

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

The text of Scripture known as 1 Corinthians has provided a well from which believers have drunk for almost two millennia. This portion of Scripture has served the church as a resource for theology, for homiletical exposition, for pastoral issues, and more recently as a source for reconstructing social dimensions and dynamics of early Pauline Christianity. Whatever else one wants to say about 1 Corinthians, it cannot be doubted that it has had a significant impact on the Christian church.

Notwithstanding the necessity and value of this diversity of perspectives and interpretive methodologies which have come across the stage of Christian history, this present work is more narrowly focused in its approach. This work is primarily a historical-exegetical commentary, the goal of which is to understand and set forth the ideas, doctrines, and feelings Paul communicated in the letter of 1 Corinthians.¹ The phrase “ideas, doctrines, and feelings” is not intended to describe an “intellectual history” of the great Apostle. Rather, Paul’s ideas, doctrines, and feelings, as recorded in 1 Corinthians, are engendered and evoked by a series of practices and beliefs, diverse in themselves, coming from individuals and groups in the church of God at Corinth.

A decision to write a historical-exegetical commentary brings with it several assumptions and commitments.

1. This means in the first instance that the feelings, doctrines, and ideas of Paul must, as far as possible, be understood in the his-

¹In general see Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), p. 27; Douglas Stuart, “Exegesis,” in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, eds. D.N. Freeman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 682-688.

torical framework, both in which he wrote them and in which the first readers lived. A historical-exegetical approach has little in common with simplistic attempts to modernize Paul, to re-create him after the image of western Christianity. To be sure, every practicing believer knows firsthand the need to bring forward, with God's help and wisdom, the meaning of the ancient text into the modern world. How strange it appears, however, when those who wish to contextualize the Gospel in the modern setting have not invested the time and effort to first learn what it meant in its original context. Just as a good translation of Russian literature into French requires that one be familiar with both languages, so a good translation of the ideas of Paul's letter to the Corinthians into modern idiom requires a competent grasp of the original meaning of this letter as well as the modern world.

2. A commitment to a historical-exegetical methodology means that one must always recognize that Paul's letter to the Corinthians is an occasional document, arising in the first instance as direct responses to ad hoc issues and problems in the lives of believers living in a certain region of the Roman Empire, at a specific time, and under particular historical and cultural circumstances. Since the historical method infers that Paul's commands, arguments, and instructions were given in direct response to the issues raised by the lives and ideas of the Corinthians, one must openly acknowledge that 1 Corinthians may not address every issue that we, living two millennia later, hope it would. In fact, 1 Corinthians was not even adequate or appropriate for addressing the problem in all the Pauline churches. I am certain, for example, that the churches of Galatia would have been perplexed to receive 1 Corinthians as a solution to their specific problems. Indeed, even at Corinth it had to be supplemented by 2 Corinthians.

Not only does the historical method help restrain us from foisting our own agendas and ecclesiastical problems upon that small group of believers who lived at a particular time in Roman Achaia almost 2000 years ago, it also serves as a restraint for those who would twist the Scriptures and put forth their own ideology masquerading as exegesis. Time and again commentators have found a theology or doctrinal imprimatur in the text of 1 Corinthians which, even if generally true, has little in common with Paul's own

intention and goals for this letter. Throughout the centuries preachers and theologians have strolled through the cafeteria of 1 Corinthians, appetite whetted, looking for some word, idea, or verse to place upon the plate from which they feed the church. At some point this kind of pragmatism in handling Scripture, which is driven by a variety of appetites, must be labeled as malpractice, and the student of Scripture needs to obey again the pastoral admonition to become “a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).

Even though a historical-exegetical method is the underpinning of this commentary, it is in no way the final task for the church in the interpretation of 1 Corinthians. Rather, the historical-exegetical approach should be the first step, and a necessary one, which is followed by many other steps taken by believers who, through the course of their journey, translate the manifold and variegated message of 1 Corinthians for the contemporary and global church of Jesus Christ. The individual tools and methods used in this process of contextualization would hopefully come from the guidance of God as well as study in the traditional theological disciplines of homiletics, systematic theology, pastoral theology, ethnotheology, and the like.

THE LETTER OF 1 CORINTHIANS²

DESTINATION

The letter of 1 Corinthians was sent by Paul and Sosthenes to the congregation of believers in the city of Corinth. This is in contrast to 2 Corinthians, which was written not only to believers in

²Compared to other letters within the collection of Paul’s letters, there is not very much debate among scholars about the introductory matter (e.g., date, destination, authorship, etc.) of 1 Corinthians. This commentary will generally follow the conclusions reached by D.A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992, henceforth CMM, *Introduction*), and W.G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed., trans. H.C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), pp. 269-279.

Corinth but also to believers in the province of Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital (2 Cor 1:1). The content of 1 Cor 5:9 “I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people” makes it evident that the letter of 1 Corinthians is not Paul’s first written communication with the church at Corinth since he here refers to a previous letter he had already sent them and which they apparently misunderstood (5:9-11).

DATE

Even though the Acts of the Apostles was not written for the purpose of providing a historical framework for the Pauline Corpus, there are instances where Acts and facts from ancient historical records do supplement the letters of Paul.³ One very important way in which Acts supplements the less specific material in the Pauline letters is in regard to chronology.⁴ Without the chronological framework of Acts, it would be much harder to know how to arrange in sequence materials from Paul’s letters and to assign dates to them. It is our good fortune to be able to assign dates to about five episodes mentioned in Acts, and thereby, assign relative dates to parts of Paul’s correspondence.⁵ One of these instances is the case of Acts 18 where Luke narrates the beginning of the Pauline mission in Corinth. At that point we have firm evidence for the date of the Christian mission based upon supplemental historical data. In particular, Acts indicates that Paul’s work at Corinth took place while Gallio was the proconsul of Achaia (Acts 18:12).⁶

³Karl Donfried, “Chronology: New Testament” In *ABD*, vol. 1, pp. 1011 & 1022.

⁴L.C.A. Alexander, “Chronology of Paul.” In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. G.F. Hawthorne et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), pp. 119-123.

⁵Donfried lists Edict of Claudius (Acts 18:2); Administration of Gallio (Acts 18:12); Reign of King Aretas (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor. 11:32-33); Famine under Claudius (Acts 11:28); Death of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23); Proconsulship of Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7); and Paul before Felix and Festus (Acts 23:23-24:27) “Chronology,” pp. 1020-1021.

⁶A helpful introduction to Gallio is given by Klaus Haacker, “Gallio.” in *ABD*, vol. 2, pp. 901-903.

This Roman official, who was the brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca, is known from ancient Roman literature as well as archaeological data. It is this latter realm of evidence which helps specify the time of his career when he was proconsul in Corinth.⁷ This would put Paul's work at Corinth and his appearance before Gallio in the early 50s. Acts 18:11 indicates that Paul worked in Corinth for 18 months; this means that Paul's correspondence in 1 Corinthians would have occurred in approximately A.D. 55.⁸ While some interpreters have attempted to get even more precise with the dating, it seems that A.D. 55 is as specific as the evidence can support.

PROVENANCE

Paul was actually not far from Corinth when he wrote 1 Corinthians. First Corinthians 16:8 points decisively to a site on the eastern side of the Aegean Sea, in Ephesus, on the western coast of the Roman province of Asia. Travel between large port cities such as Corinth and Ephesus was frequent and relatively easy in the Roman world.⁹ Consequently, it is no surprise to find Corinthians visiting Paul, and Paul and his co-workers making visits from Asia to Corinth.

ROMAN CORINTH

The Greek city of Corinth had suffered defeat at the hands of the expanding Roman Republic in 146 B.C.¹⁰ The archaeological

⁷Jerome Murphy-O'Connor. *St. Paul's Corinth*. Text and Archaeology. Good News Studies, 6 (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983).

⁸CMM, *Introduction*, pp. 264-265.

⁹The sea voyage from Athens to Ephesus took approximately two weeks when Cicero traveled there in the summer of 51 B.C. Cicero, however, wanted to spend the nights on land so each night his ship stopped at an island. Normally, the boat trip from Athens to Ephesus lasted only four to five days. Lionel Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1974), p. 151.

¹⁰A general treatment of this can be found in Victor P. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time – What Can Archaeology Tell Us?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 15, 1988, 16-17.

evidence does not support, however, the idea that in the ensuing years all life and Greek influence vanished from this conquered and partially desolate site.¹¹ While the Greek Corinth was clearly defeated, it was not totally deserted in the decades following 146 B.C. When Julius Caesar, shortly before his assassination in 44 B.C., reestablished the city as a Roman colony, it would have quickly become a city which was dominantly, but not exclusively, Roman.¹² Consequently, any study of Paul's letter to the church of God at Corinth must take seriously the fact that Paul was addressing a city which had been, since 44 B.C., a Roman colony (*Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*).¹³ Roman colonies were typically established as outposts for promoting Roman culture, religion, language, and political systems as well as providing lands for retired Roman soldiers. And even though Corinth was located geographically in Greece, there is no doubt that Roman mores and ideas impacted the local populace since, as Aulus Gellius noted (2nd cent. A.D.), Roman colonies "seemed to be miniatures, as it were, and in a way copies" of the Roman people.¹⁴ Therefore, Corinth possessed all the appropriate Roman laws, magistrates and officials.¹⁵

¹¹Many classical scholars and New Testament scholars have had a pre-critical attitude toward the ancient literary tradition that Corinth was totally destroyed in 146 B.C. and remained desolate until 44 B.C. The sources for this spurious literary tradition and the archaeological data that refutes it have been conveniently assembled by James Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome I:228 B.C.–A.D. 267," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (henceforth ANRW). Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), II.7.1: 491-496.

¹²The large percentage of Latin rather than Greek inscriptions from early imperial history in this direction; cf. the helpful observations by Ben Witherington, III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 7-8.

¹³Many interpreters have falsely concluded that the Greek culture of old Corinth was still dominant in the first century since Paul's letter to the Corinthians was written in Greek. If this were correct, how is one to understand that Paul's letter to the Romans was also written in Greek?

¹⁴Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 16.13.9. *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*. Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), vol. 3, 181. "For they [i.e. colonies] did not come into citizenship from without, nor grow from roots of their own, but they are as it were transplanted from the State and have all the laws and institutions of the Roman people,

Because of Corinth's mercantile character and important geographical location, it quickly attracted new residents from throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Consequently, by the time of Paul's arrival in Corinth, almost one century after its reestablishment as a city, the population would have included not only Romans, but also Greeks, Jews, Egyptians, Syrians, etc.

ORIGIN, STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF 1 CORINTHIANS

Even though there is not a consensus among interpreters regarding the exact nature and causes of the problems which Paul treats in 1 Corinthians, there is general agreement that the letter is organized around the cluster of problems which Paul is striving to remedy by his apostolic instruction.¹⁶ The letter is basically a series of smaller units of thought, each of which seems to be directed to a particular aberration in the beliefs and/or practices of the Corinthians. Paul's style in the letter is to acknowledge the existence of a sin or problem, address the sin or problem, and then move on to the next one.

Paul's information about these various problems at Corinth did not come from firsthand knowledge of his own nor through inspiration. The majority, if not all, of Paul's information about the various issues with which he dealt in the letter came most likely from two distinct human sources.¹⁷ The information and problems treated in 1 Cor 1-6 came from those from the house of Chloe. First Corinthians 1:11 states that "some from Chloe's household

not those of their own choice. This condition, although it is more exposed to control and less free, is nevertheless thought preferable and superior because of the greatness and majesty of the Roman people, of which those colonies seem to be miniatures, as it were, and in a way copies."

¹⁵A serious perusal of the inscriptions given by Allen B. West, *Corinth*, Vol. VIII, Pt. II, *Latin Inscriptions 1896-1926* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), and John H. Kent, *Corinth*, Vol. VIII, Pt. III, *The Inscriptions 1926-1950* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1966) makes evident the Roman character of Corinth's civic and governmental institutions.

¹⁶John Hurd and CMM *Introduction*.

¹⁷S.J. Hafemann, "Corinthians, Letters to," *DPL*, pp. 164-167.

have *informed* me that there are quarrels among you,” thereby identifying Paul’s source of information for the problem he treats in 1 Cor 1-4. The wording of 1 Cor 5:1 “It is actually *reported*” points probably to additional information in 1 Cor 5-6 which was also supplied by those from Chloe’s house. If this is not the case, then we have no idea who provided this report of immorality among the Corinthians.¹⁸

A second major source for Paul’s information is mentioned in 1 Cor 7:1 when he wrote, “*Now* for the matters you wrote *about*.” Paul is expressly acknowledging here that the list of issues and problems that he is going to respond to came from a document authored and sent by Corinthian believers to him. Numerous modern interpreters believe, rightly so in my opinion, that this Corinthian document informed Paul not only about the issue discussed in 1 Cor 7:1ff, but also the matters discussed at 8:1ff (*Now about* food sacrificed to idols), 12:1ff (*Now about* spiritual gifts), and 16:1ff (*Now about* the collection for God’s people).¹⁹

At least two points can be drawn from this information. The first is that the Corinthians themselves should receive credit for the broad outline of what was discussed and treated in 1 Corinthians. In addition, one ought not overlook the fact that Paul’s treatment of the Corinthians’ problems is a treatment of the problems as communicated to him through an unnamed informant of one of the women members of the congregation and through a letter (authors unknown) sent to Paul which already had, regardless of its tone, an agenda for which Paul was not responsible. It is obvious, then, that even though no one seriously doubts the Pauline authorship of 1 Corinthians, it is important for the interpreter to appreciate the complex role of the Corinthians in their contribution to the content and structure of the epistle.

¹⁸CMM, *Introduction*, p. 260, raise the possibility that this report came from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17).

¹⁹John C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965); Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 266-267.

PROBLEMS AT CORINTH

The task of identifying and reconstructing the multiple problems within the church of God at Corinth on the basis of Paul's letter to them is not a simple one. Writing decades ago on this very problem Prof. Kirsopp Lake commented,

The difficulty which undoubtedly attends any attempt to understand the Epistles of St. Paul is largely due to the fact that they are letters; for the writer of letters assumes the knowledge of a whole series of facts, which are, as he is quite aware, equally familiar to his correspondent and to himself. But as time goes on this knowledge is gradually forgotten and what was originally quite plain becomes difficult and obscure; it has to be recovered from stray hints and from other documents by a process of laborious research, before it is possible for the letters to be read with anything approaching to the ease and intelligence possessed by those to whom they were originally sent.²⁰

There are some scholars who wish to interpret most, if not all, of the problems in 1 Corinthians as arising from one group of individuals at Corinth. The evidence of 1 Corinthians does not, in my judgment, support such a theory. There are, admittedly, aspects of this approach which are attractive. Common traits, to be sure, can be found among some of the problems. For example, Paul refers to the sin of boasting as an ingredient in more than one of the problems within the Corinthians fellowship. Likewise, the terms "division" (σχίσμα, *schisma*) (1 Cor 1:10; 11:18) and "dissension" (also *schisma*) (1 Cor 12:25) are used by Paul in describing more than one problem situation among the letter's recipients. This common denominator of *schisma* does not require the conclusion that the problems of "party loyalty" in 1 Cor 1-4, abuse of the Lord's Meal in 11:17-22, and misunderstanding and misuse of spiritual gifts in 12-14 must all be traced back to a common theological aberration, to the same social stratum in the church, or to a particular house church in Corinth.

²⁰Kirsopp Lake, *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul: Their Motive and Origin*, p. vii, cited by Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians*, p. 5.

Since the goal in this commentary is to interpret 1 Corinthians as Paul's coherent letter, we must respect Paul's own categorization of the issues at Corinth if we want to understand the intent of his instruction and flow of thought as he responded and gave directions to the church of God at Corinth. If direct and explicit social links between the organizational subunits within 1 Corinthians can be isolated, so much the better for exegesis. However, to this point in time many of the rhetorical, sociological and anthropological reconstructions of the Christian community(ies) at Corinth resemble, at times, a Procrustean Bed rather than a picture put together on the basis of an exegetical-historical model.²¹

Throughout the modern period of Pauline interpretation scholars have regularly commented on the issue of Paul's opponents at Corinth.²² In this interpretive context, the term opponent has become almost synonymous with those who promoted or participated in the spiritual aberrations opposed by Paul in 1 Corinthians. More recently, however, other scholars have rightly attempted to both refine and redefine the term opponent.²³ From this ongoing discussion two points are relevant to this study of 1 Corinthians. First, one must not automatically equate the personalities, groups and aberrations behind 2 Corinthians with those behind 1 Corinthians.²⁴ There is no compelling reason to believe that the two letters were written to address the exact same problems. In fact, the internal evidence leads away from such a position.²⁵ (1) 1 Corinthians was written only to the church in Corinth, while 2 Corinthians was written not only to the church in Corinth but also to all believers in

²¹This should not be interpreted as a refusal to appreciate the insights provided by various methodologies. The problem is that many times these methods demand more of the text than it can, with a straightforward reading, supply.

²²Some recent treatments are surveyed by Fee, *First Epistle*, pp. 4-15.

²³P.W. Barnett, "Opponents of Paul." *DPL*, pp. 644-653; A more detailed investigation is found in Jerry Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement 40 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

²⁴CMM, *Introduction*, p. 279 write, "We must not read the situation of 2 Corinthians back into 1 Corinthians . . ."

²⁵Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians*. Word Biblical Commentary, 40 (Waco: Word, 1986), pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

all the Roman province of Achaia, of which Corinth was the capital. (2) Most of the key terms and ideas of each letter are not found in the other. (3) The tenor and literary characteristics of each letter are distinctive.

The second observation from the contemporary discussion of Pauline opponents is the question of whether every spiritual aberration within a Pauline church should be interpreted as intentional and direct opposition to Paul himself. It is not a question of whether Paul ever had opponents (e.g., 2 Corinthians, Galatians), but whether the term opponent is the appropriate term for everyone who was guilty of spiritual perceptions and doctrines different than Paul's or whose lifestyle was not in harmony with Paul's ethical teachings. John Calvin touched on this point in his commentary on 1 Corinthians when he wrote, "Now, I have good reason for thinking that those worthless fellows, who had caused trouble in the Corinthian church, were not open enemies of the truth."²⁶ Calvin's point is well taken and his caution in using the term opponent will be followed in this work. More explicit and extended discussions on the topic of opponents will be found at the appropriate junctures in the commentary itself.

OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

The recognition of literary units in 1 Corinthians is part and parcel of the task of exegesis. The opening and closing of units of thought are not merely arbitrary literary embellishments nor are they just convenient ways to structure Paul's thought and feelings. These units put linguistic and semantic limits on the words and thoughts of Paul.²⁷ The recognition of these demarcations in 1 Corinthians is mandated, since it helps ensure that the flow of Paul's rhetorical argument remains within the limits set by the

²⁶J. Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. J.W. Fraser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 8.

²⁷This issue is discussed in W.M. Klein, C.L. Blomberg, and R.L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word, 1993), pp. 156-171.

Apostle himself.²⁸ Moreover, a respect for the conceptual units and subunits of Paul's letter will greatly reduce the tendency to make his words mean more than he intended them to mean. This tendency to generalize Paul's thought and words beyond the immediate rhetorical setting comes at a high price, since it can only be maintained by denying the occasional nature of the Pauline correspondence as well as the universally recognized fact that meaning emerges from rhetorical and contextual usage.²⁹

Introduction etc.	1:1-9
Issue 1 Disunity and Community Fragmentation	1:10-4:20
Issue 2 Reports of Immorality	5:1-6:20
Issue 3 Sexuality/Celibacy/Marriage	7:1-40
Issue 4 Foods Offered to Idols	8:1-11:1
Issue 5 Liturgical Aberrations	11:2-34
Issue 6 Misunderstanding of Spiritual Gifts	12:1-14:40
Issue 7 Misunderstanding of Believers' Resurrection	15:1-58
Issue 8 Instruction for the Collection	16:1-11
Concluding topics	16:12-24

HISTORICAL MATRIX FOR THE CORINTHIAN PROBLEMS

Without going into the multifaceted issues about the historical evidence from Acts for Paul's churches and how this relates to the evidence for Paul and his churches from his own letters, it seems prudent to rely initially and primarily upon the evidence of 1 Corinthians itself rather than Luke's material in Acts to understand the nature and extent of the problems in the church at

²⁸On the topic of Paul's use of rhetoric see G.W. Hansen, "Rhetorical Criticism," *DPL*, pp. 822-826.

²⁹Regarding the use of rhetoric by Paul in his letters, one should remember the comment of D. Aune who observed, "By the first century B.C., rhetoric had come to exert a strong influence on the composition of letters, particularly among the educated. Their letters functioned not only as means of communication but also as sophisticated instruments of persuasion . . .," *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*. Library of Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), p. 160.

Corinth.³⁰ To be specific, one must not falsely conclude, on the basis of the Lukan picture of a predominant Jewish matrix of the church in Corinth, that Jewish beliefs and practices provide the matrix for most of the aberrations within the Corinthian church.³¹ In this regard, Gordon Fee is correct when he points out that many of the problems at Corinth are explicitly traced by Paul to the converts' pagan heritage.³² It can be argued, furthermore, that even those issues not explicitly traced to pagan heritage by Paul can be best understood by seeing them against the backdrop of Greco-Roman rather than Jewish mores and values.

The issues depicted in 1 Corinthians arose directly from the lives of that first generation Christian community, most of whom had been believers no more than 48 months. Since Paul nowhere implies in 1 Corinthians that the Corinthian problems were introduced by outsiders, the most reasonable course to follow in evaluating the origin of the Corinthian issues is to investigate the urban setting of Roman Corinth from which the converts came. This means that the religious and cultural perspectives which shaped the beliefs and practices of those whom Paul addressed in this letter provide the best circumstantial evidence and clues for the interpretation of 1 Corinthians.³³

While the need to recognize the Greco-Roman matrix of the Corinthian problems might seem self-evident, the history of the interpretation of 1 Corinthians clearly reveals that not all interpreters have shared this methodological concern. In practice this approach to 1 Corinthians means that:

³⁰In general see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Paul and His Theology, A Brief Sketch*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), pp. 3-21.

³¹Interpreters sometimes misuse the "Synagogue of the Hebrews" inscription discovered at Corinth. This inscriptional evidence is too fragmentary to date it precisely, but most scholars date this inscription and other Jewish archaeological evidence from Corinth at a date well after Paul's time there, Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time," p. 26; McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, p. 319 seems to also accept the late date of this Jewish inscription.

³²Fee, *First Epistle*, p. 14.

³³The evidence of Egyptian religions at Corinth has been collected and interpreted by D. Smith, "The Egyptian Cults at Corinth," *Harvard Theological Review* 70, 1977, 201-231; A helpful survey is also found in Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, pp. 12-19.

1. One must not attribute the Jewishness of Paul and the Scriptural basis of his own theology to those recent converts whom he was correcting. To extract texts and vocabulary from Jewish sources (e.g., Mishnah, Dead Sea Scrolls, Gospels, etc.) to understand the matrix of the Corinthians' problems is highly suspect. The fact that Paul often cites Scripture to remedy the problems at Corinth speaks more of his own Jewish heritage, his apostolic ministry, and his convictions that all Christians are to be guided by Scripture than it does that there was some significant Jewish background to the Corinthian problems.³⁴

2. The mores, patterns of culture and specific religious institutions of Greco-Roman paganism must be seen as the soil in which the Corinthian problems were germinated and grew.

3. The specific condition of the Corinth of Paul's day should be taken as the immediate setting for the converts. One must exercise caution in using information about an earlier Greek Corinth which had been destroyed in the second century B.C. and no longer existed in Paul's day in order to describe the Corinth of Paul's day.³⁵

4. One must recognize the multicultural nature of Corinth at Paul's time. It was geographically Greek, it was administratively and politically Roman, and its denizens came from throughout the central and eastern parts of the Mediterranean Basin. Consequently, one must reckon with ethnic influences in Paul's Corinth which reflect Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Syrian, Jewish, and Anatolian influences.

5. Vague and anachronistic labels such as gnosticism should be avoided until appropriate historical evidence and documentation can be discovered and shown to be relevant to the issues at Corinth addressed by Paul.³⁶ A commitment to the notion of a

³⁴Cf. 1 Cor 10:14 and notes there; in general cf. Rom 15:3-4; 2 Tim 3:14-17; a helpful overview and bibliography is given by M. Silva, "Old Testament in Paul," *DPL*, pp. 630-642.

³⁵This issue is correctly noted by Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, pp. 5-9.

³⁶The major difficulties with the traditional Gnosticism approach to the New Testament are spelled out in Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidences*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983); cf. also Richard E. Oster, Jr., "Christianity in Asia Minor," in *The Anchor Bible*

gnostic background to 1 Corinthians still has advocates, though their numbers are surely down from that of the 19th and earlier part of the 20th century.³⁷ Quite recently, for example, PHEME PERKINS argued that

. . . gnostic mythologizing does form part of the horizon within which the New Testament should be interpreted. Students of Christian origins have become accustomed to comparing the New Testament material with a wide variety of Jewish and Greco-Roman sources. The same efforts of analysis and comparison should be applied to the gnostic material.³⁸

Dictionary, 5 vols., eds. D.N. Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 1, 948-949.

³⁷A Gnostic background for Paul and/or the Corinthians was assumed by many scholars in the last century and the first two-thirds of this century, e.g., Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. trans. by K. Grobel (New York: Scribners, 1951, 1955). A classic interpretation of 1 Corinthians from a perspective of Gnosticism is Walther Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*.

³⁸PHEME PERKINS, *Gnosticism and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 4-5.

OUTLINE

- I. INTRODUCTION – 1:1-9**
 - A. Salutation – 1:1-3**
 - B. Thanksgiving – 1:4-9**
- II. DISUNITY AND COMMUNITY FRAGMENTATION – 1:10-4:21**
 - A. Divisions in the Church – 1:10-17**
 - 1. Report Received by Paul – 1:10-12
 - 2. Christ Undivided – 1:13-17
 - B. Christ the Wisdom and Power of God – 1:18-2:5**
 - 1. The Message of the Cross – 1:18-19
 - 2. Both Jews and Gentiles Offended – 1:20-25
 - 3. God's Choice of Foolish Things – 1:26-31
 - 4. Paul's Message Not Based on Eloquence – 2:1-5
 - C. Wisdom and Spiritual Maturity – 2:6-3:4**
 - 1. God's Secret Wisdom – 2:6-9
 - 2. The Teaching of the Spirit – 2:10-16
 - 3. Divisions a Sign of Worldliness – 3:1-4
 - D. God the Master Builder – 3:5-23**
 - 1. Paul and Apollos Merely Servants – 3:5-9
 - 2. Building on the Foundation Laid by Paul – 3:10-17
 - 3. God's View of Wisdom – 3:18-23
 - E. Apostles of Christ – 4:1-21**
 - 1. The Apostles as Servants of Christ – 4:1-5
 - 2. Overcoming Human Pride – 4:6-7
 - 3. Honor and Dishonor – 4:8-13
 - 4. Paul's Warning as Father – 4:14-17
 - 5. Arrogance to Be Confronted – 4:18-21
- III. REPORTS OF IMMORALITY – 5:1-6:20**
 - A. Discipline for the Immoral Brother – 5:1-13**
 - 1. The Corinthians' Pride in Tolerance – 5:1-5
 - 2. Getting Rid of the Old Yeast – 5:6-8

- 3. Separating From Evil – 5:9-13
- B. Lawsuits among Believers – 6:1-11**
 - 1. Settling Disputes in the Church – 6:1-8
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