on bravery (i.e., “it is base to flinch under a burden”), which he may apply to all situations, including his current dilemma. While the maxim promotes “bravery,” Seneca observes that details about the particular “burden” in question are

⁴¹ In grain transactions under normal circumstances, the self-preserving act would also be the just action.

necessary in order to determine whether the maxim holds true. The proposition applies only if the burden is worthy of a good person's endurance. Seneca's warning implies that Lucilius must consider contingent factors (i.e., whether the particular burden to be borne is worth bearing) rather than simply follow the maxim. Seneca judges that the burden in question, the professional business life, is, in fact, not worth bearing. The stresses and dangers associated with business affairs render such occupations unworthy of philosophical students. Had Lucilius adopted the rigid understanding of bravery reflected in the maxim, "never flinch under a burden," he would have failed to act bravely. Like acting justly, acting bravely requires more than following a general maxim or rule. It demands the ability to examine situational circumstances in light of the virtuous ideals.

In another instance, Cicero describes promise keeping as generally proper for the 'just' and 'good' man.⁴² Nonetheless, if an individual follows the rule of promise keeping universally, Cicero judges that he will not perform an appropriate action in all situations. The circumstances of an occasion may change in a way that makes breaking a promise the more appropriate act. Promises may be broken when one's life, health, or reputation is at stake or in cases when keeping a promise will be harmful to another. Cicero adduces Neptune's promise to grant Theseus a wish. When Theseus wishes for the death of his son in an enraged state, Neptune keeps his promise to Theseus. Cicero judges that Neptune should have broken his promise rather than act in accordance with what truth and honor typically demand. Neptune chose incorrectly because he failed to see that the circumstances of the situation (i.e., Theseus's rage) made the general moral

⁴² Cicero, *Off.* 1.31-32 and 3.89-95.

duty an inappropriate course of action. Neptune would have performed the appropriate act by not granting the request.⁴³

Returning favors and conferring benefits are other instances in which situational particularities demand more detail than the general rule supplies. General standards of honor dictate that a good man will return favors and confer benefits to others.⁴⁴ Yet many additional deliberative criteria are necessary to carry out these duties appropriately. In order to return a favor properly, the giver must consider “all the circumstances” in the exchange, including “how much he has received, from whom, when, where, how.”⁴⁵ Likewise, one who bestows a gift must take into account the “time, place, and person” to ensure that the benefaction is appropriate.⁴⁶

Seneca laments that these general types of precepts are inadequate because they are often not detailed enough to inform individuals precisely how to carry out the prescribed action. Teachers can give general rules to their pupils, but fulfillment of both types of precepts turns on many contingencies that these general rules do not consider. While the precepts may inform an individual what to do generally, they do not help the actor know “when to do certain things, and to what extent, and in whose company, and how, and why.”⁴⁷ Thus, these general precepts may enable students to accomplish the appropriate action in certain circumstances, but they cannot guarantee that they perform the best action in every circumstance. So long as a student is not able to contemplate the virtues in light of contextual circumstances, teachers must give advice for specific

⁴³ Cicero also determines that the general injunction against harming another human can be excepted under certain circumstances (*Off.* 3.18-19, 32). In cases of oppressive despotism, for instance, it is morally right to kill a tyrant (*Off.* 3.19).

⁴⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 81.1-3.

⁴⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 81.10.

⁴⁶ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.12.3 and 4.9.3.

⁴⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.5.

occasions in the moment, when consideration of full details can be conducted. For this reason, Seneca likens this capacity of moral guidance to a gladiator who plans his fighting in the ring. The gladiator analyzes the movements of each particular opponent to determine the best strategy of assault.⁴⁸ Likewise, teachers must know all the details of a certain dilemma in order to provide their pupils with an effective recommendation.⁴⁹ In order to determine how to act appropriately in all situations *on his or her own*, the pupil must gain a thorough understanding of the virtues. Only in this way can the individual determine whether or not the particular circumstances of the situation permit him to select what is normally and naturally preferable.

2.3. Advice

If self-preserving and moral-preserving precepts commonly suffer from being too general, short-range instruction, which advises specific courses of action for particular situations, is often too specific. As implied in the gladiator analogy, advice guarantees that an appropriate action happens in the moment. Nonetheless, this type of precept is so situationally dependent that it is not often reusable. Again, *Ep. 71* is instructive. Seneca writes:

You are continually referring special questions to me, forgetting that a vast stretch of sea sunders us. Since, however, the value of advice [*consilii*] depends mostly on the time when it is given, it must necessarily result that by the time my opinion on certain matters reaches you, the opposite opinion is better; for advice [*consilia*] conforms to circumstances...accordingly, advice should be produced at short notice...it should 'grow while we work. (*Ep. 71.1*)

⁴⁸ Seneca, *Ep. 22.1*.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Ep. 64.8* where Seneca uses the imagery of a doctor who must adapt prescriptions "to the particular disease and to the particular stage of the disease." The doctor instructs according to the case: "Use this prescription to relieve the granulation of the eyelids, that to reduce the swelling of the lids, this to prevent sudden pain or a rush of tears, that to sharpen the vision. Then compound several of these prescriptions, watch for the right time of their application, and apply the proper treatment in each case."

The situational sensitivity of advice prompts Seneca to dissuade Lucilius from continually writing with specific questions because the advice may no longer be appropriate when it returns. By the time Seneca's opinions reach Lucilius, changes in the contours of the original circumstance might severely alter his original recommendations.

Seneca's complaint captures a general Stoic skepticism toward specific advice and an equal discontent with students who merely seek advice from teachers with no attempt to reason autonomously. In the third century B.C., Cleanthes observed that precepts are mere feeble structures unless they are supported by philosophical principles of reasoning.⁵⁰ Three centuries later, Seneca agrees that precepts alone provide no regulatory principles that enable a person to perform all the appropriate categories of duty.⁵¹ Epictetus expresses a similar frustration as he writes, "it is wrong for a student to say to his teacher, 'Advise me' (ὕπόθου μοι). He should rather say, 'Enable my mind to adapt itself to whatever comes'...For if circumstances dictate something different, what will you say or what will you do?"⁵² Epictetus's comment implies that advice brings the student no closer to autonomous deliberation. Students who continually write to their teachers for advice in specific situations do not advance their moral thinking. They remain dependent on their teachers for instruction in every new situation. The only way students advance toward independent reasoning is through the instillation of a method of discernment.

We began our discussion of ancient moral education by defining *phronēsis* as the department of philosophy—or the virtue—which works between the general principles of

⁵⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.4.

⁵¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.12. Precepts give "...no rule by which he may regulate his acts and which he may trust to tell him whether that which he has done is right" (95.39). Cf. *Ep.* 95.45, 48-49, 59.

⁵² Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.2.21-24 (Oldfather, LCL).

Nature and the outworking of those principles in practical conduct. To become *phronimoi*, individuals must have both a strong theoretical grasp of the virtues and the laws of Nature and a practical understanding of how to apply the theoretical principles in daily life. This aim leaves moral pedagogues with a two-fold task. First, teachers must instill the foundational theoretical principles of the school. Second, they must teach students how to deploy those principles in practical decisions. Three pedagogical tools, *decreta* (the principles of Nature), *praecepta*, and *exempla*, are a part of this process. As we turn to examine Seneca's pedagogical methodology, our discussion takes up the interplay between these three pedagogical devices, with primary attention on the latter two.

3. Teaching a New Mode of Reasoning

Forming mature moral thinkers has two primary components: creating a proper disposition that underlies decision making and developing decision-making abilities. In order for students to deliberate well in practical decisions, they must first properly understand the objects and circumstances they encounter. Proper action involves proper disposition. Only when individuals value external objects properly are they able to reason clearly about what to select and what to avoid. Nonetheless, as Seneca argues, proper disposition does not guarantee that newly trained students possess the ability to choose the appropriate course of action in all affairs. Training them to discern what to do in practical matters is also necessary.

The three pedagogical tools Stoics used to help students reach decision-making maturity—doctrines, precepts, and examples—aid both components. They promote a dispositional shift from self-centered to moral-centered thinking and teach students how

to make appropriate choices in daily life. The following discussion examines each of these components.

3.1. Doctrines

The doctrines of Stoic philosophy (*decreta*) respond to intellectual corruption by providing students with a new framework of valuation and discernment. The framework affects both the disposition of the actor as well as the propriety of the acts themselves. Accordingly, the doctrines of philosophy help students both gain a moral disposition and learn effective practical decision making.

3.1.1. Doctrine Function I: Disposition

Doctrines contribute to Stoic axiology, the study of valuation of objects, ideals, and circumstances.⁵³ Doctrines teach students how to recognize what is honorable and good, dishonorable and evil, and *adiaphora* so that they may act with the proper disposition.⁵⁴ In accordance with Stoic thought, Seneca teaches that the honorable and good are strictly the virtues (i.e., temperance, prudence, bravery, justice), evils are strictly vices, and that everything else is *adiaphora*.⁵⁵ The classification of good as nothing but virtue and evil as nothing but vice places the realm of good and evil completely within a person's disposition. Honor is not found in any object or circumstance, but only in the quality of the act that is being performed in relation to objects and circumstances. The same is the case for evil and vice. No object or circumstance is evil, only the quality of

⁵³ Modern scholars use the term, "axiology," to refer to the valuation of objects and states of existence (e.g., Inwood, "Rules and Reasoning," 105, 120, 125). Value assessment is central to Stoic ethics. E.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 71, 94.33, 95.35. Even Quintilian points to the necessity of learning about the attributes of virtue: "Can a man be...just, if he has never taken part in some educated discussion of the equitable and the good, and of laws—both the universal laws which nature gives and those which are peculiar to peoples and nations?" (*Inst.* 12.2.2-3 [Russell, LCL]).

⁵⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.58; cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.73; Plato, *Prot.* 352C: "whoever learns what is good and what is bad will never be swayed by anything to act otherwise than as knowledge bids..." (Lamb, LCL).

⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 71.32.

the act that is being performed in relation to those objects and circumstances.

Accordingly, everything outside of the quality of an action occupies the morally indifferent (i.e., *adiaphora*) class. Any quantifiable gain or loss, such as health, life, wealth, freedom and their opposites, including sickness, death, poverty, and enslavement, is *adiaphora*.

Acts that are performed virtuously (i.e., with a proper disposition) are done without regard for the act's associated consequences. Seneca judges that seemingly 'honorable' deeds are virtuous only if a person does the deed with an eye on the propriety of the deed itself. If the deed is performed with an eye on the advantage gained from the deed, the act is not virtuous. For instance, attending to a sick friend solely for the sake of caring for that friend is honorable, but doing so for the purpose of attaining an inheritance makes the deed shameful.⁵⁶ So long as an individual relies on personal advantages and disadvantages as a reason for action or restraint, he does not act virtuously.

In *Ep.* 92, Seneca freely admits he will select preferred indifferents (e.g., good health, rest, and freedom) over their opposites (e.g., sickness, toil, and slavery) if they do not hinder virtue (i.e., make Seneca act fearfully, greedily, unjustly).⁵⁷ On the surface, it appears that once a virtue check has been conducted Seneca weighs his selection of indifferents based on what has the greatest value for himself. The quality of his selection is based on the value of the indifferents. This conception of Stoic reasoning dangerously opens the possibility of granting indifferents an intrinsic worth that they do not possess. Seneca, however, argues that the good involved in selecting a preferred indifferent lies not in the benefit the indifferent bestows upon the person, but in the *selection* of the

⁵⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.43. Cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 4.20.3.

⁵⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 92.11.

indifferent.⁵⁸ The value in the deliberation over an indifferent is the actor's disposition in the midst of the deliberation and not the indifferent itself.

The Stoics derived this understanding of proper disposition from the observation that virtue is complete in itself. No object or circumstance can increase or decrease it.⁵⁹ For Stoics, the claim that indifferents factor into moral deliberation admits that indifferents can increase and decrease virtue—and this admission violates the principle of virtue. If indifferents contributed to virtue, Seneca argues, virtue could never be complete because indifferents always admit of increase and decrease. A person can always gain more money, fame, glory, or military victory or experience greater poverty or military loss. However, the virtues are equal in all cases, regardless of external consequences. Cato, for example, would have been no more honorable if he had claimed military victory than he was in defeat. Cato overcame evil fortune and controlled good fortune by the same measure of virtue.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 92.11. Cf. Cicero *Fin* 2.45. Barney's "Maximization Model" of Stoic deliberation holds that the agent selects among the range of indifferents that maximizes value "for oneself" ("Puzzle," 324). This model suggests that deliberation is conducted completely at the level of indifferents and takes no conscious account of virtue or things that contribute to it. My model claims that individuals do not seek the material advantage at the end of the deliberation. In fact, if agents seek the value generated by an indifferent for its own worth then they are not deliberating properly. Seneca argues that it is wrong to do any act for the purpose of gaining an advantage. As discussed above, sitting by the bed of a sick friend in order to gain a legacy takes away honor (*Ben.* 4.20.3; cf. *Ep.* 95.43-44). Honor comes from the very process of deliberating about "to whom, how, when," etc. to bestow the benefit (e.g., *Ben.* 4.9.3), which Seneca holds as the mark of perfect reason (*Ep.* 124.20). For an action to be honorable, the value of the advantage has to be rendered zero. If it carries any value, the motive for acting would be wrong. An individual's concern must be to reason well solely for the sake of reasoning well.

⁵⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.11-12. Seneca warns, "Dissent from this judgment [that virtue needs nothing], and duty and loyalty will not abide" (74.12).

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 71.8. Cf. 71.16, 19-20. Students of Stoicism could also look to doctrines about God to help them discern proper disposition (e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 95.47-50; *Ben.* 4.9.1). The Stoics conceived of humans as possessors of a portion of God's divine nature and taught that humans held the capacity to actualize their portion of the divine through moral training. In order to understand how to reach a level of happiness equal to the gods, students needed to learn the characteristics of the gods. The gods are wholly rational beings that are not dependent on anything outside of reason. They stand in need of nothing, but are the bestowers of everything. They do not enjoy sensual benefits, but they also cannot receive injury. Seneca teaches from the premise that whatever God, as pure reason, does not enjoy or require must not be necessary for human happiness. If God is fully constituted by the Supreme Good, Seneca deduces that whatever God

In contrast to virtuous deeds, vicious acts are performed with concern for acquisition of preferred indifferents and avoidance of dispreferred indifferents. Individuals who act in accordance with the amount of externals they acquire or avoid do so because they assign a false value system to indifferents. These individuals act as if indifferents hold true value. They judge things to be good (e.g., freedom, health, and riches) and evil (e.g., slavery, disease, torture, poverty) that are merely *adiaphora* to the mature thinker. The false valuation system leads to a vicious disposition. In cases of acquisition of preferred indifferents, individuals seek them for their intrinsic benefit, thereby acting greedily, selfishly, ambitiously, without restraint, etc. In cases of avoidance of dispreferred indifferents, they act fearfully, with complaining or annoyance, etc., of the potential hardships.

Acquiring the value system Seneca teaches marks a crucial transition from childlike to mature reasoning. Much like Seneca's remarks in *Ep.* 92, the mature decision maker judges the success or failure of a certain action not on the value of an acquired object or state, but on his disposition during the acquisition. Children and most adults base their decisions on the possibilities of gain and loss of externals. For a child, the success or failure of an action is determined by whether or not he obtains the object of his seeking. The child succeeds if he attains food, shelter, clothing, etc. Equally, the child judges his happiness based on being full in the stomach, protected from the elements, and covered.

does not enjoy cannot be classed as a good. Things such as sexual desire, luxurious foods, wealth, or the allure of any physical pleasure do not pertain to God and, therefore, are not worthy constituents of human happiness. To stand equal to God, students must also depend on nothing outside of reason for happiness. Their challenge is to increasingly privilege the rational faculty over bodily needs and desires.

Unlike children and ordinary adults, the mature thinker has no regard for his personal gain or loss of externals. A good man will do what he thinks is honorable even if it brings him a dispreferred indifferent such as toil or peril. Likewise, he will refuse to partake in what is base even if it yields advantages such as money, pleasure, or power.⁶¹ No amount of negative indifferents compels the good man to avoid the honorable action and no number of preferred indifferents persuades him to participate in an action he deems base.⁶²

In terms of community life, ‘justice’ is the virtue that checks the disposition and motivation behind an individual’s action. Seneca defines justice as acts whose actors remove their thoughts as far as possible from personal interest and act, instead, for the advantage of the other.⁶³ Acts done for the sake of personal reward (e.g., ambition, reputation, financial windfall) only breeds contention and competition. If community members always seek their own advantages, then inevitably certain acts create disadvantages for others. In contrast, locating the Good in internal qualities rather than in external objects enables community members to see one another as close associates rather than as competitors.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 76.18.

⁶² Inwood claims that *Ep.* 76.18-19 depicts a deliberative process in which the honorable and base have an “overriding value” in comparison to indifferents (*Seneca: Selected Philosophical Letters* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 210). The Stoics could not admit this understanding of deliberation because it suggests that virtue and indifferents differ in degree, not in kind (Barney suggests that Inwood’s model of Stoic deliberation is close to what she labels the “Degrees of Nature” model [“Puzzle,” 331, ft. 41]). Indifferents have no value compared to the Good and so do not factor into the amount of goodness or happiness that results from an action. In *Ep.* 71, for example, Cato is no more honorable in his victories than in his defeats. He regarded both in the same light. Victory does not add to his happiness and defeat does not subtract from it. Long describes virtue as chosen for itself and not for its consequences (e.g., high office, reputation, etc.) (“The Logical Basis of Stoic Ethics,” *PAS* 71 (1970/71): 95-96; repr. in *Stoic Studies* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 144).

⁶³ Seneca, *Ep.* 113.30-31.

⁶⁴ Doctrines of God also offer helpful ways of deliberating about personal relationships (Seneca, *Ep.* 95.48-50). Theological doctrines help students understand why they must perform acts of kindness to others without expectation of reward. This mode of acting accords with divine nature. Since the gods do not need

The axiological doctrines lead students to this transition. The doctrines teach that virtue is found in the disposition of the deliberator rather than in the objects of deliberation. They inform practical situations by checking the individual's disposition during the decision-making process. Recalling this aspect of virtue reminds the student that it is base to act out of any concern for gain or avoidance of an indifferent due to its perceived intrinsic value.

While this function of doctrines warns the student against reasoning improperly, it does not adequately teach him how to make practical decisions in everyday life. If virtue is displayed amid the practical affairs of daily living, the student must learn how to make these decisions. Doctrines assist this aspect of moral formation as well.

3.1.2. Doctrine Function II: Active Selections

To live virtuously is to make choices that accord with Nature.⁶⁵ Thus, the Stoic ethical system defines virtuous living using natural observations. Stoic doctrines expound upon individual human nature and the nature of the universe in relation to the selection and avoidance of indifferents.⁶⁶ In doing so, they help students discern appropriate actions in practical circumstances.

external objects for happiness and tranquility, neither ought humans depend upon externals for happiness. A divine level of contentment brings humans into a place that frees them from needing anything and, thus, to freely bestow benefits upon others without expectation of return.

⁶⁵ The Stoics define the virtuous life as "living in accordance with Nature" (e.g., Diogenes Laertius 7.87). It is found "by copying nature and...conducting oneself according to what nature wills" (*Ep.* 66.39). Natural observations refer to the principles of operation of the universe. These include the properties of God (e.g., *Ep.* 74.14; 95.48-50; *Ben.* 4.9.1), the natural constitution of human life (e.g., *Ep.* 9.17; 17.9; 22.15; 25.4; 47.10; 60.3; 76.23; 90.16-19; 92.12; 95.51-53; 99.31; 108.8; 116.3; 119.3; 121; 124.7; *Ben.* 3.28.2), and the ordering of inanimate objects in the universe (e.g., *Ep.* 71.11-14; 94.55-59).

⁶⁶ Barney understands the *telos* formulas of Diogenes and Antipater to imply this claim ("Puzzle," 311). Diogenes describes the *telos* as "reasoning well in the selection and dissection of things in accordance with nature." Similarly, Antipater characterizes the goal of life as "to live continuously selecting things in accordance with nature and dissecting things contrary to nature" (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.76.9-15; trans. Long and Sedly, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 357). Cf. Brennan, *The Stoic Life*, 211.

Seneca advises his students to choose good health, rest, and freedom because Nature directs humans to self-preservation. Health, rest, and freedom are natural advantages for human survival. The Stoics also teach their followers to prefer items that help humans flourish, including wealth, fame, and noble birth. The good in these indifferents is not their intrinsic value, but that their selection accords with what is advantageous for the natural constitution of humans. The Stoic student cannot, however, simply and always seek after more and more of these advantages. In addition to violating Stoic axiology (i.e., falsely valuing objects as goods), unrestrained grasping after preferred indifferents violates the Stoic understanding of natural living. While Nature creates humans to seek natural advantages, living naturally also places limits on the quality and quantity of objects of selection. “Necessary for survival” becomes the measuring rod for Stoic deliberation. Observations of human infancy indicate that Nature intends humans to have contentment once the necessities of life are met.⁶⁷ Nature commands that the body receives nourishment and protection; it does not care whether the food is of average or fine quality or about the fashion of clothes and shelter.⁶⁸ It compels humans to seek what is needed, not what is desired.

“Necessary for survival” does not indicate how a person ought to act in every specific circumstance, but it does provide a tangible and general framework that helps students connect the vacuous ideal of “living virtuously” to an array of practical situations. An individual who contemplates temperance knows that Nature directs people to approach objects of selection for their functional, rather than for their intrinsic, value. He discerns whether the object aids his survival or contributes to a luxurious lifestyle. In

⁶⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 116.1-2.

⁶⁸ E.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 119.2-3.

general, this mode of thinking will direct students to refuse *pursuit* of more than their survival needs. Such pursuits typically derive from lustful desire. If opportunities arise, individuals may *select* luxury items, provided that the decision to acquire them does not violate one of the virtues.

In addition to helping students understand what they may select for themselves, observations of Nature also help them navigate decision making in a community setting. The Stoics included communal relationships under the virtue of justice. The Stoics recognized that humans are social creatures who exist in society for the benefit of one another. Part of the transition to adulthood involves realizing that humans ought to care for others. Most adults first find natural affection for others in familial relationships. Adults naturally care for their own offspring completely for the offspring's sake. The Stoics aimed to persuade their students to extend their natural concern for others to friends, acquaintances, and, ultimately, the entire human race. The Stoics supported this ideal with the observation that Nature endows all humans with a common rationality. Nature created humanity from the same source and for the same ends.⁶⁹ Seneca gives the analogy that all humans are related to one another as parts of one great body.⁷⁰ Thus, the person who reflects on "living justly" considers that all rational beings belong to him in the way that his closest associates belong to him.⁷¹ Consequently, he ought to afford all

⁶⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.52. Cf. 47.10.

⁷⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.52. Cf. 92.30; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.13.4.

⁷¹ The second century Stoic, Hierocles, depicts the 'appropriation' (Gk: *oikeiōsis*) of others by a series of concentric circles. Moving outward, the circles represent the diminishing concern an individual has for his associations as his natural connection to them decreases. The circles move in the following order: immediate family, extended family, local residents, "fellow-tribesmen" and "fellow-citizens," "people from neighboring towns," "fellow-countrymen," and the rest of humanity. Individuals should assimilate the outer groups into the inner groups so that they have mutual care for all (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 4.671.7-673.11 cited in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 349-50).

with whom he shares rationality the same care and concern he affords his closest associates.

For instance, with respect to slave treatment, Nature reminds individuals that social inferiors are rational equals.⁷² Thus, slave owners should act out of concern for the well-being of their slaves just as they do for their family members and social peers.⁷³ While observations of Nature do not clearly delineate how a master should interact with a slave, they do limit the types of actions that are appropriate. Nature directs masters to treat slaves kindly and affably and forbids pointless beatings, neglect of their health, etc.⁷⁴ In another example, Seneca suggests that a seaman who passes by a shipwrecked stranger ought to remember that the stranger is a part of the same divinely ordered body.⁷⁵ Thus, he should treat him as a family member or close friend rather than as a stranger. Again, this line of reasoning does not direct the seaman to specific measures, such as the effort he should put forth to rescue the shipwrecked stranger, the risk he should incur, or how to provide for the stranger once he is rescued. Nonetheless, it does compel him to do as much for the stranger as he would for a family member.

The natural principles of personal relationships work with axiological doctrines to shape decision making in community contexts. Axiological doctrines relating to justice check the individual's disposition and motivation for acting—ensuring that the act is done

⁷² *Ep.* 47.10. Cf. *Ep.* 47.1: "...they are our fellow-slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike."

⁷³ Seneca offers the guideline that Lucilius should treat his inferiors as he would have his superior treat him (*Ep.* 47.11).

⁷⁴ I agree with Julia Annas's description of moral reasoning: "the morally developed person will grasp the general principles that require the application of all the virtues and so will be able to qualify the conventional role where necessary. Thus, when it comes to acting like a good father, the wise person will not just follow society's rules deriving from the conventional role of father; he will do so in a way informed and qualified by his grasp of higher moral principles and the demands of virtue they contain" (*The Morality of Happiness* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993], 108).

⁷⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.51-52.

solely out of concern for the other and with no desire for personal reward. Observations about humanity help the individual determine the general parameters of appropriate action. Nature teaches that all humans come from the same stock and, thus, are all equal. This understanding of human relationship reorients individuals to see others as close associates rather than as competitors.⁷⁶ The familial perspective, in turn, directs students to treat others as equals. Though they do not specify specific action, natural observations offer students a framework to guide them toward acceptable conduct.

3.1.3. Conclusion

The axiological principles and observations of Nature begin to shape students' dispositions around virtue and help them think about practical decisions appropriately, but they perform neither function completely. With respect to disposition, doctrines offer a new value system that founds an individual's conception of good and evil completely within the realm of virtue and vice. However, this new knowledge does not completely eradicate improper thinking in every moment. Something more is needed to draw the mind back to a proper disposition. Likewise, principles of Nature provide a deliberative framework that sets boundaries on action, but does not direct the student to a specific action. With this framework, there is an implicit recognition that moral intuition is both permitted and required.⁷⁷ The wise man and advanced student simply have a sense of

⁷⁶ This view disagrees with Long and Sedley's and Inwood's approaches (labeled the "Dualist Model" by Barney, "Puzzle," 330). They each suggest that the agent selects the best indifferent and *then* does a "virtue check" (Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 1.358; Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action*, 210). Contemplation of justice is present from the very beginning of the deliberative process.

⁷⁷ If Gasela Striker has in mind specific universals that are sufficiently instructive regarding choice, then she may be disappointed ("Origins of the Concept of Natural Law," *BACAP 2* [1987]: 79-94). While she is right to claim there are universal principles (*decreta*), these principles are not definitively instructive. *Decreta* establish parameters for appropriate choice, but not specific commands for it. Striker correctly argues that self-preservation and other-regarding virtues fill out that which Nature prescribes ("Origins," 92-93), but Seneca never uses these categories to arrive at a set of universal rules for morality. On the other hand, the lack of natural, universal *rules* does not mean that whatever a sage does is the "law of

what course of action is appropriate. This level of thinking requires experience in practical deliberation, which beginning students do not have. Thus, philosophical apprentices need instruction in the application of theoretical doctrines to practical situations.⁷⁸ They need to see practical wisdom at work.

Precepts and examples help students to both ends. They assist the doctrines in transferring the disposition of students to the sphere of morality and in training them in practical decision making.

3.2. Precepts

Seneca's *Ep.* 94 reflects an ancient Stoic debate over the usefulness of *praecepta* in moral education.⁷⁹ The dispute turns on whether *praecepta* are sufficient and necessary for moral reasoning. On one side of the argument, Ariston contends that *praecepta* are insufficient to cure the mind of the sick person, but superfluous once the

Nature," as Inwood claims ("Commentary on Striker," *BACAP* 2 (1987): 100-01). The laws of Nature are unchanging natural principles that exist *prior* to the sage. The sage always uses the unchanging and prior natural principles to make practical decisions. While the principles may apply differently to various practical circumstances—which make the law of Nature simply appear to align with whatever a sage does—the principles themselves remain unchanged.

⁷⁸ Kidd states that *decreta* refer to the "ultimate philosophical principles that the wise man knows and operates in right action" ("Moral Action," 251). Inwood argues similarly that none but the sage can divine natural law because morality is not achieved by a fixed set of rules ("Commentary on Striker," 100). Both of these statements are inaccurate. Seneca's discussions of *decreta* show that non-sages can contemplate philosophical principles of Nature and virtue and that they can do so without following a fixed set of rules. Seneca teaches his students the same deliberative framework sages use. Learning the framework is the central function of philosophical training. Thus, it must be the case that non-sages ultimately reason like the sage. Citing Chryssipus, Long and Sedley argue correctly that the advanced student can be similar to the sage in every way (i.e., in his action and the deliberative framework to discern the action) (Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 363 and 367). The only difference lies in the "firmness" of the sage's disposition. Externally, the process appears exactly the same.

⁷⁹ I follow the position that Seneca's argument over the role of *praecepta* and *decreta* in moral reasoning and pedagogy reflects a debate that reaches back to the early days of the Stoa. While this view suggests that Seneca's system aligns with a long orthodox tradition, our primary concern lies with Seneca's method itself and not its relation to his Stoic predecessors. See Philip Mitsis, "Seneca on Reason, Rules, and Moral Development," in *Passions and Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Hellenisticum* (ed. Jacques Brunschwig and Martha C. Nussbaum; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 293, n. 28 and Kidd, "Moral Action," 251.

mind receives a cure.⁸⁰ Seneca, on the other hand, contends that while precepts alone are not sufficient for moral advancement, they are not superfluous once the mind has been cured.

Modern studies generally agree that orthodox Stoics thought that precepts are necessary in moral development, even after a student acquires doctrinal principles. The contemporary debate over the ancient system turns more deeply on exactly *how* precepts function in moral development. The central point of contention concerns whether precepts strictly *prescribe* actions that are to be mapped onto practical circumstances (such that once a match has been identified, all that is necessary is to follow the rule) or enter the moral reasoning process in non-prescriptive, yet cognitively beneficial ways.⁸¹ Seneca's defense of the usefulness of precepts gives insight into how precepts function in moral education.

The role precepts play in moral reasoning extends beyond their prescriptive function.⁸² Precepts join doctrines in shaping the disposition of the student by rooting out passions and correcting corrupt beliefs.⁸³ Often in the form of descriptive maxims, precepts can appeal directly to cognitive intuitions of moral propriety. Seneca characterizes this process as a sort of shock treatment to the innate moral awareness built

⁸⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.2-17.

⁸¹ A number of scholars contend that Stoic precepts are "rules" to be mapped onto practical circumstances. These scholars debate whether the Stoics conceived of precepts as "exceptionable" or "exceptionless." Representing the latter position, White contends that Stoic precepts are informative, exceptionless rules of conduct. They are limited in number, including necessary qualifications to cover time, place, and individuals involved ("Nature and Regularity," esp. 300-01). Cf. Kidd, "Moral Actions," 252-54 and Annas, *Morality of Happiness*, 98-108. For the opposing view, see Inwood, "Rules and Reasoning," 110-114. Though his position is mischaracterized by Inwood ("Rules and Reasoning," 113-14), Mitsis rightly considers this entire debate to be misguided. Mitsis contends that precepts are not simply "rules" to be applied to practical circumstances. Limiting their function to prescription is inaccurate. Precepts can help draw out the morally relevant features of a situation without assuming form or function of prescriptive rules (Mitsis, "Seneca on Reason," 295 n. 37).

⁸² See the helpful discussion in Mitsis, "Seneca on Reason," 294-99, which informs my reading.

⁸³ See n. 17.

into the soul.⁸⁴ In this capacity, precepts bypass the process of deductive reasoning from principles of Nature to particular circumstances.⁸⁵ The mind naturally recognizes the precept's obvious appeal to truth without need of doctrinal proof or support.⁸⁶ This function of precepts engages the mind in situations where an individual is prone to act contentiously in spite of doctrinal knowledge suggesting he should act otherwise. In these instances, precepts such as, "Buy not what you need, but what you must have," "The greedy mind is satisfied by no gains," or "Harmony makes small things grow; lack of harmony makes great things decay," abruptly remind the individual of an innate sense of rectitude.⁸⁷ To do so, the precept does not have to match every particularity of the situation at hand. It performs its duty merely by reminding the individual of general value assessments that reshape his disposition when facing an array of practical circumstances.

Precepts also inform practical decisions in non-prescriptive ways. They remind the memory of types of appropriate conduct and organize natural principles into their duties.⁸⁸ Even with doctrinal knowledge, individuals sometimes "try not to notice" their duties.⁸⁹ In these moments, precepts bring to light the moral perspective that the mind attempts to forget. These precepts do not immediately direct a student to action. They appeal to the mind which then convicts the individual to act. Such precepts may come in the form of prescriptive rules or non-imperative maxims. For instance, the following precepts remind the individual of duties without prescribing action: "You all know that

⁸⁴ The Stoics conceived that humans are naturally inclined toward virtue, but corrupt opinions suppress the soul's natural state. So long as corruption has not abolished the natural human completely, certain precepts can stir the soul to growth (Seneca, *Ep.* 94.31).

⁸⁵ By "phronetic" I mean the type of reasoning that is characteristic of *phronēsis*.

⁸⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.43.

⁸⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.43. Cf. *Ep.* 42.9.

⁸⁸ See n. 17.

⁸⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.25. As Seneca states, "we sometimes know facts without paying attention to them."

bribery has been going on, and everyone knows you know it. You know that friendship should be scrupulously honoured, and yet you do not hold it in honour. You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men.”⁹⁰ These precepts do not command specific conduct, but draw the individual to appropriate action by convicting the mind of truths it knows are right.

In each of these functions (e.g., rooting out passions, correcting false beliefs, reminding the mind of types of appropriate conduct, and organizing principles of Nature) precepts alter the mindset and create a new framework of moral reasoning without imposing rules of conduct. As the above examples illustrate, precepts can influence decision making without providing a complete set of general rules or casuistically supplying specific instructions *ad infinitum*.

These two roles do not exclude the fact that precepts often retain imperatival force. This function is true of “instructions” and self-preserving and moral-preserving precepts. Moral pedagogues often give council so that students will know what to do in a specific situation (so, instructional precepts) or in certain “type” situations (so, self-preserving and moral-preserving precepts).

The prescriptive function of instructional precepts, in particular, does not encompass their full use. Instructional precepts do not simply advise action, they also develop moral reasoning. Seneca uses cognitive terminology to demonstrate how instructional precepts help a student develop. Inexperienced students are hindered by lack of practice in *discovering (inveniendi)* the demands of a particular situation.⁹¹ Advice helps because their *minds (animum)* have little practice deliberating their duties in

⁹⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.25.

⁹¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.32.

real-life settings.⁹² As such, progressing students need *praecepta* to guide them in “what to do and avoid” as their minds are learning how to apply principles on their own:

If one is familiar with dogmas, it is superfluous to advise [*monetur*] him—No, this person has indeed learned to do things which he ought to do; but he does not see with sufficient clearness what these things are—for we are hindered from accomplishing praiseworthy deeds not only by our emotions, but also by want of practice in discovering [*inveniendi*] the demands of a particular situation. Our minds [*animus*] are often under good control, and yet at the same time are inactive and untrained in finding the path of duty [*officiorum viam*]*—and advice [admonitio] makes this clear. (Ep. 94.32)*

The excerpt creates an image of a learning gap between acquiring principles of evaluation and knowing how to apply those doctrines to practical conduct (i.e., *phronēsis*). Once the mind gains familiarity with *decreta*, it still lacks experience in applying *decreta* to practical matters. During this period, the mind needs *admonitio* to point out “the path of duty” (i.e., what to do).⁹³ Since Seneca’s students are in a program that creates *phronimoi*, *admonitio* does not simply ensure that the student does the right thing until he can discern practical conduct on his own.⁹⁴ The training period itself teaches students how to apply doctrinal principles to daily life. Thus, *admonitio* assists with this process. The provision of *admonitio* (in the form of pointing out appropriate conduct) trains the

⁹² Seneca, *Ep.* 94.32.

⁹³ Cf. *Ep.* 94.36. Seneca suggests that insight into practical conduct does not at once follow the acquisition of doctrines: “If we have removed false opinions, insight into practical conduct does not at once follow. Even though it follows, counsel (*admonitio*) will nonetheless confirm one’s right opinion concerning Good and Evil.” Hence, using *admonitio*, teachers must demonstrate practical reasoning for the student at first and, later, when a certain amount of training has been completed, approve or disapprove of the student’s course of action. Similarly, *Ep.* 94.48-50 discusses this role of *admonitio*. Though knowing what to do results from a knowledge of doctrines and a “sound state of mind,” progress toward these qualities “is slow;” thus, “in the meantime, in practical matters, the path should be pointed out for the benefit of one who is still short of perfection, but is making progress...Weaker characters...need someone to precede them, to say: ‘Avoid this,’ or ‘Do that.’”

⁹⁴ Though, even in this capacity, *admonitio* trains the mind to discern proper conduct. The ability to discern appropriate conduct does not simply result from “a sound state of mind,” a “sound state of mind” also results from appropriate conduct (94.49; cf. 94.46, 47). The actual doing of right conduct helps the mind ‘see’ the right course of action.

mind in *phronēsis* by demonstrating the application of the doctrines of philosophy to practical conduct.

Seneca likens this function of precepts to an instructor who teaches a student how to write.⁹⁵ Seneca uses the term, *praescriptum* ('a prior depiction'), to describe the means by which students both learn to write and learn *prudentia*.⁹⁶ The term creates the image of an instructor going before the student to provide an example for him to emulate. The writing instructor first guides the student's hand along the outline of letters and, second, instructs him to imitate (*imitari*) the penmanship of another writer.⁹⁷ Likewise, the moral instructor demonstrates appropriate conduct by telling the student, "avoid this, do that." The writing analogy suggests that these prescriptive *admonitiones* do not simply command action; they exemplify a form of practical reasoning for the student to emulate. Both types of students learn through imitation of a copy. Just as writing students learn by copying something "written before" them, moral instruction is a "thinking before" that shows students how to make practical decisions.

While Seneca does not offer practical examples of this function of precepts in his systematic discussion in *Ep.* 94, his "practical" letters show how this usage of precepts functions in actual moral deliberations. An example of this use occurs in *Ep.* 47. In the letter, Seneca gives doctrines and precepts that teach students how to treat their inferiors, such as slaves. As we saw in the earlier discussion of the letter, doctrines inform students

⁹⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.51. The analogy is founded on the idea that autonomous reasoning is the goal of moral education: "The soul should be guided at the very moment when it is becoming able to guide itself" (94.51).

⁹⁶ *Praescribo* means "to write before, in front, previously; to trace out; to describe or depict beforehand" (Lewis and Short, rev., enl., s.v. *praescribo*). The sentence states, "Boys learn according to a prior depiction...Similarly, our minds, while learning, are aided by prior depiction" (*Ep.* 94.51; my translation).

⁹⁷ This method of learning reflects Aristotle's concept of *mimēsis*: "From childhood men have an instinct for representation (*mimeisthai*), and in this respect, differs from other animals that he is far more imitative (*mimēmasi*) and learns his first lessons by representing things. And then there is the enjoyment people always get from representations" (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1448b4 [Halliwell, LCL]).

that both slave and master come from the same stock. The doctrine brings the individual closer to practical conduct by offering a rational principle supporting the types of action justice demands. Seneca also provides the moral-preserving precept (derived from natural observations) instructing students to treat all rational creatures equally: “Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters.”⁹⁸ Nonetheless, this general precept is not fully informative.⁹⁹ Inexperienced students could still supply their own incorrect opinions regarding the terms of equal treatment. If students learn doctrines and general precepts, but are never shown what to do in specific situations, they are left to apply these principles and precepts to real-life affairs on their own. In such cases, their inexperience may lead them to act incorrectly. For instance, students may respond to the command to “treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters” by following the expectations of society, their peers, family structure, or personal bias. Therefore, inexperienced and untrained students need specific advisory precepts that demonstrate justice in practice. Accordingly, Seneca offers specific instruction. He advises Lucilius to allow his slaves to talk, plan, dine, and live with him.¹⁰⁰

On one level, these instructional precepts function as mere instruction and have little educational payoff. Students could simply follow Seneca’s instruction without ever thinking about the reasoning that undergirds the advice. Lucilius, for example, may begin consulting with his slaves about life without ever considering *why* he ought to do these things. He may do them simply because “Seneca told me to do so.” While pedagogically useful in certain ways, limiting precepts to advice in one specific situation fails to account for the demonstrative function Seneca outlines for precepts in *Ep.* 94.

⁹⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 47.11.

⁹⁹ See the problems earlier identified with “moral-preserving,” precepts (pp. 68-71 above).

¹⁰⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 47.13-15.

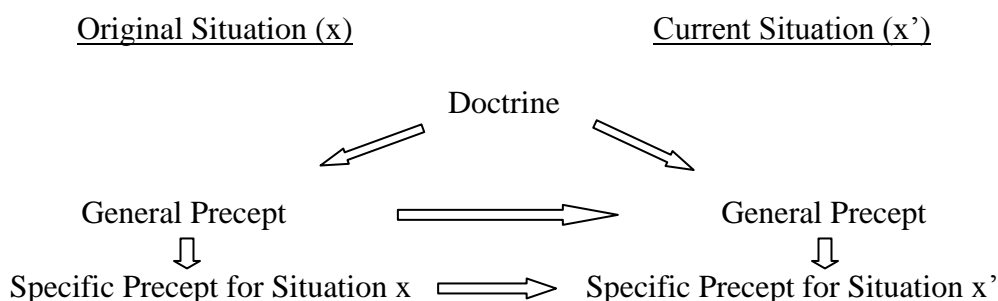
Through the specific advice, the student gains awareness of how deductive reasoning from natural observations manifests itself in practical conduct.

Practical instructions supply students with a storehouse of practical examples illustrating the practical outworking of the deliberative process. These precepts become particularly useful as the student encounters new situations that are not discussed in the training period. Let us take, for example, the shipwrecked stranger discussed earlier. The student does not have any direct command that pertains to helping strangers. The only deliberative aid he has pertaining to strangers is the principle that all are a part of the same divinely ordered body.¹⁰¹ Though this doctrine is the only component directly relevant to the current situation, the various components from the slave treatment issue can assist the current decision because slave treatment also pertains to human relationships. Seneca's letter on slave treatment supplied a principle of Nature (e.g., "all of us come from the same stock"), a moral-preserving precept on human relations (e.g., "treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters"), and specific advice regarding the treatment of slaves (e.g., "let your slave talk with you, plan with you, live with you"). As represented graphically below, the doctrinal principle pertains equally to both situations. The observation that all humans arise from the same stock applies both to slaves and strangers. In contrast, neither the general precept nor the specific advice from the original context is directly relevant to the current situation.¹⁰² A stranger is not necessarily inferior. He may be of equal or even of superior rank. Both the general precept and the specific advice remain useful, however, because they each inform the

¹⁰¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.51-52.

¹⁰² The general precept designed for hierarchical (e.g., slave) relationships is not immediately applicable to "encounters with a stranger." Nor do any of the specific instructions for slave-treatment directly tell an individual how to care for a needy stranger.

current situation via analogy (represented by the horizontal arrows in the diagram). The moral-preserving precept may call to mind equal treatment of one's fellow humans in general. Thinking analogously, if he must treat his inferiors as his equal or better, he also ought to treat strangers as his equal or better. Finally, the specific advice, "let your slave talk, plan, live with you," gives the student purchase on how his teacher would handle similar practical situations. Thus, rather than having solely to reason deductively from principles of Nature, through a moral-preserving precept, to specific action regarding the current situation, he also can reason analogously from "like" setting to "like" setting via the general precepts and the specific advice from the original situation. The student considers what the moral-preserving precept, "treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your superiors," and the specific advice to "talk, plan, live" with one's slave mean for an encounter with a needy stranger on the street. While the moral-preserving precept and specific advice are not immediately applicable to the treatment of needy strangers, they illustrate how a mature thinker reasons practically in related personal relationships. As the student considers the similarities and differences between the original situation and the current dilemma, he or she may grasp what the situation demands more vividly and concretely due to the practical precepts issued in the related case.



Moral educators conceived of general precepts and specific advice as parts or members of a holistic form of reasoning. The diagram embodies the idea that an entire form of

reasoning—including precepts—applied in one situation, can also be applied in new situations. In this capacity, precepts no longer function prescriptively, but analogously and demonstratively. The function of precepts, including specific advice, extends beyond admonition to include illustration.

3.3. *Exempla*

Seneca further reinforces moral propriety with a paraenetic device specifically devoted to illustration: the example (Lat.: *exemplum*; Gk. παράδειγμα).¹⁰³ *Exempla* take on several primary functions in moral exhortation. They may serve as a model or pattern of action to follow or avoid by illustrating deeds and ways of living of past or present figures.¹⁰⁴ Examples may also motivate the pupil to honorable action by laying the examples of historically great figures before the mind.¹⁰⁵ The deeds of heroes embolden individuals also to live honorably and heroically. Sometimes examples illustrate abstract concepts—such as the virtues or doctrines—in order to make a concept easier to grasp.¹⁰⁶ These examples demonstrate what the virtues and doctrinal principles looks like in practical conduct.

¹⁰³ The use of *exempla* in moral exhortation is well recognized by NT scholars (e.g., Carl Holladay, “1 Corinthians 13: Paul as Apostolic Paradigm” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1980), 80-98; Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (AnBib 105; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986); and Malherbe, *Hellenistic Moralists*, 267-333.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Hildegard Kornhardt, *Exemplum: Eine bedeutungsgeschichtliche Studie* (Göttingen: R. Noske, 1936), 26-34. Fiore identifies this type of example as “prototype” or “model” where “attention centers either on the person/thing which imitates or copies the prototype or who strives to fashion self after the model—thus, the end in view is the effort to imitate the example” (*Personal Example*, 90). Seneca emphasizes this role of examples at several places: “Choose a master whose life has satisfied you and use him as protector and [*custodem*] and pattern [*exemplum*]” (*Ep.* 11.10); “Let us choose, however, from among the living...men who teach us by their lives...who [teach] us what we should avoid, and then are never caught doing that which they have ordered us to avoid. Choose as a guide one whom you will admire more when you see him act than when you hear him speak” (*Ep.* 52.8); “I would have my mind such a quality as this—it should be equipped with many arts, many precepts, and patterns of conduct [*exempla*] taken from many epochs of history” (*Ep.* 84.10).

¹⁰⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 52.4: “You will find still another class of man...who do not need a guide as much as they require someone to encourage and...to force them along.” Cf. *Ep.* 102.30.

¹⁰⁶ E.g., the instances listed in Kornhardt, *Exemplum*, 13-26.

While each of these types of *exempla* have long been recognized in classical scholarship, their full contribution to practical wisdom is not yet completely explored. For instance, the common point of emphasis for examples that serve as patterns to follow is action. Examples that function as patterns or models often accompany or stand in place of a general precept or specific piece of advice. Thus, the exemplar is commonly thought to model the behavior the teacher promotes or discourages. Likewise, scholars regularly look at the exemplary actions of heroic exemplars who motivate students a certain way of living. Even illustrations of concepts—which most obviously connect principles and concepts to conduct—are rarely examined for their contribution to instructing practical wisdom.

A closer look at Seneca's uses of examples suggests that each of the above categories includes elements of practical reasoning. The discussion will show that in moralist literature like the *Epistulae*, where the teacher is trying to instruct the pupil in practical reasoning, examples often contribute to the *way of reasoning*, not just acting, that teachers desire their students to adopt. While Seneca's examples often end in action, they commonly begin with—or include—displays of practical wisdom.

The discussion below examines *exempla* in the three main categories listed above: actions to follow or avoid, motivation to honorable action, and illustrations of a concept. A fourth section will highlight two examples in Seneca that focus more specifically on displaying practical reasoning.

3.3.1. Actions to Follow or Avoid

A clear instance of a model or pattern to avoid occurs in *Ep.* 122. Seneca urges Lucilius to work during the day and to avoid working at night.¹⁰⁷ In conjunction with this instruction, Seneca presents the negative examples of Acilius Buta and Sextus Papinius who both carried out all their activity at night and slept during the day. Seneca observes that the two men possessed “badly warped character” and were notorious for living an “upside down manner of life” because they rebelled against natural existence.¹⁰⁸

The examples of Buta and Papinius are tied to a definite, practical circumstance and focus on the actions and consequences of the actions of past figures. The two examples encourage compliance with Seneca’s instruction because they illustrate the negative consequences associated with unnatural patterns of behavior. Buta and Papinius become notorious for their activity and earn the reputation of having a distorted character. As Seneca’s readers hear the stories, the negative character assessment associated with the unnatural pattern of living set by Buta and Papinius deters them from working through the night.

In between these two examples, however, Seneca includes the reason the actions of Buta and Papinius are inappropriate. He writes, “And the reason [*causa*] why some men live thus is not because they think that night in itself offers any greater attractions, but because that which is normal gives them no particular pleasure; light being a bitter enemy of the evil conscience [*malae conscientiae*].”¹⁰⁹ Moreover, following the example of Papinius, he concludes, “the chief cause, however, of this disease seems to me to be a squeamish revolt from the normal existence....notoriety is what all such men seek—men

¹⁰⁷ “Cut short the night; use some of it for the day’s business” (Seneca, *Ep.* 122.3).

¹⁰⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 122.13 and 17.

¹⁰⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 122.14.

who are, so to speak, living backwards.”¹¹⁰ While neither of these statements is located *within* the example, Seneca supplies the reasoning he desires his students to consider as they contemplate the examples of Buta and Papinius. In light of this juxtaposition, Seneca enables his students not simply to consider the negative actions of the two negative exemplars, but also the improper reasoning that leads Buta and Papinius to such action. In Seneca’s judgment, each chose a nocturnal schedule in order to revolt from natural existence and so attain notoriety.

Letter 74 provides another example of this type. The letter affirms that Lucilius is right in deeming “the chief means of attaining the happy life to consist in the belief that the only good lies in that which is honourable.”¹¹¹ The letter continually contrasts the troubles Fortune brings to groups of individuals who seek its gifts with the equanimity of those who only seek the honorable. The examples illustrate that the honorable does not consist in externals.

In the midst of these contrasting examples, Seneca exemplifies the prudent man’s *practical decision* at a monetary or grain dole.¹¹² The example illustrates a particular way a wise person (*prudens*) may carry out the following precept: “if one would win a way to safety, there is but one road—to despise externals and to be contented with that which is honorable.”¹¹³ Seneca goes on to state that *prudentissimus* runs from the theater as soon as he sees the dole being brought in.¹¹⁴

In addition to showing the action of the *prudentissimus*, Seneca also illustrates the thought process that leads him to run. He “knows [*scit*] that one pays a high price for

¹¹⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 122.18.

¹¹¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.1.

¹¹² See the previous discussion of this letter on p. 54-55.

¹¹³ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.6.

¹¹⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.8.

small favours.”¹¹⁵ Thus, while the example *ends* in action, it *begins* with a certain way of practical thinking. The wise man considers that obtaining a portion of the dole requires quarreling among the masses, a price too high for a mere natural advantage. As students face similar circumstances, they should call to mind the prudent person’s thinking and actions in the grain dole illustration. The prudent person does not join in the fury of the crowds competing for the grain because he knows that he would suffer quarrels, fights, and general grappling with others just to receive an *adiaphora* object.

3.3.2. Motivation for Honorable Action

Some examples in Seneca spur students on to honorable deeds. These examples motivate students to endure moments in which the virtuous course of action seems too difficult. In these moments, students may call to mind the heroics of great figures from the past.

Letter 104, for instance, expounds at length upon Socrates and Cato as figures who did not fear the toils of Fortune or death. The examples demonstrate that individuals can actually attain a standard of living that most consider “too big for man’s nature to carry out.”¹¹⁶ Socrates endured with equanimity the “drudgery of military service,” “a woman of rough manners and shrewish tongue,” intractable children, a twenty-seven year war, tyrant rule, and accusations of disturbing the state religion.¹¹⁷ In all of these cases, Socrates’ soul remained unaffected “amid the disturbance of Fortune.”

Like Socrates, Marcus Cato continually withstood Fortune as he lived his whole life either in civil war or under a political regime.¹¹⁸ He is the *exemplar* par excellence of

¹¹⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 74.7.

¹¹⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* 104.25.

¹¹⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 104.27-28.

¹¹⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 104.29-33.

one who sets “a high value on liberty.” He remained true to his idea of liberty and sided neither with Caesar nor Pompey even when Caesar “was on one side with ten embattled legions at his call” and Pompey “was on the other.” Seneca explicitly states his intention to paint a vivid image of the context: “If you would obtain a mental picture of that period, you may imagine on one side the people and the whole proletariat eager for revolution—on the other the senators and knights, the chosen and honoured men of the commonwealth; and there were left between them but these two—the Republic and Cato.”¹¹⁹ Seneca goes on to use Cato’s exploits to illustrate that it is possible (*posse*) for a person to endure toil (by marching an army through the African deserts, marching over sun-baked hills, “dragging the remains of a beaten army and with no train of supplies”), despise honors of office (by playing a game of ball on the day he was defeated in elections), and be free from fear of humans (by attacking Caesar and Pompey simultaneously), death, and exile.¹²⁰ Cato’s example does not relate to specific actions of Seneca’s readers, but motivates them to live lives of virtue.

While the examples of Socrates and Cato motivate others to virtuous action, Seneca also uses their examples to teach students *how* they may overcome such circumstances. The examples of Socrates and Cato both illustrate how to value external objects. Students gain the ability to overcome like Socrates and Cato by thinking about their external circumstances like Socrates and Cato. After the two examples, Seneca writes:

And so, if only we are willing to withdraw our necks from the yoke, we can keep as stout a heart against such terrors as these. But first and foremost, we must reject pleasures; they render us weak and womanish...Second, we must spurn wealth: wealth is the diploma of slavery. Abandon gold and silver, and whatever

¹¹⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 104.31.

¹²⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 104.33.

else is a burden upon our richly furnished homes;...If you set a high value on liberty, you must set a low value on everything else. (*Ep.* 104.34)

The precepts imply that Socrates and Cato were able to attain freedom and accomplish heroic acts because they rejected pleasures and spurned all external goods—i.e., they set an appropriate value on goods and possessions. In order for Seneca’s students to gain courage to face these circumstances, they must also reason that all externals are *adiaphora* and, thus, neither to be greatly desired or feared.

A common recurrence of motivational examples with respect to a particular issue pertains to suicide. Seneca continually returns to this dilemma. While he writes generally about overcoming Fortune and living virtuously, he does not labor over a practical issue as much as he labors over suicide.

Letter 77 gives the examples of Tullius Marcellinus, a known associate of Seneca, who contracted a disease that was not hopeless, but was drawn out and demanded much attention.¹²¹ As Marcellinus deliberates suicide, a Stoic friend advises him that the matter of living and dying is of no great importance. Seneca approvingly tells how Marcellinus, persuaded by his friend’s reasoning, easily slipped out of life by fasting for three days in a hot bath.

The example demonstrates that suicide can be painless as a way to incite courage in a person who has decided on this course of action, but fears following through with it. A key statement in the letter points to this purpose: “when one draws near death, one turns to flight, trembles, and laments.”¹²²

¹²¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 77.5.

¹²² Seneca, *Ep.* 77.11.

Another example in the same letter motivates a fearful soul to follow through with suicide. Seneca describes a voluntary suicide of a recently enslaved Spartan boy.¹²³ Instead of fetching the chamber-pot as his first task, the lad dashed his head against the wall to kill himself. The enslaved boy chose death over allowing himself to become subject to demeaning acts. The example motivates individuals who ought to choose suicide, but fear death, to share in the courage of the Spartan boy: “Take into your own control that which is now under the control of another. Will you not borrow that boy’s courage, and say: ‘I am no slave!’...For life, if courage to die be lacking, is slavery.”¹²⁴

Seneca supplies each example (Marcellinus and the Spartan boy) so that the individual may call to mind examples of past figures for the purpose of giving the individual the bravery to go through with an action. The examples aid the practical decision of the individual by emboldening them to act.

Some of these examples contain aspects of practical reasoning. For instance, the example of Marcellinus includes reflections on human nature. Marcellinus’s Stoic friend offers the reasoning for why it is sensible to commit suicide. He states, “It is not an important matter to live; all your slaves live, and so do all animals; but it is important to die honorably, sensibly, bravely. Reflect how long you have been doing the same thing: food, sleep, lust, - this is one’s daily round. The desire to die may be felt, not only by the sensible man or the brave or unhappy man, but even by the man who is merely surfeited.”¹²⁵ This natural principle provides a useful reasoning model for students to emulate in an array of contexts concerning the value of life.

¹²³ Seneca, *Ep.* 77.15.

¹²⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 77.15.

¹²⁵ *Ep.* 77.6.

3.3.3. Illustrations of a Concept

Seneca offers a host of examples that illustrate general concepts—such as the virtues and Stoic doctrines. Seneca identifies one such function in this field as ‘characterization’ (*characterismon*—a device that gives the signs and marks of each particular virtue and vice).¹²⁶ In *Ep.* 95.69-71, Seneca uses the younger Cato’s behavior during the Roman civil war to exemplify courage. The example describes Cato’s overarching purpose, his disposition, and his actions. In his attempt to defend the Republic, Cato remained “unterrified amid the din of war.” Nor did he “quail before real and imminent noises.” He displayed ‘force,’ ‘energy,’ “confidence...amid the general panic,” and “contempt for danger and the sword.” He was the “first to attack the armies” and “plunged face-forward into the civil conflict.” He issued a challenge both to Pompey and Caesar in an effort to defend the Republic, spoke words of freedom “in the face of ten legions, Gallic auxiliaries, and a motley host of citizens and foreigners,” and decided that he would rather die than see the Republic transform into an empire.

¹²⁶ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.65. Kornhardt labels this type of example, *Proben* (i.e., a ‘sample’) (*Exemplum*, 13). Cf. Fiore, *Personal Example*, 92: “When demonstration of virtues or vice is the aim, then the deeds or particular qualities given are witnesses not to the whole personality but to the aspect being considered.” This use of example is frequent in Plutarch: e.g., *Moral.* 244B (on bravery); 243F, 255E, 262D (on wisdom); 258F (on good sense); cited in Kathleen O’Brien Wicker, “Mulierum Virtutes (Moralia 242E-263C),” in *Plutarch’s Ethical Writings and Early Christian Literature* (SCHNT 4; ed. Hans Dieter Betz; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 113, n. 24, and 114. Cf. *Per.* 1-2; *Alex.* 1; *Pomp.* 8; *Nic.* 1; cited in Wicker, “Mulierum Virtutes,” 112.

Seneca asserts that ‘characterization’ functions the same way as precept-giving. A precept commands “what to do” and takes the form, “If you would have self-control, act thus and so” (*Ep.* 95.66). ‘Characterization’ exemplifies what to do and takes the form: “The one who acts thus and so, and refrains from certain other things, possesses self-control” (*Ep.* 95.66). Though its equation with a prescriptive precept (“if you would have self-control, act thus and so”) makes ‘characterization’ appear to function similarly to an action model, Seneca describes the function of ‘characterizations’ in illustrative terms and uses them to support the axiological doctrines (e.g., *Ep.* 94.33, 43). Like precepts that exemplify the virtues, ‘characterization’ does the same (95.66). As Seneca uses the example of Cato to expound upon his understanding of ‘characterization,’ he describes particular actions (e.g., being the first to attack the enemy, speaking words of freedom in the face of bold opposition) in a particular context (e.g., the Roman civil war). His exploits embody bravery. These observations confirm that such *exempla* are not associated with prescriptive precepts (e.g., “do this to be brave”), but with exemplifying virtue (e.g., “here is an illustration of bravery”).

The example of Cato in *Ep.* 95 illustrates dispositions and actions that embody bravery. Cato does not fear external hardships and so is able to undertake courageous action. His examples offer tangible, living demonstrations of a life colored by virtue. As students encounter moments that call for virtuous action, such examples vividly illustrate abstract injunctions to live virtuously (e.g., courageously, justly, and with temperance). By doing so, they offer students a better grasp of what the virtues entail for an individual's conduct.¹²⁷

Within this example, however, also occurs a glimpse at Cato's reasoning. Seneca cites Cato's declaration to his soldiers that "it is more honourable to fall into servitude than to fall in line with it."¹²⁸ The words display part of the reasoning behind Cato's actions. He makes the decision to fight bravely because he values the gain of the freedom of the Republic to be greater than military defeat or death.

In addition to illustrating virtues, Seneca also uses examples to illustrate an abstract concept of another type: the Stoic doctrine of indifferents. As we saw above, Stoics taught that externals are *adiaphora*, and, as such, do not contribute to the Supreme Good. In examples that emphasize appropriate valuation, the force of the example is in the sphere of reasoning more than action. For instance, in *Ep.* 9.18-19, Seneca uses the example of the fourth century B.C. philosopher, Stilbo, to demonstrate that all things but virtue are *adiaphora*. Stilbo remained happy after his family was killed *because* "he deemed (*putare*) nothing that might be taken away from him to be a good."¹²⁹

Similarly, in *Ep.* 98.13, Seneca demonstrates detachment from externals by citing Fabricius's refusal of riches, Tubero's use of earthenware dishes on the Capitol, and

¹²⁷ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.67.

¹²⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 95.70.

¹²⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 9.19.

Sextius refusing the honors of office.¹³⁰ Each instance illustrates how the axiological principle, “all the Good of mortals is mortal,” becomes manifest in practical living. Two of these examples include the reasoning process of the exemplars. Tubero used earthenware dishes on the Capitol because he “deemed’ [*iudicavit*] poverty worthy both of himself and the deity.” Sextius rejected the honors of office because he “understood [*intellegebat*] that what can be given can also be taken away.”

The examples assist Seneca’s doctrinal teaching by vividly portraying individuals who value externals as truly *adiaphora*. Importantly, the practical conduct of Tubero and Sextius *begins* with their understanding of external objects. As students reflect on the examples of Tubero and Sextius, they will recall not only the actions of each, but also the reasoning that led to their actions.

Seneca also uses negative examples to illustrate proper opinion about virtue, vice, and indifferents. These examples illustrate precepts that focus on proper valuation of external affairs and objects, such as:

You need not be envious of those whom the people call great and fortunate; applause need not disturb your composed attitude and your sanity of mind; you need not become disgusted with your calm spirit because you see a great man, clothed in purple, protected by the well-known symbols of authority; you need not judge the magistrate for whom the road is cleared to be any happier than yourself, whom his officer pushes from the road. (*Ep.* 94.60)

Seneca exemplifies these valuations by using political and military figures whose conquests the masses deemed great, but are truly heinous. Seneca devalues the heroics of Alexander, Pompey, Caesar, and Marius because each possessed a vicious character. Alexander conquered lands as a result of his “mad desire to lay waste to other men’s

¹³⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 98.12-13.

territory.”¹³¹ Pompey was driven to partake in civil war because of his “mad craving for unreal glory” and Caesar due to “renown, self-seeking, and the setting no limit to pre-eminence over all other men.”¹³² Marius slaughtered the Teutons and the Cimbri not by virtue, but by ambition.¹³³ As in the other examples, the actions of these figures *begin* with a certain mindset. The examples show that vicious motives led to their so-called heroic exploits. Alexander and Pompey had mad desires. Caesar was “self-seeking” and Marius had selfish-ambition. These examples encourage students to adopt appropriate dispositions. Though they may never encounter the circumstances of the exemplary figures, they can choose to avoid mad desire and selfish ambition in their own exploits.

3.3.4. Further Emphasis on Practical Reasoning

In addition to these examples that include aspects of practical reasoning, some examples focus more specifically on the reasoning process. At several places in the *Epistulae*, Seneca highlights the process of reasoning that mature thinkers follow. For instance, Seneca’s self-example in *Ep.* 92, a letter previously discussed, responds to a question regarding the propriety of seeking preferred indifferents: “What, then...if good health, rest, and freedom from pain are not likely to hinder virtue, shall you not seek all these?” The question arises as a result of Seneca’s comprehensive statement that the Supreme Good does not include external objects such as health, rest, and freedom. If these items are not a part of the Supreme Good, should they then not be sought? Seneca responds to this dialectical engagement with a self-example of his reflection on decisions regarding external goods:

¹³¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.62.

¹³² Seneca, *Ep.* 94.64-65.

¹³³ Seneca, *Ep.* 94.66.

Of course I shall seek them, but not because they are goods—I shall seek them because they are according to nature and because they will be acquired through the exercise of good judgment on my part. What, then, will be good in them? This alone—that it is a good thing to choose them. For when I don suitable attire, or walk as I should or dine as I ought to dine, it is not my dinner, or my walk, or my dress that are goods, but the deliberate choice which I show in regard to them, as I observe, in each thing I do, a mean that conforms with reason. Let me also add that the choice of neat clothing is a fitting object of a man’s efforts; for man is by nature a neat and well-groomed animal. Hence the choice of neat attire, and not neat attire in itself, is a good; since the good is not in the thing selected, but in the quality of the selection. Our actions are honorable, but not the actual things which we do. And you may assume that what I have said about dress applies also to the body. For nature has surrounded our soul with the body as with a sort of garment; the body is its cloak. But who has ever reckoned the value of clothes by the wardrobe which contained them?...Therefore, with regard to the body I shall return the same answer to you—that, if I have the choice, I shall choose health and strength, but that the good involved will be my judgment regarding these things, and not the things themselves. (*Ep.* 92.11-13)

Like the examples reviewed in the previous sections, this example includes two aspects: a practical decision (e.g., to don suitable attire and to walk and dine as he ought) and the reasoning process that leads to the decision (e.g., neat clothing is fitting because humans by nature are a neat and well-groomed animal). The example, though, lays greater emphasis on the reasoning that leads to Seneca’s decision than on wearing proper attire and walking and dining appropriately or the consequences of his decision. Each time Seneca states that he will seek a particular action, he offers the reasons he does so. He chooses health, rest, and freedom “because they are according to nature.” He wears suitable clothing because Nature informs him that humans are a “neat and well-groomed animal.” Because suitable attire and walking and dining appropriately accord with the nature of humans, the good man will select them.

Letter 71 offers another instance that emphasizes a way of practical reasoning. Our earlier discussion of the letter demonstrated that Seneca shows Lucilius the method of reasoning he should use to discern what to seek and what to avoid in practical affairs.

Seneca teaches Lucilius that proper reasoning refers all decisions to the Supreme Good. The majority of the epistle discusses the nature of the Supreme Good so that Lucilius may recognize that the honorable is the only good and is equal in every situation. The letter's many examples demonstrate that virtue is equal regardless of external circumstances. Seneca gives the example of Cato, who bore "with an equally stout heart" his defeat at the polls and the day of his death.¹³⁴ Though the example primarily illustrates that Cato's honor was equal in both circumstances, it goes on to illustrate *how* Cato, as a wise man, contemplates about his travails so as to endure them with a peaceful demeanor. Cato reasons as follows:

The whole race of man, both that which is and that which is to be, is condemned to die. Of all the cities that at any time have held sway over the world, and of all that have been the splendid ornaments of empires not their own, men shall some day ask where they were, and they shall be swept away by destructions of various kinds...All these fertile plains shall be buried out of sight by a sudden overflowing sea, or a slipping of the soil, as it settles to lower levels, shall draw them suddenly into a yawning chasm. Why then should I be angry or feel sorrow, if I precede the general destruction by a tiny interval of time? (*Ep.* 71.15)

Like Seneca's self-example in *Ep.* 92, Cato's reasoning method contemplates the natural order of the universe. Cato bravely endures the prospects of death because he reasons that the same fate that awaits him awaits all humans. Thus, it makes little difference to him if he precedes the rest by a small amount of time.

These examples in *Ep.* 92 and 71 present the type of reasoning that underlies a sage's virtuous disposition and action. They put forward a reasoning process for students to emulate in matters of choice and avoidance and when facing hardships. Seneca's self-example concerns actions such as wearing suitable attire and walking and dining appropriately, but his method of deliberation—i.e., contemplating what is natural for

¹³⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 71.11.

humans—is repeatable in any setting in which individuals make decisions about how to conduct themselves in selection and avoidance of externals. Likewise, Cato’s example points to specific decisions and specific settings, but the method of reasoning—i.e., contemplating the natural order of the universe—is useful for many scenarios that involve death.

3.3.5. Conclusions

Each of the examples reviewed above helps students acquire *phronēsis*. Seneca’s examples do not simply promote ways of acting; they also include the mindset and way of thinking that leads to action. Thus, as students face new situations, they have not only actions to follow, but also a mindset and way of reasoning about practical affairs that they can emulate. This aspect of Seneca’s examples will be important to have in view as we examine Paul’s use of examples in 1 Cor 8:13, 1 Cor 9, and 1 Cor 10:1-13.

4. Doctrines, Precepts, Exempla in the Letters

Many of Seneca’s letters are devoted to teaching proper evaluation of the Supreme Good, *adiaphora*, and evils. This attention reflects the centrality of axiology in decision making. Other letters step away from theory-laden content in order to address questions of practical conduct directly. These areas include retirement (*Ep.* 19, 22, 36, 68), associations (*Ep.* 3, 7, 9, 47, 52, 62, 103, 109), décor (*Ep.* 114), suicide (*Ep.* 70, 77), bestowing benefits (*Ep.* 81 and *De beneficiis*), drunkenness (*Ep.* 83), and work patterns (*Ep.* 122). Each of these letters advises the reader on a particular course of conduct regarding the issue under consideration. The advice is accompanied by one or more of the pedagogical aids previously reviewed: doctrines, precepts, and examples. Given that the practical letters are in a corpus dedicated to forming *phronimoi*, these letters focusing

on *praxis* become demonstrative of *phronēsis*, the application of theoretical principles to practical decisions. As such, they serve as the “practical” complement to Seneca’s theoretical letters.

We will examine three letters (*Ep.* 5, 22, 122) and one treatise (*De beneficiis*) in order to demonstrate how Seneca’s practical letters, including their doctrines, precepts, and examples, contribute to the overall goal of his educational program.

4.1. Letter 5

Letter 5 instructs Lucilius on how to live practically in relation to societal expectations. Seneca argues the position that philosophers should live within a standard that is not repulsive to societal norms. The sage does not conform in every respect to society, but neither does he live in a conspicuous manner. Adopting a ‘mean’ standard between luxury and poverty disposes fellow humans to hear the important teachings of philosophy by not frightening them with a radical lifestyle.¹³⁵ Discovering this mean requires an ability to discern one’s cultural surroundings and find the *modus* between too much and too little. The individual neither wants to put an obstacle in the way of the philosophical message nor violate the teachings of philosophy.

Seneca helps the student discern the societal mean through doctrines and precepts. He supports the idea of the societal ‘mean’ with the Stoic standard of life, “live according to Nature.” For Seneca, living at the societal mean and “living according to Nature” are one and the same.¹³⁶ As we have seen, Seneca uses this standard to help students judge

¹³⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.2: “The mere name of philosophy, however quietly pursued, is an object of sufficient scorn; and what would happen if we should begin to separate ourselves from the customs of our fellow-men?”

¹³⁶ The question of what happens when ‘Nature’ and the societal ‘mean’ diverge is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

their lifestyle choices.¹³⁷ In this letter, Seneca does not explain the motto with natural principles (i.e., *decreta*). Rather, he illustrates what it means to “live according to Nature” by listing appropriate practices and by ‘characterization.’ Regarding the former, Seneca judges that it is contrary to Nature to “torture the body, to hate unlaboured elegance, to be dirty on purpose, to eat food that is not only plain, but disgusting and forbidding...to avoid that which is customary and can be purchased at no great price.”¹³⁸ With respect to the latter, Seneca characterizes the type of conduct that aligns with Nature by pointing to the great man (i.e., the man who lives virtuously) who “uses earthenware dishes as if they were silver” and “uses silver as if it were earthenware.”¹³⁹

In addition to these features, Seneca offers generally applicable, prescriptive precepts that focus students’ minds on the ‘mean’ standard of living. In relation to fellow-humans, students should “inwardly...be different in all respects, but our exterior should conform to society.”¹⁴⁰ Likewise, students should “try to maintain a higher standard of life than the multitude, but not a contrary standard.”¹⁴¹ Neither precept directly tells students what to do, but gives them general reminders for practical living that are applicable across a wide range of cultural settings. Perhaps given their lack of specificity concerning *praxis*, Seneca couples these general precepts with direct commands. He delineates practices the student should avoid, including “repellent attire, unkempt hair, slovenly beard, open scorn of silver dishes, a couch on bare earth.”¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Seneca typically appeals to what Nature demands for our survival as the key criterion for selection and avoidance (e.g., *Ep.* 16.7-8; 17.9; 20.13; 22.15-16; 25.4; 60.3; 119.3).

¹³⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.4-5.

¹³⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.6.

¹⁴⁰ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.2.

¹⁴¹ Seneca, *Ep.* 5.3.

¹⁴² Seneca, *Ep.* 5.2. Cf. “Do not wear too fine, nor yet too frowzy a toga. One needs no silver plate, encrusted and embossed in solid gold” (*Ep.* 5.3).

These features—the universal Stoic motto, the general and specific prescriptions, and the illustrations of “natural” practices—create a deliberative framework that helps students discern the appropriate manner of living. The general precepts provide universally applicable reminders regarding the standard for discerning practical living, but offer no specific instructions regarding how to do so. The direct commands and the illustrations of the Stoic motto fill this void. On the one hand, these ensure that students act according to certain practices (i.e., ‘do this, don’t do that’). On the other hand, the list of direct commands and illustrations is not comprehensive, even for Seneca’s time and locale. This lack of comprehensiveness offers insight into the role these commands play. If the commands and illustrations are not all-inclusive, then Seneca must intend them to exemplify types of practices that fulfill the general Stoic injunctions. As such, they give students concrete examples of what the general injunctions, “live according to Nature” and “live at a mean between the extremes of society,” means for practical living. Thus, one of their primary intents must be to aid future deliberations.

4.2. Letter 22

This letter addresses the question of retirement from business life. The letter is important for its emphasis on evaluating externals and its subtle push to change the disposition of the reader. Seneca proposes that the question of retirement is twofold: whether to retire and how to do so. With respect to the first, Seneca’s advice is plain: “I judge that you should retire from that type of life.”¹⁴³ Nonetheless, he also demonstrates that reaching this decision is not simple. Seneca senses that his students could estimate that his advice opposes Stoic maxims on bravery: “It is base to flinch under a burden. Wrestle with the duties which you have once undertaken. No man is brave and earnest if

¹⁴³ Seneca, *Ep.* 22.3; my translation.

he avoids dangers, if his spirit does not grow with the very difficulty of his task.” Fearing his readers might use these precepts to judge that they should withstand the burdens of business life, Seneca shows that these maxims are applicable only if the burden in question is worth bearing. Proper facilitation of such maxims requires evaluation of the ‘burden’ in order to determine whether the maxims are applicable to the current situation. Seneca judges that the business life is “mean and discreditable.” The *vir bonus*, writes Seneca, does not waste time on such affairs or engage in “ambitious schemes” that involve vicious ups and downs.

In addition to the significance of explicit evaluation of *adiaphora* items (i.e., the business life), the letter also encourages a change in the reader’s general disposition in relation to the business world. Though the letter suggests that Lucilius leans toward retirement, there is a sense that he has not fully turned away from the enticements of business. Seneca suspects that he may be looking for one of the Stoic mottos on bravery quoted in the previous paragraph. Further, Lucilius’s question regarding *how* to escape the business world suggests to Seneca that he remains attached to it. Seneca affirms that, in a certain sense, the question of *how* to escape is not difficult, presuming that one despises the rewards of business. Individuals fail to retire not because they are forced to remain in business, but because they continue to desire the niceties wealth brings.¹⁴⁴ The letter’s concern for the desires of business life points to Lucilius’s reluctance to retire. In response, the discussion simultaneously pushes Lucilius to give up such attachments. It is designed to transfer the object of Lucilius’s affection from the business world to virtuous ideals. By changing his disposition, Seneca enables Lucilius to make the appropriate choice more easily.

¹⁴⁴ Seneca, *Ep.* 22.9-10.

With further regard to the question of *how* to retire, Seneca presumes that it demands deliberative alertness. As we discussed in the earlier analysis of the letter, certain questions, such as “how to retire,” require analysis of the circumstances. Seneca recommends that Lucilius withdraw gently from business life, but if circumstances are such that a gentle withdrawal is not possible, he must retire abruptly. Epicurus, too, advises his students to withdraw, but only “at the time when it can be accomplished suitably and seasonably.”¹⁴⁵ While Seneca does not discuss in greater detail the types of situations he has in view, both pieces of advice complement a definitive command to retire with a request that their students assess the circumstances to judge how and when to do so. Presumably, Seneca envisions his students reading the circumstances of their business associations and commitments and discerning from these the appropriate time and rate of withdrawal.

Throughout the letter, Seneca employs doctrines and precepts to influence Lucilius’s practical decision concerning retirement. He demonstrates that discerning the applicability of a moral-preserving precept, such as “it is base to flinch under a burden,” requires axiological evaluation of external objects. He does not hesitate to identify business as an unworthy ‘burden’ and plainly offers a generally applicable precept directing Lucilius to withdraw. Yet even Seneca admits that the instruction to withdraw requires circumstantial evaluation in order to be accomplished correctly. With respect to time and manner of withdrawal, students must remain mindful of the circumstances of their surroundings so that they may take the appropriate course of action in the appropriate way and at the appropriate time.

¹⁴⁵ Seneca, *Ep.* 22.6.

4.3. Letter 122

Letter 122 continues the general theme of selection and avoidance in light of the Stoic standard, “live according to Nature.” It emphasizes the importance of aligning activity and rest with the temporal pattern Nature sets for humans and avoiding desire for notoriety by means of living contrary to natural existence. The letter is less technical than many of the letters in the corpus. Seneca uses principles of Nature only once, but supplements this feature with ‘characterizations,’ prescriptive commands, and negative examples to achieve its purpose.

The letter’s solitary use of natural principles explains “natural temporal existence” through human physiology. This link creates a natural standard Seneca’s students can use to discern what “living according to Nature” means for their temporal regimen. Seneca asks rhetorically, “what man ever had eyes for the purpose of seeing in the dark?” The fact that human eyes function best in daylight shows that humans are diurnal creatures.¹⁴⁶ Individuals who try to live nocturnally go against natural physiology and, thus, live contrary to Nature.

In exchange for numerous scientific observations, the letter predominantly explains the meaning of “contrary to Nature” using ‘characterizations’ of *unnatural* acts. Seneca lists drinking on an empty stomach (a physiological contrary), transvestism (a gender contrary), craving flowers out of season (a temporal contrary), growing trees on rooftops (a spatial contrary), and so on, as acts that pervert the natural order. The climactic perversion toward which these unnatural acts lead is the total abandonment of the temporal rhythm of Nature: reversing daytime and nighttime activities. This series of

¹⁴⁶ Inwood, *Selected Letters*, 349.

acts builds an understanding of the natural order by illustrating unnatural actions.¹⁴⁷ It helps students see that Nature establishes appointed times and places for its objects and that humans are the source of their perversion.

At the letter's conclusion, Seneca explicitly names desire for public 'fame' as the vice that causes individuals to reverse the natural temporal order. In order to check this desire and keep his students' dispositions in a proper state, Seneca calls his students back to the "the way Nature has mapped out for us."¹⁴⁸ The contrast between inordinate desire for reputation and adherence to the natural order confines *fama* within "the way of Nature." Listed as a 'preferred indifferent' by Diogenes Laertius, presumably Seneca finds that *fama* becomes an object of vice when individuals grant it greater importance than they do the standard of Nature. The desire for 'fame' drives individuals to go to any length, including doing things "contrary to Nature," to gain a reputation. By confining fame to the Stoic standard, individuals understand that acquiring *fama* is appropriate only inasmuch as it conforms with natural existence. It cannot become the goal of existence, but only a by-product of it. The student understands that, all things equal, *fama* is better than anonymity, but *fama* as a result of unnatural existence is not to be preferred over anonymity within natural existence.

Seneca's discussion of natural existence is accompanied by very practical response: "cut short the night; use some of it for the day's business." The letter complements the sustained illustration and explanation of natural existence with an overt prescription to maintain a diurnal schedule. Even if students do not understand the concept of natural existence or persist in desiring fame over conformity to Nature, the

¹⁴⁷ Inwood, *Selected Letters*, 350.

¹⁴⁸ Seneca, *Ep.* 122.19.

prescription, “cut short the night,” gives them clear practical direction. The letter never discusses provisions that qualify this general prescription. Seneca appears to care less about exceptions that might qualify the command than the general directive to follow the natural order. The “rule” establishes a pattern of living that is to be adopted as the norm.

Seneca reinforces this general directive with negative examples of individuals whose character and reputation suffer ill-repute due to their reversed temporal regimens. As discussed in the previous section on *exemplum*, the nocturnal habits of Buta and Papinius are evaluated unfavorably. The negative assessment of their actions makes vivid the harm that results from opposing the mode of conduct Seneca advises. These two men are samples of individuals whose behavior leaves them “as good as dead.” As students face decisions about their temporal routine, they have concrete reminders of the consequences that befell individuals who adopted a similar path.

The whole of the letter can be summarized by two commands: “conduct your activity with the day” and “do not desire fame that results from living contrary to Nature.” A majority of the letter simply reinforces these two points. Seneca’s primary concern is to ensure appropriate conduct and disposition with respect to his students’ temporal regimens. Thus, the observation concerning human physiology and the ‘characterizations’ of unnatural acts more specifically support Seneca’s recommendation for diurnal existence than model a way of thinking. Nonetheless, even Seneca’s justification for his advice serves the corpus’s overall objective. Human physiology and the characterizations contribute to the student’s ability to learn how to apply the goal of Stoic philosophy, “live in accordance with Nature,” to the practical decisions of daily life. The observation regarding human eyesight models how to deduce practical conduct from

the Stoic statement on the goal of life. The ‘characterizations’ help students understand the natural order by modeling actions that stand contrary to it. By exemplifying types of examples, students gain a better perspective on what “living according to Nature” looks like in practice. Likewise, the direct command, “cut short the night,” becomes an example of the type of decision a mature thinker (i.e., one who reasons from Nature) would make in a practical matter. It becomes useful both as a model of practical reasoning in general and, specifically, in analogous situations, e.g., other decisions involving the natural order. Finally, the negative examples also aid decision making in analogous circumstances. They serve as a useful deterrent from living “contrary to Nature.” Students can reflect on the consequences of Buta and Papinius as they contemplate rebelling against the natural order in any respect.

4.4. De beneficiis

Seneca’s treatise *De beneficiis* teaches his readers how to give and receive benefits. Matters of gift-giving, like other practical decisions, involve both the disposition and the practical discernment of the individual. The treatise takes up the task of instilling both proper disposition and presenting the various elements the giver must consider when giving gifts. In a sense, the treatise is a *Gebrauchsanweisung* on the appropriate mindset and discernment process involved in the bestowal and reception of benefits.

With respect to disposition, individuals must give with the mindset that the value in the benefit lays completely in the mere giving of the benefit. The treatise offers several prescriptive, moral-preserving precepts concerning appropriate disposition. The

giver ought to have no expectation of repayment or return.¹⁴⁹ He must give willingly and without any regard for self-interest.¹⁵⁰ His focus should be entirely on the good of the recipient, not himself.¹⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the type of disposition demanded in gift-giving recalls the Stoic axiological teachings regarding virtuous acts of any kind. Virtuous thinking considers the Good to lie completely within the realm of an action itself and not in the external rewards that accompany an action. Accordingly, the value of giving a gift lies neither in the gift itself nor in the expectation of a repayment.

Seneca reinforces this teaching by reminding the readers that gifts have a neutral value.¹⁵² They are neither good nor evil. That is, like all externals, gifts are *adiaphora*. They can neither increase nor decrease the value involved in giving and receiving. If this were the case, Seneca judges, “then the greater the gifts are which we have received, the greater would be the benefits.”¹⁵³ Yet, as Seneca continues, “this is not true; for sometimes we feel under greater obligations to one who has given small gifts out of a great heart.”¹⁵⁴ The good feeling generated by a great heart and not by the gift is also true of worship of the gods. Honor paid to the gods does not lie in the particular victims of sacrifice, but in the pious spirit of the worshippers. For instance, the gods are honored by sacrifices of meal given with upright hearts, but not by great animals given with an impious spirit.¹⁵⁵

In addition to axiological doctrines and observations of worship, the actions of the gods themselves compel givers to adopt a proper disposition. The gods bestow benefits

¹⁴⁹ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.1.9.

¹⁵⁰ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.4.3.

¹⁵¹ Seneca, *Ben.* 4.9.1.

¹⁵² Seneca, *Ben.* 1.6.1-2.

¹⁵³ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.7.1 (Basore, LCL).

¹⁵⁴ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.7.1 (Basore, LCL).

¹⁵⁵ Seneca, *Ben.* 1.6.3.

only with the needs of the recipient in view. They do so with no thought of gaining a return, reward, or advantage because they stand in need of nothing.¹⁵⁶ Inasmuch as the Stoics teach that humans share in the divine, humans, too, stand in need of nothing. Thus, givers should follow this ‘model’ (*exemplari*) of the gods and give without regard for self-interest, whether in terms of repayment or reward.¹⁵⁷

Seneca’s teaching on appropriate disposition applies universally to gift-giving. The general precepts to give willingly, selflessly, without arrogance, and without expectation of return apply to every situation the giver encounters. Likewise, certain general precepts inform the actions of the giver. Among these are not drawing attention to the gift by telling others about it (2.13.3), giving the gift without reproach or demands (1.1.4-7), and accompanying the gift with kind words (2.3.1).¹⁵⁸ However, the treatise also demonstrates that many of the decisions in matters of gift-giving are circumstantial in Nature. Seneca provides no one rule or manageable set of rules that universally governs whether a gift should be given and, if so, what type, how, and when. Rather, gift-giving requires the ability to evaluate the circumstances of each new situation. Accordingly, the treatise provides individuals the types of questions they should consider as they deliberate matters of gift-giving.

The treatise delineates the many components involved in gift-giving, including the size of the gift, its rarity, whether it is necessary or luxurious, the current possessions of the recipient, the stature and character of the recipient, the stature and character of the recipients ancestors, the individuality of the giving, whether to give the benefit openly,

¹⁵⁶ Seneca, *Ben.* 4.3.2-3.

¹⁵⁷ Seneca, *Ben.* 4.25.2-3.

¹⁵⁸ “Not drawing attention” (2.13.2); “giving without reproach” (1.1.4-7); “accompanying the gift with kind words” (2.3.1).

quietly, or anonymously, and so forth.¹⁵⁹ While each of these aspects sheds light on the circumstantial nature of gift-giving, Seneca's attention on the recipient is most pertinent for our subsequent discussion of 1 Cor 8:11:1.

Book 2 concentrates on the aspects of the recipient the giver must consider in order to bestow a gift properly. First, the giver must determine the stature of the recipient in order to give an appropriate sized gift.¹⁶⁰ Some gifts can be too small in relation to the recipient's social ranking. Others can be too large. Each case requires an assessment of both the person and the gift in order to judge correctly. To emphasize his point, Seneca gives an *exemplum* of Alexander's bestowal of a city to one of his subjects.¹⁶¹ Seneca chides Alexander for giving the man a gift (i.e., an entire city) that far outweighed his capacity to receive it. Considering only himself, Alexander failed to think that such a gift might be too large for his recipient to receive. Alexander ought to have taken account of the other. As Seneca advises, "if it is not becoming for the man to accept the gift, neither is it becoming for you to give it."¹⁶²

Second, a giver must determine the character of the recipient in order to discern whether bestowing a gift is appropriate. Seneca judges that a good man will give a benefit to an ingrate who is so in terms of the Stoic understanding of a bad man, but to the ingrate who also shows himself to be a cheat in matters of benefits, he will not give a benefit.¹⁶³ The point Seneca makes is that while all men are bad in the Stoic sense (i.e.,

¹⁵⁹ For the respective elements, see 2.15 (size of gift); 1.14.1 (rarity); 1.11.1-2 (level of necessity); 1.12.3-4 and 1.14.1 (current possessions of recipient); 2.17.1-2 and 4.9.3 (character of recipient); 4.30-32 (character of forefathers); 1.14.3 (individuality); 2.9-10 (openly, quietly, or anonymously).

¹⁶⁰ Seneca, *Ben.* 2.15.3.

¹⁶¹ Seneca, *Ben.* 2.16.1-2.

¹⁶² Seneca, *Ben.* 2.16.2.

¹⁶³ Seneca, *Ben.* 4.26.3. Cf. Seneca, *Ben.* 4.27.4. According to the Stoics, all humans who are not sages share equally in vice. Therefore, the majority of humans are bad in the Stoic sense. However, there are also humans who are notably reprobate in the area of benefits. To defend the position that givers should

all men possess all vices), he will not give a benefit to an individual who is particularly prone to misuse benefits. To illustrate this point he gives the examples of a father who will not betroth his daughter to an oft divorced man or name a robber the guardian of his son. Similarly, benefactors ought to refrain from bestowing gifts that are doomed to perish at the hands of the recipient.¹⁶⁴

Third, the giver should determine whether or not the gift will harm the recipient.¹⁶⁵ Individuals often crave harmful objects and their desire blinds them from being able to determine the destructiveness of their objects of desire. Thus, the giver ought to consider the advantage, not the desire of the recipient. The gift should be truly beneficial for the recipient (in both the short and long term) and not simply something the recipient craves. Again, Seneca illustrates the point with examples. It is common practice to withhold cold water from the sick and the sword from those who are grieved or enraged, even though the sick person may crave cold water and the enraged person the sword. Likewise, Seneca judges in the form of a self-example: “I will not give a man money if I know that it will be handed over to an adulteress, nor will I allow myself to become a partner in dishonor, actual or planned; if I can, I will restrain crime, if not, I will not aid it.”¹⁶⁶

The circumstantial questions demonstrate that educating individuals in matters of gift-giving is not as simple as instructing them to adopt an “other-centered” mindset. Instructors must also teach students *how* to make practical decisions on the basis of that new mindset. Therefore, in addition to its efforts to shift the disposition of the giver from

give to bad men in the Stoic sense, Seneca points to natural observations. Plenty of benefits are given indiscriminately to humanity, such as the sun, moon, stars, favorable winds, etc. (e.g., *Ben.* 4.28.1).

¹⁶⁴ Seneca, *Ben.* 4.27.5.

¹⁶⁵ Seneca, *Ben.* 2.14.

¹⁶⁶ Seneca, *Ben.* 2.14.4.

a self-centered, reward-based mindset to an “other-centered” mindset, the treatise provides individuals with a model of decision making in matters of gift-giving. In particular, the treatise’s focus on “regard for the other” displays the type of decision making that cases involving multiple parties require. Together, the circumstantial components, along with the examples and self-example of practical decision making, accomplish this task. The two aspects of decision making form a deliberative model for giving benefits. The circumstantial questions demonstrate the appropriate form of reasoning in the matter of giving benefits, and the examples and Seneca’s self-example exemplify the types of practical decisions the deliberative model renders.¹⁶⁷ Using this framework, students will be able to reason properly *on their own* in new situations without having to recall a set of rules that dictates gift-giving.¹⁶⁸

5. Conclusion

While the admonitory features of Seneca’s letters are common across various fields of moral exhortation, the particular goal of exhortation dictates the function of the pedagogical devices used in each field. Seneca’s letters are located in the context of a pedagogical curriculum aimed at creating mature moral thinkers. In the letters, Seneca employs hortatory features (e.g., *praecepta* and *exempla*) in a fashion that aids the practical deliberation (*phronēsis*), not just the action, of his philosophical students. The antithetical connection between theory (in the form of *decreta*) and action (in the form of

¹⁶⁷ Given that Seneca’s examples and self-example do not encompass every imaginable scenario, the illustrations simply display a sample of practical decisions that result from the reasoning process.

¹⁶⁸ “What makes people the object of appreciation is not what they do, but the wisdom, the insight, the understanding, the circumspection, the thoughtfulness, the inventiveness which determine what they do and how they do it—in short, the perfection of reason behind their behavior” (Michael Frede, “On the Stoic Conception of the Good,” in *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, [ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 89).

praecepta and *exempla*) unite around the common task of teaching both how to discern “what to avoid, what to seek” and the proper disposition while doing so.

Some works, such as *Ep. 22* and *De beneficiis*, serve as explicit *Gebrauchsanweisungen* delineating the (circumstantial) components of phronetic reasoning in actual cases. Others demonstrate the stages of phronetic reasoning for general topics (e.g., slave treatment in *Ep. 47*; living according to custom in *Ep. 5*) or actual cases (e.g., *Ep. 122*). Still others focus on one or more of the aspects of reasoning that are applicable for all practical decisions: relating all decisions of selection and avoidance to the Supreme Good (e.g., *Ep. 71* and *98*) or Nature (e.g., *Ep. 92*, *116*, *119*). Among these letters, and others like them, doctrines and precepts can function as illustrative components of the reasoning process. In addition, the letters may also contain *exempla* that either display the phronetic reasoning process or illustrate a component of it.¹⁶⁹

Seneca’s *Epistulae* contribute to the subsequent analysis of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 regarding both the goal and function of the chapters, including the pedagogical devices used therein. The content of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 suggests that Paul aims to form mature moral thinkers. In light of our analysis of Seneca, Paul’s robust goal of developing ‘prudence’ demands a reconsideration of the chapters’ function and the pedagogical devices Paul deploys.

¹⁶⁹ Letters 71 and 92 are instances of the first type. The second type includes illustrations of virtue (e.g., *Ep. 9*, *67*, *95*, *98*, and *104*), analogous experience (e.g., *Ep. 74*, *77*), and direct-action models (e.g., *Ep. 122*). The former illustrates axiology and the latter, practical decisions.

Chapter 3: Analysis of 1 Cor 8

1. Introduction

Through exegetical analysis, this chapter explores the argumentative logic of 1 Cor 8:1-13. Traditional interpretations typically agree that 1 Cor 8 promotes a mode of behavior requiring self-sacrifice of one's own advantages for the upbuilding of others.¹ Accordingly, the specific points of 1 Cor 8 (esp. 8:7-13) are understood as justifying Paul's instruction to refrain from idol meat for the sake of weaker brothers and sisters.

While this interpretation correctly observes that 1 Cor 8, in part, promotes a course of action, it does not go far enough in its examination. Several other studies rightly recognize that 1 Cor 8 also includes a new *telos*, or principle, of decision making.² These studies view ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ as a principle that seeks the good of the other. It serves as a key component in Paul's thinking about the crisis facing daily conduct.³ These studies, however, presume that ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ provides a sufficient context within which the community can solve its ethical problems.⁴

¹ E.g., Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (2d ed.; ICC; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), 162; Fee, *First Epistle*, 378; Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (AB 32; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 332-33. Paul Gooch, *Partial Knowledge: Philosophical Studies in Paul* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 120-21; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Freedom or the Ghetto (1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-11:1)," *RB* 85 (1978): 543-74, esp. 568-69 and 572-73; David Horrell, "Theological Principle or Christological Praxis? Pauline Ethics in 1 Cor 8.1-11.1," *JSNT* 67 (1997): 83-114, esp. 105. Glad, for instance, writes regarding 10:25-28, "As such this section takes off from 1 Cor 8 where Paul had attempted to modify the behavior of the wise" and "Paul's overall concern here is an attempt to modify the behavior of the wise that was undermining the commitment of others in the community." Concerning 10:32-11:1, he writes "...Paul presents himself as an example of the behavior advocated...He urges the wise to restrict their freedom and thus imitate him in his affable behavior as he has imitated Christ" (*Paul and Philodemus*, 290, 292 and 294, respectively; cf. 282-83).

² Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul*, 234-37; John C. Brunt, "Love, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility: The Contribution of 1 Cor. 8-10 to an Understanding of Paul's Ethical Thinking," *SBLSP* 22 (1981): 19-34; Wayne A. Meeks, "Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul," in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics 1988* (ed. D. M. Yeager; Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1988), 17-29; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 237-58; Richard Hays, "Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians," *ExAud* 10 (1994): 31-43; David Horrell, "Theological Principle."

³ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 235.

⁴ Furnish, *Theology and Ethics*, 235-36.

This presumption prevents such studies from properly examining Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. In contrast to this strain of thought, ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ is *not* a principle that can be applied readily to decision making. Inherent to ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ is a situationally sensitive mode of reasoning. A way of thinking that seeks the good of the other must account for the traits and characteristics of the other and the particular issue in question in order to discern what best 'builds up.'

Moreover, ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ is not just a deliberative principle. Together with 8:2-3, ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ emphasizes a new disposition and self-understanding Paul wishes the community to adopt. In contrast to a mindset that thinks solely about one's own rights, standing, and possession in the gospel, ἀγάπη involves a humble self-understanding that seeks the good of the other and devotion to God over one's own self interest. This mindset and self-understanding better disposes the Corinthians to make decisions on the basis of building up others.

In light of these two observations, we propose that 1 Cor 8 neither merely promotes self-renouncing behavior nor simply provides a new *telos* of decision making. The argumentative logic of 1 Cor 8 becomes most intelligible by reading the chapter as Paul's attempt to promote the disposition of ἀγάπη and to teach the mode of reasoning and acting ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ requires.

After an initial examination of key critical issues for 1 Cor 8, our discussion follows Paul's response in the order of its presentation. First Corinthians 8 contains two major components. Verses 1-3 present ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ and "love of God" as the new disposition and deliberative framework Paul desires the community to adopt. In 8:4-13, Paul illustrates the way of thinking ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ follows in the practical matter of

idol meat. Verses 4-6 identify and support the Corinthians' monotheistic confessions. These verses establish the fullness of the Corinthians' 'right' (ἐξουσία) to eat idol meat. In 8:7-13 Paul turns to the way ἀγάπη reflects on 'rights' in the gospel in a community context. Verses 7-9 reflect on the qualities and characteristics of those who "do not have knowledge" (8:7) and the theological value of the issue in question (8:8) and draw a preliminary conclusion on the basis of these observations (8:9). Verses 10-12 offer the Corinthians an example of a practical context in which they will have to apply the mode of thinking illustrated in 8:7-9. These verses also identify the effects the Corinthians' decision to eat in such situations would have on weaker community members. Finally, Paul concludes with a self-example of his own reasoning process in situations where his freedom to eat idol meat and the presence of weaker community members come into conflict (8:13). The example reveals both his way of reasoning and, for the first time, the mode of action ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ demands.

2. Two-Preliminary Issues

Prior to the exegetical analysis of the chapter, we must address two preliminary issues. First, we must address the pre-history that leads to Paul's response in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. We contend that Paul is not writing to a community divided along the lines of "strong" or "wise" vs. "weak."⁵ While it remains uncertain exactly what caused the community to write to Paul about idol meat, several key factors suggest that the wise had no awareness of weak community members. Second, we must examine the relationship of 8:5-6 to 8:4. Does 8:5-6 support or qualify the Corinthians' slogan in 8:4? This question is crucial to Paul's argument.

⁵ Though "strong" has become common as a marker of the group or individuals who claim γνῶσις, we use the term "wise"—rather than "strong"—to refer to such individuals (unless the original author uses the term to denote these individuals).

2.1. Pre-History to 1 Corinthians

2.1.1. No Known “Weak” Group at Corinth

The proposal that the wise identified some in the community as ‘weak’ and engaged in a program of enlightenment has become common in interpretations of 1 Cor 8. On this reading, the wise are aware that some in the community lack knowledge about monotheism and remain in the custom of idols. They use the phrase “weak in conscience” to characterize their weak counterparts’ confusion over theoretical and experiential knowledge and attempt to “build them up” through word and example.⁶ In his response, Paul informs the wise that the weak are ‘defiled’ (μολύνεται) and ‘destroyed’ (ἀπόλλυται) by their enlightenment program and that they sin both against the weak and Christ when they lead their weaker brothers and sisters to eat. By bringing awareness to the negative consequences of the wise group’s enlightenment program, Paul urges them to give up their intent to educate the weak in exchange for a practice of renunciation for the sake of the weak. That is, Paul promotes a new *praxis* for the wise to adopt in relation to the weak, not a new framework of thinking about community relationships.

This interpretation encounters a major difficulty with respect to the term, ἄσθενης. This argument demands that the term originates with the Corinthians. While

⁶ Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 549. Cf. Robert Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (AGSU 10; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 424 and Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 277-81. Most who adopt the position that “weak conscience” originated with the Corinthians do so, in part, on the basis of the statistical analysis of ἄσθενης and συνείδησις (e.g., C. A. Pierce, *Conscience in the New Testament* [SBT 15; London: SCM Press, 1955], 64-65; W. D. Davies, “Conscience,” *IBD* 1:671-76; Christian Maurer, “σύνοιδα, συνείδησις,” *TDNT* 7:914; Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 421; Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 548-49; Richard A. Horsley, “Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians: 1 Corinthians 8-10,” *CBQ* 40 [1978]: 581; Wendell Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10* [SBLDS 68; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985], 90). Both terms have a high concentration of usage in 1 Cor 8-10. Moreover, συνείδησις appears in Paul’s letters for first-time in 1 Cor 8. Finally, Paul does not use συνείδησις in the similar discussion of meat in Rom 14-15 even though he uses the term earlier in that letter.

Paul may have received the term *συνείδησις* from the Corinthians, the burden of proof remains on the “program of enlightenment” position to demonstrate that the wise use the term in reference to the “*weak* conscience” of others.⁷ The wise may simply have used *συνείδησις* to designate their own—or even their belief in the entire community’s—‘awareness’ of their freedom to eat idol meat in light of their possession of *γνῶσις*.⁸

Several factors indicate that the slogan’s originators did not use the term “weak conscience.” First, *πάντες...ἔχομεν* reflects the wise Corinthians’ observation that *all members* of the community possess sufficient *γνῶσις*. *Γνῶσις* does not refer to a special or esoteric form of Christian knowing, but the basic tenets of faith in 8:4-6. The Corinthians are free to eat idol meat because they *know* that idols do not have power in the world and that there is only one sovereign God (8:4). Moreover, Paul’s agreement with the Corinthian claim (8:5-6) demonstrates that this *γνῶσις* is for all Corinthians.⁹ While outsiders believe in “many gods” and “many lords,” the first person plural at the outset of 8:6 (*ἡμῶν*) contrasts the entire community of believers, not a privileged portion of it, to those outside.¹⁰

Second, rather than using a formula that denotes the Corinthians’ prior knowledge about the weak, Paul introduces the idea that “knowledge is not in all” in 8:7 with a contrastive *ἀλλά*. This strong adversative signals a definitive break from his agreement with the Corinthians’ slogans. Paul informs them that the knowledge that they use to

⁷ Statistical analysis suggests that *συνείδησις* reflects Paul’s borrowing of the term from the Corinthians. *Συνείδησις* has a high concentration of usage in 1 Cor 8-10 (eight out of fourteen total uses) and the term appears in Paul’s letters for the first time in 1 Cor 8. Moreover, Paul does not use *συνείδησις* in the similar discussion of meat in Rom 14-15 even though the term is both available to him and he uses it twice in separate discussions earlier in the letter.

⁸ So Pierce, *Conscience*, 64-65, followed by Maurer, *TDNT* 7:914. Cf. Horsley, “Freedom,” 581-82. The wise may have used “conscience” to characterize their “clear conscience” (so Pierce, Horsley) or the certainty of their awareness (so also Horsley) of freedom to eat idol meat.

⁹ See pp. 131-41 for exegesis of 8:5-6.

¹⁰ Paul similarly draws a contrast between outsiders and the community in 1 Cor 1:22-24 and 2:8-10.

justify their right to eat idol meat “is not in all.” The verse signals Paul’s first disagreement with their argument. Though it may be the case that idols do not have power and there is only one God, this knowledge is not shared by all. If we grant this point, then it is also the case that Paul is supplying the Corinthians information they do not yet know or believe.

Third, scholars who propose that the wise identified some as “weak in conscience” commonly impose a significant contradiction upon the position of the wise. Several scholars representing this position argue that the wise used “weak conscience” to characterize individuals who lack knowledge (8:7). Yet these scholars also argue that the wise believed that the weak shared their knowledge (as indicated by 1 Cor 8:1, “we all have knowledge”).¹¹ This position forces the wise to claim both that *all* in the community have knowledge and that *not all* have knowledge. Given the emphasis the wise place on *possession of γνῶσις* as the key to eating idol meat, they would likely hold the position of *either 8:1 or 8:7*, but not both.¹² If the wise truly believed that ‘all’ have

¹¹ Reading 1 Cor 8:1, Jewett indicates that Paul “opens the discussion in Letter B by admitting the basic correctness of the Gnostic position (1 Cor 8:1ff): ‘we all have knowledge,’ he says, ‘that the idols are nothing and that all food comes from God alone’” (*Anthropological Terms*, 421). However, in his discussion of 8:7, Jewett observes that, “The weak conscience was for the Gnostic a conscious which lacked knowledge. Such a definition is clearly presupposed in 1 Cor 8:7 where those with a weak conscience are referred to as not possessing the appropriate γνῶσις” (*Anthropological Terms*, 424). Willis also brings out this contradiction. He describes 8:7 as follows: “The idea of ἡ συνείδησις ἀσθενής was a slur at those who refused to eat idol sacrifices, or who did so with troubled consciences. This means the real definition of the ‘weak’ in Corinth is ‘those not having knowledge’” (*Idol Meat*, 94). However, in his earlier discussion of 8:1, Willis comments, “It is implied in 8:1 that the opponents felt the weak shared their γνῶσις” (*Idol Meat*, 88). Willis never clarifies how the opponents can both state that all have knowledge and yet identify some as “not having knowledge.”

¹² Glad struggles with this problem as well. Perhaps because his position depends on the wise having an awareness of the weak in the community, he judges that Paul agrees with their assessment that “all have knowledge” of the monotheistic propositions in 8:4-6. He reads Paul’s statement, “this knowledge is not in all,” in 8:7 as a reference to the irrelevance of food in 8:8 rather than to the theological propositions of 8:4-6: “The wise assumed that all members of the community possessed the type of γνῶσις under discussion. The inference that this “knowledge,” basic to “Christian” belief and shared by all members of the community, must have been the conviction of monotheism, is to the point. When Paul then claims in verse seven that “not everyone has this knowledge,” he cannot be referring to the slogans in the previous verses but to the one in verse eight: food is morally and religiously irrelevant, in the view of the wise and of Paul”

knowledge, they would not be concerned to instill γνῶσις in the weak. However, if they believed that some did not have proper γνῶσις, it would be unlikely for them to attribute γνῶσις to the entire community.¹³

These deficiencies warn against creating an entire reading of the pre-history and argument in 1 Cor 8 on the basis of a wise group's prior knowledge of a group who suffered "weak consciences" due to their lack of knowledge about idols. A pre-existing "wise-weak" divide at Corinth is unlikely.

2.1.2. Alternative Proposals to Pre-History

Though our analysis of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 does not demand a definitive assessment of the letter's pre-history, there are several ways the idol meat debate at Corinth could have taken shape. One line of historical reconstruction attributes the dispute at Corinth to disagreement over the Apostolic Decree. While this reconstruction admits a number of sub-proposals, the general position deduces that an attempt was made under the aegis of Peter to introduce the Jewish-Christian orthopraxy of the Decree at Corinth.¹⁴ The

(*Paul and Philodemus*, 284). This reading is severely problematic. It focuses the shortcomings of the weak on their over-scrupulosity concerning *food* in general and not on *idol meat* in specific (see Glad's position on p. 283). This proposition is odd given that *eating idol meat* (8:4) is the crux of the issue. If the weak agreed that "idols are nothing" and also used such statements in discussions about *eating* idol meat, then it is difficult to fathom how its nature as *food* would make them avoid it.

¹³ The position that the wise engaged in a program of enlightenment of the weak faces an additional challenge. If, in fact, Paul's main objective was to qualify the wise group's plan to instill γνῶσις in the weak in conscience, it is odd that Paul does not record this part of their argument, as he does their claim that "all have knowledge." Murphy-O'Connor attributes the wise with being fully aware of the "weak consciences" of some in the community: "The response of the Strong was to attempt to show the Weak that they were being inconsistent by drawing out the implications of the monotheistic principles that the Weak had accepted. It seemed entirely natural to the Strong that this discrepancy between theory and practice on the part of the Weak should be corrected by edification of their consciences" ("Freedom," 549). If their awareness of the "discrepancy between theory and practice on the part of the Weak" was an essential piece of their argument (with 8:1 and 8:4), it is odd that Paul does not record it in the letter as one of their slogans.

¹⁴ Charles K. Barrett, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," *NTS* 11 (1965): 150. Cf. T. W. Manson, "The Corinthian Correspondence (1)," in *Studies in the Gospels and Epistles* (ed. Matthew Black; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), 200 and Arnold Ehrhardt, "Social Problems in the Early Church," in *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 278.

dispute would then arise between “Jewish-minded” individuals who sought to uphold the Decree and others who wanted to negate prohibitions against idol food altogether.¹⁵

Another explanation may be the confusion generated by Paul’s previous letter.¹⁶ In 1 Cor 5:9, Paul indicates that a previous letter incited debate over the community’s relationship with the outside, idolatrous world. It appears that some interpreted this to mean that the community could have no associations with idolatrous people or objects, including idol meat. Others, however, questioned this strict interpretation on the basis of the community’s possession of γνῶσις, monotheistic doctrine, and the indifferent status of food. Accordingly, the community writes to Paul with the arguments reflected in 1 Cor 8:1, 4, and 8.

A variant of this view is posed by those who detect a united front against Paul.¹⁷ The disagreement, then, was between Paul and the Corinthians, not among the Corinthians. In response to Paul’s previous letter, those in the community who believed they had ‘knowledge’ defended their freedom to eat idol meat on the basis of monotheistic doctrines and the *adiaphora* status of food.¹⁸

¹⁵ Though a Petrine ministry to Corinth is possible, as indicated by the “Cephas-faction” (1:12; 3:22), it is unlikely that this group can be equated with those who object to eating idol meat. As attractive a possibility this proposal is, it faces several prominent counter arguments. First, if Jewish-Christians represent the conservative position, then Paul identifies this group as “the weak” who are “still in the custom of idols” and so eat idol meat as if it were truly sacrificed to an idol (1 Cor 8:7). Given the continued custom and association with idols it is more likely that “the weak” represent Gentile Christians who have not yet acclimated fully to monotheistic beliefs. See Carl R. Holladay, *The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Company, 1979), 110-11.

¹⁶ E.g., Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 237-38.

¹⁷ Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (trans. Frank Clarke; Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), 135-67; Hurd, *Origin*, 114-25 (esp. 123-25); Brunt, “Love, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility,” 20-21; Fee, *First Epistle*, 358-59. Hurd goes too far in asserting that the ‘weak’ are merely a hypothetical construct.

¹⁸ On the one hand, the letter belies a community divided, which detracts from a “unified front” theory. Disagreement and competition are evident in the community’s identification with various apostles (1:12; 3:3-5; 3:22). Paul uses language of schism (e.g., 1:10-16; 11:18-19) and competitive mindsets (e.g., 4:6; 6:1-11 etc.) throughout the epistle. However, Epictetus describes weak (ἄσθενέσι) individuals as those who are “puffed up” (πεφουσημένως) in belief that they are more educated than actually is the case (*Diatr.*

While each of these proposals has its strengths and weaknesses, our point is not so much to adjudicate between them as to demonstrate that the pre-history of the letter does not require a divide along “wise vs. weak” lines.¹⁹ If indeed there was an intra-community debate at all, the two sides may have disagreed over the Decree or Paul’s letter without ever casting their disagreement in “wise vs. weak” terms. Those who argued in favor of eating idol meat may have simply used their observation regarding γνῶσις as response to those who favored abstention on the basis of the Decree or Paul’s earlier letter. Whether answering Paul, those who favor the Decree, or those who think Paul’s earlier letter applies to all idol meat, individuals who thought it permissible to eat idol meat argued, “but we all have knowledge that there are no idols in the world and only one God—how is it the case that we cannot eat this meat?”

2.2. Relationship between 1 Cor 8:4 and 8:5-6

A second issue central to the argumentative logic of 1 Cor 8 is the relationship between 8:4 and 8:5-6. Scholars largely agree that the two theological statements in 8:4 represent the Corinthians’ justification for eating idol meat. A majority also agrees that all or part of 8:5-6 represents Paul’s own viewpoint and reaction to the Corinthian slogans in 8:4. A number of these scholars propose that all or part of 8:5-6 qualifies the theological assertions put forth in 8:4. Paul reins in the radical monotheism of the wise by asserting the ontological existence of “many gods and many lords.”

This reading emphasizes a disagreement between Paul and the wise over the ontological existence of cosmic beings. The Corinthian statement, “there is no idol in the

1.8.8-10). If Epictetus sheds any light on 1 Cor 8, perhaps the entire community was unified around a sense of γνῶσις—even though this reality was not true for all.

¹⁹ Certainly either the Apostolic Decree or Paul’s previous letter *could have* led to a division at Corinth along “wise vs. weak” lines. For instance, according to Ehrhardt, *Paul* introduces the term ‘weak’ to indicate the Peter-minded contingency at Corinth (“Social Problem,” 278).

world,” is thought to claim that spiritual beings other than God do not exist while 8:5 admits that there are such things as cosmic powers. Typical of the tradition, Barrett writes, “The first proposition [8:4b] presumably means that no idol in the world has any real existence, though in view of x. 20f., not to mention verse 5, this affirmation needs careful statement. Paul himself undoubtedly believed in the real existence of demonic beings, and that these beings made use of idolatrous rites...”²⁰

Scholars commonly argue this position on two grounds: the qualification in 8:5 foreshadows Paul’s statement about demons in 10:19-21 and the Corinthian claim in 1 Cor 8:4 supposes radical monotheism. We take each of these arguments in turn.

First, the argument of 8:4-6 does not pertain to ontological existence of cosmic beings, but to ontic existence of the specific gods worshipped in Corinth—that is, whether the named deities worshipped in Corinth actually possessed the specific identity and power attributed to them by their devotees. Both the claims in 8:4 and 8:5-6 reflect this line of argument.

The Corinthian argument in 8:4 consists of two statements regarding the status of God as the sole θεός: οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ and οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς (8:4b-c).²¹ The first of the two propositions in 8:4 can either mean, “there are no idols in the world” (i.e., an ontological denial of idols) or “an idol is nothing in the world” (i.e., a denial of the power of idols). The syntax of the expression is somewhat ambiguous. Οὐδὲν could

²⁰ *First Epistle*, 191. Cf. Hurd and scholars listed therein (*Origin*, 68, Table 5). Conzelmann, Fee, and Wright represent a variant of this view. They admit that spiritual powers are limited in that they only have power over those who subjectively decide to grant them power by worshipping them. Each thinks that 8:5b qualifies or prepares for Paul’s qualification of the Corinthian viewpoint—namely, that there are spiritual forces (Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (trans. James W. Leitch; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 145; Fee, *First Epistle*, 372-73 and 376; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* [Minneapolis; Fortress Press, 1992], 128 and 134).

²¹ There is widespread agreement that Paul is quoting a Corinthian slogan in 8:4 (e.g., Hurd, *Origin*, 65-74; Fee, *First Epistle*, 365 n. 30; Horrell, “Theological Principle,” 85). Hurd lists nineteen scholars prior who hold this position (*Origin*, 68).

either be taken attributively, “there is no idol in the world” or predicatively, “an idol is nothing in the world.”²² The syntactically preferential reading of 8:4b is the former. Οὐδὲν εἰδωλον parallels οὐδεὶς θεός, the latter of which clearly reads “there is no God but one.”²³ Nonetheless, 8:4b is not a statement regarding the absence of idols in the world.²⁴ Idols, after all, were a common phenomenon in ancient Corinth. Rather, the phrase claims that idols are not the representations of a deity. Its parallelism with 8:4c supports this understanding. If οὐδὲν εἰδωλον is syntactically parallel to οὐδεὶς θεός (i.e., the negative is attributive in both phrases) then their meaning is likely parallel as well. The parallelism between οὐδὲν εἰδωλον and οὐδεὶς θεός suggests that the phrase, “there is no idol in the world,” indicates that idols have no existence as representations of the gods they claim to represent because there is only one God. Thus, the expression, οὐδεὶς θεός εἰ μὴ εἷς, shows that the type of “nothingness” in question is an idol’s status as θεός. There is no entity that truly warrants the appellation θεός except “one,” the God of the church in Corinth. Accordingly, these Corinthians are able to claim that idols there are no idols in the world in the sense that all entities other than “one” lack the status of θεός.

In response to their claims, Paul writes of “so-called gods,” “many gods and many lords,” and pens a confession claiming *one* God, the Father and *one* Lord, Jesus Christ. The first of these expressions, λεγόμενοι θεοὶ, points not to the reality of multiple deities in the cosmos, but to the reality of *belief* in those deities. While the Greco-Roman gods

²² For the attribute reading, see Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 219; Charles K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 191; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 142. For the predicative, see Charles H. Gibling, “Three Monotheistic Texts in Paul,” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 532 and Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 546. Parallel expressions to the predicative reading can be found in Gal 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor 7:19; 10:19. The closest parallel, ἡ περιτομή οὐδὲν ἐστὶν καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδὲν ἐστὶν (“circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing”) (1 Cor 7:19), places οὐδὲν in the predicate position.

²³ E.g., Barrett, *First Epistle*, 191.

²⁴ Cf. Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 546.

are considered to be true gods by many, they are not so for Paul. If any pagan deity is believed to exist in heaven or on earth, it is not, in fact, a god, but only a ‘so-called’ god.

Reading the ‘so-called’ status of gods next to a profession of one God “from whom are all things” and one Lord “through whom are all things,” severely contrasts these “gods in name only,” to the power and dominion of God, the Father and the Lord, Jesus Christ. The dual use of τὰ πάντα in 8:6 leaves no room for pagan gods to exercise creative power or provision. Paul names one God in specific, ὁ πατήρ, and one Lord in specific, Jesus Christ, who, together, are the source and medium of all creation, including the creation and existence of the Corinthian community.

The more difficult expression occurs in 8:5b. In a parenthetical aside, Paul comments, “as indeed there are many gods and many lords.” The reference to “many gods and many lords” either refers to the ontological existence of cosmic beings or to cult practices in the surrounding culture. Granting the first option means that 8:5b qualifies 8:4. Though Paul acknowledges confessions such as “God is one” and is able to identify foreign gods as mere “so-called gods,” he still warns that cosmic powers exist.²⁵ If the second option reflects Paul’s intent, then 8:5b points to the reality of the *practice* of cultic worship of gods and lords that permeates Corinth.

The first of these positions faces a significant challenge. Sustaining this position requires two distinct understandings of θεοὶ in the span of a single verse. Conzelmann’s commentary on the passage reveals this difficulty. Conzelmann judges that 8:5a reflects

²⁵ E.g., Hurd: “as emphatic a qualification of the monotheism of (3) as Paul could have made as a Christian” (*Origin*, 122); Horsley: “In 8.5 Paul in effect contradicts one of the Corinthian principles of γνῶσις, that ‘an idol is nothing in the world,’ by asserting parenthetically the actual existence of ‘many so-called gods and lords in heaven or on earth’” (“Gnosis in Corinth,” 50); Willis: “Paul is in the awkward position of having to argue with some Christians (formerly pagans) for the reality of the pagan divinities” (*Idol Meat*, 86).

Paul's critique of foreign gods: "They may very well be existent in the sense of being 'there' in the world and having a certain power...But they are not gods." However, he observes that 8:5b qualifies the concession in 8:5a: "there 'are' 'gods' and 'lords.'"²⁶ The difficulty with this reading is not that Paul could conceive of multiple levels of cosmic beings (i.e., God and a multitude of unspecified, lesser cosmic powers), but that he uses the same term to refer to two different levels of being. To follow Conzelmann's line of thinking, one must suppose that Paul refers to the belief in specific 'gods' of Greek and Roman piety in 8:5a while referring to θεοί as that realm of lesser cosmic powers in 8:5b without indicating any distinction between his two uses of θεός.²⁷

The second option alleviates the difficulty posed by these two challenges. The parenthetical remark, "as indeed there are many gods and many lords," observes the reality of cult practices of the city in ancient Corinth. While 8:5a denotes Paul's thoughts about the status of foreign gods, 8:5b refers to the practice and beliefs of non-Christian Corinthians: "even if there are so-called gods—whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed [in Corinth] there are 'many gods' and 'many lords' [as is evident by the worship that occurs at the temples and idols in the city]." The qualification identifies the pagan practices and beliefs that threaten the Corinthian congregation. The force of the verse is not the contrast between two levels of cosmic beings, but between the beliefs and practices of outsiders (8:5) and the confessions of Christians in 8:4 and 8:6. In 8:5a he acknowledges the subjective belief in these gods (while inserting his opinion on their

²⁶ Barrett, though less definite, argues similarly (*First Epistle*, 191-92).

²⁷ Otherwise, Paul would be taking away in 8:5b what he grants in 8:5a. For this reason, some have preferred to attribute 8:5a to the Corinthians and 8:5b to Paul (e.g., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 86). Moreover, Paul rarely uses θεοί or κύριοι to refer to the realm of cosmic powers elsewhere. The closest Paul comes to this expression is in 1 Cor 4:4: ὁ θεός τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου. He more commonly uses ἄγγελοι, ἀρχαί, ἐξουσίαι (e.g., Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24).

status as mere ‘so-called gods’) and in 8:5b he observes the physical presence of this belief through structures and practices of pagan Corinthians. The gods and lords that the citizens of Corinth worship and to which they offer sacrifices are not in fact gods, but mere ‘so-called gods.’

Together, the sequence of verses in 8:4-6 presents a unified statement of the unique position of God, the Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ, as the only divine entities among the many gods and lords worshipped in Corinth that enjoy the specific ontic identity attributed to them. The logic of 8:4-6 reads as follows. The Corinthians assert that the named gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon—as represented by their idols—are ‘nothings.’ There is only “one God” who has the specific ontic identity attributed to “him/her” by “his/her” devotees. In 8:5, Paul reinforces this claim by naming these specific Greek and Roman gods associated with idols—as evidenced in the worship practices in the city of Corinth (8:5b)—as mere ‘so-called gods’ (8:5a). Serving as the apodosis of the condition beginning in 8:5, 8:6 contrasts these ‘so-called gods’ with the creative and formative power of *one* specific God, the Father, and *one* specific Lord, Jesus Christ (8:6). The only named deity that has the identity and power associated with it is God, the Father, worshipped in the Corinthian community.

The proposed agreement between 8:4 and 8:5-6 is not a reconstruction independent of historical support. Both 8:4 and 8:5-6 align with common Jewish polemics against foreign gods and their representative idols.

Old Testament writings discuss idols in two main ways: (1) in prohibitions against crafting images in the worship of Yahweh and (2) demands for exclusive worship of Yahweh amidst the gods of the nations. The Hebrew word, *‘ăṣabîm*, which the

Septuagint translates as εἰδωλα in all but two instances, occurs, perhaps for the first time, in the prophet Hosea.²⁸ Each of the references to idols refers to Israel's crafting of images of Yahweh. Hosea commands Israel to throw out the idols they make of Yahweh. Though the context is Yahweh worship (so, way (1) above), Hosea already employs a motif that will appear in warnings and polemics against the idols of the nations (so (2) above). He highlights the human-made and 'not-god' status of idols: "a metalworker has made it; it is not God" and "they make idols for themselves from silver...all of them, the work of craftsmen."

Texts following Hosea took up and built upon these themes in polemical indictments of foreign gods. Two psalms identify the "idols of nations" as "silver and gold; made by human hands" and characterize the "idols of nations" as impotent:

Psalm 113

¹² But their idols are silver and gold,
made by human hands.
¹³ They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see
¹⁴ They have ears, but cannot hear,
noses, but cannot smell.
¹⁵ They have hands, but cannot feel,
feet, but cannot walk,
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.
¹⁶ Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them

Psalm 134

¹⁶ They have mouths, but cannot speak,
eyes, but cannot see.
¹⁷ They have ears, but cannot hear,
nor is there breath in their mouths.
¹⁸ Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.

The excerpts from both Psalms describe the inanimate and impotent nature of idols.²⁹

Moreover, the psalmist of 113 places this denigration of idols in the context of a comparison to Yahweh. Immediately prior to the anti-idol polemic, the psalmist writes: "Why do the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Our God is in heaven above (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς)

²⁸ M. Graupner, *ešab*, *TDOT* 11.282.

²⁹ The "nothingness" of idols of the nations is often described in the Old Testament through expressions of idols as absolute lifeless material (e.g., LXX Ez 16:16; Hos 13:2; Hab 2:18-19; Bel. Cf. Rev 9:20-21).

οὐρανῶ ἅνω); in the heavens and on the earth (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐν τῇ γῆ), all things (πάντα), whatever he desires, he does.”³⁰ In contrast to idols who cannot speak, hear, see, etc., God does ‘all things.’³¹

Deutero-Isaiah draws a similar contrast. In Isa 37:16-20, Hezekiah prays to God concerning the impending Assyrian invasion: “you alone are God over every kingdom of the world, you made heaven and earth (σὺ θεὸς μόνος εἶ πάσης βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης, σὺ ἐποίησας τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν).” He proceeds to beseech God to rescue Jerusalem from Sennacherib, who has laid waste to other nations and threw their “idols [Heb: *ʿēlōhêhem*; LXX: τὰ εἰδωλα αὐτῶν] into fire.” Sennacherib could do this because their idols “were not gods (Heb: *ʿēlōhîm*; LXX: οὐ γὰρ θεοὶ ἦσαν), but the works of human hand, wood and stone.” Hezekiah has faith that Yahweh will save Jerusalem praying, “but you, Lord our God, save us from their hands, in order that every kingdom on earth might know that you are God alone (σὺ εἶ ὁ θεὸς μόνος).”

Likewise, in Isa 41:23, God challenges the idols and counselors of other nations to “do anything” in order that people may know that “you are gods” (θεοὶ ἐστέ). The prophecy contrasts God who has established Israel and promised her protection and provision of all the needs of her people against the idols of nations who can neither do anything—whether good or bad—nor proclaim anything; thereby showing that they, in fact, are not gods.

³⁰ Cf. Jer 14:22 (LXX): “The idols of the nations do not make it rain, do they? And can the heavens give showers? You are He, are you not, you for whom we have waited? For you made all these things [πάντα ταῦτα].” Cf. 1 Cor 12:1-3.

³¹ In addition to the term *ʿāšabîm*, the psalmists and prophets used *ʿēlîlîm* as a polemical term against the gods of the nations. Represented by a variety of translations in the LXX (including εἰδωλα), *ʿēlîlîm* itself contains the sense of ‘worthlessness, nothingness.’ Isaiah uses this term in the 8th century similarly to the way Hosea uses *ʿāšabîm*. The idols of nations are merely human made: “Their land is full of idols [*ʿēlîlîm*] they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their fingers have made” (Isa 2:8). Cf. Hab 2:18-19.

Isaiah 46 directly contrasts the impotency of idols with the power of Yahweh.

The chapter describes the idols (Heb: *ʿāšabîm*; LXX: γλυπτά) of the nations as inanimate objects that cannot move on their own and which their people must carry about with great burden. In contrast, Yahweh carries and supports his people. In a less overt denunciation of idols, Yahweh announces through Isaiah: “I declared (things that would pass) to you from long ago, before they came to pass I announced them to you so that you would not say, ‘My idol (Heb: *ʿāšbî*; LXX: εἰδῶλα) did them, my carved image and cast image commanded them’” (Isa 48:5). Though Isaiah does not explicitly state that the ‘idol’ could not declare things beforehand, the implication is that Yahweh prevents the Israelites from mistakenly believing that they did.³²

Finally, in a related fashion, 1 Chr 16:26 observes, “For all the gods of the nations are idols, but our God made the heavens.” Though the verse does not explicitly name the impotency of ‘idols,’ the Hebrew designation of the gods of the nations as *ʿēlîlîm* (“worthlessness”), in contrast to Yahweh who made the heavens, characterizes the gods of the nations as impotent.³³

Each of these texts contrasts the nothingness or ‘non-god’ status of foreign gods to the creative, provisional, and/or protective power of Yahweh. By including belittling remarks about the ‘non-god’ status of foreign gods, these authors amplify the supremacy of Yahweh. Moreover, the three Deutero-Isaiah texts also highlight God’s provision and

³² The prophets also characterized the impotency of idols by their inability to withstand the eschatological conquest of Yahweh (e.g., Isa 2:18, 20; 19:1; 21:9; Jer 50:2; 51:47).

³³ Cf. Deut 29:17. In addition to these contrasts between an idol’s powerlessness with Yahweh’s power, a number of other OT texts deny divine status to idols. The Deuteronomist identifies εἰδῶλα with “not god”: “They provoked [παρεζήλωσάν] me with what is not god [οὐ θεῶ], that angered me with their idols [εἰδῶλοις]” (Deut 32:21). The theme occurs more frequently outside of the Pentateuch. Jeremiah 16:19-20 (LXX) likewise implies that idols are not gods: “our ancestors falsely set up idols [εἰδῶλα], and there is no benefit in them. Can anyone make gods for himself? Now these are not gods [οὐκ εἰσιν θεοί].”

protection of his chosen people in specific. Polemics against foreign gods pertain both to comparisons of power between Yahweh and foreign gods as well as comparisons of Yahweh's unique power to sustain the elect community in relation to the inability of foreign gods to do the same for their devotees.

The Jewish polemic of idols holds two consequences for 1 Cor 8:4-6. First, it demonstrates that the wise group's position lies squarely within the pre-Hellenistic Jewish tradition. Their view is not necessarily a form of radical monotheism derived from Hellenistic philosophy or Hellenistic-Judaism.³⁴ Second, 1 Cor 8:5-6 accords with this traditional mode of arguing as well. These verses highlight the contrast between the gods of Corinth who are not God, but only "so-called gods," with God, the Father, who created all things and the Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things. Accordingly, both the claims in 8:4 and 8:5-6 have a natural historical location in attempts to prevent Israel from going after foreign gods.

In light of the nature of the issue in 1 Cor 8:4-6 and the consistency of all of 8:4-6 with Jewish polemics against idols and foreign gods, we judge that 8:5 is not a qualification of the position of the wise in 8:4, but augmentation and support of it.³⁵ When we turn to the exegetical analysis of the chapter, we will explore how Paul's support of the Corinthian claim in 8:4 develops the argumentative logic of 1 Cor 8 in the context of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 as a whole.

Of key significance to the analysis of the argumentative logic in 8:1-13 is the relationship of Paul's argument to the Corinthian claims in 8:1b, 4. Our discussion has

³⁴ Pace Horsley, "Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8.1-6," *NTS* 27 (1980): 32-51.

³⁵ This reading accounts adequately for the γάρ that introduces 8:5. As an explanatory particle, γάρ implies agreement with what precedes it. The agreement of 8:5a with 8:4 is one reason why some commentators read 8:5a as a continuation of the Corinthian position (e.g., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 86).

argued both that the Corinthian rationale for eating idol meat depends on a false social observation that *all* in the community have γνῶσις (as reflected in 8:1b) and that Paul supports—rather than criticizes—their monotheistic propositions supporting their right to eat idol meat (8:4). These issues form two important substructures for the subsequent exegetical analysis. With these preliminary issues in view, we offer the full scope of the Corinthian argument—detectable in 8:1, 4, and 8—prior to turning to Paul’s response.

3. The Corinthians’ Argument for the Right to Eat Idol Meat

Regardless of the situation that led up to the Corinthians’ argument to Paul, a number of individuals, or the entire community, argued for the community’s freedom to eat idol meat on the basis of three proofs: two types of “theological” observations (8:4 and 8:8) and one social observation (8:1b).

In addition to justifying eating idol meat on the basis of the status of idols and the sovereignty of the “one God” of Israel (8:4), which we reviewed above, the wise also employ an argument regarding the status of food in general. They claim, “food will not give us standing before God” (8:8a). The underlying premise of the statement in 8:8a stems from 6:13. The wise, with Paul’s apparent agreement (if not his prompting), have argued that both food and the stomach belong to the category of objects that God will do away with at the end of the present age.³⁶ Unlike the body (i.e., whole person), the material stomach will not be raised, but destroyed. The statement in 6:13a, “God will destroy food,” is one premise of a syllogism that is accompanied by a second, unstated premise: “what God destroys does not give us standing before God.” On the basis of these two premises, the syllogism concludes: “food does not give us standing before God.” Though unstated in 6:12, the conclusion to this syllogism is plainly stated in the

³⁶ Fee, *First Epistle*, 255.

first half of 8:8a: “food will not give us standing before God.” As such, actions pertaining to food have no bearing on an individual’s eschatological existence.

With this understanding of 8:8a in mind, we can see how the two arguments in 8:4 and 8:8a inform the wise group’s position on food sacrificed to idols. The arguments constitute two levels of βρωμα: an argument concerning the *adiaphora* status of food in general (8:8) and an argument regarding one specific type of food: idol meat (8:4). The argument in 6:13 and 8:8 addresses the status of βρωμα. The entire category of ‘food’ is *adiaphora*. It does not matter what one eats. Yet within the general category of food, idol meat occupies a special class that requires further justification. Accordingly, with Paul’s approval, the wise observe that idol meat is no exception to the permissibility of food because idols do not have power over food. The two arguments collectively form the wise group’s theological basis for eating idol meat: if idol food is nothing but food and there are no special prohibitions on the category of idol food, then it is permissible to eat idol meat.

The wise coupled these theological arguments with an observation about the community’s make-up. As we argue above, those in favor of eating idol meat defend the community’s right to eat on the basis of theological propositions by asserting that “we all have knowledge.”³⁷ In response to those who affirmed that the community should abstain from idol meat, those in favor of eating idol meat insisted to Paul that the entire

³⁷ The presence of 8:1b in the wise group’s argument shows that this group did not adopt a mode of discernment based solely on theological propositions. The claim, “we all have knowledge,” is an observation, albeit an incorrect one, about the make-up of the community. Hence, any attempt to understand the logic of Paul’s argument by identifying the wise group’s reasoning as strictly “theological” or “theoretical,” while naming Paul’s as “ecclesiological” is misplaced (e.g., Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 241-42 and Horrell, “Theological Principle”).

community had knowledge—including the full knowledge of the principles represented in 8:4-6—and, accordingly, could eat idol meat on the basis of this knowledge.

4. Paul's Response: 1 Cor 8:1-13

Paul responds to the Corinthians' argument without either fully affirming or fully denying their claims. In this initial chapter of the idol meat discussion, Paul never offers an all-encompassing rule. The chapter includes maxims and observations that qualify the Corinthians' approach to the idol meat issue (8:1-3, 7-12), a statement on the theological value of eating idol meat (8:8), an exhortation to value those who are 'weak' over one's own rights (8:9), a practical scenario in which the wise may cause the weak to stumble (8:10), the theological consequences of leading the weak to stumble (8:12), and an example of his own conduct (8:13), but no behavioral commands. If Paul intended to fix the problem in the way they asked, he could have simply indicated his agreement or disagreement with their position. He resists supplying any specific advice, however, in this early portion of the argument.³⁸ Why does he argue in this way? What does the absence of specific advice at the beginning of the argument tell us about Paul's intention for 1 Cor 8-10?

Our exegetical analysis of Paul's argument will show that Paul's goal was more foundational than *either* indicating universal approval or disapproval of the Corinthians' position *or* simply directing them to abstain in certain circumstances while partaking in others. As we will demonstrate, Paul's argument both centers them in a new mindset and

³⁸ Paul's indirect way of arguing has been noted by many, including Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Freedom," 543; John C. Brunt, "Rejected, Ignored or Misunderstood? The Fate of Paul's Approach to the Problem of Food Offered to Idols in Early Christianity," *NTS* 31 (1985): 115; and David Horrell, "Theological Principle," 83.

disposition—ἀγάπη—and illustrates the types of considerations a mindset defined by ἀγάπη requires.

4.1. 1 Cor 8:1-3: Ἀγάπη as the New Disposition

In his initial response to the Corinthian claim, “we all possess knowledge,” Paul does not respond immediately with the reply, “not all have knowledge.” He saves this rebuttal for 8:7. At first, Paul addresses not their claim, but what their claim implies about the basis of their decision making. He focuses on the type of mindset that looks to ‘knowledge’ to make decisions.

Paul’s opening response offers two maxims on γνῶσις and ἀγάπη: “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” and “if someone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know what is necessary to know, but the one who loves God is known by Him.”³⁹ The two maxims set the stage for the mindset and way of thinking that Paul instructs in the chapters that follow. Each maxim contrasts two competing mindsets. One mindset, which represents the Corinthians, is characterized by an arrogant and self-centered focus on knowledge and the other, which represents Christ, is characterized by a love that ‘builds up’ and a love of God.

The first maxim contrasts the Corinthians’ pride in their knowledge with the Christic mind that focuses on loving and building up others. Paul’s rebuff, “knowledge puffs up,” points to the Corinthians’ inflated, self-centered mode of thought. Φυσίῶω, and its cognate, φυσάω, metaphorically denote a swollen or inflated view of the self.⁴⁰

³⁹ See discussion of 8:2-3 below for this reading.

⁴⁰ All NT uses of φυσίῶω but one occur in 1 Cor. BDAG defines φυσίῶω as “to cause to have an exaggerated self-conception” (s.v. φυσίῶω, 1069). The cited uses of the term suggest lofty estimation of self as a result of some prestige or accolade. Ignatius writes to the Smyrnaeans, “let no one be ‘puffed up’ because of [high] positions” (4:1). Similarly, his letter to the Magnesians praises them for their avoidance of high-mindedness (φυσίῶω) even though they enjoy freedom (12). He warns in his letter to Polycarp against letting slaves become ‘puffed-up’ as a result of their fair treatment by the community (4:3). Cf. *T.*

Ancient philosophers and historians often use the term to refer to pride or arrogance due to the possession of a skill or positions of power and wealth. For example, Epictetus describes the orator who is ‘puffed up’ by praise and deflated by scorn: “That is why, if he is praised, he goes off the stage all puffed up [φουσηθείς], but if he is laughed to scorn, that poor windbag of his conceit is pricked and flattens out.”⁴¹ Epictetus suggests that the orator who receives praise is filled with conceit over his craft. In another excerpt, Epictetus describes as ‘puffed up’ (πεφουσημένος) those who believe that they are more educated than actually is the case.⁴² Centuries prior, Xenophon observes that Critias and Alcibiades are ‘puffed up’ by wealth and power: “and when pride in their birth, over confidence in wealth, and being puffed up by their power [πεφουσημένω δ’ ἐπὶ δυνάμει]...”⁴³ Similarly, the Cynic Diogenes, criticized individuals who were prideful due to wealth: “but when again he saw...those who were puffed up with conceit of wealth [πλούτῳ], he thought no animal more silly.”⁴⁴

Each of these uses connects being ‘puffed up’ with a high, and often over-inflated, regard for one’s status—whether due to a personal skill, position of power, or possession of wealth. The same is true for Paul’s use of the term throughout 1 Corinthians. In 4:6, the verb characterizes the attitudes of those who have an over-estimation of the level of wisdom and eloquence they—and their representative apostles—possess.⁴⁵ In 5:2, Paul condemns the Corinthians for being ‘puffed up’ due to their over-zealous display of freedom in matters of sexual conduct. In 13:4, arrogance is the

Levi where the priests use their priesthood as a pretense to become ‘puffed-up’ over their fellow humans and God (14:7-8).

⁴¹ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.14.29 (Oldfather, LCL). Cf., Plato, *Alc. maj.* 145e; Plutarch, *Comp. Dem. Cic.* 2.3.

⁴² Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.8.8-10. Interestingly, Epictetus calls these individuals, ‘weak’ (ἀσθενέσι).

⁴³ Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.2.25 (Marchant, LCL); cf. Demosthenes 19.314, 59.96-97; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 30.19, 58.5; Philo, *Cong.* 127; *Legat.* 69, 255.

⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius 6.24 (Hicks, LCL).

⁴⁵ Cf. 1 Cor 4:18-19.

attitude associated with a heightened sense of importance of one's spiritual gifts, for which love is the antidote.

In alignment with these uses, 1 Cor 8:1 refers to a heightened sense of a quality of possession: γνῶσις. Like the possessors of power and wealth who become φυσοῦν in Greek literature, the claim, “we all possess knowledge,” incites Paul's accusation that those with γνῶσις in Corinth are ‘puffed up’ by their knowledge .

The corrective for ‘being puffed up’ is ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ. Although Paul has expounded very little on ἀγάπη and οικοδομεῖ at this point in the letter (cf. 1 Cor 2:9), he gives more attention to these concepts in 1 Cor 10:23 and 1 Cor 13-14.

In 10:23, Paul defines οικοδομεῖ as that which “seeks the advantage, not of oneself, but of the other.” In 1 Cor 13, Paul names several community building features of ἀγάπη that ought to characterize one's use of spiritual gifts, including γνῶσις (1 Cor 13:2). Ἀγάπη is long-suffering and kind and not jealous or puffed up (13:4). It does not seek things for itself or provoke others, but supports them (13:5-6). Moreover, in 1 Cor 14, Paul compares the value of prophecy and speaking in tongues on the basis of their respective ability to ‘build up’ the *ecclesia* as a whole. Paul judges that prophecy is better than tongues because prophecy ‘builds up’ others while tongues only ‘build up’ the individual. The chapter encourages the community to make “the building up of the church [τὴν οικοδομὴν τῆς ἐκκλησίας]” their standard of judgment for the exercise of spiritual gifts (14:12).⁴⁶

In contrast to their self-centered and inconsiderate arrogance, ἀγάπη promotes consideration and care for others. The outward centered disposition of ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ

⁴⁶ Paul makes “building up of one another” the criterion of judgment for decision making in a similar discussion in Romans (Rom 14:19; 15:2).

draws the community to think more intently about others. It encourages the community members to cease thinking only of their desires and, instead, give regard to the characteristics and needs of their fellow brothers and sisters.

Like 8:1c, the maxim, εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἐγνωκέναι τι οὐπω ἔγνω καθὼς δεῖ γινῶναι; εἰ δέ τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, οὗτος ἔγνωσται ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ (8:2-3), indicates an over-estimation of knowledge and ἀγάπη as its corrective.⁴⁷ The key term for the first half of the maxim, δοκέω, indicates a perceived, but not necessarily actualized, reality. The individual who “*thinks* he knows something” presumes a reality to be true that is not actually the case.

Paul uses δοκέω in a similar sense in 1 Cor 3:18-19. The verse states that the one who

⁴⁷ Verses 8:2-3 contain three related textual variants. P⁴⁶ omits τι in 8:2 (with Tertullian, Hilary, Origen, Ambrosiaster) and τὸν θεόν (with Clement) and ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ (with Clement, Sinaiticus, and 33) in 8:3 (Günter Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles* [London: Oxford University, 1953], 32). The committee of UBS 3rd ed. decided in favor of the longer text in each of the three cases, while Zuntz and Fee, among others, have argued for the shorter reading (Zuntz, *Text*, 31-32 and Fee, *First Epistle*, 364, 67-68). The primary argument of Zuntz and Fee is that the shorter reading in 8:2-3 suitably—if not brilliantly—fits the context of the argument of 1 Cor 8, esp. 8:1-3. However, if we take ἔγνωσται as a divine passive (as Zuntz does), then the *inclusion* of τὸν θεόν would offer an equally, and perhaps more, suitable reading of 8:3 than its omission. “Loving God” is a natural opposite of “being known [by God]” (cf. Rom 8:28 where “loving God” is equated with being among God’s chosen). Thus, what the omission of τὸν θεόν might gain in suitability for 8:1-3, it loses in terms of the context of 8:3 itself.

There is even good reason to suppose, against Zuntz, that τὸν θεόν fits the surrounding context as well. First, though Paul indeed defines ‘love’ primarily on the basis of “action upon men” in 8:1-3 and 8:7-13, a primary question of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is the proper display of one’s free status in Christ and, by implication, in God. Thus, all questions of “action upon men” are also questions of how one relates to God. This association makes “God” a natural object of ἀγάπη.

Moreover, both Zuntz and Fee are wrong to claim that “knowing God” does not fit the context of 8:1-3. Zuntz writes that “the question is not of ‘recognizing *something*’...but of the imagined possession of gnosis...” (*Text*, 31). Similarly, Fee claims that “knowing God is *not* the issue raised by the Corinthians in saying, ‘we all possess knowledge’” (*First Epistle*, 368 n. 44). Both Zuntz and Fee disregard the notion that the Corinthians *are* claiming knowledge *about God*. As Paul expresses in 8:4, they “know” that “there is no idol in the world” and that “there is no God but one.” Zuntz himself shows the inconsistency of this line of thinking as he remarks five sentences earlier that “the Corinthians had held that the ‘gnostic,’ knowing that the idols ‘are nothing,’ need feel no hesitation to eat idol meat” (*Text*, 31). Zuntz’s reference to the Corinthians’ knowledge that “idols are nothing” is, in fact, a piece of knowledge *about God* (and so, 8:2 is not “spoiled” by the inclusion of τι). Thus, as Zuntz rightly, though perhaps accidentally, admits, 8:1-6 is about “knowing God.” Granting this point shows that ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, as an alternative form of “knowing God,” fits with the surrounding context (and so, again, against Zuntz, τὸν θεόν not “truly ruinous” to the text).

In addition to these contextual arguments, we observe that P⁴⁶ has a particular tendency toward shorter readings, as is apparent in 1 Cor 8. Apart from 8:2-3, P⁴⁶ contains the shorter reading in four other verses in 8:1-13, for a total of seven shorter readings. In addition to the three shorter readings in 8:2-3 (τι, τὸν θεόν, and ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ), P⁴⁶ also excludes ἀλλ’ in 8:6, σὲ in 8:10, and ἀσθενοῦσαν in 8:12 and shortens ἀσθενῆς οὖσα to ἀσθενοῦσα in 8:7. Notably, Fee does not think any of these latter four are original.

“*thinks* [δοκεῖ] himself to be wise in this age ought to become a fool in order to gain true wisdom [εἴ τις δοκεῖ σοφὸς εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν ἐν αἰῶνι τούτῳ, μωρὸς γενέσθω, ἵνα γένηται σοφός].”⁴⁸ Like 8:2, δοκέω references an individual’s view of self that is out of alignment with the actual state of affairs. The individual falsely presumes wisdom because he does not know what he must know in order to become wise.

The second halves of the expressions in 1 Cor 8:2 and 3:18 adopt a similar mode of thought to the admission of ignorance proclaimed in the Socratic paradox.⁴⁹ The echo of the paradox suggests that the corrective to an inflated view of self is to adopt, like Socrates, a position of humility by identifying with ignorance—i.e., by admitting that one does not possess all knowledge. In 8:2, the person who “thinks he knows something” (8:2) is not truly wise because he is not in touch with the limitations of his knowledge. He concentrates on what he knows and remains unaware that he does not know many things. Hence, “what is necessary to know” in 8:2b is that the one who “thinks he knows something” does not know everything.⁵⁰ It calls him to profess that he does not have full knowledge and so admit weakness.

The content of “what one must know” extends beyond recognition of one’s own ignorance. In 1 Cor 3:18, “foolishness” is not a mere profession of ignorance, but a

⁴⁸ A similar occurrence of δοκέω occurs in Galatians. The term characterizes a divergence between the perceived and actual state of affairs. In the paraenetic section of the letter, Paul tells the community that those who have a higher view of themselves than is actually the case deceive themselves: εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὄν, φρεναπατᾷ ἑαυτόν (6:3). The two clauses in the protasis draw out the difference between perception and reality. The individual who “thinks he is something” is self-deluded because he, in fact, is actually ‘nothing.’

⁴⁹ In the *Apology*, Socrates’ profession to not know everything (i.e., his claim to ‘foolishness’) makes him wiser than one who claims to know all: “I am wiser than this man; for neither of us really knows anything fine and good, but this man thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas I, as I do not know anything, do not think I do either. I seem, then, in just this little thing to be wiser than this man at any rate, that what I do not know I do not think I know either” (21d [Fowler, LCL]).

⁵⁰ The charge, “let him become a fool in order that he might become wise,” in 3:18 adopts a similar mode of thought. It echoes the Socratic understanding that Socrates’ admission of ignorance (read: foolishness) makes him wiser than his counterpart. The corrective to an inflated view of self is to adopt a position of humility by identifying with foolishness—i.e., admitting that one does not possess all knowledge.

profession of the world's foolishness (i.e., Christ crucified) as the wisdom of God. In 3:19, Paul explains that "becoming a fool" means casting off the "wisdom of the world" because it is foolishness to God. The comparison echoes the discourse on the "word of the cross" in 1:18-2:16, in which God declares foolish the wisdom of the world by making the cross the mode of salvation (esp. 1:18-25).

Likewise, 1 Cor 8:2 does not simply call on those with knowledge to profess their ignorance.⁵¹ "What is necessary to know" is that "the one who loves God is known by him." This second expression of love is less lucid than the first. It provides no definitional content to ἀγάπη. Whereas 8:1 defines 'love' as that which 'builds up,' 8:3 names 'God' as the object of 'love,' but with no active content. The divine passive, "being known by Him," in 8:3b provides the clue to Paul's statement. Though Paul does not often use the phrase (only here and 1 Cor 13:13 and Gal 4:9), Gal 4:9 shows that "being known" signifies election. The Galatians did not transition from "not knowing God" to "knowing God," but from "not knowing God" to "being *known by* God." The nomenclature marks the initiating call of God upon individuals and the "chosenness" of the community.⁵²

The association of "being known" with being 'chosen' connects this theme to the Old Testament concept of election. A common theme associated with election is God's command for Israel to respond to their elect status with loving God in return. Among the many references to loving God in Deuteronomy, none is more important than the

⁵¹ Though this theme may be implicit in 8:2-3. Paul's discourse on love in 1 Cor 13 defines 'maturity' as the realization that we know now only "in part."

⁵² The close proximity of "being known" by God and "being called" is also evident in Rom 8:28. Through duplicate dative phrases, the verse equates "those who love God" with "those who are called according to his purpose." Given that Rom 8:28 is one of only three uses of ἀγαπᾷ τὸν θεόν, it is likely that "those called" in Rom 8:28 and "being known" in 1 Cor 8:3 are one in the same.

command to “love the Lord your God” in Deut 6:5.⁵³ The command immediately follows the first line of the *Shema*, which is echoed by the Corinthians in 8:4.

This juxtaposition is significant for the Corinthian community because certain Corinthians appear to have treated God’s ‘oneness’ from the *Shema* as a piece of knowledge *about* God in order to justify eating idol meat. That is, they have used factual knowledge about God to demonstrate their free and elect status. Paul’s adjacent placement of the Corinthians’ use of the *Shema* with the maxim, “the one who loves God,” however, shows that demonstrations of allegiance to God come through “loving God,” not knowledge about God. Paul corrects their desire to be “known by God” through *knowledge of God*. In contrast, “love of God” is the appropriate response to the personal knowledge of the individual that God displays through election.⁵⁴

The use of ἀγάπη and the passive of *being known* by God introduce a shift in the Corinthians’ thinking. In response to the Corinthians’ attempt to know God through factual knowledge, Paul counters with two terms that emphasize relational knowledge. As Old Testament texts demonstrate, “being known” by God involves personal knowledge of the individual. One psalmist expresses the Lord’s intimate knowledge of him, “you have discerned me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; you understood my thoughts from far off...Behold Lord, you have known all things, both the last and the first. You formed me and placed your hand upon me.”⁵⁵ The LXX

⁵³ Cf. Deut 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; Josh 22:5; Ps 18:1; 31:22, as cited in Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 340.

⁵⁴ As Wright observes: “The real *Gnosis*, Paul is saying, is not your *Gnosis* of God but God’s *Gnosis* of you, and the sign of that being present is that one keeps the *Shema*: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (*Climax*, 127).

⁵⁵ Cf. Jer 1:5. God’s ‘knowledge’ of Israel can also characterize their elect status (e.g., Amos 3:2).

also uses γινώσκειν to denote the personal relationship between Moses and Yahweh, who ‘knows’ Moses by name (Exod 33:12).⁵⁶

By using terms that denote relational knowledge to characterize the relationship between the Corinthians and God, Paul indicates the type of knowledge God desires the Corinthians to have of one another. The emphasis of “love of God” as the mark of “being known by God” suggests that the Corinthians should cease to display their chosen status through *factual knowledge about* God in exchange for displaying it through a personal form of knowing—that is, through *love of God*—defined in 1 Cor 8:2 as a form of knowing that builds up others. This type of ‘knowledge’ will be exemplified in 1 Cor 8:7-13. Like ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ, 8:7-13 focuses on ‘knowledge’ of fellow community members.⁵⁷

The significance of a personal form of knowing will become more evident as Paul increasingly identifies the wise with Christ, who is none other than God’s means of calling the community into being (e.g., 8:6). As the Corinthians are called to imitate Christ, they are to ‘know’—not facts about God, but characteristics of their fellow community members so that they may seek what best serves them. As 8:7-13 reveals, “knowledge of others” forms a major component of Paul’s argument.

With these maxims in view, we are ready to make some initial observations. The community’s intense focus on possession of gifts such as knowledge, as characterized by the statement, “we all have knowledge,” reveals a ‘puffed up’ arrogance that prevents them from admitting things they lack (8:1-2). In a community where there is no space for the admission of weakness, there is not even the possibility of responding *to* weakness in

⁵⁶ Cf. Deut 34:10.

⁵⁷ As we will see in 1 Cor 10:1-22, “loving God” is also manifested by loyalty and allegiance to God over other gods, as is a common exhortation in the Old Testament.

an *agapaic* or Christ-imitative manner. These introductory verses begin to open up space for weakness, particularly through the maxims of 8:2-3.

First, contrasting being ‘puffed up’ with ἀγάπη seeks to replace a self-centered focus on one’s gifts with an outward centered disposition that seeks the good of others. As a disposition that embodies long-suffering, kindness, happiness for the successes of others, and concern for the well-being of others (as Paul will write in 1 Cor 13), love promotes consideration and care of others over oneself. The negative communal consequences associated with φυσικόω dissipate as ἀγάπη takes root in an individual. As an outward centered disposition, ἀγάπη frees individuals from thinking only of themselves and focuses the mind on others. It invites them to think not of their own circumstances (e.g., possessions, status, and qualities) and concomitant rights, but of the circumstances and needs of others. Accordingly, the transition improves the ability to feel pity for others and incites the desire to forgo rights for the benefit of others.

Second, the echo of the Socratic paradox (8:2) invites the admission of weakness, thereby creating a space for weakness to exist in the community. The final introductory maxim (8:3) continues to open the space for the admission of weakness by transferring the community’s understanding of how it can “be known by God” from displays of *knowledge* of God to *loving* God. This transition further de-emphasizes the significance of *knowledge* and doing so both allows for weakness in knowledge to exist and calls for this weakness to be responded to with love.

Thus, these verses express what will become a foundational goal of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1: to move the Corinthians’ from an individualistic, self-centered concern for the possessions one has in exchange for a community that humbly recognizes the qualities

and needs of others in a way that sparks a desire to meet one another in their places of need. As Paul moves from these introductory maxims to the specificities of the argument, he will display the mind of one who both perceives the qualities and characteristics of others and decides to act in a way that embodies the mindset of the love of Christ incarnate.⁵⁸

4.2. 1 Cor 8:4-13: Teaching Practical Reasoning

4.2.1. 1 Cor 8:4-6: ‘Rights’ as a Part of Christic Identity

After the general maxims on knowledge and love, Paul restates the issue in terms of its specific application: eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols. This restatement and the accompanying review of the Corinthians’ theological justification for eating idol meat appear at first glance to disrupt the flow of the argument. Why would Paul break from his commentary on the community’s possession of *γνῶσις* and not simply proceed immediately to the line of arguing he picks up again in 8:7? This disruption is all the more real for those who propose that 8:5 qualifies the Corinthian statements in 8:4, especially given that the theological qualification of 8:4 is not at the heart of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 8. Scholars who assert that 8:5 qualifies the Corinthians’ theological argument fail to explore an important rhetorical role 8:4-6 plays in the idol meat discourse, particularly in the course of the argument in 1 Cor 8 and 9.

Scholars have increasingly identified the exemplary character of 1 Cor 9 in relation to 1 Cor 8. In the latter chapter, Paul exemplifies his own willingness to give up his ‘right’ (*ἐξουσία*) to receive payment for the sake of the gospel’s proliferation. As is typically argued, Paul engages in this form of self-presentation in order to show the

⁵⁸ Though unused in the remainder of the idol meat discourse, *ἀγάπη* remains the guiding principle of the discussion. A similar mode of arguing occurs in 1 Cor 12-14. In this three chapter sequence, *ἀγάπη* is the controlling framework that guides Paul’s advice even though the term only appears in 1 Cor 13 and 14:1.

Corinthians that he is not asking them to do anything that he, himself, has not done. Just as Paul has given up his ‘right’ to receive community support, so ought the Corinthian wise give up their ‘right’ to eat idol meat.

In the course of 1 Cor 9, Paul gives sustained attention to the justification of his ‘right’ to receive support. Verses 4-14 repeatedly emphasize that Paul *has a right* to payment from the community. He offers justificatory arguments on the basis of custom, the law, religious practice, and the command of Jesus. Paul sustains this emphasis to establish that he is aware that he has a right to receive financial support.

Paul’s mode of arguing in 9:4-14, which establishes Paul’s ἐλευθερία, is not mere rhetorical façade designed to encourage the Corinthians to do something *he* thinks is beneficial. Paul’s notion of ἐξουσία and ἐλευθερία derives from his notion of Christic self-understanding. His argument reflects the logic that imitation of Christ involves adopting a *complete* Christic identity. Though Paul does not offer the Christ hymn in 1 Corinthians, the mode of argument in 9:4-14 and 9:19a give expression to the stature enjoyed by Christ prior to his voluntary ‘enslavement’ for the sake of humanity (Phil 2:6-11). Being in the form of God, Christ enjoyed equality with God. It is only out of this divine status that he assumes the form of a slave. The hymn’s attention to Christ’s divine status reveals that the full picture of Christ’s identity is not his status as slave, but of one who takes the form of a slave *in spite of* his possession of divine form and equality. Thus, prior to Paul’s admission of refusing payment from the community (9:15-18) and being a slave to all (9:19b-23), he demonstrates his Christic self-understanding as one who has authority (9:4-14) and freedom (1 Cor 9:19a) in Christ.

In light of the exemplary character of 1 Cor 9 in relation to 1 Cor 8, the rhetorical force of 1 Cor 8:5-6 becomes stronger if it helps establish the Corinthians' theological right to eat idol meat. If we take the exemplary relationship of 1 Cor 9 and 1 Cor 8 seriously, 8:5-6 is key to this process. These verses, alone, support the Corinthians' theological justification for eating idol meat. Just as Paul will build his 'right' to receive financial support in 1 Cor 9:4-14, he builds the Corinthians' right to eat idol meat in 8:5-6. The alternative—that Paul weakens their theological justification for eating idol meat—weakens both the relationship between 1 Cor 8 and 9 and Paul's primary goal for the wise to imitate Christ by voluntarily renouncing their rights for the sake of others.

4.2.2. 1 Cor 8:7-13: Teaching the Agapaic Way of Thinking

Paul turns from augmenting the Corinthians' theological justification for eating idol meat to addressing the type of 'knowledge' he desires the community to have. Paul does not object to the wise group's theological justification for eating idol meat. He only takes issue with their observation that all share this knowledge. The argument in 8:7-13 presents the type of thinking and acting that characterizes one who truly cares for others and seeks to build them up. Such a mindset thoroughly examines the character traits of others in the community and the issue in question in order to determine what best edifies the community. The verses account for the particular qualities of the community members, the consequences these members suffer if they eat, the precise value of the issue in question, the value of the community members in the sight of God, and the theological consequences the wise face when they wound the weak.

4.2.2.1. 1 Cor 8:7: Knowing Others

a. Correction of 8:1b–Not All Have Knowledge

In 8:7, Paul observes that “knowledge is not in all.” Though Paul agrees with the theological principles of the wise, 8:7 demonstrates that he disagrees with their social observation in 8:1b. In contrast to the claim, “all have knowledge,” Paul directly states, “knowledge is not in all.” This competing observation immediately follows the confessional claims in 8:4-6, which indicate that not all in the community equally confess the theological argument the wise use to justify eating idol meat.⁵⁹ Paul’s qualification in 8:7a shows that the wise have inaccurately judged the character traits of others in the community. Regardless of the way in which Paul resolves the tension between 8:1 and 8:7a, his critique in 8:7 retains the same force. It demonstrates that the wise group’s estimation that all share the confessional beliefs in 8:4-6 is inaccurate. Not all in the community truly comprehend that “idols are nothings in the world” and “there is no God but One.”

Read this way, two key features of 8:7a emerge. First, 8:7a demonstrates that the wise have made incorrect observations about the demographics of the community. The shortcoming of the wise was not a failure to consider a known group of weak individuals. Rather, their shortcoming was a failure to judge properly the character of others in the

⁵⁹ A prominent exegetical issue in analyses of 8:1 and 8:7 is the apparent contradiction between the two verses. A few scholars alleviate the tension by suggesting that the quotation in 8:1 begins with οἶδαμεν instead of πάντες (e.g., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 68). Most, however, propose that the quotation begins with πάντες, and, thus, that Paul includes himself amongst those who “know” that all possess knowledge (e.g., Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 214; Hurd, *Origin*, 120; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 189; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 140; Fee, *First Epistle*, 365; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 338). This reading is syntactically preferred. BDAG observes, “The formula οἶδαμεν ὅτι is freq. used to introduce a well-known fact that is generally accepted” [s.v. οἶδα, 693]). These scholars typically resolve the tension by proposing a distinction between theory and practice or experience. Paul can agree that all have the theological knowledge of 8:4-6 at a theoretical level, but disagree that they comprehend the knowledge at an emotional, experiential level (Fee, *First Epistle*, 379; cf. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 146-47; Murphy O’Connor, “Freedom,” 553-56; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 344).

community (i.e., that a group of people in the community did not, in fact, have the knowledge the wise supposed was common to all). Second, this reading has the advantage of allowing the qualifying observation in 8:7a to have its most natural sense: Paul provides the wise with new information. Given that the wise presume that all had an equal share of knowledge, it is reasonable to suppose they were unaware that some did not have knowledge. In this case, 8:7a provides the wise a new piece of knowledge about the community.

In the remainder of 8:7 (and much of 8:7-13), Paul describes in detail the qualities and characteristics of these individuals who ‘do not have knowledge.’ He observes their custom of idol worship, their practice of eating idol meat sacrificially, their ‘weak’ consciences, and the consequences they experience if they eat idol meat.

b. Character Traits of Those who Lack Knowledge

Paul designates those who lack knowledge and remain in the custom of idols as “weak in conscience.” A proper understanding of this designation depends on the relationship between the circumstantial participle, ἀσθενῆς οὔσα, and the τινές clause on the opposing side of the καί. As a circumstantial participle, ἀσθενῆς οὔσα indicates the quality or manner of the συνείδησις that causes it to enter into a state of defilement. Yet the participle also points back to the custom of eating idol meat devotionally. The question becomes whether “weak conscience” denotes the *intellectual* weakness involved in eating idol meat, (i.e., eating it *as if* it were sacrificed to idols), the weak *sense of duty* exhibited by their continued desire to *participate* in their customary cultic rituals, or a combination of the two?⁶⁰ If ἀσθενῆς οὔσα refers to the inability of some to eat idol

⁶⁰ The particle, ὥς, points to an implied verb of “thinking” or “seeming” that characterizes one’s perception of an object or activity, in this case, meat (BDAG, s.v. ὥς, 1104-05). When those who are “still in the

meat in a non-sacrificial manner, then “weak conscience” denotes “lack of awareness” about the truth of idols and idol meat. With this understanding, a “weak conscience” identifies the perspective of an individual who, still being in the custom of idols, has not come to full belief in one God and in the ‘nothingness’ of idols.⁶¹ Because of their lack of knowledge (8:7a), they continue to eat idol meat in sacrificial devotion to a living, powerful god.

The likelihood of this reading is strengthened by the chapter’s sustained contrast of γνῶσις and weakness. In addition to the identification of those who lack knowledge as the “weak in conscience” in 8:7, γνῶσις and weakness also appear in opposition in 8:10 and 8:11. In 8:10, the “one having knowledge” adversely influences “the conscience of him who is weak” and, in 8:11, the weak person is destroyed “by your knowledge.” In each case, the person who is weak is contrasted with the person who has γνῶσις, which implies that the person who is weak *lacks* this quality that his counterpart possesses. This repeated contrast of γνῶσις and “weakness” suggests that “weakness in conscience” has the sense of a deficiency in knowledge about the divine realm.

custom of idols” eat idol meat, they do so ὡς (i.e., ‘as if’ or ‘with the perception that’) it were truly sacrificed to a god.

⁶¹ In Greco-Roman literature, συνείδησις (or συνειδός), sometimes denotes mere “awareness”—without any moral overtone. Diogenes Laertius reports one of the earliest uses of the term from Chryssipus: “The dearest thing to every animal is its own constitution and its consciousness thereof” (7.85 [Hicks, LCL]). Consciousness here indicates a living being’s awareness of itself. Seneca uses *conscientia* in this sense, but identifies specific objects of this self-awareness, including knowledge of one’s possessions of the virtues and of one’s weakness (Seneca, *Ep.* 59.16 and 116.5). Davies appears to limit “weak conscience” to a lack of knowledge and/or a force of habit in 8:7 (“Conscience,” 674). Jewett and Horsley also think Paul connects “weak conscience” with lack of knowledge about γνῶσις (Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 424, and Horsley, “Freedom,” 582). Jewett and Horsley, however, demonstrate the difficulty of holding this reading alone by also reading moral awareness into συνείδησις in 8:7. The συνείδησις is both susceptible to injury and likely to accuse its owner of wrongdoing (Horsley, “Freedom,” 582). Similarly, Jewett observes that μολύνεται indicates that one bears the guilt that one has sinned (*Anthropological Terms*, 425). Murphy-O’Connor also wants to associate συνείδησις both with “pangs of conscience” and lack of knowledge (“Freedom,” 549-59). Willis proposes that συνείδησις denotes the Corinthians’ awareness about the truth of idols and, hence, idol meat (*Idol Meat*, 92).

Moreover, Paul grants freedom to eat idol meat in 10:25-27 by connecting *συνείδησις* with a theological principle. In the first of the verses, Paul instructs the Corinthian wise to eat whatever meat is sold in the marketplace without raising questions on the grounds of *συνείδησις*. The term's import here is "sense of right and wrong" on the basis of *knowledge* of the meat's status. That is, Paul permits eating without examining the act's propriety on the grounds of the meat's sacrificial past. The following verse implies an association between *συνείδησις* and *γνώσις* by supplying a theological principle that justifies the instruction. Because "the earth and its fullness are of the Lord" (10:26), the Christian who fully ascends to this maxim has sound theological principles and, thus, does not need to question the propriety of eating the meat (i.e., they do not have to raise questions on account of awareness/knowledge [*διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν*] about idols). The same reasoning holds true for Paul's instruction in 10:27. The Corinthians do not need to question the appropriateness of eating idol meat at gatherings hosted by their pagan friends because of the theological principle in 10:26.⁶²

First Corinthians 10:26 implies that eating without questioning the act on account of conscience is directly supported by right theological propositions (i.e., right *γνώσις*). This line of thinking returns to the association of *συνείδησις* in 8:7 and the content of

⁶² The closest Pauline use of *συνείδησις* to "awareness" outside of 1 Cor is Rom 13:5. This verse, however, is also difficult to interpret. The term almost certainly has a future reference as it warns the community to "be subject to authority *for the sake of conscience*." The verse implies that the conscience plays a role in keeping the individual in line with governmental rules and regulations. The precise role *συνείδησις* plays in future decisions is less certain. Read in parallel with 'wrath' in 13:5, *συνείδησις* could point to the future pangs of conscience one suffers for wrongdoing (Davies, "Conscience," 674). It may also denote the fact of *awareness* that government is God ordained (Cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* [AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 669). On this reading, the two reasons individuals should maintain obedience to authorities are due to the wrath the authorities execute and because of an *awareness* that God ordains them to do it. Individuals should be subject to the government because they *know* that God ordains the government to enact laws and judgments. Gaining a right *awareness* of government leads them to act appropriately in relation to it. For deutero-Pauline uses similar to this latter sense, see 1 Tim 1:5, 19, which connect "good conscience" to upright teachings and principles of faith and 1 Tim 4:2 and Titus 1:15 which connect "conscience" to corrupt teachings and knowledge.

γνώσις in 8:4-6.⁶³ Just as Paul connects συνείδησις in 10:25 to a theological principle that permits freedom to eat, so he identifies the *absence* of full awareness of the theological principles in 8:4-6 as “weak in conscience” in 8:7.

If, on the other hand, ἀσθενής οὔσα refers to the continued *practice* of participating in idol meals, then “weak conscience” denotes the weak sense of duty to Yahweh. In this case, συνείδησις could retain the more typical sense of “moral awareness.”⁶⁴ In effect, Paul says, “some are in the custom of idols until now and eat idol meat sacrificially and because their moral awareness is weak, it becomes defiled.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Cf. Maurer, *TDNT* 7:915.

⁶⁴ The most frequent use of συνείδησις in Greco-Roman literature, however, denotes “moral awareness,” either of one’s own past and present actions or a moral awareness in relation to future decisions. The study by Pierce demonstrates the predominant use of συνείδησις to denote a guilty awareness of one’s past actions (*Conscience*, 21-59). See e.g., Plutarch, *Virt. prof.* 84D; *Tranq. An.* 476F-477A; *Sera* 156, 556A. Cf. Democritus Fr. 297, cited from Davies, “Conscience,” 671; Dionysius of Halicarnasus *Ant. rom.* 8.1.3; Isocrates, *Demon.* 16; Philo, *Deus* 128-29; Epictetus Frag. 97; Seneca, *Ep.* 43.5; 97.15-16; 105.7-8; 117.1; 122.14; Polybius 18.43.13, cited from Davies, “Conscience,” 673; Xenophon, *Apol.* 24 (verb form), cited from Davies, “Conscience,” 673; Wis 17:10. Epictetus uses συνειδός to signal the Cynic’s judgment of others (*Diatr.* 3.22.93-94). Plutarch, for instance, uses συνειδός to refer to the student of philosophy’s growing awareness of his deficiency: “...the man who is truly making progress, comparing himself with the deeds and conduct of a good and perfect man, and being pricked by the *consciousness* (συνειδότη) of his own shortcomings, yet at the same time rejoicing because of his hope and yearning...” (*Virt. prof.* 84D [Babbit, LCL]). Though this definition is frequent, it does not encompass the full range of its usage. (Moreover, this usage is not frequent in the New Testament, only occurring in this usage four times [Heb 9:9, 14; 10:2, 22]). Josephus, for instance, uses the term to denote innocence of a past deed. He writes that Alexander justified himself “not only by a clear conscience but by his powerful oratory” because he knew that the charges his brother spoke against him to their father were false (*B. J.* 1.23.3 [Thackeray, LCL]). Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 12.9; 23.7; 24:12; 43.5; 81.20-21; 97.12; *Vit. beat.* 19.1; 20.3-5; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 1.5.11; Heliodorus *Aeth.* 6.7, cited from Pierce, *Conscience*, 23; Alciphron 1.10.5, cited from Pierce, *Conscience*, 35. Paul uses συνείδησις three times to indicate his clear conscience. He claims in each of these verses that he behaves properly in past (2 Cor 1:12; 1 Cor 4:4 [in the verb form]) or present (Rom 9:1) actions. In the two additional uses in 2 Cor (4:2 and 5:11), συνείδησις refers to the “approving thoughts” of others that evaluate Paul. While similar in their *positive* judgments, these latter uses apply to an individual’s capacity to judge *another* (cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.93-94). In both 2 Cor 4:2 and 5:11, Paul expects the Corinthians to approve of his ministry. In the latter verse, συνείδησις may also simply denote individuals: “well-known to you all.” For συνείδησις role in future decisions, see n. 67 below. For other NT texts denoting “clear conscience” see, Acts 23:1; 1 Tim 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3; Heb 13:9; 1 Pet 3:16, 21.

⁶⁵ Due to the frequency with which Greco-Roman literature uses συνείδησις to signify guilty awareness of past bad deeds and the description of the συνείδησις as ‘defiled’ (μολύνεται) in 8:7, the weak are sometimes thought to suffer the turmoil of guilt for partaking in something they had been instructed to avoid. Pierce, for example, attributes the συνείδησις solely to the “pain of conscience” (*Conscience*, 81). Others recognize guilty awareness as a partial sense of the term in 8:7, including Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols.; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 217 (all subsequent parenthetical references in our discussion of Bultmann are to *TNT*, unless

The conscience (i.e., “moral awareness”) here has the sense of “knowledge about one’s own conduct with respect to a requirement which exists in relation to that conduct.”⁶⁶

Though there has been some resistance to attributing a future, decision-making role to *συνείδησις*, both Greco-Roman literature and Paul are able to conceive of the conscience in this way.⁶⁷ On this reading, “their conscience, being weak,” restates the phenomenon described in the clause, “some, being in the custom of idols until now, eat idol meat sacrificially.” Their “weak consciences” denote their weak sense of duty to the one God, as evidenced by their continued practice of participating devotionally in non-Christian sacrificial meals *even though they have been commanded to avoid idolatry*. In this way, “weak conscience” is less a commentary on their lack of knowledge of these individuals

otherwise noted); Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 425; Horsley, “Freedom,” 582; Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 549. Though this interpretation receives much attention, it must be put aside. Nearly every use of *συνείδησις* that denotes moral awareness of past action refers to *συνείδησις* as the capacity that convicts or accuses the self (Epictetus Frag. 97; Plutarch, *Virt. prof.* 84D; *de Tranq. An.* 476F-477A; *Sera* 556A; *Publ.* 4.99B; Philo, *Deus* 128-129; Polybius 18.43.13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 8.1.3). Though not explicitly stated, the literature implies that the healthy, or strong, *συνείδησις* effectively convicts the soul. In contrast, weak or unhealthy consciences presumably do not convict or accuse the self as it should. If 1 Cor 8:7 accords with this usage, “weak conscience” would denote a lack of guilt and turmoil, not the presence of it.

⁶⁶ Bultmann, *TNT*, 217.

⁶⁷ Philo, for instance, gives *συνείδησις* a role in future decisions. A strong reason, dwelling in an individual, “is discovered at one time as king and governor, at another as judge and umpire of life’s contests. Sometimes he assumes the part of witness or accuser, and, all unseen, convicts us from within, not allowing us so much as to open our mouth, but, holding in and curbing the tongue with reins of *conscience* [*συνειδότος*], checks its willful and rebellious course” (*Det.*, 23 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]). Here, the “conscience” draws on its awareness of past actions to keep the future decisions of the individual in alignment with proper choice. Though there is an accusatory component to it, it uses this “guilty awareness” of the past to inform the individual about the future. Cf. Seneca, *Ep.* 95.28 and *Vit. beat.* 20.3-5 and Epictetus Frag. 97, where the protecting role of the conscience is future oriented. Paul uses *συνείδησις* in the sense of a faculty of judgment for future action in Rom 2:15. Bultmann estimates that *συνείδησις* in Rom 2:15 refers both to the “judging conscience” which evaluates past deeds (as indicated by the “conflicting thoughts which accuse or perhaps excuse”) and to a sense of duty or right and wrong (*TNT*, 217). The Gentiles demonstrate that they are a Law unto themselves because their conscience bears witness that they have the principles of the Law written on their hearts. Bultmann also understands Rom 13:5 as an awareness of God’s direct demand on an individual (*TNT*, 218-19). Davies (“Conscience,” 674) and Horsley (“Freedom,” 581) acknowledge that *συνείδησις* can have the sense of a regulative principle. Citing Rom 2:15, 1 Cor 8:10, and 1 Cor 10:25-28, Davies claims, against Pierce, that it is difficult to exclude all sense of future reference from *συνείδησις*.

than a critique of their lack of loyalty or allegiance to Yahweh.⁶⁸ Though those still in the practice of idols are aware that they are not supposed to commit idolatry, their weak sense of duty allows them to continue in this practice.⁶⁹

The strengths of both readings warn against demanding too narrow a meaning from Paul's use of συνείδησις. Its meaning may derive from a close association of the two senses. If the Corinthians claimed "clear consciences" or a "strong sense of duty" to eat idol meat on the basis of their γνῶσις, we can see the close relationship between moral awareness and γνῶσις. Several of the examples from Greco-Roman literature previously cited display the connection between "clear consciences" and "strong sense of duty" and a full and proper understanding of natural principles that govern decision making.⁷⁰ The assumption in this literature is that the properly functioning conscience stems from a proper understanding of the governing principles that underlie its judgment (whether that judgment is past, present, or future or positive or negative). In contrast, the progressing student does not yet have a complete grasp on these principles and still makes judgments on the basis of his/her old habituations and ways of thinking.⁷¹ Given

⁶⁸ Epictetus describes the "weak soul" (ἀσθενὴς ψυχή) as "uncertain which way it is inclined" (*Diatr.* 2.15.20 [Oldfather, LCL]).

⁶⁹ This reading is distinct from those who think the weak suffer guilty conscience after they eat. Our contention is that the weak do not experience *enough* guilt when they participate in their former customs and rituals. Their attraction to idols is a part of the problem.

⁷⁰ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.93-94. The excerpt equates συνειδός with τὸ ἡγεμονικόν. The purity of the Cynic's 'governing principle' or 'conscience' gives him the power to judge others. Power of judgment depends on a prior knowledge of natural principles that govern conduct. Cf. Seneca, *Vit. beat.* 20.3-5. In this passage, Seneca does everything "for the sake of *conscientiam*." *Conscientia* is connected very closely with knowing the principles of Nature. Whether prior to action or after it, Seneca's conscience is able to evaluate decisions on the basis of knowledge of what Nature demands.

⁷¹ E.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 116.5. Though Seneca does not use *conscientia* in the sense of "awareness of past deeds" or "sense of duty," he discriminates between the wise man and the weak individual on the basis of their ability to withstand temptation of certain external objects and circumstances. The marker that characterizes the ability of each class is their *knowledge* of the value of externals. The wise man values externals properly and, thus, is able to participate in them. The student, being weak, does not value these objects properly and, thus, is advised to abstain from them. Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.11.1-12, where weakness is characterized as a lack of knowledge about the value of objects and affairs.

the literature's inclusion of a proper 'awareness' of the world within an individual's moral awareness, including his or her 'sense of duty,' it is best to allow this fluidity also to persist in Paul's usage of the term.⁷²

c. Effects that Eating Has on the 'Weak'

As a result of either their lack of knowledge about idols or their continued participation in idol meals, their conscience becomes defiled. *Μολύνω* and its cognates (used in the Pauline corpus only here and in 2 Cor 7:1) occur in Jewish and early Christian texts denoting the objective state of 'stain' or 'defilement' that results from sin.⁷³ The 'defilement' in these texts does not denote a 'stained' or 'guilty' introspection, but the guilty (or innocent) status of individuals before God on the basis of their sin. If Paul's usage in 8:7 aligns with its traditional Jewish and early-Christian meaning, then 'defilement' is the guilty status the weak incur when they commit idolatry by eating idol

⁷² As with Maurer, conscience "embraces in a totality the perception of a distinction between the facts, the acknowledgement and choice of divinely willed obligations, and self-evaluation. Hence *συνείδησις* means a "'percipient and active self-awareness' which is threatened at its heart by the disjunction of acknowledgement and perception, willing and knowing, judgment and action...It is man himself aware of himself in perception and acknowledgment, in willing and acting" (*TDNT*, 7:914). Thus, Maurer loads the term with (1) factual knowledge (2) sense of obligation and (3) self-awareness of action.

⁷³ The prophets used the term in their indictments of the sins of Israel. Isaiah spoke of "hands defiled with blood" and Jeremiah of "defilement" as the sullied state that results from sin (Isa 59:3; Jer 23:11; cf. Jer 23:15. Isa 65:4 also demonstrates that inanimate objects can also incur a defiled state, which further removes 'defilement' from the sphere of introspection in 1 Cor 8:7. Cf. 1 Esd 8:80). In Lamentations, God punishes Israel because of the "defilement" of the priests and prophets due to their sins and iniquities (Lam 4:11, 13-14). Second Maccabees names the "defiled" state of Alcimus, the former chief priest, as the reason he is unable to return to the holy altar (2 Mac 14:3. Cf. 2 Macc 5:27). In the New Testament, the seer of Revelation uses the term twice with an alpha-privative to describe the pure state of those who did not sin: "but you have a few in Sardis who have not defiled their garments" and "these are they who have not defiled themselves with women" (Rev 3:4 and 14:4). The former represents individuals who are rewarded by God for their innocence while the latter are the 144,000 souls already in God's presence.

The use of *μολύσμος* in 2 Cor 7:1 gives perhaps the clearest evidence of the objective state of defilement in 1 Cor 8:7. In a passage that issues a stern warning against idolatry and mixed marriages, Paul associates idolatry with the "defilement of flesh and spirit" (*μολύσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος*), which denotes the individual.⁷³ As the "temple of the living God," Paul or a later scribe instructs the community to avoid bringing defilement into the community through the worship of idols. They are to keep separate from idolatrous practices so as to remain clean and retain the status of 'sons and daughters' of the Lord.

meat.⁷⁴ By participating in idol meals while persisting in their belief in pagan gods, weak individuals divide their loyalties between the God of Israel and other gods and, thus, become ‘defiled’ due to their idolatrous action.⁷⁵

d. Conclusion

Paul’s correction of the wise group’s assertion in 8:1b does not end in 8:7a. The remainder of the verse presents three additional observations concerning the character traits of the group that does not have knowledge. These individuals are still in the custom of idols, have a weak sense of the truth about idols (which, in turn, leads to a weak sense of right and wrong with respect to eating idol meat), and enter into a state of defilement when they eat. These multiple observations in 8:7 highlight the deficiency of the Corinthians’ knowledge of others. In contrast to the Corinthians’ flat observation that “all have knowledge,” Paul demonstrates the richly-textured, thick description of others that the mindset of ‘love’ displays.

As the argument progresses, Paul will continue to detail the traits of these community members who do not have knowledge. These observations occur particularly

⁷⁴ Dawes (“The Danger of Idolatry,” 90-91) and Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 344) argue that idolatry is the sin in question in 8:7, but neither assigns μολύνεται eschatological import.

⁷⁵ One might object that “pained conscience” is the appropriate interpretation because the syntax of 8:7 appears to indicate that the “conscience,” not the individual, becomes defiled. Though this reading certainly incurs less syntactical difficulty, the construction in 8:7 simply intends that a “weak conscience” can lead an individual into a state of defilement through participation in acts that are normally permissible. Rom 14 offers a similar mode of thinking. Paul uses ἀσθενής to describe a subset of the Roman congregation who thinks incorrectly about idol meat. The weak are those who refuse to eat meat because they consider it to be unclean. Like 1 Cor 8, the chapter bases the propriety of eating on the subjective thought of the individual actor. Paul knows that no food is objectively unclean, but eating becomes an unclean act for anyone who does so with the belief or reasoning (λογιζομένῳ) that the consumed food is unclean (14:14). Paul transfers the permissibility of eating from the objective state of the substance in question (i.e., food) to the perception of the substance in the mind of the actor. The Roman “strong” who partake of food formerly classified as unclean with the knowledge that ‘nothing is unclean in itself’ are free to eat. On the other hand, the ‘weak’ who partake of what they believe to be unclean food are prohibited from eating *on the basis that* “whatever is done without faith is sin” (14:23). Πίστις, here, comes very close to the meaning of συνειδήσις in 1 Cor 8:7. It denotes a belief—or lack of belief—in a particular proposition that determines the permissibility of an action. The weak who eat without ‘faith’ that food is clean incur sin and stand in a state of condemnation. In the same way, the weak in Corinth sin and incur defilement when they eat without full belief that God is the one entity with the status of θεός.

in 8:10-12. Prior to these observations, however, Paul turns to another component involved in a mindset that seeks the upbuilding of others: identifying the theological significance of the issue in question.

4.2.2.2. 1 Cor 8:8: Evaluation of Issue in Question

Immediately after critiquing the wise group's defective observations about the character traits of other community members, Paul presents two statements regarding the neutrality of food: "food will not give us standing before God" and "we are not worse off if we do not eat and we are not better off if we do eat." We have already reviewed the maxim in 8:8a: food is *adiaphora* and acts pertaining to it have no eschatological bearing. The second of the two statements, like the first, clearly states the theological indifference of food. Acts involving βρωμα, such as eating, do not affect a Christian's eschatological standing before God.

While scholars generally agree that both statements assert the neutrality of food and the associated act of eating, there is widespread disagreement with respect to the source and function of each maxim. Some propose that both statements represent the views of the wise.⁷⁶ This reading judges that 8:8 constitutes the wise group's defense against those who object to eating idol meat. Those who favor eating idol meat contend that eating food is *indifferent* and, thus, permissible. The statement claims that they are free to eat without fear of eschatological punishment. Others judge that the entire verse is either Paul's correction of the wise group's position or his positive statement concerning food.⁷⁷ In contrast to the previous position, this view holds that the wise assert that acts

⁷⁶ E.g., Fee, *First Epistle*, 383-84; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 345. Cf., Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Food and Spiritual Gifts in 1 Cor 8:8," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 297 who uses a different textual tradition.

⁷⁷ For the former, see Willis, *Idol Meat*, 97; Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 241-42. Willis argues that the strong think that acts of eating are not indifferent. The group contends that eating gives individuals good standing

of eating are *not* indifferent and, thus, *affect* eschatological standing before God.

Accordingly, Paul's statement of indifference in 8:8 corrects this view. Still others view 8:8a as a reflection of the Corinthian position while regarding 8:8b as Paul's.⁷⁸ Paul agrees with the Corinthian viewpoint on the indifference of food in 8:8a, but turns their slogan defending the permissibility of eating in 8:8b (i.e., eating does not make us lack) into a reminder that this permissibility does not consequently give them an *advantage* over those who do not eat (see the position of Willis and Mitchell). This view of 8:8b aligns with the first of the three options.

In response to those who view 8:8b as a Corinthian slogan that asserts their freedom to eat idol meat, we agree with scholars who observe that the placement of $\mu\eta$ in 8:8b would have to shift from the first clause to the second in order for the statement to reflect this argument.⁷⁹ In an argument justifying their *participation* in idol meat on the basis of its *adiaphora* status (8:8a), the wise would state: "In light of food's *adiaphora* status, we may eat idol meat. For, the *adiaphora* status of food means that we are not worse off if we *do* eat idol meat and we are not better off if we *do not*." With this reading, the emphasis of the justification is on the permissibility of *eating*. However, because $\mu\eta$ connects "not eating" with "not being worse off," 8:8b appears to reflect Paul's burden to promote abstention for the sake of the weak and not the position of the

before God while not eating leaves them lacking. For the latter, see Hurd, *Origin*, 123; Conzelmann, *I Corinthians*, 148.

⁷⁸ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 195; cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 648 and NRSV.

⁷⁹ E.g., Hans Lietzmann, *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus. I. An die Korinther* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1907), 38-39; Ernest B. Allo, *Primière Epître aux Corinthiens* (2d ed.; EBib; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956), 204. Cf. Hurd, *Origin*, 123; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 195; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 97). This construction is the basic sense of the poorly attested textual variant in MSS A² and 17 (preferred by Murphy-O'Connor, "Food," 295), which both inverts the order of the received text (6-9, 1-5) and shifts the $\mu\eta$ from the first clause to the second.

wise. In an effort to promote abstention, Paul informs the wise that they will not be worse off if they do not eat nor will they be better off if they do.

With respect to 8:8a, we argued above that the statement reflects the conclusion of a premise the wise put forth in 6:13: “food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy the one and the other.” The logical deduction from this statement is that food does not give an individual standing before God. Accordingly, this connection between 6:13 and 8:8a suggests that 8:8a aligns with the position of the wise Corinthians.

While we agree that 8:8a is likely the Corinthians and 8:8b is either Paul’s adaptation of a Corinthian slogan or his independent construction, the debate over the *source* of the statements clouds the more important question of their functionality. Simply because 8:8a aligns with the view of the wise does not guarantee that it functions in the context of 8:7-13 as a rebuttal or objection to Paul’s argument. It may be the case that Paul takes up a Corinthian slogan and simply uses it to promote his argument. In this case, the maxim in 8:8a, along with 8:8b, may simply function as a *reminder* of what the Corinthians have already argued to Paul: that βρωμα is eschatologically indifferent. In order to develop this point, we must review the verse’s placement in relation to 8:4-7 and 8:9.

We demonstrated above that the wise assert God’s unique status as θεός to justify their consumption of idol meat (8:4) and that Paul agrees with their reasoning, as he shows in 8:5-6. In 8:7, however, Paul observes that some in the community do not share γινωσις of God’s unique status and, as a result, incur harm when they eat idol meat. In 8:9, Paul will prioritize the weak in Corinth over an individual’s ἐξουσία to eat idol meat.

In between the observations of the community (8:7) and the exhortation to prioritize the weak over their ἐξουσία to eat idol meat (8:9), Paul includes the two maxims on the indifference of βρῶμα. While the discourse could have moved directly from 8:7 to 8:9, the observation in 8:8 plays an important role in Paul's argument. The verse shifts the discussion from *idol meat* in specific to βρῶμα in general. This transition reminds the wise that the idol meat debate is a subset of an *adiaphora* category (i.e., βρῶμα). Thus, if, in fact, 8:8a is the Corinthians' slogan, Paul will use the very premise the Corinthians' employed to justify participation in idol meat (8:8a) to argue that they can just as easily abstain from idol meat. Whereas the wise have argued that the indifference of food makes it permissible for them to eat, Paul will argue, "Food is indifferent. You are not going to be worse off if you do not eat, nor are you going to be better off if you do. Thus, it is possible to abstain from it."

4.2.2.3. 1 Cor 8:9: Provision of an Evaluative Principle

Paul lays out the exhortation granting priority to the weak immediately following 8:8: "watch out lest somehow your ἐξουσία becomes a stumbling block to the weak." The exhortation moves the argument forward in three ways. First, it informs the wise *that* their actions influence the weak. Prior to 8:9, Paul merely suggests that the weak incur harm when they eat idol meat without implying that the wise factor into their decision to eat *or* their defilement. First Corinthians 8:7 simply observes, "some in the community eat meat as if it were sacrificed to idols, and when they do so, since their conscience is weak, they become defiled." However, in 8:9 Paul implicates the wise by identifying their actions as a source that causes the weak to stumble. It is their ἐξουσία to eat idol meat that 'somehow' (πῶς) becomes a stumbling block for the weak.

Second, the exhortation assigns the wise moral responsibility for their actions. This first and only exhortation of the chapter calls the wise to become active participants in the cohesion of the community by inciting them to be watchful of circumstances in which their actions lead the weak to eat and, thus, into defilement.

Finally, the exhortation exemplifies the evaluative principle that results from mapping the situational circumstances onto the general principle of ἀγάπη, which ‘builds up’ others. Paul reckons that the real harm idol meat brings upon the weak (8:7) gains priority over the freedom of the wise to partake in an *adiaphora* activity (8:8). As the wise contemplate daily decisions about idol meat, they now not only know that they contribute, in some way, to the plight of the weak, but also that, in these circumstances, they are to prioritize the needs of the weak over their own ἐξουσία.⁸⁰

This reading of 8:7-9 demonstrates that valuing the issue in question is an important aspect of knowing how best to build up another. Paul establishes the priority between the needs of the weak and the rights of the wise based on his assessment of βρῶμα in 8:8. It is because of food’s indifference that Paul prioritizes the weak over the

⁸⁰ Some scholars contend that ἐξουσία is a Corinthian catchword that Paul uses ironically or sarcastically to express disapproval over the wise group’s assertion of ‘authority’ in matters of idol meat (e.g., Joop F. M. Smit, “The Rhetorical Disposition of First Corinthians 8:7-9:27,” *CBQ* 59 [1997]: 482). In both Stoicism and Hellenistic Judaism, ἐξουσία indicates an individual’s power to act autonomously. This background certainly invites the notion that ἐξουσία is a catchword the Corinthians created along with their proclamations of free conduct (e.g., 6:12; 10:23). These scholars overlook the sincere connection of 1 Cor 8 to 1 Cor 9 and the relationship of both chapters to Paul’s notion of Christic self-understanding. Though ἐξουσία is not common in Paul’s letters, he uses it in a sober manner five times in 1 Cor 9. In his apologetic-*exemplum*, Paul builds his ἐξουσία to receive financial support from the Jewish scriptures and even from a word of Jesus. Paul truly seeks to build his right to receive support so that he can demonstrate that he actually did give up a right by not asking for payment from the Corinthians.

Moreover, as we observed in the discussion of 8:4-6, the main emphasis of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 is the voluntary sacrifice of one’s rights for the sake of others. Thus, the core of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 8 and 9 depends on the Corinthians actually having a legitimate right to eat idol meat. Accordingly, attributing sarcasm to Paul’s use of ἐξουσία makes a mockery of the theological premises that found the wise individuals’ ἐξουσία to eat idol meat and destroys a central goal of the entire idol meat discourse.

ἐξουσία of the wise.⁸¹ If Paul had judged eating food to be absolutely necessary or absolutely prohibited, he may have concluded differently in 8:9. For instance, if Paul determined that βρῶμα were eschatologically necessary, he might have directed the wise to eat meat in all circumstances and encourage the weak to do the same. Contrarily, if he judged that βρῶμα were eschatologically detrimental, he would have universally prohibited eating it. The *adiaphora* status of food, however, means that while eating idol meat is permissible—and perhaps even a positive display of theological belief—it is not always necessary or beneficial. The *adiaphora* status of the issue in question calls for consideration of additional variables, such as how participation in acts involving food may affect others. Thus, in light of both the indifference of food and the eschatological harm eating idol meat brings upon the weak, Paul warns the wise to watch out lest their right to eat idol meat becomes a stumbling block to those who do not share their knowledge about idol meat.

4.2.2.4. 1 Cor 8:10: Provision of a Practical Scenario

In 8:10, Paul asks rhetorically whether the ‘conscience’ of the weak will not be built up to the point of eating idol meat if they see their fellow community members partaking of a meal while in an idol temple. The verse builds on the exhortation in 8:9 by providing a specific setting in which the ἐξουσία of the wise becomes a ‘stumbling block’ to the weak. Rather than simply repeating the exhortation in 8:9 in general terms (i.e., “if someone sees you eating idol meat will not the conscience of him, being weak, be built

⁸¹ The demonstrative, αὐτη, points to a prior referent of ἐξουσία, which is found most naturally in 8:4 and 8:8.

up to the point of eating idol meat”), Paul names an idol temple as a specific location where the wise are in danger of offending the weak.⁸²

The illustration helps the wise visualize situations in which they might lead the weak to stumble.⁸³ If Paul stopped with the exhortation in 8:9, the wise would not know in what way or context they contribute to the downfall of the weak. Any number of situations could be imaginable. Do they cause the weak to stumble anytime they eat idol meat? Do they cause the weak to stumble whenever they eat idol meat in the presence of the weak? Is the question context dependent? Do they cause the weak to stumble when they eat idol meat in certain settings, but not in others? While 8:10 does not answer every question, it provides one practical context in which the wise must “be mindful” that their ἐξουσία does not become a stumbling block to the weak.⁸⁴

The provision of a concrete context is not the only contribution of 8:10. A second aspect of the “weak in conscience” is their susceptibility to peer pressure. Though the *modus operandi* of those still inclined to idols ought to be abstention, Paul warns in 8:10

⁸² The sentence is a future more vivid conditional. The protasis makes a relatively certain assumption about the future and the apodosis draws a definitive conclusion on the basis of the assumption. In this case, the conditional is best translated, “If someone sees you who have knowledge dining in an idol temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be built up to the point of eating idol meat?” The interrogative form of the apodosis expects the positive answer, “yes.” The futurity of the conditional along with the indefinite nature of 8:9 (indicated by μή πως) suggests that the scenario in 8:10 does not point to the Corinthians’ intentional practice of eating in idol temples as an example to the weak (*pace* Glad, *Paul and Philodemus*, 281-82 and 287).

⁸³ Accordingly, a sincere reference to their ability to eat in an idol’s temple is significant for their moral development. If, as some scholars propose, Paul actually prohibits eating in idol temples altogether, then the one example of a situation in which the wise ought to think about voluntarily sacrificing their *right* is nothing but an rhetorical façade. Yet, in a chapter that aims to promote the sacrifice of rights for the sake of others, why would Paul makes his *solitary* practical scenario a situation in which the wise did not actually have a right to eat in the first place? Doing so would severely weaken the rhetorical force of the argument. Moreover, given the sustained and sincere effort he makes to establish his own ἐξουσία in 1 Cor 9, it is all the more likely that the idol temple reflects a setting in which the wise have a sincere right to eat idol meat.

⁸⁴ Paul Gooch incorrectly classifies 8:10 as a display of a “Competing Moral Judgment” against the strong by equating it with verses that show the negative consequences on the weak (8:7, 11-12) (*Partial Knowledge*, 110 and 112). However, 8:10 does not delineate negative consequences. It merely reports the facts of the practical scenario.

that when the weak witness the wise eating idol meat, their conscience is ‘built up’ (οικοδομηθήσεται) to partake in idol meat as well. Συνείδησις here draws less on ‘awareness’ of factual knowledge than a person’s awareness of right and wrong conduct, that is, their “sense of duty.”⁸⁵ The weak person’s conscience is *already* enticed to eat idol meat on the basis of his “habituation in idol worship.” Witnessing another Corinthian ‘with knowledge’ eating idol meat only *further* skews his awareness of what is proper (i.e., that they should abstain from idol meat) and ultimately persuades him (i.e., ‘builds him up’) to engage in his previous cultic customs.

In this way, Paul warns that the wise ‘strike’ (τύπτοντες) the already weakened consciences of their fellow believers when they eat idol meat (8:12).⁸⁶ The return to second plural from second singular and the introductory οὕτως in 8:12 indicate that the verse provides commentary on the example Paul gives in 8:10-11. The parallel participles, ἁμαρτάνοντες εἰς and τύπτοντες, point back to the wise group’s participation in idol meat while in the presence of the weak in 8:10.⁸⁷ Wise believers “sin against” their weaker community members by eating in their presence which, in turn, “builds them up” to eat as well. Τύπτω creates an image of further impairment of a weak individual’s already deficient ability to make clear decisions.⁸⁸ The wise impart a wound of occlusion on the weak when they are facing the decision to eat or not to eat. Never sure in their

⁸⁵ Cf. Davies, “Conscience,” 674. *Pace* Pierce, who forces this verse into the notion of guilt after eating (*Conscience*, 82). The separation of the συνείδησις from the weak person does not indicate “schizophrenia” or a disjunction of conscience from the core of the person (*pace* Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 423). Rather, the construction strengthens the identification of the person having a “weak conscience” as weak in terms of Paul’s theological casting of the term (cf. Pierce, *Conscience*, 79-81; Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom,” 567).

⁸⁶ Τύπτω, a Pauline *hapax legomenon*, lit. “to strike” or “beat” physically (LSJ, s.v. τύπτω, 1835-36) is here used metaphorically. It shares etymological affinity with τύπος in 10:6, 11 where Israel “stamps” or “imprints” a warning for the Corinthians.

⁸⁷ The expegetical καί makes τύπτοντες the content of the “sin” the wise commit against the weak.

⁸⁸ Cf. πρόσκομμα in 8:9. Jewett agrees with the assessment of 8:12 proposed here. He writes, “8:12 should not be thought of as mere repetition of 8:7—it appears to denote a disabling of the function of the conscience” (Jewett, *Anthropological Terms*, 425). *Pace* Pierce, *Conscience*, 81.

decision to abstain, the moral perception of weak believers loses even more of its certainty when they witness their more wise counterparts eating meat.

4.2.2.5. 1 Cor 8:11: More Effects on the Weak

The tone of the argument shifts dramatically in 8:11. Paul starkly announces the answer to the rhetorical question of 8:10: “*destroyed* by your knowledge is the one who is weak, that is, the one for whom Christ died.” The abrupt and trenchant language brings full clarity to the severity of the γνῶσις debate. Both the negative consequences of γνῶσις (as the source of destruction) and the relationship between the wise and “those who lack knowledge” (as ‘brotherly’) reaches its climax.

Γνῶσις destroys. The verse draws a sharp contrast between Christ’s death, which intended to *save* the ‘weak’ (cf. 1 Cor 1:18-31), and the knowledge of the wise, which is *destroying* the weak.⁸⁹ Γνῶσις is no longer simply an object of arrogance or even merely an obstacle over which a weaker member may ‘stumble.’ It is the cause of another’s eschatological destruction.⁹⁰ Rather than ‘building up’ the group to salvation, the

⁸⁹ The verse contains four themes that appear predominantly in 1 Cor 1-2: destruction (1 Cor 1:18-19), weakness (1 Cor 1:25, 27; 2:3 [4:10]), γνῶσις (1 Cor 1:5, 21; 2:6-16), and Christ’s death (1 Cor 1:17-18, 23).

⁹⁰ In 8:11, ἀπόλλυμι denotes eschatological ‘destruction’—a state directly opposite salvation (e.g., 1 Cor 1:18-19; 2 Cor 2:15; 4:3; Rom 2:12). Paul developed the contrast between salvation and destruction from the beginning of the letter. First Corinthians 1:18-19 contrasts Christians for whom the cross is the power of wisdom who are ‘being saved’ with outsiders for whom the cross of Christ is foolishness who are ‘perishing.’ In addition, Paul uses ‘destruction’ as God’s form of divine punishment for Israel’s idolatry in 1 Cor 10:9-10, which, in turn, warns the Corinthians of the consequences their own idolatry holds for them (10:9-10). Seeing as the sin in question in 1 Cor 8 is nothing short of idolatry, the full force of destruction in 1 Cor 10:9-10 ought to apply to 1 Cor 8. Finally, in Rom 14, Paul clearly states that the weak are in sin and condemnation if they eat meat and warns the strong against allowing what they eat to ‘destroy’ the weak believers for whom Christ died (Rom 14:15). The language in Rom 14:15 is remarkably similar to 1 Cor 8:11:

ἀπόλλυται γὰρ ὁ ἀσθενῶν ἐν τῇ σῆ γνώσει, ὁ ἀδελφὸς δι’ ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν (1 Cor 8:11)
μὴ τῷ βρώματι ἐκείνῳ ἀπόλλυε ὑπὲρ οὗ Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν (Rom 14:15)

The similarity of language in these two verses, along with Paul’s other uses of ἀπόλλυμι, strongly suggests that ἀπόλλυμι in 1 Cor 8:11 means more than the weak believer experiences the “pains of conscience” or becomes excluded from the community. Paul tells the wise Corinthians that their actions lead the weak

knowledge of the wise directly contravenes the work of Christ. In the height of irony, the γνῶσις of the wise, which was given for the advantage of the community by God *through Christ Jesus* (1:4-5 [cf. 1 Cor 12:7]) in order to *strengthen* the witness of Christ among them (1:6), is the cause of sin and destruction of the very ones for whom Christ died. But, more still, the misguided nature of their approach gains greater criticism in light of the section's final exhortation for the community to "imitate Christ" (11:1). Far from simply contravening the work of Christ, the wise are destroying their brothers precisely at the moment they should be imitating Christ by 'dying' for their brothers in order to save them (10:31; cf. 1 Cor 1:18). When attending a meal in an idol temple in the presence of a weaker brother, they ought to sacrifice their right to eat idol meat in order to protect their brother from committing idolatry. Instead, their actions in the idol temple are 'building up' the weak to destruction.

As Paul heightens the *severity* of language to characterize the negative effects the weak incur when they eat idol meat, he also heightens the *proximity* of their relationship to the wise. The one who is destroyed is no longer merely one who lacks knowledge, "weak," or "weak in conscience," but a "*brother* for whom Christ died."

Identifying the 'weak' persons as 'brother' and the 'destruction' γνῶσις brings upon this brother finally reveals the way 'love' impacts the perception with which the Corinthians ought to view one another. 'Love' demands viewing all community members, even the weak among them, as brothers of a common family. In contrast to γνῶσις which looks to one's own interests, perhaps even to the point that it is unaware of

believers into a much more harmful effect. The weak believer who commits idolatry by eating idol food defiles himself and, consequently, stands under the threat of God's condemnation. As Conzelmann writes concerning ἀπόλλυμι in 8:11: "it must not be taken in a weakened sense as moral ruin; here as elsewhere it means eternal damnation" (*I Corinthians*, 149, n. 38). Similarly, Gustav Stählin, "τύπω," *TDNT* 8.268-69 and Brunt, "Love, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility," 22.

differences in others, ‘love’ both knows the specific qualities of others and looks upon them as ‘brother.’ Moreover, the one who loves examines the qualities and character of this brother so closely that he identifies the true effects his actions have upon him. He understands that displays of knowledge will not ‘build up’ the weaker brother to salvation, but to idolatry and, thus, to the point of separation from God.

4.2.2.6. 1 Cor 8:12: Valuing the Issue in Question: A Second Look

The earlier discussion of τύπτοντες observed that the Corinthians sin against the weak among them by ‘wounding’ their conscience. That analysis concentrated on the force of τύπτοντες. Here, we observe that 8:12 assigns a theological value to the wise group’s imposition of a “wound of occlusion” upon the weak. The verse identifies ‘wounding’ as sin against their brothers and, more importantly, as sin against Christ. While the mere act of eating idol meat is *adiaphora*, eating idol meat in the presence of a weak believer becomes a theologically negative act. The irony of v. 12 is that the Corinthians who believed they display *freedom in Christ* by eating idol meat actually *sin against Christ* when they lead the weak to eat. With this final deduction, Paul brings out a full implication that results when the wise lead the weak to eat idol meat: they sin against Christ.

The rare mention of the phrase “sin against Christ,” a Pauline *hapax*, turns the wise Corinthians’ attention back to their own relationship with Christ. It locates the object of their transgression not only on their ‘brother,’ but also on Christ, who died for the weak.⁹¹ The intentional connection of Christ’s death on behalf of the weaker brother

⁹¹ The letter positions Christ as the mediator of God’s creation and election and salvation for the community. God is the source ἐξ οὗ are ‘all things’ and Christ is the mediator δι’ οὗ are ‘all things’ in 8:6 (cf. the close association of Christ and God in 1 Cor 3:20 and 15:23-28). The height of this connection is displayed in 1 Cor 1-2. God chooses the cross of Christ as the means of saving those whom he has called.

in 8:11 suggests that the Corinthians sin against Christ because they sin against the *work* of Christ. This connection between Christ and the weaker brother gives the wise an awareness of the theological value of their own actions—i.e., that they sin against Christ by leading those without knowledge to eat. The wise not only counter a ‘love’ that is supposed to ‘build up others’ by sinning against and destroying their brothers, they also counter “love of God” by sinning against Christ, who is God’s means of salvation of the community.

4.2.2.7. 1 Cor 8:13: An Example of Practical Reasoning

The chapter concludes with a summative example of Paul’s own reasoning.⁹² Paul takes up the major components of 8:7-12 and offers his own decision in cases of conflict between his right and the needs of others.

The self-example includes three parts: a protasis, apodosis, and a final purpose clause. The protasis recalls the situation in 8:7 where idol meat—as a type of food—brings scandal upon a weak believer by defiling his conscience. The apodosis, “I will by no means eat meat forever,” indicates Paul’s decision in situations where food is a source of destruction for the weak. Paul emphasizes that he will abstain from κρέα ‘forever’ (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) in order to prevent food from attributing to the downfall of a brother. The final purpose clause depicts a situation in which Paul’s freedom in matters of food and the good of the weaker believer come into conflict. In the verse’s protasis, Paul indicated that food scandalizes his brother. However, the purpose clause’s use of σκανδαλίζω in the first person indicates that Paul’s *own participation* in foods is also a source of scandal

The presence of Christ’s death is also present in 1 Cor 8:11. Thus, offense against Christ is offense against God’s plan of salvation for the community.

⁹² Διόπερ indicates a summative conclusion to the discussion. It is a “strong inferential conjunction” (Fee, *First Epistle*, 389).

for his brother. Thus, if σκανδαλίζει in the protasis of 8:13 refers most clearly to 8:7, σκανδαλίζω points back to the role a wise believer plays in causing a weak brother to stumble in 8:9-12.

In this example, Paul demonstrates how a mature thinker deliberates in matters of community conflict. The example highlights the utter importance of the needs of weak believers over the unimportance of matters of food.⁹³ The twofold use of ἀδελφός emphasizes the close proximity of weak believers to Paul. It is not just a fellow association member, but a ‘brother’ and, at that, a brother “for whom Christ died.” If Paul’s regard for the weak believer as ‘brother’ demonstrates the high value of weak believers, the reference to idol meat as βρῶμα shows that the issue in question is one of absolute indifference by recalling 8:8.⁹⁴ Paul demonstrates that when he thinks about idol meat, he thinks of it as a subset of the category of food. Thus, if, a type of *food*–which occupies a category of indifference–causes a brother–who is of utmost importance to Christ–to stumble, Paul emphatically judges that he will never eat that type in order to ensure that his actions do not contribute to the downfall of a brother for whom Christ died.

Though Paul does not explicitly state the motivation for his decision, the reason a ‘brother’ takes precedent over ‘food’ is due to that form of ἀγάπη that seeks to build up others. Paul’s application of this mindset to the idol meat issue demonstrates how ‘love’ manifests itself practically. As the example demonstrates, ‘love’ closely assesses the qualities and characteristics of others and the issue in question in order to determine what

⁹³ Paul writes in hyperbole in 8:13. The emphatic negation (οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) does not match 10:25-27, where Paul permits the wise to partake of meat indiscriminately. Cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 173.

⁹⁴ Cf. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 149-50.

action best contributes to another's good. It judges that avoiding a cause of harm to a brother is of greater importance than exercising one's right in a matter that is *adiaphora* to God.

5. Recapitulation: Paul's Argument Summarized

The above analysis enables us to recapitulate the logic and progression of the chapter. The beginning of 1 Cor 8 presents a major focus of the discourse: how the Corinthians reflect on the demographics of the community. Among the three components of the Corinthians' argument for eating idol meat, Paul highlights their social observation, "we all have knowledge," as the primary point of his critique. He sets this point of their argument off from the other two components by citing it in the discourse's introductory verses. Moreover, we demonstrated that Paul even affirms one of their theological arguments (the claims in 8:4) and merely pushes their argument (regarding food in 8:8a) to its logical conclusions. In contrast, their claim in 8:1b receives sharp qualification in both 8:1c-3 and in 8:7-13.

Paul's initial response to their claim, "we all have knowledge," identifies the theme that will pervade 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. *Ἀγάπη* is the disposition that counters zealous over-attention to one's possessions. In contrast to the Corinthians' concentration on the community's possession of *γνῶσις*, which manifests itself in self-centered arrogance, *ἀγάπη* disposes itself toward others and is manifested through seeking the upbuilding of others and by standing in loyalty to God (8:1c-3). As Paul moves to the body of his argument, his attention will continually return to the misguided statement about the state of the community. A key to the upbuilding of the community is a sincere and earnest understanding of the qualities and characteristics of others.

Nonetheless, Paul does not proceed directly from 8:1-3 to the qualification of their observation about the community in 8:7. Paul opens the body of his argument in 8:4-6 with an essential component of ἀγάπη. A part of ἀγάπη is the giving of one's possessions and self. Yet there can be no giving without true possession. Therefore, in order for ἀγάπη to become real in the community, Paul must show that some actually *do* possess a right and freedom to eat idol meat. Thus, after setting out ἀγάπη as the disposition and mindset that he desires the community to adopt, Paul begins the body of the discourse by affirming this right and freedom.

The purpose of 8:5-6 goes deeper still. As we argued regarding Paul's self-presentation in 1 Cor 9, Christic imitation involves a complete Christic identity—including the privilege and status that accompany a Christian's identity in Christ. Therefore, establishing the freedom of eating idol meat is not only necessary for ἀγάπη to function properly, it underlies a key component of Christic imitation. Christic identity—and so Christic imitation—is incomplete without true recognition of one's privileges and status in Christ. Only by truly possessing Christic freedom can the Corinthians *voluntarily* renounce their freedoms for the sake of others.

Once Paul establishes the Corinthian right to eat idol meat, he turns to display the *way of thinking* ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ requires. The subset of 8:7-9 displays the essential deliberative components involved in ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ. First, he returns to his critique of the Corinthian observation in 8:1b. The antithetical connection between ἀγάπη and the wise group's claim, "we all have knowledge," in 8:1-3 suggests that Paul's correction of their claim in 8:7 reflects the type of observation a mind guided by ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ makes. It is a mindset that observes the qualities and characteristics of others—i.e., that not

all in the community have knowledge and, in fact, are still in the custom of worshipping idols so that when they eat idol meat they come into defilement. This detailed attention Paul gives to observations about the community in 8:7 suggests that “love builds up” *begins* with observations of others. Prior to making decisions in accordance with “love builds up,” individuals must first discern the traits of others.

In addition to observing the characteristics of others, ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ requires discernment of the issue in question. Just as with observations about others, identifying the value of the issue in question *precedes* advice. Immediately after observing that “not all have knowledge,” Paul reminds the Corinthian wise that “food does not give us standing before God—we are not worse off if we do not eat nor better off if we do” (8:8). The statement reminds the community that the issue in question is indifferent for those with ‘knowledge.’

Identifying both the harm that weak individuals incur when they eat idol meat and the indifferent status of food enables Paul to prioritize weak brothers and sisters over eating idol meat. Both observations are prior to and necessary for enacting ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ. Paul can only advise a general evaluative framework in accordance with what “builds up” after considering the individuals and objects in question.

After presenting the key deliberative components in 8:7-8 and the general evaluative principle that results from these considerations (8:9), 8:10-12 provides the community with an example of a specific practical context to help them visualize situations in which they might potentially violate the principle of 8:9. These verses shift from identifying the way others perceive idols and the consequences these individuals suffer if they eat to naming the effects the actions of the wise have on these weaker

believers. Those with knowledge ‘wound’ the conscience of the weak by ‘building them up’ to eat idol meat and, in this way, they ‘destroy’ the weak in the community. As the wise find themselves at a meal where idol meat is served (e.g., an idol temple) and a weak community member is present, these consequences of their actions will remind the wise of both their influence over the weak and the severity of the consequences on the weak if the wise compel them to eat.

Though 8:10-12 focuses on the effects the wise have on the weak, 8:11 also brings to a climax the *way* the wise ought to view their weaker counterparts. The one who loves intimately *knows* and *cares for* the identity of another to the point of seeing him as a brother. The weak are not lesser or inferior members in the congregation, but siblings whom Christ’s self-renunciation saved. By looking upon others in the community with love, the wise would recognize that “sinning against their brothers” is sinning against Christ and, thus, would have a sense that their moral responsibility to their brothers is, in fact, a moral responsibility to Christ.

The two references to Christ in 8:11-12 (“the brother for whom *Christ died*” and “you sin against *Christ*”) foreshadow Paul’s ultimate call for the wise to imitate Christ and, in this way, define the content of ἀγάπη on the basis of Christic imitation. If the Corinthians are to *imitate Christ*, they ought to emulate his self-sacrificial death for the salvation of others by renouncing their own rights for the building up of their brothers. Instead, the wise *sin against Christ* by destroying their brothers.

Paul’s appeal to Christ orients the community’s moral responsibility around their relationship to Christ. In addition to giving awareness of the theological value of their actions, the addition of this ‘vertical’ element to the chapter’s dominant ‘horizontal’ (i.e.,

communal) responsibility will provide a crucial link to 1 Cor 10:1-22. It shows that decisions concerning the community are intricately connected to the community's formation around its progenitor.

The self-example at the conclusion of 1 Cor 8 draws the entire chapter into the mind of Paul.⁹⁵ The verse not only reflects Paul's own way of thinking about the situation at hand, the concluding position of the self-example, with its strong inferential particle, *διόπερ*, also imbues all of 8:4-12 with a sense of Paul's own way of thinking. After positioning himself as one of the wise in 8:1, 4-6 he concludes the section by stating how he, as a representative of the wise, would act in situations of conflict between the wise and weak. Both of these features of Paul's self-example highlight the reasoning that leads to his action.

Paul's delay in putting forth a particular behavior until the chapter's final verse reflects the logic that reasoning is both prior to, and necessary for, action. Prior to 8:13, Paul *describes* the traits of those who lack knowledge (8:7, 10-12), identifies 'food' as indifferent (8:8), exhorts the wise to be mindful that they do not cause the weak to stumble (8:9), supplies an example of a practical scenario in which the weak might be compelled to eat (8:10), and identifies the ways the actions of the wise affect the weak (8:10-12), but offers no advice on a particular *course of action* until 8:13. He concludes that abstention is appropriate only after he has given full review of the contours of the situation, including the characteristics of others, the value of the issue in question, and the consequences both the weak and the wise face if the wise compel the weak to eat. In light of these observations, he states his own practice: *to abstain* from idol meat if it causes the weak to stumble.

⁹⁵ Cf. Seneca's juxtaposition of points of reasoning with *exempla* (see our discussion on pp. 93-107 above).

As will become clear in 1 Cor 9 (particularly 9:19-23) and 11:1, Paul's decision for self-renunciation for the sake of the weak derives from his self-understanding as one who imitates Christ. Paul chooses abstention as his way of interacting with the weak (opposed to some other act that protects them from eating) due to his understanding of Christ, who divested himself of his standing with God and took on human identity in order to save them.

6. Conclusion

With the full cadence of the chapter in view, we are ready to offer some concluding observations. First, after the presentation of ἀγάπη in 8:1-3, 1 Cor 8:4-13 progresses from "right" (8:4-6) to "renunciation" (8:13). In 8:4-6, Paul establishes that the Corinthians have a well-founded theological right to eat idol meat. By the chapter's concluding verse, however, Paul announces his own renunciation of this right (8:13). The general progression from right—which Paul claims he enjoys as well—to his example of self-renunciation gives the readers a sense that the very structure of the chapter promotes a mode of behavior Paul wishes the community to emulate.

As we suggested in the introductory chapter, the progression from right to renunciation reflects the core model of the incarnate Christ that we propose controls a major portion of the discourse. Significantly, 1 Cor 8 acknowledges both aspects of Christic imitation: recognition of gospel benefits and status and renunciation of those benefits and status for the sake of others. Paul not only models this in his own example, but also in the pattern of the argument itself. He will repeat this same pattern in 1 Cor 9.

The exegetical analysis also suggests that ἀγάπη οἰκοδομεῖ involves more than a mode of behavior. The verses intervening 8:4-6 and 8:13 provide the requisite

circumstantial considerations that precede decisions regarding a course of action. As Paul's own example in 8:13 shows, it is only because of the *stumbling* that βρῶμα—an indifferent—brings upon a fellow community member that Paul asserts his decision to give up his right to eat idol meat.

This feature of the chapter aligns with the very nature of ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ. As an activity that is dependent on the particularities of an individual's personality and the type of issue in question, ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ is not reducible to a single mode of behavior. Only by making these observations in each new situation can an individual know what type of action "builds up."

Moreover, the argument of 1 Cor 8 does not promote ἀγάπη as a way of thinking that *precludes* or *excludes* theological propositions. Indeed, Paul never suggests that the Corinthians *exchange* theological doctrines for ἀγάπη. Rather, Paul urges communal awareness and a willingness to forgo rights established by theological propositions on the basis of ἀγάπη for others.⁹⁶ Paul thinks that knowledge serves as *a* basis for Christian behavior. It is the character of the disposition and way of thinking that *accompanies* knowledge that Paul corrects.

Finally, Paul's mode of arguing—particularly his avoidance of prescribing a particular action—reveals that ἀγάπη involves more than *both* a mode of behavior *and* a mode of reasoning. Prescribing a certain mode of behavior does not guarantee that one acts with ἀγάπη. Adopting a certain mode of conduct can be carried out in the absence of ἀγάπη. It may amount to rule following or even become a new source of self-centered boast. Just as having all knowledge or a faith that moves mountains amounts to 'nothing'

⁹⁶ Pace, Barrett, "[love]...rather than *gnosis*, should determine his actions" (*First Epistle*, 191) and Horrell, "Theological Principle."

without love, so would displays of abstention without love amount to nothing.⁹⁷ Yet even ἀγάπη οικοδομεῖ, understood merely as a mode of reasoning that seeks the upbuilding of others, is also subject to self-conceit. The wise in the community could discern the traits of others and the consequences certain activities have upon them without loving them. In this way, 1 Cor 8 not only seeks to instill a certain *praxis* of behavior, or even a certain *praxis* of reasoning, but a fundamental dispositional change in the hearts and minds of the Corinthians. To embody ἀγάπη in the community, that is, to embody Christ in the community, the Corinthians must have sincere interest in learning the personalities and needs of others. In this way, 1 Cor 8 does not simply imprint a mode of reasoning for the Corinthians to emulate, but embodies a total re-orientation of oneself in relation to others that reflects Christ's sincere and interested care of others.

⁹⁷ Hence, "The real ethical question is not 'to eat or not to eat' but to act responsibly in love toward the other person" (Brunt, "Love, Freedom, and Moral Responsibility," 24).

Chapter 4: Analysis of 1 Cor 9

1. Introduction

The previous chapter argued that Paul challenges the Corinthians' focus on their possessions and rights in the gospel and promotes a way of thinking that is guided by building up others. In response to a community that primarily operates with the mindset that Christian freedom manifests itself in free behavior, Paul encourages them to adopt a mindset and way of thinking that uses freedom to seek the good of others.

In 1 Cor 9, Paul's argument makes abrupt shifts. It switches from idol meat to finances and from instruction to apology. As we saw in chapter 1, this significant transition has led to various proposals about the role and function of the chapter in Paul's argument.

Some think the chapter is a digression in which Paul defends his decision to refuse financial support, or even his apostleship in general.¹ These proposals allow little connection between 1 Cor 9 and 1 Cor 8 and 10. Others downplay Paul's use of the term *apologia* and deny that he is really defending himself at all. These interpreters commonly view the chapter as Paul's example of a certain *praxis* he wishes the community to adopt: self-abnegation for the sake of the gospel. The exemplary argument is merely cloaked in the façade of an apology for rhetorical purposes.² This interpretation connects the chapter to the surrounding texts by making Paul's financial decision in Corinth function analogously with the idol meat issue. Taking a third

¹ E.g., Hurd, *Origin*, 126-131; Günther Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts," in *Studies in Luke-Acts: Essays in Honor of Paul Schubert* (ed. Leander Keck and J. Louis Martyn; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 194-208; Peter Marshall, *Enmity in Corinth: Social Convention in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* (WUNT 23; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987), 306-17; Fee, *First Epistle*, 392-394.

² E.g., Wendell Willis, "An Apostolic Apologia? The Form and Function of 1 Corinthians 9," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 33-48; Mitchell, *Rhetoric*.

approach, several scholars have attempted to claim a middle ground by arguing that the chapter functions both as apology and example.³ This “two-birds” position proposes that Paul defends his teaching by arguing that it is more consistent with apostleship to renounce one’s rights in the gospel than to insist upon them. This same argument also *exemplifies* that he is not asking them to do anything he has not already himself done.⁴

The problem these competing interpretations present is how to honor the structure and language of 1 Cor 9 as well as the fullness of its function.⁵ To deny 1 Cor 9 any apologetic function ignores that Paul frames the chapter as an *apologia* and that the chapter has a defensive tone. Paul identifies the chapter as an *apologia*, not as an example, and several of the rhetorical questions show that Paul is on the defensive (e.g., 9:6 and 9:12).

Certain features of 1 Cor 9, however, suggest that the chapter functions within the overall context of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 as Paul’s self-*exemplum* for the community to imitate. Paul identifies that he has an ἐξουσία that he gives up so that he does not become a ‘stumbling block’ for the gospel—a self-description that has obvious parallels to his instruction in 1 Cor 8.

Among the three types of proposals presented above, our chapter argues that a version of the “two-birds” argument is the best reading. First Corinthians 9 is both

³ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 15, 200; Ronald Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 60-61; Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology* (New York: Roundtree, 1996), 120-43 and 176-89; Abraham J. Malherbe “Determinism and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians 8 and 9,” in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 231-55.

⁴ E.g., Barrett, *First Epistle*, 15, 200.

⁵ A classic example of the difficulty is Glad who argues that 1 Cor 9 is an *exemplum* (not *apologia*), but admits that Paul’s refusal of a financial offer constitutes a “debate” between Paul and his Corinthian patrons (*Paul and Philodemus*, 266). In the very next sentence, Glad continues, “The practice then which exemplifies Paul’s freedom in this context is his refusal to accept financial support” (*Paul and Philodemus*, 266). Glad gives no explanation of why Paul should use a point of contention between the Corinthians and himself as an *exemplum*, especially given that he makes himself appear low-status in the process.

apologia and *self-exemplum*. The key distinction of our analysis from prior “two-birds” proposals is that Paul’s defense and example are grounded in a *mindset* and *way of thinking*—not a mode of conduct—that appropriately characterizes Christian freedom. First Corinthians 9 constitutes Paul’s *apologia* of his decision not to accept financial payment from the Corinthians in which he also *exemplifies* a mindset and mode of reasoning that he wishes to foster within the community.

The Corinthians appear to have questioned Paul’s Christian freedom and apostolic status because they thought that he was not even aware of his apostolic rights. Paul defends his decision by showing the self-understanding and reasoning that led to his decision. Paul first establishes that he, in fact, *is* aware of his ‘right’ to support (9:1-14). Once he establishes his awareness of his right, he moves to the centerpiece of his defense. He views himself as a steward of the gospel whose ‘boast’ lies not in his calling to preach, but in *how* he uses the rights that accompany his apostolic calling (9:15-18). The way of thinking that guides his use of his rights is the accommodative statement in 9:19-23: Paul becomes like others in order to win them for the gospel (cf. 9:12c). This Christic way of thinking is the basis of his boast and ‘reward’ (9:15-18, 24-27).

The mindset and reasoning that govern Paul’s decision regarding finances is the very mindset and reasoning that ought to guide the Corinthians in the matter of idol meat. Paul desires them to perceive of themselves as servants of the gospel whose boast is not in their calling alone, but in *how* they use the gifts and rights that accompany their calling. Like Paul, they are to use their rights in the gospel in a way that best wins others for the gospel. This mode of self-perception and practical thinking is the basis of their boast and reward.

First Corinthians 9 functions successfully as both *apologia* and *exemplum* because Paul's financial decision and the idol meat issue are two practical circumstances that call for the same process of reasoning. Paul defends himself against Corinthian accusations by claiming that his decision is informed by a mindset and way of thinking that is modeled after Christ's incarnation. He also commends this very mode of reasoning as the way the Corinthians ought to address practical dilemmas such as eating idol meat.

Our chapter first examines the logic of 1 Cor 9 from its apologetic perspective. We then discuss how the exemplary aspects of the apology emerge. Each section focuses on the role Paul's reasoning plays in his argument.

2. The Defense

In chapter 3, we demonstrated that the Corinthians boast about their knowledge. In addition to boasting over knowledge, they are also under the impression that knowledge grants them total authority (ἐξουσία) to act as they please. They found their notion of authority on the idea that freedom constitutes knowledge of what is permissible and what is not permissible.⁶ They argue that “all things are permissible [πάντα ἔξεστιν]” in matters of sexual conduct and food. They pride themselves on knowing that it is permissible for them to conduct themselves in these areas as they please.⁷

The Corinthians' identification of knowledge of what is permissible and what is not as the foundation of freedom, along with their belief that ‘all things’ are permissible

⁶ E.g., Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14:18: “Therefore we are forced to define freedom as the knowledge of what is allowable and what is forbidden, and slavery as ignorance of what is allowed [ἔξεστι] and what is not” (Cohon, LCL). Cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 14.13-16. See also the reference in Malherbe, “Determinism,” 235-36.

⁷ See chapter 6, pp. 272-75, for a discussion of πάντα ἔξεστιν. The phrase is commonly recognized as a variation of the Cynic-Stoic maxim expressing the freedom and authority of autonomous action of the wise man (Robert M. Grant, “Hellenistic Elements in 1 Corinthians,” in *Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby* [Chicago: Quadrangle, 1961]: 60-66; Stanley K. Stowers, “Paul on the Use and Abuse of Reason,” *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 263.

to the Christian, leads them to question Paul's freedom and apostleship (1 Cor 9:1-2). The nature of Paul's argument and the pre-history of the letter suggest that the Corinthians accused Paul of lacking freedom and apostolicity because he did not *know* what is permissible for an apostle. After Paul left Corinth, the community appears to have learned from other apostles the normal apostolic practice of receiving support (e.g., 1 Cor 9:6, 12a). Since Paul declined to ask for support, the Corinthians questioned whether Paul had any awareness of his right to receive payment and so doubted his freedom and apostleship.

If this scenario is plausible, then a central aspect of Paul's defense is to show that he does, in fact, know what is permissible for him. He belabors his right to support (9:4-12a, 13-14) to demonstrate that he is *aware* that he has this right.⁸ Once he adequately establishes that he is knowledgeable of his ἐξουσία to receive financial support, he moves to the second aspect of the defense. He re-defines the Corinthians' conception of Christian freedom. The mark of Christian freedom is not the rights the gospel grants, but the freedom to use one's rights in a way that best wins others for the gospel.

In the following exegetical discussion, we detail these two aspects of the defense. First we examine the justifying proofs that show Paul's awareness of his apostolic ἐξουσία (1 Cor 9:1-12a, 13-14). Second, we analyze the key verses that re-define Christian freedom and true apostleship (9:12b, 19-27).

⁸ Pace Mitchell, Paul does not seem to be arguing for *an* apostle's right to live from the gospel (*Rhetoric*, 130). The Corinthians appear to know that apostles have a right to live by the gospel. They question whether Paul, who calls himself an apostle, is aware of this right.

2.1. 1 Cor 9:1-12a, 13-14: I am Free—I am Aware that I have Apostolic Rights

Paul begins the chapter with a series of forceful questions and statements that both name his apostleship as the subject matter of the defense and offer an initial assertion that he, in fact, is an apostle. The initial three questions in 9:1 claim his freedom and his apostolic status in general. Is he not free? Is he not an apostle? Has he not seen the risen Lord? The question and statement that follow (9:1d-2) focus on his apostolic status in Corinth. Has he not preached the risen Lord successfully in the community? If he has not successfully preached to others, at least he has in Corinth. They are the seal of his apostleship. The very existence of the community shows Paul's status as apostle to Corinth. If they are to claim an apostolic beginning, then they must claim Paul as an apostle.

Verse 3 functions as the pivot verse between subject matter (Paul's apostleship) and the body of the defense. After the series of questions and statements that show Paul's freedom and apostleship are under scrutiny (9:1-2), Paul writes in relation to what follows, "this is my ἀπολογία to those who would question me."⁹

The body of the defense addresses the specific issue that led the Corinthians to question Paul's apostleship: their doubt about whether Paul is aware of his apostolic rights, most particularly, his right to receive financial support. The argument begins with a series of three rhetorical questions that name Paul's awareness of his various rights as

⁹ Since 9:1-2 are too short to constitute a full defense, 9:3 cannot refer to what precedes it as the actual defense (Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 233; *pace* Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 179 and Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 257). Additionally, the location of the demonstrative pronoun, αὐτη, shows that his *apologia* follows in vv. 4-27. Finally, and most importantly, we offer a plausible proposal that logically connects 9:1-2 and 9:4-14. Verses 1-2 establish that Paul's apostleship is in question. Verses 4-14 argue *that* Paul is an apostle because he is aware of his right to support.

an apostle. He asks whether he has a right to eat and drink whatever he chooses (9:4; cf., 1 Cor 8), to go about with a believing sister as wife (9:5; cf., 1 Cor 7), and to refrain from working at a trade for a living, as do the other apostles (9:6). This third question takes up the topic of the apology.

Verses 7-12a, 13-14 offer an extended argument for a worker's right to receive financial support from his work. The argument draws on societal custom (v. 7), Jewish law (vv. 8-11), his involvement with the community in relation to other apostles (v. 12a), religious practice (v. 13), and the command of Jesus (v. 14).

Verse 7 offers three analogies from societal custom that demonstrate a worker's right to benefit from his or her work. Society has no expectation that soldiers pay their own expenses or that vineyard growers and shepherds not partake of the fruits of their labor (9:7).¹⁰

In vv. 8-11, the argument continues the theme of the worker's right to benefit from his or her work, but shifts to a more authoritative source—the Mosaic law. It is not merely human custom that supports a worker's right to benefit from his or her labor, Jewish law does as well. Citing Deut 25:4, Paul observes that farmers should not prevent their oxen from partaking of the grain over which they labor. Drawing out the fuller sense of this text, Paul deduces that if farmers ought to allow their animals to receive the benefits of their work, how much more does God permit humans to benefit from their labor. This deduction is all the more true if a worker sows spiritual goods. If contemporary preachers sow spiritual benefits among the community, which Paul has done in Corinth, how much more should those who sow spiritual goods receive material benefit.

¹⁰ For the second proof (vineyard growers), see echoes in Deut 20:6 and Prov 27:18 LXX.

Verse 12a shows why Paul's decision not to act on his right to support is particularly acute. Other apostles appear to have asked for and received material support from the community, which would have made the Corinthians question Paul's apostleship. They might have wondered whether Paul was even an apostle since he did not ask for support. Accordingly, Paul both demonstrates that he is aware of the apostolic right that he and others enjoy and uses this awareness to claim his superior right to support as founder of the community. If other apostles have enjoyed this rightful claim, how much more does he, as the community's founder, have a right to support from them?

The final two arguments for a worker's right to benefit from his work transitions from farmers to religious workers. In v. 13, Paul emphasizes that priests benefit from the products of their labor (v. 13).¹¹ Just as priests partake of the materials they sacrifice at the temple and in the altar, so evangelists ought to earn their living from the gospel they preach.

The argument reaches its climax in the second proof from religious work (v. 14). Paul is aware that Jesus even commands that evangelists have a right to receive financial support for their work (cf. Luke 10:7). Paul concludes the demonstration of his awareness of his right with the most authoritative source in the early church.

These verses establish beyond doubt that Paul is 'knowledgeable' of what is permissible to him as an apostle. He did not fail to request payment from the Corinthians due to lack of knowledge about his rights as an apostle. He knows what is permissible and rightful to him. He is free. In comparison to the Corinthians' justification for their

¹¹ Paul may have in mind Jewish priestly rights (e.g., Num 18:8-24; Deut 18:1-5) or those in Greek and Roman practice.

ἐξουσία to eat idol meat on the basis of one or two theological statements, Paul offers a panoply of reasons—climaxing with the command of Jesus—that reveal the depths of his awareness of his ἐξουσία to receive financial support. The numerous proofs demonstrate that the Corinthians’ charge that Paul is not free or an apostle because he is unaware of his rights does not stand.¹²

Paul’s display of his awareness of his right to receive payment is the first step in a two-part argument. The second part of the argument—in 9:12b, 15-27—provides the reasoning behind Paul’s decision not to request support from the community. Though aware of his right, additional considerations enter his decision making. Paul decided not to act on his right as a result of his understanding of his apostolic commission (9:15-18 and 24-27) and out of consideration of what best enables others to hear the gospel (9:12b, 19-23).

This second part of Paul’s defense redefines apostleship. It is not the acceptance of rights that makes true apostles, but *how* an apostle uses his or her rights. The true apostle follows the incarnational mindset of Christ, who identified himself with humanity in order to save humanity.

2.2. Redefining Apostleship

Paul’s redefinition of apostleship occurs in two conceptual stages. First, he moves the basis of true apostleship from the rights one possesses to how apostles use their rights.

Second, he displays the way of thinking that characterizes true apostles as they discern

¹² This reading provides a viable alternative that Willis and those who follow him do not see for Paul’s defense. As Willis rightly judges, Paul is not establishing his right to support (“Apostolic Apologia?,” 35). Willis is wrong, however, to limit Paul’s defense strategy by claiming that he over-argues if his purpose is to defend his decision not to accept support (“Apostolic Apologia?,” 36). Paul is not making the point that he *has* a right, but that he is *aware that he has* a right. The sustained proofs are evidence of this point.

how to exercise their rights. First Corinthians 9:15-18 and 24-27 accomplish the first task, while 9:12b and 19-23 focus on the second.

2.2.1. 1 Cor 9:15-18: Redefining Apostolic Self-Understanding

First Corinthians 9:15-18 constitutes a central aspect of Paul's *apologia*. In these verses, he reorients the basis of Christian reward from the mere standing one enjoys as an apostle to what an apostle does with the rights granted to him or her in the gospel.

The first step of the argument moves an apostle's grounds of boasting from his or her *standing* as an apostle to *denying* the rights that accompany apostleship (9:15). True apostolic boast derives not from acting on a right, but in refusing to act on it. Paul indicates that he does not list the litany of proofs in vv. 16-17 in order to claim his right to support. Though aware of his right, he assures the Corinthians that he is not writing in order to secure it. Doing so would remove his *καύχημα*. If he received his 'right' in the gospel, he would have no 'boast' as an apostle. His 'boast' is derived in giving up his right.

Following v. 15, which equates apostolic boast with renunciation of rights, vv. 16-17 explain why apostolic preaching, alone, is not a basis for boasting. Merely preaching the gospel is *not* an apostolic boast because Paul preaches under 'compulsion' (*ἀνάγκη*—v. 16b). Because 'compulsion' is Paul's only drive to preach, his incentive to do so is negative. He incurs no 'boast' if he preaches, only 'woe' if he does not (v. 16c).

Verse 17 continues the thought of v. 16. The verse presents the two logical ways Paul could preach the gospel: *ἐκὼν* ('willingly') or *ἄκων* ('unwillingly'). If Paul preaches 'willingly,' he has a *μισθός*. If he preaches 'unwillingly'—that is, under

‘compulsion’—he is simply carrying out his responsibility to a divine οἰκονομία and, thus, receives no reward.

Of the two alternatives, the context suggests that Paul ‘unwillingly,’ or ‘involuntarily,’ preaches. First, ἄκων echoes the idea of ἀνάγκη in v. 16. One who preaches under compulsion also preaches involuntarily. Second, οἰκονομία πεπίστευμαι suggests that Paul is obligated to fulfill a commission. In 1 Cor 4:1-2, Paul identifies Apollos and himself as a ‘stewards’ (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries of God and indicates that ‘stewards’ are required to be found ‘trustworthy’ (πίστος) in their assignment. This passage demonstrates that Paul thinks of his ‘stewardship’ (i.e., his preaching) as a duty in response to a divine appointment. This self-understanding is consistent with v. 16 and v. 17b. Paul preaches ‘unwillingly’ and, thus, has no reward.¹³

Thus far, Paul has claimed that preaching free of charge is the grounds of his ‘boast’ (v. 15), that mere preaching is the basis of neither his ‘boast’ nor ‘reward’ (vv. 16-17), and that ‘reward’ must result from a ‘willing’ act (v. 17a). In v. 18, Paul indicates where his reward lies. He asks, “what, then, is the basis of my reward?” and answers that it lies in preaching the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of his

¹³ Thus, like many commentators, I take εἰ δὲ ἄκων as the real condition of Paul’s evangelistic impetus. E.g., Fee, *First Epistle*, 419-20. Pace Hock, *Social Context*, 100 n. 113 and Malherbe, “Determinism,” 249-51. Malherbe’s preference for reading v. 17a as the real condition cannot stand. He allows that Paul has a choice between complying with this ‘compulsion’ ‘willingly’ or ‘unwillingly’ and judges that Paul chooses the former (v. 17) (“Determinism,” 249-51). In addition, he argues that if Paul were to preach ‘unwillingly,’ he would have no right to financial support, but since he preaches ‘willingly’ he does have such a right.

Malherbe’s argument is wrong on two accounts. First, Paul does not preach ‘willingly.’ In addition to the above arguments against why Paul cannot preach ‘willingly,’ Malherbe never explains how the μισθός that he adduces Paul accrues in v. 17 is distinct from the καύχημα Paul would not gain if he acted on his right to support (v. 16). For Malherbe to claim that Paul preaches ‘willingly’ and, thus, has a ‘reward,’ he would also have to show that μισθός and καύχημα refer to two different areas. As we see in n. 15 below, μισθός and καύχημα are parallel terms.

Thus, second, Paul does not equate ‘reward’ with his right to receive financial support. Paul is able to claim his right in the gospel *and* that he preaches ‘unwillingly’ because he associates ‘reward’ with his ‘boast,’ *not* with receiving payment. The right to support is connected to preaching the gospel *regardless* of its origin in ‘necessity’ or ‘free will.’

rights from preaching the gospel. Paul's answer to his own question indicates that not making full use of his rights in the gospel is his willing act that incurs a reward. Since only what is done willingly receives a reward and preaching the gospel free of charge is the basis of his reward then preaching free of charge is Paul's willing act.¹⁴ Thus, he is able to claim that though he does not voluntarily preach, he voluntarily decides not to act on his full rights in the gospel and, accordingly, has a 'reward' and 'boast.'¹⁵

Paul's argument in 9:15-18 speaks of his own apostolic calling, yet it also addresses apostolicity in general. By identifying ἀνάγκη and ἄκων with οἰκονομία, Paul defines true apostleship on the basis of a compelled and unwilling preaching in response to a divine commission. The implication of vv. 16-17 is that if an evangelist preaches willingly, then he or she does not preach under a divine commission, thus raising questions regarding the basis of his or her apostleship. If, however, an apostle preaches in response to a divinely appointed οἰκονομία, then he or she preaches unwillingly and

¹⁴ Using a Lutheran reading of the philosopher's *amor fati*, Käsemann judges that Paul lived out the gospel, that is, his destiny (ἀνάγκη), in the blessed realization that, through service, he actualizes and fulfills the grace and freedom of the gospel in his life (Ernst Käsemann, "A Pauline Version of the "Amor Fati"," *New Testament Questions of Today* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969], 217-35). But for Käsemann, none of this is by choice. The gospel's enslavement of Paul includes his call to preach *and* the obligation to preach it free of charge. Paul adamantly rejects support, not because he is free to do so, but because he is obliged to as a part of his enslavement to the gospel. Nonetheless, Paul's 'compulsion' is not the lifeless, inanimate 'destiny' of the philosophers. His destiny is also the object of his love (e.g., "Pauline Version," 234). Paul understands that his acts of service to others are themselves his reward as they simultaneously and paradoxically display the liberating power of the gospel in his life.

Verses 17-18 do not support Käsemann's understanding. While Käsemann thinks that Paul does not have free choice either in his decision to preach the gospel (vv. 16-17) *or* in his decision to preach free of charge (v. 18), the reasons we site here suggest that preaching free of charge is Paul's choice. Moreover, the parallelism of 1 Cor 8 and 9 is predicated upon both the Corinthians and Paul having free choice in the gospel. The premise of 1 Cor 8 is that Paul asks the Corinthians to give up freely and 'willingly' an ἐξουσία they rightfully possess. In order for 1 Cor 9 to maintain a parallel structure to 1 Cor 8, Paul's point must be that he indeed gives up something he has freedom to accept. Both Paul's apology and paraenetic exemplum depend on the distinction between compulsion in vv. 16-17 and voluntary choice in v. 18.

¹⁵ Verse 18 reveals that Paul equates μισθός and καύχημα. The parallelism of his response in v. 18 (μὴ καταχρησασθαι τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ μου ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) to his statement of declension in v. 15 (ἐγὼ δὲ οὐ κέχρημαι οὐδενὶ τούτων) draws μισθός (v. 18) and καύχημα (v. 15) into parallel. His statement of refusal in v. 18 identifies this act as the basis of his μισθός just as his statement of refusal in v. 15 identifies the act as the basis of his καύχημα.

under compulsion and, thus, has no boast or reward in the mere act of preaching.

Therefore, true apostolic boast and reward must be found in another realm, which Paul locates, for the moment, in not acting on one's rights in the gospel.

Though 9:15-18 suggests that apostolic boast and reward reside in not acting on an apostle's rights in the gospel, 9:19-23 show that this conception is really but one aspect in a broader way of thinking that reflects true freedom and apostleship. True apostleship is ultimately defined not simply by abstaining from acting on apostolic rights, but by properly discerning *how* to use the rights that accompany apostles.

2.2.2. 1 Cor 9:19-23 and 9:12b: The Mindset that Guides Decision

Making

First Corinthians 9:19-23 identifies the positive principle Paul uses to discern how and when he exercises his rights. He does not associate apostolic boast with accepting—or even simply with giving up—a right. Paul's boast is found in a separate realm. His boast lies in using his rights in a way that best saves those whom he evangelizes. He judges his decisions regarding when to exercise, and when to refrain from exercising, his rights on the basis of the mindset of the incarnate Christ. He seeks to save others by “becoming like” them. His defense, therefore, is none other than identifying himself—and true apostleship—with the incarnational mind of Christ.

Paul introduces the explanation of his decision not to accept support by echoing the concept of freedom that introduced 1 Cor 9: “Though I am free [ἐλεύθερος] with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all” (9:19). Ἐλεύθερος picks up the Corinthian conception of freedom in 9:1, which Paul proves that he himself possesses in 9:4-14. Paul is indeed a ‘free man.’ He knows what is permissible to him in the gospel.

As the second portion of the verse shows, however, this conception of ἐλεύθερος is not the full understanding of Christian freedom. The subtlety of v. 19 is that the entire verse, not just v. 19a, is a statement of true Christic freedom. By initially defining himself as free in the Corinthians' sense of the term (v. 19a), only to deny this conception of freedom (v. 19b), Paul transforms apostolic freedom to a new (and proper) foundation. Freedom is not freedom always to act on one's rights and privileges in the gospel, but freedom to enslave oneself to others for the sake of their salvation.

The epexegetical καί that introduces v. 20 indicates that the activity in vv. 20-22a defines what it means for Paul to enslave himself to others. Servitude to others means to “become like” them in order to win them. To ‘Jews,’ Paul becomes like Jews. To “those under the law,” Paul becomes as one under the law. Conversely, to “those not under the law,” Paul becomes as one not under the law. Finally, to “the weak,” Paul becomes weak. He becomes all things to all people in order to save some of them.¹⁶

¹⁶ Verses 19-22 have a chiasmic structure, with 9:23 functioning as a conclusion:

(A) ἐλεύθερος γὰρ ὢν ἐκ πάντων πᾶσιν ἑμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα	ἵνα τοὺς πλείονας κερδήσω
(B) καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαίος	ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω
(C) τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, μὴ ὢν αὐτὸς ὑπὸ νόμον	ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω
(C') τοῖς ἀνόμοις ὡς ἄνομος, μὴ ὢν ἄνομος θεοῦ ἀλλ' ἔννομος Χριστοῦ ἵνα κερδάω τοὺς ἀνόμους	ἵνα κερδάω τοὺς ἀνόμους
(B') ἐγενόμην τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν ἀσθενής	ἵνα τοὺς ἀσθενεῖς κερδήσω
(A') τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα	ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω
πάντα δὲ ποιῶ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον	ἵνα συγκοινωνὸς αὐτοῦ γένομαι

The formal structure of chiasm is obvious. The pattern has been recognized by many (e.g., Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 242 and *Das Urchristentum* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917], 310; Nils Wilhelm Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament: A Study in Formgeschichte* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942], 147-48 and Barbara Hall, “All Things to All People: A Study of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23” in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul & John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* [ed., Robert T. Fortna and Beverly R. Gaventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990], 137-57). Elements A and A' each contain two uses of πᾶς. Paul's statements of accommodation in B (to the ‘Jews’) and B' (to the ‘weak’) each contain the verb, γίνομαι, while the two middle verses (v. 20b = C and v. 21a = C') contain no verb (cf. Hall, “All Things,” 139). C and C' also maintain an inverted parallel structure—those “under the law” directly contrasts those “not under the law.” Finally, C and C' share parenthetical qualifying statements of Paul's standing in relation to the law.

In v. 20a, Paul writes that he “became like Jews” to ‘Jews.’ It appears that the shift in language in v. 20b primarily clarifies what he means by “to the Jews, I became a Jew” in v. 20a (cf. Günther

Verses 19-23 are the crux of Paul's defense. Paul refused to act on his right to financial support not because he was unaware of it, but because doing so modeled Christ's act of incarnation. The repetitive refrain, "I became like 'x' in order to win/save 'x'," defines Christian freedom around the notion of solidarity with those one seeks to save. Christian freedom does not take the form, "I know my rights and I will act on them." Rather, it expresses itself in the incarnational statement: "I know my rights, but I will become like others in order to save them."

The mindset Paul adopts emulates the mindset of Christ depicted in Phil 2:6-11. Though having equality with God, Christ voluntarily gave up that equality in order to express solidarity with humanity by humbly assuming human form (e.g., Phil 2:6-11). That is, Christ "became like" those he sought to save. Christ's voluntary incarnation is predicated upon his true and full possession of equality with God, the Father. If Christ did not truly possess his 'right' of equality with the Father, he could not have made a *voluntary* self-sacrifice. Paul translates this understanding to his own imitation of Christ.

Bornkamm, "Missionary Stance;" 195; C. H. Dodd, *More New Testament Studies* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968], 134-35; Morna D. Hooker, "A Partner in the Gospel: Paul's Understanding of Ministry," *EpRev* 25/1 [1998]: 71; and many commentaries). Himself a Jew by birth and heritage, Paul specifies in v. 20b that he "becomes like" Jews particularly with respect to the religious dictums of the Mosaic Law.

In addition to clarifying how Paul "becomes like" his fellow Jews, the phrase is also broad enough to encompass Jewish-Christians. Paul's use of ὑπὸ νόμον in Galatians denotes a mode of salvation that depends upon the law (Rom 6:14-15; Gal 4:21; 5:18), as especially promoted by Judaizing Christians in Galatia (Gal 4:21; 5:18). Accordingly, ὑπὸ νόμον continues to refer to the Jews, but may also include Jewish-Christians. Cf. H. L. Ellison, "Paul and the Law—'All Things to All Men'" in *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce on his 60th Birthday* (ed. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 196.

If these points stand, then v. 21c and v. 22a are also parallel. "Those not under law" qualifies "the weak," thus making "the weak" those who are outside the law (i.e., Gentiles). This structure fits with the likely scenario that the wise in Corinth are those who are comfortable with monotheistic doctrine while the weak are those still partially committed to Greek and Roman gods and, hence, susceptible to idolatry when they eat idol meat.

Hall's suggestion that C ("those under the law") refers to both the Jews of 9:20a and the weak of 9:22 (cf. the weak of 1 Cor 8) and that C' ("those outside the law") refers to the Greeks (who are also the strong) does not make sense of the chiasm ("All Things," 146-47; similarly, Ellison, "Paul and the Law," 196). While Hall's proposal offers a plausible parallelism between 'Jews' and "those under the law," it forces the 'weak' also to be "those under the law," thus causing "those *not* under law" to have no relation to any other element in the chiasm.

By associating his decisions to “become like” others with Christ’s incarnate act, Paul identifies true apostleship not on the basis of demanding one’s rights, but as emulating Christ’s act of self-giving for the sake of others.

This mindset informs Paul’s decision to refrain from acting on his right to financial support. Though Paul does not express this motive clearly in 9:1-18, he hints at this mindset in 9:12b. He states that he did not ask for financial support “in order that we might not place a hindrance in front of the gospel” (ἵνα μή τινα ἐγκοπὴν δῶμεν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ). While, on the surface, the phrase mentions nothing about ‘others’ or Christic solidarity, the phrase has affinity with 1 Cor 8:9, which exhorts the Corinthians not to become a stumbling block to the weak.¹⁷ This parallelism allows us to infer that Paul decided not to act on his right to support because he did not want to disrupt the Corinthians’ ability to hear the gospel—that is, he perceived that not taking support would be the best way to win the Corinthians.¹⁸ Just as Paul does not want the ἐξουσία

¹⁷ Verse 9:12b contains three features that are parallel to 8:9: ἐξουσία, giving up ἐξουσία, and stumbling block imagery. In 8:9, Paul exhorts the wise to be mindful that their ἐξουσία does not become a ‘stumbling block’ to the weak. Similarly, 9:12 pronounces that Paul has an ἐξουσία which he gives up in order that it might not be a ‘stumbling block.’ The parallelism of the three components suggests that a fourth component, the beneficiary of the act of renunciation, should also be parallel. First Corinthians 8:9 exhorts the Corinthians to consider giving up their right so that it might not become a stumbling block τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν. First Corinthians 9:12 states that Paul gives up his right to support so that he might not give an obstacle τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. The phrase in 9:12 implies that Paul did not want to create an obstacle to the community’s reception of the gospel when he came to evangelize them. He deemed it beneficial for “them” (in terms of their ability to receive of the gospel) to give up his right to support.

The final statement of 9:19-23 confirms the point. Paul becomes all things to all people “for the sake of the gospel” (διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) in order to ‘win’ or ‘save’ them (9:23). The use of εὐαγγέλιον in both verses suggests that 9:19-23 is the positive expression of μή τινα ἐγκοπὴν δῶμεν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Becoming like others in order to save the mindset that leads Paul to not put an obstacle in front of the gospel. Or, conversely, Paul’s decision not to put a hindrance in the way of the gospel in v. 12b is a way of stating that he seeks the good of the other in order to save them.

The association of v. 12b and vv. 19-23 is given added confirmation by the heavy use of εὐαγγέλ- cognates in vv. 12b-18. Whereas it does not occur in vv. 1-12a, the root appears nine times in vv. 12b-18, and ten including v. 23 (9:12b, 14 [x3], 16 [x2], [x3], 23). The first and last uses form an *inclusio* between v. 12b and v. 23.

¹⁸ Cf. 2 Cor 11:7-15, which is strongly reminiscent of the issue in 1 Cor 9:4-18. This text shows that Paul lowers himself (ἐμαυτὸν ταπεινῶν) to the Corinthians by preaching the gospel to them free of charge. This text also shows that refusing to act on his right to financial support is not his universal practice, thus

of the Corinthians to become a stumbling block to the spiritual growth of the weak, and so advised the wise to adopt a pattern of Christic solidarity by refraining from idol meat when around the weak, so did he not want his own ἐξουσία to hinder the Corinthians' initial receptivity of the gospel. Accordingly, Paul decided not to request support and, instead, worked with his hands as a way to “become like” the impoverished and low-status at Corinth (e.g., 1 Cor 1:26-28).

These verses constitute the second step of Paul's defense. First Corinthians 9:15-18 moves the understanding of apostleship from a voluntary calling that incurs reward to an involuntary commission that carries no automatic reward. It locates reward in *how* apostles exercise their rights in the gospel. First Corinthians 9:19-23, then, shows the type of mindset that properly exercises those rights. True apostles exercise their rights by following Christ's incarnational model of becoming like those he sought to save.

2.2.3. 1 Cor 9:24-27: The Appeal to the Moral Athlete

Paul concludes the apology with imagery of an athletic contest. The section shows signs of self-example that hints at the chapter's dual function. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to ‘run’ in a way that they will receive the prize (9:24), which gives the two subsequent illustrations—of the athlete (9:25) and Paul (9:26-27)—an exemplary quality.

The section, however, also marks the conclusion of the apologia.¹⁹ The language of athletic competition depicts Paul's apostolic self-expression in high-status imagery.

implying that Paul came to his decision in Corinth *specifically* for the financial circumstances of the Corinthian community.

¹⁹ Victor C. Pfitzner proposes that the athletic motif emphasizes ‘self-control,’ in support of Paul's overall goal to defend his practice of renunciation (*Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* [NovTSup 16; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967], 84-92). We contend, contrarily, that the point of the apology is not to show that renunciation of rights is the mark of apostolicity, but to show that knowing *how* to exercise one's rights marks the true apostle.

After depicting the Christic life with low-status language of slavery in 9:19-23, Paul characterizes himself as a successful athlete. Paul trains and competes well in the athletic contest. Just as the athlete trains for the perishable wreath of athletic competition, Paul competes with effective determination for the immortal wreath of Christian victory. He neither runs a wayward course nor misses the mark (i.e., he competes in a way that he may win) and ensures his success through self-discipline (9:26-27).²⁰ The imagery highlights both Paul's success on the field of competition and the self-imposed training he undergoes in order to compete well.

The significance of the imagery only heightens in view of the moralists' use of the same metaphor to depict the moral life. The moralists viewed life as an athletic competition that requires training and discipline in order to compete successfully in moral contests. Epictetus, for example, describes the moral battle against external impressions in the language of athletic training. He writes, "The man who exercises himself against such external impressions is the true athlete in training. Great is the struggle, the divine task; the prize is a kingdom, freedom, serenity, peace."²¹ Moreover, moral philosophers use images of running and hand-to-hand combat (e.g., boxing, wrestling, and pankration) to describe the moral struggle. According to Philo, the person of virtue:

as he goes on his way, he neither becomes weary, so that he gives in and collapses, nor grows remiss, so that he turns aside, now in this direction, now in that, and goes astray missing the central road that never diverges; but, taking the good runners as his example, finishes the race of life without stumbling, when he

While Fee rightly maintains that the last two verses "in part at least" intend to use the boxing application to bring Paul's self-defense to conclusion (*First Epistle*, 437), we disagree with Fee's assessment that Paul uses the imagery to defend himself against the charge of inconsistency.

²⁰ Paul's discipline (9:27a) is preparatory for his success in the contest (9:26). The juxtaposition of training and competition is a natural use of the metaphor in moral philosophy (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.24.1-2). The phrase, ἀέρα δέρον, can either signify the boxer's failure to land his blows or his actions in a mock contest of shadow-boxing (Pfitzner, *Agon*, 90). The parallelism of this phrase with "not running aimlessly" likely connotes the former of the two. Paul does not box as one who misses the target.

²¹ *Diatr.* 2.18.27 (Oldfather, LCL). Cf. 2.18.22-23.

reaches the end he shall obtain crowns and prizes as a fitting guerdon. (*Migr.* 133)²²

In addition to running, Philo compares an individual successfully struggling with fate to a boxer or pancratiast who avoids the blows of his adversary and so “compels his adversary to lay about him in empty space, much as men do when practicing the movements.”²³ Though Paul expresses the opposite—that he does not miss his opponent, Philo shows the use of the boxing metaphor for the moral contest. Paul is the successful boxer who has a target in view and successfully strikes it.

The moralists used the athletic metaphor to characterize an individual’s relationship to external objects and circumstances. Epictetus’ wider argument in *Diatr.* 2.18 concerns the battle individuals must wage against enslavement to external objects and impressions. The truly free person—the one who wins the prize of freedom, serenity, and peace—is the individual who values external impressions properly and can resist rampant desire for them. In Philo’s excerpt, the implicit distractions for which the runner turns aside are external objects.²⁴ Accordingly, in 9:24-27, Paul implies that he cautiously considers his “pleasures” (i.e., his rights) and does not become distracted by them as he runs his race. Like a moral athlete, Paul disciplines himself in relation to material goods so that he may not become beholden to them and so cease to use them

²² Cf. Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.4.20, where he describes the person who uses the guiding principles in decision making as a successful runner who runs according to the principles of running. Cf. Philo, *Leg All* 3.48, where the victorious runner denies himself and seeks knowledge of God. Similarly, Marcus Aurelius instructs his students not to be distracted by the opinions of others regarding what they think or do with respect to possessions, statuses, and activities. Like Philo and Epictetus, he uses running imagery: “Verily it is not for the good man to peer about into the blackness of another’s heart, but to ‘run straight for the goal with never a glance aside.’” (Marcus Aurelius 4.18 [Haines, LCL]).

²³ Philo, *Cher.* 81 (Colson, LCL).

²⁴ Though he does not use race imagery, Epictetus describes an ἀσθενης ψυχή as an individual who is ἄδηλον in his decision making with regard to external objects due to lack of an appropriate and fixed principle. He uses the example of taking money for teaching services to illustrate his point (*Diatr.* 2.15.20).

effectively. By disciplining his body, he can remain unattached to material objects and activities and, therefore, exercise his rights in a way that seeks the advantage of others.

2.3. Conclusion to the Defense

Paul's apology demonstrates that he is *aware* of his right to support (9:4-12a, 13-14). Accusations against Paul's apostolic status due to his lack of knowledge about his rights as an apostle do not stand. Moreover, he reorients the Corinthians' understanding of what constitutes true freedom and apostleship. Paul cannot boast of his apostolic calling because it is not his choice, but an obligated response to a divine appointment. If he were not to preach, a 'woe' would come upon him. Accordingly, he receives no 'reward' from merely preaching. The full apostolic life, which incurs an earthly boast and a heavenly reward, is lived out in *how* apostles use their rights in the gospel. Thus, in 9:12b and 19-23, Paul explains the mindset that marks this true freedom and apostleship. Paul exercises his rights by emulating the mindset of Christ's incarnation. He engages in Christic solidarity with those he evangelizes in order to save them. In contrast to other apostles who readily and universally accept payment, Paul carefully discerns in each situation how he may best use his rights in a way that displays the gospel of Christ's incarnation that he proclaims.

3. Apology that Functions as an Example

Paul's apology is not freestanding. He inserts the apology at a point in the letter in which he is also instructing the Corinthians in their dilemma over idol meat. Several key aspects of the discourse suggest that 1 Cor 9 has an exemplary function. These aspects include the self-*exemplum* in 8:13, the exhortation to "run" in 9:24, the

discourse's concluding exhortation to imitate Paul in 11:1, and, most importantly, the analogous relationship between 1 Cor 9 and the idol meat issue.

Though many agree that 1 Cor 9 functions as an example, our proposal is distinct from prior interpretations because it locates the mimetic force of the example at the level of self-understanding and reasoning rather than only at the level of conduct. While Paul desires the wise Corinthians to refrain from idol meat when around weak believers, his greater purpose is to teach them a mindset and way of thinking that will properly inform their decision making in an array of circumstances. The imitation of conduct (i.e., renunciation of rights around the weak) is only one practical instantiation that reflects a more general mindset and mode of reasoning Paul wishes the community to adopt.

Our analysis will show that the example focuses not on Paul's actions but on the mindset and process of reasoning that leads to action. The key elements of Paul's example are (1) the justification of his right as an apostle (9:4-12a, 13-14) (2) his apostolic self-understanding (9:15-18 and 9:24-27) and (3) his imitation of the mind of the incarnate Christ (9:19-23). Each of these components emphasizes the reasoning process that leads to Paul's decision not to request financial support.

3.1. 1 Cor 9:4-12a, 13-14: Establishing a Parallel 'Right'

Interpreters correctly argue that Paul's defense of his right to support parallels the Corinthians' argument for their right to eat idol meat. They fail to acknowledge that this parallelism focuses the analogous context on the sphere of reasoning, not action. The most sustained portion of Paul's self-example is the set of *reasons* Paul cites to justify his right to support (9:7-14). He demonstrates that he *thinks* about his decisions in the same way the Corinthians think about their decisions. Just as the Corinthians think about

whether to eat idol meat on the basis of theological assertions, such as the oneness of God and the impotency of idols, so does Paul think about whether he has a ‘right’ to financial support on the basis of a certain set of social and theological principles, including apostolic practice, social custom, legal principles, religious practice, and the command of Jesus. The proofs in 9:7-14 collectively display a part of Paul’s reasoning process as he decides on a course of action. Paul demonstrates that he has a reasonable case to receive support, just as the Corinthians argue that they have a reasonable case to eat idol meat.

The next portions of the example are equally focused on reasoning. Paul could simply state that he has the right to financial support, but chose not to act on his right. He spends a key portion of the argument, however, on the reasoning that underlies his decision. The central components of the example are the apostolic self-understanding (9:15-18 and 9:24-27) and the way of thinking (9:12b, 19-23) that he illustrates.

3.2. 1 Cor 9:15-18: Proper Self-Understanding in the Gospel

As we observed in our discussion of 1 Cor 9’s apologetic function, *καύχημα* occurs twice in 9:15-18. This term helps draw 9:15-18 into an analogous and, thus, exemplary relationship with the Corinthian context. In 1 Cor 4, Paul asks plainly why the Corinthians ‘boast’ (*καυχᾶσθαι*) over what they have as if they did not receive it as an unearned gift (4:7). Paul reminds them that their new standing in the community of Christ is not a cause of ‘boasting’ (*καυχῆσθαι*) in themselves, but in Christ (1:29, 31). They have nothing that they have not received so they should not boast as if they attained it through their own striving.

Paul’s explanation of his apostolic self-understanding in 9:15-18 counters this mindset and way of thinking. When Paul writes, “If I preach the gospel, it is not a boast

[καὶ ἔχοντα] to me...for I have been entrusted with a commission [οἰκονομίαν
πεπίστευμαι],” he suggests that merely fulfilling the office to which one is called is not
grounds for boasting. It is simply a compelled response to a divinely given duty. The
exemplary nature of these verses suggests that Paul’s self-understanding of his apostolic
commission translates to the offices and gifting that God distributes among the
Corinthians.²⁵ The positions and gifts the Corinthians enjoy are also not a basis for
boasting. Like Paul, the Corinthians are entrusted with their own divine commission.
They have been given offices and spiritual gifts to exercise within the life of the
community. Accordingly, like Paul, they, too, should conceive of themselves as stewards
of a divinely appointed duty and, thus, expect to receive no boast for doing so.²⁶

The call to imitate this type of self-understanding is also a component of 1 Cor 4.
Paul characterizes Apollos and himself as “servants of Christ” (ὑπηρέτας Χριστοῦ) and
‘stewards’ (οἰκονόμους) of the mysteries of God who are obligated to be found
trustworthy of their commission (ἵνα πιστός τις εὑρεθῆ) (4:1-2). He then indicates that he
“applies these things [i.e., this mindset] to myself and Apollos *for your sake*, in order that
you may learn the meaning of the phrase, ‘do not go beyond what is written’” (4:6). Paul
intends the self-understanding of servanthood and stewardship that guides him also to
guide the Corinthians. He makes this hope clear in his exhortation for the community to

²⁵ Though the Corinthians are not commissioned as apostolic preachers, they are a ‘called’ community (e.g., 1:2, 9, 26) that has been bestowed specific offices and gifts. God ‘placed’ (ἔθετο) community members in specific roles and functions within the church—as apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, helpers, guiders, and speakers of tongues (12:28). In correspondence with these offices, the Spirit distributes gifts among the members of the church as the Spirit itself determines (12:11). To some has been given a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge (λόγος γνώσεως), to another faith, to another gifts of healing, to another the working of powers, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another speaking in tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues (12:8-10). Moreover, as a whole, the community has been enriched in ‘word’ (λόγῳ) and ‘knowledge’ (γώσσει) and does not lack any ‘spiritual gift’ (χαρίσματι) as they await the revelation of Christ (1:5, 7; cf. 7:7; 12:8; and 13:2).

²⁶ Thus, 9:15-18 is not “totally superfluous” (*pace* Käsemann, “Pauline Version,” 218). The verses play an essential in promoting the self-understanding and mindset Paul desires the community to adopt.

imitate him in 4:16. The appropriate mindset for the Corinthians, who are all granted privileges in the gospel, is to regard themselves as servants and stewards of their calling and gifting.

3.3. 1 Cor 9:12b, 19-23: Discerning how to Exercise ‘Rights’

The self-understanding as obligated stewards is only half of the mindset and way of thinking that Paul teaches the community. First Corinthians 9:15-18 also introduce the notion of a steward’s rights as they relate to boasting and reward. As a steward of the gospel, Paul does not incur boast and reward if he fulfills his commission, only woe if he does not. In order to gain a reward, he must look to the realm. Thus, in 9:12b and 19-23, Paul illustrates the way of thinking that exercises rights in a way that receives a reward.

Verse 9:12b states that Paul denies financial support “*in order that* [ἵνα μὴ] we might not put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ” (9:12b). As Paul contemplated whether or not to act on his right to monetary support, he did so on the basis of what least hinders the gospel.

This line of reasoning is central to the entire discourse. It reappears in different forms in 8:9; 8:13; 9:19-23; and 10:33. In 1 Cor 8:9, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be mindful that their ‘right’ in the gospel does not become a ‘stumbling block’ (πρόσκομμα) to the weak (8:9). In the concluding self-example of 1 Cor 8:13, Paul, again, states the *reason* that he would forgo his right to eat idol meat. If food causes his brother to stumble, he will never eat meat “*in order that* [ἵνα μὴ] I might not cause my brother to stumble [σκανδαλίσω]” (8:13). This same principle of reasoning reappears at the conclusion of the discourse. The penultimate exhortation of the 8:1-11:1 urges the Corinthians to “not become a stumbling block [ἀπρόσκοποι] to Jews, Greeks, and the

church of God” (10:33). Each of these statements expresses a principle of *reasoning* that Paul desires the community to consider as they make decisions regarding their ‘rights’ in the gospel. They are to conduct themselves in a way that does not create a source of stumbling for others as they live out the gospel.

The γὰρ in v. 19 indicates that 9:19-23 continues the argument of 9:1-18. Verses 19-23 express positively what 9:12b and the parallel statements in 8:9; 8:13; and 10:33 express negatively. Paul illustrates the way of thinking that underlies his practical decision with respect to finances and all personal relationships.²⁷ The incarnate mindset of “becoming like” those one seeks to save constitutes the fundamental self-understanding and way of thinking that guide Paul’s practical decisions. Though he is free in the sense that he has rights he can demand, he voluntarily chooses to enslave himself to others by becoming like them in order to save them.

These verses play several key roles in Paul’s self-example. The verses illustrate the type of activity that best loves and builds up others unto salvation. Our chapter 3 demonstrated that ‘other’-centered thinking could technically yield a number of appropriate responses. For instance, in the idol meat issue, the wise could judge that to build up others means simply to instruct the weak to resist the temptation to eat idol meat, even as the wise eat in their presence. Though a variety of responses could fulfill this general deliberative principle, Paul views one response as preeminently emulative of Christ. For Paul, Christ’s incarnate display of solidarity with humanity, to the point of

²⁷ The broadening of the groups beyond the Corinthian context shows that Paul’s thought expands beyond the scope of the financial matter or even the issue of idol meat. Cf. Willis, “Apostolic Apologia,” 36-37. Against Mitchell, the verses are not a “specific application of the exemplary argument to the Corinthian situation” (*Rhetoric*, 248). Bornkamm rightly states, “It is also obvious that it is not until vss. 19ff. that Paul proceeds to statements of a fundamental and comprehensive character. Prior to this point he has spoken about his renunciation of the right to be supported by the churches. Now he turns to speak about his fundamental stance with its various expressions” (“Missionary Stance,” 194).

death, is the pinnacle physical manifestation of “the mind that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Christ became human and suffered death in order to stand in solidarity with humanity and to take on its burden. Accordingly, emulation of Christ’s act of incarnational solidarity is, likewise, the ultimate practical manifestation of one who deliberates with Christic reasoning.

We should not, however, presume that 1 Cor 9:19-23 is simply a mode of action that Paul teaches. Rather, 9:19-23 expresses a mindset and identity that Paul embodies and desires the Corinthians to adopt. As we observed in the introductory chapter, Christ’s single act of exchanging divine equality for human form translates into the human context in various ways. The incarnate model involves “becoming like” various people groups in various circumstances. Paul’s reference to multiple people groups (e.g., Jews, those under law, those not under law, and the weak) exemplifies that the incarnate mindset is a way of thinking that considers others in order to know how best to display the incarnate Christ to them.²⁸ Thus, the act of “becoming like” these various groups collectively represents a mindset, not a specific action, that the Corinthians must adopt.

The most informative statement with respect to the mindset Paul expresses and promotes occurs in vv. 20-21. The identification markers, “under the law” and “not under the law” not only describe a Jew/Gentile divide, they also play a specific role in Paul’s instruction. As we have argued, the wise in Corinth tend to think in terms of a binary opposition between law-bound and law-free. In order for the Corinthian wise to share in Christic identity, however, they must define themselves fully by Christ. The mindset of Christ incarnate neither thinks of terms of a law-free vs. law-bound opposition

²⁸ As Paul displays in 1 Cor 8, such a mindset discerns the qualities and traits of each person in light of the issue in question in order to determine how to “become like” them in order to save them.

nor even in terms of acting on a right vs. not acting on a right. Rather, the incarnate mindset transcends this binary opposition. It thinks through the lens of how best to use one's rights and privileges for the salvation of others.

Thus, in vv. 20-21, Paul identifies himself in a way that transcends these binary oppositions. In v. 20, he writes that he became like one "under law," though he himself is not "under law." The natural deduction from this statement is that Paul understands himself to be "outside the law." Immediately in v. 21, however, Paul states that he became like those "outside the law." This statement negates the possibility that Paul understands himself to be "outside the law" of Moses. If Paul must "become like" those "outside the law," then he cannot perceive of himself as "outside the law." For Paul to "become like" both those under the law and outside the law implies that he identifies himself as neither law-free nor law-bound.

He transcends the binary opposition for a third option: being "in-lawed to Christ". The verses negate a way of understanding of one's religious identity that hinges on the law/not-law divide in exchange for a cognitive identity that does not solely adhere to a set of rules or permissions.²⁹ The phrase, ἔννομος Χριστοῦ, gives expression to the incarnational, 'other-centered' Christic mindset Paul embodies in these verses.

Paul's use of legal terminology is significant for those in the community who, on the one hand, understand themselves to be law-free, but, on the other, have bound themselves to a law-like list of prescriptive freedoms. For Paul to state that he is willing to become like those both 'under' and 'outside' the law shows that "being in Christ" renders obsolete a mode of thought—adopted by the Corinthians—that is established on the

²⁹ Cf. Bornkamm, "Missionary Stance," who proposes a similar way of thinking about this passage (esp. p. 196).

basis of rule-following or not-rule following. As Paul argues, the identity of a truly free Christian is not a matter of adherence to a certain list of prohibitions or freedoms, but identification with the “mind of Christ.”³⁰ Anyone who is truly free will follow this mindset.

In light of this discussion, 1 Cor 9:1-23 is far more than an example of a particular course of action (i.e., renouncing their right to eat idol meat when around the weak) that Paul wishes the community to adopt. Paul does not renounce his right to financial support because he believes that renunciation of rights is the mark of true freedom. Rather, he renounces his right to support because he deemed that doing so was the appropriate way to manifest Christ incarnate to the Corinthians. Paul chose to work to support himself in order to become socially and economically poor and weak to the many in Corinth who were poor and weak.

³⁰ Dodd asks whether the “law of Christ” is to be conceived of as a regulative principle in the Greek sense or as analogous to the Torah (in the sense that Jesus’ commands operate like of a code of precepts) (*New Testament Studies*, 139-40). He claims that the latter identification is possible and ultimately decides in its favor based on the positive evidence of 1 Cor 7:14 and 9:14 (among other, less secure allusions to Jesus sayings in Paul’s letters). Dodd summarizes his argument as follows:

if in the seventh chapter of that epistle he speaks of an ἐπιταγή Κυρίου, and at an early point in the ninth chapter settles a controversial point with the words, ὁ Κύριος διέταξεν, and if then at a later point in the same chapter he uses the expression ἔννομος Χριστοῦ, it is reasonable to conclude that such ἐπιταγαί and διατάγματα are conceived as in some sort constituent elements in the ‘law of Christ’ (*New Testament Studies*, 146).

The major problem with Dodd’s assessment is that Paul does not view the command of Christ in 9:14 as a ‘permission’ that cannot be excepted. In fact, Paul shows that he does not act on the command. If some relationship exists between 9:14 and ἔννομος Χριστοῦ in 9:21, then it exists within a hierarchy of deliberative criteria even with regard to the sayings of the Jesus tradition. With respect to gospel rights, even Jesus’ permissions must be held in view of the higher, Christ principle of selfless concern for others (e.g., Gal 5:6, 14; 6:2). Hence, the correctness of Conzelmann and others who hold that law is used in 1 Cor 9:21 in an “improper” sense—that is, as Christ himself being the norm (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 161).

Verses 20-21 give similar expression to the thought Paul pens in 1 Cor 7:19 and Gal 6:15. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but obeying the commandments of God (1 Cor 7:19)/new creation (Gal 6:15), is everything. In these verses, Paul renders the reliance on prescriptions of Torah as the means of salvation as obsolete. Salvific identity is founded upon a new standard described variously as “commandments of God” (1 Cor 7:19), “new creation” (Gal 6:15), “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2), and “in-lawed to Christ” (1 Cor 9:21). Each of these statements expresses the overarching idea that Christ sets the standard of decision making in the new age.

While the incarnate mindset and way of thinking certainly includes the possibility of forgoing Christian privileges in certain cases, Paul's instructional goal is for the Corinthians to begin to think in the way of the incarnate Christ. If they do so, they will act in all the various ways Paul thinks appropriate. They will be able to discern that it is proper to give up their right to eat idol meat when around the weak, judge that Paul acted appropriately by giving up his right to financial support when evangelizing the community, and respond rightly in other practical decisions they face in the present and future.

3.4. 1 Cor 9:24-27: Proper Self-Understanding in the Gospel

This final section contains two important exemplary functions. First, the image of athletic competition reinforces the paradigm-shift expressed in 9:15-18: all in the community are given gifts and privileges, but their gospel reward depends on what they do with these gifts and privileges. First Corinthians 9:24-27 emphasize that the victory prize (i.e., reward) is not attained simply by competing in the games; it requires competing well. The section begins by delineating the difference between competing in and winning a race (9:24a). Though 'all' (πάντες) the runners compete, only 'one' gets the prize. The contrast of 'all' to 'one' denotes that merely being in the competition does not guarantee victory. Victory depends on *how* one competes.³¹ Though all run, not all win because not all run well.

³¹ As we will see, the example of Israel in 1 Cor 10:1-11 illustrates a negative example of this point. Though 'all' (πάντες) Israel enjoyed spiritual provision, most acted *in a way* (i.e., idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, grumbling) that warranted punishment.

In order to attain their reward, the Corinthians must ‘run’ in such a way that gains them the prize (9:24b).³² Paul defines “running well” via the examples of the athlete and himself in 9:25-27. In v. 25, Paul offers the image of the athlete who ‘exercises self-control’ (ἐγκρατεύεται) in his training in order to win the prize of the contest.³³ In v. 26, Paul compares himself to this athlete. He runs straight on his course, hits his marks, and beats and enslaves his body so that he will not be disqualified from the prize. The examples suggest that for the Corinthians to gain the prize, they too must exercise self-control like the athlete and discipline themselves like Paul, the paradigmatic moral athlete.

The final clause of the section (9:27b) confirms its emphasis that *how* the athlete competes in the contest matters for Christian living. Paul is aware that merely preaching the gospel is not enough for a ‘prize.’ He fears that he may be disqualified even though he preaches the gospel. Like an athlete who enters contest, merely being a commissioned, apostolic preacher does not equal victory; victory depends on *how* Paul and, thus, the Corinthians, use their callings.

As with the apologetic function of these verses, the moralists’ use of the athletic metaphor is key to the exemplary argument. The imagery echoes the moralists’ depiction of athletic competition to describe an individual’s struggle against hardships and pleasures. In order to emulate Epictetus’ “true athlete in training” and so attain freedom,

³² This import of the race imagery is supported by the exhortation in 9:24b. The exhortation highlights that the *way* an athlete trains and competes is central to the contestant’s success. The command, οὕτως τρέχετε ἵνα καταλάβητε, does not imply that *if* the Corinthians simply run, they will win. Rather, οὕτως looks forward to the result clause and indicates that they are to run *in such a way* that they win the prize (Fee, *First Epistle*, 436; cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 196 and Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 711-12). Οὕτως in v. 24 likely points forward to ἵνα καταλάβητε, making the ἵνα clause expegetical: “in this way, run, that is, in a way that you might receive the prize.” Cf. 1 Cor 9:26.

³³ Paul also uses ἐγκράτεια in 1 Cor 7:5 and 7:9 in the context of πορνεία.

the Corinthians must show discipline and self-control with respect to the external impressions. Epictetus promotes this same point in another passage:

Now God says to you, ‘Come at length to the contest, show us what you have learned, how you have trained yourself. How long will you exercise alone? Now the time has come for you to discover whether you are one of the athletes who deserve victory or belong to the number of those who travel about the world and are everywhere defeated.’ (*Diatr.* 4.4.30 [Oldfather, LCL])

The quotation suggests that training and exercise are required in order to encounter “outward appearances” successfully. The moral athlete must form proper opinions with respect to external impressions of objects and circumstances that he or she encounters.

In another text, Epictetus identifies some of these external objects and circumstances:

Who then is the invincible man? He whom nothing that is outside the sphere of his moral purpose can dismay. I then proceed to consider the circumstances one by one, as I would do in the case of the athlete. ‘This fellow has won the first round. What, then, will he do in the second? What if it be scorching hot? And what will he do at Olympia?’ It is the same way with the case under consideration. If you put a bit of silver coin in a man’s way, he will despise it. Yes, but if you put a bit of a wench in his way, what then? Or if it be in the dark, what then? Or if you throw a bit of reputation in his way, what then? Or abuse, what then? Or praise, what then? Or death, what then? All these things he can overcome...The man who passes all these tests is what I mean by the invincible athlete. (*Diatr.* 1.18.21-23 [Oldfather, LCL])

These two texts help bring to light the type of struggles that face the Corinthians. The challenges confronting the Corinthians are not hardships, but pleasures. Silver, a beautiful woman, glory, and praise characterize the type of moral contest the Corinthians encounter with respect to sexual conduct and idol meat. We recall that the Corinthians argued for their freedom and right to ascertain such pleasurable items and activities. The athletic imagery, however, emphasizes that true wisdom and freedom exercises self-

control and self-discipline with respect to these objects so that they might be free from desire for them, not free to always partake of them.³⁴

The self-control and discipline Paul promotes are not ends in themselves. They are necessary and preparatory for properly exercising ‘rights’ in the gospel.³⁵ Freedom from desire of external objects and activities, such as sex and idol meat, enables uninhibited decision making. By training mind and body with respect to externals, moral athletes develop a proper detachment from these items, which, in turn, enables them to make decisions with a clear mind. Likewise, training and disciplining themselves with respect to ‘rights’ in the gospel will enable the Corinthians to develop a proper detachment from such externals, which, in turn, will allow them to make decisions about how to use their rights in a way that best benefits others.

Second, these final verses not only emphasize exercise and self-discipline, they also offer a statement of hope for reward. While Paul alludes to his free decisions as a basis for reward in 9:15-18, verse 27 moves beyond verses 15-18 because Paul specifically expresses hope of reward as *motivation* for his actions. Paul disciplines himself not just for the sake of others, but by doing so *he himself* may not be disqualified from the merits of the gospel (μή πως...αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι).

In light of 9:27b, the concluding section of the example highlights Paul’s triumphant hope for himself and other Christ-imitators in the age to come.³⁶ The

³⁴ Paul considers one who insists in partaking of an object to be ἐξουσιασθήσεται (e.g., 6:12). This usage plays off of the Stoic idea that one who is free has ‘authority’ (ἐξουσία) over externals (e.g., Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.24.67-70: “Who, then, has authority [ἐξουσίαν] over me?”). Thus, those in Corinth who do not have such ἐξουσία are ‘controlled’ by external objects and affairs.

³⁵ Pace Weiss, who surmises that 9:24-27 has bad relations with 9:19-22 and very good relations with 10:1-23 (*Korintherbrief*, 246) and Schmithals, who locates 9:24-27 in Letter A, along with 10:1-22, while placing 8:1-9:23 in Letter B (*Gnosticism*, 92-93).

³⁶ Cf. Mitchell, who comments, “That self-abnegation for the sake of the greater good...does not mean that one entirely forsakes one’s own advantage is demonstrated by Paul again in the summary argument of

replacement of the ‘other’-centered ἵνα clauses in 9:19-23 with self-interested ἵνα and μή πως clauses in 9:24-27 (e.g., 9:24-25, 27) is an intentional shift to remind the wise that the Christ-like sacrifice is inseparable from final victory. As much as the Corinthians are to accommodate themselves to others “in order to win them” (9:19-23), Paul exhorts the Corinthians to accommodative self-discipline in order that they themselves might receive the eschatological prize (9:24-27). Even Paul, the exemplary ἀγωνιστής, exercises self-discipline for the sake of others with fervent hope of his own future security (9:27).³⁷

Paul’s understanding of service to Christ involves not emotionless and lifeless self-detachment, but the experience of life and freedom in the midst of present self-sacrifice *and* the hope of victorious restoration and redemption of oneself in future eschatological consummation (e.g., Phil 3; 1 Cor 15:23-28, 42-55).³⁸ Paul can hope for reward because the mode of living he adopts and encourages others to adopt is consistent with the gospel message. Inasmuch as Paul identifies himself with the death of Christ, he

9:24-27, where he points once more to the eschatological advantage (the final μισθός, the ἄφθαρτος στέφανος)” (*Rhetoric*, 248).

³⁷ In light of the eschatological focus of 1 Cor 9:24-27 and the parallelism of 9:24-27 with 9:15-18, it is likely that the μισθός of 1 Cor 9:15-18 also refers to eschatological reward (*pace* Käsemann, “Pauline Version,” 223; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 210; Hock, *Social Context*, 62; Fee, *First Epistle*, 421; and Malherbe, “Determinism,” 250). In addition to the parallelism of 9:15-18 and 9:24-27, Paul uses μισθός language in discussion of eschatological reward in 1 Cor 3. Paul describes Apollos and himself as servants of the community who labor on its behalf and receive a μισθός for their labors. The eschatological allusion of μισθός is confirmed by the distinct eschatological language in 3:13-15: φανερός, ἡμέρα, τὸ πῦρ δοκιμάσει, σώζω.

³⁸ Though commentators debate the significance of συγκοινωνός αὐτοῦ in 9:23, the language of ‘reward’ and ‘prize’ in the surrounding context suggests that the phrase at least includes the blessings of the gospel (cf. Rom 11:17), opposed simply to signifying Paul as “fellow-worker” in it (e.g., Phil 1:7 and 4:14). Moreover, 9:24-27 progresses from acts of labor to reception of benefit. The two athletic metaphors progress from labor to reward (vv. 24-25) and Paul’s self-example as athlete in vv. 26-27 is motivated by eschatological reward. Thus, the same pattern reasonably occurs in vv. 19-23. In vv. 19-22, Paul’s labors for the benefit for others (i.e., they are “gained/saved”). If the same pattern occurs in vv. 19-23 that occurs in vv. 24-27, then Paul labors in hope of his own future advantage (9:23). As Pfitzner writes, “...in v. 23 the apostle’s self-restriction in all things (πάντα) for the sake of the Gospel includes, at the same time, the condition for his own share in its blessings. Paul cannot separate his apostolic commission from his own salvation. The two go hand in hand” (*Agon*, 85). Even the Christ-hymn in Phil 2:6-11, which bears similarity to the incarnate mindset Paul promotes in 1 Cor 9, includes exaltation as a reward for Christ’s self-emptying enslavement for the sake of humanity.

must also hope for future reward precisely because the death of Christ is the means by which God redeems and declares victory.

4. Conclusion

Our analysis contends that Paul defends a certain self-understanding and mode of thinking while simultaneously putting forth the same self-understanding and way of thinking for emulation. Paul's apology can function as an example because his defense is nothing but an expression of the mindset and thinking informed by the incarnate Christ. Paul did not request payment because he decided to "become like" the Corinthians. He reasoned with the mindset of Christ incarnate. Likewise, Paul desires the Corinthians to think how they might "become like" the weak with respect to idol meat so as to emulate the incarnate Christ to those who are weak among them.

The exemplary aspect of the apology contains two key parts. Certain aspects of the self-*exemplum* pertain specifically to the financial matter while others are more broadly oriented. The argument for his 'right' to receive support (9:4-14) and his statements of refusal to take support (9:12, 15, 18) pertain specifically to the financial issue. The *reasoning* that grounds his refusal, however, is not specific to the financial question. Not putting a hindrance in the way of the gospel (9:12), conceiving of a Christian's reward as *how* one manages his/her rights (9:15-18, 24-27), and seeking the salvific gain of others by becoming like them (9:19-23) can be applied to a host of issues and contexts.

The example leaves the Corinthians with a general framework of reasoning that they may apply to an array of practical decisions. In any area in which they have a 'right,' Paul illustrates that they should not think about how to attain or protect their right,

as if their status and calling in the gospel demands they receive such rights, but how they may best exercise this right in accordance with the mindset of the incarnate Christ. They will reflect that they should “become like” those who lack in some material or spiritual aspect in order to save them. If they share in Christ’s incarnation, they will also have hope of sharing in Christ’s exultation and glory.

In 1 Cor 10, Paul transitions from the issue of eating idol meat around the weak to contexts in which eating idol meat is idolatrous. The athletic metaphor at the conclusion of 1 Cor 9 bridges the two issues. First Corinthians 10 teaches that mature thinking does not focus on one’s standing in the gospel, but on how to exercise that standing appropriately. The Corinthians cannot assume that their gifts and calling in the gospel grant them immunity to eat idol meat in all contexts. Demonstration of self-control over external circumstances and objects also involves avoiding idol meat in idolatrous contexts. Accordingly, in 1 Cor 10, Paul both calls the Corinthians to adopt a humble spirit so that they may recognize their susceptibility to falling and helps them to recognize the idolatrous contexts they must avoid.

Chapter 5: Analysis of 1 Cor 10:1-22

1. Introduction

In between 1 Cor 8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1 is a section that is noteworthy for its difference from the surrounding context. First Corinthians 8-9 is primarily characterized by contexts in which it is permissible to eat idol meat; 10:1-22 is characterized by prohibition. First Corinthians 8-9 contains only one general, behavioral command (9:24) and one deliberative command (8:9), while 10:1-22 contains eight action-oriented instructions (vv. 6-10, 14, 21[x2]). Paul instructs the Corinthians not to become idolaters (twice—10:7, 14) or fornicators (10:8), put Christ to the test (10:9), or complain about their circumstances (10:10). He also tells them that it is not possible to “drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons” or “partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons” (10:21). These commands are strikingly different from the Paul who earlier resisted rule-giving (8:1-9:27). Moreover, the characteristic feature of 1 Cor 8-9, “concern for the other,” is conspicuously absent in 10:1-22. Paul focuses on the dangers of idolatry for the individual and the community, not one individual’s affect on another.

In contrast to proposals that highlight prohibition as the climax of the discourse, we contend that 10:1-22 comprises one part of the discourse’s overarching purpose to teach true wisdom and freedom. First, like aspects of 8:1-9:27, 10:1-22 contains features that move the Corinthians away from a mindset and self-understanding that relies on one’s possession of status and gifts in the gospel to a mindset that recognizes the importance of exercising one’s status and privileges appropriately. Though Paul shifts from *adiaphora* contexts involving idol meat to idolatrous contexts, he continues to

emphasize that reward does not lie in one's calling and gifts, but in *how* those who are called exercise their calling and gifts—just as he does in 9:15-18 and 9:24-27.

This aspect comes to the fore particularly in 10:1-13. Paul offers Israel as a negative example of a people who did not embody self-discipline, simply rested on their status as a called people, and did not think well about *how* to use their called status (10:1-11). He then relates the example to the problem of complacent arrogance in Corinth and to the solution God offers for difficult trials (10:12-13). These verses re-shape the Corinthians' selfish disposition by encouraging humility and alertness and by urging community members to reconsider their so-called ability to withstand all idol meat contexts. They explain that godly strength and wisdom do not imply *use* of gifts in all circumstances, but that sometimes 'escape' is the strong and wise course of action (10:13).

Second, Paul not only reorients their mindset and self-understanding in relation to possessions, but also teaches them how to reason practically about their gifts and rights with respect to the threat of idolatry. Because not all meals involving idol meat are idolatrous, he must teach them to recognize when a meal is no longer *adiaphora* and enters the idolatrous realm. Paul takes up this task in 10:14-22. He teaches a mode of practical reasoning that thinks about idol meal participation from the aspect of their alternative participation in a pure, holy, and righteous body of Christ. If the incarnation of Christ is the model of thought for contexts in which idol meat is *adiaphora*, participation in Christ's body is the model of thought for questions of idolatry. Paul teaches them to discern the types of meals that are idolatrous on the basis of the body-forming practices of community meals.

If this thesis is correct, then reading 10:1-22 solely for its prohibitive force overlooks the dynamic and subtle movements of the section. The prohibition against idolatry is less significant than how the section shapes the Corinthians' self-understanding, their understanding of Christic conduct, and their ability to think about appropriate Christic conduct through a core mindset. Paul's goal is not simply for the Corinthians to avoid idolatry, but, even more, to adopt an appropriate view of Christian freedom and learn how to exercise properly their gifts and rights in the gospel.

Our chapter examines 10:1-22 in two parts: 10:1-13 and 10:14-22. Through exegetical analysis, we will explain the structural and argumentative logic of the section as a whole. Following this analysis, the chapter explores how 10:1-22 contributes to the Corinthians' moral formation and to the wider community-forming goals of the discourse as a whole.

2. Exegetical Analysis of 1 Cor 10:1-13

First Corinthians 10:1-13 recalls the actions of the Israelites in the wilderness and the punishment they incurred as a result of their actions. The account of Israel is similar to the type of examples that emphasize an action to follow or avoid. As we reviewed in chapter 2 on Seneca, these examples draw on a past event to promote or discourage a certain course of action for the present and future.¹ They establish analogous contexts between the original and current circumstances, show the course of action of the original actors, and, commonly, reveal the consequences that resulted from the actions of the original actors.

¹ See the discussion of examples as "actions to follow or avoid" on pp. 95-97.

First Corinthians 10:1-11 contain components that align with the characteristics of examples of this type.² Verses 1-5 establish the analogous relationship between Corinth and the original actors (ancient Israel).³ Verses 6-11 present the actions of the Israelites and the consequences that accompanied their actions. Because the paraenetic force of examples lies in the actions of the original actors, our discussion will concentrate more greatly on 10:6-11 than 10:1-5.

First Corinthians 10:12-13 appropriates the example for the Corinthian community. Verse 12 calls those who think they are standing to be mindful that they do not fall. The verse focuses on arrogant self-perception and implies that Israel overstepped its bounds because of its arrogant disregard of their commitments to Yahweh. Moreover, God's faithful provision of an ἔκβασις (10:13) shows the Corinthians that displays of Christic freedom do not always involve bold displays of conduct. Paul, in fact, indicates the opposite. In certain practical contexts, Christic freedom is displayed through God's provision of an 'escape.'

2.1. 1 Cor 10:1-5: Establishing an Analogous Context

In 10:1-5, three features in particular draw out the analogous relationship between the Israelites in the wilderness and the Corinthian community: πάντες, πνευματικόν, and Χριστός. The repetition of πάντες (10:1)...καὶ πάντες (10:1)...καὶ πάντες (10:2)...καὶ

² Fiore names 10:1-11 an "instructional precedent" (*Personal Example*, 168, 184, and 189). Mitchell emphasizes the analogous purpose of the example (*Rhetoric*, 251). See similar comments on the role of 10:1-11 as example in Barrett, *First Epistle*, 227; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 167-68; and Willis, *Idol Meat*, 125. The identification of 10:1-11 as an analogous pattern to avoid should guide our present analysis away from too complex an examination of the specific echoes behind the text and the text's pre-history. The emphasis of an instructional *exemplum* lies in determining how the context of the original actors is similar to the current context. Echoes and allusions should only be searched insofar as they contribute to the analogous link between *illustrans* and *illustrandum*. Accordingly, our interpretation will avoid analysis of much of the symbolism that may or may not underlie the images in the text.

³ As we will see, 10:5 is a transitional conclusion that structurally aligns with 10:1-4, but, functionally, foreshadows 10:6-11.

παντες (10:3)...καὶ πάντες (10:4) forms 10:1-4 as a cohesive unit. The four verses delineate ways ‘all’ the Israelites participated in miraculous acts and spiritual provisions in the wilderness. The repetitive use of πάντες in these verses echoes the Corinthians’ claim, “*all* possess knowledge,” in 8:1. Though Paul ultimately disagrees with their claim in 1 Cor 8, he plays off of it in 10:1-4 in order to draw the Israelite experience into parallel with the Corinthian context. Just as the Corinthians professed that ‘all’ have knowledge, so too does Paul observe that ‘all’ the Israelites participated in spiritual provisions in the wilderness.

The association between the Israelite and Corinthian contexts is strengthened by the identification of βρῶμα and πόμα as πνευματικόν. The mere presence of food and drink certainly connects Israel’s wilderness experience to the Corinthian context, but the inclusion of πνευματικόν is particularly noteworthy. The term calls to mind the spiritual gifts that are present in Corinth. It is not simply physical food and drink, but *pneumatic* sustenance that the Israelites enjoyed. Just as God provides Corinth with the spiritual gift of γνῶσις, God provided the Israelites with their own *spiritual* provisions.

The parallel relationship between the Israelites’ possession of *spiritual* food and drink and the Corinthian possession of spiritual gifts is strengthened by identifying the ‘rock,’ which is the source of the Israelites’ spiritual drink, as ‘Christ’ (10:4). In spite of many discussions about how Christ comes to appear in this Christian midrash, the textual origins of Christ’s inclusion are less significant than its contribution to the establishment of the example’s analogous relationship with the current situation in Corinth.⁴ In the

⁴ Scholarship includes vibrant discussion on the way Paul came to make the equation of the “following rock” to Christ (e.g., Earle E. Ellis, “A Note on First Corinthians 10:4,” *JBL* 76 [1957]: 53-56 and Andrew J. Bandstra, “Interpretation in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13,” *CTJ* 6 [1971]: 5-21 [esp. 5-14] and the sources listed therein). The force of the identification of Christ with the rock for the function of this verse in the

context of the *exemplum*, the identification of Christ as the source of the Israelites' spiritual provisions connects the Israelites' spiritual provisions, like the Corinthians', to Christ. Christ, in the form of the πνευματικῆς πέτρας, was present with Israel as the source of their spiritual provisions just as Christ is present in the Corinthian community as the source of their πνευματικοί.⁵

The use of πάντες in this example, the identification of the Israelites' wilderness provisions as πνευματικόν, and naming Χριστός as the source of those provisions establish the analogical link between the original actors and the current context. As the Corinthians hear these links in 10:1-4, they would associate the Israelites' experience of spiritual provisions with their own spiritual gifts. This association prepares the Corinthians to think in terms of their possession of γνῶσις in relation to the idol meat issue as they hear of the actions of the Israelites, and the consequences they suffered as a result of their actions, in 10:6-11.

Verse 5 foreshadows the portending circumstances facing the Israelites. The statement is starkly negative: God was not pleased with a majority of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness (10:5). As the Corinthians hear 10:5, and the harsh

exemplum does not turn on questions of previous or contemporary Jewish traditions. The force of naming the 'rock' as 'Christ' is the mere identification of the presence of Christ in the wilderness tradition. The simplest explanation for the identification of Christ as the rock is Deut 32. As Richard Hays observes, Deut 32 repeatedly ascribes to God the title, "the Rock" (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31) (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letter's of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989], 94), which plays an important role in 1 Cor 10:14-22. Given the echoes of Deut 32 in 1 Cor 10:14-22, esp. vv. 17 and 22, the confluence of θεός and κύριος in 10:20-22, and the substitution of Χριστός for θεός in 10:9 (a text which also echoes the rock episode), Deut 32 likely serves as the textual grounding for the identification of Christ with rock. He does not stop to explain the origins of the allusion because the importance is the fact of Christ's presence, not *how* he establishes it.

⁵ The letter's thanksgiving and 1 Cor 12 indicate that the Corinthians' possession of spiritual gifts (χαρίσματα in 1:4 and πνευματικῶν in 1 Cor 12) was bestowed *through* Christ (1:4, 6; cf. 1 Cor 12:5).

While Paul's argument in 2:10-16 ultimately seeks to connect the Corinthians' spiritual wisdom to Christ *crucified* (which promotes a self-sacrificial mindset), the discourse also links *spiritual* wisdom to the presence of Christ in the community. Particularly, in 2:14, Paul writes that the community is able to understand the proclamation of Christ, and its associated 'gifts' (χαρισθέντα), because they have *received* the Spirit of God (2:12).

consequences that God imposes upon Israel in 10:6-11, the analogous relationship between the spiritual provisions of the Israelites' and the Corinthians' spiritual gift of γνῶσις will prompt them to think in terms of their possession of γνῶσις.

Moreover, this contrast also prompts the Corinthians to think of the athletic metaphor in 9:24-27. As in the athletic metaphor mentioned earlier, though 'all' the Israelites "competed," only very few won the prize, as God was not pleased with a 'majority' (πλείοσιν) of them.⁶ Thus, in order not to be like the Israelites, the Corinthians must exercise self-control and self-discipline in order to compete well in the race. Even though *all* possess γνῶσις and *all* enter the field of competition, not 'all' necessarily win. Like Israel in the wilderness, it matters not *what* individuals possess, but *how* they regard their possessions and their relationship to God. Though God grants provisions, God may not be pleased with the community's actions and, thus, may bring about its ruin.

2.2. 1 Cor 10:6-11: Function of the Negative Example

Ταῦτα δὲ τύποι (10:6) and ταῦτα δὲ τυπικῶς (10:11) clearly mark off vv. 6-11 from the surrounding verses by forming the outer edges of a chiasm:

Ταῦτα δὲ τύποι ἡμῶν ἐγενήθησαν, εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν, καθὼς κάκεινοι ἐπεθύμησαν (10:6)
 Μηδὲ εἰδωλόατρα γίνεσθε καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν, ὡσπερ γέγραπται ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν (10:7)
 Μηδὲ πορνεύωμεν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν ἐπόρνευσαν καὶ ἔπεσαν μιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ εἴκοσι τρεῖς χιλιάδες (10:8)
 Μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν Χριστόν, καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν ἐπείρασαν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ὄψεων ἀπόλλυντο (10:9)
 Μηδὲ γογγύζετε καθάπερ τινὲς αὐτῶν ἐγόγγυσαν καὶ ἀπόλοντο ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀλοθρευτοῦ (10:10)
 Ταῦτα δὲ τυπικῶς συνέβαιναν ἐκείνοις, ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰῶνων κατήντηκεν (10:11)

The chiasm models an ABCC'B'A' pattern. In addition to ταῦτα δὲ τύποι (10:6) and ταῦτα δὲ τυπικῶς (10:11), which form A and A', the two negative imperatives in 10:7 and 10:10 and the two negative hortatory subjunctives in 10:8 and 10:9, demarcate B and B' and C and C', respectively.

⁶ The contrast of 'all' the runners to 'one' getting the prize readily foreshadows the contrast between 'all' Israelites who participated in the cloud, sea, food, and drink (10:1-4) with the 'majority' (πλείοσιν) and 'some' (τινες) with whom God was not pleased (10:5).

Though the chiasmic structure is clear, the interpretation of 10:6-11 is less certain. Scholars have used various clues from the chiasm to guide their reading of the text. For instance, Meeks identifies the citation of Exod 33:6 in 10:7, a major disruption in the chiasm, as the interpretive key for the verse.⁷ He reads each of the sins listed in 10:6-11 through the lens of *παίζειν* in 10:7. Gary Collier, however, observes that 10:6 is the “heading statement” of the chiasm and, thus, that its OT echo, Num 11, is the section’s exegetical centerpiece.⁸ He reads each of the sins in 10:6-11 as pertaining to “evil cravings” for the wrong kind of food.

While Meeks and Collier do not exhaust the readings of 10:6-11, they enable us to see common interpretive strategies for these verses. Their readings are guided by two decisions. First, they give priority to OT and Jewish traditions as the hermeneutical key to 10:6-11. Second, they suppose that 10:6-11 can only connect to the wider context of 1 Corinthians via *one* of the issues that 10:6-11 covers—i.e., either idolatry or food consumption. Meeks judges that 10:6-11 only connects to the wider context through idolatry in 10:7 (10:6, 8-10 are extraneous), while Collier forces all of 10:6-11 into the issue of food consumption.

Because of the popularity of these modes of reading, we expound upon the arguments of Meeks and Collier below. We demonstrate the difficulty of interpreting all of 10:6-10 through a single OT verse or text and of confining each of the actions in 10:6-11 to a single subject matter. After reviewing their arguments, we offer our own interpretive strategy. We argue that 10:6-11 is best read by listening first to the

⁷ Wayne A. Meeks, “‘And Rose up to Play’: Midrash and Paraenesis in 1 Corinthians 10:1-22,” *JSNT* 16 (1982): 64-78.

⁸ Gary D. Collier, “‘That We Might Not Crave Evil’: The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10.1-13,” *JSNT* 55 (1994): 55-75.

Corinthian context. We will show that the *exemplum*'s placement between 9:24-27 and 10:12-13 suggests that Paul intends 10:6-11 to relate to the surrounding context neither by idolatry nor food consumption alone. Rather, the text functions best by allowing its two key components, idolatry and sexual immorality, to stand as mutually independent actions that both relate to the wider context.

2.2.1. 1 Cor 10:6-11: Two Common Interpretive Strategies

Meeks begins with two observations concerning 10:7. First, he observes that the citation of Exod 32:7 disrupts the chiasm.⁹ While each of prohibitions in 10:8-10 are coupled with a brief statement of the Israelites' sin and accompanying consequences, 10:7 cites scripture that expounds upon Israel's sin and mentions no consequence for their sin. Second, Meeks reads the citation of Exod 32:7 in two parts. "Sitting to eat and drink" refers to the Israelites' participation in the God-given spiritual food and drink in the wilderness (e.g., 10:3-4) while the phrase, ἀνέστησαν παίζειν (10:7), denotes Israel's sin.¹⁰

Next, Meeks appeals to midrashic interpretive techniques and the definitional range of παίζειν to demonstrate that the verb is the exegetical key for each of the sins in 10:6-10. First, the rabbis related (*m^eṣahēq*; παίζειν) to idolatry and sexual immorality as they sought to answer how παίζειν in Gen 21:9 could be grounds for casting out Ishmael. Hence, Rabbi Akiba interpreted *m^eṣahēq* as idolatry (through the lens of Exod 32:6) and Rabbi Eleazar interpreted it as sexual immorality. Second, for the sins of "testing Christ" and 'grumbling,' Meeks observes that παίζειν and ἐμπαίζειν regularly mean "to joke, mock, make fun of," which, he suggests, captures the sense of the two verbs in 10:9 and

⁹ Meeks, "Rose up to Play," 68-69.

¹⁰ Meeks, "Rose up to Play," 69.

10:10. Finally, Meeks connects “desiring evil” to παίζειν, a difficult task by his own admission, through Philo’s interpretation of the golden calf.¹¹ For Philo, the idolatry of the golden calf is a turning of a soul from higher things to becoming enwrapped by the material world.¹² In Meeks’s opinion, Paul’s phrase, ἐπιθυία κακῶν, is an apt expression of Philo’s view.

In contrast to Meeks, Collier judges that the chiasm’s main theme is ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν (10:6) and finds the section’s midrashic basis in Num 11. He observes that ἐπιθυμία κακῶν is not one of the sins listed in 10:6-10, but the “heading statement” of the sins in 10:7-10.¹³ Moreover, he determines that Num 11 is a fitting textual basis for the section because it addresses Israel’s craving (ἐπεθύμησαν ἐπιθυμίαν) for meat in the wilderness.¹⁴ With these two observations in hand, Collier then draws together Num 11 and Exod 32:6 through the verbs, καθίζκειν and ἀναστήναι, which the two texts share in common. The two verbs characterize Israel’s idolatrous eating and drinking in Exod 32:6 and their ravenous pursuit of meat at the beginning and end of Num 11 (v. 4 and v. 32, respectively).

In light of this connection, Collier finds that Exod 32:6 works with Num 11 to unfold the sins in vv. 7-10. Each of the sins in vv. 8-10 is a way the Israelites wrongly craved food. The connection of Num 11 and Exod 32:6 around the issue of food calls the reader to work through Numbers to see that each of the listed sins in vv. 8-10 relates to

¹¹ Meeks, “Rose up to Play,” 71.

¹² Meeks, “Rose up to Play,” 71.

¹³ Collier, “That We Might Not Crave Evil,” 57 n. 11. First Corinthians 10:6 has several distinctions that set it off from 10:7-10. First, the warning in 10:6 is constructed with a purpose clause (εἰς τὸ μὴ εἶναι ἡμᾶς ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν), while the warnings in 10:7-10 are imperatives or hortatory subjunctives. Second, despite Meeks’ insistence on their similarity, καθὼς κἀκεῖνοι in 10:6 is clearly distinct from the fourfold καθὼς/καθάπερ τινες αὐτῶν in 10:7-10. Third, 10:6 does not include any consequences of the Israelites’ sin, which is a part of vv. 8-10. Finally, the chiasmatic structure associates 10:6 more closely with 10:11 than with 10:7-10.

¹⁴ Collier, “That We Might Not Crave Evil,” 63-64.

eating and drinking.¹⁵ ‘Sexual immorality’ echoes Israelite participation in the sacrificial meals and idol worship of the Moabites (Num 25:1-2). “Testing Christ” alludes to Israel’s speaking out against God due to the lack of food and water (Num 21:4-7) and ‘grumbling’ to their complaint about meat in Num 11 itself. Each of these gluttonous sins exemplifies evil cravings.

The positions of Meeks and Collier show the complexity involved in interpreting the whole of 1 Cor 10:6-11 through a particular OT text or set of texts. While Meeks understandably observes a connection between idolatry and sexual immorality, he is on much less stable ground by connecting *παίζειν* to ‘testing’ and ‘grumbling.’ Meeks offers no example to support his claim that “joking, mocking, and making fun” define testing and complaining. Moreover, Meeks stretches greatly in his attempt to connect “craving evil” (10:6) to the golden calf incident.¹⁶ Philo’s explication of the incident as a turning of a soul from higher things to becoming enwrapped by the material world is, on Meeks’ estimation, aptly captured by Paul’s use of the phrase, *ἐπιθυμία κακῶν*.¹⁷ A great difficulty with this view is that Philo does not use *ἐπιθυμία* in his own account. To make this connection, the reader must deduce that Philo connects Exod 32:6 to the depravity of the soul with no clear verbal indicator from Paul.

The greater shortcoming of Meeks’ interpretation does not occur with his reading of 10:6-11 through the lens of *παίζειν* (though this is unnecessary and likely incorrect), but the extent to which his reading helps us interpret the role of 10:1-11 within Paul’s argument. Though Meeks allows each of the sins in vv. 6-11 to stand on their own right (in contrast to Collier), Meeks only connects the *exemplum* to the wider context through

¹⁵ See Collier’s discussion on p. 66 for the following connections.

¹⁶ Meeks, “Rose up to Play,” 70.

¹⁷ Meeks, “Rose up to Play,” 71.

Israel's sin of idolatry, thus rendering vv. 8-10 superfluous. A reading that allows all the sins in vv. 6-11 to be relevant to the wider context is to be preferred.

Collier's interpretation suffers similar shortcomings. Though we agree that v. 6 is the heading statement of the sins listed in vv. 7-10, Collier quickly gets into difficulty by insisting that all of the sins listed in vv. 7-10 are to be read through the lens of φαγεῖν and πειν in Exod 32:6. His convoluted exegesis requires recognizing that Num 11 and Exod 32:6 share the two terms and deducing from this that all of the sins in vv. 7-10 are to be interpreted as types of craving the wrong kind of food. The text, however, gives no strong signal for the reader to adopt such a strategy.

In addition to this interpretive difficulty, Collier misreads 10:7. He judges that 10:7 pertains to craving the wrong kind of food. The obvious problem with this reading is that both Exod 32:6 and 10:14-22 address idolatry, which concerns inappropriate associations with foreign deities, not inappropriate food cravings.

The challenge of 1 Cor 10:6-11 is to offer a reading that allows the clear and natural allusions of OT texts to be heard while permitting all of the sins listed in vv. 6-10 to remain relevant to the Corinthian context without forcing each into a single category. The *exemplum* of Israel is broader than food and drink alone, yet still aligns with the context of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. In the following section, we explain how this is the case.

2.2.2. 1 Cor 10:6-11: A New Proposal

We begin with brief comments of the structure of vv. 6-10 and the clearest OT echoes for each of the sins and consequences listed in these verses. First, as stated above, we agree with Collier that 10:6 is the "heading statement" of 10:7-10. The warning in 10:6 is not the same type of sin as the following four warnings in 10:7-10. Unlike

‘idolatry,’ ‘sexual immorality,’ ‘testing,’ and ‘grumbling,’ “desiring evil” is not an *action*-based sin. It is a sin of disposition.¹⁸ Thus, 10:6 is a summative categorization of what follows. Verses 7-10 list the ways that the Israelites exhibited an evil disposition in their conduct.

The first of the four actions of the Israelites is idolatry. The verse takes the form of a negative prohibition (“do not become idolaters”) and includes a scriptural citation of *how* the Israelites committed idolatry. After participating in the food and drink provided by God through Christ in the wilderness (10:3-4; cf. Exod 16:1-17:7, etc.), the Israelites sat down to eat and drink in honor of idols made with their own hands (Exod 32:6).¹⁹

The prohibition of sexual immorality immediately follows the prohibition of idolatry. The almost certain OT allusion in 10:9 is the Israelites’ sexual immorality and idolatry at Shittim (Num 25:1-9). The Israelites committed sexual immorality (ἐκπορνεῦσαι), ate the sacrifices of Moabite idols (ἔφαγεν ὁ λαὸς τῶν θυσίας τῶν εἰδώλων αὐτῶν), and worshipped these idols (προσεκύνησαν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν). As a result, 24,000 Israelites died.²⁰

The prohibition against “testing Christ” (10:9) may draw on one of the several references to the Israelites’ testing of God in the wilderness (e.g., Exod 17:1-7; Num 14:22; Deut 6:16). In light of the identification of Christ as “the rock” that bore water in 1 Cor 10:4, the clearest echo to 10:9 is the Israelites’ ‘testing’ of God’s ability to provide

¹⁸ Gal 5:24 lists ἐπιθυμία as a vice.

¹⁹ Pace Meeks (“And Rose up to Play,” 69), the entire citation—not just “...and rose up to play”—describes the Israelites’ idolatrous acts.

²⁰ Paul lists the number who died at 23,000, which is 1,000 less than the amount reported in Num 25. We should not, however, become distracted by this imprecision. Discerning whether Paul was recalling the story from memory and, thus, simply misremembered the number or conflated the number of individuals who died in the golden calf account with the Shittim story is not important for the rhetorical force of 10:8. Regardless, Paul’s point is clear: thousands died—i.e., most.

water in the wilderness (Exod 17:1-7). God responds to this testing by providing water from the rock, and Moses marks the name of the place of this provision as “πειρασμός.”

Finally, the ‘grumbling’ motif is the most general among the four warnings and has the least clear reference to a specific OT event. Among the possible OT allusions, the most concentrated usage of the word family occurs in Exod 16 (seven times total in vv. 2, 7-9, 12). The term also appears in Num 11, which, as Collier observes, includes the reference to “desiring evil,” Num 14, which includes an echo of 10:5, and Num 16.

These textual echoes lead to two observations. First, each of these actions describes a unique and distinct way Israel “desired evil.” The Israelites committed idolatry, sexual immorality, tested Christ, and grumbled at their circumstances. Second, the only obvious connection of these sins within the OT is the Israelites’ sexual immorality and idolatry at Shittim (Num 25). Beyond this, the OT echoes offer no simple solution that unites the four sins around a single text or particular type of sin.

If the sins of 10:6-10 are distinct and so cannot be subsumed into a single category without convoluted exegesis (*pace* Collier), is it the case that idolatry (10:7) is the only sin that fits into the context of the idol meat discourse? We think not. The two sets of verses that frame 10:1-11 (9:24-27 and 10:12-13) suggest that Paul’s concern is greater than idolatry at this point in the discourse.

As we argued in the previous chapter, the language of 9:24-27 is not limited to idol meat or idolatry. The image of the athlete exemplifies generally that the one who exercises self-discipline and competes well gains the prize (9:24-27). The ἀγών motif describes preparation and training for all contests in the moral struggle. The runner must run the race well and the athlete exercises self-control in ‘all things’ (πάντα) (9:25).

Likewise, Paul's self-description maintains this general focus. He trains by beating and enslaving his body so that he himself might not be disqualified from the prize after preaching the gospel to others (9:27).

The connections between 9:24-27 and 10:1-11 (discussed above) and the attention of 9:24-27 to general self-discipline suggest that Paul does not intend the *exemplum* of Israel to pertain to idolatry or food alone. Rather, it prompts the Corinthians to think in terms of all areas of conduct that require self-discipline, including *both* idolatry *and* sexual immorality. Thus, as Paul transitions from the athletic metaphor to the account of Israel in the wilderness, Israel becomes a negative example of a community that did not display self-discipline or compete well in the games in two major areas of conduct that pertain to Corinth.

As we will see, as Paul draws the paraenetic conclusion of the example for the Corinthian context (10:12-13), the same general scope persists. Verse 12 warns the Corinthians of arrogance and 10:13 addresses the community's understanding of Christic freedom. Neither verse limits its scope to a single sin.

2.3. 1 Cor 10:12-13: Proper Self-Understanding in the Gospel

Scholars readily recognize that the example from Israelite history spans 10:1-11, with the lesson from the example beginning in 10:12.²¹ The transition is marked by τύπος in 10:11, which closes the *inclusio* that began in 10:6, and ὥστε in 10:12, which denotes a strong conclusion from the preceding argument.²² Thus, after delineating the

²¹ E.g., Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 208; Wilhelm H. Wuellner, "Where is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?", *CBQ* 49 (1987): 459; Fee, *First Epistle*, 359; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 746. Contrarily, Meeks proposes that 10:12 belongs to the homily ("And Rose up to Play," 71).

²² ὥστε is used "at the beginning of a sentence, to mark a strong conclusion" (LSJ, s.v. ὥστε, 2040-41). Thiselton (*First Corinthians*, 746) and Willis (*Idol Meat*, 147 and 155) observe that ὥστε indicates the "conclusive character of this sentence."

actions of ancient Israel and the negative consequences that resulted from its actions, Paul concludes with summative hortatory advice. He writes, “the result of the previous example is this: let the one who thinks he is standing watch out lest he falls [ὥστε ὁ δοκῶν ἐστάναι βλέπेटω μὴ πέση].”

The exhortation warns those who profess γνῶσις of two things. First, they are to watch out for ways in which they may fall. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the warning informs the Corinthians *that* they are not immune from falling. Prior to this point in the discourse, Paul never directly indicates to the wise that they are capable of falling. Only the weak are susceptible to this peril.²³ As 8:9 indicates, the wise simply are to ‘watch out’ (βλέπετε) for ways they may cause the weak to stumble. The danger of stumbling or being destroyed does not apply to them. Their responsibility is for the ‘other’ and not for themselves. In 10:12, however, Paul makes explicit that the wise, too, are capable of falling.²⁴

Paul follows the exhortation in 10:12 by identifying the Corinthians’ present dilemma as a ‘human trial’ (ἀνθρώπινος) from which God will provide an ‘escape’ (ἐκβασιν) (10:13). The verse is commonly identified partly as a continuation of the warning in 10:12 and partly as a consoling message of reassurance in light of the warning.²⁵ Each of these assessments greatly underestimates the import of the verse. The verse not only warns the Corinthians of falling or consoles them with God’s

²³ E.g., 1 Cor 8:7, 9, 11, 13.

²⁴ This aspect of the exhortation turns the force of the example of Israel from action to self-perception, thus giving the example a different pedagogical function than is seen in deliberative rhetoric. Paul does not conclude the example immediately with: “so, do not commit idolatry,” as would be expected in a deliberative speech or letter. It first calls them to think about their actual standing in relation to their self-perception.

²⁵ E.g., Barrett, *First Epistle*, 229 (“sense of warning”); Meeks, “‘And Rose up to Play,’” 71 (“consolation”); Willis, *Idol Meat*, 159 (“cautiously as a word of comfort”); William Baird, “1 Corinthians 10:1-13,” *Int* 44 (1990): 289-90 (“encouragement”).

faithfulness, but also *informs* them of the nature of their trials and the course of action God provides in the face of these trials. In doing so, 10:13 continues to shape the Corinthians' self-understanding and their understanding of how to display Christic freedom. Four terms and phrases are key to the verse's interpretation and function: ἀνθρώπινος, πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεός, ὑπὲρ ὃ δύνασθε, and τὴν ἔκβασιν.

Paul first indicates that “no test has come upon you except a human one.” Ἀνθρώπινος may signify the quotidian nature of the trial or its human origin. If the former, ἀνθρώπινος looks back to the example of Israel to show that the Corinthians' dilemma is not unique.²⁶ The Israelites underwent the same types of trials that the Corinthians currently encounter. If the latter, ἀνθρώπινος indicates that the trial is of human, not spiritual, origin.²⁷

The first of the two readings more accurately captures Paul's intent. Given that ὥστε signals the conclusive role of 10:12-13 for the *exemplum*, the human trial that has seized the Corinthians likely refers to the shared experiences between the Corinthians and the Israelites. The phrase continues the idea expressed in 10:11, namely, that what happened to Israel is ‘typical’ and was written for the Corinthians who are on this end of the ages. The trials the Corinthians face were already encountered by the Israelites. Corinth is not undergoing special or unique trials.

In light of this reading, ἀνθρώπινος suggests that the Corinthian wise may fall even to *human* trials. For a community that believed it could ‘stand’ in all contexts

²⁶ Paul uses ἀνθρώπιμος in Rom 6:19 to indicate an example from “everyday life.”

²⁷ This understanding does enjoy support in Paul's letters. The two previous uses of ἀνθρώπιμος in 1 Cor contrast human and divine realms (1 Cor 2:12; 4:3), and two of the seven uses of πειράζ- cognates in Paul refer to the temptations of Satan/the Tempter (1 Cor 7:5; 1 Thess 3:5). God's testing of people is also common in the OT (Gen 22:1; Exod 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut 8:2; 13:3; etc.). Moreover, the juxtaposition of the ‘human trial’ with God, who provides the ἔκβασιν, connotes two oppositional spheres. The trial originates among humans, the ‘way out’ originates with God.

because of its privileged spiritual gifts, Paul's judgment that its members cannot even overcome all human trials with spiritual gifts must have sharply deflated their understanding of the power γνῶσις affords them.²⁸

Naming the trials as common to humanity may also address the Corinthians' conception of God's expectations and demands on the congregation. The Israelites' common burden with Corinth informs the Corinthians that their current trials are *not* unique tests of their freedom in Christ. The Corinthians do not possess any special strength that would enable them to overcome the trials in a way that Israel could not. Thus, these trials are not instances that require proof of the durability or strength of their spiritual freedom. The subsequent phrases show God's preferred and supplied alternative to partaking in these trials. The faithfulness of God is not in the provision of 'ability' (δύνασθε) to withstand the trial, but in providing a 'way out' (ἐκβασιν) as the means of enduring it.

The first of these phrases, πιστὸς δὲ ὁ θεός, is not new to the Corinthians' ears. The phrase occurs in the letter's thanksgiving (1:9). In 1 Cor 1:4-9, Paul calls God faithful because God 'makes firm' the community until the end (ὃς καὶ βεβαιώσει ὑμᾶς ἕως τέλους) through the provision of spiritual gifts, including γνῶσις (ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει).²⁹ The two prominent aspects of God's faithfulness are the fullness of the spiritual gifts and the 'security' this provides the community. In 1 Cor 10:13, however, God is faithful not because the Corinthians may

²⁸ Thus, if the "everyday" aspect of the trial is in view in 10:13, the point is not that the temptation is "still relatively bearable" (*pace* Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 169). Paul's entire point is that remaining in the trial is *not* bearable. In stark contrast to exhorting the Corinthians to withstand the temptation, Paul indicates that 'escape' is the only way the Corinthians can survive it.

²⁹ Cf. 2 Cor 1:18-24, where the theme of God's faithfulness appears along with the description of God as ὁ δὲ βεβαιῶν ἡμᾶς and the 'Spirit' as a guarantee of the community's sanctification into the future.

enact their spiritual gifts to engage these matters, but because God gives the community a ‘way out’—via avoidance (10:14)—of their trials. In sharp contrast to the thanksgiving’s confirmation of the community’s elect status *through* spiritual gifts, 10:13 grounds God’s faithfulness in the provision of an ἔκβασις that *avoids* the use of those gifts. We comment further on ἔκβασις below.

The next phrase of 10:13 indicates that God’s faithfulness resides in not permitting them to be tested “beyond what they are able [to withstand] [ὑπὲρ ὃ δύνασθε].”³⁰ Like 10:12, the phrase emphasizes that there are trials beyond the Corinthians’ ability to endure. Yet it also shows that God does not allow the Corinthians to be tested beyond the limitations of their ability: “God will not permit you to be tested *beyond what you Corinthians* are able [to endure].”³¹ Thus, contrary to their self-understanding, the Corinthians must not assume that their spiritual gifts provide a means to overcome all trials, but also that their abilities have limits, of which God is aware and to which God responds.³²

Ἐκβασις makes it clear that God’s response to the limited abilities of the Corinthians comes in the form of ‘escape’ from the trial (which Paul describes in 10:14 as ‘flight’). This aspect of the verse adds a new dimension to the narrative of Israel in

³⁰ Δύνασθε plays off of its cognate, δύναμις, which denotes ‘power.’ The term regularly appears in the Corinthian correspondence in association with the God, Christ, and the Spirit. Paul’s gospel message includes Christ as the ‘power’ of God (1 Cor 1:24), the kingdom of God as one of ‘power’ (1 Cor 4:19-20), the ‘power’ of God as what will raise the Corinthians (1 Cor 6:14), and the ‘power’ of God as the source of Paul’s ministry (2 Cor 6:7). Paul also connects ‘power’ with the Spirit in Gal 3:5 and Rom 15:13, 19. In light of the Corinthians’ belief in gifts of the spirit through Christ, δύνασθε in 10:13 likely connotes the notion of capability, ability, or power (i.e., “beyond what you have the power to do”).

³¹ Paul speaks of limitations of his own ‘power’ in 2 Cor 1:8: “we were weighed down exceedingly beyond our power [ὑπερβολὴν ὑπὲρ δύναμιν] with the result that we despaired even of life.”

³² Paul states in the indicative in 1 Cor 10:13 what he states in the imperative in 1 Cor 4:6 (ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται) and Rom 12:3 (μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν παρ’ ὃ δεῖ φρονεῖν). In the latter two verses, he exhorts his communities to have sober self-judgment. In 10:13, he informs them that they, in fact, have limitations on their ability, which implies that they should think more soberly about their abilities.

10:1-11. The story of Israel recounted the deeds of Israel and the punishment for its actions, but did not explicitly include a statement referring to God’s provision of a ‘way out’ of its trials. Thus, though the Corinthians are not unique in the type of testing that faces them, Paul moves beyond the example by adding the component of God’s faithful provision of an ἔκβασις from the trials that are “beyond the limits” of their ability.³³

The concluding appropriation of the *exemplum* in 10:12-13 is general in its content. Nothing in the verses pertains specifically to idolatry or idol food. The warning in 10:12 calls the Corinthians to a general alertness to *ways* they may fall and a general awareness *that* they may fall. Thus, the warning applies to each of the sins listed in 10:6-11. The Corinthians must remain watchful in areas of idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, and complaining. If the Corinthians fail to observe boundaries in these areas as did the Israelites, the fate of the Israelites (i.e., ἔπεσαν in 10:8) will await the Corinthians (e.g., πέση in 10:12).³⁴

First Corinthians 10:13 is equally general. In addition to reinforcing the Corinthians’ limited strength (ὕπερ ὑπερ ὃ δύνασθε), the verse shapes their understanding of ‘trials’ and Christic freedom. Nothing in these elements limits the scope to idolatry or idol food alone. The verse emphasizes that *none* of the trials facing Corinth are unique to them within the history of God’s people. The general reference points back to the range of trials the Israelites encountered in the wilderness example. Moreover, Paul informs them that God’s faithfulness does not always lie in provision of strength to overcome trials, but in the strength to ‘escape’ or ‘avoid’ them—a strategy that Paul employs for

³³ Ἐκβασις assumes the sense of an ‘escape’—and not merely an ‘exit’ or ‘departure’—in light of its association with φεύγετε in 10:14. Cf. von Soden, “Sakrament und Ethik,” 249; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 229.

³⁴ Cf. κατεστρώθησαν in 10:5 and ἀπόλλυμι in 10:9-10.

both idolatry (10:14—φεύγετε ἀπὸ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας) *and* sexual immorality (6:18—φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν).

In light of these observations, readings that subsume the other sins of vv. 6-11 into idolatry or food cravings or render them superfluous to the Corinthian context do not give appropriate weight to the generality of the texts that frame the *exemplum*. Both 9:24-27 and 10:12-13 refer generally to self-discipline, humility, and appropriate understanding of Christic freedom that is significant for the Corinthians' moral development in multiple areas of conduct.

With these observations in view, we are still left with describing how the four sins of vv. 7-10 relate to the Corinthian context. We submit that idolatry and sexual immorality are equal focal points of the warnings and that “testing Christ” and ‘grumbling’ relate to the Corinthians’ engagement in these two areas.

First, sexual immorality is independent of and equal to idolatry. Instead of looking to the association of sexual immorality and idolatry in Num 25, the more immediate and natural referent is the Corinthians’ own challenges with sexual immorality. The problem occupies Paul in 1 Cor 5:1-11 and 6:12-20, where he specifically addresses the Corinthians’ *arrogant* presumptions in such areas (1 Cor 5:2) and that such conduct even displayed their Christic freedom (6:12-13).³⁵ Moreover, the echo of 6:12 (πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν) in 10:23 (πάντα ἔξεστιν) demonstrates that the issues of 1 Cor 5-6 are not far from Paul’s mind. Thus, the inclusion of sexual immorality in the

³⁵ The problem is uniquely highlighted in 1 Corinthians. As Willis observes, “all but three uses of this word group are found in 1 Corinthians” (*Idol Meat*, 149). Πορνεία appears seven times (three uses are outside of 1 Corinthians—2 Cor 12:21; Gal 5:19; 1 Thess 4:3). The remaining words in the group (πόρνη, πόρνος, and πορνεύω) appear eight total times—all in 1 Corinthians. In light of this observation, it is odd that Willis argues that identifying sexual immorality as one of the “special sins of the Corinthians” is “over-exegeting” (*Idol Meat*, 150).

exemplum does not appear to be due to a Vorlage or merely to Paul's opportunistic moment to decry sexual immorality in light of its close association to idolatry (e.g., Num 25). Rather, its inclusion is part of the *exemplum*'s broader purpose to address significant ways the community fails to show self-discipline and humility and in which it misrepresents Christic freedom.

Second, we must account for the role of "testing Christ" and 'grumbling' within the *exemplum*. The letter reveals no explicit way the Corinthians either test Christ or complain about their circumstances. Perhaps the analogical link between the Israelites' "spiritual drink" (10:4) and the Corinthians' "spiritual gifts" provides the key. If the Israelites' testing of God at Meribah to provide "spiritual" drink is in view in 10:9, then the analogous connection of the Israelites' spiritual drink to the Corinthians' spiritual gifts implies that the Corinthians "test Christ" by boldly challenging God to provide them spiritual support as they engage in their desired activities. Accordingly, if we are right to link "testing Christ" to the Corinthian context through the analogy of "spiritual" provisions, then the general reference to grumbling simply refers to the Corinthians' potential complaint about not receiving the spiritual gifts they demand for their activities—just as the Israelites complained both about not having 'spiritual' food and drink and about the type of food and drink God provided.

These explanations make sense with the Corinthian context. The warnings are not new and distinct areas of conduct, but relate to the prohibitions against idolatry and sexual immorality. The Corinthians test Christ by pushing the boundaries of their spiritual standing in Christ through their indiscriminate engagement in sexual conduct

and idol meals.³⁶ The warning against grumbling addresses the Corinthians' potential complaint that Paul does not permit them to exercise their spiritual gifts in these areas. The admonition likely preempts the Corinthians' objections to Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 10:7-8, 6:12-20 and 10:14-22.³⁷ He warns the Corinthians not to complain about the behavioral strictures he suggests.³⁸

Thus, our analysis shows that the two sets of verses that frame 10:1-11 are more concerned with the Corinthians' self-discipline, arrogance, and misunderstanding of Christic freedom that are the root causes of misconduct than with the Corinthians' conduct with respect to idol meat alone. Moreover, our analysis shows how the sins, specifically in vv. 7-10, relate both to this broader context and to one another. The warning against idolatry is only one part of Paul's greater purpose in 10:1-13. The example addresses the deeper problems of arrogance, lack of self-discipline, and lack of understanding about God's expectations for the community, of which idolatry is but one of two major symptoms. As Paul expands to these general areas of the Corinthians' moral formation from 9:24 to 10:13, he takes the opportunity to exhort the Corinthians in two key areas in which they manifest these deficiencies.

One issue remains. We must account for the uniqueness of 10:7 in the chiasm. Why does Paul expound upon the Israelites' idolatry with a scriptural quotation rather than identify a consequence of their actions as do vv. 8-10? The citation of Exod 32:7 highlights the sin that is most central to the current context. Exodus 32:6 emphasizes the parallel relationship between the *illustrans* (i.e., the Israelites) and the *illustrandum* (i.e.,

³⁶ The threefold echo of ἐκπειράζομεν in 10:13 (i.e., πειρασμός, πειρασθῆναι, and πειρασμῶ) indicates that the current issues of the community are on Paul's mind in 10:9.

³⁷ Pace Willis, *Idol Meat*, 152-53.

³⁸ This strategy is not unique to 10:10. Paul also pre-empts potential objections in 1 Cor 9 (concerning his teaching in 1 Cor 8) and 10:29b-30 (concerning his advice in 10:28).

the Corinthians). It shows that the Israelites committed idolatry by participating in meals dedicated to idols *in spite of* the fact that they also participated (10:3-4) in meals that commemorated and proclaimed Christ's redemptive and sustaining death. Similar to the Israelites, the Corinthians participated in Christ-oriented meals, but were also inclined to participate in meals that were dedicated to other gods.

The singular nature of 10:7 foreshadows the specific discussion of idolatry in 10:14-22. Verse 14 turns the argument from general lessons regarding self-discipline, humility, and Christic freedom to the issue of idolatry in specific.

3. 1 Cor 10:14-22: Instruction in Phronēsis

3.1. 1 Cor 10:14: The Advice

Διόπερ, denoting a strong conclusion, indicates that the command to “flee from idolatry” in 10:14 results from what precedes it, namely, the example of Israel (10:1-11) and its concluding appropriation for the Corinthian context (10:12-13).³⁹ Both parts of the argument are in view. The Corinthians are to flee idolatry because the negative consequences that befell Israel might also befall Corinth if they continue to participate in idolatry. The Corinthians also ought to flee idolatry because flight is God's provision of an ‘escape’ for them in the face of such trials.⁴⁰

³⁹ Διόπερ only occurs elsewhere in the NT in 1 Cor 8:13. In this earlier verse, it signals the conclusion of Paul's first argument pertaining to eating idol meat. Its usage in 1 Cor 8 suggests that διόπερ in 10:14 also denotes a conclusion to what precedes it. Robertson and Plummer state, “Διόπερ indicates more strongly than ὅστε that what follows is a reasoned result of what precedes” (*First Epistle*, 208). Outside the NT, Thucydides uses δι' ὅπερ in the middle of an argument, but it refers to what comes before it (1.71.3). In 1.120, the term also occurs in middle of the argument, but looks both backwards and forwards. In 8.92.1, it begins the new section, but gives the result of what precedes it.

⁴⁰ Φεύγετε thematically connects to ἔκβασιν. In the first of the two verses, Paul expresses that God provides an ἔκβασιν from the trials facing the community. Ἐκβασίς denotes a “departure, disembarkation, a way out, escape from” (LSJ, s.v. ἔκβασίς, 501). The term occurs in the NT only here and in Heb 13:7. The command, φεύγετε, is the specific way the community enacts the divinely given ἔκβασίς, thus giving the term the sense of “escape from.” Cf. Thiselton who writes, “the ‘way out’ (v. 13) conjures up the image of an army caught in a defile and urged to *flee* at all speed through a mountain pass” (*First Epistle*, 755; italics mine). Thiselton also suggests that ἀπό conveys metaphor of location and active flight, which

3.2. 1 Cor 10:15-22: How to Recognize Idolatry

Immediately after the prohibition of idolatry, the argument offers analogies from Christian and Jewish meal practice to *define* what constitutes idolatrous pagan meals. Prior to 10:15, the Corinthians have been instructed to avoid idolatry (10:7, 14; cf. 5:11), but have been given little instruction about the circumstances that make a meal idolatrous. Verses 15-22 instruct the Corinthians in how to think about such contexts.

The argument is divided into two primary parts: proof (10:15-18) and conclusion (10:19-22). Κρίνατε ὑμεῖς ὃ φημι (10:15) introduces the argumentative proofs by inviting the Corinthians to judge for themselves the correctness of Paul's instruction in 10:14. Verses 16-18 describe the community's eucharistic meal (10:16-17) and Jewish sacrificial meal practices (10:18) to show that ritual meals center around common worship of a deity. They are not mere social occasions. Τί οὖν φημι (10:19) introduces the conclusions Paul draws from the proofs. After describing Christian and Jewish meals, Paul identifies the conclusion he desires the Corinthians to draw: "that which (pagans) sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God" (10:20a). Verses 20b-21, in turn, identify practical implications from the conclusion in 10:20a: the Corinthians are not to be 'partners' with demons by participating in pagan sacrificial meals. Finally, two conclusive rhetorical questions preempt potential objections (10:22).

Paul's argument brings theological significance to community meals by emphasizing that meals coalesce individuals, in bodily fashion, with and around a deity. The argument emphasizes the specific type of κοινωνία these meals establish by

picks up the preceding allusion to ἐκβάσις in v. 13 (*First Epistle*, 755). Cf. Hays, *First Corinthians* (IBC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 166.

identifying the role of ritual meals in maintaining the community's relationship with the god who sustains them.

Κοινωνία occupies a major place in the argument. A κοιν- cognate occurs four times in this section (10:16 [x2], 18, 20). Commentators have commonly focused on the term's presence in the descriptions of community meals to suggest that Paul emphasizes the *camaraderie* that is formed at such meals.⁴¹ Our discussion will show, however, that κοινωνία is not the focal point of the argument. Κοινωνία, alone, does not imply a level of bonding that would prohibit Corinthian participation. Rather, 10:15-22 emphasizes the *type* of κοινωνία these meals establish. The problem with pagan meals is not κοινωνία, but that the Corinthians form κοινωνία with and around other gods.

Κοινωνία often implies fellowship or sharing with someone in something.⁴² It could denote a marriage or business partnership, a political community, or various types of associations of people.⁴³ Moreover, this usage commonly occurs with a genitive of thing shared, as they do in 10:16-21. This construction specifies the 'something' or 'someone' around which 'partnership' or 'sharing' takes shape. Demosthenes, for example, writes of 'common participation' in help and friendship: "we cannot take any common pledge of help or friendship [κοινωνίαν βοηθείας καὶ φιλίας]."⁴⁴ Epictetus uses κοινωνός similarly. Encouraging his students to adopt a Cynic lifestyle, he writes, "He must be a partner in [the Cynic's] scepter and his royalty [κοινωνόν... τοῦ σκήπτρου καὶ

⁴¹ E.g., J. Y. Campbell, "Κοινωνία and its Cognates in the NT," *JBL* 51 (1932): 52-80; George V. Jourdan, "ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ in 1 Corinthians 10:16," *JBL* 67 (1948): 111-24; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 167-211 and 215-19.

⁴² Campbell, "Κοινωνία," 356.

⁴³ On marriage, see Plato, *Leg.* 721a and Isocrates, *Nic.* 3.40. On business, see Plato, *Resp.* 343d. On community, see Plato, *Resp.* 461e (of women with men in education, children, and guardianship of other citizens) and 370d, 449d, 461e, 464a, 464b (last four are cited in Campbell, "Κοινωνία," 358). On a society bound together by constitution, see Aristotle, *Pol.* 1276b2 (cited in Campbell, "Κοινωνία," 357).

⁴⁴ Demosthenes, *3 Philip.* 9.28 (Vince, LCL).

τῆς βασιλείας] ...”⁴⁵ The point made by Demosthenes and Epictetus is not simply that partnership is formed, but that it is formed by a particular *action* (e.g., helping), *relationship* (e.g., friendship) or *mode of living* (e.g., the Cynic life). The type of *κοινωνία* depends upon the genitive of thing shared.

Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides offer clear illustrations of the range of ‘somethings’ around which fellowship occurs. Dio writes, “...since they are men with whom you have common [κοινοί] ties of wedlock, offspring, civic institutions, sacrifices to the gods [θυσίαι θεῶν], festive assemblies, and spectacles...”⁴⁶ Similarly, Aristides displays this range nicely in *Or.* 23.16: “And neither membership in a chorus, nor the companionship of a voyage [πλοῦ κοινωνία], nor having the same teachers is so great a circumstance, as the gain and profit in having been fellow pilgrims at the Temple of Asclepius...”⁴⁷ Though Aristides only uses *κοινωνία* to describe the voyage, the notion of community established around a shared experience is present in each item.

These quotations demonstrate that ‘partnership’ can be formed in various ways.⁴⁸ Dio describes a common bond arising from marriage, children, political institutions, religious acts, and festivals. Similarly, Aristides shows that ‘partnership’ can come about by common participation in a chorus, on a voyage, by sharing a teacher, or, most significantly, on a religious pilgrimage. Aristides’s excerpt is particularly informative because it shows that the significance of the bond depends on the type of experience that

⁴⁵ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.22.63 (Oldfather, LCL). Elsewhere, describing humanity as a whole, Epictetus identifies rationality as the common factor that unites humans in the society of God: “seeing that by nature it is theirs [humans] alone to have communion [κοινωνεῖν] in the society [συναναστροφῆς] of God”) (*Diatr.* 1.9.5 [Oldfather, LCL]).

⁴⁶ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 41.10 (Crosby, LCL).

⁴⁷ Cited and trans., Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 142 n. 461.

⁴⁸ Cf. Friedrich Hauck, “κοινός, κοινωνός,” *TDNT* 3:789-809: “The group *κοινων-* is applied to the most varied relationships...” (798).

is shared. Not all *κοινωνία* is equal. The experience of mutual religious pilgrimage forms a companionship that exceeds mutual engagement in music, travel, or education.

Uses of *κοινωνία* show that the strength of bonds could even vary within religious meals. They vary from *κοινωνία* around mere pleasure to *κοινωνία* with and around a god.⁴⁹ Aristotle, for instance, refers to the social aspect of common meals, even religious ones: “some [*κοινωνιῶν*] appear to be formed for the sake of pleasure, for example religious guilds and dining clubs [*θιασωτῶν καὶ ἐρανιστῶν*] which are unions for sacrifice and social intercourse [*θυσίας καὶ συνουσίας*].”⁵⁰ Other texts point to a heightened communion between gods and men at sacrificial meals. Plato writes, “all sacrifices and ceremonies controlled by divination, namely all means of communion [*κοινωνία*] between gods and men, are only concerned with either the preservation or cure of love.”⁵¹ Aristides, likewise, observes, “Men share [*κοινωνοῦσιν*] in a special way the truest communion [*κοινωνίαν*] in the sacrifices to this god alone, as they invite him to the altar and appoint him as guest and host.”⁵²

This brief review demonstrates that *κοινωνία* commonly denotes partnership or “sharing in common” and that the “strength” of the *κοινωνία* is determined by the object or experience the participants share. Certain shared experiences and activities form stronger bonds than others. From the perspective of Aristides, religious ties form the strongest bonds. Yet the examples also highlight that even the type of ‘fellowship’ established by religious meals could range across a spectrum. Meals may create pious

⁴⁹ Dio Chrysostom shows the different intention for which gathering at religious meals could take place: “Consider...how much better and more sensible it is at the common religious gatherings and festivals and spectacles to mingle together, joining with one another in common sacrifice and prayer [*συνθύειν καὶ συνεύχεσθαι*], rather than the opposite, cursing and abusing one another” (*Or.* 40.28 [Crosby, LCL]).

⁵⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 1160a19-20 (Rackham, LCL).

⁵¹ Plato, *Symp.* 188b; cited and trans., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 172.

⁵² Aristides, *Or.* 8; cited and trans., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 172-73.

and sacral intimacy among humans and between gods and humans or they may simply serve as festive gatherings for a social club.

We contend that 1 Cor 10:15-22 is best read in light of this range of meaning. The diverse uses of *κοινωνία* should be kept in view in 10:15-22 rather than limit the term to one precise sense. The force of Paul’s argument comes to the fore more clearly if we consider that Paul and the Corinthians have *differing* understandings of the type of *κοινωνία* established at their community meals. Paul’s goal is not to inform the Corinthians *that* their meals establish *κοινωνία*, but to inform them of the *type* of *κοινωνία* their community meals create.

Accordingly, we argue that the most prominent aspect of 10:15-22 is not the mere presence of the term, *κοινωνία*, but the association of *κοιν-* cognates with *bodily* forming functions of *ritual* and *sacrificial* acts of eating and drinking. The verse diagram below shows that the structure of 10:16-21 emphasizes this association. The left-hand column of the diagram describes the meal practice while the right-hand column describes the *type* of *κοινωνία* the meal practice establishes. Each use of *κοινωνία* occurs with a genitive of thing shared. Moreover, in each case, the “thing shared” is a ritual object implying relationship with the god or the deity itself:

10:16: τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν,	οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ ἁίματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ;
10:16: τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν,	οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν;
10:18: οὐχ οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας	κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσὶν;
10:20b-21: οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων,	οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς κοινωνοὺς τῶν δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι.
οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων	

The repeated association of meal practices with *κοιν-* cognates + genitives of “ritual object” or “deity” shared suggests that the Corinthians must see that community meals do not establish a mundane, social *κοινωνία* (as they likely think—e.g., 1 Cor 11:17-34), but a ritualistic and devotional *κοινωνία* with and around a deity. This aspect of *κοινωνία* is

present in each use of a κοιν- cognate in 1 Cor 10, not least in the “body of Christ” imagery in 10:16-17.

3.2.1. 1 Cor 10:16-17: Participation in the Body of Christ

In 10:16, Paul asks rhetorically whether or not the cup the community blesses and the bread it breaks are ‘common sharing in’ (κοινωνία) the blood and body of Christ. As has long been recognized, the language of 10:16 bears strong similarity to the words of institution in 11:23-26:

ἔλαβον ἄρτον καὶ εὐχαριστήσας ἔκλασεν καὶ εἶπεν τοῦτο μοῦ ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν (11:23-24)
τὸν ἄρτον ὃν κλῶμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐστὶν; (10:16)

τὸ ποτήριον μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι λέγων τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἢ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ αἵματι (11:25)
τὸ ποτήριον τῆς εὐλογίας ὃ εὐλογοῦμεν, οὐχὶ κοινωνία ἐστὶν τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ; (10:16)

The echo of the eucharistic words in 10:16 emphasizes that eating and drinking at community meals are not merely ‘common participation’ in social festivity. Rather, these meals are ‘common participation’ in the blood of Christ, which transacted the new covenant, and the body of Christ, which was given τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν.

As Paul instructs the community in 11:24-25 and informs them in 11:26, these ritual meals have both a commemorative and proclamatory function. The Corinthians are to eat and drink in ἀνάμνησις of Christ (11:24-25). Additionally, as he informs them in 11:26, whenever they eat the bread and drink the cup they share in the Lord’s death by proclaiming that death until he comes.

The echo of the Eucharist emphasizes both *that* they are in fellowship and *what forms* their fellowship. The emphasis on their participation in the commemoration and proclamation of Christ’s death coalesces the Corinthians’ κοινωνία around the sacrificial and covenant-transacting death of Christ. Viewed against the background of a community who regarded meals as social gatherings, the echo of the eucharistic tradition

transforms their understanding of *κοινωνία* from a mundane sense of sharing in a meal together, to a pious act of commemoration and proclamation.

This feature of 10:16 becomes expressed as a *body*-forming practice in 10:17. Paul writes, “because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread.” The verse highlights both *that* the community is “one body” and *why* the community is “one body.” The central, independent clause of the verse stands out from the two subordinate clauses. The point of the statement is that the many in the community are one. Nonetheless, the twofold explanation of what shapes “the many” into “one body” emphasizes the unifying factor of the body. They are one body *because* (ὅτι) there is one bread and *because* (γάρ) they all share this one bread. Paul’s thought begins and ends with the unifying catalyst. This twofold explanation implies that their ‘bodily-ness’ is not merely due to a common sharing of a loaf of bread (ἄρτος). Rather, the connection of ἄρτος with σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ in 10:16 indicates that the two uses of ἄρτος in 10:17 imply the “body of Christ.” The Corinthians form a somatic unity *in Christ* because they partake of the body *of Christ*.

Paul uses a similar argument about the body in 1 Cor 6:15. In this verse, he asks, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Now, therefore, do I make members of Christ members of a prostitute? By no means!” Like 10:17, the emphasis of σῶμα is not a mere social unity of community members, but a somatic connection of each individual member to Christ, which, by extension, forms a somatic unity among members.⁵³ This emphasis becomes apparent in 6:16-17 when Paul asks rhetorically

⁵³ Paul does not expound upon the concept of 10:17b (i.e., *that* the body has many members) until 1 Cor 12:12-27. In 1 Cor 6 and 10, he simply identifies the Corinthians as members of Christ’s body (1 Cor 6) or simply that ‘many’ form “one body” (1 Cor 10). The emphasis of these latter texts is the connection to

whether ‘uniting’ with a prostitute forms “one body” with her and states that ‘uniting’ with Christ forms “one spirit” with him. Paul unifies the community to Christ in a bond that is on a higher level than the flesh. This unification is concerned with violating spiritual oneness with Christ. The emphasis on connection to Christ continues in 6:19, which characterizes the Corinthians as bearers of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon them from God, who purchased the community with Christ’s sacrificial death. The questions compel the Corinthians to reflect on sexual practice in light of their unity with Christ.

The rhetorical impact of 1 Cor 6:15-19 aligns very closely with that of 10:16-17. The earlier passage invites the Corinthians to reflect on activities that form “one body” with a prostitute. The Corinthians cannot ‘join’ sexually with prostitutes because they are members of Christ’s body. Uniting with a prostitute transfers their body to a foreign realm. The implication is that sexual immorality is a physical act that violates the boundaries of the body of Christ and, thus, that the Corinthians cannot divide their loyalties between Christ and prostitutes. Similarly, 10:16-17 pertains to physical acts that connect the Corinthians to Christ’s body. Eating and drinking in devotional contexts also forms the community into “one body” in Christ.⁵⁴ Accordingly, by implication, eating and drinking in idol worship forms “one body” with demons just as uniting with a prostitute forms “one body” with her. Thus, like 6:15-17, Paul informs the Corinthians in 10:21 that they cannot divide their loyalties. They cannot eat at the table of the Lord and of demons.

Christ and the factors that create solidarity with or separation from the body of Christ. The force of 1 Cor 12 is the unity of the body—all parts of the body are necessary and what affects one affects all.

⁵⁴ John A. T. Robinson thinks that Paul envisions believers as a part of the physical body of Christ: “[Paul] is not saying anything so weak as that the Church is a society with a common life and governor, but that its unity is that of a single physical entity: disunion is dismemberment” (*The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* [SBT 5; London: SCM Press, 1952], 51). Commenting on 10:17, he writes, “Insofar as the Christian community feeds on this body and blood, it *becomes* the very life and personality of the risen Christ” (*Body*, 57).

3.2.2. 1 Cor 10:18: Analogy of Jewish Meal Practices

The second proof refers to Israel κατὰ σάρκα, whose act of “eating sacrifices” establishes κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου.⁵⁵ The two parts for discussion are the referent of Israel κατὰ σάρκα and the meaning of κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου. We attend to Israel κατὰ σάρκα first.

Though some see a reference to the golden calf episode of 10:7, Israel κατὰ σάρκα points to the historic and contemporary sacrificial practices of Israel. Three reasons suggest this is the case. First, the *exemplum* (10:1-11) uses 18 imperfect or aorist verbs (and no present tense verbs) to describe Israel’s actions and plights while 1 Cor 10:18 uses the present tense, εἰσίν. Second, the verse’s placement as a proof alongside of 10:16-17 indicates a parallel relationship between 10:16 and 10:18. The logical progression of the argument suggests that Paul adduces an example from the Corinthians’ own meal practice and an example from Jewish meal practice in order to emphasize the ritualistic nature of pagan meals. Finally, Paul refers to the contemporary sacrificial eating practices of Israel’s priests in the previous chapter (1 Cor 9:13), which shows that such practices are present in his mind.⁵⁶

With this sense of κατὰ σάρκα in view, we turn to the more difficult phrase, κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου. Scholarship has made much of the symbolic interpretation of this phrase. Interpreters commonly propose that θυσιαστήριον is a circumlocution for Yahweh or that “partners in the altar” implies common participation with Yahweh at the

⁵⁵ Βλέπετε is only used in the sense, “to consider,” as it is used here, in Paul’s letters one other time (1 Cor 1:26).

⁵⁶ Some point to the echoes of θυσιαστήριον in Exod 32:5 and θυσίαν and φαγεῖν in Exod 32:6. The use of θυσιαστήριον in 1 Cor 9:13 shows that a reference to sacrificial system in general is equally probable.

sacrificial meal.⁵⁷ Others suggest that θυσιαστηρίον is a common figure of speech for food on the altar.⁵⁸ Representatives of this view suggest that κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου implies religious fraternity among the human participants around the sacrificial food of the altar.⁵⁹ No κοινωνία with Yahweh is established.

The discussions of 10:18 are often based on word studies of θυσιαστηρίον or κοιν- cognates in the LXX or parallels in Philo. Scholars have long demonstrated that θυσιαστηρίον never denotes a circumlocution for Yahweh in the LXX and that the LXX never speaks of κοινωνία between Yahweh and humans. Notably, however, κοιν- cognates in the LXX also never express fellowship among worshippers of Yahweh around the altar or otherwise. Moreover, the overused text from *Spec. Leg.* 1.221 does not settle the matter. Scholars on both sides of the debate appeal to Philo's phrase, κοινωνὸν...τοῦ βωμοῦ, to support their respective views that 10:18 implies table fellowship with Yahweh on the one hand and, on the other, to argue that 10:18 implies a fraternal bonding among human participants.

In light of this lack of clarity, we must turn to a different source of evidence. In the midst of examining κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου, rarely do discussions look to descriptions of the actual sacrificial practice of Israel. The practice is significant because the meal participants also played a role in the sacrifice. A brief overview of this practice will help shed light on the phrase.

Leviticus describes a six-step process for sacrifices: (1) bringing an animal to the sanctuary (2) laying hands upon the animal (3) slaughtering the animal (4) tossing or

⁵⁷ For the former, see Hugo Gressmann, "ἡ κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονιῶν" *ZNW* 20 (1921): 224-30. For the latter, see Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 215.

⁵⁸ E.g., Campbell, "Κοινωνία," 376.

⁵⁹ E.g., Campbell, "Κοινωνία," 276-77 and Willis, *Idol Meat*, 184-88.

dabbing blood on the altar (5) burning the animal and (6) disposing of the remains. Both laypeople and priests had a role in this six-step process. The layperson brought the animal to the sanctuary, laid hands on the animal, slaughtered it (Lev 3:2), and, in some sacrifices, helped to dispose of it by eating it. Priests fulfilled the remaining tasks. They performed sacrificial actions at the altar, including tossing (in burnt, guilt, and peace offerings) or dabbing (in purification offerings) the blood of the animal on the altar, burning the animal on the altar, and disposing of the remains, which sometimes involved eating.⁶⁰

Among the OT sacrifices that comply with this description, the peace-offering was a common sacrifice of which all the people partook. A peace offering, along with a burnt offering, accompanied the giving of the Ten Commandments. The Lord instructs Moses, “Make an altar from the earth for me and sacrifice upon it burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen, in every place where I pronounce my name, I will come to you and bless you” (Exod 20:24). Similarly, in Exod 24, Moses reports the ordinances of the Lord to all the Israelites and offers burnt offerings and peace offerings in the process of the covenant’s ratification among the people. The Israelites also offer a peace offering and burnt offering at the dedication of the tabernacle (Num 7:87-88) and for ordinary feasts (e.g., Num 15:1-10). At each of these sacrifices, both the laypeople and the priests would play a role in the sacrificial ritual, including consuming the meat.

In other sacrifices, such as sin offerings and guilt offerings, only the priests consumed the meat.⁶¹ Though the layperson still brings the animal to the sanctuary, lays

⁶⁰ Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT),” *ABD* 5:875.

⁶¹ E.g., Lev 7:1-10.

hands on it, and slaughters it, the priests fulfill the remaining tasks, including consuming the meat.

The above examples show that Israelites sacrificed at central events in their relationship with Yahweh: the establishment of the Mosaic covenant, the dedication of the temple, and the beginning of the priestly ministry. Offerings were also made on a regular basis. Peace offerings happened not only at these central events but also in response to fulfillments of vows, as acts of spontaneous piety, and as general thanks for beneficence (e.g., Num 15:1-10).⁶² Sin and guilt offerings were made in hopes of purifying the sinner from the effects of sin or, perhaps, as in some cases of guilt offerings, for purification of sacred items (whether an item, animal, or individual).⁶³

This brief overview demonstrates that participation in sacrificial food also implies participation in the sacrificial rites of Israel. Thus, “partners in the altar” means not only religious fraternity around the altar, but partners in a sacrificial ritual that establishes and maintains a relationship with Yahweh. The imagery of eating sacrifices and “partners in the altar” may even call to mind literal participation in the sacrificial process. Those who eat the sacrifices also participate in the sacrificial ceremony—whether by presenting and slaughtering the animal (layperson) or by spreading the blood on the altar and burning the animal (priest).⁶⁴

Do those scholars who claim that the Israelites share the meal with the deity have grounds beyond Philo? While there is no systematized statement of Yahweh’s

⁶² Leviticus 7:11-18 prescribes three types of peace offerings in which all Israelites partake: (1) thanksgiving (2) votive and (3) free-will.

⁶³ Anderson, *ABD*, 880-881.

⁶⁴ If 10:18 evokes images of the priest’s role, then the association becomes even stronger. Given that priests performed the duties of the sacrifice at the altar, the priests who eat the sacrifices also literally participate in the sacrificial duties at the altar.

fellowshipping with the Israelites at these meals, the sacrificial meal system implies such a presence. Baruch Levine, for instance, argues that the common joining of burnt offering and peace offering (e.g., Exod 10:25) is a merism describing the sacrificial system in general.⁶⁵ These two types of sacrifices are a natural pair because the former represents food offered completely to Yahweh and the latter includes provision for the devotees. Thus, the merism implies a sacrificial meal in which both Yahweh and the participants are simultaneously partaking of the feast.

Moreover, several of the above texts suggest that sacrifices were presented to Yahweh in order to invoke and maintain Yahweh's dwelling among Israel. The passage from Exod 20 suggests that the burnt and peace offerings invoke Yahweh's presence: "Make an altar from the earth for me and sacrifice upon it burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen, *in every place where I pronounce my name, I will come to you and bless you.*" Similarly, the sacrifices at the dedication of the Tabernacle (Num 7:87-88) preceded Moses' entrance into the tent where he spoke with the Lord. Also, in Lev 9, after Aaron sacrificed the sin offering, burnt offering, and peace offering at the beginning of the priestly ministry, fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the offering in the presence of all the people (v. 24), invoking joy and worship. Finally, the *t'amid* burnt offering, made twice daily at the entrance of the tent of meeting, invokes the Lord's presence with the priests and the Israelites (Exod 29:38-43).

Though these examples do not clearly describe co-participation between Yahweh and the Israelites at a sacrificial meal, they do show that the sacrificial system in Israel directly related to Yahweh's dwelling in the community. Thus, while θυσιαστήριον is

⁶⁵ Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (SJLA 5; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 21. Cf. Anderson, *ABD*, 878.

neither a circumlocution for God nor implies the “Lord of the altar,” the imagery evoked by the Israelites’ participation in the sacrificial system includes Yahweh’s presence among Israel.

In light of this discussion, 10:18 transforms the mere act of eating sacrifices into a ritual event.⁶⁶ Those who “eat the sacrifices” are not merely gathering festively with one another. They are ‘participants’ in a sacrificial system that maintains the community’s relationship with God. This system signifies an expression of commitment and loyalty to Yahweh alone for the community needs. Moreover, it calls to mind the role of the sacrificial system in establishing the presence of Yahweh in the community, not simply at the meals themselves, but as the God who dwells continuously among the people.

3.2.3. 1 Cor 10:19-21: Practical Conclusions

As Paul turns from proof to conclusion, the argument has offered two illustrations of the ritualistic and religious significance of community meals. Communities that gather for meals do not just seek conviviality or camaraderie. Rather, these meals establish bodily participation in a system of dependence upon and devotion to a particular deity. The practical conclusions Paul draws in 10:19-21 also address the religious implications of participating in pagan meals. In fact, these verses provide the clearest demonstration of the type of *κοινωνία* sacrificial meals establish and why such *κοινωνία* is problematic.

First Corinthians 10:19-20a identifies the point Paul intends the two proofs in vv. 16-17 and v. 18 to illustrate. He states, “what then am I saying? That idol meat is anything or that an idol is anything? No, but that which they sacrifice, [they sacrifice] to demons and not to God.” Paul’s point is neither that the food elements (i.e.,

⁶⁶ Paul desires the community to think about the full ritual implications of the meal, not just that eating sacrificial meat is co-participation with Yahweh at the meal. The imagery has greater significance than the mere sharing of a meal in a particular moment.

εἰδωλόθυτον) nor the graven image itself (i.e., εἰδωλον) is anything of note; rather, he is concerned with the Corinthians' participation in meals in which their Greek and Roman friends sacrifice "to demons and not to God."⁶⁷

The verse draws the Corinthians' attention away from food and graven images in a pagan home or idol temple and toward the deity who is the recipient of pious devotion. The echo of Deut 32:17 in 10:20a locates 10:20a in an OT tradition that impugns the Israelites' worship of other deities. As the Deuteronomist expresses, sacrificial meals to other gods in the wilderness demonstrated that Israel "deserted the Rock" who birthed and sustains the community (32:15, 18). Thus, the echo implies that just as the Israelites voluntarily sacrificed to 'non-gods' and so abandoned the God, their savior, so too do the Corinthians abandon the God who created and sustains their community by participating in the sacrificial meals of their pagan friends, who sacrifice to 'demons' (i.e., non-gods) and not to God.⁶⁸

This conclusion serves two functions. First, it corroborates our contention that the primary concern of 10:16-18 is the formation and maintenance of a community's

⁶⁷ Several interpreters allow the echo of Deut 32:17 (ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ) in 10:20a (θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ) to dictate the interpretation of the passage. Two reasons disqualify this reading. First and foremost, reading "Israel" of 10:7 as the phrase's subject completely destroys the structure of 10:15-20. Scholars who view Israel as the subject of 10:20a also see historical Israel (of the golden calf episode) as the subject of 10:18. In this case, the implied subject of 10:20a points back to Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα in 10:18. This reading leaves 10:16-17 with no role in the argument. If 10:20a connects primarily to 10:18 then one whole proof in Paul's argument is without relevance in the conclusion. Second, though commentators make short shrift of the *present* tense of θύουσιν in 10:20a, the use of the present (opposed to the aorist—as in Deut 32:17) significantly loosens the connection of 10:20a to both 10:18 and the golden calf episode. Thus, while the inclusion of τὰ ἔθνη by P⁴⁶, κ, A, C, and 33 is secondary, this understanding of the verse is correct. Paul uses Christian and Jewish meal practices to support his point concerning pagan meal practices.

⁶⁸ Though Paul uses the term δαιμόνιον in 10:20, we cannot presume from this term that Paul views the threat of idolatry as falling under the sphere of demons. This is the case for several reasons. First, Paul solely identifies the danger of idolatry as inciting the jealousy of the Lord (1 Cor 10:22). The section contains no sense that the Corinthians face the threat of a demonic sphere. Second, 10:20-21 is the only time Paul uses the term δαιμόνιον in his letters. To adduce a demonology from this sole usage over interprets the context. Third, and related to the second, Paul appears to take over the term from Deuteronomy, which roughly equates δαιμόνιον to foreign 'non-gods' and not the demonic realm.

relationship with its god. Participation in the body and blood of Christ and in the altar are, respectively, expressions of dependence upon, devotion to, and proclamation of Christ (10:16-17) and Yahweh (10:18). Second, it demonstrates that the κοιν- cognates in 10:16, 18, and 10:20b-21 focus on the god that is worshipped and not simply on the notion *that* camaraderie is established at the meal. As 10:16 and 18 intimate, the problem of κοινωνία with pagan friends results not from mere participation in meals with them, but from eating at meals in which their friends sacrifice in honor, thanksgiving, or request of a god.⁶⁹

Paul draws the practical implications from this conclusion in 10:21. In light of the devotional aspect of such meals, δύνασθε in 10:21 contains prohibitive force: the Corinthians cannot have divided loyalties. In this practical implication, Paul returns to the imagery of eating and drinking that began the argument in 10:16. The Corinthians cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and of demons (ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων) or eat from the table of the Lord and of demons (τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων). In light of 10:16-20, the Corinthians should see that acts of drinking and eating are not merely common participation with fellow diners in social gaiety and frivolity, but signifiers of a system of devotion to and dependence upon a particular deity who creates and sustains community.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ As 10:19 and 10:27 indicate (and 8:10 implies), if the Corinthians were simply sharing with their pagan friends in mere idol meat, there would be no problem with such participation.

⁷⁰ Τραπεζής κυρίου...τραπέζης δαιμονίων also evokes the image of the deity's presence at the meal. Several papyrus invitations to meals use the phrase, εἰς κλείην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος ("at the table of the Lord Sarapis") (P. Yale 85; P. Oslo 157; P. Oxy. 110, 523, and 1755). David Gill observes that τραπέζα could denote the special table on which the god's portion of the sacrifice was placed, which implies either the god's full participation in the meal or the god's more removed presence as spectator ("TRAPEZOMATA: A Neglected Aspect of Greek Sacrifice," *HTR* 67 [1974]: 117-37, esp. 123-37).

3.2.4. 1 Cor 10:22: A Surprising Warning

Paul concludes the section with two rhetorical questions that, on first glance, fit oddly as a conclusion to the argument. They are short, thematically abrupt, and occur in the first person plural. The two questions, however, play a key role in the argument. The questions turn the Corinthians' attention from thinking that the threat of participation in idolatrous meals lies with δαιμονία to locating the threat with τὸν κύριον. Though concluding that the problem with pagan sacrificial meals is their devotion to δαιμονία (four times in 10:20-21), when Paul finally addresses the harm involved in participation in these meals, he does not describe the destructive power of demons, but the Lord's jealousy and concomitant punishment. It is not δαιμονία that the community must withstand, but τὸν κύριον. Paul asks the Corinthian wise, "Shall we provoke *the Lord* to jealousy? Surely we are not stronger *than he*?" If, as is likely, the Corinthians expected the threat to concern their strength vs. the strength of pagan 'non-gods,' the abrupt transition to τὸν κύριον would have countered their expectations, thereby adding greater rhetorical force to the concluding questions.⁷¹ As the context of 1 Cor 8-10 (esp. 8:4-6; 8:8; and 10:19) suggests, the Corinthians may believe that they are strong enough to resist the 'nothingness' of pagan sacrificial meals, but, as Paul asks in 10:22, are they strong enough to withstand the Lord's jealousy and wrath? The allusion of the first

⁷¹ The abrupt switch from demons to "the Lord" implies, once again, the impotency of idols. The harm posed by eating at the table of demons is not the destructive power of demons, but the Lord's wrath. Brian Rosner cites several possible OT echoes of 10:22b that describe the Lord's strength, including Eccl 6:10; Isa 45:9; Ezekiel 22:14 ("Stronger than He?": The Strength of 1 Corinthians 10:22b," *TynBul* 43 [1992], 172). While Paul does not cite any of these texts explicitly, each of these potential echoes aligns with Paul's point.

rhetorical question to Deut 32:21, and so to the example of Israel in 10:1-11, demonstratively claim ‘no.’⁷²

Paul has the difficult task of helping the Corinthians discern the line between acceptable participation in idol meat (e.g., 8:10 and 10:25, 10:27) and unacceptable participation in idolatry (10:7, 14). First Corinthians 10:15-21 take on this task. Ritual community meals establish the boundary line of acceptable participation. When the Corinthians gather for Eucharist, they do not merely experience *κοινωνία* in wine and bread. They participate in the blood and body of Christ and, thus, in the covenant transacting, sacrificial death that formed and sustains the community. Likewise, when the laypeople and priests of Israel eat sacrificial meals, they are participating in the sacrificial system that maintains their covenant relationship with Yahweh. In light of these analogies, the Corinthians should conclude (as Paul informs them) that participating in meals that are directed toward the worship of a Greek or Roman god constitutes idolatry. These sacrificial meals are not just festive celebrations, but ritual meals that signify dependence upon and devotion to the god or goddess who creates and sustains the community or worshippers. If the Corinthians break this boundary, they invoke the Lord’s jealousy and punishment.

4. Conclusion: Impact on Moral Formation

4.1. Moral Formation of Individuals

In the above discussion, we have demonstrated that the central focus of 10:1-22 is not the prohibition of idolatry, but teaching the Corinthians an appropriate mindset and

⁷² Ἰσχυρότεροι plays on the self-perception of the Corinthian wise as “strong enough” to withstand temptations (cf. 10:12), likely on the basis of their knowledge (8:1-2). The Corinthians felt they would be able to withstand the allurements of impotent idols that accompany idol meals due to their monotheistic confessions. Paul turns the question. Do the Corinthians also believe they are stronger than the Lord?

way of thinking with respect to idolatrous contexts. The exegetical analysis shows that 10:1-22 focuses on (1) the Corinthians' arrogant thinking that their possession of spiritual provisions enables them to participate in idol meat in all contexts (10:1-13) and (2) their lack of thoughtfulness about what constitutes idolatry (10:14-22). First Corinthians 10:1-22 corrects both of these shortcomings by warning the Corinthians that they can fall if they do not use their gifts properly and by illustrating for them practical contexts that constitute idolatry.

In this section, we discuss how certain components within these two major instructional areas play a central role in the Corinthians' moral development. Urging a humble self-perception, informing the community that Christic freedom involves avoidance of trials, and illustrating the type of meal that is idolatrous each contributes to the formation of the Corinthians' Christic wisdom.

First, the call to humility depends on the moralist logic that true wisdom requires the admission of one's weaknesses. Emphasizing that the Corinthian wise may fall not only shows the self-proclaimed wise that they have weakness, it also calls them to acknowledge their weakness. First Corinthians 10:12 trades on the same Socratic thought as 1 Cor 8:2 and 3:18. Just as 1 Cor 8:2 implies that "the one who thinks he knows something" must admit his ignorance and 3:18 indicates that one must become a fool to become wise, so too does 10:12 call those who think they are immune from falling to admit the possibility that they may fall. By informing the wise that they may fall, Paul invites them to think that they are not as ineluctable or strong as they might think and, in doing so, instills in them an aspect of true wisdom. The Corinthians become wiser and stronger by admitting their limitations and weaknesses.

Second, the exhortation to “flee [φεύγετε] from idolatry” also shapes the wise Corinthians’ understanding of mature Christic behavior. The role φεύγειν plays in moral education will help to illustrate this point.

Among the moralists, φεύγειν commonly denotes avoidance of some external circumstance or vice. The action may denote either the response of an ordinary individual to false fear or the proper response of a mature thinker to improper or vicious conduct. When it characterizes ordinary individuals, it often describes their inappropriate response to circumstances they *should* face. In one description, Epictetus compares the immature person to a fearful scout who recommends *fleeing* danger:

But no one sends a coward as a scout, that, if he merely hears a noise and sees a shadow anywhere, he may come running back in terror and report ‘The enemy is already upon us.’ So now also, if you should come and tell us, ‘The state of things at Rome is fearful; terrible is death, terrible is exile, terrible is reviling, terrible is poverty; *flee* [φεύγετε], sirs, the enemy is upon us!’ we shall say to you, ‘Away, prophesy to yourself! Our one mistake was that we sent a man like you as a scout.’ (*Diatr.* 1.24.3-5 [Oldfather, LCL])

The analogy reflects the philosophical idea that non-preferred indifferent objects such as death, exile, reviling, and poverty are not to be feared or ‘fled,’ but faced with courage. Refusal of fear and ‘avoidance’ of indifferent objects, according to Epictetus, is the mark of the ἐλεύθερος: “whoever, therefore, wants to be free [ἐλεύθερος], let him neither wish for anything, nor *avoid* [φευγέτω] anything, that is under the control of others; or else he is necessarily a slave.”⁷³

In a similar description, Epictetus uses the imagery of a deer to contrast the ordinary human response to fear with the ideal response of a wise man:

⁷³ Epictetus, *Ench.* 14.2 (Oldfather, LCL). Cf. *Diatr.* 1.4.19: “...and if he has learned that he who craves or shuns [φεύγων] the things that are not under his control can be neither faithful nor free [ἐλεύθερος]...” (Oldfather, LCL). In *Diatr.* 2.17.17, Epictetus asks why his student is trying to ‘escape’ (φεύγεις) what is necessary.

However, we act like deer: when the hinds are frightened by the feathers and *run away* [φεύγουσιν] from them...So it is with us also; where do we show fear? About the things which lie outside the province of the moral purpose. Again, in which do we behave with confidence as if there were no danger? In the things which lie within the province of the moral purpose...Our confidence ought, therefore to be turned toward death...whereas we do just the opposite—in the face of death we turn to *flight* [φύγην]. (*Diatr.* 2.1.8-14 [Oldfather, LCL])

In this excerpt, Epictetus equates the actions of the deer with the natural human state.

The analogy demonstrates that while the mature person ought to face death with confidence, the ordinary person, like the fearful deer, turns to ‘flight’ (φύγην) in the face of death. Like a deer that does not properly value external objects and so flees perceived danger, an ordinary human is frightened and so flees objects of perceived, but unreal, harm. The person who learns the proper value of externals attains the state of tranquility, fearlessness, and freedom (ἐλευθερία).

Even though ‘flight’ from externals characterizes an immature person, Epictetus recommends that students should adopt this mode of action until they gain the ability to face them. He advises, “*flee* far away from the things that are too *strong* for you [τὰ πρωτὰ δὲ φεύγε μακρὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ἰσχυροτέρων]. It is not a fair match that, between a pretty wench and a young beginner in philosophy.”⁷⁴ Similarly, he advises his students to “*flee* [φεύγετε] from...former habits”—such as drinking, shows, gladiatorial combats, gymnasium-colonnades, and circuses—until they acquire a mature state of mind.⁷⁵

Nonetheless, in contrast to these descriptions, sometimes ‘flight’ *is* the mature mode of action. The moralists commonly list vicious actions that individuals at all philosophical levels should avoid. Epictetus, for instance, writes:

When you decide that something ought to be done and are doing it, never avoid [φύγη] being seen doing it, though the many shall form an unfavourable opinion

⁷⁴ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.12.12 (Oldfather, LCL).

⁷⁵ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 3.16.14-16.

about it. If, however, what you are doing is not right, avoid [φεῦγε] the thing itself; but if it is right, why do you fear those who rebuke you wrongly? (*Ench.* 35 [Oldfather, LCL])

In between the two exhortations to continue doing things they should *not* avoid, Epictetus asserts that certain things are “not right” and, thus, to be fled.⁷⁶

The moralists’ use of φεύγειν may inform our understanding of 10:14. Given that the Corinthians understood themselves as ‘strong’ and that the moralists associated ‘flight,’ in part, with a weak and immature response to trials, we can easily see that the Corinthian wise may have heard Paul’s command to ‘flee’ as an instruction for weak and immature individuals and so unworthy of their mature and advanced status.

Paul, however, likely appeals to them as sensible people (φρονίμοις) who ought to recognize that *flight* is sometimes the truly wise and mature course of action. As the moralists show, ‘avoidance’ of vice is central to the life of the wise man. For the mature thinker, φεύγετε does not connote fearful fleeing, but wise avoidance. The wise man does not act by the principle, “always endure all things.” Rather, he recognizes that certain circumstances and contexts are to be avoided. Accordingly, the wise and prudent Corinthians should recognize that all idol meat meals are not—as the wise may improperly suppose—a trial or burden that requires endurance, but, in the language of the moralists, in some cases a ‘vicious’ activity from which they should flee.

Third, the section develops the circumstantial reasoning ability that is necessary to distinguish ‘vicious’ from permissible activity (10:15-22). As we examined in chapter 2, Seneca’s *Ep.* 22 illustrates the importance of recognizing the *type* of context or

⁷⁶ Cf. “As from the face of a serpent, flee from sin; for if you come near it, it will bite you” (Sir 21:2) and “For a child with a holy spirit will flee [φεύξετε] trickery” (Wis 1:5).

circumstance when determining whether to endure or escape.⁷⁷ The letter addresses Lucilius' participation in the world of business. He writes that he cannot simply provide a motto such as, "It is base to flinch under a burden," because a mature thinker must first evaluate whether the 'burden' in question is worthy of bearing. Seneca judges that the quality and nature of the business life renders such a life *unworthy* of bearing. Thus, Seneca advises departure.

The letter illustrates that wisdom requires evaluation of circumstances in order to determine whether the wise course of action is participation or avoidance. First Corinthians 10:14-22 share the logic of Seneca. Paul not only advises avoidance of idolatry (10:14), with 10:15-22 he demonstrates the type of meal that is idolatrous and, thus, to be avoided.

To do so, Paul offers both the framework that should guide their practical decision making and the practical decision such a framework ought to discern. He emphasizes that the Corinthians should think about meal participation on the basis of their participation in the body of Christ. Some community meals are not merely social engagements but, like the Eucharist, body-forming practices. Because the Eucharist forms the community into a body of Christ—in which, as we see in 6:12-20, God's Holy Spirit resides—participation in meals that sacrifice to other gods is exclusively prohibited.

Read in this way, 10:15-22 demonstrates a form of practical wisdom. It helps the Corinthians *identify* types of meals that are idolatrous. Just as Seneca does not answer Lucilius's question about the business world with the motto, "endure all things," so does 10:15-22 imply that the Corinthians must evaluate the particular circumstance in order to determine whether endurance or flight is the wise course of action. Without 10:15-22,

⁷⁷ See the discussion of the letter on pp. 110-12 above.

the Corinthians would not have a clear sense of either the framework from which to make such decisions or what types of meal participation constitutes idolatry.

4.2. Moral Formation of Community

These three aspects of Christic maturity do more than develop the Corinthians' moral formation at an individualized level. These developments also hold consequences for the formation and cohesion of the community as a whole. Encouraging the wise to admit their weakness promotes sympathy toward others in Corinth. We saw in chapter 3 that humility is an essential dispositional trait for sympathy toward others. As Philodemus observes, arrogant individuals do not have the ability to desire the welfare of others or act in ways that promote it.⁷⁸ Presumably, Philodemus would also contend that thinking modestly about oneself disposes that individual to sympathize with and respond more generously to the needs of others. Paul follows this logic. His argument in 1 Cor 8 connects the admission of ignorance (8:2) with the concern for the other (8:7-13).

Thus, while 10:1-22 does not give overt attention to "the other," the call for the wise to more sober self-judgment yields communal benefit. Philodemus and Paul both imply that attention, care, and concern for others naturally accompany sober-thinking and humility. As the wise come into a greater awareness of their own weaknesses, they will be able to sympathize with and be more considerate of the needs of those community members who are weaker than they.

The command to "flee from idolatry" and delineation of idolatrous contexts in 10:14-22 also tacitly promotes Christic solidarity within the community. This influence does not necessarily surface in the minds of the Corinthian wise or even at a conscious level in Paul's mind. Nonetheless, promoting 'flight' from idolatry instills a common

⁷⁸ Voula Tsouna-McKirahan, *The Ethics of Philodemus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 146.

practice of abstention within the community. Unlike 1 Cor 8, the call to abstention for *theological* purposes in 10:14 applies to all Corinthians, including the wise. Thus, as the wise decide that they must ‘avoid’ certain idol meat meals, they model abstention for the weak and so create space for the weak to do the same with regard to idol meat in general.

In these ways, 10:1-22 continues implicitly to promote ἀγάπη and Christic solidarity in Corinth. As the wise increasingly admit the limitations of their γνῶσις and strength, their arrogance dissipates, ἀγάπη takes root, and they will more willingly stand with and protect the weak in circumstances in which they are safe, but the weak risk peril. Moreover, as the wise increasingly *act on* the limitations of their γνῶσις by discerning and fleeing from idolatrous contexts, their actions will increasingly display Christic solidarity with the weak by making abstention for the sake of not committing idolatry a shared experience of all in the community.

Chapter 6: Analysis of 1 Cor 10:23-11:1

1. Introduction

The transition from 10:1-22 to 10:23-11:1 is sharp. The appeal against idolatry gives way to a twice repeated Corinthian slogan: πάντα ἔξεστιν. After two sustained monologic arguments (9:1-27 and 10:1-22), 10:23 echoes the dialogic mode of discourse last seen in 1 Cor 8. Moreover, whereas 10:1-22 limits the wise Corinthians' participation in idol meals, 10:23-11:1 returns to the theme of permissibility and "building up" others that occupied 8:1-9:27.

In addition to stark differences in form and content between 10:1-22 and 10:23-11:1, the concrete and detailed nature of the instructions in 10:25 and 27-28 distinguishes this section from the imperatives in the previous sections of 1 Cor 8-10. In these final verses, Paul gives the Corinthians three pieces of advice. He allows the wise to eat idol meat purchased from the marketplace. He permits them to eat idol meat at meals hosted by unbelievers. He advises them to abstain from eating meat at pagan hosted meals when a weak believer expresses concern over the meat's sacrificial past. Prior to 10:23-11:1, the argument includes eight imperatives. Among these, six are general injunctions prohibiting broad courses of action (e.g., 10:7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14), one is a general exhortation regarding the goal of Christian life (9:24), and one invites the wise to be mindful of circumstances in which they might cause the weak to stumble in matters of idol meat (8:9).¹ None of these imperatives, however, issues the specific, contextualized

¹ The imperative in 8:9 is somewhat more detailed than the others. Paul pairs this exhortation with a practical scenario presented in the form of a rhetorical question (8:10). While the pair of verses hints at a concrete precept (i.e., "do not eat idol meat at pagan temples if a weak believer is present"), the two verses do not give direct advice in the manner of 10:25 and 27-28. Moreover, while 10:14 (cf. 10:7) are supported by a detailed analogy of what constitutes idolatry (10:16-22), Paul does not directly connect the command to a *practical* scenario (as he does in 10:25 and 27-28).

advice that characterizes 10:25 and 27-28. The distinctive nature of these verses raises the question of their function in the discourse.

Scholars have attempted to account for the advice in 10:25 and 27-28 in a number of ways. First Corinthians 10:23-11:1 (esp. 10:25-30) is often regarded as a new context that was not previously in view in 8:1-10:22.² Others judge that 10:23-11:1 is a permissive counterpoise to the largely prohibitive instruction from 8:1-9:27.³ Still others have accounted for the transition by partitioning the argument.⁴

In contrast to these proposals, our exegetical analysis of 10:23-11:1 will show that this section, properly viewed, recapitulates the entire discourse.⁵ Reading 10:23-11:1 in

² This position includes two approaches. The first judges that 8:1-10:22 addresses temple settings, while 10:23-11:1 addresses non-cultic settings such as the marketplace and private home (e.g., Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυστα.” 178a; Gooch, *Dangerous Food*, 81-88; Dawes, “The Danger of Idolatry,” 92; Joop F. M. Smit, “1 Cor 8,1-6: A Rhetorical Partitio: A Contribution to the Coherence of 1 Cor 8,1-11,1,” in *The Corinthian Correspondence* [ed. R. Bieringer; BETL 125; Leuven: University Press, 1996], 582). The other approach judges that 1 Cor 8 and 10:23-11:1 each have in view non-cultic meals, which are permitted except for the qualification of the ‘weaker’ believer. The latter section differs from 1 Cor 8 because it offers new contexts, in addition to non-cultic meals at temples, in which the Corinthians may partake (i.e., the marketplace and private homes) (e.g., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 260; Bruce N. Fisk, “Eating Meat Offered to Idols: Corinthian Behavior and Pauline Response in 1 Corinthians 8-10 [A Response to Gordon Fee],” *TJ* 10 [1989]: 49-70; and Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 397-401).

While this second view rightly judges that 1 Cor 8 and 10:23-11:1 each pertains to non-cultic meals, Fisk’s logic exemplifies the difficulty of claiming that 10:23-11:1 offers new contexts. Fisk argues that 1 Cor 8 lays out general ethical principles and that 10:23-11:1 “reiterate[s] and generalize[s] those principles so that they apply to all dimensions of life” (“Eating Meat Offered to Idols,” 68). If the purpose of 10:23-11:1 is to “reiterate” and “generalize” the principles of 1 Cor 8 to all facets of life it is odd that Paul would intentionally shift from one context (i.e., temple) to others (i.e., marketplace and private home). Rather, the contexts imagined in 10:27-28 should be broad enough to include the marketplace, homes, and temples (cf. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 177).

³ E.g., Pierce, *Conscience*, 79 and Smit, “1 Cor 8,1-6: A Rhetorical Partitio,” 590 and “The Function of First Corinthians 10,23-30: A Rhetorical Anticipation,” *Bib* 78 [1997]: 380-81. Smit characterizes 10:23-30 as “anticipation” of Corinthian objections. In response to potential objection from 10:1-22, Paul abruptly switches contexts from a general prohibition against sacrificial meals (10:1-22) to suggesting places where it is permissible to eat (10:23-30) (“The Function of First Corinthians 10,23-30,” 380-81). This view does not give appropriate weight to the advice to abstain in 10:28.

⁴ E.g., Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, xl-xliii and Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 87-96 and 224-29. Each judges that 10:1-22 belongs to Letter A, while 8:1-9:23 and 10:23-11:1 belong to Letter B.

⁵ E.g., Hurd, *Origin*, 125: “Closer comparison reveals that the whole of 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 is a point by point restatement and summary of the argument of 1 Cor. 8 and 9” and Barrett, *First Epistle*, 239: “it is time to sum up in terms of practical advice and precept.” Cf. Willis, *Idol Meat*, 262-63; Duane F. Watson, “1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1 in the Light of Greco-Roman Rhetoric: The Role of Rhetorical Questions,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 310-12; and Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 256. Pace Smit who thinks only 10:31-11:1 is recapitulative (“The Function of First Corinthians 10,23-30,” 380-81).

this way highlights its role as the concluding summation of the mode of reasoning Paul wishes the community to emulate. The section offers the Corinthians the guiding deliberative principles of Christic imitation and examples of Christic reasoning in practical contexts. These aspects are the lynchpins that hold together 10:23-11:1 with both 10:1-22 and 8:1-9:27.

The discussion begins with an exegetical analysis of 10:23-11:1. This analysis answers many of the interpretive questions inherent to the unit. Moreover, it reveals the section's recapitulative function within the overall discourse. In light of this role, we observe how each of the subunits in 10:23-11:1 (10:23-24 and 25-30) contributes to the discourse as a whole and, particularly, how the section's contribution to teaching a new mode of reasoning links 10:23-11:1 with 8:1-10:1-22.

2. Exegetical Analysis of 1 Cor 10:23-30

2.1. 1 Cor 10:23-24

In 10:23, Paul quotes an expression that is widely regarded as a Corinthian slogan: πάντα ἔξῃστιν.⁶ The slogan not only stands as the opening phrase of the final section of the idol meat discourse, it also stands as the phrase that introduces the topic of sexual immorality—and foreshadows the discussion of βρῶμα—in 6:12. This earlier section shows that the Corinthians used this expression in connection with arguments that defended their free practices in matters of sexual conduct and food. First Corinthians 6:13 follows the slogan with a corresponding proof that grounds their claim to freedom in both areas: “food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food.” We have already reviewed the role this observation plays in the defense of their freedom concerning idol meat (see pp. 142-43 and 165-68 above). First Corinthians 6:12-20 suggests that the

⁶ Hurd and the scholars on Table 5 (*Origin*, 68) as well as most subsequent commentaries.

Corinthians also used this observation about food to justify their sexual freedom (e.g., with prostitutes [6:15] and a father's wife [5:1]). They likely deduced from Paul's teaching on the indifference of food on the body an equal indifference of sex on the body. If food is *adiaphora* and, therefore, permissible, then surely so must sex be absolutely *adiaphora* and, therefore, always permissible.

The Corinthians did not likely derive their notion of free conduct completely from this deduction. Paul's proclamation of a law-free gospel, in which Christ brought the end of the law and established freedom, must have resounded in the Corinthians' ears. First Corinthians 9 itself reveals glimpses of this proclamation. Paul defends his own ἐξουσία and ἐλευθερία in the gospel and the exemplary form of the argument suggests that the Corinthians also have this freedom (cf. 10:29b). Moreover, as we have just observed, 1 Corinthians identifies certain elements of the law, including idol meat and circumcision, as *adiaphora* in the new age (e.g., 1 Cor 6:13 and 8:8 [food] and 7:19 [circumcision]).

In addition to these elements, the Corinthians' self-understanding was also likely informed by the wider culture. Πάντα ἔξεστιν echoes the popular Stoic notion that the wise man is free and can do anything he wishes. Epictetus taught that "freedom" is "the right [τὸ ἐξεῖναι] to live as we wish."⁷ Diogenes Laertius wrote of the Stoic teaching that "freedom is the power [ἐξουσίαν] of autonomous action [αὐτοπραγίας], and slavery the lack of autonomous action."⁸ Similarly, Philo writes that the free man has "...the power [ἐξουσίαν] to do anything, and to live as he wishes, and he for whom these things [are lawful] [ταῦτ' ἔξεστιν] must be free... The good man cannot be compelled or

⁷ Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.1.23 (Oldfather, LCL).

⁸ Diogenes Laertius 7.121.

prevented...one is prevented when he does not get what he desires...”⁹ In each of these excerpts, freedom *appears* to be defined as the power of autonomous, libertine action. A sage can merely do whatever he desires.¹⁰

If such philosophical expressions of freedom were common in Corinth, the philosophically minded in the Corinthian church may have coupled this concept with Paul’s teachings on freedom and authority in Christ and determined that they have the ἐξουσία (e.g., 1 Cor 8:9) and ἐλευθερία (e.g., 1 Cor 9:1, 19) to act as they wish.¹¹ Within this general framework, they marshaled arguments concerning the *adiaphora* status of food to support their prerogative to engage in sexual activity (6:13-14) and idol meat (8:8).

An individualistic and flat mindset characterizes the self-understanding that underlies this slogan. Πάντα ἔξεστιν in 10:23 and πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν in 6:12 show that the Corinthians are focused on their own rights. As the μοι in 6:12 clearly expresses, the Corinthians are concerned with what is lawful ‘for me.’ Moreover, the arguments and claims of freedom result in a belief that these rights that apply without exception in *all* circumstances. The Corinthians exhibit sensitivity neither toward others nor toward circumstances that may qualify their libertine conduct.

⁹ Philo, *Prob.* 59-60 (Colson, LCL). My translation follows Colson’s with the exception of the bracketed English text. Cf. Dio Chrysostom: “...who, a keener sense of justice than he who is above the law; who a more rigorous self-control than he to whom all things are permissible [πάντα ἔξεστι]?” (*Or.* 3.10 [Cohon, LCL]).

¹⁰ As Conzelmann translates πάντα ἔξεστιν: “I am free to do anything” (*1 Corinthians*, 108).

¹¹ Scholars have typically recognized the connection between ἐξουσία and the phrase “all things are ἔξεστιν for me” in 6:12 and 10:23. Both terms derive from the same root ἐκ + εἰμί (cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 461; Horsley, “Consciousness and Freedom among the Corinthians,” 579; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 99; and the discussion by Lincoln Galloway (*Freedom in the Gospel: Paul’s Exemplum in 1 Cor 9 in Conversation with the Discourses of Epictetus and Philo* [Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2004], 4-7). The wordplay between ἔξεστιν and ἐξουσία becomes more apparent with Paul’s use of ἐξουσιασθήσομαι in 6:12: πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει· πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπό τινος.

Paul does not deny their claim of πάντα ἔξεστιν. Rather, he qualifies it with two principles that prioritize concern for the other over individualized freedom. Though “all things are lawful,” not all things are ‘beneficial’ and not all things ‘build up.’ The two qualifications shift emphasis from individual rights to communal benefit. While πάντα ἔξεστιν implies seeking what is permissible ‘for me’ (i.e., one’s individual ‘rights’ as a believer), συμφέρει and οἰκοδομεῖ focus decision making on the benefit of others.¹² The verse encourages them not to reflect on the outcomes of their decisions as isolated units, but as part of an integrated community.¹³

Paul makes this transition explicit in 10:24. The maxim, μηδεὶς τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ζητεῖτω ἀλλὰ τὸ τοῦ ἑτέρου, identifies the ‘other’—not oneself—as the intended object of συμφέρει and οἰκοδομεῖ.¹⁴ By making the abbreviated maxims of 10:23 explicit, this verse sharpens the contrast between self-centered, individualized freedom and a mode of thought that focuses on the upbuilding of others. The rubric of decision making is not just lawfulness or individual rights, but, more importantly, the benefit of another.

2.2. 1 Cor 10:25-30

In 10:25-30, Paul shifts from general maxims to specific advice. He presents two practical scenarios in which eating idol meat is permissible (thus echoing πάντα ἔξεστιν

¹² Like πάντα ἔξεστιν, συμφέρει reaches back to 6:12. While Paul also qualifies the Corinthian slogan using this term, in this earlier section the emphasis lies more directly on the ‘advantage’ of the individual than the ‘other.’ In contrast to 10:23, Paul uses ἐξουσιασθήσομαι, rather than οἰκοδομεῖ, as the second qualifier of πάντα ἔξεστιν. The first person singular of this second verb—along with the inclusion of μοι in the two Corinthian slogans—gives συμφέρει an individual focus.

¹³ Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 3.64: “For just as the laws set the safety of all above the safety of individuals, so a good, wise, and law-abiding man, conscious of his duty to the state, studies the advantage (*utilitati*) of all more than that of himself or of any single individual” (Rackham, LCL).

¹⁴ Note the syntactical similarity between 10:23 and 10:24. Like the contrast between “all things are lawful” and “ἀλλ’ not all things are beneficial... ἀλλ’ not all things build up” in 10:23, ἀλλά separates seeking one’s own advantage from seeking the advantage of the other in 10:24.

in 10:23) and one in which it is not advisable.¹⁵ The first concerns meat sold at the market (10:25). The second pertains to a meal—at an unspecified location—hosted by an unbeliever (10:27). The third presents the same context as 10:27, but with the addition of someone pointing out the sacrificial nature of the meat (10:28).

These seemingly straightforward instructions open several exegetical questions for 10:25 and 27-28. First, Paul instructs the Corinthians to eat meat sold at the market and at a meal hosted by an unbeliever without ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν. Each component of the phrase has multiple possibilities. Ἀνακρίνοντες could either denote examination of the meat’s history or an activity of ‘conscience.’ Διὰ could either denote “for the sake of” or “on account of.” Finally, συνείδησις could refer to awareness of idol meat, sense of duty, or one’s moral awareness (i.e., sense of guilt or innocence of one’s conduct). Proper interpretation requires discernment over each of these components.¹⁶ Second, the context Paul has in view in 10:27-28 is unclear. While 10:25 specifies the meat market (ἐν μακέλλῳ), 10:27-28 does not indicate plainly whether these meals are hosted in public buildings or private homes. Third, the “informant” in 10:28 is not immediately obvious. Is it the host of the meal, a Greek bystander, or a weak believer?

We begin exploring these questions not by addressing the specific components of the verses, but by establishing the structural framework of 10:25-30. Paul’s advice in

¹⁵ The primary position of πᾶν in 10:25 and 10:27 points back to πάντα in 10:23. The two verses show situations in which “all things” are lawful. Thus, the emphasis on freedom in 10:25-27 is not a response to the limitations Paul imposes upon freedom in 8:1-10:22 (*pace* Fisk, “Eating Meat Offered to Idols,” 65-67). Rather, the instructions emphasize areas where the Corinthian claim to lawful activity on the basis of theological principles is appropriate. Accordingly, ἐάν δέ in 10:28 picks up the ἀλλ’οὐ in 10:23.

¹⁶ These choices have led to several translation variants. Some translations associate ἀνακρίνοντες with συνείδησιν, e.g., “without raising questions of conscience” (NIV, NLT). Others divide ἀνακρίνοντες from συνείδησιν, e.g., “asking no questions which might trouble conscience” (Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 120) or “without raising questions of conscience,” but with “questions” pointing to the meat and not the “rightness or wrongness” of the act itself (e.g., Fee, *First Epistle*, 475-76, 481-82). Thiselton generally agrees with Fee’s assessment, but translates διὰ, “on account of” (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 779, 784-85).

10:25-27 and 10:28-29a reflects the same oscillation between permissibility and qualification as does 10:23-24. In agreement with the Corinthians, Paul presents two practical scenarios in which eating idol meat is ‘lawful.’ The wise may eat meat purchased at the market (10:25) or at a meal hosted by an unbeliever (10:27). Moreover, as we will describe in greater detail below, Paul establishes the ‘lawfulness’ of his advice in 10:26 by using a theological proof similar to the style the wise adopt to justify their ἐξουσία in matters of idol meat (6:13, 8:4, 8), respectively. In keeping with the movement of 10:23-24, Paul follows the two permissive scenarios with a circumstance in which he advises abstention. Though theological justification for eating idol meat exists (e.g., 10:26), Paul instructs them to abstain in the presence of another who points out the nature of the meat (10:28-29a). In 10:29-30, Paul offers support for the advice to abstain just as he does for his advice to partake in 10:26.

The parallelism of this progression with that of 10:23-24 will shed light on the exegetical difficulties of 10:25-30. Rather than working linearly from 10:25 to 10:30, we begin with an analysis of 10:28 and move out from there.

The first question this oscillating pattern answers is whether διὰ denotes “on account of” conscience or “for the sake of” conscience. The oscillation between individual right and concern for the other in 10:23-24 (as well as the focus of concern for the other in 10:32-33) suggests that Paul’s recommendation for abstention in 10:28-29a is “for the sake of” the other as well. In keeping with the focus of 1 Cor 8:1-9:27 and 10:23-24, we may infer that Paul issues this advice in order to seek the informant’s salvific good.

A second question associated with 10:28 is the identity of the ‘informant.’ If someone at the meal announces that the meat is sacrificial, then Paul advises the Corinthians not to eat “for the sake of the informant” and *his* (i.e., the informant’s) conscience. Though some have proposed that the informant is the non-believing host or a non-believing guest, the argumentative logic and context of 10:23-11:1 and 8:1-11:1 as a whole suggest that the informant is a weak believer.¹⁷ While Paul includes non-Christians in the purview of 9:19-23 and 10:31-11:1, the major problem Paul addresses in the discourse is *intra*-community relationships. First Corinthians 8-9 primarily address the wise Corinthians’ treatment of the weak.¹⁸ Moreover, if the informant were a non-believing Greek, the principle of Christic accommodation that Paul promotes in 9:19-23 and echoes again in 10:32-33 suggests that the appropriate action in such contexts would be to partake. In the case of an *adiaphora* object such as idol meat, the principles “become like those outside the law to those outside the law” and “do not be a source of stumbling for Greeks” apply in pagan contexts, thus prompting a Corinthian to eat rather than to abstain.¹⁹

In contrast, the one instance in which Paul clearly advises abstention in 8:1-9:27 is in the presence of weak believers. Thus, in 10:28, we can imagine a gathering hosted by a non-believer that both wise and weak Corinthians attend. In light of the sensitive

¹⁷ Weiss observes that the informant cannot be the host because Paul would not have used *τις* again in 10:28 if this were the case (*Korintherbrief*, 264-65).

¹⁸ The only additional mention of *συνείδησις* outside of 10:23-11:1 refers to the ‘conscience’ of weak believers (8:7, 10, 12), which makes it likely that its use in 10:28 implies the same. Cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 121.

¹⁹ With Weiss and Barrett, it is difficult to imagine how a non-Christian Greek would take umbrage with a Christian’s *participation* in idol food [Weiss, *Korintherbrief*, 265 and Barrett, *First Epistle*, 242; cf. Willis, *Idol Meat*, 241 n. 90]). Fee contends that the informant is a pagan attendee of the meal who has pointed out the nature of the meat to the Christian “out of a sense of moral obligation to the Christian, believing that Christians, like Jews, would not eat such food” (*First Epistle*, 485). The Christian should abstain so as not to offend that person’s moral expectations of Christians. This scenario reads too much imagination into the text as it exhibits no consistency with any of Paul’s teaching in 8:1-11:1.

state of his conscience, a weak Corinthian inquires about the nature of the meat and informs his fellow-believers of its sacrificial history. By doing so, the weak believer makes his weakness known to his fellow-believers. In light of their awareness of a weak believer, the principle “become weak to the weak” and, thus, abstention applies. The Corinthian wise should not eat for the sake of their fellow-believer’s malleable and misinformed conscience.

The next question pertains to the meaning of *συνείδησις* in 10:28, 29a, and 29b. We have already reviewed the sense of *συνείδησις* in these verses in chapter 3 and so only briefly comment on them here.²⁰ In chapter 3, we judged that *συνείδησις* demands a fluid understanding. As Maurer describes it, conscience:

embraces in a totality the perception of a distinction between the facts, the acknowledgement and choice of divinely willed obligations, and self-evaluation. Hence *συνείδησις* means a “‘percipient and active self-awareness’ which is threatened at its heart by the disjunction of acknowledgement and perception, willing and knowing, judgment and action...It is man himself aware of himself in perception and acknowledgment, in willing and acting.” (*TDNT*, 7:914)

Maurer’s definition, which we uphold, shows that *συνείδησις* could encompass an individual’s awareness of self and the world, sense of obligation on the basis of that awareness, and a moral self-awareness (i.e., innocence or guilt) that accompanies one’s actions. Accordingly, a ‘weak’ *συνείδησις* could connote a weak believer’s lack of ‘awareness’ (i.e., knowledge) about idol meat, their weak sense of moral obligation to God over idols, and perhaps the sense of guilt that accompanies their participation in idol meat—as a result of their conflicting sense of obligation about God and idols.

In 10:28-29a, *συνείδησις* at least retains the sense of “awareness” or “knowledge” about idol meat. The clearest clue lies in 10:29b. Paul warns that he does not want to

²⁰ See pp. 159-60 above.

give his freedom an opportunity to be condemned by the ‘conscience’ of another. ‘Conscience’ here cannot mean the “moral awareness” (i.e., clear or guilty conscience) of another. Nothing in the text implies that condemnation occurs as a result of the weak eating idol meat and suffering a guilty conscience. Rather, Paul likely has in view the sense of duty that arises out of their knowledge of idol meat. Though they are inclined to idols, the sense of duty to God on the basis of Paul’s teaching leads them to condemn the wise when they eat. Thus, Paul does not want to give his freedom to eat idol meat an opportunity to be condemned by another who has misinformed awareness (i.e., a weak conscience) about idol meat. The informant’s care to search out the nature of the meat and inform a wise Corinthian of his findings points to such a believer.

In light of these findings in 10:28-29, we return to 10:25 and 27. The continuity in the syntax between 10:28-29a and 10:25 and 27 leads us to expect the same rendering of *διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν* in 10:25 and 27 as in *δι’...τὴν συνείδησιν* in 10:28:

πάν τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ παλούμενον ἐσθίετε μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν (10:25)
εἴ τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων καὶ θέλετε πορεύεσθαι, πάν το παρατιθέμενον...ἐσθίετε μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν (10:27)
ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν, μὴ ἐσθίετε δι’...τὴν συνείδησιν (10:28)

Given that *διὰ* in 10:28 is best translated as “for the sake of,” this parallelism suggests that *διὰ* in 10:25 and 27 indicates that Paul does not want the Corinthians to examine the issue “for the sake of” conscience. Moreover, though we are careful not to limit *συνείδησις* to a lesser range than the fullness of Maurer’s definition, in light of 10:28-29, *τὴν συνείδησιν* in 10:25 and 27 certainly includes a “sense of obligation that results from an awareness” of idol meat. Thus, combining the *διὰ* and *συνείδησιν*, 10:25 and 27 instruct the Corinthians not to raise questions “for the sake of a duty that is informed by their knowledge of idol meat.” Matters of idol meat are not a matter of conscience.

To complete a full understanding of μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, we return to the question of whether ἀνακρίνοντες points to examining the meat's history or to an activity of the conscience. Again, 10:28 is informative. It indicates that the meat itself is at issue. The weak-believing informant tells a wise Corinthian that the meat is ἱερόθυτον. We can imagine that the context is a meal in which the meat's history is not obvious and a Christian guest or servant investigates or is aware of the meat's origins. His concern over the meat compels him to inform his fellow Christian of its history.

If 10:28 indicates that the type of meat is the central concern, then ἀνακρίνοντες in 10:25 and 27 in all likelihood refers to “examination” of the meat's history. Paul advises the Corinthians to eat meat purchased at the marketplace and served by a non-believing host of a meal without asking the butcher or the host about the meat's history.

Thus, of the possible renderings of μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν, translations that separate ἀνακρίνοντες from διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν are to be preferred. The Corinthians are not instructed to avoid “raising questions of conscience,” but to avoid “examining the meat's history for the sake of conscience,” that is, for the sake of a supposed moral obligation arising from a certain understanding about idol meat. The *type* of meat is not a matter of conscience.

Before moving away from 10:25 and 10:27, one final question is necessary. What is the rubric for decision making Paul envisions in 10:25-27? Some scholars determine that Paul bases his instruction on whether the meat's origin is known or unknown—as indicated by ἀνακρίνοντες. This rubric implies that eating meat is permissible only so long as its origin is unknown.²¹ Others suggest that the location of the meal is the

²¹ E.g., Peter J. Tomson, *Paul and the Jewish Law: Halakha in the Letters of the Apostle to the Gentiles* (CRINT 3; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1990), 203-20. Tomson argues that knowledge of the meat's sacrificial

primary factor for decision making.²² We challenge both of these points and favor a third. Paul has the intent of the meal in view and not awareness of the meat's history or the meal's location.

The first position fails because it introduces the false notion that Paul is ultimately concerned with the meat itself. An essential basis of Paul's agreement with the Corinthians is that εἰδωλόθυτον/ιερόθυτον (i.e., meat which *has* passed through a pagan sacrificial rite) is simply food and nothing more. In 8:8 Paul implies that εἰδωλόθυτον is nothing but βρῶμα and, thus, not of concern. Moreover, in 10:19 he explicitly states that idol meat is 'nothing': "what then am I saying, that idol meat is anything?" which implies the answer, "no."

In addition, if knowledge of the meat's history rendered it inherently unsafe, we would expect 10:28 simply to read: ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπη τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν, μὴ ἐσθίετε. Paul, however, explicitly states that the reason for abstaining in this circumstance is a matter of another's conscience, not objectivity.

The rubric of decision making is also not the meal's *location*. In contrast to those who associate a meal's religious or non-religious nature with a specific 'location' (i.e., private = secular and public = religious), the public or private nature of ancient meals did not indicate its level of religiosity. Household meals could be religious and meals at temples could remain detached from cultic life.

Papyrus fragments discovered in Egypt, commonly adduced in discussions of 1 Cor 8-10, include invitations to religious meals that take place in private homes.²³

history makes the context idolatrous. In such cases, the Corinthians are not to eat in order not to partake in idolatry. Concern over the informant (δι' ἐκεῖνον τὸν μηνύσαντα) reflects the informant's idolatrous intention. On account of this intention (i.e., συνείδησις), Paul advises the Corinthians to abstain so as to avoid idolatry.

²² See particularly the scholars mentioned in n. 2 above.

Among these, some invitations are for a specific social purpose (e.g., weddings, birthdays, coming of age, etc.) while others are unspecified. Among the invitations with an unspecified purpose, three include the phrase εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος (“at the table of the Lord Sarapis”) (P. Yale 85; P. Oslo 157; P. Oxy. 523), which is identical to the phraseology used in invitations for meals that take place at a Sarapeion (e.g., P. Oxy. 110 and 1755). If we stand by the logic that temple invitations are to cultic events, the identical phrasing of the invitations to private households suggests that the festivities at private homes are also cultic.²⁴ Gatherings in the name of Sarapis could be devotional regardless of the public or private nature of the location.

Ancient literary evidence also attests that religious rites took place in private homes. Athenaeus, for instance, writes of ‘sacrifice’ taking place at house banquets in Alexandria. As he laments the misconduct and inappropriate behavior at house parties, he states that “if the banquet happens to be a religious one, even the god will cover his face and depart.”²⁵ Similarly, Plutarch describes a traditional sacrificial rite performed both in public and in private homes called “driving out of bulimy [βουλίμου].”²⁶ Among Latin writers, Horace regularly discusses sacrificial meals in the context of house gatherings. *Satire 2.2* describes a meal where friends and neighbors stopped in to share in a chicken or goat and play drinking games. The meal is ritualized with a prayer to Ceres: “and Ceres, receiving our prayer that she would rise high on the stalk, allowed the

²³ Chan-Hie Kim, “The Papyrus Invitation,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 391-402; Fee, “Εἰδωλόθυτα,” 184, n. 21; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 40-42.

²⁴ Cf. Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Folk Religion* (New York: Harper, 1961), 66-76.

²⁵ Athenaeus 420E-F; cited in J. P. Kane, “The Mithraic Cult Meal in its Greek and Roman Environment,” in *Mithraic Studies: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies* (ed. John R. Hinnells; vol. 2; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), 329. In addition to Kane’s point that Athenaeus’ comment implies a general lack of religiosity at sacrificial banquets, the comment also reveals that house banquets may well be sacrificial in nature. The indifferent tone of the clause suggests that a religious atmosphere is not unexpected for a house banquet.

²⁶ Plutarch, *Quaest. conv.* 6.693F (Clement and Hoffleit, LCL).

wine to smooth away our worried wrinkles.”²⁷ In another section of the same satire, he again references a ritual offering that accompanies a meal: “ah, those evenings and dinners. What heaven! My friends and I have our own meal at my fireside. Then, after making an offering, I hand the rest to cheeky servants”²⁸ Finally, in the *Odes*, Horace explicitly links a birthday celebration in a home to sacrificed meat. Horace hosts the festivity in his home, where “the house [*domus*] gleams with silver vessels; the altar [*ara*], wreathed with sacred leafage, yearns to be sprinkled with the blood of an offered lamb [*immolato ango*].”

Greek Romances also depict sacrificial meals as a part of celebrations at private households. In the novella, *Daphnis and Chloe*, the protagonist couple marries at the house of Daphnis’s parents. At the wedding festivities, the couple “reclined together at table” and “victims were...sacrificed and mixing bowls set out, and Chloe too dedicated her implements—pipe, scrip, skin, milk pails.”²⁹ The tale clearly sets the wedding in a private context and demonstrates the sacrificial nature of the meat.

Finally, Aristides tells of the sacrificial worship of the god, Sarapis, at private dinners. He writes, “in sacrificing to this god [Sarapis] alone, men keenly share a vivid feeling of oneness, while summoning him to their hearth and setting him at their head as guest and diner...[He is] the fulfilling participant in all cult associations, who ranks as leader of toasts among them wherever they assemble.”³⁰ As a central piece of furniture in homes, the ‘hearth’ locates the dinners in a private dwelling.³¹

²⁷ Horace, *Sat.* 2.2.115-25. Though Horace writes in jest, his description reflects common practices of his time.

²⁸ Horace, *Sat.* 2.6.65-66.

²⁹ Moses Hadas, *Three Greek Romances* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1953), 94 and 97, respectively.

³⁰ Aristides, *Or* 8.54.1; cited in Ramsey MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 38.

³¹ Nilsson refers to the hearth in sacrifices performed at home (*Greek Folk Religion*, 74).

In addition to Greek and Roman practice, Christian eucharistic meals occurred in private homes, which suggests that Paul and the Corinthians would think about private dwellings as they thought about devotional meals.

If the Oxyrhyncus invitations, ancient literary evidence, and Christian eucharistic practice question whether all private settings can be classified as secular, ancient evidence also questions whether all gatherings at public temples were for the purpose of cultic worship.³² One Oxyrhyncus fragment is an invitation to a social celebration at a temple *without* the phrase εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος. In P. Oxy. 2791, the host invites his guests for dinner in the Sarapeum on the occasion of his daughter's first birthday with no mention of any cultic context. In another instance, a host does extend an invitation to dine εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαράπιδος on the occasion of the coming of age for the host's brothers, but the meal is held in the temple of Thoeris (P. Oxy. 1484). The location of the celebration at another god's temple may cast doubt on any close connection of the coming of age festivity—or even any meal that includes the phrase—with the cult's worship.³³

The non-cultic use of temple space is corroborated by instances in which temples were rented out by non-devotees of that temple's idol. Ramsey MacMullen notes an association of builders in Ravenna that got permission to meet in the portico of the temple of Neptune.³⁴ It does not appear that any special event went on there that would

³² Joseph G. Milne, "The Kline of Sarapis," *JEA* 11 (1925): 6.

³³ Cf. Willis, *Idol Meat*, 43.

³⁴ Ramsey MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations, 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 77.

not have occurred at trade associations that met in their own halls or corner cafés for the purpose of “pure comradeship,” including eating, drinking, and merriment.³⁵

From the Oxyrhyncus fragments and epigraphic evidence of the builders of Ravenna, we propose that occasions arose in which meat eaten at a temple had no more association with a cultic rite than did meat that had previously passed through a sacrificial rite and subsequently was sold in the marketplace or served at a private home. In light of this evidence, as well as the potential for a household meal to have cultic significance, a distinction between 8:1-10:22 and 10:23-11:1 on the grounds of a meal’s location cannot be maintained.

Thus, rather than locating the rubric of decision making around knowledge of the meat’s history or the location of the meal, we propose that Paul’s instructions emphasize the *nature or intent* of the meal—as the factor that determines whether it is permissible to eat idol meat. After twenty-two verses of arguing against participation in idolatrous meals, Paul returns to permissible contexts. Participation in pagan sacrificial meals—as characterized in 10:14-22—is prohibited, but the Corinthians may eat idol meat sold at the marketplace and at meals hosted by non-believers. Eating market meat and meat at meals hosted by unbelievers is permissible not because the meat’s history is unknown or because the meal occurs in a private home, but because the contexts are not sacrificial and devotional in nature. The permissibility of market meat is readily discernible along these lines. The Corinthian Christians control the purpose of the meal itself when they purchase meat from the marketplace. Identifying the non-sacrificial context of the

³⁵ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 77 and n. 73 for the inscription of Ravenna (*CIL* 11.126). For other inscriptions indicating secular use of public temples, see MacMullen, *Paganism*, 39 n. 24.

second setting (i.e., a meal hosted by an unbeliever) requires a return to our observations of 10:28.

Verses 28-29a describe the meal Paul envisions in 10:27-28 as not overtly sacrificial or devotional. The fact that a Christian would have to investigate the meat's history by inquiring of the host or of one of the servants—or perhaps is a servant at such a meal himself and thus knows the history of the meat—suggests that the sacrificial nature of the meal is not obvious, neither from the invitation nor in words spoken at the meal. Moreover, *if* the meal were overtly devotional, partaking of it would be prohibited on the grounds of 10:1-22. As it stands, however, even when the meat's history becomes known, the eating remains a matter of subjective conscience (not of objective *officium*), which also implies the non-sacrificial nature of the meal.

Accordingly, the non-sacrificial *nature* of the meal stands behind both 10:25 and 10:27 and so sets the meal's intent (not awareness of the meat's history or the meal's location), as the rubric of decision making.

With these practical scenarios in view, we turn to the supporting proofs that underlie each piece of advice. Paul justifies the Corinthians' freedom to partake of idol meat in 10:25 and 10:27 with a citation of Ps. 24:1 (LXX 23:1) in 10:26. The psalm asserts the Lord's creative sovereignty over the earth and all that is in it. The rabbis used Ps 24:1 to argue that a blessing over all that one eats must be said—on the grounds that “the Earth is the Lord's, and its fullness.”³⁶ In contrast to the rabbis, who presumed that blessed meat had already been thoroughly examined for ritual cleanliness, Paul uses the

³⁶ E.g., *t. Ber.* 4.1.

citation to justify not investigating the meat prior to eating it.³⁷ This latter use sanctifies even meat that has a sacrificial history. Verse 26 implies that all that is sold in the meat market—including the sacrificial meat—is the Lord’s and *all* that is served at a house of an unbeliever—including sacrificial meat—is the Lord’s.

In addition to citing the psalm in support of freedom to eat idol meat, the subsequent verses of Ps 24 suggest that the psalm may share an additional connection to the Corinthian context. After announcing the Lord’s sovereignty over creation in 24:1-2, the psalmist proclaims in v. 3 that those who do not trust in idols or swear by false gods may ascend to the mountain of the Lord. These first three verses of the psalm persuade the hearers not to follow after idols. The Lord’s sovereignty over creation in vv. 1-2 implies the impotency of idols in v. 3. If the Lord is sovereign over the earth, mountains, and sea, then idols are impotent over creation, and nothing but ‘false’ gods, unworthy of following.

If the extended context of the psalm is in view, then 10:26 is at once a statement of the Lord’s creative sovereignty over the earth and the impotency of idols. In this case, Paul’s theological proof in 10:26 echoes even more closely the Corinthians’ claims about the supremacy of God and the powerlessness of idols. Similar to the Corinthians in 8:4, Paul grounds freedom to eat in the Lord’s sovereignty over creation and, as Ps 24:3 states, in the ‘nothingness’ of idols.

If 10:26 supports Paul’s advice to eat idol meat, 10:29-30 expounds on Paul’s advice to abstain for the sake of the community context. Paul writes two rhetorical questions in the first person singular: “to what end should my freedom be judged by the

³⁷ The explanatory γὰρ in 10:26 indicates the verse’s supportive role for Paul’s instruction in 10:25 and, presumably, in 10:27.

conscience of another?” and “if I partake with thankfulness, why should I be blasphemed on behalf of that for which I give thanks?” The content of the questions is relatively clear. The verses ask why Paul, as representative of a wise Corinthian, should create an occasion for his participation in idol meat to be judged and condemned. The difficulty is how 10:29b-30 relates to what precedes it. Four major positions have been articulated:³⁸

(1) Paul portrays the objections of the wise who resist the restrictive teaching in 10:28-29a³⁹ (2) Paul addresses the weak and encourages them not to limit the freedom of the wise⁴⁰ (3) Paul assures the wise that their voluntary abstention around the weak in no

³⁸ Many of the references to the sources cited herein can be found in Watson, “1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1,” 308-09 and Willis, *Idol Meat*, 246-47.

³⁹ E.g., Pierce, *Conscience*, 78; Watson, “1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1”. Against this position, scholars commonly argue (1) that *δέ* or *ἀλλά*, not *γάρ*, is expected to introduce an adverse argument and (2) that Paul oddly supplies no answer to the objection of the wise. Watson attempts to resurrect a form of this position. Dismissing the diatribe proposal, he suggests that the two questions display characteristic features of questions (*proserōtōnta*) used in recapitulation and anticipation in deliberative and judicial rhetoric. In recapitulation, rhetoricians may put forth a type of question called *proserōtōnta* to highlight their strongest and their opponents’ weakest points (*Rhet. Alex.* 36.1444b.30-35; cited by Watson, “1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1,” 311). In this recapitulative context, the questions can assume an anticipatory function (*prokatalēpsis*), in which the questions anticipate potential objections against one’s argument and so sweep the objections aside (*Rhet. Alex.* 33.1439b.3-11; cf. Watson, “1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1,” 312). One type of anticipation sets one’s own argument against the opponent’s to make the opponent’s argument appear weak and trifling. In the rhetoricians Watson cites, however, *proserōtōnta* do not represent the objections of the opponent, but the argument of speaker himself. In Aristotle’s discussion of *proserōtōnta*, the *orator* questions his opponent to reveal an absurdity, to prove a debated point by asking obvious questions, or to demonstrate a contradiction or paradox in his opponent’s position, not vice versa (*Rhet.* 3.18.1-3). Thus, if the rhetoricians give any clue to 1 Cor 10:29b-30, they imply that the questions are not anticipatory objections of the wise, but Pauline questions that are *directed toward* the wise in anticipation of their potential objection to his advice in 10:28.

⁴⁰ Frederik Grosheide, *A Commentary to the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT 7; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 243-44; Murphy-O’Connor, “Freedom or the Ghetto,” 555-56, 570-71; Peter Richardson, *Paul’s Ethic of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Westminster/John Knox, 1979), 129. This position is difficult to maintain. Paul offers no indication of a switch in audience from 10:28-29a to 10:29b-30. *Γάρ* gives the sense of continuation, not a shift. Moreover, as is regularly observed, the weak do not seem to act hostilely against the wise to keep them from eating (e.g., Willis, *Idol Meat*, 246 n. 117).

way subjects their freedom to the discernment of the weak⁴¹ and (4) Paul offers additional reasons supporting the advice to abstain.⁴²

Structural and thematic evidence gives preference to the fourth reading.⁴³ If we judge correctly that 10:28-29a pertains to abstaining for the sake of a weak believer, then the explanatory γάρ indicates that the supporting reasoning in 10:29b-30 maintains focus on the context envisioned in 10:28-29a. Moreover, the thematic framing of this final section around ‘seeking the good of the other’ (10:23-24 and 10:32-11:1) suggests that the theme continues to apply in 10:29b-30.

In light of these structural and thematic observations, Paul’s questions in 10:29b-30 imply occasions in which the wise consider eating idol meat in the presence of weak believers (e.g., 8:10). The questions ask the Corinthians to reflect on the good it does for acts of freedom and thanksgiving to be given opportunity for rightful condemnation. The reasoning Paul supplies is not new. He has already identified causing a weak believer to stumble as ‘sin’ in 1 Cor 8:12. Thus, κρίνω (‘to condemn’) and βλασφημέω (‘to revile’) merely refer to the (appropriate) response by others in the community should the wise eat in the presence of the weak, and so tempt them to follow suit.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bultmann, *TNT*, 1:219; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 243. Paul assures the wise that they have not lost their freedom of action and judgment (i.e., conscience) when they abstain from idol meat for the sake of the weak. Abstention remains in the sphere of moral choice, not in the sphere of involuntary subjection of one’s conscience to the standards of another.

⁴² Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 429; Maurer, *TDNT* 7.915; Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 222-23; Willis, *Idol Meat*, 246-50.

⁴³ We make the case against (1) and (2) in nn. 39 and 40, respectively. The two positions with the most merit are (3) and (4). Each reads 10:29b-30 as addressed to the wise and allows γάρ to maintain its natural, explanatory sense. The following argument demonstrates why (4) is preferred over (3).

⁴⁴ While κρίνω can either indicate a decision-making activity (i.e., discernment using a particular standard of judgment, which favors (3) [Rom 14:5; 1 Cor 2:2; 7:37; 10:15; 11:13; 2 Cor 2:1; 5:14]) or a rendering of a guilty judgment over another’s deeds, which supports (4) (e.g., 1 Cor 5:3, 12-13; 11:31-32), the latter sense aligns more closely with its use in the current context. The decidedly negative connotation of βλασφημέω (‘speak profanely of sacred things,’ ‘speak ill’ [LSJ, s.v. βλασφημέω, 317-18]) in 10:30 pushes κρίνεται away from its neutral sense (i.e., ‘to decide/determine’) and toward its negative meaning (‘to judge guilty,’ ‘to condemn’). If κρίνεται is granted a negative force in 10:29b then the phrase does not assure the wise

With 10:30, the specific advice and supporting arguments conclude. The final four verses of the section (10:31-11:1) shift to generalizing exhortations and principles for practical deliberations. We have already highlighted some key features of these verses.⁴⁵ Thus, we reserve additional comment on these verses for the “Elements of Moral Reasoning” section below.

2.3. Exegetical Conclusions

The exegetical analysis yields several points that require further observation. First, the themes and structure show that the section focuses much more on 8:1-9:27 than on 10:1-22. Any argument for the integrity of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 must account for the relationship and transition between 10:1-22 and 10:23-11:1. Second, the analysis shows that the types of commands Paul issues in 10:25, 27-28 are distinct from the previous imperatives in the discourse. What is the role of these verses? Finally, we see that Paul supports his advice to partake and abstain in a manner that reflects the proofs he and the Corinthians use to establish rights (e.g., 8:4-6, 8 and 9:4-14) and the reasoning Paul uses to advise abstention (e.g., 8:7-13; 9:15-18, 19-23, 24-27) in the previous sections. We must examine how these proofs relate to Paul’s earlier instruction and the role they play in his strategy to teach the community a new mode of reasoning.

3. Elements of Moral Reasoning in 10:23-11:1

Reading 10:23-11:1 for its contribution to this new way of thinking best answers the questions left by our exegetical analysis. These verses contribute important elements

that another’s standard of judgment (i.e., conscience in 10:29a) cannot impose limitations to their freedom, as would be demanded by (3).

Some who read the neutral sense of κρινῶ and hold to (3) propose that vv. 28-29a are parenthetical and that γάρ in 10:29b points back to 10:27 (e.g., Brunt, “Love,” 32 n. 33). Verse 29b defends the idea that a wise individual’s freedom *to eat* (e.g., 10:27) should not be limited by the conscience of another (e.g., Brunt, “Love,” 25). This reading is unacceptable because it makes parenthetical one of the main emphases of the entire discourse—abstention for the sake of the weak.

⁴⁵ For a discussion of them, see chapter 1, pp. 44-48.

to the mode of reasoning he desires them to adopt. We proceed by discussing 10:23-24, 10:25 and 27-28, and 10:26 and 29-30.

3.1. 1 Cor 10:23-24: Principles of Deliberation

The summative nature of 10:23-24 in relation to 8:1-9:23 is obvious. As we have thoroughly discussed, moving the Corinthians from self-centrism to a form of “other”-centered thinking lies at the heart of 1 Cor 8-9. The greater challenge is determining the role of 10:23-24 in relation to 10:1-22. How can Paul theoretically agree with πάντα ἔξεστιν after he has just issued prohibitions against idolatry and sexual immorality in 10:1-22 (cf. 6:12-20)? Returning to the moralist conception of ἐλευθερία and ἔξεστιν reviewed above will prove helpful in answering this question.

In the truncated excerpts on philosophical freedom, ἐλευθερία could be misinterpreted as the power of autonomous, libertine action in terms of merely doing whatever one desires. The Corinthian slogan, πάντα (μοι) ἔξεστιν, reflects such a misconception of these Stoic and Philonic statements on freedom. The Corinthians subscribed to total behavioral freedom. The excerpts we quoted from the Stoics and Philo, however, occur in the context of the equally Stoic notion that the truly free man can do whatever he pleases precisely because whatever he pleases already aligns with the divine ordering of the universe. For instance, Philo precedes his above remark on freedom with the following statement: “he who always acts well, always acts rightly: he who always acts rightly, also acts impeccably, blamelessly, faultlessly, irreproachably, harmlessly, and, therefore, will have the power to do anything, and to live as he wishes...and he who has this power, must be free.”⁴⁶ According to the full understanding of “being free to do anything,” the wise man is free precisely because anything that he

⁴⁶ Philo, *Prob.* 59 (Colson, LCL).

does already aligns with right living, that is, he does all things in accordance with Nature. Such a person is never constrained by a law or prohibition because his will and actions already align with the natural laws of the universe.

A person who reaches this level does not need to be compelled by a rule to act in a certain way. The individual willingly and freely derives the appropriate mode of action through his or her own reasoning. The category of decision making is not “is this legal for me?”, which depends on compliance with judgments of another, but “does this align with Nature?” This second mode of reasoning depends on one’s own judgments and not those of another. To discern right action, an individual must observe the workings of the natural world in relation to the issue in question.

In light of this understanding, the freedom and autonomy of action of a wise man does not mean that rules cease to apply or exist. The statement of autonomous freedom is not a commentary on the presence or absence of a legal system once a state of freedom is reached, but a reflection of *the mode of decision making* that characterizes a free existence. We saw this trajectory in chapter 2. The Stoics use “rules” for beginning and progressing students, but as a student matures, rule-following (as a means of decision making) fades increasingly into the background in exchange for a mode of reasoning that makes decisions by contemplating the nature of humanity, interpersonal relationships, and the nature of the universe.

If the moralists are of any relevance to 1 Cor 10, then Paul’s qualification of πάντα ἔξεστιν in 10:23—ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει... ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα οἰκοδομεῖ—does not comment on rules themselves (i.e., what things are lawful or whether all things are lawful), but promotes a way of reasoning that transcends rule-following. If, as πάντα

ἔξεστιν suggests, the Corinthians think in terms of the legality or illegality of acts (i.e., rules), Paul's response changes these categories altogether. His carefully crafted remarks in 10:23-24 neither wholly approve nor wholly deny the Corinthians' claim. Instead, they push the Corinthians beyond making decisions by means of "rule-following" to a rubric of thought that discerns right action on the basis of "benefit" and "upbuilding." Simultaneously granting that "all things are lawful" and implementing new decision-making categories alter the Corinthians' way of thinking. Paul shifts the community away from making practical decisions on the basis of a legal/illegal divide toward a framework that reasons on the basis of one's immediate and broader social context.

Paul's refusal to deny flatly their slogan is not just rhetorical. Paul does not directly oppose, "all things are lawful," because this statement is inherently true for Christians. Christian freedom is not bound by laws. Thus, the mark of Christian freedom is not defined in terms of perfect compliance with, or utter disregard for, a given set of commands or rules. Instead, the mark of Christian freedom is discerning proper conduct on the basis of new categories, which Paul characterizes as 'benefit' and 'upbuilding' in 10:23 (cf. 8:1, 9:19-23), and the voluntary agreement of the will with such judgments.

Accordingly, rightly understood, πάντα ἔξεστιν does not grant free behavior, but refers to a state of being that characterizes a mature thinker. As 1 Corinthians fully displays, appropriate conduct remains central to Christian freedom. The glaring difference between Christian freedom and legal enslavement is not an individual's conduct, but the means by which one reaches a practical decision. The free person does not need laws or rules to govern his way of thinking, willing, and acting. For such a

person, “all things are lawful” because this individual reasons, and so acts, rightly without depending on laws or rules to define his will and action.

This way of reading 10:23 brings it into unity with 10:1-22. Framing 10:23 as a statement that reorients the deliberative process of the Corinthians becomes reflected in Paul’s mode of argument in 10:1-22. In essence, we might say that 10:1-22 demonstrates what 10:23 promotes. In 10:1-22, Paul does not prohibit idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, or grumbling on the basis of legal prescriptions, or even by his own authority. He argues for these prohibitions by appealing to the Corinthians’ logical sensibilities via historical example (10:1-11) and analogy (10:16-22). Each proof, whether about God’s interaction with His people of the past (i.e., Israel) or present worship practices of Christians, Jews, and pagans, invites the hearers to reach their own conclusions.

First Corinthians 10:15 makes this mode of appeal explicit. Paul addresses the Corinthians as φρονίμοις and invites them to “judge for themselves” the merits of his arguments.⁴⁷ The term appeals to the Corinthians as wise people and the subsequent argument of analogy (10:16-22) reflects a type of persuasion worthy of a φρόνιμος. The appeal and argument show that Paul desires the Corinthians to “flee idolatry” because they rationally agree that it is the right course of action, not because he or a certain legal framework commands them to do so. His appeal to them in 10:15 and 16-22 shows that he does not want them to think about the prohibitions in 10:7-10 and 10:14 from the standpoint of legal prescriptions, but by their own discernment and rationality.

⁴⁷ Philo characterizes the “good man” and the “free man” as one who acts ‘sensibly’ (φρονίμως): “He who always acts sensibly [φρονίμως] always acts well...and, therefore, will have the power to do anything, and to live as he wishes, and he who has this power must be free. But the good man always acts sensibly [φρονίμως], and, therefore, he alone is free” (*Prob.* 59 [Colson, LCL]).

If Paul succeeds in this goal, the Corinthians will refrain from participating in sacrificial meals because they understand that such participation is not ‘beneficial’ and does not ‘build up.’ They will identify themselves as φρόνιμοι for whom “all things are free” not because they freely engage in all activity, but because they freely and aptly reflect on what it means to seek the good of a *community* that is formed and sustained by a *Christic* identity and voluntarily align their will with such reflection.

3.2. 1 Cor 10:25 and 27-28: Illustration of Practical Decisions

The exegetical argument above shows that the specific instructions in 10:25 and 27-28 are *new forms of precepts* that pertain to the *same subject matter* as 8:1-13. They continue to address idol meat, but the combination of their directness of instruction and specificity of context distinguishes these verses from the previous imperatives.

A brief comparison between 10:25 and 27-28 and the only other previous verse that identifies a specific context of a meal—8:10—demonstrates the newness of these precepts. The protases of 8:10 and 10:25 and 27 (which sets the context for 10:28) each identifies the contexts of the meal (ἐν εἰδωλείῳ κατακείμενον [8:10], ἐν μακέλλῳ [10:25], and τις καλεῖ ὑμᾶς τῶν ἀπίστων [10:27]). Moreover, the protasis in 8:10 and 10:28 each describes, using similar syntax, a circumstance in which a weak believer is present at a meal (ἐὰν γὰρ τις ἴδῃ σε [8:10] and ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ [10:28]). The apodoses of 8:10 and 10:28, however, diverge. While Paul moves from description of context to *observation* about the consequences a wise individual’s decision to eat would have on a weak believer in 8:10, in 10:28, he moves from description of context to *instruction* about how to act in such situations.

These distinguishing features indicate that 10:25 and 27-28 do not merely repeat the preceding material and, thus, must function more than as a recapitulation of the discourse.⁴⁸ To determine their function, our discussion of the Stoics is informative once again.

The specificity of context indicates that the instructions in 10:25 and 27-28 are best classified as ‘advice,’ which Seneca identifies as contingent precepts that depend on specific settings, times, locations, etc.⁴⁹ As we saw in chapter 2, ‘advice’ may operate on several levels.⁵⁰ For those unable to reason well, it may simply direct them to proper conduct by telling them what to do. For those who are increasingly able to determine appropriate conduct on their own, advice may serve as a reminder of proper conduct in light of the mind’s tendency to forget its duties. In this capacity, advice may assume a demonstrative role and exemplify practical reasoning for these individuals who are becoming adept thinkers, but still need practice in discerning *what* to do.

Each of these functions could apply to 1 Cor 10:25 and 27-28. On one level, the instructions may simply direct the Corinthians to proper conduct. If some Corinthians remain in their ‘fleshly’ and ‘infant’ state (e.g., 3:1-4), and so fail to adopt the disposition and mode of reasoning of *imitatio Christi* and ἀγάπη, the advice gives them instructions so that they may at least act appropriately on certain occasions.

⁴⁸ In *Rhet. Alex.*, examples of the components of ‘recapitulation’ in judicial and deliberative rhetoric summarily recount the previous material more than derive new assessments or practical judgments (e.g., 20.1433b.33-1434a.17).

⁴⁹ See the discussion on pp. 71-73 above.

⁵⁰ Among the scholars who propose that 10:23-11:1 is recapitulative and that 10:25-30 are practical, none explore how 10:25-30 contributes to the mode of decision making that Paul teaches the community (e.g., Robertson and Plummer, who liberally introduce v. 25 in their translation with: “see how this works in practice” and v. 27 with: “take another case” [*First Epistle*, 218]; Mitchell who identifies 10:25-28 as “two concrete cases” [*Rhetoric*, 257]; Tomson writes, “from v25 onward a different language is used, not that of ethical sayings but of clear and distinct rules” [*Paul*, 204]).

For individuals who are beginning to grasp an understanding of Christic imitation and ἀγάπη, however, the advice may serve a reminding or demonstrative function. As with Seneca, the advice in 10:25 and 27-28 may remind maturing Corinthians of appropriate action by demonstrating for them the practical, concrete manifestations of the form of theological and Christological reasoning that Paul wishes them to adopt. In this way, the advice complements the general goal (ἀγάπη and *imitatio Christi*) and principles (e.g., seeking the advantage of others) of Christian living. If ἀγάπη and *imitatio Christi* express the goal of Christian living and “seeking the salvific advantage of others over one’s own authority and freedoms” a central principle of this goal, the advice in 10:25 and 27-28 illustrates the goal and general principles in practical contexts.

Rather than simply being left to question which contexts are permissible and which require consideration of benefit and upbuilding, Paul’s final advice demonstrates several real life scenarios for the Corinthians. As they contemplate the mindset and deliberative principles of Christian living, they also have available examples of the way the mindset and principles apply to practical settings. “All things are lawful” applies to settings in which it is a matter of food alone, but “benefit” and “upbuilding” apply in settings that may injure a weaker community member. Like Seneca’s ‘advice,’ Paul’s instructions in 10:25 and 27-28 help the Corinthians’ envision what the Christic mind does in practical contexts while they are yet inexperienced in applying the deliberative principles of ἀγάπη and *imitatio Christi* to practical decisions.

3.3. 1 Cor 10:26 and 10:29-30: Illustration of Reasoning behind Action

This final section considers the proofs Paul supplies to support his instruction in 10:26 and 29-30. In the exegetical section, we observed that the theological principle in

10:26 supports Paul's advice. Here, we emphasize the role of the proof from another viewpoint. Paul's use of a theological principle reflects the Corinthians' way of reasoning about idol meat. Paul affirms the Corinthians' use of theological principles to ground their freedom to partake of God's creation. Though the Corinthian wise may not reason as maturely as Paul desires with regard community relationships, 10:26 approves this important aspect of the deliberative process.

The history of scholarship often relegates the theological argument of the Corinthian wise to a 'correct,' but immature position. They are 'correct' because they grasp the nothingness of idols, but underdeveloped because they understand little about community formation. Though this observation is true, amid this critique scholars lose sight of the importance of the Corinthians' theological mode of argument. Paul's approval of their use of theological principles in 10:26 is far more than agreement for the sake of unity or compromise. The verse claims a significant theological principle in its own right. The Earth, and its elements, is God's creative provision for humanity. Partaking of these elements with thanksgiving to God (e.g., 10:30) uses them as God intended, and so glorifies God (e.g., 10:31). In this way, the Corinthian wise understand an important concept of the God's sovereignty over the created world. Their permission to eat is not just a 'right,' but, properly conceived, an act of worship.

Paul continues this support of the wise in 10:29-30. Ἡ ἐλευθερία μου in 10:29b asserts that the Corinthians have a rightful claim to freedom. This is the first time in the discourse that Paul explicitly identifies their self-proclaimed 'freedom' to eat idol meat as

a true freedom.⁵¹ Similarly, the dual assertions, εἰ ἐγὼ χάριτι μετέχω and ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εὐχαριστῶ, show that eating idol meat with thanksgiving is a proper act that glorifies God. These assertions give the wise an opportunity to reflect that their participation in idol meat is truly a freedom in Christ and, thus, that any encouragement for them to abstain does not take away their freedom.

This support also brings with it a new aspect of deliberation. In the discourse's previous discussion of abstention for the sake of the weak, Paul adumbrates the harm others incur (8:9, 11, 13), the eschatological value of eating idol meat around the weak (8:12), and one's own eschatological reward for self-discipline (9:15-18, 24-27) as points for the Corinthians to consider. Here, Paul asks them to reflect on the right to eat idol meat from a perspective of stewardship. In the two rhetorical questions, Paul asks why he would want to put his freedom and act of piety in a place of condemnation and blasphemy. It encourages the wise to think of their freedom to worship God as an identity or benefit in the gospel that they possess and must protect. They are to be mindful of weak believers not just out of care for others, their own eschatological reward, or even for the sake of guarding against their own sin. They should also consider their decisions about eating around weak believers in light of protecting their own freedom and pious acts of worship.

This penultimate section of the discourse exhibits regard for both the wise and the weak. In each of the three aspects of this unit (general principles in 10:23-24; advice in 10:25, 27-28; and proofs in 10:26, 29-30), Paul both acknowledges the freedom of the wise (10:23; 10:25-27; 10:29b-30) while encouraging them to reflect on the needs of

⁵¹ First Corinthians 8:9 alludes to their ἐξουσία and, in 9:1 and 19, ἐλευθερία refers more definitively to Paul. While 10:29b, like 9:1 and 19, is in the first person singular, here Paul clearly asserts the freedom of the wise.

others (i.e., their weak brothers and sisters) (10:23-24; 10:28-30). By granting legitimacy to the freedom of the wise while encouraging them to have regard for the weak, Paul models the mode of reasoning that affirms thinking about one's own authorities and freedoms in the gospel while holding those freedoms in proper perspective in relation to the salvific good of others.

3.4. 1 Cor 10:31-11:1: Principles of Deliberation

In our analysis of 10:31-11:1 in chapter 1, we argued that these verses offer universal, but not fully informative principles of conduct. Moreover, we argued that *imitatio Christi* and its defining content of seeking the other's good (10:32-33) cannot, on their own, adequately teach individuals how to make decisions. By its nature, Christic imitation requires further discernment. Its dependence on circumstances such as the character of the individuals in question and the issue under consideration involves a form of reasoning that is not immediately applicable for conduct. Thus, we have contended throughout chapters 3-6 that 8:1-10:30 functions most adequately as an attempt to teach the Corinthians how to think and act with the mind and will of Christ.

In these final observations, we comment on how 10:31-11:1 positively contributes to Paul's goal for the community to imitate Christ's disposition and mindset. Verse 31 exhorts the Corinthians to "eat...for the glory of God," which implies that they are not to eat for their own glory. In light of the generally self-centered disposition of the Corinthians, this verse moves the wise toward a God-centered disposition.⁵² The Corinthians' acts, including their personal freedoms, are not for themselves but for the

⁵² In contrast to "all things are lawful" (10:23), which is self-centric, "all things for the glory of God" is God-centric.

glory of God.⁵³ With 10:30, 10:31 reminds the Corinthians that their participation in idol meat is an act of thanksgiving that should be conducted with God's glory in mind. As such, stewardship over privileges like eating idol meat should be done in ways that do not offend God's glory.

This understanding of 10:31 manifests itself practically in two ways. First, it strengthens the significance of Paul's call to abstain from sacrificial meals in 10:1-22. If acts of eating are to be for God's glory, participation in a sacrificial meal in honor of a foreign deity cannot be an appropriate course of conduct. Eating in honor of another deity provokes God's jealousy rather than glorifies Him. Second, the shift from self-centered rights to God-oriented thanksgiving enables the Corinthians to hold their freedoms more loosely and, thus, prepares them to think more easily about practices that best save others, as Paul suggests in 10:32-33.⁵⁴ If the focus of the meal is giving thanks and glory to God and not one's individual rights, then it is more difficult to participate in idol meat if the participant knows that his action damages another community member.⁵⁵

The two penultimate verses (10:32-33) reiterate the central, deliberative principles that guide interpersonal relationships (e.g., 9:19-23 and 10:23-24). By picking up terminology (e.g., κοπ- cognate) and themes (e.g., seeking good of others) from the body of the discourse, the two climactic principles set the idol meat argument within an

⁵³ Pace Willis (*Idol Meat*, 251-52), the Corinthians may not have yet fully identified with this statement. While the wise used theological arguments to eat, and perhaps even ate with a sense of piety, it is not clear that they participated in idol meat for the purpose of glorifying God as wholly as Paul desires.

⁵⁴ Cf. Rom 15:1-7 where Paul intertwines the principle of seeking the good of the weak with glorifying God.

⁵⁵ Cf. Robertson and Plummer, *First Epistle*, 223 on 10:30: "the point is in the incongruity of 'saying grace' for what places me in a false position...One cannot thank God for a pleasure which one knows to be wrong." The misuse of freedom precludes the fullness of the divine goodness and blessing from spreading without offense. This interpretation of 10:29b is similar to the idea in Rom 14:16: μη βλασφημείσθω οὖν ὑμῶν τὸ ἀγαθόν. Paul values the freedom of the wise to eat all meat as ὑμῶν τὸ ἀγαθόν because exercising freedom to eat is done "for the Lord" and "with thanks to God" (Rom 14:6). In Rom 14:16, Paul warns against allowing an act that is ordinarily τὸ ἀγαθόν to come under condemnation (βλασφημείσθω) by causing a weaker believer to stumble and suffer destruction (Rom 14:13-15).

‘other’-centered and, thus, circumstantially sensitive deliberative framework. The way the Corinthians are to imitate Paul and Christ is to become devoid of offense to—and, indeed, to seek the salvific advantage of—the various individuals with whom they interact throughout different facets of life, including both those outside of (e.g., “Jews and Greeks”) and within (e.g., “church of God”) the community. Like 10:23-24, the universality of these principles provides the community with deliberative guidelines for all interpersonal relationships. Whether interacting with a Jew, Greek, or a member of the church, the Corinthians must consider in each new situation what mode of conduct best procures the salvific gain of others. To do so requires a disposition and mindset that is prepared to know and understand the qualities and characteristics of others and discern what gives them the best opportunity to receive the gospel of Christ unobstructed in a particular situation. In this way, they imitate Paul as Paul imitates Christ.

4. Conclusion

With this, Paul concludes the final section and the idol meat discourse as a whole. The concluding set of verses begins with the general principles that guide interpersonal conduct (10:23-24). It then shifts to specific scenarios involving idol meat (10:25-30). Next, it returns to general principles of decision making (do all things for the glory of God [10:31] and seeking the benefit of the other [10:32-33]). Finally, it concludes with the most general exhortation to imitate Paul as Paul imitates Christ (11:1).

Thus, the final section includes the most specific and the most general instruction of the discourse. The juxtaposition of specific, concrete cases involving idol meat (10:25-30) with the general principles of deliberation (10:23-24, 31-33), and the overarching goal of Christian living (11:1), offers a concise conclusion to the idol meat

discourse. It provides the Corinthians an opportunity to see, in one consolidated form, the general framework of reasoning that Paul wishes them to adopt.⁵⁶

In the final and concluding chapter, we re-examine the whole argument of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. The chapter outlines the discourse's various components to show the argumentative logic of the whole.

⁵⁶ Cicero remarks on the lack of immediate association between general doctrines and specific duties as follows: "But as regards special duties [*officiorum*] for which positive rules [*praecepta*] are laid down, though they are affected by the doctrine of the supreme good, still the fact is not so obvious, because they seem rather to look to the regulation of every-day life" (*Off.* 1.7 [Miller, LCL]). Thus, laying general principles and specific precepts side-by-side, as Paul does in 1 Cor 10:23-11:1, makes grasping the connection easier.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Our project has argued that the unifying theme of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 lies in Paul's attempt to instill a new self-understanding and way of thinking in the Corinthian community. Paul's primary aim is not to teach the Corinthians proper behavior regarding idol meat, but to instruct them in an appropriate way to think about their gifts and rights in the gospel. If we understand the entire discourse under this rubric then the relationship between the two major divisions of 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 becomes clear. How the Corinthians understand and use their gifts and rights in the gospel is central both to eating idol meat around others (8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1) and eating idol meat in idolatrous contexts (10:1-22). In these concluding comments, we offer a brief summary of the logic of Paul's argument.

Teaching the appropriate mindset and way of thinking concerning gifts and rights in the gospel involves two major aspects. First, Paul teaches the Corinthians *that* true freedom and wisdom lie not in the possession or procurement of privileges in the gospel, but in how those who are granted gifts and privileges in the gospel conduct themselves. Paul seeks to get the community members to regard themselves not as privileged kings, but as privileged servants who must exercise their privileges in a way that benefits others and shows commitment to God. He does this in 8:1-3; 9:15-18; 9:24-27; 10:1-13. Second, Paul teaches the Corinthians the mindset and way of thinking that determines how best to exercise their gifts and rights, both with respect to others (8:1-9:27 and 10:23-11:1) and God (10:14-22). He teaches the right way of thinking through provision of core principles and core models (8:1-3; 9:19-23; 10:23-24 and 10:31-11:1) and through

illustration of practical reasoning (8:4-13; 9:1-18; 10:14-22). With this framework in view, we review Paul's argument sequentially.

In 8:1-3, Paul exhorts the wise to trade reliance on γνῶσις as the means of gaining standing before God for a humble self-understanding, defined as ἀγάπη. Reliance on the possession of privileges in the gospel—i.e., γνῶσις—leads to over-inflated self-perception. The appropriate mindset of those called by God in Christ is admission of ignorance and recognition that 'love'—not 'knowledge'—is the proper way to display devotion to God. These verses put forth the proper disposition and mindset that prepares for Paul's practical instruction in 8:4-13.

In these verses, Paul illustrates how one who embodies 'love' thinks about his or her right in relation to others (8:7-13). First, Paul establishes that the Corinthians have a legitimate right and privilege in the gospel to eat idol meat (8:4-6). These verses constitute an essential part of Christic identity. Being in Christ includes privileges, gifts, and rights. Moreover, in order for the Corinthians to emulate Christ, who voluntarily gave up his equality with God to assume human form, the Corinthians must truly possess rights as well.

Second, in 8:7-13, Paul displays the way of thinking of one who 'loves.' Paul considers the qualities and character traits of others in light of the issue in question. Though the presentation does not proceed linearly, we can see these two components at work. First, we can see Paul's careful consideration of others. He identifies some in the community as being "without knowledge" (8:7). These individuals remain in the custom of idols and are susceptible to peer pressure (8:7, 10). He also considers the effects consuming idol meat has on them. They are defiled (8:7), destroyed (8:11), and wounded

(8:12) if they eat. Second, Paul gives thought to the true value of the issue in question. Idol meat is simply food and, thus, *adiaphora* for a Christians' eschatological standing before God (8:8). Moreover, causing a weak member of the community to stumble because of idol meat is not *adiaphora* in the least, but sin against that member and against Christ (8:12). In light of these practical observations, Paul concludes that he and the Corinthians ought not use their 'right' to eat idol meat if it means eating in front of a community member who is still in the custom of idols and, thus, subject to stumbling (8:9, 13).

In 9:1-27, Paul offers a second practical illustration—via an apology of his own prior decision not to act on his right to financial support—of the mindset and way of thinking guided by ἀγάπη. Like 8:4-6, Paul first establishes his 'right' in the gospel. He demonstrates that he is fully aware of his right to receive financial support (9:4-12a, 13-14). Moreover, like 8:9 and 8:13, Paul also states that he refuses to act on this right (9:12b, 15).

While 1 Cor 9 shares these elements with 1 Cor 8, it also includes new components of the deliberative process. First Corinthians 9 does not delineate the qualities and characteristics of others or explain the value of the issue in question. Both of these aspects are presumed in the parallelism of 1 Cor 8 and 1 Cor 9. Rather, Paul moves his instruction forward by focusing on the mindset and way of thinking that *found* the type of reasoning he displays in 1 Cor 8.

In 9:15-18, Paul exemplifies the appropriate self-understanding of those called and commissioned in Christ. He presents himself as a compelled and commissioned steward of the gospel. As such a steward, he locates the basis of his reward not in the

mere preaching of the gospel, but in *how* he exercises the privileges his calling grants him. The implication for the Corinthians is that those who are called into the service of Christ do not simply receive reward from acting on their call, but on the basis of how they exercise the rights that accompany their calling.

In 9:19-23, Paul identifies the way of thinking that he adopts to discern *how* to exercise his rights in practical issues such as idol meat and finances. Though Paul possesses all things, he adopts the mindset of being a slave to all in order to save them. For Paul, this means “becoming like” those he seeks to save, including “becoming like” a Jew to Jews, like one under law to those under law, like one not under law to those not under law, and weak to the weak.

We see here the central model that governs Paul’s relationship with others. ‘Love’ as that which ‘builds up’ (8:1) reaches its clearest illustration in Paul’s self-example in 9:19-23. His self-example is a characterization of the mindset of the incarnate Christ. Like the model of the incarnate Christ, Paul loves others by “becoming like” those he seeks to save. Just as Christ enjoyed equality with God but assumed human form in order to save humanity, so Paul, though he enjoys certain privileges and rights in the gospel (e.g., 9:19), enslaves himself to others by “becomes like” the various groups of individuals he seeks to save.

In light of 9:19-23, the logical progression of 8:4-13 and 9:1-18 is significant. Paul moves from ‘right’ to renunciation in each context because this progression is the same mode of reasoning that characterizes Christ’s decision to become incarnate (e.g., Phil 2:6-11). Moreover, 9:19-23 also enables us to see that the step by step consideration of the qualities of community members that Paul displays in 1 Cor 8 is an essential aspect

of what displaying Christ incarnate involves. One who follows the mindset of the incarnate Christ must think about the qualities and characteristics of others in order that he may discern how to become like them. Paul—and so the Corinthians—cannot reach the practical decision to give up the right to eat idol meat without this prior consideration.

First Corinthians 9:24-27 concludes the apologetic self-example and prepares for the shift to the matter of idolatry. This transitional section returns to the theme of self-understanding in the gospel, as expressed in 9:15-18, and looks forward to the same theme in 10:1-13. Using athletic imagery, Paul compares himself and the Corinthians to athletes who compete in the arena. Though ‘all’ compete, they must compete effectively in order to win the prize. Mere participation does not constitute victory. Victory depends on how the athlete trains and competes with regard to external objects and circumstances. Paul and the Corinthians, like esteemed athletes and moral athletes, must ‘run’ in such a way that wins them the prize. They must exercise self-control over their rights in order to be able to make proper decisions with respect to their rights.

As the discourse shifts from generally permissive contexts to the narrower, prohibited context of idolatry, Paul does not move away from the central tenets of his instruction. First Corinthians 10:1-22 displays both a concern to establish a proper mindset and self-understanding in the gospel and to help the community understand why and how they should avoid idolatrous contexts.

The example of Israel clearly echoes the athletic imagery in 9:24-27. ‘All’ the Corinthians’ possession of spiritual provisions portrays an entire community that was “in” the competition. Just as ‘all’ the competitors compete but only ‘one’ wins the prize, so ‘all’ the Israelites enjoyed spiritual provisions in the wilderness, but “the majority”

were struck down. They were struck down because they committed acts that offended against God—including idolatry, sexual immorality, testing, and grumbling. Unlike the moral athlete and Paul, the Israelites failed to compete well with respect to their rights and, thus, did not qualify for the prize in their moral contest.

The concluding exhortation suggests that the driving impetus for the Israelites' failure to compete well is their overconfident reliance on possessions and gifts in the wilderness. Paul intends the example of Israel to steer the Corinthians away from overconfidence in their gifts and the accompanying belief that they stand immune from any risks regarding idol meat. Thus, in 10:12-13, Paul urges the Corinthians to consider *that* it is possible for them to fall (8:12) and suggests that how they exercise their self-proclaimed privileges matters (8:13). In 10:12, Paul warns the community not to follow the pattern of the Israelites, those failed athletes who did not compete well in the competition because they did not consider *that* they could fall. In 10:13, he explains that God does not require participation in such circumstances (e.g., sexual conduct and idol meat) as a way of displaying strength and freedom in the gospel. To the contrary, God supplies 'escape' as the way of displaying freedom and strength in the gospel. Like the moral athlete who exercises self-control, sometimes the moral struggle requires avoidance of a circumstance rather than participation in it.

In view of these observations, we may conclude that the example of Israel is another perspective on the self-understanding Paul describes in 8:2-3; 9:15-18; and 9:24-27. The Israelites exemplify a community that rested on its privileged status and failed to consider that *how* it exercises its privileges with respect to its covenant loyalty impacted its standing. Just as 9:15-18 implies that the basis of reward lies not in the fact of one's

calling, but in *how* one uses the rights that accompany that calling, so does 10:1-13 suggest the same. A community's called and privileged status does not guarantee reward. Reward depends on *how* one exercises privileges in the gospel.

This self-understanding and mindset is necessary and preparatory for Paul's second goal in 1 Cor 10:1-22: to teach the Corinthians a mode of Christian *phronēsis* as it relates to idolatry. Paul seeks to teach them how they may discern what types of practices constitute idolatry in this new Christic age that is no longer ruled by law. In this matter, he appeals not to emulation of Christ's incarnation but participation in Christ's body as the mindset that ought to guide conduct. Paul wants the Corinthians to understand that certain acts—such as participation in pagan sacrificial meals—are prohibited on the basis of their participation in the body of Christ. Paul emphasizes that devotional meals—such as Eucharist and pagan sacrificial meals—are bodily forming practices. Participation in such meals means forming a bodily mode of partnership with the lord the attendees worship. Thus, the Corinthians cannot participate in the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons or eat from the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Teaching the Corinthians to identify the types of meals that qualify as idolatrous is a very real and practical matter. The Corinthians had opportunities to participate in community meals in an array of contexts. As we saw in chapter 6, discerning whether a meal is sacrificial is not as simple as identifying the meal's location. Rather, as Paul demonstrates in 10:14-22, it requires understanding the intent of the meal's participants. Accordingly, 10:1-22 establishes a significant rubric for practical decision making. As the Corinthians deliberate about whether to eat idol meat, the *first* question they will

consider is whether the participants of the meal intend to worship a foreign god. If so, they must decline due to their participation in Christ's body.

In light of this role 10:1-22 plays in the Corinthians' practical deliberations, we should regard this section as a second, equally important subset of the idol meat issue. In 8:1-9:27, Paul addresses the mindset and way of thinking that should accompany the Corinthians as they eat idol meat in permissive contexts, especially in the presence of the weak. In 10:1-22, Paul addresses how they may discern whether or not it is even advisable to participate in the meal on the grounds of idolatry. The first section educates the Corinthians in the way to think about their right to eat idol meat with respect to their emulation of the love of Christ incarnate. The second section educates them in the way to think about how they should conduct themselves as participants in the body of Christ.

With 10:14-22, Paul concludes the body of the argument. First Corinthians 10:23-11:1 returns, in summary fashion, to contexts in which eating idol meat does not constitute idolatry. As we indicated in the previous chapter, the summative conclusion to the discourse puts the full range of the reasoning process on display. First, it offers general principles of reasoning that guide how the Corinthians ought to use their rights in the gospel (10:23-24 and 10:31-11:1). Second, it gives practical advice on specific contexts. We demonstrated that the advice not only directs the Corinthians to certain courses of action, but also demonstrates how the mode of practical reasoning that Paul teaches appears in practical contexts. After not offering specific advice in 8:1-9:27, Paul finally identifies the practical implications of the way of thinking he teaches. It is prudent to eat idol meat that is purchased at the meat market and at non-idolatrous meals hosted by unbelievers. It is not prudent to eat if a fellow believer makes it known that he

or she is bothered by the meat's history. Finally, Paul also gives the specific reasoning behind each decision. As in 8:4-6 (cf. 9:4-14), Paul shows that it is prudent to eat idol meat from the market and at a non-idolatrous meal hosted by an unbeliever *because* idol meat is nothing but meat and so a part of the Lord's provision for humanity (10:26). Moreover, as in 8:7-13 and 9:12b and 19-23, if another believer points out the idolatrous nature of the meat, then Paul shows that it is advisable for the Corinthians not to eat *for the sake of* the other person's conscience. Thus, these three components—(1) general principles (2) practical advice and (3) reasoning behind each piece of advice—display the reasoning process of those who seek to emulate the love of the incarnate Christ.

Though Paul has yet to name the central model that drives his teaching, in the final verse of the discourse, he finally does. Christ is the controlling mindset and way of thinking that guides his instruction. 'Love,' as that which 'builds up' (8:1) and seeks the good of the other (10:23-24) and Paul's implicit modeling of the incarnate Christ (9:19-23) are ultimately revealed as *imitatio Christi* (11:1). It is Christ's incarnate mindset of servitude to humanity and voluntary divestiture of his divine privileges in order to become like those he sought to save that compel Paul's instruction in 1 Cor 8:1-11:1. It is also the fundamental framework that holds 1 Cor 8:1-11:1 together.

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