

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF FIRST CENTURY A.D. CHRISTIANS

SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF FIRST CENTURY A.D. CHRISTIANS
STUDIED IN THE CONTEXT
OF
CORINTH

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ABSTRACT

Corinth is chosen as the setting for this thesis since the Pauline Corinthian letters yield much first hand information concerning the problems the new Christians were facing. A general description of the history, social atmosphere, and architecture of Corinth is given in order to establish a background in which the study can be made. Two specific problems are addressed. First, that of "Porneia" ("Sexual immorality.") A definite prohibition against all extra-marital sexual intercourse causes the Christians to identify marriage as a necessity for those desirous or in need of sexual fulfillment. This is in contrast with the Greco-Roman attitude towards marriage, namely that it provided only one of several possibilities for sexual fulfillment, and was primarily for the purpose of child-bearing. The second problem addressed is that of eating "eidolothuta" ("meats offered to idols.") Paul distinguishes between circumstances when specific practices of pagan worship are present, and when they are not present. In the former situation, the Christians were not to eat; in the latter, they were permitted to eat.

For the Christians to comply with St. Paul's instructions concerning each of the two named problems, it meant limiting their social activities in various ways. The result may have been restricted social, political, and financial prosperity, as well as eventual hatred and abuse by their contemporaries.

PREFACE

Throughout the text of this thesis, I have included a translation of all Hebrew, Greek, or Latin quotes (the words of the chapter headings excepted.) This has been done to make the thesis available to those not conversant with these languages. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are my own. I have also indicated the text used for quotes from ancient sources, "O" indicating "Oxford," "T" indicating "Teubner," and "B" indicating "Budé" texts. All New Testament quotes are from the Greek New Testament of the United Bible Societies, 2nd ed., 1968.

I wish to give special thanks to Dr. G. Paul who has given me consistent guidance in my study and preparation of this thesis. His meticulous checking of my work has been invaluable. I am also grateful for the helpful suggestions and corrections that have been offered by Dr. P. Kingston and Dr. M. Miller. Thanks also must be given to my friend Marilyn Hadden for her help in proofreading a final version.

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INTRODUCTION

It is true that the fourth century A.D. saw Christianity arise over paganism as the officially endorsed religion of the Roman Empire. However, the Greco-Roman environment into which this new faith initially entered was in fact an unlikely host. Society was generally tolerant of any religious tradition, but Christianity would not reciprocate this courtesy: rather, quite intolerant principles and practices were established within Christianity which would contest the very framework of ancient society to the degree that the converts would conform to and publicize these new principles.

There is a new interest in reconstructing the social, economic, and religious realities of New Testament times, and social historians (such as Wayne Meeks, Gerd Theissen, Ramsay MacMullen) are doing much to bring this period to life. With such information available, it is becoming more and more possible to reconstruct the actual problems a first century Christian community might have faced as it arose within Greco-Roman society. The purpose of this thesis, then, will be to explore two such problems, each as a fruitful study on its own, but together as illustrative of the difficulties presented to the Christians of the first century

as they were challenged to preserve Christian principles and practice in the environment of a fixed pagan tradition.

Since no surviving literary text shows us more clearly than St. Paul's Corinthian letters the conflict thus experienced by the Christians, I have chosen to pursue the study in the context of first century A.D. Corinth. Accordingly, the following outline will be followed:

I. General Background of first century A.D. Corinth

II. The Problem of Πορνεία ("sexual immorality")

III. The Problem of Εἰδωλόθυτα ("meats offered to idols").

In the first section, I wish to give a broad perspective on life in the city of Corinth as it was in the first century A.D. This general survey is an attempt to bring to life the realities of a city that was bustling with activity, constantly expanding and progressing.

With this background, I then wish to discuss the two problems named above which the Corinthian converts experienced, reconstructing them as accurately as possible from Paul's letters: that of establishing a standard of sexual morality appropriate to their new faith; and that of determining limitations as to their consumption of food that was (or had been) associated with pagan worship and sacrifice.

If we are able to visualize at least in measure the real situation at Corinth, it will accordingly be possible to evaluate the intensity of the above problems among the Corinthian converts, and the amount of change to which

Christianity was calling them. We are addressing the question: What were the social consequences for a pagan in the first century A.D. when he became a Christian?

Source material for this study is primarily available from ancient literary documents, though some helpful insights concerning Corinth itself are to be gained from archaeology and epigraphy. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of Corinth seem to have been so pre-occupied with local affairs as to have neglected an attempt to leave behind a literary legacy. Much literature that we do have concerning Corinth is apparently from second hand sources, and we must try to separate fact from reputation. However, the many decades of archaeological research both at Corinth itself and at the port settlements have yielded ample evidence to establish at least the commercial, religious, and industrial nature of the city. Then in our attempt to reconstruct the social conditions, we must often draw from evidence elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world in the belief that the situation around the Mediterranean would have been fairly consistent.

A word should be said about the Corinthian letters themselves. That both letters are genuinely Pauline is accepted almost universally, and it is also generally agreed that the letters were written in close succession (perhaps within a year of each other) around 55-57 A.D., shortly after the apostle Paul's own time in Corinth (approximately

49-51 A.D.¹) There have been some suggestions that the Corinthian letters as we know them have been redacted from several Pauline letters to Corinth.² While we find no reason to conclude that this is the case, our own purposes here are faithfully served by the text regardless of this possibility. Much of the content of the letters appears to be in answer to questions raised by the Corinthian converts: the point is that the letters are closely bound to the actual experiences of the Corinthian Christians.

1. Murphy-O'Connor, St. Paul's Corinth, p. 140.

2. See p.102, note 82, below.

I

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF FIRST CENTURY A.D. CORINTH

Corinth, originally a name denoting just a region, but which eventually included a centralized urban settlement, was seemingly destined for prosperity by its very location. All overland travel between the Greek mainland and the Peloponnese - whether commercial, military, tourist, or migratory - had virtually no option but to find its way through the narrow Corinthian Isthmus. Furthermore, travel by sea between the Adriatic and Aegean was facilitated by this same Isthmus: the trip around the Peloponnese was long and dangerous, whereas transporting cargo across land meant only a six kilometer (three and one half mile) haul.¹ Thus whoever might occupy this territory would naturally have the opportunity to levy taxes and tariffs on those passing through, as well as of providing for them any number of saleable goods and services. That this advantage was recognized by the ancients is clear from the testimony of Thucydides (1.13.5):

οἰκοῦντες γὰρ τὴν πόλιν οἱ Κορίνθιοι ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἰσθμοῦ
αἰεὶ δὴ ποτε ἐμπόριον εἶχον, τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὸ πάλαι
κατὰ γῆν τὰ πλείω ἢ κατὰ θάλασσαν, τῶν τε ἐντὸς

1. The Corinthians provided for this overland transport by means of the diolkos, a roadway built directly across the Isthmus. Cf. Strabo, Geographica 8.2.1; Thucydides 3.15, 8.7. Some large stone-slab remains can still be seen. See Harold Fowler, Corinth, I.i, pp. 49ff.

Πελοποννήσου καὶ τῶν ἔξω, διὰ τῆς ἐκείνων παρ' ἀλλήλους ἐπιμισγόντων, χρήμασί τε δυνατοὶ ἦσαν, ὡς καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ποιηταῖς δεδήλωται· ἀφνειὸν γὰρ ἐπωνόμασαν τὸ χωρίον. ἐπειδὴ τε οἱ Ἕλληνες μᾶλλον ἐπλωζον, τὰς ναῦς κτησάμενοι τὸ ληστικὸν καθήρουν, καὶ ἐμπόριον παρέχοντες ἀμφοτέρω δυνατὴν ἔσχον χρημάτων προσόδω τὴν πόλιν. (0)

(For since the Corinthians inhabit the city at the Isthmus, in times past they always had opportunity for trade; because the Greeks of old, more by land than by sea, both those within and those without the Peloponnese, mingled with one another through Corinthian territory; and the Corinthians were powerful by means of wealth, as also is made clear by the ancient poets; for they gave the district the epithet "rich." And then when the Greeks began to travel by sea, the Corinthians by manning their own fleets rid themselves of piracy, and provided for both land and sea trade and made the city prosperous by the revenue from trade.)

While Thucydides is correct in his contemporary analysis of the situation at Corinth, his reference to the poets raises a further point. It is true that Corinth was designated "ἀφνειός" ("rich") in the Iliad of Homer (2.570), but archaeology has thus far revealed no evidence of a major urban center in Corinthian territory during Mycenaean times; rather there were several small settlements scattered throughout the area. Therefore, it may be that the term "Corinth" referred to the entire district (i.e. Corinthia) rather than a city proper, and the epithet "rich" indicated that the soil there was reputedly fertile. Carl Blegen observed early in this century that in comparison with much of Greece, the land at Corinth was extremely productive, boasting several natural fresh water springs as well as arable land. He reported large yields of wheat, barley, grapes,

currants, tobacco, and cheese, and concluded that ancient agriculture would have been similarly productive.² At least we can conclude that Corinth had not only the advantage of location, but also the means of subsistence livelihood.

According to the findings of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, the development of the actual city of Corinth can be traced back to about the middle of the sixth century B.C. But before that time, while the Corinthian inhabitants may have lived in separate settlements, they nevertheless demonstrated a common interest in commerce. They established colonies such as Syracuse, Corcyra, and Epidamnus which served to extend Corinthian contact abroad, and facilitate a more effective means of trade.³ Industrial pursuits appropriate to coastal regions - fishing and ship-building - were early engaged in, and a reputation for naval power was justly earned; the earliest sea battle recorded in Greek history in fact took place between Corinth and her colony Corcyra.⁴ But industry at Corinth was not limited to the sea. Large clay beds made possible the development of ceramic works for which Corinth gained an international

2. Carl Blegen, "Corinth in Prehistoric Times," *A.J.A.*, XXIV, 1920, pp. 10ff. See also Harold Fowler in *Corinth*, I.i, p.112.

3. Cf. John Boardman, *The Greeks Overseas*, 2nd ed., p. 225.

4. Thucydides 1.13; also, Corinth's large naval capabilities in the fifth century B.C. are reported by Herodotus, 8.1, 8.43.

clientele, Corinthian pottery being exported voluminously, though not always by the Corinthians themselves. Concerning this pottery, John Boardman remarks:

It was of the highest quality, worth possessing and carrying for its own sake by any Greek, and need not mean active participation of the Corinthian traders in the east. The vases have been found all over the Greek world - and beyond it - and do not present any very clear pattern of specifically Corinthian trade and interest.⁵

Further, from the seventh century B.C. onward⁶ Corinth was known for its bronze working, products again being widely exported and prized by purchasers.⁷

Corinth did indeed figure significantly in Greek history. She was an active participant in Greek resistance to the Persian invasion; she joined with Sparta in opposing and eventually defeating the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.); she became the center of the Hellenic League during the Macedonian Empire of Philip and Alexander; and subsequently she was also the center of the Achaean League which arose as the last attempt at Greek independence in ancient times. So strategic was her position, and so protective her acropolis that she was considered one of the three "fettters of Greece" along with Chalcis and Demetrias. This

5. Boardman, loc. cit., p. 48.

6. Corinth: A Brief History of the City and a Guide to the Excavations, p.3.

7. Later witnesses to the value placed on Corinthian bronzework: Cicero, Actio in Verrem 2.4.97-98; Strabo, Geographica 8.6.23c; Propertius, Elegies 3.5.3-6; Petronius, Satiricon 50; et al.

designation, first used by Philip of Macedon,⁸ reflected the belief that whoever would hold Corinth, Chalcis, and Demetrius would control all of Greece.

Cicero credited Corinth with having been a city worthy of comparison with Carthage and Capua, each capable "imperii gravitatem ac nomen sustinere" ("of bearing the dignity and name of empire.")⁹ However, the power that the city was thus to attain turned in fact to her own ruin, for when the Romans in the person of L. Aurelius Orestes asked for the dissolution of the Achaean League (147 B.C.)¹⁰ and were refused, they determined to forcibly impose the same.¹¹ Accordingly, Lucius Mummius in the following year led the Romans to a complete mastery over the Greeks, and Corinth itself was all but razed.

There is a continuing discussion as to the extent of Corinth's destruction in 146 B.C. It is agreed that the inhabitants for the most part were either killed or sold as slaves; but there is also evidence of some life on the site during the interval between the destruction and the recolonization by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. Coins from this period have been excavated at Corinth which seem to indicate some

8. Strabo, Geographica 9.4.15.

9. De Lege Agraria 2.87. (B)

10. James Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome," p. 461.

11. Pausanias, Description of Greece 7.16.

commercial activity at the time; ruts made from carts during this period are also apparent.¹² Furthermore, several of the cultic areas were maintained continuously such as that of Aphrodite on Acrocorinth, the sanctuary of Demeter and Core, and the Asclepieium.¹³ We are also given some hints about refugees at Corinth by Cicero who apparently visited the site. He testifies, "Corinthis vestigium vix relictum est" ("scarcely a trace of Corinth is left")¹⁴ indicating that there may at least have been some sort of remains; and he encountered some native folk there who did not share his shock at the site owing to their familiarity with it.¹⁵ It is likely that some Corinthians who by chance had escaped the carnage of 146 B.C. returned to live on in whatever way they could.

Whatever the case, the advantages of location that raised Corinth to prosperity in Greek times still prevailed so as to allow the same to occur for the Roman city which was colonized in 44 B.C. The colonists were sent out from Rome at the direction of Julius Caesar who chose to refound

12. Charles K. Williams, "Corinth, 1977, Forum Southwest," pp. 21-23. See also Wiseman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 493f for evidences of habitation at Corinth during this period.

13. Mentioned each by Wiseman and Williams; see footnote 12 above.

14. De Lege Agraria 2.87.(B)

15. Tusc. Disp. 3.22.53.

both Corinth and Carthage as Roman colonies.¹⁶ The colonists themselves were apparently from the lower classes; whereas opportunities for political or financial advancement may have been limited for such persons at Rome, membership in a new colony - particularly one with so many natural advantages - offered innumerable possibilities for prosperity. In the judgment of one Crinagoras (fl. ca. 45 B.C.), Corinth was enduring a grievous insult:

αὐτίκα καὶ γαίης χθαμαλωτέρῃ εἶθε, Κόρινθε
 κείσθαι, καὶ Λιβυκῆς ψάμμου ἔρημοτέρῃ
 ἢ τοίοις διὰ πᾶσα παλιμπρήτοισι δοθεῖσα
 θλίβειν ἀρχαίων ὀστέα Βακχιαδῶν.

(Would that you now lay even lower than the ground,
 O Corinth, and more desolate than Libyan sands,
 than be handed down completely for such good-for
 nothings to crush the bones of the ancient
 Bacchiadae.)¹⁷

However, this display of sentiment over Greek nobility must be tempered by the fact that Corinth subsequently arose with all speed to its former position of prosperity. If the colonists were not of the noble class, they were at least industrious. According to Strabo, the colonists Caesar sent out were "τοῦ ἀπελευθερικοῦ γένους πλείστους" ("for the most part of the class of the freedman");¹⁸ no doubt these emancipated slaves carried with them trades and skills which they had

16. Dio Cassius, 43.50.3-5.

17. Greek Anthology 9.284. (L)

18. Geographica 8.6.23. (T)

learned as slaves, and now employed for profit. We also learn from Plutarch of another class of people on which Caesar bestowed the honour of participating in Corinth's recolonization:

τὴν δ' εὐνοίαν ὡς κάλλιστον ἅμα καὶ βεβαιότατον ἑαυτῷ περιβαλλόμενος φυλακτῆριον, αὐθις ἀνελάμβανε τὸν δῆμον ἐστιάσει καὶ σιτηρεσίῳ τὸ δὲ στρατιωτικὸν ἀποικίαις, ὧν ἐπιφανέσταται Καρχηδῶν καὶ Κόρινθος ἦσαν,...

(In order to surround himself with goodwill as the best and most secure form of guard, he renewed his efforts to win over the populace by means of feasts and distributions of corn; and the military by opportunities to share in new colonies, of which the most conspicuous were Carthage and Corinth,...)¹⁹

Whether a large contingent of veterans was included among the new colonists is subject to debate.²⁰ Clearly, however, potential economic prosperity was the major factor that was attractive about Corinth, and anyone willing to take the initiative would have had an ideal opportunity there.

The city in its rebuilding took on a Roman appearance. According to M. Hoskins Walbank, Corinth "was founded and laid out in accordance with the normal procedure for establishing a late Republican or early Imperial colony, and (that) it should be regarded as an essentially Roman city rather than a continuation or refoundation of Greek Corinth."²¹

19. Life of Caesar 57.8. (T)

20. See Murphy-O'Connor, loc. cit., p. 66, 107.

21. "The Nature of Early Roman Corinth," A.J.A., 90, (1986), pp. 220-221.

Nor was it long before it could be called "rich" once again. Strabo rehearses the same reasons as Thucydides (p. 4 above) for this prosperity - marketing opportunities serviced by two harbours, with Asia and Italy on either side.²² Travel across the Isthmus in all likelihood did not cease during the interval between Greek and Roman Corinth, but, as discussed above, it certainly did continue in Roman times. One orator prided himself on not being "ὡς ἓνα τῶν πολλῶν καὶ κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν καταιρόντων εἰς Κεγχρεὰς ἔμπορον ἢ θεωρὸν ἢ πρεσβευτὴν ἢ διερχόμενον..." ("... like one of the many who put into port at Cenchreae each year, whether a merchant or state-envoy or ambassador or traveller..."),²³ demonstrating the many reasons for which persons might have travelled through Corinthian territory. This self-renewing market enabled the once "ἄποροί" ("poor")²⁴ colonists to develop their city into a well structured establishment with an evolving aristocracy. It appears that since all the colonists were recent immigrants themselves, leaving no one with advantages of rank due to tradition or ancestry, all were potential candidates for nobility; hence, a certain local competition arose among the ambitious for public honour and recognition. From the archaeological evidence, John Harvey Kent concludes:

22. Geographica 8.6.20a.

23. [Dio Chrysostom], Discourses 37.8. (J. De Arnim)

24. Appian, History 8.136.

...by the beginning of the Christian era many inhabitants had obtained Roman citizenship and some had acquired considerable wealth. They had acquired also a taste for displaying their civic pride in the form of architectural gifts to the city. The return of the management of the Isthmian games to Corinthian control some time between 7 B.C. and A.D. 3 doubtless stimulated greatly this form of ostentatious public generosity (φιλοτιμία) and helped set a pattern for donating new buildings of marble or adorning old ones with marble revetments, a pattern which continued to be followed by wealthy benefactors throughout the next two centuries. The list of donors that follows is striking in that they are nearly all unknown to us apart from their inscriptions, and evidently were local commercial tycoons whose political ambitions did not extend beyond the borders of their own city.²⁵

The list Kent then gives includes 27 structures which is not a comprehensive catalogue of all donations. Rebuilding in or by the time of the first century A.D. included the sanctuaries of Demeter and Core, the Archaic temple, the sanctuary of Asclepius, the fountain of Peirene, the fountain of Glauke, many market places and shops, civic buildings, and the theatre. The apostle Paul visited Corinth less than one hundred years after its recolonization, and yet already the city was very much restored.²⁶ One of his converts, Erastus, whom he referred to as the "οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως" ("city steward")²⁷ may well have been a benefactor of the city himself. An inscription reading "[Praenomen nomen] Erastus pro aedilit[at]e s(ua) p(ecunia) stravit" ("Erastus in return for

25. Kent, Corinth, VIII, iii, pp. 20-21. See also Wayne Meeks, First Urban Christians, pp. 48f.

26. Wiseman, loc. cit., p. 521.

27. Romans 16.23.

his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense")²⁸ in all probability refers to him,²⁹ and shows his accession into politics by means of civic generosity.

In chapter III below we encounter the suggestion that the "strong"³⁰ Christians Paul refers to are the wealthy. At this point we can at least affirm that there were wealthy members among the converts. The apostle himself implies this in I Corinthians 11.21-22; perhaps also by "δυνατοί" ("powerful") in I Corinthians 1.26 he means "influential" (thus presupposing wealth, given the political system at Corinth). Specifically, we know of Erastus who was an individual of means; Gaius, who had a house big enough, or at least means enough to be a "ξένος ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας" ("host of the entire Church");³¹ and Phoebe, who had been a "προστάτις πολλῶν" ("patroness of many").³²

It was an expensive proposition for a person to hold political office in Corinth since he would be expected to

28. Kent, loc. cit., pp. 99-100. Kent's translation.

29. Ibid. Also, Murphy-O'Connor, loc. cit., p. 37.

30. In fact St. Paul really speaks only of the weak (ἀσθενής) Christian, and specifies the opposite as being those who have knowledge (γνώσις). See, for example, I Cor. 8.9, 10. It is implied, however, that those having knowledge are not weak, therefore "strong".

31. Romans 16.23; see Wayne Meeks, loc. cit., p. 57.

32. Romans 16.2.

bestow benefits on the colony.³³ Upon the foundation of the colony, there must have been some individuals wealthy enough already to perform these services. However, as time went on, others found their way to financial prosperity and civic administration. Wealth would have come to the colonists primarily from their individual efforts at serving the available market, and we are aware of several specific avenues pursued. Perhaps most well known is the production of bronze-ware, and the almost legendary reputation of Greek Corinth³⁴ for its bronze no doubt provided a renewed interest in its acquisition during Roman times. One first century A.D. bronzesmith shop of Roman Corinth has been excavated, and it was supplied water by the fountain of Peirene,³⁵ reputed to give the Corinthian bronze its unique quality. Apparently someone from among the colonists saw great potential in trying to imitate or reproduce the craftsmanship of the past.

The large number of shops in the Corinthian agora (see figure 1) reveals a vast marketing of goods. Without too much imagination we can surmise that breads, meats, vegetables, etc., were produced and sold; fish tanks in the

33. See E.T. Salmon, Roman Colonization, p. 155.

34. Propertius, for example, suggested an interest in it equal to that for gold or precious stones: 3.5.6.

35. Wiseman, loc. cit., p. 512. See also Carol C. Mattusch, "Corinthian Metalworking: the Forum Area," Hesperia XLVI, 1977, pp. 380-382. She describes a bronze foundry and casting pit of the first century A.D.

ports³⁶ demonstrate that commercial fishing was practised, and indeed an inscription reveals that there was a shop specifically designated as a fish market.³⁷ Other commodities must have been made available such as clothes, jewellery, furniture, housewares, blankets, tents,³⁸ toys, tools, etc. We can imagine with Dio Chrysostom³⁹ that during public festivals the appropriate areas would have swarmed with sophists, playwrights, poets, jugglers, seers, and pedlars of various sorts. Even money itself apparently provided a business at Corinth, and regular financial services were offered: Plutarch lists Corinth along with Athens and Patrae as banking centers of Greece where the unwary might be burdened down with interest payments.⁴⁰

Such a city must have created an environment in which only the fit would survive. Whether in politics or in business, each individual was free to aspire to his greatest potential and reap the fruit of his own efforts.⁴¹ Because of

36. Wiseman, loc. cit., p. 531, specifically describes such a tank at Cenchreae.

37. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's Journey in Greek lands. Part III: Corinth." B.A. IV, 1942, p. 40.

38. No doubt especially in demand during the public festivals and games. Priscilla and Aquila as well as Paul himself made a living at Corinth by tentmaking, Acts 18.2-3.

39. Discourses 8.5.

40. De Vitando Aero Alieno, 831.A.

41. Even the prostitutes must have taken advantage

this, Corinth became the home of countless "self-made" success stories: individuals who started with virtually nothing, and who by their own efforts finally achieved prosperity.⁴²

There were also poor people at Corinth indicating that some did not manage to succeed. But because those who acquired wealth did so on their own, there evidently arose an apathy towards the poor, the attitude, I suggest, being: "We came here and worked hard and made it. Anyone else who wants to can do the same thing if they're willing to work." Accordingly, we find Alciphron reporting that the city was, though beautiful to see, nevertheless ungenerous and inconsiderate: miserable for the poor, and no place for parasites.⁴³ St. Paul also observed this lack of consideration displayed at the celebration of the Eucharist where "ὅς μὲν πείνῃ, ὅς δὲ μεθύει" ("one man hungers, while another is drunk") (I Cor. 11.22). Obviously there were some folk who were not well off, and the rest were not naturally disposed to providing for them.

The designation "Roman Corinth" correctly distinguishes the Corinth of post 44 B.C. from that of the city which

of the commercial potential. If D. Gilula is correct ("A Note on Philotis' voyage to Corinth," A.J.Ph. XCVIII, 1977, pp. 356-358) the Athenian soldier who took to Corinth the courtesan Philotis, also from Athens, did so since he could not afford to hire a Corinthian one.

42. See pp. 13-14 above.

43. Alciphron, Letters to Parasites, 3.60.

existed before 146 B.C. However, though a Roman colony and settled by Latin-speaking colonists, it was not the case that Corinth remained singularly Roman. Rather, the very location and nature of the city inevitably made it cosmopolitan. The same reasons that made Corinth attractive to the colonists would have drawn craftsmen, entrepreneurs, prostitutes, lawyers, doctors, and teachers from both Greece itself and from other Mediterranean peoples, resulting in a city that may well have appeared in some respects to be more Greek than Roman. It was recognized by the ancients that a transformation like this could only be expected in port cities; and Cicero chose Corinth particularly as a suitable setting for which he might express this topos:

Est autem maritimis urbibus etiam quaedam corruptela ac mutatio morum; admiscentur enim nouis sermonibus ac disciplinis et inportantur non merces solum aduenticiae, sed etiam mores, ut nihil possit in patriis institutis manere integrum. ...multa etiam ad luxuriam inuitamenta perniciose ciuitatibus subpeditantur mari quae uel capiuntur uel inportantur; atque habet etiam amoenitas ipsa uel sumptuosas uel desidiosas inlecebras multas cupiditatum. Et, quod de Corintho dixi; id haud scio an liceat de cuncta Graecia uerissime dicere.

(Moreover, there is also a certain corruptive influence on the standard of morality in maritime cities, for there is an admixture of new language and ideas, and not only foreign goods, but also foreign customs are brought in, so that none of the national traditions can remain intact. There are also abundantly furnished by the sea many enticements to luxury which are harmful to states, introduced either by pillage or by trade. And the beauty of the place itself also affords many lustful attractions, either extravagant or indolent. And what I have said concerning Corinth, I rather think that it might be most truly said con-

cerning all of Greece.)⁴⁴

Cicero here did not have Roman Corinth in mind, but the site itself of Corinth and what he presumed took place in the city of Greek times. What he said did prove true in Roman Corinth.

First and foremost was the Greek influence, so much so that by the end of the second century A.D., at least according to the testimony of one, the city was completely hellenized: "...παρ' ὑμῶν μὲν, ὅτι Ῥωμαῖος ὢν ἀφῆλληνίσθη, ὥσπερ ἡ πατρίς ἡ ὑμετέρα." ("He ought to have a statue of himself placed) ... also in your city, because he, being a Roman, has been thoroughly hellenized, just as your own homeland has been.")⁴⁵ This speech, attributed to Favorinus, is addressed to Corinth and the orator is speaking of himself. He takes pride in his own accommodation to Greek culture, and implies that such a person would be favourably received by the Corinthians, also cloaked by this time with the effects of hellenization.

Actually, the epigraphical evidence, according to John Harvey Kent, concurs well with this assessment, for from the time of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) on, the Greek inscriptions far outnumber the Latin, whereas previously, the Latin inscriptions were more numerous.⁴⁶ Kent concludes that while

44. De Re Publica 2.7ff. (B) Cf. Plato, Republic 2. 11-14; Laws 4 (704-704).

45. [Dio Chrysostom] (Favorinus) 37.26. (J. De Arnim)

46. A summary of the inscriptions is given by Kent in Corinth VIII, iii, pp. 18ff.

Latin was (as we would expect) the language of the colony in its beginning, steady immigration of Greek speaking peoples brought about a significant change. Now it is also true, as Meeks points out, that the early inscriptions though Latin often bore Greek names (e.g. Hipparchus, Erastus, Cleogenes.)⁴⁷ Therefore, if the Roman colonists were mostly freedmen, they may well have been mostly Greeks as well, at least in their education. Accordingly, the Corinthians may generally have had command of Greek as well as Latin right from the foundation of the colony. Being a Roman colony, no doubt the citizens striving for recognition and public office would have used Latin as their official language (thus the early inscriptions) even if they were equally conversant with Greek. But as time went on and the colony became entrenched again in its Greek surroundings, and populated by an increasing number of Greek speaking people, the practice was discontinued. Even in the first century A.D. the apostle Paul could write to the Corinthian converts in Greek and (presumably) expect to be understood by them. Perhaps it was both inherent tendencies among the colonists, as well as the influence of steady immigration that caused Corinth to become so quickly and completely hellenized.

47. Meeks, loc. cit., p. 48. Several lists are given in Kent, loc. cit., pp. 22ff, of Corinthian persons known by inscriptions. It appears that most if not all of those who had Greek names had Latin nomen and Greek cognomen. Such persons had attained Roman citizenship, but were likely of Greek background.

Secondly, considering the nature of the city, there must have been a significant influx of other Mediterranean peoples to Corinth. Unfortunately, as yet there is generally a lack of specific evidence for this. However we can see very clearly in the religious monuments and artifacts of the area a certain element of foreign interest implying the presence of Eastern immigrants. A sanctuary for Isis, she being a goddess of navigators, could be expected at the port if only to serve seamen from the East. However, seeing evidence of her worship in the city proper would indicate a more permanent commitment on the part of at least some Corinthians. And indeed Pausanias reports that on Acrocorinth itself were two precincts of Isis, and two sanctuaries of Serapis.⁴⁸ Furthermore, according to D. E. Smith, the city even minted coins bearing the image of Isis,⁴⁹ unusual for a Greek city. This fact alone testifies to a more than nominal interest in the Egyptian deities. Still other artifacts such as lamps bearing images related to these cults have been excavated⁵⁰ giving similar testimony. Other than these Egyptian deities, we also have the report of Pausanias that a statue of Ephesian Artemis stood in the agora,⁵¹ possibly indicating the presence

48. Description of Greece 2.4.6.

49. Smith, "The Egyptian cults at Corinth," H.Th.R. LXX, 1977, p. 221.

50. Ibid.

51. Description of Greece 2.2.6.

of immigrants from Asia Minor.

Thirdly, and directly relevant to the present study, was the presence of a sizeable Jewish community among the residents of Corinth. Again, in large part archaeological evidence is lacking. We do have an inscription reading [ΣΥΝ]ΑΓΩΓΗ ΕΒΡ [ΑΙΩΝ] ("synagogue of the Hebrews") from Corinth verifying their presence.⁵² Given this evidence, we can more easily believe the report by Philo that a colony of Jews was sent to the new Corinth.⁵³ In addition, some biblical details bear this out: St. Paul included Jews in his correspondence to Corinth,⁵⁴ and he, according to Acts 18:4, began his ministry there in the synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila, a Jewish couple, apparently made temporary residence in Corinth where they found a market available for their tent-making trade: thus there were Jewish immigrants to Corinth in addition to those who came as reported by Philo. How much influence the Jews actually had in the shaping of the colony is not clear. Certainly there is little evidence for their influence on either architecture or craftsmanship or any other aspect of Corinthian society.

Taken together, these three sources of immigration must have caused the "degeneration" of Roman mores and tra-

52. Wiseman, loc. cit., plate V.8.

53. Legatio ad Gaium 281.

54. For example, I Corinthians 7.18-19.

ditions that Cicero bemoaned. It is ironic that from the Greek point of view, the same lamentation is heard concerning the negative influence Roman traditions had upon Greece, and in this regard, Corinth had been the leader: she was the first among the Greek cities to host gladiatorial contests such as were held in Rome.⁵⁵ In the opinion of Dio Chrysostom, at least the Corinthians had decency enough (in contrast with Athens) to hold these outside of the city:

οἷον εὐθύς τὰ περὶ τοὺς μονομάχους οὕτω σφόδρα ἐζηλώκασιν Κορινθίους, μᾶλλον δ' ὑπερβεβλήκασιν τῆ κακοδαιμονίᾳ κάκεινους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας, ὥστε οἱ Κορίνθοι μὲν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως θεωροῦσιν ἐν χαράδρᾳ τινί, πλῆθος μὲν δυναμένῳ δέξασθαι τόπῳ, ῥυπαρῶ δ' ἄλλως καὶ ὅπου μηδεὶς ἂν μηδὲ θάψειε μηδένα τῶν ἐλευθέρων, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ θεῶνται τὴν καλὴν ταύτην θέαν ὑπ' αὐτὴν τὴν ἀκρόπολιν,...

(For example, (the Athenians) so zealously emulated the Corinthians with respect to gladiatorial contests, or rather, surpassed them and all others in this madness, that whereas the Corinthians watch these in a certain ravine, in an area with room for a crowd, but otherwise dirty and unfit even for the burial of a freeman, the Athenians witness this fine spectacle in the theatre at the front of the acropolis itself...)⁵⁶

Interestingly, Corinth had once more gained such prominence in Greece that it was with her that these comparisons were drawn. However, the apparent assumption was that Corinth would be setting the standard of least acceptable behaviour, as Philostratus also suggests:

οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι ξυνιόντες ἐς θέατρον τὸ ὑπο τῆ ἀκροπόλει προσεῖχον σφαγαῖς ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἐσπουδάζετο

55. Mason, "Lucius at Corinth," *Phoenix*, XXV, 1971, p. 162.

56. Dio Chrysostom 31.121. (J. De Arnim)

ταῦτα ἐκεῖ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐν Κορίνθῳ νῦν....

(The Athenians would come together in the theatre which is beneath the acropolis and show a keen interest in the slaughter of men, and such activity was pursued there more than that which is done in Corinth now....) 57

Athens only revealed her own depravity by carrying the matter further.

To summarize, then, Corinth was favoured by ideal geographical positioning so as to make inevitable a self-renewing market for commercial activity. The destruction of Corinth by Mummius in 146 B.C. led only to a brief interlude in the city's history of prosperity. Roman Corinth, though colonized by lower-class people, rose quickly to affluence and developed an aristocracy of its own. The language, predominantly Latin at first, was gradually replaced by Greek, representing a general hellenization of the city. Architecture, financed largely by individual donors, was carried out in Roman fashion but in general conformity to the previous Greek city. The colony became characteristically cosmopolitan, receiving Greek, Mediterranean, and Jewish immigrants. The resulting admixture of culture, perhaps offensive to those of purely Roman or purely Greek sentiment, was the unavoidable product of such an accommodating environment.

57. Life of Apollonius 4.22.(L)

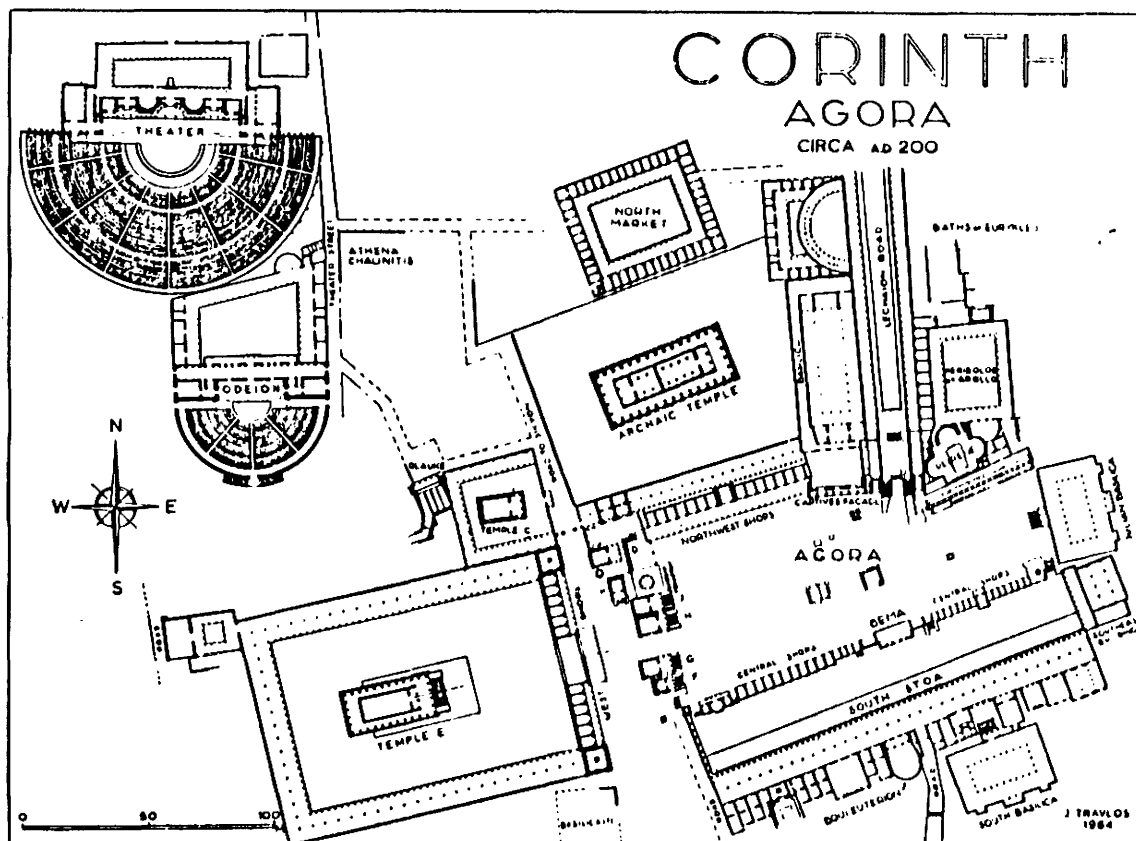


Figure 1. (By J. Travlos. Reprinted from Corinth: A Brief History of the City and a Guide to the Excavations, American School of Classical Studies at Athens.)

II

"ΠΟΡΝΕΙΑ"

One area of evident concern to the apostle Paul was that of the sexual behaviour of the Corinthian converts to Christianity. It would seem that if any instructions had previously been given on the matter (I Cor. 5.9-11 implying that they had), the converts were still in need of clarification. For them a comprehensive prohibition against extra-marital sex may have been too foreign to be readily accepted. In any case, St. Paul now expressly states the instruction: "φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν. πᾶν ἁμάρτημα, ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος, ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν· ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει." ("Flee sexual immorality. Any sin a man may commit is outside of his body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.") (I Cor. 6.18) πορνεία, then, according to Paul was a sin, and one which could potentially exclude the offender from the "βασιλείαν θεοῦ" ("kingdom of God.") (I Cor. 6.9-10)

1. Definition

To begin with, we should attempt to determine what Paul actually meant by "πορνεία" and if possible, what the Corinthian converts took him to mean. Traditionally, the term has been translated "fornication," and more recently, "sexual immorality." According to Bauer-Arndt-Danker the word is used of "every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse"

including prostitution and unchastity.¹ At least one scholar has been dissatisfied with such a sweeping definition, however; Bruce Malina offers an innovative suggestion when he argues: "πορνεία means unlawful sexual conduct, or unlawful conduct in general. What makes a particular line of conduct unlawful is that it is prohibited by the Torah, written and/or oral. Pre-betrothal, pre-marital, non-commercial sexual intercourse between man and woman is nowhere considered a moral crime in the Torah. ...there is no evidence in traditional or contemporary usage of the word πορνεία that takes it to mean pre-betrothal, pre-marital, heterosexual intercourse of a non-cultic or non-commercial nature, i.e. what we call 'fornication' today."²

The relevant question is, what did St. Paul mean by πορνεία? Even if we should grant that he derived his teaching of lawful or unlawful behaviour from the Torah - and in matters of law, this was not always the case, as for example in reference to circumcision (Gal. 5.1-6); and keeping of the Sabbath days (Col. 2.16) - we do not find the Torah completely silent on the matter. In actual fact, a woman found not

1. W. Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 2nd edition revised by W.F. Gingrich and F. Danker, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979, p. 693.

2. Bruce Malina, "Does Porneia Mean 'Fornication'?" Novum Testamentum, 1972, p. 17. In spite of his sweeping conclusion, Malina does not seem to deal with all the evidence from the Torah, nor from other New Testament writings.

to be a virgin upon the consummation of her first marriage was to be stoned! (Deut. 22.21) This lack of virginity was equated with harlotry, with no explanation required or allowed as to how she may have become such:

נְשֹׂאָה כִּי -
וְנִשְׂאָה נְכַלָּה זָיְשָׁה לְזָנוֹת בֵּית אָבִיהָ

("And she shall die because she has committed a disgraceful act in Israel by playing the harlot in the house of her father.") (Deut. 22.21) (Also note that here, זָנוֹת is translated in the Septuagint as "ἐκπορνεῖσαι" ("to have committed harlotry.")) Again, if a man was found to have had sexual relations with an unbetrothed virgin, he was required to pay the dowry and marry the girl. (Exodus 22.16-17; Deut. 22.28-29) A woman taken as a slave had to be treated as a wife if sexual relations were enjoyed with her (whether she was a foreigner (Deut. 21.10-14) or a fellow Hebrew (Exodus 21.7-11)). She could not be resold, and dismissal of her or deprivation of her rights was treated exactly as divorce: the woman was granted freedom, and no compensation was given to the man. Indeed, sexual relations outside of marital commitment according to the Torah were entered upon at risk of at least material loss; at most, death.

On the other hand, if Paul was relying upon his apostolic authority for his teaching on sexual behaviour, it seems clear that his intent was exactly as it has been traditionally understood. According to Malina, the only meaning certainly attributed to πορνεία in I Corinthians 5-6 is that

of "incest."³ Quite to the contrary, however, the injunction "φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν" ("flee sexual immorality") comes in the context of association with prostitutes (I Cor. 6.15-18); the apostle in chapter 5 is not speaking of incest as being the only form of πορνεία (not that Malina says that he is); rather, he is expressing shock at the type of πορνεία to which they had succumbed: "καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία, ἣτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν..." ("and such sexual immorality as exists not even among the Gentiles.") He then goes on to forbid all πορνεία.

That this prohibition against πορνεία extends to all "fornication" as we think of it at present is clear by the conclusions drawn in I Corinthians 7. Having given the instructions, Paul presents two options: his first choice is that the Christian convert "γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι" ("not touch a woman"). (7.1) This, however, he concedes is not best for those who "οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται" ("do not have self-control") (7.9); their state of being if unmarried would be "πυροῦσθαι" ("to be burning (i.e. with sexual desire)"); better for them "γαμῆσαι" ("to marry"). Now his stated reason for wishing the converts to remain unmarried is for their "εὐπρόσδρον τῷ Κυρίῳ ἀπερισπόστως" ("devotion to the Lord that is without distraction.") (7.35) If, then, "pre-betrothal, pre-marital, non-commercial sexual intercourse" was not included in the prohibition, why not encourage sexual

3. Ibid.

freedom among the unmarried for fulfilment of the sexual need, and avoidance merely of the obligations of engagement and marriage, perhaps what the converts were arguing for (see p. 62 below)? Why the narrow choice between "γαμῆσαι" ("to marry") or "πυροῦσθαι" ("to be burning")? Clearly Paul was offering only two alternatives: self-control and chastity in the unmarried state; or for those who do not have self control, the only legitimate provision for them, marriage.

It may be difficult to prove whether the Corinthian Christians adopted this interpretation of the prohibition against πορνεία; however, the apostle seems to have anticipated their doing so. They were apparently disposed to follow his example of celibacy, but before addressing this possibility in chapter 7, he first eliminated πορνεία as an option. The question would then arise, "If we are better off unmarried, yet sexual fulfilment outside of marriage is prohibited, what are we to do?" The answer in essence was, "The privilege of celibacy is only for those gifted for it."⁴ The matter is not further raised again directly in II Corinthians (other than to commend their obedience), indicating that the apostle was apparently satisfied with their compliance.

Thus for our consideration of St. Paul's teaching

4. See I Cor. 7.7; this perhaps reflects the saying of Jesus recorded in Matthew 19.11, "οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον τοῦτον, ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται." ("Not all receive this word (i.e. that it is better not to marry), but those to whom it is given.")

on sexual behaviour, and of the difficulties accordingly caused for the Corinthian converts because of their presence in first century Greco-Roman society, we will take πορνεία to mean "fornication" and "sexual immorality" in the traditional sense, the sense manifestly intended by the apostle.

2. Attitudes and Practice in Greco-Roman Society

Sexual abstinence was not altogether unknown in the ancient world. Rather, in fact, very many of the traditional gods and goddesses were venerated by means of persons exercising (usually temporary) chastity. As pointed out by Eugen Fehrle,⁵ the Pythian prophetesses of Apollo were to be virgins, as were the priestesses of Dionysus⁶ and Herakles.⁷ Also for Pan, Poseidon, Sosipolis, Zeus, Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Ge, Hera, Hestia, and others, chaste priests,⁸ priestesses, and servants were variously required.⁹ Even the laity was often required to exercise at least temporary abstinence from sexual activity in their worship of various

5. Die Kultische Keuschheit im Altertum, pp. 75ff. See concerning the Pythian prophetesses, Plutarch, De Pyth. Or. 22; Pausanias, Description of Greece 2.24.1; Diodorus, 16.26.

6. [Demosthenes], 59.75-78.

7. Pausanias, Description of Greece 9.27.6.

8. Quite less frequently than in the case of priestesses. See Plutarch, De Pyth. Or. 20 for an example of a one year period of chastity (even from his own wife) for the priest of Herakles.

9. The matter is dealt with in detail by Fehrle, loc. cit., pp. 75ff.

gods.¹⁰ We would note here, however, that it was sexual abstinence altogether that was being required, not sexual fidelity.

Furthermore, philosophy sometimes led thinking people to similar conclusions, so that Plato, for one, recommended that sexual intercourse only be enjoyed with properly acquired wives.¹¹ Better than that, he pointed out, was the state of those who for some higher purpose (such as athletics) learn to abstain altogether.¹²

Even on the larger scale, society in general had specific standards to be adhered to. In both Greek and Roman tradition careful attention was given to the maintenance of legal citizenship status, whether in the individual πόλεις ("city states") or in Rome; similarly, each family was concerned that the family inheritance be passed on to a rightful heir. It was most important, then, that girls of citizenship birth and status be preserved "untouched" until rightful marriage, and faithful to their husbands after marriage. There was accordingly much concern that such girls be virgins upon marriage: Dio Chrysostom implied that virginity was normally expected or at least desired, when he lamented that especially in the cities where promiscuous behaviour was more tolerated,

10. Ibid., pp. 126ff.

11. Plato, Laws VIII (839A, 841B).

12. Ibid., 840A-C.

"οὐδὲ περὶ τῶν παρθένων ἐκεῖ θαρρηῆσαι ῥᾶδιον τῆς κορείας οὐδὲ τὸν ὑμέναιον ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ δικαίως ἀδόμενον ἐν τοῖς παρθενικοῖς γάμοις πιστεῦσαι ποτέ." ("There, it is not easy to be confident about the maidenhood of the girls nor to believe that the marriage song being sung at their weddings is true and deserved.")¹³ Pliny, writing to Junius Mauricus, speaks of the "castitati puellarum" ("purity of the girls") as the understood condition anticipated in a marriageable girl;¹⁴ and Plutarch concludes that this desire for virgin brides was the reason for such an early legal age for a girl to be married according to Roman law (namely, twelve years old¹⁵): τῶν δὲ Ῥωμαίων δωδεκετεῖς καὶ νεωτέρας ἐκδιδόντων· οὕτω γὰρ ἂν μάλιστα καὶ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ ἦθος καθαρὸν καὶ ἄθικτον ἐπὶ τῷ γαμοῦντι γίνεσθαι. ("...while the Romans give their daughters in marriage at age twelve and younger; for thus would they be especially clean and untouched in body and character for the one marrying them.")¹⁶

Faithfulness of the wives after marriage, as mentioned above, was equally important among the Greeks and Romans. There is evidence that to some extent at least, Greek

13. Dio Chrysostom, 7.142. (T) (242)

14. Pliny, Epistulae 1.14. (T)

15. See M.K. Hopkins, "The age of Roman girls at marriage," Population Studies, 1965, p. 509. Hopkins demonstrates that marriages were contracted for girls as young as seven years old.

16. Plutarch, Comparison of Lycurgus and Numa 4. (B)

women were carefully guarded against even public exposure to insure their fidelity. Xenophon records that the wife of Ischomachus had had so little exposure that she knew only how to spin wool and make clothes;¹⁷ Lysias claimed to know of household women who blushed even at being seen by "τῶν οἰκείων" ("the members of the household");¹⁸ and Isaeus states what was apparently the obvious: "καίτοι οὐ δὴ πού γε ἐπὶ γαμετὰς γυναῖκας οὐδεὶς ἂν κωμάζειν τολμήσειεν." ("And yet I don't suppose that anyone would dare party with married women.")¹⁹ Then when a child was born and introduced into the phratry, the father was obliged to give an oath "ἄστυν ἔξ ἄστυς ἑγγυητῆς αὐτῷ γεγεννημένον εἰδώς" ("knowing him to be a child possessing civil rights as having been begotten to him of a rightfully wedded townswoman.")²⁰

The Romans, particularly in the time of the Republic, had standards similar to these. Valerius Maximus records some extremes to which precaution was taken: C. Sulpicius Gallus divorced his wife because she appeared in public unveiled: "'lex enim' inquit 'tibi meos tantum praefinit oculos, quibus formam tuam adprobes.'" ("'For the law,' he said, 'prescribes my eyes alone for you, to which you are to show your

17. Xenophon, Oec. 7.5-6.

18. Lysias, 3.6.

19. Isaeus, 3.14.(B)

20. Demosthenes, 57.54.(O)

beauty.'")²¹ P. Sempronius Sophus divorced his wife "nihil aliud quam se ignorante ludos ausam spectare" ("for no other reason than daring to attend the games without his knowing.")²² Q. Antistius Vetus is added to the list as one who could not tolerate seeing his wife in public with a freedwoman lest she risk her social and civil purity.²³

Whatever public socializing was allowed the women, adultery was dealt with severely. The Twelve Tables of Roman law granted to the husband the right to kill his wife so discovered.²⁴ In later times, a man also had the right to kill anyone committing adultery with his daughter.²⁵

It was all important, then, in ancient society to abstain from extra-marital sexual intercourse with married women and the unmarried legal daughters of citizen parents. However, we observe that the prime reason for such a standard was the securing of legitimated offspring; indeed, marriage was "an arrangement for the maintaining of the oikoi."²⁶ For the Romans, the difference between iustae nuptiae

21. Valerius Maximus, 6.3.10. (Edition "Joannis Kappii")

22. Ibid., 6.3.12.

23. Ibid., 6.3.11.

24. Cf. Aulus Gellius, Attic Nights 10.23.

25. Paulus, Opiniones 2.26.

26. Lacey, The Family in Classical Greece, 1968, p.113.

("rightful marriage"), matrimonium iniustum ("wrongful marriage"), and even concubinage to some extent, was not the validity of the marital commitment and consummation itself, but whether or not the children born from such a union would be eligible for civil rights. This is not to say that mutual affection within marriage was necessarily lacking; not at all. Unusually beautiful indeed is the poem written by Propertius in which the faithful - but newly deceased - Cornelia bids farewell to her husband and children.²⁷ Her marital fidelity and genuine love for her husband are extolled and offered to her children as an example to be followed. Other sources such as epitaphs reveal fondness for spouses.²⁸ But on the other hand, we do see that the major factor which established a standard of marital fidelity was that of the legal obligations with respect to child-bearing.²⁹ This being the case, it was also the case that a double standard was permitted, to a degree at least, whereby the strict requirements for fidelity applied only to the women; the men could with less reproach enjoy extra-marital sexual relationships with women of other than citizen status.

27. Propertius 4.11.

28. See also: Pliny, Epistulae 4.19.2-4; 6.7; 7.5; Statius, Silvarum Libri 3.5.

29. This legal obligation of course shared a social and moral aspect since marital fidelity was the accepted norm. Adultery was accordingly disgraceful for women, even for those beyond child-bearing years.

Although there is not perfect agreement in classical literature about the decency of prostitution, there is no question that it did exist, was quite legal, and was to some extent accepted. Prostitutes were of two general classes: those who worked out of brothels either independently or as slavegirls who were bought and sold for this purpose; and women of higher classes such as freedwomen, who presumably for the sake of financial independence acted as "companions" for well to do clients. The latter group, known in Greece as hetairai, or courtesans, were often well educated and skilled women who could provide for interests other than sex alone.

Since most males did not marry until about age thirty because of military or political involvement, sexual fulfilment, if it was to be had, was available through these women. Recourse to prostitutes was not entirely condemned: Cicero, defending Caelius' activity in this regard, appealed to the possible sentiment that it was only natural.³⁰ The aediles kept a registry of all such women, and early in the Empire (i.e. in the reign of Caligula, A.D. 37-41) a tax was levied on them.³¹ The treatment given them by many authors - Ovid, Horace, Juvenal, Martial, etc. - shows that they were accepted as a part of normal life. Even male slaves were able to

30. Pro Caelio 48-50.

31. Suetonius, C. Cal. 40.

go to brothels; or in some cases, as with the elder Cato, a slave owner provided female slaves for the male slaves at a price.³² While Lucretius states that the entanglements of romance and emotion ought to be avoided, he too regarded sexual fulfilment as a given.³³

Ovid in fact devoted an entire book, Ars Amatoria, to the practice of the courtesan. It is his stated intention to help not married women who lived decently, but those who were making a living by professional "love-making." These courtesans provided more lasting relationships than did the brothel prostitutes, but were only available to those who could afford them.

Prostitution was not the only resort to which men could have turned for extra-marital sexual relationships. We know of love affairs involving women - such as Sempronia³⁴ and Clodia³⁵ - who were not "professional" lovers, but who became involved out of personal interest or desire. Then those wealthy enough to own slaves no doubt had this further avenue for sexual indulgence, that being with their own slave girls. Even the elder Cato is reported to have had regular visits from one such girl after the death of his

32. Plutarch, Cato the Elder 21.1-2.

33. De Rerum Natura 4.1058-1076.

34. Sallust, Catilina 25.

35. Cicero, Pro Caelio 35.55-57.

wife;³⁶ Augustus was known for having several favourites;³⁷ Tertia Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus, so accepted the love between her husband and one of his slaves that upon his death, she manumitted the slave girl.³⁸

Clearly ancient society provided ample opportunity for sexual indulgence to all classes of men. Prostitutes were available at brothels, at temples (if we may believe Juvenal),³⁹ at the baths,⁴⁰ in the taverns,⁴¹ and at hotels.⁴² For those of the rich who so desired, higher class prostitutes were available at parties and other social gatherings. Personal slaves were also available to their owners for such purposes. As mentioned above, however, the attitude towards these things was perhaps more that of tolerance than outright approval.

Terms of scorn are often used, particularly by the comic writers, for those who made their living by owning and managing prostitutes;⁴³ but these people were despised more,

36. Plutarch, Cato the Elder 24.1-2.

37. For example, Suetonius, The Deified Augustus 69.

38. Valerius Maximus, 6.7.1. Not to say that such affairs were generally approved of by the wives. Cf. Lysias, On the Murder of Eratosthenes 12.

39. Satires 9.24.

40. Catullus, 37.1.

41. For example, Horace, Epistulae 1.14.21ff.

42. A hotel bill found in Campania lists, among other expenses, the cost for a girl. ILS 7478.

perhaps, for their inconsiderate greed than for their involvement in prostitution. Prostitution in itself seems to have been accepted as a fact of life. Apart from the few dissenting voices, there was no major legal or moral current that resisted this as a part of society. To be sure, some did see infelicities. Plato would have the members of his ideal state living better than animals who by sheer instinct know enough to abstain from homosexual practices and who faithfully and chastely pair off with a mate.⁴⁴ Then for those for whom ἀτακτος Ἀφροδίτη ("lawless Love") becomes uncontrollable, public shame should be so strongly attached to it that all such activities would be infrequent and driven quite underground.⁴⁵ Socrates in Xenophon does not condemn prostitution outright; but certainly suggests the potential harm it can bring:

εἰ γοῦν τις χρῆτο τῷ ἀργυρίῳ ὥστε πριάμενος οἶον ἑταίραν διὰ ταύτην κάκιον μὲν τὸ σῶμα ἔχοι, κάκιον δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν, κάκιον δὲ τὸν οἶκον, πῶς ἂν ἔτι τὸ ἀγύριον αὐτῷ ὠφέλιμον εἴη;

(Now then, if someone should use his money so that by purchasing a hetaira, for example, because of her makes his body worse, his soul worse, and his household worse, how could his money still have been a benefit to him?)⁴⁶

43. As was also the case with slave dealers in general, though again the private use of slaves was accepted.

44. Laws 8.840D-E.

45. Ibid., 841C-E.

46. Oeconomicus 1.13.(0)

Cicero, when the occasion demanded it, also appealed to the sentiment that such activity was only tolerable, but neither desirable nor exemplary. He says of Antonius that had it not been for the intervention of Caesar, "in lustris, popinis, alea, vino tempus aetatis omne consumpsisses...." ("you would have spent the whole of your life in brothels, taverns, in gambling and wine.")⁴⁷

Dio Chrysostom speaks out strongly against the evils of professional prostitution and pimping, and would have it removed entirely:

οὐ γὰρ δὴ περὶ γε πορνοβοσκῶν καὶ περὶ πορνοβοσκίας ὡς ἀμφιβόλων ἀπαγορευτέον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάνυ ἰσχυριστέον τε καὶ ἀπορρητέον, λέγοντι μηδένα προσχρησθαι μήτι οὖν πένητα μήτε πλούσιον ἐργασίᾳ τοιαύτῃ, μισθὸν ὕβρεως καὶ ἀκολασίας ὁμοίως παρὰ πᾶσιν ἐπονείδιστον ἐκλέγοντας, ἀναφροδίτου μίξεως καὶ ἀνέραστων ἐρώτων κέρδους ἔνεκα γιγνομένους συναγωγούς, αἰχμάλωτα σώματα γυναικῶν ἢ παίδων ἢ ἄλλως ἀργυρώνητα ἐπ' αἰσχύνῃ προΐστάντας ἐπ' οἰκημάτων ῥυπαρῶν, πανταχοῦ τῆς πόλεως ἀποδεδειγμένων, ἐν τε παρόδοις ἀρχόντων καὶ ἀγοραῖς, πλησίον ἀρχείων τε καὶ ἱερῶν, μεταξὺ τῶν ὀσιωτάτων.

(In dealing with brothel-keepers and their trade we must certainly betray no weakness as though something were to be said on both sides, but must sternly forbid them and insist that no one, be he poor or be he rich, shall pursue such a business, thus levying a fee, which all the world condemns as shameful, upon brutality and lust. Such men bring individuals together in union without love and intercourse without affection, and all for the sake of filthy lucre. They must not take hapless women or children, captured in war or else purchased with money, and expose them for shameful ends in dirty booths which are flaunted before the eyes in every part of the city, at the doors of the houses of magistrates and in

47. Phil. 13.24.(B)

market places, near government buildings and temples, in the midst of all that is holiest.)⁴⁸

However, these dissenting voices are not in the majority, nor do they necessarily reflect popular opinion. The fact is that even if popular morality looked askance at prostitution, it was still widely practised, and certainly not considered illegal. Likewise in the case of sexual intercourse with slaves, there may have been some negative stigma attached to it (as for example demonstrated by the daughter-in-law and son of Cato who betrayed signs of disapproval at the slavegirl's visit to his bedroom.⁴⁹) Nevertheless, the practice went on throughout Roman history well into the empire.

We do not suggest that every man in the Roman empire was involved in extra-marital sexual relations. We have noted cases where, for religious or philosophical purposes, sexual abstinence or fidelity were practised (or at least encouraged.) As mentioned above, there is also ample evidence of some long lasting, happy marriages which may well have been faithfully attended to by both partners. We do, however, see the two-faced coin of Greco-Roman society: the women of citizen families were required by tradition and law to remain chaste before marriage, and then faithful to the marriage

48. Dio Chrysostom, 7.133ff. Loeb texts, translated by J.W. Cohoon.

49. Plutarch, Cato the Elder 24.2.

relationship;⁵⁰ and the men, of all classes, were permitted to engage in pre-marital and extra-marital sex, sometimes even with the knowledge and apparent consent of the wives.

The conclusion to be drawn at this point would appear to be that the standards for sexual behaviour were established on pragmatic rather than moral grounds; thus the moral "rightness" of any given behaviour was derived rather than presupposed. If this is true, a fundamental difference will accordingly be established between St. Paul's teaching and the dictates of ancient society. Therefore, we do well to examine this possibility in more detail.

If we could take at face value the sentiment expressed in the speech against Neaira included in the Demosthenian corpus, the matter for Greek society at least might be settled: "τὰς μὲν γὰρ ἑταίρας ἡδονῆς ἕνεκ' ἔχομεν, τὰς δὲ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ' ἡμέραν θεραπείας τοῦ σώματος, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τοῦ παιδοποιεῖσθαι γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἑνδον φύλακα πιστὴν ἔχειν." ("For we have courtesans for pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our bodies, but wives for the producing of legitimate children and for a trustworthy guardian of our households.")⁵¹ However, rhetoric being by its very nature meant to persuade a point, it cannot be assumed that life

50. Granted the potential of exceptions as noted on p. 39 above. Cf. Juvenal, Satires 6.

51. [Demosthenes], 59.122. (0)

was thus defined and accepted. On the other hand, it does again suggest the three purposes for sexual relationships: sex for pleasure with respect to prostitutes, sex and companionship with respect to courtesans, and sex for child-rearing with respect to marriage.

Indeed one looks in vain to discover among the ancients a universally compelling and acceptable reason which might have surfaced as an authoritative rule for the governing of sexual behaviour. Plato appealed to the good of the state; Dio Chrysostom to philanthropy. But in fact, the behavioural rules actually practised were based mainly on civic responsibility and accountability. Unfaithfulness on the part of a married woman in Greek society was done at risk of divorce, and like incest, was curbed and controlled (if Plato was right) by public opinion.

Marriage was almost unanimously endorsed as being primarily for begetting children as heirs, not for sexual fulfilment (though Plato did suggest that faithfulness by the husband to the marriage would promote fondness for the wife.⁵²) Xenophon offers the argument to us in precise terms:

καὶ μὴν οὐ τῶν γε ἀφροδισίων ἔνεκα παιδοποιεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὑπολαμβάνεις; ἐπεὶ τούτου γε τῶν ἀπολυσόντων μεστὰί μὲν αἱ ὁδοί, μεστὰ δὲ τὰ οἰκήματα. φανεροὶ δ' ἔσμεν καὶ σκοπούμενοι, ἔξ ὁποίων ἂν γυναικῶν βέλτιστα ἡμῖν τέκνα γένοιτο, αἷς συνελθόντες τεκνοποιούμεθα.

52. Laws 839D (VIII).

(And surely you do not suppose that men beget children to gratify their passions, for the streets are full, and the brothels are full of ways⁵³ to accomplish this. Clearly, we make examination as to what sort of women would produce the best offspring for us, and we produce children by cohabiting with them.)⁵⁴

While this in no way condones the indulgence of lust, it does nevertheless reveal the purpose of marriage: child-rearing.

Plutarch says the same thing in the negative sense:

ὁ γὰρ ἐν γάμῳ παρορῶν τὸ καλὸν οὐ τέκνων ἔνεκα
δηλὸς ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἡδονῆς ἀγόμενος γυναῖκα, τὸν τε
μισθὸν ἀπέχει, καὶ παρρησίαν αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς γενομέν-
ους οὐκ ἀπολέλοιπεν, οἷς αὐτὸ τὸ γενέσθαι πεποίηκεν
ὄνειδος.

(For he that avoids the honourable state of marriage clearly takes a woman to himself not for the sake of children, but of pleasure; and he has his reward, in that he robs himself of all right to upbraid his sons for neglecting him, since he has made their very existence a reproach to them.)⁵⁵

Rather than approving a non-marital relationship, Plutarch manifestly belittles it; but the point is still clear, that marriage fulfills its purpose when it produces rightfully born children. He concedes that sexual fulfilment is available through other means. Concerning these "other means," Menander through his character Chaereas quite correctly observed that they were basically attempts at gratification of the sexual appetite with no particular concern for the girl

53. Taking τῶν ἀπολυσόντων as neuter. See Ludwig Breitenbach, *Xenophons Memorabilien*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin, 1889, p. 111, n. 4.

54. *Memorabilia* 2.2.4.

55. Plutarch commenting on Solon's Law, *Solon* 22.4. Loeb texts, translated by Bernadotte Perrin.

involved. However, when it came to marriage, very careful study and choosing of the girl was the rule.⁵⁶

The time came early in the days of the Roman Empire when, especially among the upper classes, child-productive marriages became noticeably fewer than was necessary for the maintenance of the existing class structure. Augustus therefore instituted a system of rewards and incentives designed to encourage citizens to marry and have children: taxes were levied on the unmarried, and prizes were given for marriage involving pro-creation.⁵⁷ He also made law that which was already understood - that adultery was unacceptable. Thus the Lex Julia de Adulteriis Coercendis stipulated that anyone taken in adultery would be exiled, and their property would be confiscated.⁵⁸ Apparently there was much license at this time, and marriage was not being seen as essential; for the good of the Empire, then, Augustus tried to encourage marriage by law. Not that he tried to eliminate other avenues of sexual indulgence - he himself had a reputation for indulgence⁵⁹ - nor that he was trying to establish moral responsibility with regard to sex; rather, again, it was for the purpose of establishing family units and procreation

56. Menander, Dyskolus 58ff.

57. Dio, 54.16.1-2.

58. Ibid.

59. See again Suetonius, The Deified Augustus 71.1.

of children that he encouraged marriage.

Marriage was not always entirely lacking sexual attraction. The wedding hymn of Catullus certainly paints a picture of excitement as the marital consummation is anticipated: the girl is to be given to the "iuveni ardenti" ("burning youth")⁶⁰ who is obviously eager to have her as wife. However, even in this wedding hymn there is a hint of the existing situation as described above: a warning to the girl that other sexual fulfilment is available for her groom:

nupta, tu quoque, quae tuus
vir petet caue ne neges,
ni petitum aliunde eat.

(Bride, take care also not to deny your husband that which he desires, in case he goes to seek it elsewhere.)⁶¹

(but here at least is the suggestion that she might possibly fulfill all her husband's desires); and an expression of hope that the marriage might produce children:

ludite ut lubet, et breui
liberos date. non decet
tam uetus sine liberis
nomen esse, sed indidem
semper ingenerari.

(Play as you please, and soon produce children; for it is not fitting that so longstanding a name lack children, but that offspring always be produced from the family lineage.)⁶²

60. Catullus, 62.23.

61. Catullus, 61.151-153. (O)

62. Ibid., 216-220. (O)

We have thus seen that ancient society was not devoid of standards for sexual behaviour. There were strict expectations for the female members of citizen families - as to how they were to live and how they were to be respected. Men were expected to honour these requirements and to limit their sexual indulgences to other women. Prostitutes, brothels, etc, were regarded as necessary and perhaps acceptable, though the prostitutes themselves and their keepers were considered inferior and often treated with contempt. Higher class prostitutes (i.e. courtesans) were enjoyed with more social acceptability since they moved in circles that were socially superior. Marriage was considered primarily as the means to maintain the family heritage and give stability to society as a whole. While some marriages appear to have had partners mutually faithful and happy, the procreation of children was still the main purpose. Recourse to prostitutes was certainly available, and such indulgence could be enjoyed apparently without any retribution. Faithfulness to one's wife appears to have been a matter of personal preference. Sexual intercourse with slave-girls was also accepted as part of the owner's right. We can only conjecture that although some women (such as Livia and Tertia Aemilia) accepted or even encouraged these indulgences of their husbands, such exploits may have caused grief to many married women.

3. The Situation at Corinth

The Corinth of Greek times had acquired a name for being a center of sexual indulgence, so much so that Aristophanes could use the term "κορινθιάζεσθαι" to denote the practice of fornication; Poliochus could call a whoremonger a "κορινθιάστης";⁶³ and even Plato could use the label "κορινθία κόρη"⁶⁴ when he meant a prostitute. While it may be true that Athenian prejudice against Corinth (due, perhaps, to envy of her economic prosperity) fueled this reputation as much as did the actual situation at Corinth,⁶⁵ the collective evidence that is available to us, taken together, does give us reason to believe that the city was not innocent in the matter.

Strabo, for one, concluded that this factor was an underlying reason for the earlier city's material prosperity:

τό τε τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἱερὸν οὕτω πλούσιον ὑπῆρξεν ὥστε πλείους ἢ χιλίας ἱεροδούλους ἐκέκτητο ἑταίρας, ἅς ἀνετίθεσαν τῇ θεῷ καὶ ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες. καὶ διὰ ταύτας οὖν πολυωχλεῖτο ἡ πόλις καὶ ἐπλουτίζετο. οἱ γὰρ ναύκληροι ῥαδίως ἐξανηλίσκοντο, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἡ παροιμία φησὶν "οὐ παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἐς Κόρινθον ἐσθ' ὁ πλοῦς.

(The temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it had acquired more than a thousand slaves who served as cult-prostitutes which both men and women had given

63. Cf. Athenaeus, Deipnosophistae 27d, 313c, 559a.

64. Republic 404D. p. 66

65. As suggested by Conzelmann, I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 12.

as offerings. And on this account the city became heavily populated and grew rich. For thus the seafaring folk quickly spent all they had, and accordingly the proverb says, "Not for every man is the voyage to Corinth.")⁶⁶

Now the context of this passage is clearly that of pre-Roman Corinth, and in fact the question has been raised as to whether temple prostitution was practised at all.⁶⁷ On the one hand, no temple with such a capacity has yet been found at Corinth, and writers from the Greek period are silent on the matter (a particularly noteworthy point, as Murphy-O'Connor observes, since cult-prostitution was otherwise unknown in Greece.⁶⁸) However, the fact remains that such a story could be told with apparent acceptance; and of course, even if there were not cult-prostitutes, that is not to say that there were no prostitutes. Following his mention of the proverb (above), Strabo also gives a brief anecdote about a Corinthian prostitute who, being reproached for indolence and worthlessness, defended herself as having a useful role in serving seamen. At least the general reputation of Corinth is attested to by his accounts.

66. Geographica 8.6.20.(T) p. ~~1~~ 1

67. At least on such a large scale. See Conzelmann, "Korinth und die Mädchen der Aphrodite. Zur Religionsgeschichte der Stadt Korinth." NAG, VIII, 1967, pp. 247-261. However, note also that Wiseman does not think temple prostitution is completely out of the question, p. 68 below.

68. St. Paul's Corinth, p. 56.

Athenaeus also gave accounts of such prostitution,⁶⁹ and included Pindar's statement that a certain Xenophon of Corinth had brought one hundred women to the city.⁷⁰ He also refers to the play Φίλουσα ("The Lover") by Alexis as proof that Corinth even held a festival of Aphrodite for the prostitutes.⁷¹ He further refers to works by Chamaeleon, Theopompus, and Timaeus as witnesses to the presence of prostitutes at Corinth.⁷² Actual first hand accounts of prostitution at Corinth may be lacking, but we do observe that not a single ancient author expresses any doubt as to the reality behind this reputation.

Actually, the observation of Strabo that Corinth's wealth was due to the patronage of seamen is not without good reason. And the same reasons that made Corinth a likely location for commercial prosperity - namely, geographic centrality on trade routes, and the convenience of the diolkos - also made her a suitable home for prostitution. Seamen and other travellers would have been likely targets for such activity, as would be the case in any major sea-port, modern or ancient. And even if the ancient writers referred to

69. Deipnosophistae 13.567c, 573b-574c. ^{Deipnosophistae 13.567c}

70. Ibid., 573f. According to the ode, these women were taken to the sanctuary of Aphrodite, implying that it was temple prostitution being practised.

71. Ibid., 574b.

72. Ibid., 573c ff.

above (pp. 50-52) all speak of pre-Roman Corinth, nevertheless, the factors which contributed to the situation of Greek times remained on into Roman times. We could hardly expect anything but a renewed market and provision for commercial sex.

Nor is it that we are completely without evidence concerning Roman Corinth. Plutarch mentions the story of Lais, most beautiful of prostitutes, who had had her home among the Corinthians;⁷³ and Pausanias states further that the Corinthians of the Roman city still prided themselves as having had her as a resident.⁷⁴ Aelius Aristides attributed to Corinth all the allurements of love (though his rhetorical style creates as much doubt as credulity);⁷⁵ perhaps he had seen Roman Corinth or perhaps he had not - he had travelled in Greece - but even if he was speaking on second hand knowledge, apparently Corinth was gaining the same reputation that it had had in Greek times! Martial mocked an acquaintance of his who boasted of residence in Corinth as being effeminate, apparently taken up with a life of pleasure.⁷⁶ Apuleius, retelling the story of Lucius, changes the setting from Thessalonica to Corinth;⁷⁷ if Mason is correct, the

73. Amatorius 21.

74. Description of Greece 2.2.5. p 9.

75. Orationes 46.24-25.

76. Epigrams 10.65.

77. Apuleius, The Golden Ass 10.19ff.

reason for this change was that Corinth had a reputation for immorality that suited his purpose as he tried to develop a contrast between the purity of Isis worship and popular morality.⁷⁸

Finally, the most specific evidence we have of the practice of prostitution at Corinth is that which we find in St. Paul's first Corinthian letter. Of all his extant epistles, none other deals so explicitly and thoroughly with the sexual behaviour of his converts, and clearly throughout his discussion of the topic he deals with πορνεία and the presence of prostitutes as a very real problem.

We are thus left with a variety of evidences as to both the reputation Corinth had gained for immorality, as well as the actual situation that must have existed. Even if the reputation was fueled by rumour and imagination, as a maritime city inhabited by persons devoted to commercial prosperity, no doubt this avenue of commerce was well exploited also.

4. Principles Given by St. Paul for the Church

Apparently the saying "τὰ βρώματα τῆς κοιλίας, καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν" ("Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food") (I Cor. 6.13) was circulating among the Corinthian converts, and had been passed along to Paul

78. H.J. Mason, "Lucius at Corinth," Phoenix, XXV, 1971, pp. 160-165.

as a rationale for the legitimation of πορνεία: sexual fulfilment was a natural part of life taught by nature itself. In light of the contemporary ethics, the argument was logical; however, as mentioned above, a factor is now introduced by the apostle which changes the picture significantly: ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει. ("The one who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.") (I Cor. 6.18) In the case of the food and the stomach, both will be disposed of (I Cor. 6.13); but the argument does not apply to the body and πορνεία because the body has become inhabited by τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ("the Holy Spirit"), and πορνεία is a moral offense, a ἁμαρτία ("sin"), to this God.⁷⁹ In fact, πόρνοι ("sexually immoral persons") will not even be granted inheritance of the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6.9-10) - presumably the entire goal of the Christian religion (I Cor. 15.19).

There were reasons for prescribed moral conduct among the Greeks and Romans: social respectability, legal responsibility, philosophical ideals, and sometimes (temporary) religious requirements. However, as noted above, there was no absolute and universal motivation for men and women (with the exception of the wives and daughters of citizen families) to abstain from sexual indulgences outside of marriage. Now, in contrast, the Corinthian converts are confronted with an absolute standard, the violation of which was to be hazarded

79. See p. 27 above.

at risk of their very hope as believers. A test case was already in place, for one of the converts was living with his father's wife (I Cor. 5.1). Likely this was a step-mother, and while being offensive, the relationship was not "incest" as we think of it; but at least it was forbidden in that it was an extra-marital relationship. The apostle takes the warning against πορνεία so seriously that in this case, he wished for the church "παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός" ("to hand over such a person to Satan for the destruction of his flesh") (I Cor. 5.5). This strong statement, intended to bring about the man's final well-being, likely meant that the church, by excommunicating the man, would expose him unprotected to Satan's power. Thus the moral injunction against πορνεία was no appeal to philanthropy or social "rightness"; nor even to the present good of their own lives or that of others. Rather, it was presented as an absolute necessity fundamental to the essence of Christianity. And as might be expected, no distinction of class was made. While treating the subject of morality and marriage, specific mention or address is made of (or to) married men, married women, virgins (παρθέναι), unmarried men, and slaves; one standard is given and applied to all the converts.⁸⁰

Thus if our interpretation of πορνεία (above) is correct, the believers were now constrained to limit their

80. This brings up the interesting problem of the female slave convert who may have been expected as part of her duty to provide sexual favours for her master or her mater's sake. This situation is mentioned again below, p. 64.

sexual activity entirely to the marriage relationship. It is interesting to note that St. Paul's instructions concerning marriage are basically different from the views commonly held in Greco-Roman society. As observed above, the primary purpose for legal marriage was the rightful begetting of children (not to say that marital cohabitation was not enjoyed for other reasons). Strikingly, the apostle makes virtually no mention of this in his discussion. Apparently (and perhaps due to his eschatological preconceptions) he is concerned about the morality of his converts, not the ramifications of the choice for marriage (alluded to in I Cor. 7.32-35). Therefore, his encouragement of marriage is not for the reason of child-bearing; it is for the purpose of sexual fulfilment, or at least, avoidance of πορνεία.

This is taken by some to mean that St. Paul had a low view of marriage. However, he is not saying that the only value of marriage is sexual fulfilment. What he is saying is that for those who desire or need sexual fulfilment, marriage is the only option for the convert. In fact, his insistence on marriage went a long way to grant fairness and protection to women. First, it granted that constant sexual attention be given the wife, Paul even mentioning this specifically: τῆ γυναικὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν ὀφειλὴν ἀποδιδότω.... καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλὰ ἡ γυνή. ("Let the husband give to his wife what is due her, ...and the man has not authority over his own body, but his wife has.") (I Cor. 7.3-4)

She was also to be given equal voice in times when temporary abstinence was appropriate: μή ἀποστερεῖτε ἀλλήλους, εἰ μήτι ἂν ἐκ συμφώνου πρὸς καιρόν... ("Do not deprive one another, except perchance for a time by mutual consent....") (I Cor. 7.5) On the other hand, Greco-Roman permissiveness may have resulted in some wives being neglected or at least unsatisfied with the physical attention their husbands gave them.⁸¹ Secondly, the new ethic erased the double standard: extra-marital sex was as wrong for men and husbands as it was for the women.

Furthermore, marriage for the Christians was to be until death (I Cor. 7.39), and accordingly, divorce was not acceptable (I Cor. 7.10-11). With this understanding, a woman who married would (ideally) enjoy provision and security as long as her husband lived. Such security was not necessarily afforded married women of Greco-Roman society, for divorce was legal. But the situation was even worse for such women as prostitutes and courtesans who, when their physical beauty faded, suffered neglect and poverty unless they had provided security for themselves when they had the opportunity. Paul's legislation against extra-marital sex had a positive and negative aspect for such women: it (ideally,

81. So argued by Sarah Pomeroy in Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves, pp. 87f. The argument is plausible and there is some supporting evidence. Plutarch (Solon 20.3) and Plato (Laws 8.839B) each saw sexual attention for wives as a proper component of marriage.

again) prevented the "using" of women who were temporarily attractive; but it removed from female converts prostitution as an acceptable means of livelihood. Thus the women were also encouraged to enter into marital commitment which would provide for their own well being.

Clearly St. Paul was in favour of the unmarried state, inasmuch as it was a life potentially freer from binding obligations and responsibilities (I Cor. 7.8,35). However, he also makes it clear that celibacy was to include continence and abstinence: εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται γαμησάτωσαν, κρεῖττον γάρ ἐστὶν γαμῆσαι ἢ πυροῦσθαι. ("But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to be burning.") (I Cor. 7.9) This unmarried state he conceded was not likely for most (I Cor. 7.2) and was to be in accordance with individual χαρίσματα ("gifts"). He is perhaps mindful of the saying of Jesus recorded in Matthew 19:11: οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον (i.e. οὐ συμφέρει γαμῆσαι), ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται. ("Not all men accept the saying (that it is not advantageous to marry), but those to whom it is given.") This seems to be a surprising concession on the part of a man who had just offered himself as an example: πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπό τινος. ("All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.") (I Cor. 6.12) Somehow he had retained an open-mindedness to the needs and desires of the average convert even though he himself found it possible to live a life that

was chaste and solitary. His instructions to the Church at Corinth were certainly radical in comparison to contemporary ethics, but they were nevertheless conciliatory and mindful of the realities of life.

5. The Resulting Situation for the Converts at Corinth

It cannot (unfortunately) be known what the precise content of St. Paul's earlier letter to the Corinthian Church was, though we are given some clues. Nevertheless, the moral instructions given in I Corinthians 5-7 would seem to be restatement and clarification rather than completely new ideas for the believers, whether previously given by word or by letter. Several times Paul uses the question οὐκ οἴδατε...; ("Do you not know...?") as if the information following was common knowledge (and perhaps as censuring the Church which was rich "ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει" ("in every word and in all knowledge.") (I Cor. 1.5))

But if the strict limitations on sexual behaviour had been clearly given previously, they had not been equally understood and received. The case of immorality spoken of in I Corinthians 5 had been taken by the Church as an occasion for pride. Their thinking seems to have been something like this: "The non-Christians have no advantage over us. We are free in Christ and can behave as we wish." Indeed they had received the order μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις ("to not associate with sexually immoral persons"), but had interpreted

it to mean (apparently) "non-Christian" immoral persons. Therefore they had reserved the freedom to enjoy license among themselves, as if πορνεία itself was not wrong, just πορνεία involving non-believers. Paul now clarifies the instructions: οὐ πάντως τοῖς πόρνοις τοῦ κόσμου τούτου..., ἐπεὶ ὀφείλετε ἀρὰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελθεῖν. νῦν δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι ἐάν τις ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος ἢ πόρνος..., τῷ τοιοῦτῳ μηδὲ συνεσθίειν. ("(I did) not at all (write that you should disassociate) from sexually immoral persons of this world, for then you would have to go out of the world. But now I have written to you that you should not associate with anyone labelled "brother" if he be sexually immoral..., with such a person, not even to eat.") (I Cor. 5.10-11)

If it seems impossible that this misunderstanding can have occurred, it would be worth noting that the Corinthian Church was at this point only about six years old,⁸² and lacked a heritage of Church history, tradition, and developed theology. The converts were required to interpret and apply "Christian" principles to life as they knew it, and in this case fell short of the intended goal. The fact that the moral offender of I Cor. 5 responded with penitence (II Cor. 2.5-11) may indicate that misunderstanding rather than defiance had been his mentality.

82. Using Murphy-O'Connor's date of Paul's first visit as being A.D. 49, St. Paul's Corinth, p.140.

They had seen the example of Paul that the unmarried state was desirable for Christian life and service. Also, from their cultural background (at least that of those who were non-Jews), sexual activity was not necessarily limited to marriage. Putting these two together, it is possible that they saw a ready solution: remain unmarried and find sexual fulfilment wherever possible. They also wrote to Paul about the situation and asked about marriage and sexual concerns. They must also have asked specifically if it were not better to remain unmarried, for Paul responds that yes, it is "καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι" ("good for a man not to touch a woman.") (I Cor. 7.1) Here Paul is making clear that for the Christian, the alternative to marriage is to have no physical relationship with a woman. The converts had not realized that celibacy also required sexual abstinence. Having ruled out πορνεία among fellow believers, and having also made clear the illegitimacy of recourse to prostitutes,⁸³ the apostle now anticipates the question, "If we can't have the sexual fulfilment that is available to us, how can we meet the standard of celibacy?" He responds: "εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύ-

83. A necessary clarification lest the pendulum swing and the prohibition of association with an ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος ("person called a 'brother'") make possible the alternative, that non-Christian πόρνοι ("sexually immoral persons") were acceptable; thus: ἄρα οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; μὴ γένοιτο. ("Having taken the members of Christ, then, should I make them members of a prostitute? Far be it from me!") (I Cor. 6.15)

ονται, γαμησατώσαν." ("If they do not have self-control, let them marry.") (I Cor. 7.2) Those that are doubtful ought to marry διὰ τὰς πορνείας ("because of immoralities") (I Cor. 7.2); those that οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται ("do not have self-control") ought to marry because κρεῖττόν ἐστιν γαμῆσαι ἢ πυροῦσθαι ("it is better to marry than to be burning."⁸⁴) (I Cor. 7.9) It is understood that all the responsibilities of marriage will apply to those who marry (I Cor. 7.32-35), but this is still the only option for most (cf. I Cor. 7.2). According to Paul's view, sex is intended only for marriage, and marriage is intended to include sex, though marriage is intended for more than sex. Only those specially gifted were permitted to avoid the encumbrances of the marriage relationship (cf. I Cor. 7.7).

We noted that these instructions provided for equal rights of women with men. Wives were to receive what was their due in the marriage relationship, and they were even granted authority over their husbands' bodies (I Cor. 7.4). They were also given equal say in matters of temporary sexual abstinence (I Cor. 7.5). Furthermore, the option of remaining unmarried was presented to the women just as it was to the men (I Cor. 7.25-35). The apostle had gone a long way to bring about the equal importance of the women by these

84. The present tense must imply that Paul means burning "with sexual desire" rather than an anticipation of fiery judgment.

instructions; but interestingly, it is also particularly with the Corinthian Church that the matter of the status of women in the Church became an issue (I Cor. 11.2-6; 14.33-36). Possibly this was due to the general reception by the Church at Corinth of the concept of Christian liberty. However, it may be that the personal rights which Paul granted the women were used by them as justification for transcending other matters peculiar, in the apostle's eyes, to the place of women, namely propriety (I Cor. 11.2-16) and submission (I Cor. 14.34-38). These issues then required specific address.

A final concern is the potentially awkward position in which a female slave convert might have found herself, in that her owner would have had the legal right for sexual relations with her. The moral prohibition by St. Paul against πορνεία would seem to apply to this, but the question exists as to what choice she would have had. There is no record of such a situation in the New Testament writings. However, consignment to a brothel was sometimes used as a punishment for Christians in times of persecution.⁸⁵ From the point of view of an unwilling slavegirl, sexual relations with her would have been tantamount to rape. Thus if the situation

85. For example, "Μαρτύριον τῶν Ἁγίων Ἀγάπης, Εἰρήνης, καὶ Χιόνης μαρτυρησάντων ἐν Θεσσαλονίκη," ("The Martyrdom of the Saints Agape, Irene, and Chione who were Martyred in Thessalonica,") 6. In this case, Irene was taken forcibly, but according to the account, she was never violated. Set in A.D. 304.

(at worst) was inescapable, it would seem that moral responsibility on the part of the girl need not have been in question. Quite possibly non-co-operation or refusal may have been done at risk of ill favour and even mistreatment,⁸⁶ but the first century Christians were known for their willingness to suffer for the sake of doing right.⁸⁷

Paul's intention was not to restrict social contact of the Christians with their fellow-townsmen.⁸⁸ Many of the social gatherings that we know of - symposia, particularly - included entertainment by prostitutes who danced, played the flute, and among other things satisfied the sexual appetites of the guests. It is likely that participation in such gatherings would now be unmanageable for the Corinthian believers, and thus at least some of their social life may well have been curtailed. However, we know that personal invitations from one home to another were still possible; viewing the Isthmian games was not prohibited and perhaps was even encouraged, judging from references to athletic activity; and activity in commercial affairs of the city was assumed. The morality demanded by the apostle was not so radical as to catapult the believers out of society. Marriage was advo-

86. Such a situation might be appropriately addressed in I Peter 2.18-23.

87. See for example Tacitus, Annals 15.44; Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 252-253.

88. See I Cor. 5.9-10; 10.27.

cated by Paul and was also the norm for Greek and Roman citizens. The prohibition that Paul did give would have restricted some social life to be sure; however, it may have caused the believers to become more home oriented, and perhaps thus more inclined to engage in functions of hospitality themselves (such being a Christian virtue in any case).

III

"ΕΙΔΩΛΟΘΥΤΑ"

The title of this chapter immediately suggests a conflict between the first century Christians and the society in which they lived when we bear in mind that pagan sacrifices were popularly known as *ιερόθυτα* ("sacred offerings"), not *είδωλόθυτα*. The Christians adopted this substitute word in the persuasion that the pagan gods were not gods at all, and that the representative images were merely idols. Accordingly, the Christians did not consider sacrifices made by pagans to be "sacred," and they chose instead to use the rather disparaging term "*είδωλόθυτα*." But if there was agreement among the Christians as to the term to be used, there was no comparable agreement as to the appropriate response for Christians to those sacrifices. It is this question that the present chapter is intended to explore.

1. Pagan Religious Thought and Lifestyle

According to Acts 17.16, Paul was very troubled as he observed the city of Athens being "*κατείδωλον*" ("full of idols"); the same reaction at Corinth can have been scarcely less provoked. This city, populated by Greeks, Romans, and others, and influenced by a transient multitude from the entire Mediterranean world, displayed a vast number of statues of gods and goddesses, of temples, shrines, and altars. It is interesting to notice that Pausanias composed

his description of Corinth - as in fact he did also with other Greek cities - primarily by recording the religious monuments he observed there together with the mythical/historical and religious details of background he considered relevant. One is struck that for him, to describe the religious and mythical aspects of a Greek city was to describe the city.¹

The fact that the Corinthians gave early attention to the rebuilding of the sanctuaries indicates in part at least a commitment to religious interests. Aphrodite, goddess of love, remained as the chief patroness with a temple on the peak of Acrocorinth, a sanctuary at the port at Cenchreae, and according to Pausanias, another temple just outside the city proper.² The sanctuary at Cenchreae included several small rooms which Wiseman suggests may have been provided for priestesses or prostitutes.³ Being a coastal city, due respect was given also to Poseidon by means of a sanctuary at Lechaem where the Isthmian games were celebrated in his honour. Mythological figures seem also to have been adopted - possibly as the colonists tried to tie their new city into traditional history - for representative

1. I am referring to his Description of Greece, 2.

2. Ibid., 2.3.

3. James Wiseman, "Corinth and Rome: 228 B.C. to A.D. 267," ANRW, VII.1, p. 531.

images were numerous.⁴ A precinct for Bellerophon stood just outside the city proper, as did the grave of Lais; outside the agora toward the Lechaem Gate stood Phaethon and his chariot; Herakles was also represented there, and nearby was the fountain of Peirene. On the road to Lechaem was an image of Palaemon on the dolphin; another fountain, this one with Bellerophon on top and the horse Pegasus below; and the well of Glauke (though Pausanias informs us that sacrifices to Medea had been discontinued.) Images and temples to traditional gods were many: on the way up to Acrocorinth were precincts for Ἀνάγκη ("Necessity"), Βία ("Force"), Μητέρα Θεῶν ("Mother of the gods"); temples of the Fates, Demeter, and Hera. On the acropolis itself stood a temple of Aphrodite, a statue of her in armour; and statues of Helios and Eros. In the agora stood Ephesian Artemis, two statues of Dionysus, a temple of Fortune, a sanctuary for all the gods, images of Poseidon, Apollo, Aphrodite; two images of Hermes; three of Zeus; and a bronze Athena. On the Lechaean Gate was a chariot with Helios, and on the road a statue of Hermes. On the road to Cenchreac was a temple and image of Artemis, and in the town stood the sanctuary of Asclepius. To this host must also be added the imported gods Isis and Serapis, each of which had two precincts on

4. The following observations are made by Pausanias, Description of Greece 2.2ff.

Acrocorinth; Isis also had a sanctuary at Cenchreae. Finally, Pausanias reports that in the agora of Corinth was a temple for the Emperor cult. Indeed, the atmosphere of first century Corinth must have seemed to the apostle Paul to be saturated by idolatry.

The result of Paul's ministry at Corinth and the conversion of pagans to Christianity might seem less remarkable if pagan religious commitment could be shown as having been entirely nominal. However, this was not the case: pagan religious observance was related to real need.⁵ The situation at Corinth was no exception to this, and as elsewhere, we find traditional gods entrusted with individual responsibilities important to the worshippers. A most evident example of this may be seen in the temple of Asclepius. Excavations have revealed a hospital-like arrangement including stone beds, bedside tables, and even stone pillows.⁶ Several thank-offerings representing parts of the body were also discovered in the temple, indicating that individuals once recovered credited the god with healing them. Further, a coin receptacle shows that people gave either payment or tangible thanks to the god for services rendered.⁷

Another temple excavated is that of Poseidon at

5. See R. MacMullen, Paganism in the Roman Empire, p. 49f.

6. W.A. McDonald, "Archaeology and St. Paul's journey in Greek lands. Part III: Corinth," B.A., IV, 1942, p. 46.

7. Ibid., p. 47.

Isthmia.⁸ The specific purpose of the worshippers is not clearly evident in this case - though something related to sea-travel seems a reasonable conjecture - but their involvement is. Along with ashes and bones, small pebbles are found in the sacrificial area: apparently the participants each tossed in a stone, perhaps as symbolic of participation in the sacrifice.⁹ Also in Isthmia are evidences of the worship of Palaimon, son of Ino. Here again there are sacrificial pits filled with ash and animal bones,¹⁰ along with several lamps which made night time celebration possible.¹¹ In this case, the hero cult was practised in conjunction with the Isthmian games, held in honour of Poseidon and Palaimon, and oaths taken by the participants in the games were thought to be guarded by Palaimon.¹² The popularity of the cult - no doubt due to the Isthmian games - is attested to by coins commemorating the dolphin ride.¹³

Other religious experience in the ancient world is attested to generally in the case of the mystery cults. Well known are the extreme cases of self-mutilation undertaken by

8. O. Broneer, "Paul and the pagan cults at Isthmia," H.Th.R., XLIV, 1971, p. 75.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 176.

11. O. Broneer, "The Apostle Paul and the Isthmian Games," B.A., XXV, 1962, p. 12.

12. Cf. Pausanias 2.2.1 with Broneer, 1962, p. 29.

13. Broneer, 1962, p. 13.

priests of Cybele;¹⁴ worshippers of Dionysus, Isis, Osiris, Ma, and other deities engaged in ecstatic frenzies and dance in their "enthusiasm" for the god.¹⁵ Strabo tells us that priestesses of the Persian Artemis walked on hot coals without injury to themselves.¹⁶ This is not to say that such phenomena were the common lot of all pagans. On the contrary, there was much disapproval, official and personal, as in the case of Seneca, who (quoted by St. Augustine) wrote: 'Ille,' inquit, 'viriles sibi partes amputat, ille lacertos secat. Ubi iratos deos timent qui sic propitios merentur?' ("One man,' he says, 'cuts off his virile parts and another slashes his arms. What can they fear from the wrath of the gods when they use such means to win their favour?")¹⁷ However, it does demonstrate that there was a manifest subjective reality, albeit gruesome at times, to the mystery religions which individuals experienced to a greater or lesser degree.

Corinth itself may have been host to several mystery religions. No doubt in the worship of Demeter and Persephone

14. See F. Cumont, Oriental Religions in the Roman Empire, p. 50; cf. Catullus 63; also St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei 7.26.

15. The verb often used in this connection to describe the worshipper is κατέχειν ("to possess") and the participants are called κἀτοχοι ("those possessed.")

16. Strabo, Geographica 12.2.7.

17. Seneca, De Superstitione, quoted by St. Augustine in De Civitate Dei 6.10. Loeb texts, translated by William M. Green.

the Eleusinian Mysteries were entered into by some who sought a spiritual experience and hope for the afterlife. And in the case of the worship of Isis and Serapis, religious experience in the fashion of the mystery cults was clearly involved. From other sources we find that commitment to these gods involved emotional as well as intellectual attachment. Isis being, among other roles, a goddess of navigators¹⁸ had temples in the Corinthian ports and thus offered ready access to sea-farers. Worship of her was cloaked in mysteries, and was disposed towards sensual and emotional response,¹⁹ allowing much moral liberty (also suitable to port areas.)²⁰ The personal testimony of Lucius Apuleius lends credibility to this view, for he in describing his pilgrimage reveals himself as a devoted worshipper, intimate with this goddess for whom he expresses much adulation.²¹ Further, he claims a personal revelation from her in a night-time vision.²²

18. Cumont, loc. cit., p. 79.

19. Ibid., p. 81.

20. Ibid., pp. 90-91.

21. Although Apuleius likely bases his story on an earlier Greek work, it still appears autobiographical in nature and seems to be at times reflective of his own spiritual experiences. He claims to have undergone initiation rites in Greece (Apologia 55.62.20) and the descriptions given in Metamorphoses 11.19ff betray personal insight. See J. Gwyn Griffiths, The Isis Book pp. 3-4.

22. Lucius Apuleius, The Golden Ass 11.22.25.

Perhaps in a more communal way, the worship of Serapis also engendered a feeling of spiritual satisfaction, being singled out by Aelius Aristides as unique among the gods:

καὶ τοίνυν καὶ θυσιῶν μόνῳ τουτῷ θεῷ, κοινῶνουσιν ἄνθρωποι τὴν ἀκριβῆ κοινωνίαν, καλοῦντες τε ἐφ' ἐστίαν καὶ προῖστάμενοι δαιτυμόνα αὐτὸν καὶ ἐστιάτορα, ὥστε ἄλλων ἄλλους ἐράνους πληροῦντων κοινὸς ἀπάντων ἐράνων οὗτός ἐστι πληρωτῆς συμποσιάρχου τάξις ἔχων τοῖς ἀεὶ κατὰ ταυτὸν συλλεγομένοις. ὡς περ Ὀμηρὸς ἔφη τὴν Ἀθηναίαν αὐτὴν ἅμα σπένδειν τε καὶ τελεῖν ἕκαστα, αὐτὸς ὢν δημόσπονδος τε καὶ ὁ τὰς σπονδὰς δεχόμενος, ἐπὶ κῶμόν τε ἀφικνούμενος καὶ καλῶν ὡς αὐτὸν κωμαστάς, οἱ χορεύοντες ὑπ' αὐτῷ τὴν ἀδεῖα κακῶν χορείαν,.....

(And moreover, also it is with this god alone that men uniquely share a special fellowship in the sacrifices, inviting him to the altar and appointing him as guest and host, so that while other gods supply individual contributions variously, this god is the common provider of all the contributions, holding the position of symposiarch for those who gather from time to time for the same purpose. Just as Homer said (Odyssey 3.62) that Athena herself poured a libation and fulfilled each desire, this god, being himself both participant in the libations and receiver of the libations, upon his arrival at the festival summons the participants to himself; these by his doing celebrate with dancing that is free from fear of trouble,.....)²³

Whether or not the rhetoric may be taken as verified testimony, it does serve to demonstrate the spiritual dimension sought for by pagan worshippers.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that to a certain extent at least, pagan religion was conceived of and partici-

23. Aelius Aristides, Orationes 8.54. (Dindorf)

pated in as a spiritual reality. Perhaps Paul had some of these manifestations in mind when he declared that "ἀ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ" ("the things they sacrifice are to demons, and not to God") (I Cor. 10:20); and this conviction was certainly maintained by the Church Fathers.²⁴ Any attempt to understand the question of whether or not the Christians were to be permitted to eat meat that had been offered to idols must then include this factor: pagan religion evidenced a spiritual reality that moved the question beyond the singular consideration of γνῶσις ("knowledge")²⁵ to which the "strong" believers made their appeal (I Cor. 8).

On the other hand, it would not by any means be the case that all pagans were involved in religious practice for a mystical purpose, nor that all religious practice was so intended. Even contemporary observation suggests that mankind enjoys or practises religion on various levels: one individual considers himself Muslim, Hindu, Catholic, etc., by virtue of the fact of his citizenship in a respectively

24. See, for example, Eusebius, Praepar. Evang. 4.23. 1-8 concerning his analysis of Serapis and the demons which were involved. Also, Oracula Sibyllina 8.386: καὶ δαίμοσιν αἷμα χέουσιν ("and they pour out blood to demons"); and 393-394: Δαίμοσι ποιήσουσι νεκροῖς, ὡς οὐρανίοισι, θρησκείαν ἄθεον καὶ ὀλέθρον ἐκτελέοντες. ("They will be performing godless worship unto demons, as if to heavenly beings, and bringing about their own destruction.")

25. It appears that by γνῶσις ("knowledge") Paul means perception of objective truth, namely that there is really only one God and He "owns" all creation. This truth is objective if his theological presuppositions be granted, and at least for his converts, this was presumably the case.

Muslim, Hindu, or Catholic country; another with the same citizenship might rather devote his entire life to the pursuit of religious satisfaction and lifestyle. So it was in the first century. And religion - particularly traditional religion - was so entwined into the fabric of society that no deliberate effort was required to make one at least nominally religious.

To begin with, early history and beginnings were generally conceived of in terms of mythological tales and figures, truth and imagination being colourfully intermingled. Even for newly founded Roman Corinth, mythology was accepted and re-constructed so as to explain the city's early colonization and to justify a prominent place in the Empire. The Corinthians laid claim to the mighty Theseus as their deliverer from Phaea the sow and Sinis the bandit.²⁶ They commemorated Palaimon and the dolphin that brought him to shore, continuing the Isthmian games in his honour.²⁷ The Isthmus was considered the property of Poseidon who had received it from Briareos, and thus a sanctuary to him and his wife Amphitrite was maintained there.²⁸ Also honoured were the Cyclopes,²⁹ Sisyphus, Neleus, and Dionysus (in relation to the tale of Pentheus.)³⁰ In fact, any statue, temple, or altar

26. Pausanias, Description of Greece 2.1.3-4.

27. O. Broneer, 1962, p. 1.

28. Pausanias, Description of Greece 2.1.7.

29. Ibid., 2.2.1.

30. Ibid., 2.2.6-7.

set up brought to mind a whole mythological background relative to the figure honoured. Thus even what might be considered "secular" life and thought was rooted in traditional religion as people lived in constant exposure to the mythical figures.

In light of the pervasiveness of mythology in society, social functions can be more readily understood as being also of a religious nature. The common denominator for all the people, the unifying force, was their common heritage from the past. Therefore, celebration and festivity could be enjoyed by all if it was done in honour of their gods or heroes; and it was often on these occasions that everyone could receive a ration of meat, since the worshippers or the city itself would make sacrifices and divide the meat among the other participants. Honouring the gods provided the occasion for having a "good time." Xenophon describes such a festival which he himself was responsible for instituting at Olympia for Artemis:

...καὶ πάντες οἱ πολῖται καὶ οἱ πρόσχωροι ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες μετεῖχον τῆς ἑορτῆς. παρεῖχε δὲ ἡ θεὸς τοῖς σκηνώσιν ἄλφιτα, ἄρτους, οἶνον, τραγήματα, καὶ τῶν θυομένων ἀπὸ τῆς ἱερᾶς νομῆς λάχος, καὶ τῶν θηρευομένων δέ.

(And all the citizens and neighbours - men and women - shared in the feast. And the goddess provided for those encamped barley meal, bread, wine, sweets, and portions of the sacrificial victims from the sacred pasture and from hunted beasts.)³¹

31. Xenophon, Anabasis 5.3.(B)

Here the goddess is seen as the provider of the food; and Plutarch confirms that this was the general view of the participants of such festivals who enjoyed particular cheer and joy on those occasions in the sentiment that the god being honoured was present and benevolent.³² In the above case, the sacrificial animals were taken in part at least from the "sacred herd." However, more often it was a person or persons of means who made the provision. Plutarch says that in general men regarded as "great" who made such offerings inspired further reverence for the gods on the part of the common people who shared in the banquet.³³ Even officials would make use of this means to win favour from the people: Stratocles "εὐαγγέλια θύειν ἔγραψε καὶ κρεωδαισίαν τινὰ κατὰ φυλὴν ἐποίησεν." ("... decreed a public sacrifice of good tidings and a distribution of meat by tribes.")³⁴ Whether, then, for personal, political, or sincerely religious motives, festivals were often sponsored at which the general population of a community got together for celebration and fellowship.

And if there was a general belief in the reality and goodness of the gods on such occasions, there was also a significant social dimension equally important:

32. Plutarch, Moralia 1101.D-F.

33. Ibid., 822.B.

34. Plutarch, Demetrius 11.(0)

ποία μὲν γὰρ εὐφροσύνη προσφιλῆς εἰ μὴ καὶ πάντων
 παρείη τὰ μέγιστα, ποῖον δὲ συμπόσιον ἡδὺ χωρὶς
 εὐνοίας τῶν παρόντων; ποία δὲ θυσία κεχαρισμένη
 θεοῖς ἄνευ τῶν συνευωχουμένων;

(For what sort of festivity would be pleasing unless
 this greatest addition [i.e. the presence of friends]
 is present? And what sort of drinking party is a
 pleasure without the good-will of the guests? And
 what sacrifice is favourable to the gods without
 the participants in the feast?)³⁵

It is thus difficult to determine the real purpose for such
 events - religious or social. Rather, it seems that the two
 go so closely in hand that they are inseparable: community
 festivals were an opportunity for everyone to enjoy fellowship
 together as well as to honour their gods and heroes.

The exact frequency of such public festivals at Cor-
 inth may not be completely known to us, but we are aware of
 several that did take place. The Isthmian games, removed
 from Corinthian control at the destruction of 146 B.C., were
 returned to them either in 6 or in 2 B.C.³⁶ At this time, the
 Isthmian sanctuary of Poseidon was rebuilt, and the games were
 once again celebrated as part of the Spring Festival.³⁷ An
 inscription reveals that a Lucius Castricius Regulus was the
 official who brought the games back under the authority of
 Corinth, and he himself financed them the first time and also

35. Dio Chrysostom, 3.52.(T)

36. Dates here are given by Wiseman, loc. cit., p.
 533. He argues in favour of 2 B.C.

37. Kent, Corinth VIII.iii, p. 21.

provided a banquet for all the Corinthians.³⁸ Subsequently, the games were held on a biennial basis. Then there were the Caesarean games held quadrennially,³⁹ and other public festivals held to celebrate the imperial contests for the Emperor whenever the city was honoured with his presence.⁴⁰

To what degree private parties or household meals were associated with god-consciousness is also somewhat difficult to ascertain. We do know that the Romans were very careful in their responsibilities to their household gods (Penates); but again, this does not necessarily have bearing on family meals. Probably there was no fixed convention for all homes, nor even for the same home at all times. There were at least times when the gods would be honoured at meals. According to Plutarch's judgment, "πλουσίοις δὲ καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἐστιάσεις καὶ πανδαισίαι τινες παρέειν αἰεὶ αἱ δ' ἐφ' ἱεροῖς καὶ θυηπολῖαις, καὶ ὅταν ἐγγιστα τοῦ θεοῦ τῆ ἐπινοίᾳ ψαύειν δοκῶσι μετὰ τιμῆς καὶ σεβασμοῦ, πολὺ διαφέρουσιν ἡδονὴν καὶ χάριν ἔχουσι." ("For rich men and for kings, banquets and full course meals are always available; but those banquets held on holy occasions and sacrifices, and whenever they seem in their minds to touch things nearest the divine with their honour and reverence, those banquets provide much

38. Ibid., pp. 70ff, #153.

39. Wiseman, loc. cit., pp. 499f.

40. Ibid.

greater pleasure and joy.")⁴¹ Hence, whatever the case during the average meal, it was also the case that sometimes a meal was held for celebration rather than just for nutrition.

In practical terms, meat would have to have been consumed quite soon after the animal was slaughtered since no significant means of preservation was available. Therefore, if a family raised and butchered its own livestock, apart from small animals (fowl, for example,) there would have been too much meat for a single family to consume; the obvious solution was to invite guests in for a joint meal, perhaps to be reciprocated in time. The statement, "ὅποτε θύοι, ἐκάλει" ("whenever he sacrificed, he sent invitations")⁴² bears witness to this, and also suggests that "slaughtering" was almost synonymous with "sacrificing." Indeed, the word θύειν by New Testament times could be used to mean simply "slaughter" as Acts 10.13, "Ἀναστὰς, Πέτρε, θύσον καὶ φάγε." ("Rise, Peter, kill and eat.") Regardless, dinner invitations would have been especially appropriate if meat were involved.

Private parties were not only held in private homes, but also in the precincts of the gods. A well known papyrus of the second century A.D. reads: ἐρωτᾷ σε Χαίρημων δειπνήσαι εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαρᾶπιδος ἐν τῷ Σαραπέῳ αὐριον,

41. Plutarch, Moralia 1102.A.(0)

42. Xenophon, Memorabilia 2.9.4.(Schneider)

ἤτις ἐστὶν με, ἀπὸ ὄρας θ'. ("Chaeremon requests your company at the table of the lord Serapis at the Serapeum tomorrow, the 15th at 9 o'clock.")⁴³ This does not specify that the said party was to be specifically religious in purpose, nor that meat would be served. Apparently the temple may have served as a "restaurant" or even "conference service" which people could book for functions other than those of a religious nature, though religious rites were no doubt included. Archaeology does bear witness to the fact that temples, including those at Corinth,⁴⁴ were equipped with dining rooms to seat usually seven to eleven persons, and that slaughtering and cooking were also done on the premises. An absence of other accommodations for such purposes lends support to the possible "secular" usages of the temple facilities. However, in the case of the above invitation, whether the gathering was to be of a religious nature or not, it was given in the name of the "lord Serapis" and the host was clearly in sympathy with the meal being at the god's table. The point is that religious practice and social function were so closely related as to make a separation of one from the other very dif-

43. P. Oxy. 1.110² Translation by G.D. Fee, "Ἐἰδωλό-
θυσια once again. An Interpretation of I Corinthians 8-10,"
Biblica, LXI, 1980, pp. 184f., n. 21.

44. See N. Bookidis and Joan Fisher, "The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Akrocorinth," Hesperia, XLI, 1971, pp. 284, 299ff., 315.

ficult indeed.⁴⁵

One further way that religion penetrated the fabric of society was by its commercial advantage. Throughout antiquity it was the temple that usually became the community's "treasury" and a primary source of income. Usually the temple provided a service of the god - whether an oracle such as at Delphi, or healing at an Asklepieion, or fertility guarantees at any number of temples - for which individuals would gladly pay a fee or offer a thanksgiving contribution.⁴⁶ Not only money was offered, but also dedications of gold, silver, or bronze artifacts which all increased the wealth of the temple itself as well as that of those who were employed in temple service. Perhaps the most vivid insight into such activity has come down to us from Lucian who described in detail the activity of Alexander of Paphlagonia. Here we see a new "religion" catching the attention of people

45. A papyrus similar to the one quoted above presents the same type of invitation but apparently to a private home rather than a temple:

ἔρωτᾷ σε Ἀντώνιο(ς) Πτολεμ(αίου) διπνησ(αι) παρ' αὐτῷ εἰς κλείνην τοῦ κυρίου Σαραπίδος ἐν τοῖς Κλαυδ(ίου) Σαραπίω(νος) τῆ ἡ ἡς ἀπὸ ὥρας θ'.

(Antonius, son of Ptolemy, requests your company at the table of the lord Serapis in the house of Claudius Serapion on the 16th at 9 o'clock.) P. Oxy. III. 523. Translation by G.D. Fee, *loc. cit.*, pp. 184f., n. 21. Thus again there is a combination of religion, at least in name, and social function even if in a private household.

46. In Corinth, for example, a coin-box has been discovered in the Asklepieion as well as many coins minted with images of various deities. See McDonald, *loc. cit.*, p. 47.

from the Black Sea all the way to Rome. And because of the services offered - particularly oracles - people streamed to Abonuteichus and paid large fees to have their questions answered. Not only did Alexander himself get rich, but also the town became famous and wealthy by virtue of its "tourist attraction." Corinth, already a centre of travel, was known for its beauty, not the least element of which were the temples and other religious monuments suited to the fancy of almost any traveller (certainly it was these that especially caught the attention of Pausanias). Here then was not only a direct source of income (i.e. offerings to the gods) but also some indirect commercial value such as employment from temple construction, maintenance, and service, either at private or public expense. Also images, votives, etc., provided a significant market for smiths and craftsmen.⁴⁷

Consideration of the "macellum" ("market place") must also be given in this regard. It has been variously questioned whether or not all meat sold in the macellum would have been from sacrificial animals;⁴⁸ certainly the agora (in which was the macellum)⁴⁹ included many temples at

47. Cf. Acts 19.23-40.

48. See Conzelmann, loc. cit., p. 176, n. 11; also C.K. Barret, "Things Sacrificed to Idols," N.T.S., XI, 1964/65, p. 145.

49. The precise location of the macellum in the Corinthian agora is not certain, but an inscription confirms its presence: H.J. Cadbury, "The Macellum of Corinth," J.B.L.,

which slaughtering was done and the meat subsequently sold, and a reasonable inference is that the macellum was always directly connected to religious activity. However, the argument is weak, as H.J. Cadbury points out,⁵⁰ in that regularly all public buildings tended to be located together in a central city area, and the close proximity of the macellum to the temples was not peculiar. Furthermore, meat was evidently available that was not sacrificial: whole skeletons of sheep found in the Pompeii macellum "suggest that the meat may have been sold on the hoof or slaughtered in the macellum as well as sold already butchered or sacrificed in a temple."⁵¹

C.K. Barrett is also of this mind, and adds further:

That meat was to be had that was not *ιερόθυτον* is confirmed by Plutarch Sympos. VIII,8,3, where it is said that the Pythagoreans *ὡς μάλιστα μὲν ἐγεύοντο τῶν ἱεροθύτων ἀπαρχόμενοι τοῖς θεοῖς*, which seems to mean that the Pythagoreans, who took flesh very sparingly, ate it only in the form of *ιερόθυτον*. It is implied that others, who did not share the vegetarian principles of the Pythagoreans, would eat it when it had not been sacrificed - that is, that non-sacrificed meat was available.⁵²

It could also be noted that it was apparently possible for those who wanted to determine if any given piece of meat

LIII, 1934, pp. 137ff; other excavations have suggested possible locations (see W.T. Sawyer, The Problem of Meat Sacrificed to Idols in the Corinthian Church, pp. 68ff.)

50. Cadbury, loc. cit., p. 141.

51. Ibid.

52. C.K. Barrett, loc. cit., p. 145.

were ἑρῶθυτον, presumably by questioning the vendor (cf. I Cor. 10.25).

If Pompeii may be taken as exemplary, the macellum also offered a market for fish, "figs, chestnuts, plums, grapes, fruit,..., lentils, grain, loaves of bread, and cakes."⁵³ Of primary concern here, however, is the fact that meats - both sacrificial and non-sacrificial - were sold to the community residents. Naturally this provided a necessary avenue for the priests who received a portion of the sacrifice to vend their meats, and for individuals to acquire meat - whether they specifically desired ἑρῶθυρα or not.⁵⁴ For pagan society, then, a happy balance was hereby maintained; and once again the mutual interdependence of religion and society rises clearly into view.

The fundamental conclusion to be drawn in this chapter thus far is that pagan society was a religious society inasmuch as religion and social life were virtually inseparable. Archaeology as well as literary and epigraphic evidence make it clear that the gods and mythical heroes were venerated throughout Corinth and its "suburbs" through numerous statues, altars, shrines, and temples. Judging from what we know of

53. Cadbury, loc. cit., p. 141.

54. Clearly sacrificial meats were sold to the general public, cf. Pliny, Epistulae 10.96.10. But according to this letter, it must have been possible to determine the source of the meat, whether it was from a sacrifice or not.

pagan religion in the early Roman Empire, (as well as from specific evidences at Corinth,) there were Corinthians who were genuinely and subjectively involved possibly to the point of ecstatic experiences. Then in varying degrees down to simple nominal assent, the rest of the residents would have participated in the religious aspect of society. Beyond such subjective responses, mythical history and tales enshrouded society in an air of the supernatural so that life seemed a product of more than mere human effort. Social activity, particularly when it involved the community as a whole, also relied heavily on religious ground for its common bond and unifying force; individuals would gain a sense of belonging to the community as a whole by their involvement in such religious festivals. On a smaller scale as well, however, private meals and parties sometimes (at least) met in the name of a god or gods. The commercial health of a community also depended somewhat on religion as it found there a market for construction, craftsmanship and smithing, tourism, and perhaps direct services from a god. (Corinth no doubt had other major commercial advantages, particularly due to its geographical position. The economic value of religion, then, might have been less significant at Corinth than at other places, though no doubt the "gods" took advantage of the vast influx of travellers.) Finally, it is evident that the town macellum or meat-market was connected with religious activity if for no other reason than that it provided a market for the meats

resulting from animal sacrifices, though not all meats or food sold at the market would necessarily have been *λεπόθυτον*.

2. Thought and Practice of the Early Christian Church

Pagan society was quite generous in its welcome of new gods as seen by the popularity of Eastern religions in Western communities of the ancient world. The Roman government itself intervened only when religious practice became inhumane, such as self-mutilation,⁵⁵ or when it was considered to be criminal, such as in the case of the Bacchanalia.⁵⁶ Christianity, however, found no such warmth; rather, the Christians were a group of people, according to Tacitus, "quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat." ("...who, being hated on account of their disgraceful activities, the common people called 'Christians.'")⁵⁷ Theirs was an "exitibilis superstitio" ("pernicious superstition")⁵⁸ deserving of "novissima exempla" ("extreme punishment," i.e. the punishment of death.)⁵⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed by the followers of Alexander of Abonuteichus, who in their rituals cried, "Ἐξω Χριστιανούς... Ἐξω Ἐπικουρείους!" ("Out with

55. See Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 2.19.

56. Livy, 39.14-18.

57. Tacitus, Annals 15.44. (O)

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

the Christians... Out with the Epicureans!")⁶⁰ The perhaps surprising adjunct of Epicureans with Christians is explained by the "atheism" common to both. Similar antagonism was held generally toward the Jews, though not on an official level since legal recognition and protection was granted them from the time of Caesar. Tacitus considered Judaism a base religion of a depraved people: hateful, lustful, atheistic, etc.⁶¹ This hostility was easily transferred to the Christians who appeared to be a sect of Judaism.⁶² Furthermore, Christianity did not share the tolerance of its pagan contemporaries, and its firm commitment to monotheistic theology was a denial of the gods and a quiet condemnation of pagan lifestyle.

St. Paul himself relied quite heavily on the Old Testament Scriptures for his theology and his presentation of Christianity. He regularly uses the formula "καθὼς γέγραπται" ("just as it is written") or something similar as he introduces a quotation to support something he is saying, and having made such a reference, he expects no further appeal. Thus along with Judaism, he taught a strict monotheism that would tolerate no deviation: "οἴδαμεν ὅτι

60. Lucian, Alexander the False Prophet 38.

61. Tacitus, Histories 5.5. Reasons for such an attitude are summarized by Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period," J.B.L., XCVIII, 1979, pp. 45-65.

62. Cf. Tacitus, Annals 15.44.

οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς."

("We know that there is (really) no idol in the world, and that there is no god except one.") (I Cor. 8.4) Pagan religious activity, directed towards gods represented by images - idols, to the Christians - indeed constituted "idolatry" in the judgment of the apostle, and such idolatry was an abomination to be fled from (I Cor. 10.14) as having the potential to bring down the wrath of God (I Cor. 10.17), and by which the offending Christians would be παραζηλοῦντες τὸν κύριον ("provoking the Lord to jealousy"). (I Cor. 10.22) The Corinthian Christians were thus to carry out a complete reversal from idolatry to worship of the Judaeo-Christian God alone.

Furthermore, Paul also explicitly acknowledged the reality of other spirit beings (namely δαιμόνια ("demons")) which were, in his judgment, the powers behind the idols that the pagans worshipped (I Cor. 10.20-22). He was not denying the possibility of a subjective and real experience on the part of the "idol" worshippers; in fact, he says that even to participate in eating of the sacrifices to the gods is to be taking part with demons (I Cor. 10.20). The Christians had a very real situation to avoid; for rather than the avoidance of eating εἰδωλόθυσια being a whim of "over-scrupulous Jews," it was a sine qua non of their religious beliefs.

The priority of the Christians at Corinth was to present themselves with spiritual purity towards their Lord, par-

ticularly to be reflected in the eucharist (I Cor. 10.16-17) and in their abstinence from any idolatry. Their entire lives were to be lived for God's sake, thus in keeping with His commands: εἴτε οὖν ἐσθίετε εἴτε πίνετε εἴτε τι ποιεῖτε, πάντα εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ ποιεῖτε. ("Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.") (I Cor. 10.31) Clearly giving worship to other gods could not be included. However, a second responsibility was similarly incumbent upon them: ἀπόσκοποι καὶ Ἰουδαίοις γίνεσθε καὶ Ἑλλησιν καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, καθὼς καγὼ πάντα πᾶσιν ἀρέσκω, μὴ ζητῶν τὸ ἑμαυτοῦ σύμφορον ἀλλὰ τὸ τῶν πολλῶν, ἵνα σωθῶσιν. μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε, καθὼς καγὼ Χριστοῦ. ("Be without offense to both Jews and Greeks and to the Church of God, just as I also please all men in every respect, not seeking my own welfare, but the welfare of the many. Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.") (I Cor. 10.32-11.1) In order to do this, it was necessary for them to live in and be integrated with society, and Paul wanted them to do so as much as possible.⁶³ They ought still to maintain association with their pagan friends, shop in

63. Cf. I Cor. 5.9-10. The conclusion "ἐπει ὠφεῖλετε ἄρα ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελθεῖν" ("...since then you would have to go out of the world") is obviously not what the apostle wants. This reflects the saying of Jesus recorded in the prayer of John 17.15: οὐκ ἐρωτῶ ἵνα ἄρῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἀλλ' ἵνα τηρήσῃς αὐτοὺς ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ. ("I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.")

the town market, and also to accept invitations to meals at non-believers' homes if they so desired. Paul's own example of canvas-craftmanship was clear instruction to carry on with business as usual. He frequently alludes to athletic competition, suggesting a fairly current interest on the part of all in the Isthmian (and other) games, of which he himself was very likely a spectator in 51 A.D.⁶⁴ The requirement that they be without offense to all including Jews and Greeks also presumes that there would be contact with them. Furthermore, since St. Paul's gospel taught that the ceremonial law of the Jewish Old Testament had been fulfilled in Christ - "πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν" ("all things are lawful for me"), a position to which, if Acts be accepted, Peter also came (Acts 10.15) - he put no food restrictions on his Gentile or Jewish converts: "πάν τὸ παρατιθέμενον ὑμῖν ἐσθίετε" ("Eat anything set before you") (I Cor. 10.27). Indeed, life for the Christian was to be characterized by freedom, thus making participation in ordinary society, in principle at least, entirely permissible, even commendable.

These two priorities were thus to be the guidelines

64. The agon motif was used variously throughout Hellenistic times and was not an innovation of the apostle Paul. However, it had special significance for the Corinthians who were the hosts of the Isthmian games; St. Paul was apparently in Corinth during the games of the Spring of A.D. 51 (Broneer, 1962, p. 31) and it is hard to imagine him not attending even if only for evangelistic and commercial purposes (i.e. sale of tents and canvas goods which he made.)

for the Christian: all things were to be done for God's glory; and life was to be maintained as much as possible in a manner integrated with society. The conflict that was to result was contained in the tension between these two priorities: just how much could the converts remain one with their contemporaries, and how far could "freedom"⁶⁵ go while still allowing the believers to be spiritually pure. In practical terms, the "grey" area of life needing clarification was that of the proper attitude towards εἰδωλόθυτα, and apparently the Corinthians had written Paul for his advice on the matter.

The problem of εἰδωλόθυτα was not limited to Christians at Corinth; it was an issue throughout the entire breadth of the first century Church. Accordingly, when the apostles were addressing matters of concern to Gentile believers, they specified that Christians were to abstain from eating such meat. We wonder if the Corinthians knew of this so-called "Apostolic Decree" of Acts 15, and if so, why the matter was not closed for discussion: ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων ("abstain from meats offered to idols"). It is sometimes

65. Christian "freedom" was the emancipation from legalistic obligations towards God, i.e. the ceremonial regulations observed in Judaism were not to be binding on Christians. However, there were obviously moral obligations still to be observed by the Christians, and these moral guidelines once established were to fix the bounds of "freedom." The problem then, as in the case of εἰδωλόθυτα, was to establish the moral guidelines pertaining to any given matter.

maintained that Paul in his zeal to demonstrate his individual apostolic authority did not feel bound by the authority of the Jerusalem Council, and therefore (assuming that he even knew of the decree at all) did not uniformly enforce it in the churches of his ministry.⁶⁶ However, it appears that the opposite may be true: that Paul or someone else had given them the instructions to abstain from εἰδωλόθυσια, and it was the Corinthians - not St. Paul - who were attempting to undermine the command on the basis of their γνῶσις ("knowledge"). G.D. Fee observes that the nature of Paul's reply (i.e. I Cor. 8.1-11.1) is "combative" rather than merely advisory, and thus Paul in opposition to their implied arguments is re-affirming and modifying the decree.⁶⁷ The suggestion can stand if Paul can be shown to be consistent with himself⁶⁸ and consistent with the decree in his response.

Many attempts have been made to determine specifically who these individuals - usually labelled the "strong" - were who were arguing for the freedom to eat εἰδωλόθυσια. There is the possibility, albeit unlikely, that members of the

66. See for example Arnold Ehrhardt, The Framework of New Testament Stories, 1964, p. 277; Hans Conzelmann, loc. cit., p. 146, n. 7.

67. G.D. Fee, "Εἰδωλόθυσια once again. An interpretation of I Corinthians 8-10," Biblica, LXI, 1980, p. 179.

68. Another point widely doubted. See for example Conzelmann, loc. cit., p. 137; Gerd Theissen, The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity, 1982, pp. 121, 122.

Jewish-Christian component of the church were doing so. Of course, because of the strict dietary and ritualistic laws of Judaism, it seems that the Jewish converts were more likely to have argued strongly against eating such meat. However, Paul himself had been an outstanding leader in Judaism, progressing "έν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας έν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων" ("...in Judaism beyond many of my peers among my people, being more exceedingly zealous for my ancestral customs") (Galatians 1.14); yet he had no personal reservation about eating meat that had been the product of εἰδωλόθυτα (I Cor. 10.29-30). Therefore, could not other Jews who were following Paul's example have also rejected Jewish tradition whether by reacting against their (perhaps onerous) past, or by eagerness to be all things to all men? (Certainly the "strong," whoever they were, were strict monotheists according to I Corinthians 8.4-6.)

It was the Gentiles, however, who would have had less background in dietary regulation and more reason to desire freedom to eat εἰδωλόθυτα. If it were the case, as discussed above, that public festivals as well as business and private parties, were held in honour of a god or gods, the Gentile converts would have needed to either isolate themselves from many such functions, or risk eating sacrificial meats while in attendance. Yet for both business and social reasons, it was to their advantage to have freedom to attend and partake

as community members. G. Theissen gives a useful example in the person of Erastus,

"the 'city treasurer' (Romans 16:23), who could have jeopardized his public position had he rejected all invitations where 'consecrated meat' might have been expected. If he is identical with the aedile Erastus known from an inscription, and thus somebody who at one time or another wished to be chosen as overseer for those public places and buildings where such meat was sold, he scarcely could have demonstrated an attitude of reserve about 'consecrated meat.' Such an attitude would have been wholly inappropriate for his office."⁶⁹

Theissen is arguing that neither Jews nor Gentiles specifically, but the wealthy and influential members of the Church would have been those pressing for freedom to eat εἰδωλόθυσια, thus the "strong"; they would have had too much to lose by withdrawing from social integration. Doubtless there is good reason to look to those from upper strata of society to find persons among the "strong." But eating of εἰδωλόθυσια being a matter of conscience, wealth does not necessarily insure strength. The rich as well as others enjoyed a subjective element in their religious beliefs,⁷⁰ and thus might "τῆ συνηθείᾳ ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου" ("...by their customary association with the idol until now") be forced to act in disregard of their conscience in order to partake.

69. Ibid., p. 130.

70. See Plutarch, Moralia 1102A quoted above, though in Moralia 822, Plutarch implies that the rich often just take part in religious observance to win favour among the populace.

In fact poorer members of society had as much motivation to desire freedom. Meat may have been available to them mainly in the form of εἰδωλόθυσια. Indeed, public sacrifices⁷¹ and distributions of meat may have been the only source for the very poor,⁷² though others may have had recourse in varying degrees to purchasing meat at the macellum. Thus to some extent, at least, if they wanted to eat meat, they probably ate that which had come from sacrifices. This being the case, their desire to continue to enjoy meat and community involvement could have motivated them to adopt the view of the "strong," particularly when Paul had given clear teaching on monotheism and Christian liberty. Lack of wealth does not presuppose lack of inner fortitude.

We thus find the potential for the "strong" in each segment of society. Noting that in this context St. Paul himself does not specifically talk about the "strong" but rather, those "γνώσιν ἔχοντες" ("having knowledge"), we ought accor-

71. Some descriptions of such distributions are: Cicero, *De Officiis* 55; Livy 8.22, 39.46, 41.28; Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars*, Deified Julius 38.2.

72. Cf. Xenophon, *Hier.* 1.18; [Xenophon], *Ath. Pol.* 2.9. However, the fact that such festivals were anticipated and enjoyed is not conclusive proof that meat was had by the poor under such circumstances only. Offers of anything "free" even today gain great attention and public favour, though they seldom offer commodities otherwise unenjoyed. See G. Theissen, *loc. cit.*, pp. 127-128 for an opposite conclusion: meat (for the poorer classes) "belonged to a sacred time segregated from the everyday world. It had a 'numinous' character."

dingly to define our use of "strong" as denoting those who for whatever reason desired and, on the basis of knowledge, were able to disassociate the eating of meat resulting from εἰδωλόθυτα from the act of "idolatry" that had previously made the meat "consecrated," and who thus could partake without hurting their conscience.

It is the "ἀσθενής" ("weak") whom Paul expressly mentions in I Corinthians, and it is in part at least out of concern for them that he formulates his response to the problem:

Περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἰδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς. ... Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐν πᾶσιν ἡ γνώσις· τινὲς δὲ τῆς συνηθείας ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν, καὶ ἡ συνείδησις αὐτῶν ἀσθενῆς οὖσα μολύνεται. βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παραστήσει τῷ θεῷ· οὔτε ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν ὑστερούμεθα, οὔτε ἐὰν φάγωμεν περισσεύομεν. βλέπετε δὲ μή πως ἡ ἐξουσία ὑμῶν αὕτη πρόσκομμα γένηται τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν.

(Therefore, concerning the meat of idol sacrifices, we know that there is [really] no idol in the world, and that there is no god except one. ... But this knowledge is not in everyone; but certain persons, by their customary association with the idol until now eat [such meat] as meat sacrificed to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; we are neither inferior if we do not eat, nor superior if we do eat. But beware lest in any way this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block for the weak." (I Cor. 8.4,7-9))

The "weak" are those whom the "strong" might cause to stumble, i.e. cause them to act contrary to their own conscience. Their weakness is seen in their inability to disassociate meat that derived from a pagan sacrifice from that sacrifice, and interestingly enough, Paul warns the believers "ἀπόσκο-

ποι καὶ Ἰουδαίοις γίνεσθε καὶ Ἕλλησιν καὶ τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ." ("...to be without offense to Jews and to Greeks and to the Church of God.") (I Cor. 10.32) Implicitly, then, persons in any of these three categories might be made to stumble. Within the Church of God, who were the "weak"? We can agree with Sawyer that Jewish believers, having been accustomed to strict laws forbidding the consumption of various foods including εἰδωλόθυστα⁷³ may have found it difficult to change their views.⁷⁴ But we observe that the Jewish believers were often resolute in their views and would not have had temptation to partake of εἰδωλόθυστα. Quite the opposite; they were more likely to cling to their traditional dietary laws and force them on their Gentile brethren.⁷⁵ Thus some of the Jewish contingent may perhaps have been "weak" and tempted to break from the past and even eat εἰδωλόθυστα against their conscience, but it would only have been those who were desirous of secular/social integration, something not characteristic of the Jews on the whole.

With respect to the view that the "strong" were the wealthy and influential members of society within the Church, Theissen presents the argument that the "weak" were those from

73. W.T. Sawyer, The Problem of Meat Sacrifice to Idols in the Corinthian Church, p. 126, n. 47.

74. According to Acts 10.1-15, the apostle Peter himself accepted change, but with considerable reluctance.

75. See, for example, Galatians 2.11-14.

the lower classes, who being accustomed to meat only in a religious context, could not have appreciated it as a neutral thing in itself; but who, desirous of eating meat, might be encouraged to eat even if they felt it was wrong.⁷⁶ Again we must concur that the argument is plausible and that there is reason to look for "weak" Christians among the lower class of Corinth. However, as discussed above, the rich also may have regarded pagan religious deities as existing in reality, and thus εἰδωλόθυτα for them may have remained such, and the temptation to partake - for political, commercial, or social reasons - was not removed.

Therefore, we find the potential for the "weak" among the Jewish and Gentile converts, as well as among both the rich and the poor. Economic or racial status does not determine strength of personal character. The point, then, is that the weak were those who when tempted - for whatever reason - to partake of εἰδωλόθυτα could do so only against their own conscience. As Conzelmann concludes, "the 'weak' are neither Jewish Christians nor any closed group at all. They do not represent a position. They are simply weak."⁷⁷ Furthermore, it is likely that "weak" is a temporary condition that many believers went through subsequent to conversion, a condition which diminished in any individual with time and experience

76. Theissen, loc. cit., pp. 127-128.

77. Conzelmann, loc. cit., p. 147.

in Christianity. Paul himself points to the temporal factor by saying that the weak "τῆ συνηθείᾳ ἕως ἄρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ἐσθίουσιν." ("...by their customary association with the idol until now eat [such meat] as meat sacrificed to an idol.") (I Cor. 8.7) The adverbial phrase "ἕως ἄρτι" ("until now") implies that the condition is temporary; but as long as there were new converts entering the Church, the "weak" brother would always be a matter of concern. Sooner or later, the συνηθεῖα ("customary association") of a believer would be oriented strongly towards monotheism and practices of Christianity, and accordingly free him (hopefully) from unnecessary scruples.⁷⁸ The weak in conscience were so because of a lack of knowledge: in time their knowledge would be made more complete.

With this background we may return to the original question and Paul's response to it. Had the Corinthians received and reacted against instructions similar in content to those of the Council of Jerusalem? Is Paul consistent in his reply with the Council, or even with himself?

At least we can be sure that the Corinthian believers knew that εἰδωλόθυτα presented a controversy, and apparently they were arguing for complete freedom on the basis of γνῶσις ("knowledge.") Had Paul taught them something contrary to the

78. The following passages imply development (thus becoming "strong") which St. Paul considers vital: I Cor. 3.2-3, 14.20, 16.13; II Cor. 3.18, 5.17, 13.9-11.

Jerusalem Council, such as freedom to eat εἰδωλόθυτα, this question need not have arisen (again). Furthermore, his instructions for the Church in this letter seem to re-affirm the Apostolic Decree.

Introducing the subject in a general way in I Cor. 8.1, he begins with: περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων ("Now concerning meats offered to idols,..."). The word εἰδωλοθύτων, translated as "meat offered to an idol,"⁷⁹ according to F. Büchsel "denotes the meat which derives from heathen sacrifices, though without the intolerable implication of the sanctity of what is offered to heathen gods, or the divinity of these gods."⁸⁰ Manifestly the word can have only been used by people - principally Christians and Jews - who regarded the pagan deities as εἰδωλα ("idols").⁸¹ After making the general introduction of I Cor. 8.1-3, Paul then argues for freedom to eat, on the basis of γνῶσις ("knowledge") (I Cor. 8.4-13), such freedom being regulated by consideration for the "weak"; in this he appears to agree with the position of the "strong." But he then argues for abstinence (I Cor. 10.14-22) on the basis of the spiritual reality of pagan worship.⁸² This apparent

79. Bauer, loc. cit., p. 221.

80. Kittel, II, p. 378.

81. See p. 67 above.

82. This is on the assumption that we are dealing with a single, coherent letter, rather than a compilation. There is no external evidence - textual or otherwise - to suppose

contradiction has led to the idea that I Cor. 10.1-22 is out of place in its present context,⁸³ or else that Paul vacillates in his opinion on the matter.⁸⁴

However, it is worthy of note that after the preliminary remarks of 8.1-3, Paul then speaks further "περὶ τῆς βρώσεως οὖν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων" ("(Therefore) concerning the meat of idol sacrifices.") He is not now referring to εἰδωλόθυστα, per se, but to the βρώσις ("meat") resulting from it. Conversely, the next passage in question (i.e. 10.14) explicitly refers to εἰδωλολατρία ("idolatry"). In the context, then, εἰδωλόθυστα refers to consecrated meats in the presence of and in association with the very acts of sacrifice and worship.⁸⁵ Once removed from that specific situation, it

that a redactor is responsible for the present state of the letter; arguments based on internal evidence are not compelling nor in any way uniformly interpreted. See Sawyer, loc. cit., pp. 160ff; Conzelmann, loc. cit., pp. 2-4.

83. Conzelmann, ibid., pp. 3-4.

84. Admittedly, I Cor. 9 may at first seem to be a rather strange interjection between the two chapters dealing with εἰδωλόθυστα. However, chapter 8 is addressing those who felt the freedom to eat, but who should for the sake of others choose to forego their liberty. This did not mean their personal freedom (as a state of being) was in jeopardy. Paul then illustrates in chapter 9 how this can be: he himself was (and continued to be) free personally to marry, receive support, eat and drink, etc. But his freedom also included the choice to go without these things, and so he did. (Perhaps he had himself been accused of being "weak" (cf. I Cor. 9.3).) This, he explains, was not the case. He was indeed free, but chose voluntarily not to exercise many of his liberties.

85. Thus Paul's comparison with Israel (I Cor. 10.18) of sacrifices being shared at consecrated feasts, cf. Lev. 7.11-21.

is simply meat resulting from such a sacrifice; such meat, as the rest of creation, belongs to the Lord.⁸⁶ The "weak" then, were those who by reason of their συνηθεία τοῦ εἰδώλου ("customary association with an idol") could not disassociate the meat from the sacrifice it had come from, and therefore would eat it ὡς εἰδωλόθυτον ("as (if it were still) meat sacrificed to an idol") (I Cor. 8.7). The Apostolic Decree had made it clear, as had Paul apparently (and he re-affirms it in I Cor. 10.14-22), that eating εἰδωλόθυστα⁸⁷ is always wrong for the Christian. The "weak" brother therefore is indeed wrong to eat such meat resulting from a sacrifice, for to him it is still εἰδωλόθυτον (I Cor. 8.7). The "strong" is able by an attitude of thanksgiving (I Cor. 10.30) which presupposes acknowledgement of God as possessor of all things, to eat such meat as simply βρωσις, regardless of where it had come from. Therefore, it is not εἰδωλόθυστα that is "without the intolerable implication of the sanctity of what is offered to heathen gods" (see p. 102 above), but it is such meat, when removed and disassociated from actual pagan religious activity, that is so.⁸⁸

86. I Cor. 10.26, quoting Psalms 24.1.

87. Expressly because εἰδωλόθυστα per se presupposes the presence of the act of εἰδωλολατρία ("idolatry").

88. Ehrhardt finds that the term εἰδωλόθυτον was used by the bishops of the Spanish Synod of Elvira "for any kind of expense on behalf of the pagan idols." (loc. cit., p. 289) He goes on to say that it was mistakenly "used as a comprehen-

Having established these two principles, viz. that the meat derived from a previous sacrifice is the property of the Judaeo-Christian God, and that outside the specific context of "idolatry" may be enjoyed legitimately with thanksgiving; and that any participation in "idolatry" such as eating consecrated meat in the context of sacrifice and "idol-worship" must be avoided at all cost - Paul goes on to deal with specific circumstances that might arise.

1. Reclining in an εἰδωλεῖον ("temple of an idol") (I Cor. 8.10) would be an obvious stumbling block for the "weak". Perhaps for commercial, political, or social reasons a Christian might wish to attend a gathering at a temple, even if he had no intention of participating in "idolatry" or in eating of consecrated meats. However, the apostle seems to permit this possibility under no circumstance in deference to the "weak".

2. The purchasing of meat from the macellum would have been a normal part of life for those who could afford it; Paul grants free access to all, and may in fact be subtly encouraging the weak to become stronger and to buy such meat "μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν" ("...making no investigation for conscience' sake.") (I Cor. 10.25) In this

sive term for all the various dues to idols which the Christians refused to pay...." But at least we see them using the term for activity done expressly in the context of pagan religious practice.

case, the meat is clearly disassociated from the specific presence of pagan religious worship.

3. Invitation to the private homes of pagan friends or associates was also likely to happen, and Paul again grants freedom for those who wished to do so (I Cor. 10.27ff). Under such circumstances, meat was also to be eaten without question, but if it were declared as being *ἑρῶθυτον* ("consecrated meat"), it should not be eaten so as not to cause a "weak" brother to stumble.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, such meat, being absent from immediate pagan worship, was not truly *εἰδωλόθυτον* in Paul's view (and thus the "strong" could conceivably still have eaten it because of their "knowledge") but rather was considered as such by other direct or indirect witnesses. The reason for abstinence in this case is deference to the "weak."

4. Other activities such as attendance at public festivals are not mentioned by Paul, but those activities held in honour of gods, and which involved religious observance, would have constituted *εἰδωλολατρία* ("idolatry") which was forbidden to the Christians; however, it may have been possible for them to attend some things without participating

89. This pagan term for consecrated meat may have been used by the non-believing host, or another non-believer present. The "conscience" liable to injury could conceivably be that of a weak convert also present, those that might be informed by hear-say, or even the pagans themselves who might thus see Christianity as either tolerant or polytheistic.

in idolatry; for example, without eating anything. Tertulian in On Idolatry draws a distinction between those festivals held in honour of an idol, and those which merely included idols, festivals such as nuptials, engagements, name-givings, and white-toga celebrations. In his view, attendance at the former would constitute participation in idolatry, while at the latter, mere observation of idolatry. Perhaps the Corinthian Christians were expected to use discretion to make such distinctions on the basis of principles given and applied by Paul to the various examples.

We have thus seen that Christianity, in contrast to its tolerant pagan contemporaries, adhered to a strict monotheism that denied the existence of other deities, condemned all other religions, but recognized the real spiritual forces (i.e. δαιμόνια ("demons")) behind the pagan idols. The priorities therefore for the Christians were to keep spiritually pure and free from idolatry, and yet to accommodate themselves to as much social integration as was otherwise possible. Controversy arose in the practical application of these priorities specifically on the matter of eating εἰδωλόθυσια, the "strong" - those more experienced in Christian faith and knowledge - arguing for complete freedom; but St. Paul warning them to be careful to consider the "weak" - those newly converted and still very conscious of pagan worship. The apostle re-confirms the instruction of the Jerusalem Council that εἰδωλόθυσια per se - i.e. meat sacrificed and eaten in the

immediate context of "idol-worship" - must always be refused due to the influence and participation of demons in pagan worship; but that outside the context of "idolatry," the βρώσις τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων ("meat resulting from idol-sacrifices") might be eaten as being back in the possession of God. In practical terms, neutral situations such as shopping in the macellum or accepting personal dinner invitations should be enjoyed regardless of the source of the food, but consideration for the weak should always be a governing factor.

3. Results

St. Paul's answer to the question of eating consecrated meats is basically a conciliatory response intended to grant as much freedom to the Christians as possible, while still insuring their spiritual fidelity: it did theoretically allow for social integration among their contemporaries. However, the interweaving of religion with culture severely limited the possibilities for this. R. MacMullen appropriately summarizes the situation:

For most people, to have a good time with their friends involved some contact with a god who served as guest of honor, as master of ceremonies, or as host in the porticoes or flowering, shaded grounds of his own dwelling. For most people, meat was a thing never eaten and wine to surfeit never drunk save as some religious setting permitted. There existed - it is no great exaggeration to say it of all but the fairly rich - no formal social life in the world of the Apologists that was entirely secular.⁹⁰

90. MacMullen, loc. cit., p. 40.

Furthermore, pagan religion even increased in the years succeeding Paul's visit to Corinth,⁹¹ and the situation became more difficult for the Christians as time went on.⁹² The possibility did remain that a believer could enjoy social activity in the private homes of his pagan friends where specific acts and practice of pagan religion might not be included.⁹³ But on the whole, social integration became less and less possible.

To say the least, it is ironic that a group of people who were to be known by their love and goodwill should have gained the reputation for having an "odium humani generis" ("hatred of the human race.")⁹⁴ However, in light of the importance of pagan religion to society, and the social, political, and commercial values attached to it, wholesale rejection of it must have appeared like rejection of society itself. According to the Younger Pliny, governor of Bithynia during the reign of Trajan, as Christianity grew in number and influence the temples were "prope iam desolata," ("already all

91. The observations made by Pausanias about Corinth were made in the second century A.D., testifying to the continued enthusiasm for paganism after Paul's time there.

92. Even by the time that II Corinthians was written, Paul felt constrained to state more emphatically the need for spiritual purity (6.14-18): social integration was for the purpose of mission (cf. I Cor. 9.19-23) rather than personal desire for κοινωνία ("fellowship") with non-believers.

93. This possibility suggested in I Cor. 10.27.

94. Tacitus, Annals 15.44.

but abandoned"), the sacred festivals had been already long "intermissa" ("neglected"), and the sacrificial animals found only the "rarissimus emptor" ("very rare buyer").⁹⁵ Accordingly, then, the very center of society was affected by the Christians - depending on their actual number - so as to gain the attention even of officials including the Emperor! No doubt the refusal of Christians even to enter pagan temples⁹⁶ was an outright offense to people who spent much pride and effort in providing magnificent places of worship. The intolerance of the Christians towards the religion of their contemporaries was an evident discourtesy and perhaps even taken as a quiet condemnation of a valued lifestyle. Absence of the Christians from the festivals must have appeared as a statement of anti-social and non-patriotic sentiment (particularly when Emperor worship was involved), revealing them (apparently, at least) as non-contributing, non-supportive members of the community. Apart from the public offense, the Christians were also seen as a threat to the governmental stability of the Empire. H. Musurillo observes that Pliny

95. Plinius Secundus, Epistulae 10.96.10.(0)

96. See, for example, the Acts of Pionius 7.2 (Text of Musurillo): ταῦτα ἀκούσας ὁ Πολέμων λέγει; Πιόνιε, εἰ μὴ θέλεις θῦσαι, κἂν ἔλθε εἰς τὸ Νεμεσεῖον. ὁ δὲ ἔφη: 'Ἄλλ' οὐ συμφέρει σου τοῖς εἰδώλοις ἵνα ἐκεῖ ἔλθωμεν. ("Having heard these things, Polemon says, 'O Pionius, if you are not willing to make a sacrifice, then enter into the temple of Nemesis.' But he replied, 'But it is of no benefit to your idols that we go there.'")

was vitally concerned with the attendance at the public festivals not on "purely religious" grounds, but rather that Rome's "ultimate control of the provinces, the pax et ordo of the commonwealth" might be maintained.⁹⁷

In reaction to these Christian practices, various efforts were made to eliminate Christianity from the Empire, and interestingly enough, sacrificing and the eating of εἰδωλόθυσια became a prime testing ground for identifying Christians. Pliny's correspondence with Trajan records a swift return to pagan worship on the part of many who, perhaps having adapted themselves to Christian ideas, now returned to former tradition (i.e. visiting temples, attending the sacred festivals, and purchasing sacrificial victims) rather than be condemned as Christians. The edict of Decius made it mandatory for people to sacrifice and eat the consecrated meat in order to prove their disassociation from Christianity. We thus have a papyrus document from Egypt dated (the equivalent of) June 17, 250 A.D.⁹⁸ which reads (in the handwriting of two individuals, distinguishable one from the other):

(First handwriting) τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν θυσιῶν
ἡρημένοις
π(αρά) Αὐρηλίου Σάκις ἀπό

97. Musurillo, The Acts of the Christian Martyrs, p. lxii.

98. Date translated by E.R. Hardy, Faithful Witnesses, p. 77.

κώμησ θεοξενίδοσ
 ἅμα τοῖσ τέκνοισ Ἄϊωνι
 καὶ Ἡρᾷ καταμένοντεσ
 ἐν κώμησ θεαδελφεῖα.
 ἅλ θύοντεσ τοῖσ θεοῖσ
 διετελέσαμεν καὶ νῦν
 ἐπὶ παρόντων ὑμῶν
 κατὰ τὰ προσταχθέντα
 ἐθύσαμεν καὶ ἐσπέισαμεν
 καὶ τῶν ἱερείων ἐγευσά
 μεθα καὶ ἀξιοῦμεν ὑμᾶσ
 ὑποσημιώσασθαι. διευ
 τυχεῖτε.

(Second handwriting) Αὐρήλιοι Σεργῆνοσ καὶ
 Ἑρμᾶσ εἶδαμεν ὑμᾶσ
 θυσιάζοντασ.

("To those placed in charge of the sacrifices, from Aurelius Sax of the town Theoxenis, along with his children Aion and Hera, while we are residing in the town, Theadelphia. We always have fulfilled our obligations to the gods by making sacrifices, and now in your presence, according to the laws, have made a sacrifice and poured out a libation and tasted of the sacrificial victims; and we count you worthy to undersign. May you prosper.")

"We, Serenos and Hermas Aurelios, witnessed you making a sacrifice.")⁹⁹

Obviously, the individual involved was attempting to prove his own "innocence" and that of his family against the possible indictment of being "Christian."

Even if Paul granted the Christians the right to eat ἡ βρώσις τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων ("the meat of (i.e. resulting from) consecrated offerings"), it was only to be done in the absence of the specific context of pagan worship. Thus in subsequent generations, many Christians confronted by the choice to eat or perish chose rather to perish, since in such

99. Michigan Papyri, III, #157. See also Harvard Theological Review, XVI, 1923, p. 345.

contexts sacrificing and eating were presented in conjunction, and clearly it was εἰδωλόθυτα per se in question. Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165 A.D.) accordingly declared to Trypho that "... οἱ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν διὰ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ σταυρωθέντος ἐπιγύνοντες τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὄλων θεόν, (ἀλλὰ) πᾶσαν αἰκίαν καὶ τιμωρίαν, μέχρις ἐσχάτου θανάτου ὑπομένουσι περὶ τοῦ μήτε εἰδωλολατρεῖν μήτε εἰδωλόθυτα φαγεῖν" ("...those of the Gentiles who, through Jesus who was crucified, know God the maker of all things, endure every outrage and punishment even unto death, over not making a sacrifice to idols or eating sacrificial victims.")¹⁰⁰ We have in the Acta Martyrum specific accounts of persons who took exactly this stand and suffered martyrdom for it. In the "Martyrdom of St. Pionius the Elder and Those with Him" (a record also from the time of the persecution of Decius,) the intention of the officials is explicitly stated: προσευξαμένων δὲ αὐτῶν καὶ λαβόντων ἄρτον ἅγιον καὶ ὕδωρ τῷ σαββάτῳ ἐπέστη αὐτοῖς Πολέμων ὁ νεωκόρος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ τεταγμένοι ἀναζητεῖν καὶ ἔλκειν τοὺς Χριστιανοὺς ἐπιθύειν καὶ μιαιοφαγεῖν ("And when on the sabbath they (i.e. Pionius and those with him) had prayed and taken holy bread and water, Polemon the temple custodian and those appointed along with him to seek out and draw the Christians into making sacrifices and eating defiled meat, came to them.")¹⁰¹ Subsequently,

100. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 34 .

101. "Martyrdom of Pionius" 3.1. (Text of Musurillo)

Pionius refuses to comply and is tortured to death. Similarly, the young women Agape, Irene, Chione, etc., also refuse - even when threatened - to partake of consecrated meat. The charge against them is read to a court prefect, Dulcitus: γίνωσκε, κύριε, Ἀγάθωνα καὶ Εἰρήνην καὶ Ἀγάπην καὶ Χιόνην καὶ Κασσίαν καὶ Φιλίππαν καὶ Εὐτυχίαν μὴ βούλεσθαι ἱερόθυτον φαγεῖν, ἃστινας προσάγω σοῦ τῆ Τύχῃ ("Know, sir, that Agathon and Irene and Agape and Chione and Kassia and Philippa and Eutuchia are unwilling to eat sacrificial meat, and I present them to your Favour.")¹⁰² Once again, these women understood Christian doctrine to preclude idolatry in any sense, and chose to die for their beliefs. That which Paul had taught was intended to make the Christians as compatible as possible with their contemporaries, not to cause unnecessary trouble. However, it was the pagans, offended by Christian intolerance and subsequent lack of community participation, who determined to press the Christians beyond non-involvement to real confrontation with pagan "idolatry."

Those who did not pay heed to Paul's advice caused the exact problems of which he had warned the Corinthian Christians. His primary concern had been to provide no "stumbling block" to either Jews, Greeks, or the Church. "Stumbling" a person meant "destroying" him, namely, preventing him from entering into or remaining in the "Kingdom of

102. "Martyrdom of Agape" 3.1. (Text of Musurillo)

God." Certain groups evolved along the lines of the precursor Corinthian "gnostic" group who argued for and held to complete freedom for eating εἰδωλόθυστα. Irenaeus, for one, exposed several such sects in his Adversus Haereses: the Valentinians, Basilides, Carpocrates, and Nicolaitans. The Valentinians, for example, "...idolothyta indifferenter manducant, nihil inquinari ab his putantes, et in omnem diem festum ethnicorum pro voluntate in honorem idolorum factum primi conveniunt" ("...consume consecrated meats without concern, thinking that they receive no defilement from them, and on every festive day celebrated in honour of the gods according to the wish of the Gentiles, they are the first to arrive.")¹⁰³ Concerning Basilides and his followers: "Contemnere autem et idolothyta et nihil arbitrari, sed sine aliqua trepidatione uti eis, habere autem et reliquarum operationum usum indifferendum et universae libidinis." ("However, they lightly esteem consecrated meats and use no discretion, but enjoy them without any fear; and moreover, they make use of the rest of the offerings as matters of indifference and universal longing.")¹⁰⁴ These groups apparently denied the reality of pagan "idol-worship" that Paul was concerned about (I Cor. 10.14-22), and in full view of all participated ea-

103. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. 1.63.

104. Ibid., 1.24.5. These and other examples are discussed by Theissen, loc. cit., pp. 132f.

gerly, yet as Christians. Trypho's response to Justin Martyr reveals how clearly such "believers" had emerged: "καὶ μὴν πολλοὺς τῶν τὸν Ἰησοῦν λεγόντων ὁμολογεῖν, καὶ λεγομένων Χριστιανῶν, πυνθάνομαι ἐσθίειν τὰ εἰδωλόθυτα, καὶ μηδὲν ἐκ τούτου βλάπτεσθαι λέγειν" ("And indeed, I know of many who say they confess Jesus, and are called Christians, who eat sacrificial meat and say that they suffer no harm from it.")¹⁰⁵ This practice had given the idea that Christianity could tolerate or even participate in pagan "idol-worship" and festivals, and thus left Justin Martyr in the awkward position of having to try to convincingly re-establish the necessity of behavioral purity for the Christians.

To summarize, the withdrawal of Christians from public and community festivals for the gods led to an antagonism against them, in the face of which personal socializing (such as shopping in the town market or going to a friend's for a meal) offered little consolation. An attempt at conciliation thus being unaccepted by pagan society on the whole led to a confrontation with Christians on the very issue of whether or not they would make sacrifices and eat the resulting consecrated meat. Many Christians, who remained as what we might call "orthodox" responded by refusal even at the cost of life; however, some gnostic groups refused the advice of Paul as given in I Corinthians, and served only to cloud

105. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 34f.

the issue, and make "orthodox" Christians look even worse.

CONCLUSION

The stated intention of this thesis was to address the question: "What were the social consequences for a pagan in the first century A.D. when he became a Christian?" Within the defined areas of inquiry in chapters II and III above, some suggestions were made as to the results of compliance with St. Paul's instructions. However, a person's life was not thus compartmentalized into tidy components capable of being dealt with in isolated, consecutive fashion - any more than it would be so today. Rather, the panorama of Christian ideals was presented as a whole, and the contrast thereby created with pagan lifestyle must have seemed extreme. Even if Christianity was eventually to "conquer" the Empire, surely the first generations of converts would experience confusion and encounter opposition to the suggestion of such a pervasive transformation.

Furthermore, the two specific problems discussed in this study do not represent the total picture. Other difficulties warrant similar attention, such as: were women granted unrestricted association with men at "Christian" functions, and was this an innovation, and did it create further complications? Did the Christians intend that their celebration of the Eucharist would replace (and thus somewhat imitate) the pagan symposium? What effect did Corinthian

wealth have on Christian virtues being practised, such as aid for the poor, forgiving debts, and supporting Christian workers? Perhaps it would be after these and other questions had been addressed that we could provide a synoptic analysis of the social consequences a first century convert to Christianity might have faced.

Still the picture is beginning to take shape. A person who contemplated becoming a Christian faced significant changes. He would risk the loss of some social activity; accordingly, he might lose specific friends. He might even face the breakup of his marriage should his partner reject the new lifestyle (I Cor. 7.15); but he might rather need a new commitment to the necessity and permanence of marriage. His rejection of all other religions as "idolatry" would have been offensive to some, and his refusal to take part in "idol"-related functions might have been interpreted as anti-social or non-patriotic sentiments. This might have resulted in less possibility for political or even sometimes financial advancement.

On the other hand, the Christians provided for their own social needs. They met together regularly and shared times of feasting (I Cor. 11.17-18). They appeared to have a clear sense of those who were and those who were not believers (I Cor. 5.12); and they shared a certain fraternal relationship amongst themselves, though the Corinthian Church was notorious for its divisions within that community

(I Cor. 1.10-17). Thus while the new convert might lose some friends, he might also gain several new ones. The new lifestyle would be shared by many, and thus support might be gained from others even in the face of opposition.

One final observation might be made here. We have been contrasting pagan lifestyle with the principles and practices taught by the apostle Paul, and then trying to surmise the results for the converts on that basis. In the actual experience of the Corinthian Church, the situation was probably not so clearly defined. There would have been those who complied entirely with Paul's instructions; but there were no doubt others who conformed only in varying degrees. We have seen that gnostic groups did subsequently appear, and probably from the beginning there were those who insisted on some freedoms which he did not allow. Such people may have been questioning his authority to pontificate on Christian ethics.¹ It was then for the Christian community to determine a suitable response to individuals professing to be converts, but who in some way did not live in accordance with the principles given.

It would be appropriate, then, to visualize the first century Christian community at Corinth (and elsewhere) as an evolving body of persons who, while attempting to apply

1. At least someone was questioning Paul's authority, making necessary his lengthy personal defence in II Cor. 10-12.

Christian principles to their lives, still were struggling to find a place in their society. We would not find complete uniformity, but probably with some trial and error, and eventually at great cost, the development of tradition and precedent which would provide an orthodox interpretation of Christian responsibility acceptable to succeeding generations of Christians.

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