Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 4
Declaration and Copyright Statement .................................................................................................. 5
Dedication .................................................................................................................................................. 6
Acknowledgments ...................................................................................................................................... 7
The Author ............................................................................................................................................... 8
List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................................................ 9
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study ...................................................................................................... 14
  Orientation to the Study ....................................................................................................................... 14
  Assumptions and Further Methodological Considerations .................................................................. 18
  Outline of the Study ............................................................................................................................ 47
PART I: DISCERNMENT AND THE MIND OF CHRIST: FUNCTIONAL WISDOM AS A FOUNDRATIONAL CONCEPT WITHIN THE ΕΦΚΑΛΗΣΙΑ .......................................................... 50
Chapter 2: In the Same Mind and in the Same Judgement (1 Cor 1:1–4:21) ......................................... 50
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 50
  Paul's Potential Thesis Statement for First Corinthians ................................................................. 51
  The Superiority of Wisdom from Above ............................................................................................. 53
  The Mind of Christ ............................................................................................................................... 59
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 71
PART II: DISCERNMENT FOR LIVING IN THE WORLD ............................................................. 80
Chapter 3: Exercising Discernment in Moral and Ethical Matters (1 Cor 5:1–7:40) .......................... 81
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 81
  Judgement over Immorality in the ΕΦΚΑΛΗΣΙΑ (1 Cor 5:1–5) ......................................................... 81
  Judging Immorality as Leaven in the Christ Passover (1 Cor 5:6–8) .............................................. 86
  Mixing and Purity in the ΕΦΚΑΛΗΣΙΑ as a Matter for Discernment (1 Cor 5:9–13) ................. 87
  The Community Court (1 Cor 6:1–11) ............................................................................................. 91
  Personal Decisions about Marriage (7:25–40) ................................................................................... 97
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 106
Chapter 4: Discerning Interrelationships within the Surrounding Culture (1 Cor 8:1–11:1) ............ 108
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 108
  Idolatry and the Christian .................................................................................................................. 109
  The Proper Use of Freedom ............................................................................................................... 114
  Judge for Yourselves ....................................................................................................................... 117
  Coherence with the Surrounding Context ......................................................................................... 123
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 127
PART III: DISCERNMENT AND THE GATHERED, WORSHIPPING ΕΦΚΑΛΗΣΙΑ .......................................................... 129
Chapter 5: Discerning within the Gathered ΕΦΚΑΛΗΣΙΑ (1 Cor 11:2–11:34) ............................. 130
  Introduction ............................................................................................................................................ 130
  Demeanour in Worship: Judge for Yourselves ............................................................................... 131
Abstract

This thesis investigates the conceptual use of discernment in First Corinthians. As a motif, discernment spans many issues in the epistle while forming a key element in Paul’s understanding of the eschatological people of God in Christ and his expectations for them to emerge through the renewing process of the Gospel into their new identity. This identity has its type in the Wilderness Tradition of Israel, with the literary influences of 2TJ Wisdom and the OT scriptures undergirding Paul’s conceptualization in an intertextual matrix. Paul develops the motif through an open, subtle intertextuality that does not rely primarily on overt citation, but reflects a conceptual/theological movement from text/history/type to existential situation/antitype in the new covenant community being formed in the first century context of Pauline communities. Discernment does not recur in random, discrete units, but builds throughout the epistle in consistent applications that contribute in significant ways to the development of the Corinthian community.

Part I analyses the Pauline groundwork for wisdom exercised through discernment as a foundational necessity for the ἐκκλησία of Corinth. Part II demonstrates the importance of discernment for the community as it functions within society, with respect to internal and external relationships. Part III studies aspects of discernment in the community gathered for worship, with discernment forming a basis for interactions of the worshipping community. Part IV concludes the study. These aspects are tracked in order through the epistle to follow Paul’s coherent use of the motif even as he addresses the occasional nature of varied issues in the Corinthian community. This study moves the discussion away from a strong focus on the dysfunctional aspect of Corinthian schism toward a more positive theology for and about the community. It also expands on limited or fragmented approaches to issues of judgement/discernment to argue for an additional coherent thread in Paul’s thought. Paul maintains a highly hopeful view for this community as an emerging people of realized eschatological fulfilment, empowered to function at a high level of spiritual wisdom as a manifestation of the body of Christ.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.

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Dedication

For my wife Beth, in deepest gratitude and love.
Acknowledgements

Many people have been of great help in this effort in various ways. Included are many family and friends who have given love and support. In my pursuit of biblical studies at both undergraduate and graduate levels, I give particular thanks to Mr John Hunt, Dr Becky Town, Dr Mary Spaulding, and Dr David Parris. For specific additional encouragement to pursue Ph.D. studies, thanks to Dr Charles Scalise, Dr Cynthia Engle, and Dr Cliff Anderson (†).

Among the bright spots for me throughout this research have been people and events at the Nazarene Theological College (UK) and the University of Manchester. Thanks to NTC for the Academic Excellence Bursary. I also would like to thank my student colleagues Julianne Burnett, Dr Chris Foster, Rob Fringer, UnTae Park, Lindy Williams, Dr Matthew McIntosh, Jim Moretz, and Mi Ja Wi. Colleagues in other disciplines and other institutions have also provided many helpful and stimulating discussions. Of special note among other scholars giving their time to discuss matters pertinent to this thesis are Professors George Brooke, James Dunn, Robert Moberly, and Anthony Thiselton. Dr Peter Oakes is also due many thanks, as is Dr Dwight Swanson.

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In remembrance of Robert F. Pickard (†) for encouraging me to continually press on in education. Also in remembrance of my grandfather, Luigi Romano (†), who has been a tremendously positive influence in my life.
The Author

James Dominic Romano: 2011–2015 PhD research at University of Manchester and Nazarene Theological College, UK; 2007–2010 MAT, Biblical Studies concentration at Fuller Theological Seminary, USA; 1999–2003 BA Biblical Studies and Theology at Barclay College, USA
List of Abbreviations

Note: Abbreviations in this thesis are primarily taken from The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). Some of these and additional abbreviations are indicated in the following tables.

Primary Sources

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>1QS</td>
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<td>4Q206</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Apocr. Ezek.</td>
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<td>Bar</td>
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<td>Cyr.</td>
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<td>Def. Orac.</td>
<td>De defectu oraculorum</td>
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<td>DSSSE</td>
<td>The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition</td>
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<td>The Digest of Julian</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.A.B.</td>
<td>Liber antiquitatum biblicarum (Pseudo-Philo)</td>
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<td>Op.</td>
<td>Opera et dies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opif.</td>
<td>De opificio mundi</td>
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<td>QH²</td>
<td>Hodayot² or Thanksgiving Hymns²</td>
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<td>Symp.</td>
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<td>Wis</td>
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Secondary Sources

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<td>American Journal of Philology</td>
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<td>Analecta biblica</td>
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<td>Anglican Theological Review</td>
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<td>AYB</td>
<td>Anchor Yale Bible Series</td>
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<td>BECNT</td>
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<td>BETL</td>
<td>Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium</td>
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<td>Bib</td>
<td><em>Biblica</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BibTSt</td>
<td>Biblical Tools and Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>BibInt</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation Series</td>
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<td>BJRL</td>
<td><em>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</em></td>
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<td>BNTC</td>
<td>Black’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
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<td>BSac</td>
<td><em>Bibliothea sacra</em></td>
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<td>BTB</td>
<td><em>Biblical Theology Bulletin</em></td>
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<td>BWA(N)T</td>
<td>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten (und Neuen) Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZ</td>
<td><em>Biblische Zeitschrift</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BZNW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td><em>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</em></td>
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<td>CBR</td>
<td><em>Currents in Biblical Research</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CECNT</td>
<td>Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>Colloq</td>
<td><em>Colloquium</em></td>
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<td>ConJ</td>
<td><em>Concordia Journal</em></td>
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<td>COQG</td>
<td>Christian Origins and the Question of God</td>
</tr>
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<td>CSCD</td>
<td>Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTR</td>
<td><em>Criswell Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EBib</td>
<td><em>Etudes bibliques</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECL</td>
<td>Early Christianity and Its Literature</td>
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<td>EcRev</td>
<td><em>Ecumenical Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EKKNT</td>
<td>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETL</td>
<td><em>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EvQ</td>
<td><em>Evangelical Quarterly</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTJ</td>
<td><em>Grace Theological Journal</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HNT</td>
<td>Handbuch zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>HTA</td>
<td>Historisch Theologische Auslegung</td>
</tr>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTS</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTSTS</td>
<td>HTS Teologiese Studies</td>
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<td>HUT</td>
<td>Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie</td>
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<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>INT</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<td>JAAR</td>
<td>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</td>
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<td>JAJS</td>
<td>Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JETS</td>
<td>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPT</td>
<td>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</td>
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<td>JPTSS</td>
<td>Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series</td>
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<td>JSJSupp</td>
<td>Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism</td>
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<td>JSNT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
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<td>JSNTSup</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
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<td>JSP</td>
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<td>LNTS</td>
<td>Library of New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>LPT</td>
<td>Library of Philosophy and Theology</td>
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<td>MNTS</td>
<td>McMaster New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>MSJ</td>
<td>The Master’s Seminary Journal</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>New American Commentary</td>
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<td>NFTL</td>
<td>New Foundations Theological Library</td>
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<td>NIB</td>
<td>The New Interpreter’s Bible</td>
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<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>NTTth</td>
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<td>Pauline Studies</td>
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<td>Perspectives in Religious Studies</td>
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<td>Revue biblique</td>
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<td>Religion and Theology</td>
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<td>ResQ</td>
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<td>RevExp</td>
<td>Review and Expositor</td>
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<td>RivB</td>
<td>Rivista biblica italiana</td>
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<td>RTM</td>
<td>Rivista di Teologia Morale</td>
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<td>SacScr</td>
<td>Sacra Scripta</td>
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<td>SBEC</td>
<td>Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity</td>
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<td>SBLEJL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature</td>
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<td>SBLSymS</td>
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<td>S-CJ</td>
<td>Stone-Campbell Journal</td>
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<td>SCJud</td>
<td>Studies in Christianity and Judaism</td>
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<td>SJT</td>
<td>Scottish Journal of Theology</td>
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<td>SNT</td>
<td>Studien zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>SNTSNTS</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</td>
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<td>SNTW</td>
<td>Studies of the New Testament and its World</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Sacra pagina</td>
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<td>SPCK</td>
<td>Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge</td>
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<td>SScripEJC</td>
<td>Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity</td>
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<td>ST</td>
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<td>Studies in Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>STDJ</td>
<td>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</td>
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<td>SThR</td>
<td>Studies in Theology and Religion</td>
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<td>TDSSCOL</td>
<td>The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins Library</td>
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<td>TGST</td>
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<td>TJ</td>
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<td>Transf</td>
<td>Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies</td>
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<td>TS</td>
<td>Theological Studies</td>
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<td>UBS</td>
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<td>WTJ</td>
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<td>WUNT</td>
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<td>WW</td>
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<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
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**Other**

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<td>Second Temple Judaism</td>
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<td>Second Temple period</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Dead Sea Scrolls</td>
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<td>Hebrew Bible</td>
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<td>Jesus tradition</td>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint</td>
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<td>MT</td>
<td>Masoretic Text</td>
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<td>N.B.</td>
<td><em>nota bene</em>, note carefully</td>
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<tr>
<td>NT</td>
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<td>OG</td>
<td>Old Greek</td>
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<td>Old Testament</td>
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<td>WT</td>
<td>Wilderness tradition</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Orientation to the Study

Among the various strands woven into the tapestry of thought in First Corinthians, discernment or judgement are not very prominent in the scholarly work on this major epistle. Despite the relative lack of attention, these concepts continue to emerge throughout much of the letter. The interweaving of various topics with judgement or discernment, along with the frequency of such occurrences, underscores the importance of this subject area. Evidence for this begins with Paul’s opening remarks and continues to inform and conceptually ground the message of the epistle in frequent interaction with discernment. Terms related to discerning, evaluating, judging, or testing are quite frequent in First Corinthians. There are forty-five different uses in thirty-eight verses for terms most readily translated with this sense.¹

The abundance of this terminology alone is suggestive. How significant is this terminology? Is discernment simply a casual process that happens to weave in and out of this epistle? The frequency and consistency of the terminology begins at the outset, with a close relationship to the varied themes within the epistle. This fact alone provokes some wonder that there has not been more scholarship with respect to the conceptual and theological meaning at the core of this important emphasis. It is not incidental language to the main thrust of the document, but rather a primary focus that should not be subsumed under other issues. Expanding this understanding to more of the epistle as appropriate is consistent with Paul’s thematic use of the concept in various ways.

While this is not a lexical study, the actual words indicating discernment are important to the discussion. Precise definitions of the different terms connected with

¹ Appendix 1 consists of Greek words potentially translated judgement/discernment in First Corinthians. Peripheral terminology of wisdom or knowledge are excluded, including forms of σύνεσις (translated as “discernment” in 1 Cor 1:19 NRSV, but is more precisely comprehension or understanding. See BDAG 970).
discernment or judgement are dependent on the context of each use. Judgement may be virtually synonymous with discernment, while occasionally there are important differences in meaning. Judgement can be a technical term appropriate to formal judicial settings, or simply an exercise in decision-making. Discernment may be critical evaluation, or a choice between alternatives. Paul’s word choices reflect a nuanced understanding of these terms in relationship with the varied topics and sections in the letter. Terms will be addressed as they occur topically.

The general unity of First Corinthians is more widely accepted recently than was the case in some earlier studies.\(^2\) Manuscript evidence beginning from \(\Psi^{46}\) onward supports the integrity of the composition as one epistle. Arguments for conceptual unity are diverse. One stream flows from rhetorical criticism, whose proponents claim a compelling case for unity on the basis of reconstruction through formal rhetorical conventions.\(^3\) Such arguments do at least demonstrate a plausibly sophisticated structuring to the epistle, even if the composition did not intend to follow formal rhetorical convention. A separate, but sometimes overlapping stream, is that of non-technical unity. By this any of the pastoral, theological, or general conceptual themes become evidence for literary integrity. Matthew Malcolm argues extensively for unity along these lines while including reception history and literary/rhetorical structures. He concludes that some relief of “exegetical tensions” is gained through considering Paul’s varied “rhetorical techniques” and chiastic structures,  


while proposing the *kerygma* as an overall unifying factor.⁴ Relevant to this thesis is David Hall’s proposal that Paul addresses wisdom problems in 1 Cor 1–4:21 as the “root” of behaviour problems in 5:1–16.⁵ A more positive approach to this structure is proposed herein where Paul’s paraenesis is based on revelatory wisdom in the first major section of the epistle, which in subsequent sections articulates his applications for this instruction. Further, conceptual uses of discernment/judgement span and are interwoven throughout the epistle in support of compositional unity. Aside from the unity issue, the extensive use of discernment still provides discreet pockets of concepts with intratextual merit regarding Paul’s thought.⁶

First Corinthians will be approached primarily through six sections for the purposes of this study (1:1–4:21; 5:1–7:40; 8:1–11:1; 11:2–11:34; 12:1–13:3; 14:1–14:40).⁷ Other studies take a different approach to the structure, but this approach works with the different cycles of discernment as Paul uses the concept.⁸ A section break after 7:40 maintains movement from “insider” issues affecting the believer and community toward more external, “outsider” issues, while recognizing overlap between moral and idolatry issues. Movement into the community worship setting begins with 11:2, continuing through

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⁵ David R. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (JSNTSup 251; London: T&T Clark, 2003), 30–32, 41–50. Hall contends φυσίόω is strong evidence for unity, appearing three times in 1 Cor 4 and three times in 5–16 (elsewhere in NT writings only in Col 2:18).


⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Scripture references follow the versification in the NRSV unless otherwise indicated. Translations showing non-English text are this author’s unless within a secondary source quote or otherwise indicated.

14:40. Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner broadly classify the main topic sequence as “wisdom, sexuality, worship, and resurrection/consummation.”\(^9\) Their first three areas provide the most pertinent material to this overall thesis. Each section has its own use of discernment related to a variety of issues and general modes of life. Paul articulates these in various ways often broadly categorized as either ethical or spiritual discernment/judgement.\(^10\) These broad categories are helpful for the analysis of the concepts across the continuum of uses, from evaluative decision making to the assessment of prophecy. At the same time, parsing these categories along rigid lines distorts and minimizes what is better seen as a continuum.

This continuum for Paul’s extended uses of discernment is important to the meaning and purpose of the epistle as a composition. The concept of discernment in First Corinthians reflects Paul’s connection of spiritual realities to an epistemological ground, the renewed mind in Christ. This connection anchors the spiritual to human perceptual reality, encourages the successful formation of community in Christ, and develops the community as an eschatological people able to appropriately exercise this calling into wisdom as a foundational aspect of spiritual life.

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\(^9\) Ciampa and Rosner, “The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians,” 213.

\(^10\) Cf. André Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul* (SNTSMS 140; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15–16. Munzinger views such a separation as artificial in definitions of terms (δεικνύω being ethical, and διάκρινω/διάκρισις being spiritual). His comments on lexical issues are helpful, but conflating discernment into only one category fails to consider the breadth of Paul’s conceptualization. Contra Munzinger, it will be argued in this thesis that determining the identity of a spirit or source of a revelation is not properly an ethical process.
Discernment in Recent Literature

Discernment has received limited attention in biblical studies.\(^{11}\) Robert Moberly has bemoaned the lack of scholarly resources in either focused or broad areas for discernment.\(^{12}\) As a topical area, works such as commentaries often gloss over the area with limited or no interrelationship between various uses of discernment as a conceptual area deserving of focused and sustained attention. It is an area that does have some overlapping and intersecting content with other concepts. These are sometimes evident in the assessment of Paul’s conceptualizing/theologizing of epistemological issues, but inevitably bleed into issues more closely associated with spiritual activity. Discernment thus becomes entangled in a netherworld between more concrete thought processes and a haze of mystery.\(^{13}\) Respectively, these include cognition in understanding issues of moral and ethical concerns, but also encompass questions about the unseen realm of spiritual activity. Discernment is not equal to cognition, but overlaps with cognitive processes. It is not simply a spiritual gift, although there are elements of spiritual gifting that involve discernment.

Key questions remain unanswered: What is discernment? What does discernment have to do with Christian spirituality or theology on the basis of scripture? Why and how

\(^{11}\) Munzinger, *Discerning*, 193. Munzinger claims he “provides the first conceptual investigation into discernment in the Pauline writings.” He notes that E. Käsemann, P. Stuhlmacher, and J. C. Beker all offer a “basis for dealing with this gift in a comprehensive manner,” with all failing to settle the issue; *Discerning*, 3. He refers to discerning of spirits of 1 Cor 12:10 as the gift addressed, but failure is in large part about assumptions made with respect to discernment and discerning spirits without adequate foundation. Munzinger’s use of these sources is in itself a demonstration of the lack of resources in this area. The problem of appropriate integration and separation of aspects for discernment are not addressed in these works.

\(^{12}\) R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (CSCD; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 14–19. Scholarly work on discernment is sorely lacking, according to Moberly, as described under four points. These include work on authentication of prophecy, OT and NT issues or biblical theology, and producing “valid criteria of discernment” for prophecy. His final example has to do with attempts to contextualize the prophet/prophesy in a certain time set against interpretations of the scripture or traditions then current.

\(^{13}\) Discernment is found in some studies of spiritual disciplines. Cf. Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 4–5. McIntosh’s study does not build primarily on biblical sources, but spans Origen, ‘desert fathers’, and to the present. The aim is “discernment in the broadest sense.”
does discernment emerge as a biblical issue? The focus for this thesis is to address these questions primarily in First Corinthians, where Paul makes substantial use of the concept to address various concerns and issues in sometimes surprising ways. This thesis seeks to establish discernment as Paul’s conceptualization of a vital component of the dynamic interplay between the regenerated and regenerating believer/community and God’s active spirit. The net result of the developing mindset of Christ and spiritual gifting is expressed in improved cognition, intuitive response, and gifted evaluation/assessment. These conceptual areas of discernment can be subdivided within wisdom/epistemological, ethical/moral, community/relational, and spiritual applications. These areas will now be discussed in turn, but then ultimately the area of discernment and apocalyptic thought will be discussed as a unifying factor in discernment enabled across the range of potential issues.

Discernment and Epistemology

Paul has a surprisingly positive attitude toward human reason, but this reason is not considered in isolation. Ian Scott suggests the “Spirit’s role is one of facilitating reasoning rather than displaying human intellectual activity.”

14 His reading of Romans 1 indicates moral failure leads to darkening of mind, idolatry, and ultimately defective reasoning.

15 He continues that “human ‘thoughts’ (διαλογισµοίς)” emerge through “the reasoner’s moral character.” This last critically important point indicates the imperative for discernment, in that reason is dependent upon a range of discerning functions ranging from perception to the assessment and disposition of any object requiring meaningful interaction with cognitive function. Scott rightly says Paul “does not talk about ordered, methodical steps in thought. Instead he talks about acts of interpretation, hermeneutical acts in which

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15 Scott, Implicit Epistemology, 20.
phenomena are brought together, synthetically, to construct a model of the world.”\(^{16}\)

Discernment is not a subsidiary function of reason, but it is enmeshed with reason. Discernment is brought to its fullest expression in the collection of various data, the synthesis and processing of this data, and formulating action on the basis of this data. Part of this is clearly intellectual, rational, and reasoned. At the same time, Paul appeals to that which is beyond natural ability or perception as part of the required assessment. The fusion of these characteristics forms the essence of Pauline discernment, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Scott argues some positive potential for human reason is evident in Romans 1, which expands through “renewing of your minds” in Rom 12:2.\(^{17}\) There is a wilful movement from partial seeing/understanding to rejection of divine truth (Rom 1:19–22). Scott develops the renewal theme of uncorrupted reason via 1 Cor 1:17–2:16.\(^{18}\) Rationality requires the spirit for “reorienting the moral life of those who are chosen (1 Cor 1:24), so that the message which would normally appear foolish can be seen and understood as wisdom.”\(^{19}\) This is mediated by Scott’s comments that the “Spirit’s activity does not provide a license for irrationality,” but rather the “Spirit can be understood to restore and empower human reason by allowing human minds to reason within the one framework which allows true interpretations of existence.”\(^{20}\) Connecting wisdom and rationality on the basis of a different moral life carries the implicit idea of an altered means of rationality, which also means rationality is not a strictly propositional, logical ordering of data.

The problem with rooting proper reasoning in a revised morality (as Scott does) is the problem of arriving at that new morality. It seems that there must first be an altered reasoning (\(\nuμητάνωα\), Rom 2:4) that perceives the need for revising morality in the first

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\(^{19}\) Scott, *Implicit Epistemology*, 34.

place. Thus the requirement for the change of mind is one necessary beginning point for the one who would follow Jesus (Rom 8:5–11; 12:2; 2 Cor 4:4–6).\textsuperscript{21} Change of mind enables the perception of a new morality (1 Cor 15:34; 2 Cor 3:14–18). This suggests any rationality, to be consistent with a form of biblical wisdom, must be relative in some sense. It is relative to the phase of development for a person or community. Relativity is perceived within a pluriform dynamic including spiritual agency, intertextual appropriation of divine revelation (which includes texts as well as anything else judged to be valid revelation), regenerated mind (with an attendant revised morality), experience, education, and not least the revelation of/in the Christ-event. There is a self-limiting cap on the extent for human reason to be the basis for true rationality or wisdom. It is not without error or dangers, and also must be developed to maturity. Liberation from human limitations brings this understanding, which simultaneously greatly complicates identification and description.

There is a linkage between reason and judgement that should emerge in any extended discussion about epistemology. This is evident in Paul. Scott comments, “For Paul, every act of ‘understanding’ involves a ‘judgement’. It is only when a judgement yields a true model of the world, however, that it comes to constitute an act of understanding.”\textsuperscript{22} Thus can be seen a cycle of exercising judgement or discernment developing and extending understanding. Renewed mind can begin in simplicity before progressing to more complex capabilities of judgement.

One of the most important conversation partners for this thesis is the work of Andre Munzinger. Munzinger calls discernment “one of the principle features of Pauline


\textsuperscript{22} Scott, Implicit Epistemology, 70–71.
epistemology.” He observes that “existential appropriation” is necessary to the knowledge of God, and also that the self-revelation of God establishes a contingency in which “all of reality is qualified.” The heart of this epistemology is knowledge of God as the ground of true reality. Everything must be discerned through the renewed mind because of the break with the former darkened understanding. Nothing can be truly understood apart from discernment. Discerning allows for the appropriation of wisdom, knowledge, and understanding for the renewed/being-renewed mind. The net effect of Munzinger’s proposals is to recognize the elevation of discernment through the renewed mind as an indispensable key to human existence. Some similarity is readily observed between Scott and Munzinger on the necessity of the renewed mind leading to a new world or reality.

According to Munzinger discernment is inherent in the Lebensbewegung, or pure experience, which is essential to the existential whole of the new life. The transformation of the spirit enables the believer to perceive God. Thus all of reality is appropriated through discernment, the lens of the converted mindset. The renewal of knowledge is a key for Munzinger, where discernment is really an “existential process.” He thinks “discernment is primarily related to existential renewal,” and that “God’s initiating love” is how “true knowledge is exemplified and made possible.” Clearly, Munzinger places a high emphasis on the renewed mind in connection with knowledge, which makes the epistemological aspect of faith central and dominant.

Drawing on Troels Engberg-Pedersen, the transformation/renewal Munzinger conceives is classified as “identification.” Critiquing Munzinger’s “collapsing” of

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23 Munzinger, Discerning, 17.
24 Munzinger, Discerning, 81.
25 Munzinger, Discerning, 176.
26 Munzinger, Discerning, 177.
27 Munzinger, Discerning, 178, also 184.
28 Munzinger, Discerning, 188.
transformation as simply identifying with Christ, James Samra sees this as too limiting.\textsuperscript{30} In fairness, it must be said that Munzinger conceives of this identification as much more than what he contrasts as “imitation.” Munzinger’s “identification” includes “linking the whole self into the Christ-story and hence identifying completely with Christ.”\textsuperscript{31}

Tempering his focus on epistemological considerations, Munzinger does note the vital and ongoing “interplay” between divine and human initiative, grounding knowledge in the modern category of “existential encounter.”\textsuperscript{32} But might this extended and central focus on understanding, even though renewed, move the discussion away from Paul’s emphasis on what is more ‘spiritual’, and therefore more broadly based than one’s own understanding? Munzinger’s search for Paul’s foundational understanding is not necessarily enhanced by recourse to modern categories such as existential encounters.

One of Munzinger’s primary assertions is that Paul had his real context of “allegiance” to Judaism, which is where the first source of background information must be sought.\textsuperscript{33} Referring to the Qumran material (1QS 1.1 ff.), he cites Carol Newsom in connection with discernment of Torah as the reason for the community of God to exist.\textsuperscript{34} There is no attempt to argue movement from this notion to Paul’s conception. The analysis of Paul’s background makes little use of Judaism (excepting Philo) and focuses on Stoic


\textsuperscript{31} Munzinger, Discerning, 180.


\textsuperscript{33} Munzinger, Discerning, 101.

ideology. For the Stoics, Munzinger says that discernment is a “central tool for differentiating between the real and unreal world. He makes the shift to a Stoic background for Paul’s thought on discernment and epistemological material in a wider sense, for the stated reason that Judaism “lacks” enough detail. He does reference the lack of Paul’s “direct dependence” on Philo or any individual Stoic in favour of Stoic philosophy as a general background for Hellenistic teachings, even if not “a completely conscious act.”

Munzinger returns to Philo again for “symbiosis of Spirit and mind.” The Greek idea that “like is known by like” is seen by Munzinger as fulfilled in the reconciliation of human and divine. There is consistent and coherent shading to the rational, reasoning side of Paul throughout that forms a strong basis for analysis. This is especially true with regard to the Stoic framework. Does this really represent Paul’s actual position, or is it perhaps strained excessively toward the cognitive operation of the consciousness? As Munzinger extracts Paul’s language of the renewed mindset or mind (Rom 8:6; 12:2; 1 Cor 2:16), he overtly prefers the language of mindset as representative of the new life. As noted in Samra above, this can be a flaw in the argument, a stricture on what Paul actually meant to be a more comprehensive view of the transformation of mind and spirit together, or perhaps the spirit influencing the mind. In any case, whether Paul consciously or subconsciously drew upon a Stoic framework, such a position fails to account for the extent to which Paul subverted the Greco-Roman thinking/philosophies in favour of his

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35 Munzinger, Discerning, 101–140.  
36 Munzinger, Discerning, 121. He draws from Plato, Theaet. 150b–151c. Plato discusses birthing the real versus images, which is a questionable comparison with the discernment Paul discusses generally in determining right from wrong, holy from unholy, or God from imposters.  
37 Munzinger, Discerning, 138.  
38 Munzinger, Discerning, 139.  
39 Munzinger, Discerning, 171.  
40 Munzinger, Discerning, 172.  
41 Munzinger, Discerning, 173.
interpretation of scripture and ongoing revelation. These issues re-emerge in later relevant portions of this study.

More generally, Munzinger defines discernment as “the process of reflective thought leading to decision and choice on the ‘correctness, meaning, truth, or value of something or someone’.”

Defining Paul’s many uses of discernment as one basic category of thought (especially as subsumed under ‘discerning of spirits’) tends toward overlooking some levels of discernment and gifting in this area. Munzinger claims to exercise a conceptual approach that focuses on the connection of mind and “Spirit” and a review of discernment in general in Paul.\(^4\) If there is too much of the human mind in view, then discernment is simply an aspect of epistemology. If the mind/spirit connection is really involved, in what ways can this be expressed and understood? Is Munzinger making the connection between mind and spirit in such a way that actually is truly only ‘mind’, at least in a way that would be less recognizable to Paul and Paul’s original audience?

The “Spirit” is the essential element in the new life Paul describes, which generates questions over the role of the mind.\(^4\) Commenting on what the ‘mind’ probably meant to Paul, Munzinger has “rationality, intentionality, volition, and consciousness” as coherent constituents.\(^4\) The mind-spirit “juncture” is described as a “constant interplay between the grace of God and the work of the believer.”\(^4\) In terms of guidance for the Christian, Munzinger is concerned with an increasing consciousness in the entire person over divine guidance as a kind of intervention.\(^4\) The role of the human spirit in distinction from the mind is stressed by Paul (cf. Rom 8:4–16; 1 Cor 14:14–20) and should remain in view, even if less distinguishable in ethical concerns.

\(^{42}\) Munzinger, *Discerning*, 11. He notes his expansion on the subdomain L&N I: 363 through the inclusion of “reflection” as part of the process. His addition may be implied, although it importantly establishes more than hasty judgements based on simplistic understandings.


\(^{45}\) Munzinger, *Discerning*, 152.

\(^{46}\) Munzinger, *Discerning*, 157.

\(^{47}\) Munzinger, *Discerning*, 162.
Discernment and Ethics

Knowledge links tightly with ethics for Munzinger. In part, this is because a “radical shift in perception and awareness will affect not only a person’s cognition, but also his/her valuation and intentionality.” Reviewing Munzinger, Anthony Thiselton states, “Ethics and theology are inextricably bound together.” This linkage is sometimes denied, but John Lewis argues such fragmentation results from defective interpretation of Paul, a denial of what Lewis sees as a “reasoned practice” of “spiritual discernment” uniting the believer’s conduct with “experiences of God’s life-giving power.” Ethics and theology both require discernment for understanding and application. There is a dynamic interaction between knowledge (including theology) and the means of applying that knowledge. The adaptation of any knowledge to ethics requires engagement through discernment.

Moving to reduce the gap between theology and ethics in readings of Paul, John Lewis proposes a system of reasoning under the moniker “theo-ethical” reasoning, which he connects with “the community practice of spiritual discernment.” He proposes that “theo-ethical reasoning establishes the conceptual framework for the dialogical, community practice of spiritual discernment . . . Believers practise spiritual discernment by looking for life in the manifestations of the Spirit that illuminate experiences of this new life” (emphasis his).

Lewis argues Paul not only understands this as the path to

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48 Munzinger, Discerning, 81–82.
49 Munzinger, Discerning, 165.
52 Lewis, Looking for Life, 4–8.
53 Lewis, Looking for Life, 3.
life, but additionally to appropriate behaviour. Lewis’s approach to the problem of ethical/moral appropriation in finding life in Christ for the Christian community conceives a necessary bridge between Paul’s ethics and theology. Remaining to be identified are areas where discernment may work in more mundane areas, those where ethics or actions may not be informed by “manifestations of the Spirit.”

Essential to Lewis’s bridge is the use of discernment, which he identifies as a foundation for life in Christian community, even if its place is only assumed. The identification of something called “spiritual discernment” rightly brings such a process into the discussion. Unfortunately, Lewis does not actually define what his frequent uses of “spiritual discernment” actually mean. Additionally, the adjective “spiritual” is often unhelpful as it prematurely collapses or confuses the wide range of discerning functions identified throughout the course of this study in Paul’s words to the Corinthians.

Munzinger claims scholars have made an artificial distinction for discernment as ethical or spiritual. He identifies two primary roles for discernment: one is interpretative, and the other is corrective. He expands this notion through discernment having an “interpretive and a corrective role within the structure of Paul’s thought.” He brings these concepts into dialogue as parallel ideas. The interpretive role is realized through the “cross as the hermeneutical key to reality.” This is valid and essential, but problematically this kind of language becomes an end point for the discussion. The cross can be the “catch all” bucket where theology and understanding stop.

The corrective role of discernment is realized as a “check” on interpretation according to Munzinger. There is a “spiralling” between the interpretive and corrective

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57 Munzinger, *Discerning*, 90.
roles. He includes some interpretation of the discernment/judgement language in 1 Cor 2:14–15; 4:3; 9:3. This is in part designed to emphasize that knowledge is not the end goal. It is always love that is the goal. Munzinger calls discernment “existential theologising.” It is in this way that living and appropriating revelation can be exercised. The concept of this spiralling appears again near the end of the thesis. The interplay of ethics, theology, and epistemology must remain in view in order to understand any one of these, which are too often held in separation.

Is the division of discernment into categories of interpretive and corrective defensible and useful? Is there a better way to categorize? It may be worth considering whether the corrective role is really subsidiary in the larger scheme of discernment, for this would place correction as a function of properly exercised discernment. Interpretation must include judgement beyond a simple yes or no, but should inherently include extensions to application or correction. In other words, sometimes discernment is simply identification without enacting a specific judgement. At other times the process of discernment must include an assessment that comes to a concluding result or action. Deciding what discernment applies, to what extent action must be taken is in itself a discerning process. This process is not subject to excessive reductionism without undermining the entire enterprise. Discernment is a broadly useful and essential set of tools for the person and community in Christ.

**Discernment and Community**

Community is an indispensable component in Pauline discernment. As people function together in community, conflicting notions about reality and interpretive acts are

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61 Munzinger, *Discerning*, 98.
inevitable. Differences of opinion must have some means of adjudication if there is to be any kind of harmony, especially an idealized unity of thought, purpose, and action. Additionally, interacting with anything supposedly manifesting from a spiritual source, whether words, ideas, or actions, requires discernment in response.

Lewis labels the community in Corinth as a “deliberative assembly,” claiming, “Paul probably understood the ἐκκλησία as the political assembly of the people in Christ in pointed juxtaposition to the official city assembly.” As Lewis continues, he associates the LXX use of ἐκκλησία in the translation of אֱֹהִים as the assembly of God. His close reliance on Michael Gorman’s language about Paul’s understanding in like manner draws on the Greco-Roman setting of the polis to find a parallel to Paul’s usage, even if in some anti-imperial subversion. While giving brief attention to the LXX background for Paul’s terminology, Lewis stresses the notion of deliberation as a primary function of the assembly after the pattern of the “first-century social custom known as the symposium.”

However, as Gorman also notes, Paul uses “assembly of the Lord” or “assembly of God,” reflecting the “assembly of God” or “assembly of Israel” in the OT.

Lewis conceives Paul to have established the “dialogical nature of the practice of spiritual discernment,” which is “collective dialogue of those engaged in the active process of diakrisis.” Drawing from Aristotle and Plutarch, Lewis sees “community formation”

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64 Lewis gives the examples of Deut 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; Josh 9:2; 1 Chr 13:2, 4; Ezra 10:8, 12; Neh 8:2; 13:1; Mic 2:5; Sir 21:17; Sir 23:24; 38:33; 1 Macc 2:56; 4:59; 5:16. Lewis, Looking for Life, 38.
65 Michael J. Gorman, Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 356–357. Gorman notes the comparative features of “synagogue and guild/voluntary association,” which are sometimes called ἐκκλησία, while recognizing “Paul’s usage seems more closely related to the larger political and religious symbols of Rome and Israel,” 357 n. 13.
66 Lewis, Looking for Life, 67–68; see also his “symposium-like period of moral dialogue that follows the Lord’s Supper,” 103.
67 Gorman, Cruciformity, 356. Gorman gives as examples Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1. See also Witherington, Conflict, 79–80. Pointing out Paul’s likely primary emphasis on the LXX usage over the Greco-Roman sense, Witherington notes the importance of Paul’s stress on the broader assembly “in every place.”
as a product of mutual, moral dialogue engaged through the mind of Christ.\textsuperscript{69} This recurrent stress is an important focus for Lewis’s thesis, but it does come at the expense of a more developed sense of the community as something beyond what is typical of the surrounding culture.

Uses in the NT contextualize the sense of ἐκκλησία as the people of God in assembly for the purpose of worship, service, and mutual edification (all of which become evident throughout the text of First Corinthians). The community must discern within the context of its primary purpose as God’s assembly, gathered in worship. As this thesis will demonstrate, discernment must work throughout the lives of those who are part of the community—whether in personal, social, or worship settings.

Richard Horsley also addresses issues of terminology for the community. To ground his concept, he appropriately nominalizes the use of “Christian” as anachronistic, along with “Judaism” (as a monolithic religious label).\textsuperscript{70} As Horsley indicates, the complexity and special status of the Ἱουδαίος under Roman law created a situation different from religious communities or “voluntary associations.”\textsuperscript{71} These associations share some characteristics with Paul’s ἐκκλησία, but according to Horsley’s analysis are quite distinct in major ways.\textsuperscript{72} The question remains as to whether Paul was intentionally identifying the nascent Christian community within Greco-Roman cultural norms, the LXX usage for God’s assembly, or something else.

\textsuperscript{69} Lewis, \textit{Looking for Life}, 102–103.
\textsuperscript{71} Horsley, “Paul’s Assembly in Corinth,” 375–376. Horsley comments that Paul was raised in just such a community, which may have influenced his organization of the nascent communities for operation within Greco-Roman civilization.
\textsuperscript{72} Horsley, “Paul’s Assembly in Corinth,” 379–381. Differences include Pauline communities having minimal evidences of patronage (such as honorific titles or inscriptions), eschewing democratic governance for “charismatic leadership,” being exclusive while socially mixed, being “interethnic or international,” and disconnection from the local socio-political context. Horsley differentiates his view on many points from those in Wayne A. Meeks, \textit{The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 78–84.
Problems with over-interpretation of frequent NT usage of ἐκκλησία are not uncommon. In actuality, evidence for Paul’s usage based on Greco-Roman organizations exists only in the narrowest lexical sense, where his adjectival modifications of the term point toward a meaning with more depth, which moves toward LXX examples of God’s assembly. Under-interpretation can mask ἐκκλησία as reflecting connections with the divine calling inherent in God’s actions toward his people, and their response. Paul is “called (κλητός) to be an apostle,” appeals to “the church (ἐκκλησία) of God that is in Corinth,” the Corinthians are “called (κλητός) to be saints, together with all those who in every place call (ἐπικαλέω) on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:1–2). There is a mutual calling back and forth between Lord and humans in Paul’s usage. Beyond simple usage of common terminology for association, the special status of a people drawn out of the ordinary into the extraordinary of an apocalyptic calling is inherent and necessary to Paul’s choice of words. Paul draws overtly from the LXX terminology for the people of God assembled, which fits with his simpler uses of ἐκκλησία for the specially formed eschatological people in identification with their standing within the history of the “Israel of God” (Gal 6:16). The preferred term throughout this thesis for the Pauline community is ἐκκλησία as best representing the historical situation.

Munzinger submits 1 Cor 2:6–16 as part of the evidence for the broad involvement of discernment in the community. Discernment is empowered through the spirit in various functions of assessment, which is an aspect of “how the Spirit affects rationality.” These functions are the means of appropriating reality as it is interpreted through the new

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73 114 uses in the NT include 46 in undisputed Pauline epistles, with 22 in 1 Cor alone. The expression ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ may draw from “apocalyptic Judaism as a term for the eschatological company of God.” J. Roloff, “ἐκκλησία, ας, η,” EDNT 1:410–415. Paul’s preference for this term over συναγωγή avoids confusion and may intentionally shift focus toward “calling” as a preference over “gathering” or even as a place. On the over-interpretation problem, see Thielson, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 75.

74 Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians (TPNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 55.

75 Munzinger, Discerning, 70.

76 Munzinger, Discerning, 169.
lens of faith. Drawing from the relational aspect of discernment, Munzinger comments, “judgement begins in the manner in which members of the community treat one another.”77 This is Paul’s basis for the discerning community. Discernment does not override the essential nature of love in the community. Discernment moves beyond individual concerns, as “liberated reality is the basis of new community life.”78 This is perhaps the most in depth statement about the community in connection with the topic of discernment in Munzinger. In the new reality there is a basis for discernment from renewal of mind, which on the basis of love builds community in a deep and faithful existential ground. In this thesis, Paul’s use of discernment will be unpacked as part of that which comes through the Christ-event to the people of God, but is also established and proven in the self-sacrificing love required for community to be the spiritual body of Christ.

**Discernment in Spiritual Things**

The mind and spirit interface is where many of the questions collide in Munzinger’s study where 1 Cor 12–14 is discussed at some length to launch an exploration of mind vs. “Spirit.”79 This brings together two pivotal verses, the discernment of spirits (1 Cor 12:10) and discerning prophecy (1 Cor 14:29). In large measure, this relates to Paul’s admonition to discern all things (1 Cor 2:14) as a standard for Christian practice.80 For Munzinger, discerning spirits is the exact same operation as discerning anything else as part of the Christian life, which he tightly connects with ethical discernment.81 This is important to the overall arc of his thesis in terms of discernment and its holistic relationship to epistemology. How does divine revelation fit into the scheme of discernment? How should human reason interact with divine authority? This is an area that Munzinger largely leaves

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77 Munzinger, Discerning. 25.
78 Munzinger, Discerning. 170.
79 Munzinger, Discerning. 141–147.
80 Munzinger, Discerning. 145.
81 Munzinger, Discerning. 69.
out of the argument because he interprets 1 Cor 12:10 within the framework of general discernment. Taking a different approach, ch. 6 of this thesis will show discernment of spirits contrasts with other types of discernment, which broadens the sphere of discerning activities in important ways.

The three “aspects” Munzinger identifies regarding the evaluation or discernment of prophecy are that discernment “grounds prophecy in the reality of community life,” discernment of prophecies by the whole church maintains unity, and this inclusive form of discernment actually enhances the ordering of prophecies in terms of their authority. Munzinger makes the keen observation that discerning prophecy by the church is part of the “self-regulation” of the church. At the same time, he makes the unfortunate conclusion that this is Paul’s reason for establishing this kind of discernment. This places the locus for the conception in Paul’s own personal agenda. This minimizes the dynamic interaction of Spirit/spirit, mind, and wisdom drawn from the mind of Christ in the community. Paul draws from a much deeper well than an agenda for effective church governance.

Moberly seeks to harmonize the OT and NT regarding the biblical phenomenon of “human speech on behalf of God . . . and its disciplined critical appraisal.” As he develops his thesis, he states his “concerns are with (a) how God may be discerned and heard specifically in human speech (and action) and (b) how those who are not necessarily prophets might be able to discern those who are prophets.” Addressing these concerns to the discernment of divine initiative through humans can also be seen to bleed into areas beyond prophecy alone. Moberly draws criteria from Jer 23:9–22, with a focus on false prophets lacking integrity, failing to turn evildoers from their way (or failing to encourage

82 Munzinger, Discerning, 61–64.
83 Munzinger, Discerning, 64.
84 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 1-2.
85 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 131, for related iterations of his thesis see 81, 166, 232–233.
them), and speaking from themselves.\textsuperscript{86} He objects to language that speaks of the experience of the prophet (visionary, unattested, and private) as outside verifiable bounds except in hindsight, while being adamant that “claims about the invisible spiritual realm are validated (or not) through the content of the visible and accessible realm of character, conduct, and priorities.”\textsuperscript{87} There are many problems with this position, notwithstanding some general appeal in it. A person could have all these qualities and characteristics while being quite deluded about their prophetic calling. All that is really being described is someone who is faithful to the covenant of the Lord. That is the base starting point, not a high level of qualification.

Moberly disputes the position Robert Carroll takes about Jeremiah’s “lie” to the court officials at the direction of King Zedekiah (Jer 38:24–27), which Moberly thinks misrepresents and denigrates Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{88} The argument is interesting, however, it is clearly made in order to support the thesis about the character of prophets as determinative of validity. Inadvertently, his argument points out the subjective problem of evaluating a prophet on the basis of character. In many ways, it is no less subjective than evaluating the content of the prophecy. The subjective element (a modern concern) is not easily surmounted. Even with the focus on the character of the prophet, Moberly identifies the nature of discernment as essentially ‘seeing’ God, which he thinks depends on the “condition and qualities of the person who would see.”\textsuperscript{89} In this identification, it is now the character of the discerner that becomes central.

Can these principles be connected with NT prophecy? These narratives are certainly ripe background material, yet Paul does not use them to discuss discernment. Still, Moberly utilizes Second Corinthians as the core proof for his thesis. This is worked

\textsuperscript{86} Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 75–76.
\textsuperscript{87} Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 81.
\textsuperscript{88} Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 88–95.
\textsuperscript{89} Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 132. He uses the story of Balaam (Num 22–24) on his p. 147 to illustrate the failure of moral rectitude as leading to the failure to ‘see’ the divine.
out in an excursus about the principles Paul applies to himself as something transferable to evaluating others. The problem with Moberly’s thesis is again clear. He is moving Paul’s language about discerning prophecy and/or spirits into the realm of discerning the character of a person. Moberly concludes discerning is the ability “to recognize those who speak and act for God.” This is where his thesis breaks at least with respect to prophetic utterance and the NT. It is the utterance, or content, which must be judged (see ch. 7 below). Framing discernment in this way equalizes the field for all who speak for God, and avoids elevating certain individuals to the place of speaking for God. His thesis melds general discernment of the Christian life with discerning of speech and/or spirits, which neglects the larger sphere for discernment.

The varied phases of discernment in the early Christian community are not entirely separable into discreet units. This is because ultimately, the issue becomes one of appropriating a kind of knowledge or insight about the divine. This is true whether the question is about what kind of wisdom can be accessed and applied to any situation, determining ethical or moral responses or actions, assessing the status of other people, identifying spiritual sources, or assessing speech purported to be from God. Any of these areas concern prioritization within a divine schema. Paul can perceive the greater potential for discernment working through human limitation because of the paradigm shift brought in Christ. This shift can be summarized through apocalyptic thought.

Discernment and Apocalyptic Thought

When Munzinger says, “the Christ-event is the hermeneutical key for the whole of history,” he includes two key resultant aspects that “not only is history as a whole

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90 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 208–211.
91 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 254.
transformed, but along with it the perception of reality.”

Thus a critically important aspect of Paul’s thought is expressed, and indeed expressed as grounded in Christ. Reality can only be interpreted through this contingent manifestation, which is not simply phenomenological. It works through and with history to be revealed as reality. Thiselton states, “In Paul’s view any ‘absolute’ of revelation is anchored in the cross and the resurrection within the framework of OT revelation and further disclosures as anticipation of the End when the whole picture becomes unveiled at the last judgment.”

The arc of time in what may be called ‘salvation history’ must include points of revelation along the way, the “further disclosures.” In a related vein, Lewis describes the Christ-event in connection with the foretaste of glory manifesting the power of God in people, which is part of the transforming renewal enabling the wisdom of God through the spirit/spiritual.

The Christ-event is grounded in history and births the NT community in dynamic interaction with the spirit, which in turn produces and requires the capacity to discern. Beyond mere capacity, this discernment is developmental as it cycles through progressive stages. A beginning must be located for these stages of progression. This is realized through one aspect of the Christ-event as the initiating capacity for renewal as part of what God reveals, the \( \text{ἀποκάλυψις} \).

Insightfully, Lewis identifies “apocalyptic” in Paul as grounded in “present revelation, rather than simply referring to Paul’s eschatology.” Calvin Roetzel describes

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92 Munzinger, Discerning, 86. He echoes Thiselton (quoting Pannenberg). Cf. Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1064–1065; also Wolfhart Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology (LPT 1; trans. by G. Kehm. London: SCM, 1969), 181. For Pannenberg it is in Jesus that reality in its entirety “can be conceived without compromising the provisionality and historical relativity of all thought, as well as openness to the future on the part of the thinker who knows himself to be only on the way and not yet at the goal.”

93 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1064.

94 Use of ‘salvation history’ in the context of apocalyptic can be problematic for some scholars. Herein it has the sense of the biblical narrative about God’s deliverance of humanity through time past, present, and future. See N. T. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God (COQG 4; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1393, 1459–1460, 1512.

95 Lewis, Looking for Life, 64–66.

96 Lewis, Looking for Life, 22–23.
Lewis’s application of the “ethical reasoning process” (his italics) as situating “Paul’s letters as ongoing theological and open-ended reflection on the ethical requirements of the ‘new creation’.”97 Paul’s hopes for the community life of God’s people are expressed in the space of the cooperative and self-sacrificing mindset that both expresses and looks forward to all that is inaugurated through the Christ-event as historical and typical for the Christ followers: historical in all it fulfils and accomplishes, yet typical in evoking holy conduct and dynamic experience for those who follow after as they move toward bodily resurrection along with the community of faith.

Apocalyptic thought and theology is not only concerned with the end of the current age. J. Beker describes it as “born out of a deep existential concern,” where “discontinuity between this age and the age to come points to a radical transformation of the present world order.”98 Beker is critical of “de-eschatologizing” and “antiapocalyptic sentiment,” part of modern attempts to demythologize Paul through “spiritualistic interpretation.”99 Beker sees “Paul’s hermeneutic is shaped by the complex interaction of coherence and contingency; moreover, the coherent theme of Paul’s theology is an apocalyptic theme that centers on the coming triumph of God.”100 In his attempt to restore apocalyptic to Paul, Beker may go too far in deleting the space between Jesus resurrected and the final eschaton. His critique of “realized eschatology” as a means to “deapocalypticize Paul’s thought” sets the use of eschatology against apocalyptic to accomplish this goal.101 Beker’s criticisms are well founded, but fail to give adequate consideration of realized eschatology to bridge the gap between some current time and final eschaton. Rather than stifling apocalyptic as an area of thought in Paul, a fuller picture can be drawn that accounts for the

99 Beker, Paul, 139–142.
100 Beker, Paul, xiii.
101 Beker, Paul, 142–143.
space for the faith community. This is precisely where Paul can conceive of the community acting at a high level of discerning ability.

Beker does acknowledge the “strict temporal dualism is only peripherally present in Paul because the old age has run its course already: ‘the end of the ages has come upon us’ (1 Cor 10:11; perfect tense, katēntēken) and the ‘fulness of time’ has occurred in Christ (Gal 4:4).” For Beker, “eschatological hope contains the expectation of new acts of God, such as Israel’s eschatological conversion or the liberation of creation or the ‘mystery’ of change (1 Cor 15:50) or the ‘mystery’ of Israel’s way of salvation (Rom 11:25).” What of the present “mystery” (1 Cor 2:7) becoming manifest in and to the community of faith, or the “mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1) kept by Paul and others? Beker later softens his stance on the centrality of the “eschatological triumph of God,” recognizing the broader “apocalyptic motifs,” which are not from “Hellenistic-Jewish or Philonic influences but are modifications of an apocalyptic substratum” (emphasis his). There is room in apocalyptic thought and theology for the community of God’s people to have a role in discerning the ongoing narrative of unfolding revelation.

Uses of the term apocalyptic are varied and “slippery.” Aune describes a contrast between apocalyptic and prophetic that looks at the prophetic as “an optimistic perspective” about near future restoration where “‘apocalyptic eschatology’ is pessimistic” in current time” while awaiting a final eschaton. Although he refers to apocalyptic literature, his focus on “perspective” extends to the underlying thought. Elements of both

103 Beker, Paul, 148.
apocalyptic and prophetic as Aune describes them are present in Pauline literature, so for Paul the distinction is at least partially artificial. Aune does note the eschatology of Paul includes the interlude between resurrection and Parousia as characterized by the presence and gifting of the spirit, adding, “Though the final consummation is still future for Paul, the new age was present for Christians because the Messiah had come.”

This less pessimistic view straddles what has become segregated, sometimes excessively. Apocalyptic thought can be seen to derive from prophetic as it seizes upon meaning as it is revealed. Discernment is necessary to interpret, understand, and act upon revelation.

Lester Grabbe compares and contrasts the prophetic and the apocalyptic, rightly objecting to the confusion of categories and other related issues. The apocalyptic/mythical blends with reality in the lives of those who live it as history. This is where the community of faith enters the narrative, where Paul sees the community living together in the revised narrative space within the Christ-event. Grabbe believes the ‘end of the world’ idea attached to apocalyptic is a “red herring.” His stress on the space between can be seen another way. According to N. T. Wright, “what some call ‘apocalyptic’, properly understood within its first-century framework, does indeed lie at the heart of Paul’s theology . . .” Paul has at the core of his thought, Wright says, “the point where covenant, Messiahship and apocalyptic meet . . . Jesus the Messiah, and him

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108 Cf. Christopher Rowland, “Apocalyptic Literature,” in It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars (eds. D. A. Carson, B. Lindars, and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge University Press, 1988), 183. Rowland objects to the false “polarisation” especially between apocalyptic and other Jewish Literature, which he also extends to dividing “prophetic and charismatic as compared with scribal” traditions. He criticizes division of the thought and roots underlying these genres.
110 Grabbe, “Prophetic and Apocalyptic,” 114. Wright is also critical of this overemphasis, which undercuts the “metaphorical investing of space-time events with their theological significance.” Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1393. Similarly, Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity (WUNT 2.36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 26.
This is where present and future meet in new reality. Paul’s theology contains “inaugurated eschatology” (emphasis his) as this meeting point. In the process of realizing this reality the community of Christ is given new expectations for practice in life.

Ordering of practice in continuity with an eschatological timeline is accomplished in part by discernment. This is the means of mediation among the varied inputs and demands on the community. As Helmut Koester situates it, Paul focuses on believers being “with the Lord” (emphasis his, σὺν κυρίῳ, or ἐν Χριστῷ) with “no interest in an apocalyptic timetable per se.” Always present in Paul’s apocalyptic thought is part of the ‘already, not yet’ with its combination of some things present in the community of Christ through the present life and gifts of Jesus now (whenever ‘now’ is). These are inaugurated through the poured out spirit and build toward the final eschaton. Terms such as inaugurated or realized eschatology are helpful in distinguishing elements of the theology about the entire course of events and activities within the schema of the Christ-event, from the initiating human birth of Jesus to the Parousia. Discernment is necessary for the community to function in this space.

The problems of eschatological terminology lead Grant Macaskill to prefer ‘inaugurated eschatology’ so “realised and future elements” are included. This does

112 Wright, Paul: Fresh Perspectives, 58.
113 Wright, Paul: Fresh Perspectives, 55.
114 Wright, Paul: Fresh Perspectives, 57. This apocalyptic meeting point will be discussed further in ch. 5.
116 A nuanced aspect of this is found in E. P. Sanders’ “participationist eschatology,” which in part encompasses Paul’s stress on participation with Christ as an actual concern as part of the movement to final eschaton. E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 454–455, 520–521, esp. 549. See also Richard B. Hays, Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 58. Hays opines that Paul portrays the suffering of “Christians” as foretold in the OT in the “eschatological interval between Christ’s resurrection and the ultimate redemption of the world.”
117 Grant Macaskill, Revealed Wisdom and Inaugurated Eschatology in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (JSJSupp 115; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 24–25. See also the preference for ‘realised eschatology’ in Torleif Elgvin, “Early Essene Eschatology: Judgement and Salvation According to Sapiential Work A.” in
avoid excessive focus on the consummation of time, but ‘inaugurated’ suggests excessive focus on beginnings. ‘Realized eschatology’ has the advantage of encompassing the beginning and process while recognizing the end point/goal inherent in eschatology.\textsuperscript{118} It has the further advantage of providing dialectical space for consideration of degrees in this realization in the schema of overrealized eschatology as either historically or potentially problematic. The framework for this thesis conceives realized eschatology as the most useful term in the context of discernment and discerning capabilities in the Corinthian community. Various areas of discernment as either developing capabilities or special gifts will be discussed as part of the Pauline conceptualization of the community in the “space between,” in the realization and expectation inherent in their new reality.

Wright continues to argue for the connection of history and apocalyptic through his narrative analysis. Apocalyptic thought is maintained in “historical context”\textsuperscript{119} James Dunn addresses this same tension in Paul as “a continuity in the discontinuity, the apocalyptic climax of the salvation-history which constituted the heart of his gospel.”\textsuperscript{120} Salvation history is being fulfilled along the living principle that what has begun in spirit will lead to “complete redemption.”\textsuperscript{121} This process of redemption includes the renewing transformation that enables discernment. It is unnecessary to set apocalyptic thought against either prophecy or history. Literature that can be identified as primarily apocalyptic brings some different issues, but where thought is concerned, excessively rigid categories can be unhelpful and overlook the broader movement that is represented by a more holistic


\textsuperscript{119} Wright, \textit{Paul and the Faithfulness of God}, 461.

\textsuperscript{120} James D. G. Dunn, \textit{The New Perspective on Paul} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 264.

\textsuperscript{121} Dunn, \textit{The New Perspective}, 263.
understanding of 2TJ or early Christian thought. This is true in writings that include apocalyptic material, but are not necessarily classified as apocalyptic by genre.

Another difficulty in classifying Paul’s thought is reflected in the tension between apocalyptic and sapiential thought. Some distance between these two has been longstanding in Pauline scholarship. E. Elizabeth Johnson narrates a continuum between poles of the two in various modes of understanding positive potentialities in human life versus hopelessness about the human condition at one end of apocalyptic thought, which counters a “scholarly construct that may not have made sense to a first-century Jew like Paul.”

Paul is reliant on multiple genres of literature as a foundation for expressing what he perceives to be current revelation. Johnson assesses passages such as Rom 11 and 1 Cor 1–3 to show “sapiential themes are bound inextricably to apocalyptic ideas.” A rigid line between certain classifiable areas of thought can be counterproductive in Pauline studies.

For Munzinger, ongoing revelation is a “revolution of the understanding but without denigrating the mind’s functions.” He observes Paul can “speak of two types of wisdom, which are mutually exclusive without requiring a displacement of the noetic functions nor any form of ontic change in a person.” The affected person continues in the present world order, but with elements of the new world emerging. Conversion is the radical “break” that leads from defective wisdom into the true wisdom given through the spirit. This is where the “Christ-event,” or cross enters the picture as the “hermeneutical key.”

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125 Munzinger, *Discerning*, 164.

126 Munzinger, *Discerning*, 165.

Myer describes the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus as the “divine vindication” in which “Paul uses apocalyptic categories and traditions . . .”

Regarding the “wisdom of God—‘Christ crucified’,” Markus Bockmuehl says, “The hidden salvific dimensions of God’s wisdom in this mystery are known by revelation only (1 Cor 2:6–10; cf. 2 Cor 4:3–18, etc.).” The new wisdom through revelation is applied in discernment, as discussed in chapter 2 below.

Lewis extends and modifies his own terminology in demonstrating Paul’s use of a “broad semantic field of revelatory language to articulate the connection between Christ-conforming conduct and experiences of God’s life-giving and community building power.” Experience of revelation in Christ should affect conduct in a cycle of life that builds wisdom, ethical conduct, and community. This is a new standard for present life and continuing through resurrection. Although he does not suggest it, this last statement provides a reasonable summary statement for First Corinthians. Intertwining strands bind wisdom, revelation (in apocalyptic or prophetic conceptualization), and the Christ-event into one tapestry through Jesus and ongoing spiritual transformation in the community of Christ. Working throughout this tapestry, “true discernment is based on a very intricate mix of revelation and cognition.” This mixture continues to inform and shape the body of this thesis.

Assumptions and Further Methodological Considerations

This study recognizes the extensive use of terms and concepts related to discernment and/or judgement in First Corinthians in various ways and topics that provide an

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132 Munzinger, *Discerning*, 165.
opportunity to explore Paul’s use of these concepts. To some degree it follows
Munzinger’s method, a “conceptual approach” that seeks to analyse discernment unbound
by the failings of basic word studies.\textsuperscript{133} It is partly through this approach that he melds
discerning of spirits with other examples of discernment. Looking from this angle at the
epistle will reveal the prominent role Paul gives discernment. Two notable departures from
Munzinger should be noted. First, after acknowledging Paul’s dependence on his Jewish
roots, Munzinger resorts to Greco-Roman thought for support.\textsuperscript{134} This study situates Paul
primarily within his Jewish framework. Second, where Munzinger sets forth discernment
of spirits as the lynchpin of Paul’s thought on discernment, this thesis argues discernment
of spirits is an adjunct form of discernment.\textsuperscript{135}

Another difference is rooted in reasons \textit{why} discernment is important for Paul. On
what basis does Paul develop this concept in so many ways? It will be argued Paul’s
primary basis for use of this conceptual area is grounded in the traditions found in the OT
and reflected in other Jewish literature. A limited intertextual approach facilitates this
aspect as a supporting methodology. Paul builds on scripture as mediated through the
Christ-event to establish the foundation upon which he understands the Corinthian
community to stand. Paul’s understanding derives from his application of the narrative
world of the OT as it is radically affected by the Christ-event.

The use of intertextuality in this thesis helps locate some of Paul’s foundation for
discernment. Biblical scholars have incorporated intertextuality primarily through a
“spectrum” of quotation, allusion, and echo.\textsuperscript{136} In NT intertextual studies the primary focus

\begin{footnotes}
\item[133] Munzinger, \textit{Discerning}, 5.
\item[136] David I. Yoon, “The Ideological Inception of Intertextuality and its Dissonance in Current
from its inception through “postmodern ideologies” and a related problem of “authorial intent.” Yoon
recognizes different concerns between biblical studies and fictional literature, especially authorial intention
as more difficult to dispose in the former. His objections to the term intertextuality in biblical studies as
\end{footnotes}
has been the use of OT texts. The basic form is quotation/citation or allusion with the author intending to appropriate meaning from an earlier hypotext/pretext for a current context to produce a hypertext. The distinction between quotation and allusion can be vague, especially in ancient literature where standards of quotation are often informal. Richard Hays states, “Quotation, allusion, and echo may be seen as points along a spectrum of intertextual reference, moving from the explicit to the subliminal,” where correspondence may not be not asserted. He uses allusion for “obvious intertextual references” and echo for “subtler ones.” Identifying echo is especially challenging.

Regarding dialogue between texts, Nigel Nicholson argues, “To reconstruct a dialogue does not require a prior, fixed text, but rather a compelling argument that such a text could be imagined at a given moment in a particular social formation.” In the social ethos of dialogic interaction, “intertexts are characterized not by complex verbal echoes but by a larger shared vocabulary of terms and issues, and the only limits to possible intertexts are the limits of the community itself.” An author cites, alludes, or echoes a pretext, bringing the reader into a narrative world.

In this study, a simplified approach will consider quotation/citation as including a formal citation marker with a corresponding thematic relationship, which will normally discordant with deconstructionist ideology are noteworthy, but the term has taken on a significant life of its own within biblical studies.

139 Hays, Echoes, 23.
140 Hays, Echoes, 29. Echo may be unintended. See John Hollander, The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 64, 72.
have close lexical/syntactical parallels with the proposed source text. Allusion may not include citation markers, but will demonstrate thematic parallels along with plausible lexical/syntactical parallels.\textsuperscript{143} Michael Thompson provides key criteria for allusion. These include “verbal agreement” especially where multiple or rare words are “identical or cognates” or there is a “unique combination of significant words.”\textsuperscript{144} Additionally, “conceptual agreement” should be demonstrable through a plausible connection, which this study combines with “common motivation, rationale” in connection with ethical behaviour.\textsuperscript{145} Finally, “formal agreement” accounts for structural similarities.\textsuperscript{146}

Past this initial stage of inquiry, echo becomes vital. When Paul alludes to aspects of ancient Israel, there may be extended intertextual discourse in the dialectic space between his selection of texts and the specific occasion of an epistle. Echoes may be seen before or after the allusion. This allows progression beyond a notion of incoherent proof-texting as a paradigm for Pauline discourse toward a more coherent reading in the quiet of intertextual echo.\textsuperscript{147} Hays notes five effects of intertextual meaning through echo, ranging from authorial intent to reader response.\textsuperscript{148} This study primarily seeks some access to the author’s thought world.

Echoes also potentially work intratextually within an epistle or with Paul’s other epistles. Hays provides seven general criteria for echo, which are “availability” of proposed hypotexts, “volume” or intensity, “recurrence” including repeated words or

\textsuperscript{143} Benjamin L. Gladd, \textit{Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with Its Bearing on First Corinthians} (BZNW 160; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 4–5. Note similarities to Gladd’s “two-tiered approach” for allusion. Marked text may be allusive when it is not verbatim. See Christopher A. Beetham, \textit{Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians} (BIS 96; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 18–19. See also Larsson, “Intertextual Density, Quantifying Imitation,” 331. Larson cautions that “qualitative and quantitative dimensions of parallels should be considered in relation to one another.”

\textsuperscript{144} Michael B. Thompson, \textit{Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13} (JSNTSup 59; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 30–32.

\textsuperscript{145} Thompson, \textit{Clothed with Christ}, 32–33.

\textsuperscript{146} Thompson, \textit{Clothed with Christ}, 32.

\textsuperscript{147} Intended here is something like Hollander’s “cave of resonant signification.” See Hollander, \textit{The Figure of Echo}, 65.

\textsuperscript{148} Hays, \textit{Echoes}, 26–27. His stated intent is for modern “readings of Paul informed by intelligent historical understanding: to undertake a fresh imaginative encounter with the text, disciplined and stimulated by historical exegesis.”
passages, “thematic coherence,” “historical plausibility” especially for the author’s concept, “history of interpretation” (not used in this study), and “satisfaction” or reasonable possibility.\textsuperscript{149} Ultimately, both allusion and echo require judgement regarding their potential presence.\textsuperscript{150} The intention for intertextuality in this study is to find potential foundations for Paul’s conceptualization of judgement/discernment.

**Approach of the Study**

Bringing together a conceptual approach with the support of intertextuality yields the opportunity to view Paul’s varied uses of discernment in more complete light. The lack of overt citation with specific application to discernment is daunting. Paul’s use of narrative here is important. Wright says, “Paying attention to the underlying narrative structure of Paul’s thought, then, is not simply a matter of recognizing the implicit narratives in Paul and drawing out their implications for detailed exegesis. Something much deeper, more revolutionary, is going on when we start to unearth these implicit stories . . .”\textsuperscript{151} The current aim is to study discernment, and so in a sense is less methodologically driven. Examining discernment as a conceptual area as influenced by a particular narrative substructure (especially the WT), anchors Paul’s thinking in the reality he perceived to have dawned through the Christ-event as part of the unfolding of God’s intentions for humanity over time.

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\textsuperscript{150} Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 36.
\textsuperscript{151} Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, 11.
Outline of the Study

This chapter situates the study in the context of research on discernment with respect to Pauline scholarship and related areas. Methodological approaches are discussed with respect to the synthesis of a conceptual and intertextual approach. Part I consists of chapter 2 and analyses the Pauline groundwork for revelatory wisdom exercised through discernment. Support is identified in 1 Cor 1:10, which will be proposed as tightly interwoven with judgement as an essential function for the ἐκκλησία. Interaction of this conceptual area with wisdom, mindset, and revelation brings the concepts of judgement and discernment into focus for the healthy ἐκκλησία. These areas will be unpacked with the concept of discernment in view. The faction motif recedes next to the focus on Paul’s concern for the community to judge reality appropriately. Explicit description in 1 Cor 2 will be demonstrated as expansion upon this thought. The focus on revelatory wisdom as the means for community function and growth will be demonstrated as essential to Paul’s conception for the community.

Part II demonstrates the importance of discernment for the community as it functions within society, with respect to internal and external relationships. Chapter 3 explores discernment within the community as the means to deal with questions of morality and purity. Paul’s use of Torah in 1 Cor 5–6 is explored as a basis for the community to exercise judgement appropriately. Contingencies in 1 Cor 7 affect Paul’s use of scripture, which becomes the opportunity to examine how Paul’s personal judgement is applied and recalls 1 Cor 1:10. Chapter 4 studies discernment in areas of social interaction with the surrounding community, arguing Paul builds upon Deuteronomy and Numbers to deal with idolatry. Bringing freedom into the discussion, Paul interacts with scripture even as he demonstrates the essential need for the community to exercise judgement and discernment in view of their status as the people of God.
Part III moves into the gathered community in issues of worship. Chapter 5 studies aspects of discernment as a basis for interactions among the community with respect to conduct in their gathering. Here Paul draws little from the OT, but does ground some of his discussion on accepted practices of other communities and also draws on JT for meals in worship settings. The serious nature of discerning/judging in this context is a substantial part of Paul’s practice, which relates to Paul’s broader use of discernment. Chapter 6 studies discernment of spirits and its relationship to discernment in other areas of spiritual activity. This discernment is demonstrated as differing from proposals claiming it is either the paradigmatic aspect of discernment and/or is analogous to discerning prophecy. Chapter 7 builds on the foundation for specialized uses of discernment in the worship context, which correlate with Paul’s general teachings on discernment and community wholeness. The chapter discusses relevant aspects of discerning prophecy in its context as a high form of responsibility and authority for the community to act together in the realization of their calling. Paul’s use of scripture is nominal here, but the foundation for discernment built throughout the epistle informs and actually reaches a pinnacle in this exercise of discernment upon what are purported to be words of God.

Part IV concludes the study. The contribution to research is summarized and areas for further research are suggested.
PART I: DISCERNMENT AND THE MIND OF CHRIST: FUNCTIONAL WISDOM AS A FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPT WITHIN THE ἘΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ

Chapter 2: In the Same Mind and in the Same Judgement (1 Cor 1:1–4:21)

Introduction

Paul perceives divisiveness as problematic for the Corinthian community. Despite this, he also addresses issues that are not simply those of a divided community in need of repair. These issues connect with his diagnosis of the existing situation and extend the discussion into many rich theological soils. These areas include wisdom given by God, as well as who the people of God should be. The many references to wisdom in First Corinthians, especially in the first two chapters, readily demonstrate the significance of this topic. Paul criticizes human wisdom, but rather than devaluing all wisdom he advocates wisdom anchored to the cross and received through the spirit. This empowering wisdom makes discernment possible. It is functional wisdom because it spans the ranges of applications necessary for the community to be and become the unique people of God, which becomes evident through appropriate uses of discernment.

This chapter will first establish the foundation of discernment/judgement Paul interweaves with his introductory material. This forms an often-overlooked key to First Corinthians, and one overshadowed by excessive focus on divisions. Second, it will explore how Paul extends these concepts as he describes the role of the appropriate and superior wisdom. Third, the necessity of accessing wisdom through the ‘mind of Christ’ in what that evokes will be explored. Fourth, the importance of revelation will be established in Paul’s conceptualization of the wisdom necessary to community formation. Finally, the role of discernment throughout this section will be demonstrated as a foundational and essential need for the community to grow toward their τέλος as people of God.
Paul’s Potential Thesis Statement for First Corinthians

Margaret Mitchell argues for the location of Paul’s πρόθεσις in 1 Cor 1:10, albeit with respect to unity in the ἐκκλησία. Allen Hunt follows Mitchell in this respect, as well as acknowledging the overall coherence of the epistle as a unified, comprehensive work as seen through the issue of schisms in the Corinthian community. Paul urges, “you should be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgement” (Ἦτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ, 1:10c). The term γνώμη, sometimes translated “purpose” in this verse (so NRSV, NET), is a word related to insight and the exercise of judgement. Unity rightly receives a great deal of attention, but the completion or goal of this is not unity for the sake of unity alone. There is a developmental, maturational issue...
that Paul portrays as found in this pairing of mind and judgement.\footnote{Hans Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians} (Hermeneia; trans. by James W. Leitch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 32. Conzelmann regards θες and γνώμη to have “no difference of meaning.” This is counterintuitive to the lexical meanings as well as Paul’s usage, which Conzelmann makes redundant. There is a relationship between these terms, but they are not synonymous.} Paul not only issues a call to unity, but rather to a community life that is the fertile ground for spiritual growth. Having the same judgement is a major step toward reaching that goal. Unity is useless unless it is centred on the right mind of insightful judgement.

To speak of the community as empowered to judge on a wide variety of issues is to speak of a significant authority and responsibility. What is the source of this kind of judgement? Is it simply a function of the highly perspicacious mind? If so, it is a practice that is developed through insight and experience, an intellectual activity that must be discovered and refined. Is this judgement a gift, with the divine dimension of something graciously bestowed? If judgement involves some measure of divine giftedness, the questions become somewhat different. How does it work with the mind and with wisdom? How is it realized? In what ways can it be developed? What are the limitations on such a gift? What brings balance between developing rational faculties and divinely empowered judgement?

The passive participle in ἦτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι does not suggest a process of training and effort in achieving the state that Paul holds out before the Corinthians. For Paul, the divine gifting that works in the ἐκκλησία is always important in the renewal that continues to form the believer along with the community. The “in the same mind and in the same judgement” comment leads into a discussion that continues to reference wisdom in various ways, interwoven with the concepts of the mind of Christ, revelation, and discernment (1:17–4:21). Paul identifies some specific sources of schism in the Corinthian devotion toward specific human leaders (1:11–17) as he moves to contrast types of wisdom. Paul
establishes a wisdom that comes through revelation as a foundation for the Corinthians to develop the same mind and judgement.

Knowledge issues emerge at points in the discussion throughout this thesis. Tension between good and bad uses of knowledge will be discussed, but at the outset Paul seeks to establish a framework for a particular wisdom as the ground for living. Wisdom forms the basis for discerning the range of issues affecting the Corinthian ἐκκλησία. The foundational revelation in the Christ-event is in itself a key insight, but extends to becoming the interpretive lens—a wisdom framework through which to approach life. This kind of practical, functional wisdom is the ground from which discernment grows.

**The Superiority of Wisdom from Above**

Paul does disparage a certain kind of wisdom, but caution should be exercised with respect to the depth of his animosity. It is common in Greco-Roman culture for the non-professional in rhetoric or philosophy to speak in negative terms of these activities. Yet Paul is not merely self-deprecating or devaluing wisdom as a general principle. His negative assessment of the wisdom esteemed by some in the Corinthian ἐκκλησία is instructive, especially compared with the wisdom he describes as coming from God. The “wisdom of the wise” and wisdom sought by Greeks is declared inadequate (1:18–2:5). The true wisdom worth having is the hidden wisdom, which God has revealed (ἀπεκάλυψεν) and made accessible to the spiritual person through the mind of Christ in the appropriate exercise of judgement (2:6–16). Paul will later reiterate he acts “not by earthly wisdom” (2 Cor 1:12).

The background for Paul’s general orientation to wisdom has been a source for widely divergent views, some of which are overviewed below. After considering several

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aspects of Cynic and Stoic teachers, Stanley Stowers concludes that there is one true similarity between the Cynic teachers and Paul in his “stressing the continuity between his preaching activity and everyday life.”\(^7\) Abraham Malherbe compares Paul with non-technical philosophers without actually identifying him as such.\(^8\) At the same time, Malherbe nearly labels him a Cynic in key practices, if not in name.\(^9\) Simultaneously, Paul is distanced from Cynics in his advocacy for work, social order, and community life.\(^10\) Malherbe also conceives Paul to purposely reject Epicurean teachings in his notion of believers taught by God versus self-taught, becoming “self-sufficient,” and contributing positively to society.\(^11\) He also notes Paul’s urge to quiet life has superficial similarities to Stoic ideals, but differs by encouraging manual labour and seeking approval of “outsiders.”\(^12\) Philosophical thought systems prove to be poor sources for the substance of Pauline teachings.

Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues for a Paul steeped in Stoic philosophy. His contention is that “Paul in practice construed the Christ event” within a Stoic framework.\(^13\) This framework is visualized using a graphic model that has the individual lifted from selfishness into Christ, then merging in community with others having the same experience.\(^14\) There is a movement from egocentrism to community. Michelle Lee adjusts this model to use Paul’s ‘mind of Christ’ language (1 Cor 2:16) at the point where Christ is located, the place where one is lifted beyond self into a greater awareness.\(^15\) She calls this a “unique eschatological type of ‘reason’ found in the mind of Christ.”

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12 Malherbe, Paul and the Thessalonians, 96–99.
13 Engberg-Pedersen, Paul, 117–118.
14 Engberg-Pedersen, Paul, 294, see his p. 34 for a graphic representation of the model.
15 Michelle V. Lee, Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ (SNTSMS 137; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17–18.
‘mind of Christ’ concept is important to the ‘body’ language Paul uses (1 Cor 12). Lee continues that the “concern for unity is built upon an ontological understanding that the Corinthians are a people who stand apart from the world by the mind of Christ.” The connection made between this particular ‘mind of Christ’ concept and the body imagery elevates ‘reason’ as part of this new corporate body. Lee concludes the Corinthians “exist as a new humanity through the possession of ‘reason’.”

Engberg-Pedersen’s model is construed as evidence for Paul’s Stoicism, but the basic problem with this model is that most socially conscious worldviews can be made to fit nicely. It works just as well to remove Christ and replace him with God/gods, a human leader, love, service to others, or any ideal (such as reason in the Stoic worldview). Lee inadvertently confirms the basic weakness in the model as proof of a Stoic Paul. It is inconsistent with Paul’s conception to describe the ‘mind of Christ’ as highly developed reason.

Drawing upon the generally Roman, Stoic background of the Corinthians, Albert Garcilazo argues Paul is countering these influences. Paul’s mockery of the quest for high status among some of the Corinthians supports an anti-Stoic polemic. Furthermore, Paul’s body imagery of mutuality counters the Stoic principle of self-sufficiency. Garcilazo’s argument gives coherence to the Corinthian position and brings balance to the social status questions, while also making Paul’s rhetoric more consistently coherent. Paul writes in language that is understandable to his diverse audience, not in language intended to bring them into a Stoic understanding. Paul’s foundational understanding is more

16 Lee, Paul, 160.
17 Lee, Paul, 166.
18 Where reason is “certainly a different kind of God.” Engberg-Pedersen, Paul, 35.
strongly identifiable in 2TJ. Influence through Greco-Roman thought is different from dependence.

James Davis argues that in 2TJ wisdom is linked to Law/Torah, the Law leads to wisdom, and that the “Spirit” is involved at the highest level in giving wisdom. His analysis identifies a broad, identifiable, and significant body of thought in the wisdom teachings of 2TJ. Even with this key background, Paul inverts the conception of access to wisdom. For Paul, the spirit initially imparts wisdom by revelation. Wisdom is not birthed through Torah or reason. One does not progress by steps through study, then through achieved wisdom come into the spirit. For Paul, the spirit alone reveals the wisdom hidden in God, which then opens understanding (Rom 8:3–17). This is the ground and beginning point for the wisdom that gives insight into life and the ability to judge appropriately.

The sectarian Qumran material speaks of wisdom in terms of “concealment concerning the truth of the mysteries of knowledge” (1QS IV, 1–6). Concealment is not perpetual. God has revealed judgement, mystery, and wisdom in the community, for “from the spring of his justice is my judgement and from the wonderful mystery is the light in my heart. My eyes have observed what always is, wisdom that has been hidden from mankind, knowledge and prudent understanding (hidden) from the sons of man” (1QS XI, 5–6).

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23 See John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 281–283. Comparing Paul’s contrast between the spirit of God and the spirit of the world with the “Teaching on the Two Spirits” in the Community Rule, Levison notes a general similarity. The role of Torah in the latter is vastly increased, but in both sources there is no middle ground. God’s mysteries and wisdom in each are only accessible through the right spirit, which comes from God.

24 Samuel I. Thomas, *The “Mysteries” of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (SBLEJL 25; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009) 15–22. There can be some difficulty translating ‘mystery’, but the issue is not a large problem when the term is understood as representative of divine knowledge hidden from humans, without special regard for mystical modes of access to this knowledge.

25 The Hebrew for judgement here (משפט) often carries legal connotations, but it also is used of taking measure. *HALOT* 651–652.
God it is written that “you have taught all knowledge and all that exists is so by your will. Beyond you there is no-one to oppose your counsel, to understand any of your holy thoughts, to gaze into the abyss of your mysteries, to fathom all your marvels or the strength of your might” (1QS XI, 17–20). The knowledge of divine wisdom has the potential for disclosure through the spirit, “which you gave in me, and I have listened loyally to your wonderful secret through your holy spirit. You have [op]ened within me knowledge of the mystery of your wisdom, and the source of [your] power . . .” (QHª XX, 12–13). Similarities with Paul’s teachings are evident in the concealment of wisdom and its subsequent potential revelation from somewhere in God.

There is a textual history in the OT for Paul’s description of the unique hidden wisdom revealed by God (1 Cor 2:9). These things have not been seen, heard, nor have they entered the human heart. This verse is introduced by a citation marker, “but as it has been written” (ἀλλὰ καθὼς γέγραπται), which suggests an antecedent scripture. There are several passages in the OT that speak of the inability to see or hear the things of God (Deut 29:3; Isa 6:9–10; 64:3), with one of the closest parallels being found in the context of the revelation of the lifted up servant of YHWH (Isa 52:15). This last passage resonates with Paul’s association of revealed wisdom with the Christ-event.

Perhaps one of Paul’s allusions is to Sir 1:10, where the “wisdom theme and context provides significant background for 1 Cor 2:9 and its context.” The revelation of wisdom is a gift, where God has “lavished her (wisdom) upon those who love him” (Sir 1:1–10). Paul’s allusion evokes various writings, as well as intertextuality of thought.

\[26\] John P. Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (SBLSymS 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 53–57. Heil also does discuss several passages that use the terminology of the Lord ‘preparing’ something for his people, but these instances never specifically mention the human heart.

\[27\] Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 56–57. In n. 5 Heil notes his disagreement with Lindemann that the contexts are “very different.” Heil’s point is that Paul’s citation is not to one “particular OT text or context but of the OT scriptures as a whole and in general.” See Andreas Lindemann, *Der Erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9/1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 67.
Paul’s understanding of this newly revealed wisdom is firmly rooted in the context of the writings informing 2TJ understanding.

An assessment of Paul requires taking careful note of the Hellenistic world in which he was raised and, for the most part, operated. Yet in the midst of this background, Paul saw himself as “entrusted with a Jewish message for the whole world.” Paul was not a primarily Stoic thinker reinterpreting the Hebrew scriptures to fit his philosophical framework. He was a Jew often swimming against the current of the dominant Stoic worldview, interpreting the new revelation of Christ from the primary background of the Hebrew scripture and the Jewish worldview in terms comprehensible in the Greco-Roman world.

Divergent viewpoints on Paul’s framework of thinking grow from comments by Paul, which can be explained most coherently and consistently by the fact that Paul was addressing audiences influenced by various systems of thought. Paul shows an awareness of these common worldviews of his own time. His negative view toward the wisdom of the Greeks and any other form of human wisdom is also clearly stated (1 Cor 1:17–2:16). Duplicity in this respect would be transparent to many in his original audience. There is a means of access to divine wisdom available to the Corinthians through the mindset they should have, and through which they can be in the same judgement. The next section expands on this mindset.

The Christ-event is both revelation and the basis for ongoing revelation. Revelation births understanding in the heart as the wisdom that only comes through the spirit. This revealed wisdom is the basis for discernment in spiritual people. Wisdom must be more than accrued knowledge. The exercise of discernment is the primary means to engage with the ethical and spiritual dimensions of life in wisdom. Acting on the wrong wisdom leads to the improper discernment of teachings, teachers, and others in the ἐκκλησία.

28 Wright, Paul: Fresh Perspectives, 5.
Discerning on this basis leads to factionalism through a quest for superiority and self-advancement at the expense of others.

Next to be discussed is how the wisdom that comes from God results in the ‘mind of Christ’, the framework for discerning a new reality in and among the transformed people of God. This new reality only becomes accessible in this way, both through adopting this mind and acting accordingly. This is a corporate mindset that informs and modulates the actions of the believer and community in all aspects of life in the spirit.

The Mind of Christ

Paul’s point of connection between revealed wisdom and the ability to discern appropriately unfolds through 1 Cor 2. Although the Corinthian quest for wisdom is problematic, valuable knowledge comes through the spirit of God. According to Peter Stuhlmacher, “a faith theory of knowledge is also present in nutshell form in 1 Cor 2:6–16, where faith is not a hindrance but liberation to realistic thought.” In his analysis of 1 Cor 2:6–16, Hunt states that “for Paul, the judging of divinely received knowledge and its responsible communication within the community takes a priority unparalleled elsewhere in antiquity.” This passage culminates in Paul’s assertion, “For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (2:16). How can this apparent reversal be understood? Scott argues Paul does not assault reason itself, but rather “reason which has been hijacked by human vices,” with the ‘mind of Christ’ indicating for

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29 Scott, Implicit Epistemology, 42–43.
30 Peter Stuhlmacher, “The Hermeneutical Significance of 1 Cor 2:16,” in Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday (eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 341. Stuhlmacher goes on to say that these concepts are consistent with the “Israelite wisdom tradition,” but this wisdom tradition was “to be seen and appraised anew in the light of the revelation of Christ”
31 Hunt, The Inspired Body, 68. Hunt is recognizing the relative importance of the concept in Paul in contrast with the ancient milieu, but the importance also emerges relative to the rest of the NT.
the “spiritual” believer a “new way of thinking and reasoning.” This new way of thinking can be described as a mindset.

The mind (νοῦς) is not an organ, but represents the gathered elements of the process of thinking, or “mind-set.” This is the kind of understanding that leads Thiselton to link the ‘mind of Christ’ to the yielding sacrifice of Christ as represented in Phil 2:5. In this respect the use of the noun νοῦς comes close to terminology describing the process of thought, such as forms of the verb for thinking, φρονέω (Rom 12:3; 15:5; Phil 2:2, 5). Beyond thought and intelligence, Luke Johnson sees the “mind-set” inherent in νοῦς as “moral intelligence that grasps certain fundamental principles or values.” He observes that for Paul, νοῦς is “an instrument of moral discernment.” Same-mindedness with Christ must be one product of the renewed mind with renewed thoughts and knowledge expressed and lived in consistency with that mindset. Knowledge is not an end, but can become a source for good or bad outcomes, perhaps expressed also as useful or useless knowledge. The expression of useful knowledge occurs through discernment as the means to use properly what is known.

Terminology related to knowing recurs in 1 Cor 2:2–16. Charles Cousar asserts that as a key to this passage, Paul uses the infinitive “to know” (εἰδέναι, 2:2) followed by six other uses of ‘know’ (with forms of γινώσκω and οἶδα, 2:6–16) to centre spiritual knowledge in the cross alone and stress the insufficiency of human knowledge. Knowledge from God is not accessible through natural human means. Paul states in this passage that only the things taught by the spirit (as opposed to those taught by human

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wisdom) are revealed from God as true wisdom. What is known in the mind of the Lord is beyond human understanding. Still, dawning through this cloud of unknowing is the glimmer of a different reality: “we have the mind of Christ.” It is not reason itself that is the goal, but rather having the mindset that is in accordance with the spirit. To the extent reason is beneficial, it must always be grounded in the revelatory framework of Christ, which is grounded in scripture and the power of the spirit. Bringing these together and living in accordance with this reality is an ongoing process of discernment.

Who is included in the “we” (ἡμεῖς) having this mind? It is often argued that Paul is speaking of himself, or perhaps of himself and some elite subset of believers. It is difficult at times to know precisely to whom the first person plural refers in the epistle, but most often it is to Paul along with the believers at Corinth.37 Summarizing the value of the Corinthian standing in God, Paul advises, “for all things are yours” (1 Cor 3:21b), which makes a sweeping statement about such great gifts.38 Revealed wisdom is theirs, the mind of Christ is theirs, and these things are true whether or not they always act accordingly. The Corinthians are admonished to act in accordance with all that they have been given through the cross and the activity of the spirit. It is not the apostolic elite alone who possess these things bestowed by the spirit.

The appropriate mindset is evident through the setting aside of one’s own wisdom in favour of God’s wisdom, the wise use of spiritual things, and for the discernment that is only operative through the ‘mind of Christ.’39 The specific terminology found in the phrase, ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν (1 Cor 2:16b), is a unique occurrence in the New

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37 E. Verhoef, “The Senders of the Letters to the Corinthians and the Use of ‘I’ and ‘We,’” in The Corinthian Correspondence. (ed. Reimund Bieringer; BETL; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 418–419. Verhoef accounts for 86 first person singular, 54 first person plural uses (33 of which are claimed to be of believers in general) in 1 Corinthians. In 1:18–2:16, Verhoef classifies most of the first person plurals as referring to believers in general, with the possible exceptions of 1:23 and 2:6, 7, 13, 16 as referring to “preachers.”


Testament. Alexandra Brown states that the “mind of Christ” is unknown in other letters, with nominal attention given this terminology by most commentators. The preceding sentence, τίς γὰρ ἐγνώ νοῦν κυρίου, οὗ συμβιβάσει αὐτόν; (2:16a-b), is very close to Isa 40:13a, c in the LXX. There is no introductory formula, or any other indication that a reference to scripture is intended. It seems Paul expects the reference to be understood as support for his argument. Taking the allusion as a rhetorical question, the answer must be in the negative. Even though the expected answer is clear, Paul here supplies the surprising positive response that “we have the mind of Christ.” There is a close relationship between this verse and vv. 14–15, where the spiritual person discerns/evaluates (ἀνακρίνει) all things. Here the spiritual person has a means to apprehend normally inaccessible things of God hidden from the natural person (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος).

Paul alludes to Isa 40:13 in Rom 11:34 also, with a more doxological focus. The immediate context is lofty language of praise. “Oh the depth of riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and inscrutable his ways!” (Rom 11:33–36).

41 There is an addition of γὰρ in 1 Cor 2:16a and updated verb morphology in Isa 40:13c: τίς ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν τίς ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου, καὶ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, ὃς συμβιβάσει αὐτόν (Isa 40:13a–e). There is no citation marker, but close “verbal,” “conceptual,” and “formal agreement” along with ethical cohesion to establish allusion. On categories see Thompson, Clothed with Christ, 30–33.
42 Heil, The Rhetorical Role of Scripture, 69–70. See also R. Timothy McLay, The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 152–153. McLay thinks the citation works to bolster the “mystical union of the believer in Christ” on a participatory basis, which urges one to “think and live in a way that Christ would.”
43 Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 119 n. 86. Fee comments that the ἦ in 16b should be read as an adversative. This preserves the original sense of the passage from the HB while allowing Paul to make the contrast between those having the spirit, the πνευματικὸς (v. 15), and those who are merely natural, ψυχικὸς (v. 14).
44 Wolfgang Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther: 1 Kor 1,1–6,11 (EKKNT 7/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991), 267: “Wichtiger ist der Wechsel von κυρίου zu Χριστοῦ. Χριστὸς heißt für Paulus gerade der Gekreuzigte, wie schon 1,17.23f.30; 2,2 zeigten.” Schrage sees the change in terms from “Lord” to “Christ” as bringing the crucifixion into this citation as a continuation of these previous verses.
45 Mathias Rissi, “ἀνακρίνω,” EDNT 2:321. Rissi has common meaning at “interrogate, make a judicial decision,” but the definition in 2:14–15 ranging through examine/test and judge. See BDAG 66, where “discern” is included for these verses.
11:33). Following this declaration, wisdom and knowledge are further contextualized through the questions, τίς γὰρ ἐγνω νοῦν κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο; (11:34). The expected response to these questions is once again in the negative. Emphasis in this passage is placed on the mind of the Lord, with no mention of humans having the ‘mind of Christ’, or any kind of access to divine thought or mind. The verses immediately following these questions, however, speak about being “transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern (δοκίμαζειν) what is the will of God” (12:2), having “sober judgement” (σωφρονεῖν, 12:3), being “one body in Christ” (12:4–5), and various other characteristics related to harmonious thought and living (continuing through 12:21). The general sense of these concepts parallels the context of Paul’s ‘mind of Christ’ statement. Access to divine wisdom and the appropriate exercise of discernment work together in the unified community of Christ.

Perhaps the language most directly comparable to the ‘mind of Christ’ is found in Paul’s words to the Roman ἐκκλησία that God would “give to you the same thing to think (intend or judge are possible translations) in one another according to Christ Jesus” (δώῃ ύμῖν τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν ἐν ἀλλήλῳ κατὰ Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν), language of unity and shared mindset (Rom 15:5–6). The subjunctive in this passage is consistent with this being an expressed hope or possibility. This is something that may be realized subsequent to conversion, and also whatever maturational progress is in the Roman ἐκκλησία.

An important, yet more distant linguistic parallel may be observed in “you should think the same thing in yourselves which also is in Christ Jesus” (τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ύμῖν δ

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46 Romans 11:34 closely parallels Isa 40:13a, d. See p. 58 n. 41. Additionally, the conjunction ἢ is added in Rom 11:34d.

47 According to McLay, in Rom 12:2 the significance of the citation in 11:34 is seen, which also builds on the material in Rom 7 about human mind in “hapless plight.” McLay, The Use of the Septuagint, 150–151.

48 Thompson links the transformation here to 2 Cor 3:18, which has the believers in process of transformation into the “same image” of the Lord. He states, “Paul is not interested simply in individual transformation, but corporate renewal.” Thompson, Clothed with Christ, 84.
καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Phil 2:5). It is this language and the following passage through v. 16 about the kenosis of Christ that has pointed many to see this self-emptying as the core of the one mind motif in Paul. The self-yielding attitude sets aside personal superiority and factiousness. One spirit and one mind language is also found in Paul’s opening admonition to the Philippians (Phil 1:27, cf. 2:2). There is a pattern of similarity with the material in Rom 11–12 and 15, as well as in 1 Cor 2:16.

Munzinger suggests that the renewed mind is the response to the unsearchability of God, proposing that “in Paul’s emphasis on the renewed mind (or its equivalent, the ‘mind of Christ’ in 1 Cor 2:16) as the locus of normativity, discernment becomes anthropologically centred.” This is the primary groundwork for Munzinger to argue that the human mind renewed in Christ is the pivot point for new creation. One difficulty in his argument is that moving the “locus of normativity” to the renewed mind, and thus by extension to the mind of each of those whom Paul includes in this framework, may represent a move back in the direction of the Corinthian problem. Paul speaks of renewed persons, while pushing this renewal outward into community.

One potential solution to this difficulty is understanding the ‘mind of Christ’ is not directly equivalent to the renewed mind, but rather that these represent two nuanced aspects of Paul’s theology. The renewed mind falls within a continuing process in the person (Rom 12:2 ἀνακαινώσει; 2 Cor 4:16 ἀνακαινοῦται). The present passive third singular verb in 2 Cor 4:16 is used in view of the daily, ongoing process. In each case, the usage relates to a process that results in changed patterns of thought. In Rom 12:2 the “renewing of the mind” is preceded by the second person plural present passive imperative

49 NRSV translates φρονεῖ as mind, but the verbal force is retained here.
51 Munzinger, Discerning the Spirits, 44.
“be transformed” (μεταμορφούσθε). Paul’s imperative to the Romans to be transformed by the renewing of the mind is a process embraced in response to God’s actions on their behalf. The passive language is important here, because this is not Paul’s description of what is achieved through human effort alone. It is a divine work, part of the revelatory in-breaking of Christ. Renewal is active in the person before it is able to affect the corporate people. If the person is not renewed, it is impossible for a community of people to be renewed. The metamorphosis lays a foundation in the person for building in concert with the community. Transformation is necessary for both person and community. The renewed person is able to live in oneness with the community of the renewed, which is then able to function in unity.

Preceding this transformation by the renewing of the mind is the empowering necessity to “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1). Body here does not have ‘body of Christ’ imagery plainly in view, particularly through the plural τὰ σώματα ύμων. The result of this sacrifice of self and the transforming renewal is the ability “to discern (δοκιμάζειν) what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable, and perfect” (12:2b). It is often difficult to identify whether the person or community is meant in many passages. This is in part because this material is written to the community. Whatever Paul’s exact conception of the individual may be, there are identifiable workings of the spirit in the person. These workings are never solely for individualistic gain, but always contributing something for the ἐκκλησία. There should be an ongoing symbiosis between the person and community in the nexus of renewal.

The ‘mind of Christ’ terminology appears completely dependent on the collective unity among members in the ἐκκλησία. Wendell Willis concludes the terminology is “not

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focused on special wisdom or experiences, but on community life.”

More expansively, J. Murphy-O’Connor describes this concept as “to the extent that the community exemplifies the authentic humanity manifested by Christ, it judges from the standpoint of Christ. It is in this sense that it can be said to possess ‘the mind of Christ’.” Renewal of mind in the person makes possible having the ‘mind of Christ’ together with the ἐκκλησία. Renewal is movement away from the previously hostile, darkened minds (Rom 1:21–22; 8:5–10; cf. 1 Cor 3:1–3). “Transformation” and “renewal” suggest a dynamic process that is preparatory to the stative of “having” a different mind.

The one mind language is encouraged as part of the actualization of the mature, Christ-centred life in the present. Conflating these concepts of renewal and the ‘mind of Christ’ can create a stark choice between renewal as an individual or community process. Renewal can be a process broadly at work in the people who together as the ἐκκλησία move toward grasping the ‘mind of Christ’. Equating renewal of mind in a person with the ‘mind of Christ’ suggests displacement of the human mind by the divine mind in some way. Admittedly, this problem is mitigated by understanding νοῦς to be more precisely defined as mindset. This does not entirely resolve the problem of displacement. Paul displays his own thinking in areas of spiritual concerns as one proven trustworthy (1 Cor 7:6–12, 25–40). His self-perception reveals a distinction between his personal judgement and divine judgement. But his renewed mind brings him to the state in which discernment becomes operative, and revelation can be assessed. Paul models discernment working through ‘the mind of Christ’ as his mindset to approach situations lacking clarity. Having the ‘mind of Christ’ is the state in which those attitudes and judgements can be free of the sense of superiority that produces divisive outcomes as a matter of course. Paul is urging

the Corinthians to participate with him in acting together through the ‘mind of Christ’, the actualization of the hidden wisdom through the spirit.

Revelation

How can this hidden wisdom (1 Cor 2:7) be discovered? Something hidden can be searched out in an appropriate way, but for Paul the wisdom of God is not something learned through merely expanding human knowledge. The hidden wisdom, this mystery, is accessible because “God has revealed to us through the Spirit” (1 Cor 2:10a). The spirit plumbs the depths of God in a way that only the spirit of God is able to do. The spirit alone is the avenue for revelation (ἀποκάλυψις), for just as “vv. 10b–13 make clear, the emphasis lies on the means of revelation, the Spirit.” Actualization in the human reality of the things hidden in God transpires through the spirit acting in order to bring the divine to the human sphere. Realizing this one thing does not solve the problem of revelation in terms of content or recognition. What kinds of things can potentially be revealed? How can it be known that these revealed things are truly from God? Is it more important to discern the content of the revelation, or to discern the spirit of God as the means? Some of this is further discussed in chs. 6 and 7, but here the focus is on 1 Cor 2 more narrowly as a foundation for discernment.

In order to consider what might be revealed, diverse types of revelation must be parsed. In Paul’s greetings to the Corinthians he states, “you are not lacking in any

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56 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 109–110.
57 Paul W. Meyer, “Holy Spirit in the Pauline Letters: A Contextual Exploration,” Int 33 (1979): 3–4. As Meyer points out, it is not an overlap among Judaism, Stoicism, or Gnosticism that drives the issue of the spirit. The “theological context for a discussion of God’s Spirit or the Holy Spirit is thus unavoidably set within reflection upon the relation of the divine to the human, of God’s transcendence to his presence and power in the world, of the eschatological to the historical.”
58 C. K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians (BNTC; London: Continuum, 1968), 317. Barrett differentiates between Paul’s use of the term ‘revelation’ (ἀποκάλυψις) for the “apocalyptic manifestation at the last day,” “supernatural revelations” of the Gospel, “celestial truths,” and “Christian
This is the kind of revelation that Paul elsewhere refers to in similar language. The ‘day of the Lord’ motif is in very much in view when this kind of revelation is discussed (Rom 2:5–16; 1 Thess 1:10; 4:14–5:11; cf. 2 Thess 1:7; 2 Thess 2:8). The eschatological hope is in view as he discusses “the glory about to be revealed to us” (Rom 8:18; cf. Col 3:4). This eschatological revelation is distinct from the revelation that occurs more subtly. Large-scale revelation through events such as the ‘day of the Lord’ indicate divine willingness to reveal what is normally hidden.

Another kind of revelation is mentioned by Paul, which occurs at a more personal level. This aspect of revelation has to do with disclosure of something previously unknown to a specific person or group. This is an area where revelation and inspiration overlap. It is still revelation that can be assimilated in an understandable way. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Paul does not describe divine inspiration in terms of the eviction of one’s mind or senses in a state of ecstasy. He demonstrates familiarity with revelation on a grand scale as well as in more personal modes.

Paul asserts that his gospel is a result of the direct, divine revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal 1:11–16). He brings this revelation itself, on the basis of a later, very specific revelation, to submit it to the church leaders in Jerusalem for their judgement (Gal 2:1–2).
Paul is the recipient of direct, divine revelation about the gospel and also specific actions. These occasions have Paul receiving divine instruction about something unknown to him previously, without the input of human intermediaries. Paul also describes revelations (plural of ἀποκάλυψις) that include visionary experiences of “paradise” (παράδεισον, 2 Cor 12:1–7). These revelations are closely related to the rhetorical purpose at hand, yet also demonstrate Paul’s high regard for revelatory experiences. Paul does not disparage revelation, but rather points to a mode of revelation given in the spirit for the building up the ἐκκλησία. His avoidance of merely self-indulgent spirituality is grounded in his view of revelation as cruciform, Christocentric, and intended to be constructive for both the individual and the community.

These revelatory experiences in Galatians and Second Corinthians cover an extensive range of transformative events for Paul. He receives revelation that brings him to faith in Christ, revelation that guides his decisions, and apparently revelation that is ecstatic. Paul is well versed in a life that can be characterized as ‘mystic’.

**Components**

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61 William Baird, “Visions, Revelation, and Ministry: Reflections on 2 Cor 12:1–5 and Gal 1:11–17,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 656–657. Baird follows the RSV in translating “revealed to me” instead of “revealed in me” (NASB) as evidence that “an inward or ecstatic experience is not necessarily implied.” If this is a correct interpretation, Paul’s claim that he did not receive this revelation through human means becomes relatively meaningless. Paul’s claim to the Galatians appears precisely designed to establish these specific revelations as proof of his approval by God. Paul combines his revelations with his background, relationship with the Galatians, and his interpretation of the HB as the grid for them to judge him as trustworthy.

62 Baird, “Visions,”: 657–659. Here Baird notes the “heavenly journey motif” and a clear relationship with apocalyptic genre writings deriving from the 2TP. Unlike an apocalypse as a literary construction, Baird argues that Paul is relating a genuine personal experience.

63 Edith M. Humphrey, *And I Turned to See the Voice: The Rhetoric of Vision in the New Testament* (Studies in Theological Interpretation; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 42–44. Humphrey places the vision-report of Paul at the end of the argumentatio in an “ironic mode” that is nevertheless intended to “point beyond himself to the One who has been seen.” She argues that Paul “plays with the genre of apocalypse,” featuring an “intertext” of the entire genre. This is part of Paul’s understanding of an “ongoing connection between the unseen world and the life of the church.” Paul makes use of the rhetorical and the apocalyptic in ways that fit his overarching purpose of developing the church.

64 If Paul did not receive the revelations in 2 Cor 12:1–7, it seems strange that he would be given a “thorn” to prevent him from exalting himself. In any case, Paul does esteem these revelations as important, and also at least partially private.

65 Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 52. According to Segal “Paul’s experiences are manifestly ecstatic,” can be related to the “Jewish mystical tradition,” and are similar to other experiences in both “biblical tradition and early Judaism.” See also Christopher G. Foster, “Communal Participation in the Spirit: The Corinthian Correspondence in Light of Early Jewish Mysticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls” (Ph.D. diss., University of
such as these form a core in Paul’s character that cannot be dismissed in favour of a merely intellectual, Stoic Paul.

This revelation from God to individuals or the ἐκκλησία is something in which Paul has confidence. He speaks of the “faith” that was to be revealed apart from the Law (Gal 3:23). Righteousness by faith is a matter of revelation (Rom 1:17). There is a revelation of long hidden mystery through the Gospel (Rom 16:25). Each of these areas of revelation centre on the unfolding of the Gospel itself as a new reality, in a way that makes the Christian faith and the Christ-event accessible. These examples of revelation are written to the ἐκκλησία, so can appear to reference community revelation. Whether these are regarded as revelation to an individual or a group, the individual must still appropriate the content of the revelation. In Rom 1:16–17, however, the language of revelation is connected with individuals in the singular usage for “Jew,” “Greek,” and then the “righteous.” Paul sees this personal appropriation of faith as something that must happen through revelation in each person. When he writes to the Corinthians about the revelation of the hidden wisdom made accessible through the spirit, he is being consistent with his writings elsewhere.

Divine revelation is given to effect change or to give instruction. Thinking that is not Christ-like will be revealed to believers (Phil 3:15). Revelation stimulates a person to speak something to instruct the ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 14:6, 26). In a setting where revelation flows from a purportedly divine source, how is it possible to respond and interact with this world of spiritual dynamism?

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Manchester, 2013), 122–128. Foster argues that Paul teaches communio mystica as corporate participation in the spirit for all Christians.

66 Paul relates revelation to prophesying as a spontaneous source of inspiration to speak out (1 Cor 14:30).
Discernment as an Interpersonal and Spiritual Concern

Even as Paul begins to address the problem of factions in the Corinthian assembly, he takes what can look like a puzzling step of encouraging them to engage in discernment. He begins with a call to have the same mind and judgement, but this is surely a risky action for a community struggling with divisions. Clearly, they have already been engaged in some kind of judgement, at least in terms of evaluating and selecting teachers and teachings. How can inviting such a collection of individuals to sharpen their sense of discernment and judgement lead to the resolution of disharmony? Paul certainly perceived the process of discernment to be defective in Corinth. Continued references to discernment or judgement in First Corinthians make this clear. To risk this subject within a divisive church demonstrates the importance of discernment generally, but also as an essential means to recover from these problems. Defective discernment has led to many problems, but the suspension of discernment is not the solution.

Paul will give examples of his own judgement, just as he acknowledges that the Corinthians will evaluate him. As Paul is discussing wisdom, he makes his first use of a form of judgement in terms of his own approach to the Corinthians in his time living among them. He speaks specifically of not using high-level speech or wisdom (1 Cor 2:1), “for I did not judge to know anything among (in) you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (οὐ γὰρ ἐκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον, 1 Cor 2:2). This translation varies from many others in placing the negative adverb with the indicative verb instead of the infinitive as is typically done in this verse (cf. BDF §429, but for a less absolute position see A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Bellingham: Logos, 2006), 1162). Translating ἐκρινά as ‘judge’ maintains focus on this terminology.

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67 Use of ἐκρινά here is “to come to a conclusion after a cognitive process,” BDAG 568.
68 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 211–212. For the appropriateness of keeping the negative with the indicative verb instead of the infinitive as is typically done in this verse (cf. BDF §429, but for a less absolute position see A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (Bellingham: Logos, 2006), 1162). Translating ἐκρινά as ‘judge’ maintains focus on this terminology.
well as avoiding attributing a false “anti-intellectualism” to Paul. Attaching the negative with either the infinitive or the pronoun produces a reading where Paul claims to know nothing. The issue is over which knowledge is good, not that all knowledge is bad.

It is possible to stress the “in you” over “among you.” The latter is attractive in the context of the passage, at least in terms of Paul’s physical location when in their midst. In the broader conceptual context, however, it is possible to see that Paul is reflecting on his judgement of the Corinthians through Christ in them (cf. Rom 8:9–11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 13:5; Col 1:27). In other words, Paul had selectively judged them on the basis of Christ in them, without regard to their advancement in the faith. In one sense, translation of either in or among may be less a matter of a choice between individualism or community life than it is an understanding that Christ is not presented as an “other,” but is intimately meshed with those who call on him and seek to be more like him. Paul models an aspect of judgement that respects the work of the spirit within the person or at least in the midst of the community, and maintains a focus on this aspect of their status as believers. This is a key principle that Paul is using to empower the appropriate kinds of judgement/discernment that will move the Corinthians away from division.

This kind of judgement will be reflected once again as Paul shifts the discussion in 1 Cor 2:12–16. Wisdom brings with it the implicit purpose of application to life. Sprouting forth from the wisdom of God is the ability to discern (ἀνακρίνει) all things (2:15). The spirit from God is given “so we might know the things graciously given to us by God” (ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν, 2:12b). Continuing this idea in v. 13 he refers to these same things “which also we speak not in words taught through human wisdom, but taught through the spirit, interpreting spiritual wisdom through spiritual words” (Ἡ ἡμῖν...
λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ’ ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικά συγκρίνοντες). 69

Paul’s use of συγκρίνοντες may be incidental to other aspects of judgement in the epistle, but it is an interesting word choice that does relate conceptually. There are only two other uses of this word in the NT, with both occurring in 2 Cor 10:12 in the context of evaluating by comparison between people. 70 Moving from the idea of interpreting these spiritual things in 1 Cor 2:13, in v. 14 he immediately begins to speak of the “natural person not accepting the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to the one who is also not able to understand, for they are spiritually discerned” (ψυχικός δὲ ἀνθρωπος σοφίας λόγοις ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις, ὡς ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικά συγκρίνοντες). 71 The dichotomy between the natural and spiritual here emerges as a chasm. Spiritual discernment is enabled by spiritual wisdom given through the spirit, not naturally accessible means.

There is a shift in the nature of the discussion in the following verse from things to people, “but the spiritual person judges all things, yet this same person is judged by no one” (ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα, αὐτὸς δὲ υπ’ οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται, 1 Cor

69 See Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 76: “interpreting spiritual truths by means of spiritual words.” The diversity of thought on the translation of this verse is quite large. The continuity of thought is maintained with “things graciously given,” which are here spoken in words. This points to πνευματικοῖς as masculine, due to the continuation of the idea in v. 13a of words taught through the spirit. It seems most consistent with the context to translate πνευματικὰ having what (τὰ) is given by God (wisdom) as its antecedent (cf. 2:6–7, 12). See W. Schneider, “κρίνει,” NIDNTT 2:362 for a concise set of definitions for συγκρίνω including “interpret.” See also Edwin Larsson, “συγκρίνω,” TDNT 3:283: Larsson has “interpret/explain” as better choices than other definitions in this verse. See also F. Buechel, “συγκρίνω,” TDNT 3:953–954. Büchel considers to “interpret,” “expound,” or “explain” as best definitions for this context, while noting this is also consistent with uses in the LXX (cf. Gen 40:8, 16, 22; 41:12, 13, 15; Dan 5:7).


71 Schneider, NIDNTT 2:362. Schneider states that “anakrinō, found from Thucydides onwards, expresses the questioning process which leads to a judgement: to examine, cross-examine, interrogate, inquire, and investigate.” In Paul’s use here, a judicial process in not in view, but rather the examination that allows one to reach a judgement about something.
2:15). Now the πνευματικὸς is not only able to comprehend things and to judge, but others do not judge this person. Is this in fact part of what Paul refers to in v. 2? He has introduced the language of judgement from 1:10 onward, now exempting the spiritual person from the judgement that would be applied by other people. If he has already said that he had not judged to know anything in the Corinthians except Christ in/among them, he is extending the concept in the current discussion. Wisdom is given through the spirit to spiritual person, with the result that this person is broadly discerning. Discernment is then a characteristic of the spiritual person that appears to be inseparable from that person’s spiritual nature. To lack discernment is to be natural (ψυχικὸς), to be spiritual (πνευματικὸς) is to be discerning.

It is at this point that Paul introduces the ‘mind of Christ’ concept. The context indicates the discernment Paul advocates is rooted in the ‘mind of Christ’. Superficially, this appears to support the ‘mind of Christ’ as some kind of refined, pure reasoning that is accessible through the spirit. Brian Rosner posits the ‘mind of Christ’ is how Paul merges wisdom with the cross for “everyday life.” Having the ‘mind of Christ’ is actualized through the self-yielding mindset that characterizes Christ and leads to the ἐκκλησία abiding in the “same mind and in the same judgement.” The context diametrically opposes the kind of interpersonal superiority apparent in the Corinthian spirituality. The sharp edges that invariably attend to matters of judgement are softened and brought into the appropriate service only in those who have the ‘mind of Christ’.

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72 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 117. Fee notes the ten occurrences of a form of ἀνακρίνω as the only uses in Paul, which leads him to conjecture that this may be a case of Paul using a Corinthian term against them. This is in part based on what he identifies as the “polemical or ironical context” of each use except 14:24. Even so, Fee describes the verb as appearing in 2:15 as “the one proper activity of the truly ‘spiritual’ person. This argues against limiting the term to either a “polemical or ironical context.”

After this fairly positive comment, Paul shifts to a negative diatribe that brings back several elements expressed earlier. The transition from 2:16 to 3:1 has a startling effect. Speaking of his earlier association with the Corinthians, he states, “I could not speak (λαλῆσαι) to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.” What was lacking continues, “Even now you are still not ready, for you are still of the flesh” (3:2b–3a). This brings back into focus the issue of factionalism that had been introduced originally in 1:11–17. Questions arise as to the status of the Corinthians, who should have the mind of Christ. Paul can shift from spiritual to natural because the choice must be made to receive what is spiritual and to act accordingly, which is in the mindset of Christ.

Paul continues to shift the emphasis away from human servants to the divine source, the one whose building/temple the Corinthians are (1 Cor 3:4–12). The construction each person places on the foundation of Jesus Christ will be revealed by fire in “the Day,” as “the fire will test what sort of work each has done” (3:13). This testing is something that God alone can do, because in fact God will destroy (φθερεῖ) those who destroy God’s temple. The intent may not be to emphasize destruction, but rather a fire of refinement. Paul will continue to develop this metaphor of the temple as the epistle continues through other topics. It is clearly part of Paul’s emphasis on avoiding defilement (6:15–20). This language remains in view when Paul recapitulates 3:10–17 in 4:1–5.

Again contrasting the inferior wisdom of the world with that of God, Paul returns to language of discernment. He uses forms of ἀνακρίνω in 4:3–4, which first emerged in 2:14–15. Earlier, the spiritual discernment of spiritual people discerned all things. The shift is made from discerning/judging things to the same exercise made with respect to a person.

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75 Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians,” 864–865. Sampley argues for three main points here. Dedication to the Lord, redemption from slavery, and “temple maintenance.”
Now as he acknowledges that the Corinthians examine him, Paul states that he does not examine himself. Stating that his conscience is clear implies that some self-examination has occurred. Continuing with this reasoning, he clarifies that it is the Lord who examines him (4:3–4).

In a verse reminiscent of 3:13, the conclusion of the examination just referred to is again the surety of a coming judgement when God will reveal the counsel of the heart. Paul cautions, “therefore do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord will come” (ὧστε μὴ πρὸ καιροῦ τι χρίνετε ἐς ὅν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος, 4:5a). The present imperative (μὴ χρίνετε) has the effect of commanding restraint from judging in this way. This opening section of the epistle establishes a need for the exercise of judgement, but then suddenly there is a prohibition against judgement. How can this be reconciled?

The change in tone for this passage is in part the different court of judgement. This is a merely human court, as Paul asserts, “but to me it is insignificant, that I should be judged by you or human day” (ἐμοὶ δὲ εἰς ἐλάχιστον ἐστίν, ἵνα ύφ’ ὑμῶν ἀναχριθῶ ἢ ὑπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡµέρας, 4:3a). The enigmatic “by human day” refers to human courts, which are pathetically beneath the divine court of 3:13 and then again in 4:5. The change of venue from the divine to a human court does not in itself resolve the shift in tone about judgement.

In the most straightforward terms of the context from v. 3, Paul is simply continuing his discussion about the Corinthians judging him. In this case he suggests they

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76 Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (SP 7; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 169–171. Collins states that 4:3 “recalls” 3:13, where Paul’s rhetoric has the “eschatological judgment (4:3–5) stand in relationship to the servant and steward metaphorical motif (4:1–2) much in the way that the words on judgment (3:14–17) stand in relationship to the construction metaphor of 3:10–13.” Although the language of 4:3–5 is derived from “the semantic field of forensics,” this does not mean the use is “forensic or judicial rhetoric.”

77 Rissi, “χρίνω,” *EDNT* 2:320. Rissi has this use as “condemnation.”

78 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 338: “First, the human ἡµέρα stands in contrast to the day [of the Lord] in 3:13, i.e., it is to God’s day of judgment, not to any human day of judgment, that we look for a valid assessment of our work. Second, in Hebrew and in other languages including very occasionally Greek, a close link exists between day and judgment or court (Heb νέ, yom)” (emphasis his). See also Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 127–128.
wait to see how he will be judged when the Lord comes.⁷⁹ One proposal for a solution to the tension this passage creates is to translate v. 4.5a as “do not reach any verdict,” which leaves open the earlier uses of ἀνακρίνω as related to the kind of examination that comes before a trial.⁸⁰ This reading maintains the contrast between the human and divine court as the heart of this specific passage.

The figurative language Paul uses in 4:6 strongly hints at his overall purpose.⁸¹ He applies the schema (μετεσχημάτισα) of his examples to himself and to Apollos so that they may realize how these things apply to themselves as well. These metaphors illuminate their standing before God and one another. The core of their misappropriated understanding becomes plainly illustrated through the elevation of human teachers and failure to recognize the value of the cross.⁸² The failure to use the appropriate judgement in these matters, along with the failure of acting through the ‘mind of Christ’, have together allowed factious self-aggrandizement to blossom.

Paul makes one further reference using the language of judgement in this opening section of the epistle. Relating to everything preceding comes a series of questions, “for who has judged you? What do you have that you did not receive? And also if you received it, why do you boast as not having received it?” (τίς γὰρ σε διακρίνει; τί δὲ ἐχεις δ ὡς ἐλαβες; εἰ δὲ καὶ ἐλαβες, τί καυχάσασι ὡς μὴ λαβών, 4:7).⁸³ The boasting, factious nature is incompatible with the revealed wisdom of God and the mind of Christ. Paul had made the judgement to know only Christ in their midst instead of comparing them with others. Their

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⁸⁰ Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 102–103. The attempt here is to reconcile the type of judgement Paul has in mind in different passages.
⁸¹ Fiore, “Covert Allusion,” 89. Here Paul “expressly states the paraenetic purpose behind his remarks.”
⁸³ Büchsel, “διακρίνω” *TDNT* 3:946. Büchsel has judgement by comparison here for διακρίνει.
own lack of judgement over time has resulted in the embrace of defective human wisdom and entanglement in competitive factions.

Discernment is the key to unlock the potentially Pandoran box of the spiritual world. This must be the case whether the issue is spiritual manifestations or spiritual concepts. It is no less important in evaluating people or ethical conduct. Whether it is a matter of the source of revelation, the content of revelation, or the living out of a new life in Christ, the exercise of discernment within the realized Christ-event is the Pauline gold standard for spiritual maturity, as well as for meaningful unity.

**Conclusion**

This chapter built upon Paul's conceptualization for the same mind and judgement in the community as foundational to the discernment motif. Paul describes his own judgement (κρίνω) among the Corinthians as grounded in Christ crucified, then emphasizes revelatory wisdom as the only true wisdom through which interpretive discernment (συγκρίνω) becomes available. The gifts of the spirit are spiritually discerned (πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται) by those who are spiritual in contrast with those incapable of discernment, those being natural/unspiritual. This discernment is essential to those who are in Christ, who transcend the evaluation of others on the basis of this identity and behaviour. Having the mind of Christ provides access to this wisdom through the spirit.

After establishing the spiritual discernment that springs from revelatory wisdom, Paul maintains the tension between discerning appropriately and the limitations against prematurely coming to final judgements (κρίνω) against others in advance of God’s final judgement. Paul models judgement based on the new reality in the cross, where those who have the mindset of Christ are able to discern properly, parsing where their judgement/discernment functions and where it ceases. The basis of discernment in
revelatory wisdom and the mind of Christ as common denominators point toward the “same mind and judgement” the community should have. Advancing these concepts, the appropriate roles for human and divine judgement established in 1 Cor 3–4 is a basis for discernment/judgement with respect to others, which becomes prominent especially in 1 Cor 5–6 and 8–11.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the proper exercise of judgement/discernment is the means Paul uses to establish the path for the Corinthian ἐκκλησία to find their standing in Christ. Through discernment the Corinthian community can be in real agreement, evaluate revelation, and cooperate to become the people they are called to be. This foundational groundwork informs the remainder of this thesis in discussion of Paul’s use of discernment/judgement throughout the range of issues addressed in First Corinthians. Paul maintains tension between the inscrutability of God and the revelation of previously concealed wisdom for the building of community in Christ. The wisdom of God is realized through the mind of Christ producing self-giving love defining and empowering the discerning ἐκκλησία. The community is able to exercise discernment from this standpoint in different areas of personal conduct, daily life, and in worship matters.
PART II: DISCERNMENT FOR LIVING IN THE WORLD

Having the mind of Christ and thereby exercising discernment in matters of ethical concern provides the necessary basis for the community to walk in the purified, self-sacrificing mode that was also in Christ. The foundation in the first section of the epistle (1 Cor 1:1–4:21) undergirds the moral standing of the ἐκκλησία as a developing body of people learning how to live new lives in Christ. The formulation of this new paradigm is developed from Israel’s scriptures, but adapted with modified boundary/identity markers.¹

People now become participants without circumcision or certain measures of ritual purity. The following two chapters will argue Paul does this by mediating the truth of scripture, teaching appropriate exercise of judgement and discernment, and encouraging the Corinthians toward their rightful place as the people of eschatological fulfilment. This mediation of scripture is rooted in the revelation through the Christ-event as Paul describes it in the first section of the epistle.

¹ Beetham argues Paul actually “relativized” prescriptive Torah issues/practices and the Jerusalem temple through his mode of allusion and echo. Beetham, Echoes, 261.
Chapter 3: Exercising Discernment in Moral and Ethical Matters (1 Cor 5:1–7:40)

Introduction

Judgement by the community over sexual immorality in their midst, issues of morality more broadly, and issues of discernment related to marriage are addressed in 1 Cor 5–7. In each area addressed, the importance of the community to collectively or personally exercise proper judgement over conduct in these matters is at the heart of Paul’s instruction and provides further foundation for discernment in the following chapters of this thesis. Chapter 1 grounded discernment/judgement in revelatory wisdom, but now it will be demonstrated Paul expresses a basis for community judgement also in Torah, which gives a specific foundation for the community’s calling to exercise judgement in moral matters.

First, immorality confronted by Paul in 1 Cor 5 brings the community’s judgement into question. Paul’s use of Torah in this situation will be examined along with the application of judgement to correct the problem and to protect the community. Next, judgement by the community is extended to interpersonal conflict, which forms a basis for discussion of this judgement as it overlaps with eschatological issues for the community. Finally, the application of judgement in personal choices about marriage will be demonstrated through Paul’s use of opinion and flexibility.

Judgement over Immorality in the Ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 5:1–5)

This section demonstrates Paul’s basis for the community to exercise a standard of judgement that guards against immorality in their midst. There is an undergirding of scripture in 1 Cor 5 that forms a basis not only for action against specific behaviour, but also for the community to act in judgement. The community not only has failed to judge egregious behaviour formally, but also fails to discern related issues.

A report of sexual immorality (πορνεία) in the community induces a strong adverse reaction from Paul (1 Cor 5:1–2). The behaviour is something not even found “among the
Gentiles” (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). This provocative statement evokes questions. What is the standard of measure for this moral lapse? Why does Paul unambiguously compare them to Gentiles, and what does that suggest about the community? The Gentiles are not the standard for morality, but the Corinthian congregation should be distinct as a new people set apart.² They are called to transcend the morality of other groups. Distinguishing between the Corinthian community and Gentiles arises from Paul’s vision for the eschatological people of God. Differences between this new ethical reality and that of outsiders are found more in the purposes of the ethics than in their forms. This new ethical life includes the necessity of judging within the ἐκκλησία in matters affecting their standing before God. Failure to exercise this judgement provokes Paul not just for purity’s sake, but also the betrayal of what the community should understand about their identity and role.

Paul decisively moves to unilateral judgement of the immoral man without pleading for support. Urging the assembly to cast him out, Paul says, “I have already judged” (ἡδη κέκρικα, 5:3). His use of the perfect demonstrates the completed and continuing force of this judgement.³ Carrying out the judgement is the responsibility of the community, even though they have failed to exercise judgement. They are directed that the offender must be “removed from your midst” (ἀρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν, 5:2), and to “hand this man over to Satan for destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (5:5). It is opaque how this is to be effected in Corinth besides the loss of relationship with the community, but the Deuteronomic expulsion formula alluded to in

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² Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 95 n. 20: “Sexual immorality is in the Jew’s eyes the sin of the Gentiles” (italics his). Cf. Jub. 25:1; Wis 14:12, 22–26.
5:13 is anticipated here.\textsuperscript{4} In Deuteronomy and Leviticus, the defiling sin of sexual immorality is connected with resultant “curse, physical suffering, and exclusion.”\textsuperscript{5} The essential purity of the community as the temple of God must be maintained. The groundwork has been established for the community as the temple in 1 Cor 3:16–17, with the idea recurring in 6:19.\textsuperscript{6} There is a significant frame of the temple motif bracketing the defiling moral issue of πορνεία and its destructive nature running through 1 Cor 5–6. The failure to exercise judgement causes Paul to forcefully intervene. Not withstanding this intervention, the community has still failed to discern the gravity of the situation with respect to defilement from this immorality on the people directly involved as well as on the community. Beyond this, they have failed to discern who they are.

The basis for this judgement is most likely immorality between a man and his stepmother. Gerald Harris comments that language similar to “someone having his father’s wife” (γυναῖκα τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἐχειν, 5:1) is used in Leviticus 18:7–8 to draw a distinction between a mother and stepmother, and also that the grammatical present ἐχειν demonstrates the continuing nature of the relationship.\textsuperscript{7} Leviticus contrasts between μήτηρ and γυναικὸς πατρὸς σου, with either forbidden as sexual intimates, but the latter is likely a stepmother.\textsuperscript{8} Paul draws on Torah in language and concept here. This behaviour also violates Roman law.\textsuperscript{9} It was a serious criminal offense if the father was alive at the same

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\textsuperscript{4} B. J. Oropeza, \textit{Paul and Apostasy: Eschatology, Perseverance, and Falling Away in the Corinthian Congregation} (WUNT 2.115; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 224. Drawing from the political language of Plutarch \textit{Mor. 479B}, Oropeza compares this to the amputation of “one’s own limb” to maintain purity.

\textsuperscript{5} Smith, ‘\textit{Hand this Man over to Satan},’ 123–136.

\textsuperscript{6} Friedrich Wilhelm Horn, “Paulus und der Herodionische Tempel,” \textit{NTS} 53 (2007): 187. “Die Tempelmetapher wird in 1 Kor 3.16 (2.P.Pl.) und in 2 Kor 6.16 (1.P.Pl.) sowie in 1 Kor 6.19 (2.P.Pl.) stets auf die Gemeinde bezogen, nicht auf ein Individuum.” See also Kent E. Brower, \textit{Living as God’s Holy People: Holiness and Community in Paul} (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), 65. Brower comments that “Paul’s point here is that the dwelling place of God is in persons, whole persons, as well as the people of God corporately.”


\textsuperscript{8} John E. Hartley, \textit{Leviticus} (WBC 4; Dallas: Word, 2002), 294.

\textsuperscript{9} Harris, “The Beginnings of Church Discipline,” 4. See also Will Deming, “The Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6,” \textit{JBL} 115 (1996): 294–295. On Roman laws, see \textit{Digest} 23.2.14 banning marriage to
time, unlikely to be ignored by the courts.\textsuperscript{10} The Corinthian situation may involve a man “having” his deceased father’s widow, but the offense is serious regardless, even among Gentiles.

Legalities aside, broader social strictures regarding marriage or sexual relations between stepmothers and stepsons may have been ambiguous in some circumstances.\textsuperscript{11} Against this ambiguity 2TJ commentary expands on the Torah proscription, “Do not touch your stepmother, your father’s second wife, but honor her as a mother, because she follows the footsteps of your mother. Do not have intercourse with the concubines of (your) father” (Pseudo-Phocylides 179–181).\textsuperscript{12} It is not difficult to understand Paul’s abhorrence of the situation as a violation of religious fidelity, broad moral standards, and even prevailing legal standards. The Corinthians should have discerned the gravity of the situation.

The lexical history of πορνεία in the Greco-Roman context is tied closely with prostitution, with “its root meaning being derived from ‘to sell’ (probably πορνάω).”\textsuperscript{13} Paul’s usage can be traced to the LXX, where πορνεία has a broader application toward forbidden behaviours (unfaithfulness is πορνείαν; Num 14:32 LXX). Paul’s specific concern with this problem in the nascent community is consistent with the situation of early Israel. It seems reasonable to posit echoes from Numbers here, which is also a theme re-emerging in 1 Cor 10 (see ch. 4 below).\textsuperscript{14}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Jin Hwang connects the problems of 1 Cor 5 with events of Numbers 25:1–9 in terms of immoral actions affecting the community (Num 25:1–3; 1 Cor 5:1), brazenness and the resistance of the people to discipline offenders (Num 25:5–8; 1 Cor 5:9), and mourning as a response (Num 25:6; 1 Cor 5:2, 6). Jin K. Hwang, “The Crisis At Corinth and Paul’s Use of Numbers in 1 Corinthians,” in \textit{Early Christian Literature}
In Numbers, an Israelite man brings a Midianite woman into the camp for sexual and apparently cultic purposes (Num 25:6–8). The event in Corinth causes similar community contamination involving a man in the community and a woman from outside. It appears that the stepmother is not part of the Christian ἐκκλησία. She is never mentioned as a party to the discipline, which repeatedly refers to one person in the singular and/or masculine (ὁ τὸ ἐργον τοῦτο πράξας, 5:2; τὸν, 5:3; τὸν τοιοῦτον, 5:5). Unlike the Numbers incident, the woman is not condemned in any way (cf. 5:12–13) as judgement of outsiders is not in view (1 Cor 5:9–10). Second, Paul stands as the human judge over this event as did Moses (cf. Num 25:5; 1 Cor 5:3). He exercises judgement and directs the response through others, unlike the situations in 1 Cor. 6–7 where he invites the Corinthians to use their judgement. Third, as in Numbers, the community leaders failed in their responsibility to exercise judgement (Num 25:4–5).

The Corinthian situation here bears resemblance to that in Numbers, while creating the opportunity for Paul to bring the Torah proscription against community defilement into the dialogue. Paul’s allusion to Deuteronomy establishes a basis for community judgement that protects against immorality, which is a form of impurity Paul seeks for the community to avoid.

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16 One reading of 5:3b–5:4a is that the immoral man was committing incest “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” thus magnifying the severity of the offense. Robert Moses, E., “Physical and/or Spiritual Exclusion? Ecclesial Discipline in 1 Corinthians 5,” *NTS* 59 (2013): 180–181.
17 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 200–201: “... it is nearly impossible that she could have been a member of the community and not in v. 5 have been brought under the same judgment as her lover.”
18 Coming after the conclusion of a passage dealing with rebellion against Paul (1 Cor 4:14–20), this could echo as an antitype to the rebellion against Moses in the corresponding Numbers narrative.
Judging Immorality as Leaven in the Christ Passover (1 Cor 5:6–8)

A shift to Passover imagery extends the use of scripture, which also indicates the likely awareness of this general concept in Corinth. Morality issues continue, but have an additional component affecting Paul’s criticism of their failure to exercise discernment. The failure is more than one of pride because the community fails to discern its standing. The imagery Paul employs gives a reason for judgement against this particular immorality as an urgent matter.

Paul accuses the Corinthians of being arrogant (καὶ ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἔστε, 5:2) using a participle of φυσιόω, a verb that has the basic meaning of puffing or blowing up.19 This is suggestive of the effect of leaven in dough, and further confirmed by the association of boasting as the Passover metaphor is developed. Paul extends this imagery saying “your boasting is not a good thing” (5:6). One component of the image is the contaminant of pride leavening the dough, which must be free of all impurities. Paul commands, “Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened” (5:7a). Paul reweaves the Passover narrative along with other Torah narratives calling Israel to be a pure people. Along with the echoes from Numbers, a foundation for the community as the purified, set apart people of God is evident. Paul saying “you really are” (5:7a) highlights a major failing in Corinthian discernment to appropriate their rightful place.

Paul’s interweaving of the impurity brought by the immorality in 5:1 and boasting in 5:2 with the Passover metaphor suggests the Corinthians had some background with the Passover narrative and its meaning for them. The Passover narrative in this context demonstrates “boldly imaginative readings of the old story.”20 The implementation of such

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19 ἀφυσιόω, EDNT 3:444.
20 Richard B. Hays, The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 161. Hays previously observed, “Paul treats them as readers able to discern the allusion to Exod 12 (or Deut 16.1–8), to recover the original context, and to interpret the figurative...
a vision requires a discerning people who can mediate the OT narrative into their current situation. Paul brings the Corinthians into the narrative as no longer the ἔθνος of Roman Corinth, but the eschatological people of God separated from the ἐδικος of the surrounding society. Paul perceives the mindset of the Corinthian believers to be misaligned with this understanding. The Passover connections serve to remind them of their deliverance through Christ while urging a readjustment in attitude toward what it means to be a redeemed people. The examples and instruction of the deliverance and wilderness experience of Israel are operative in their orientation to this new life. As the specific πορνεία situation has its parallels with Numbers 25, the Passover imagery is an important representation of their calling to be pure, a people actively pursuing sanctification. The message is not just sanctification, but realizing their eschatological potential through higher standards of discernment and judgement, which includes understanding and acting to protect what is entrusted to them as the Deuteronomic standard for judging requires.

Mixing and Purity in the Ἐκκλησία as a Matter for Discernment (1 Cor 5:9–13)

One could reasonably expect this purity language to force the conclusion that physical separation from the surrounding society is necessary. Clarification of this question extends the appropriate realm of judgement for the community, which is also related to discerning how to address purity issues. Paul acknowledges, “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons” (µὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι πόρνοις, 5:9). Concluding the Passover metaphor, the use of συναναμίγνυμι establishes another potential echo of the OT through this fairly uncommon word. Hosea expresses the unfaithfulness of Israel as sexual immorality in many ways, even as mixing dough. “Ephraim mixes (συνανεμέλγνυτο)
himself with the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hos 7:8). The mixing echo becomes less tenuous when considering Hosea’s baking metaphor in connection with Passover.

This first mention of an earlier letter to the Corinthians addresses misunderstandings about relationships. Paul clarifies he is “not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world” (5:10). The problem of contaminating leaven is not from the surrounding society, but rather those within their midst. The community is expected to be able to relate to outsiders without immoral mixing. Bringing the current situation into focus, Paul clarifies, “But now I am writing to you not to associate (συναναμίγνυσθαι) with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one” (5:11). The συναναμίγνυμι language continues to emphasize purification.22 Immoral persons within the community are excluded from their Passover (5:8), as well as meal sharing more generally.

Paul continues to clarify the matter of who is subject to judgement, “For what have I to do with judging (χρίνων) those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge (χρίνετε)? God will judge (χρίνει) those outside” (5:12–13a). J. Duncan Derrett argues the parallel χρίνετε and χρίνει make judgement by the community “expressly likened to God’s judgement of the world.”23 This likening may be overstated, nevertheless it is a serious responsibility. Use of χρίμω gives the sense of a completed act of judgement, which also continues Paul’s declarative judgement from 5:3.24 Rather than primarily discerning issues, the community is charged with judgement that involves completing the

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22 Smith, ‘Hand this Man over to Satan’, 138–139.
24 BDAG 568.
process with a decision and action. This judgement by the ἐκκλησία is related most closely to church discipline, which maintains the integrity of the community.²⁵ Heil rightly claims Paul asserts they “have both the competence and responsibility to judge” insiders.²⁶ The confluence of scenarios juxtaposes God’s judgement of outsiders with the requirement for community responsibility in judging immorality manifest among them. Unlike Paul discouraging judging concealed things in deference to Jesus’ final eschatological judgement (4:5), this judgement is necessary because of the visible, known violation of the community. Judgement by the church is essential and appropriate in matters within the community.

Judgement requires action. The Deuteronomic expulsion formula alluded to in 5:13b, “remove the immoral from among you” (ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν), has several similar iterations.²⁷ The significant change in Paul’s allusion is from the future active, second person plural (ἐξαρεῖς) to the aorist active imperative, second person plural (ἐξάρατε).²⁸ This may simply reflect the fact that the Deuteronomic material anticipates future events, where Paul is giving direction about a current event that requires completed action. It is likely Paul expected the allusion to be understood as he gives no further appeal to his own authority or reasoning.²⁹ Shared reading would increase the probability for the

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²⁶ Heil, The Rhetorical Role of Scripture, 98.
²⁷ Cf. ἀφανείς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, Deut 13:6 LXX; ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, 17:7; ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ Ἰσραήλ, 17:12; then ἐξαρεῖς τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν, 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; 24:7. There is no citation marker, but close “verbal,” “conceptual,” and “formal agreement” along with ethical cohesion to establish allusion. On categories see Thompson, Clothed with Christ, 30–33. See also David Lincicum, Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 118–120, 128.
²⁸ Rosner argues Paul intentionally leaves out a citation marker for rhetorical effect. Brian S. Rosner, Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 63. Garland generally agrees with Rosner, while stating the lack of citation marker heights the “command.” Garland, 1 Corinthians, 191. Heil thinks Rosner overinterprets uses from Deuteronomy, but Paul expects his implied audience to recall this as an “authoritative quotation” from scripture. Heil, The Rhetorical Role of Scripture, 91, 100. Lincicum rightly cautions against excessive claims about Paul’s intentions, while recognizing the
hearers to grasp the allusion through dialogue with others. Asserting the imperative for expulsion in such a straightforward manner is direct and also works with the Passover allusion, which likewise lacks citation markers. This complex of allusions taken together indicate Paul does expect some understanding of his scripture sources. Regardless, the Deuteronomic allusion establishes authority to judge community members for immorality within the current time.

Mitchell observes the version of the expulsion formula from Deut 17:7 is followed by “a discussion of proper court procedures.” This is a notable point of coherence between Paul’s allusion and the following material in ch. 6. The exclusion formula from Deuteronomy is both developmental and anticipatory. It develops the community as the people of God by establishing the necessary environment for growth based on their current covenant status. It anticipates a future arrival at the destination toward which the community must move. The Corinthian ἐκκλησία is moving in this same direction as new heirs of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9). Rosner draws an intertextual matrix together from the allusion to Deuteronomy along with echoes from the OT. Paul has a foundation in scripture that supports community purity. None of this is realized without the exercise of the appropriate judgement, something that requires the ongoing interaction of scriptural understanding, wisdom, and revelation through the spirit.

strong support for the “implicit citation.” Lincicum, Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy, 118–120, 130.


31 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 417. Thiselton comments, “No introductory formula intrudes between Moses and the Corinthians, no conjunction weakens the command to a simile.” They are to be like Israel.

32 Rosner, Paul, Scripture and Ethics, 84–91. He presents isolated common terms (such as arrogance, pride, assembly, leaven, cleanse, “put away evil,” mixing, slander, arrogance, greed, deliver/Satan) and imagery (“Exodus/Passover/Unleavened Bread”). He calls 1 Cor 5:1–13 a passage where “an interrelated complex of Scriptural ideas converge to a profound effect.”
The Community Court (1 Cor 6:1–11)

Insider/outsider issues continue in 6:1–11. Some shifting occurs at 6:1 from the preceding immoral situation to one of civil litigation. Hall thinks the primary subject of πορνεία indicates a more cohesive argument is continuing. Martinus de Boer notes the “significant thematic and terminological points of contact” within 1 Cor 5–7, most specifically πορνεία (5:1; 6:13, 18; 7:2). Will Deming thinks the “relation” of 1 Cor 6:1–11 to the immediately preceding and following passages is unclear. He admits some connection through “sexual sin” (5:1–5, 9–11, and 6:9, 13–20), “judgement” (5:3–6, 12–13; 6:1–8, and “by implication” 6:12–20). The moral issues throughout combine with the judgement issues to give additional coherence to 1 Cor 5–7. Thematic issues of judgement also continue into 1 Cor 7 in more personal terms. The coherence in the need for the community to exercise appropriate judgement/discernment through questions of moral conduct, interpersonal relationships, and personal choices about family replaces tenuous coherence over πορνεία alone. This builds on the basis of revealed, functional wisdom in the opening section of the epistle and prepares for the following issues of interaction outside the community.

As in 1 Cor 5:1–2, Paul expresses shock at the situation, “When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court (to judgement, κρίνεσθαι) before the unrighteous (ἀδίκων), instead of taking it before the saints?” (6:1). Bruce Winter analyses and compares a variety of sources on civil litigation as it may apply to Roman Corinth. He argues civil litigation common between higher status community members in

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34 Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence*, 36.
37 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 32; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 251: Fitzmyer notes further nuances of πρᾶγμα often were specific to a “lawsuit,” but in this use the “matter” would no longer be a lawsuit if brought before the church in this context, so “matter” works well. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 195: “The infinitive κρίνεσθαι (krinesthai) has the meaning here of going to law (cf. Matt. 5:40).”
Roman cities was carried into the Christian ἐκκλησία, where the common practice of civil suits among the elite continued.³⁸ Winter further argues training of the elite in argumentation and forensics gave adequate background for civil conflict to be settled within the Christian ἐκκλησία.³⁹ Although true, overextending Winter’s reading produces discontinuity with Paul’s overall thrust. It is not just a matter of education or status, but the standing of the Corinthians among the eschatological people of God that makes judgement of these things possible and even essential. Paul asks, “Do you not know that the saints will judge (κρινοῦσιν) the world? And if the world is to be judged (κρίνεται) by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?” (1 Cor 6:2).⁴⁰ He presses the point saying, “we will judge angels” (ἀγγέλους κρινοῦμεν, 1 Cor 6:3). Judging angels is a striking future task for the community, but is left unspecific in particulars.⁴¹ It is not just the elite who judge among community members or will judge angels. There is a corporate responsibility as a discerning body that Paul is impressing on the Corinthians about their standing in creation.

If the ‘wise’ in this context refers to those best trained in forensics, then Paul’s emphatic declarations about wisdom in 1 Cor 2 are overthrown. The elevation of the entire ἐκκλησία as a judging body further develops Paul’s response to problematic factiousness in Corinth. There is a distinction in the level of wisdom among individuals in the assembly,

³⁸ Bruce W. Winter, “Civil Litigation in Secular Corinth and the Church: The Forensic Background to 1 Corinthians 6:1–8,” in Understanding Paul's Ethics: Twentieth Century Approaches (ed. Brian S. Rosner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 96–99. See also Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 82: This work assumes the lawsuits are initiated by Christian Jews going before “wise men” of their former “Israelite community.” In either situation, the true problem is submitting to the judgement of those who are outsiders.
⁴⁰ Creation here for κόσμος fits the overall context including judging angels. Paul demonstrates the people of God are those set in place to exercise a truly significant role in the economy of God both now and future.
⁴¹ D. Francois Tolmie, “Angels as Arguments? The Rhetorical Function of References to Angels in the Main Letters of Paul,” HTSTS 67 (2011): 4, 6. See also Paul M. Hoskins, “The Use of Biblical and Extrabiblical Parallels in the Interpretation of First Corinthians 6:2–3,” CBQ 63 (2001): 1–5. Neither Tolmie nor Hoskins see the angelic reference as central to the discussion by Paul. Additionally, Hoskins examines the claims by many scholars that the judgement by the saints along with God in the final, eschatological judgement is drawn from the wider 2TJ setting. He argues this is overstated as in both OT and 2TJ literature the saints participate in executing the judgement which belongs to God alone. Paul’s claim is unique about the capacity of the saints in judging angels.
but not based on the status conferred by education or social standing in the wider community. It is recognition of the reality of different abilities and gifts, which becomes clearer in 1 Cor 12. Instead of segregating into cliques, Paul anticipates them working together in support of others through the supply of various gifts and abilities. These things are enabled through discernment/judgement as the means to a functioning community.

Seeking intertextual grounding, Rosner claims a relationship exists between this passage, Exod 18:13–26, and Deut 1:9–17, along with the additional directions to judges in Deut 16:18–20 and 17:8–13. Some form of dependence is not difficult to see, especially with reference to judges maintaining order and justice within the community. Other elements of this source for Paul’s direction are as important as the dispensing of justice in disputes. As the nascent covenant community of Israel took shape, administrative order and social interrelationships increasingly became an issue. Similarities on these points are inherent as the Corinthian community develops.

After Moses’ father-in-law Jethro questions Moses about leadership procedures, Moses responds, “When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide (διακρίνω LXX) between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God.” Jethro advises Moses to appoint leaders to judge (χρισούσις) smaller (βραχύς) issues (Exod 18:13–27). Moses remains the judge of important (προτέρους) issues (Exod 18:22). This could also suggest that Paul’s judgement of the immoral man (1 Cor 5) was something that he, like Moses, would judge himself.

One difference Rosner notes is Paul rejecting “unsuitable” judges, while Moses appoints “suitable” ones. This is generally true, but Paul establishes the judgement capacity of the community as a greater priority than simply preventing lawsuits in Corinthian courts. The insignificant (ἐλαχίστων, 1 Cor 6:2)

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42 Rosner, Paul, Scripture and Ethics, 97, 99. Rosner notes additional judicial appointments in the OT text in 2 Chron 19:5–11, with dependence on the Deuteronomic texts. Other minor texts are 1 Sam 8:1; 1 Chron 23:4; Ezra 7:25, 10:14.

43 Rosner, Paul, Scripture and Ethics, 99. Rosner suggests a similarity between Moses and Paul becoming “overwhelmed,” so needing assistance.
court in the Corinthian assembly likewise is capable of judging the things of ordinary life (βιωτικά, 6:3, 4).\textsuperscript{44} Paul uses some vocabulary different from Exodus to discuss this judgement in the assembly, but with a similar result in concept. He is willing to step in to judge weighty matters affecting the whole community, while encouraging responsible local judgement of ordinary matters in the ἐκκλησία. Indications throughout Paul’s commitment to judgement in 1 Cor 5–6 are that his first choice was not control from a distance, but rather that it became necessary because of the community’s failure to exercise judgement. In this sense Paul does not just mirror the pattern of judicial appointment in Exod 18, but can be seen urging the community to press into the role of administering right judgements.

As Paul presses for establishment of the appropriate exercise of judgement he asks, “If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide (διακρίνει) between one believer and another, but a believer goes to court against a believer—and before unbelievers at that?” (1 Cor 6:4–6). As discussed previously, the call for wisdom is necessary and consistent with the Exodus account. Perhaps this also echoes Deuteronomy, where those who judge must be righteous and fair in their evaluations. “I charged your judges at that time: ‘Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge (κρίνει) rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien’” (Deut 1:16). Some echoes resonate here.\textsuperscript{45} The formation of the wilderness community informs the community of Christ in their need to exercise wise, right judgement. Paul forcefully takes a judging role in 5:3, yet he continues to call the Corinthians into exercising judgement appropriately. Having the mind of Christ is the

\textsuperscript{44}It is interesting that in Prov 30:24, there are small (ἐλάχιστα) things on earth that are exceedingly wise (σοφότερα τῶν σοφῶν). This may not be an echo, yet in addition to the single word correspondence it is an example of something insignificant displaying unexpected wisdom. This is a theme with Paul (1 Cor 1:19–20, 26–27; 3:18–20).

\textsuperscript{45}The potential hypotexts have “availability,” “thematic coherence,” “historical plausibility,” and are reasonable. On criteria, see Hays, Echoes, 29–32.
foundation for the application of scriptural antecedents in judging as the community of Christ.

Rosner details issues with the difficult language of διακρίναι ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ. His analysis demonstrates that through and beyond the writing of the NT, it is only the Greek of Deut 1:16 and 1 Cor 6:5 where “(a form of) κρίνω plus ἀνὰ μέσον plus (a form of) ἀδελφὸς occur in that order.” Additionally, the syntax difference where Paul drops the repeated ἀνὰ μέσον can be an “abbreviation” of the Semitism retained in the LXX. This suggests Paul draws on the Torah as he instructs the Corinthians on this issue. Because the Corinthians would be unable to form a completely independent judicial system for all matters, this is also evidence that Paul’s main concern is community formation rather than forensics. If the parallel formation of the community of Israel and the Corinthian ἐκκλησία are Paul’s concern, there is a more coherent pattern to this passage than an ad hoc insertion to the flow of the epistle and the immediate context.

There is another connection with the Deuteronomic material on these disputes. “When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court (κρίνεσθαι) before the unrighteous (ἀδίκων), instead of taking it before the saints?” (1 Cor 6:1). Paul’s use of ἀδίκος is among twelve adjectival uses in the NT, with only three uses in Paul (Rom 3:5; 1 Cor 6:1, 9). A reason given for this negative statement comes in the preface to a list of ἀδίκος practices as Paul asks, “Do you not know that wrongdoers (ἀδίκοι) will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (6:9a). He says this in terms of behaviour

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46 Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics*, 100. Using the TLG, Rosner found one additional use in a citation of 1 Cor 6:5. Cf. Dieter Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Meyers Kommentar V; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 214 n. 112. The brief but detailed, unique verbal agreement and rare words along with “conceptual agreement” and “rationale” are further support to this phrase as an allusion. On criteria, see Thompson, *Clothed with Christ*, 30–33.

47 BDF §139.


49 The term means “contrary to right;” including “unjust, crooked.” BDAG 21.
the Corinthians may be guilty of committing in these lawsuits. “In fact, to have lawsuits (κρίµατα) at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? But you yourselves wrong (ἀδικεῖτε) and defraud—and believers at that” (1 Cor 6:7–8). Unrighteousness is at issue here, for inheritance of God’s kingdom is at stake. Paul suggests the unrighteous may be “outsiders” or those within, the difference in this case being one of conduct.

The language of unrighteousness/injustice (ἀδίκος) is prominent in the LXX with respect to justice in the community:

You shall not join hands with the wicked (ἀδίκου) to act as a malicious (ἀδίκος) witness. (Exod 23:1). If a malicious witness (ἀδίκος) comes forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing, then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days, and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry. If the witness is a false (ἀδίκος) witness, having testified falsely (ἀδικά) against another, then you shall do to the false witness just as the false witness had meant (ἐπονηρεύσατο) to do to the other. So you shall purge the evil (πονηρὸν) from your midst (Deut 19:16–19).

These passages have many similarities to Paul’s comments. The concern for the ἀδίκος corrupting relationships in the community is apparent in both. Even though the forensic context brings its own similarity, other aspects are critical. The corrupting influence in the midst of the community is an unacceptable contaminant that must be judged. Immorality resonates in the overall context of 1 Cor 5–6.50

Paul envisions the community judging the matters at hand in a comprehensive way. Peter Richardson describes this judgement as bridging two eras. “Specifically he wants to see judgment exercised, but a form of judgment predicated on both the old understanding of judgment and justice (5:13 and the Deuteronomy formula) and on the new

understanding of the saints as the effective form of the people of God.\textsuperscript{51} This comment reflects the scripture working in the newly realized people having the mind of Christ. Joseph Fitzmyer perceives influence on 1 Cor 6:9b–10 from the LXX of Dan 7:22, “with its mention of judgment, saints, and inheritance of the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{52} A confluence of community formation from the Torah and apocalyptic completion could then be the foundation for a greater vision for the Corinthians as an appropriately judging community. This judgement can be seen in continuity with the Mosaic covenant as a tradition of Israel at its best, while simultaneously reflecting an arrival at the fulfilment of something long anticipated. The anticipated community is interpreted differently from that of the Qumran sectarians and other Jewish groups, yet it is in continuity with the historic purposes unfolding through Israel.

In establishing righteous judgement within the community, contamination must be driven out and appropriate boundaries established so that the people may pursue righteousness together as the covenant people of God. Justice, then, is not simply a matter of high-minded ethical ideals and doing the right thing. It is a greater ethic of conforming the ἐκκλησία to a different standard as the purified eschatological people, the heirs of the kingdom of God. This a major coherent thrust of Paul’s reasoning throughout these situations with the Corinthians. They should be discerning their place and reasons for behaviour suitable to God’s eschatological people.

**Personal Decisions about Marriage (7:25–40)**

The first return to uses of γνώμη since 1:10 occur in 7:25 and 7:40. The generalized call from 1:10 to be ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῦ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ can be considered along with Paul’s expression of his own γνώμη. The need for the same opinion, purpose, and judgement now

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\textsuperscript{52} Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 249.
suggests Paul models something to be emulated. Paul’s use of discerning opinion is also important in this context due to some apparent departure from scriptural precedent and perhaps JT. Here Paul models use of his spirit infused discernment in mediating current problems within his apocalyptic thought system. The scriptural foundation established in 1 Cor 5–6 remains, but contingent realities require generalized discernment.

Paul proceeds through some marriage and family issues oscillating between a command of the Lord (7:10) regarding conservation of marriage, while proceeding to discuss various conditions modifying marriage status.\textsuperscript{53} Included is his specific expression on his own opinion without appealing to divine authority (7:12). Thompson thinks Paul does this to “advance the gospel,” having the goal of “conformity to the person of Christ” (emphasis his).\textsuperscript{54} This shifts the focus away from simply obeying a standard. Paul then says, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything” (7:19). This creates conflict about what qualifies as commandment. Hays comments that this same principle is explicit in Rom 2:26–29a, which extends the promise of Deut 30:6 for circumcision of heart.\textsuperscript{55} Commenting on Paul’s use of Deut 9:4; and 30:12–14, D. Smith notes Paul’s substitution of Christ for Torah in Rom 10:6–8 as the righteousness of faith.\textsuperscript{56} James Thompson states, “Although Paul insisted that gentiles are not subject to the established boundary markers (circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws), his ethical instructions are consistent with the moral instruction of the Torah.”\textsuperscript{57} For Paul, Torah is not abrogated, but fulfilled in Christ. The mediation of the

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\textsuperscript{53} On the possibility of JT here, see Thompson, Clothed with Christ, 70, 74, 195. Similar JT is documented for Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18. See also Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians. Barrett thinks Paul cites Jesus here because Jesus tightened OT requirements.

\textsuperscript{54} Thompson, Clothed with Christ, 240. Cf. Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 291–292. Paul may show the JT, which often interprets the OT for ethical norms.


\textsuperscript{57} James Thompson, Moral Formation According to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 15.
Christ-event has those commands currently applicable distinct from those not in force, or being otherwise fulfilled. Paul demonstrates the necessity to exercise judgement in application regardless of traditions working here.

In a new section beginning with περὶ δὲ, Paul continues to parse his instruction carefully.58 “Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy” (7:25).59 Paul exhibits great freedom in giving his own judgement (γνώμη, “opinion,” NRSV, NASB) here. His statement lacks an appeal to authority, but asserts trustworthiness due to Paul’s status through mercy. It is a generous appeal to the Corinthian attitude toward Paul as part of the same river of faith they share. His opinion counts because he is proven based on both character and that which fills him.

Paul continues, “I think (νομίζω) that, in view of the impending crisis, it is well for you to remain as you are” (7:26). This is a key statement in the midst of Paul’s oscillating expressions of his own views and those he attributes to the Lord. It explains something specific to Paul’s opinions on this topic with respect to the OT in particular. Clearly expressing his opinion based on the “impending crisis,” which can translate as “present situation” (ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην), the ad hoc nature of the current judgement cannot be overstated.60 The situation may include significant dangers regardless of the final

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58 This construction occurs in 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12. In 7:1, “Now concerning issues about which you wrote…” could suggest the following occurrences are also responses to a letter, but they may simply indicate a change in topic. Cf. Margaret M. Mitchell, “Concerning περὶ δὲ in 1 Corinthians,” NovT 31 (1989): 233–250; Garland, 1 Corinthians, 363–364; Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 567–568.

59 Orr, “Paul’s Treatment of Marriage,” 17. Orr argues that παρθένων as a plural genitive is referring to unmarried males and females, citing Rev 14:4.

60 BDAG 337: 60–61. The meaning of these words could mean final days or simply serious trouble. Cf. 3 Macc 1:16, where ἐνίστημι is war distress. On the ambiguity of the specific distress, see Adela Yarbro Collins, “Paul’s Contribution to the Hope of the Early Church,” in Paul, John, and Apocalyptic Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Martinus C. De Boer (eds. Jan Krans et al.; NovTSup 149; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 206.
eschaton. In either case, it may explain why Paul discontinues his use of Genesis 2:24 as in 1 Cor 6:16 with the “one flesh” motif, which could be extended here regarding procreation of children (Gen 1:28). A matter of judgement in the current situation affects the implementation of a scriptural principle.

He follows with statements on freedom for both men and women to marry, but then says, “Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that” (7:28b). This is often taken together with his comments that “I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short” (7:29a), and “the present form of this world is passing away” (7:31b). If Paul speaks of the world’s end as impending, then there exists apparent warrant to alter the normal state of marriage and family as esteemed in the OT. Thiselton argues that here “we encounter a permanent theological principle of the relativizing of all civic, family, and commercial commitments on the basis of eschatological realities” (emphasis his). The language and context of this concept is reflective of Paul’s understanding of the tension between the ‘already, but not yet’ as daily realities for Christian life. As he is about to indicate, it is the matter of devotion to the Lord and priorities that weigh the balance in decision-making.

The issue of distraction emerges in vv. 32–35, where Paul emphasizes the importance of devotion to the Lord. Stating his larger purpose in encouraging the unmarried state, “I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered (ἀπερισπάστως) devotion to the Lord” (7:35). Niko Huttunen claims the adverb ἀπερισπάστως reflects the same issue of distraction in Paul as in the Cynic view (citing Epictetus, Disc. 3.22.69–72). The overall context of Disc. 3.22,
however, speaks of a severe asceticism and complete denial of sexual pleasure. The relationship of a single word with reference to serving God yields little about Paul’s attitude, especially from someone likely born after the composition of First Corinthians. The ‘distraction’ that humans experience through sexual issues does not lead Paul to forbid marriage.

Arguing for a broader Stoic basis in Paul’s attitude toward marriage, David Balch surveys a span of Stoic literature from the second century B.C.E to the first century C.E. This literature is diverse and somewhat inconsistent on marriage as good, acceptable, or problematic. Diversity in Stoicism casts doubt on monolithic understandings of its influence on Paul. Critical also is the reality that Paul was addressing an audience acculturated in a largely Stoic milieu. The backgrounds of Paul, audience, and Paul’s desire to lead them into a new understanding of reality collide in the “present crisis” (7:26). Something is at hand that requires focused discernment, but the tension of the eschatological inbreaking of the kingdom of God remains in view. Paul moves from a general to specific situation.

The issue of judgement recurs in 7:36–38, in what John Hurd calls “one of the most difficult and controversial in the New Testament, because a number of serious ambiguities occur in these three verses.” The combinations of factors involved in this decision require serious judgement. Who is involved in this judgement? There are many questions about the role of the male, as well as the role and status of the παρθένος. Does she also participate in this exercise of judgement? There are three main lines of interpretation for this situation. For this discussion, a literal translation for 7:36–38 helps:

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Hurd, The Origin of 1 Corinthians, 171.

For detailed comparisons of these interpretations, see Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 355–363; see also Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to
36 But if someone thinks he acts unbecomingly toward his virgin, and if he goes too far, and thus he is obligated to bring about what he desires to do, he has not sinned, let them marry! 37 But one who stands firm in his heart, not having compulsion, and having the ability concerning his own desire, and he has judged this in his own heart, maintaining his virgin, he will do well. 38 Therefore the one giving his virgin in marriage does well, and the one not giving his virgin in marriage does better.

This translation attempts to resolve some of the difficulties by retaining the same male as the subject throughout.

The NRSV continues the tradition of the RSV in translating the passage as if a male “has determined” (χέρυτεχν, 7:37 NRSV) for his own “fiancée” whether or not to consummate a marriage (“fiancée” for παρθένος three times in 7:36–38). In a second line of interpretation, Richard Kugelman argues against this translation on the basis of the language, as well as a long history of exegesis consistent with the father/guardian acting in the socially expected manner. A key language issue is the use of γαμίζων twice in v. 38. The participle means “giving in marriage” and can suggest a father or guardian “giving” his legal charge in marriage. This is not an indication of a forced marriage, as shown below. Paul uses a related, but different verb (γαμέω, vv. 36, 39) in the same passage with reference to a person choosing marriage. Kugelman argues, “Paul’s very use of both
verbs in this passage is an a priori argument for their distinction in meaning.”\textsuperscript{70} One weakness in this interpretation is found when Paul says “let them marry” (γαμείτωσαν, 7:36).\textsuperscript{71} This may suggest the man is wrestling with the idea of marriage to his own betrothed. They both need to be decided on this choice. Importantly, what is true of one is true of both.

The third typical, but less common interpretation for vv. 36–38 is that a so-called “spiritual marriage” is involved.\textsuperscript{72} Aside from the probable anachronism of this post-apostolic development, it is strange that Paul would characterize a sexual consummation of this arrangement by saying “let them marry.”\textsuperscript{73} They likely would have been legally married to satisfy Roman marriage laws.\textsuperscript{74} If not, and Paul was in favour of this type of arrangement, it seems that he would have considered them married anyway. This scenario calls for different language.

“Having judged” (κέκρικεν, 7:37) in this context is essentially the same in whichever scenario is envisioned, but the factors influencing the judgement are different. If a father is the “someone” making this judgement, it appears that Paul is addressing a social circumstance that is quite normal for the setting. This also explains why the involvement of the young woman is different from the widow in 7:39 (see below). If this is a father, he would have the ultimate legal responsibility to authorize the marriage. The father had a

\textsuperscript{70} Richard Kugleman, “1 Cor. 7:36–38,” \textit{CBQ} 10 (1948): 70.
\textsuperscript{71} To support the father/daughter scenario by translating “let her” from γαμείτω, NASB translators follow later and weaker mss. evidence from D* F G 1505 pc d vg\textsuperscript{7} sy\textsuperscript{b}. Cf. Thiselton, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 598.
\textsuperscript{72} See Greg Peters, “Spiritual Marriage in Early Christianity: 1 Cor 7:25–38 in Modern Exegesis and the Earliest Church,” \textit{TJ} 23 (2002): 211–224 for an extended argument on these verses as a reference to “spiritual marriage” (synesaktism), meaning a husband and wife in a celibate arrangement.
\textsuperscript{73} Synesaktism was likely unknown until the second century. Cf. Molvaer, “St Paul’s Views on Sex,” \textit{ST} 58 (2004): 52; Fitzmyer, \textit{First Corinthians}, 324–325.
\textsuperscript{74} Susan Treggiari, \textit{Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60–65. It is unclear exactly how the law was applied outside Rome, but the earlier form of the \textit{Lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus} of 18 B.C.E., along with the modifications of the \textit{Lex Papia Poppaea} of 9 C.E., allowed for indefinite engagements. These engagements were sometimes undertaken by men to secure privilege and position. Later law limited the engagement for two years, which would expose the couple to a lack of legal benefits. Cf. Antti Arjava, \textit{Women and Law in Late Antiquity} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 77.
powerful position, but it was also against Roman law for him to prevent his daughter from marrying.\textsuperscript{75} She also could not be forced to marry without her consent.\textsuperscript{76} He may be grappling with conflict over the marriage for any number of reasons. Regardless, it seems unlikely Paul would encourage a father to prevent his daughter from marriage in violation of the civil law, especially in writing.

In the two scenarios of a man deciding how to proceed with his own betrothed, the sense of the situation may be clearer. Dieter Zeller comments, “Es versetzt ihn in eine Zwangslage, in der die Heirat als einziger Ausweg von der Sitte geboten ist.”\textsuperscript{77} In this case, the man may be unsure how to proceed with his commitment to the woman, which effectively holds her hostage to his doubts. She is committed to the marriage, so he must decide. His judgement must not be forced, a consistent Pauline position throughout 1 Cor 7. He must make the decision freely and in good conscience. To remain in the current state, he must be firm in his own heart, under self-control, and also having judged to follow this path in his heart. If the conclusion is to “maintain his virgin,” what does this mean? First, it is not necessarily a permanent state. Second, a break in the relationship is not stated or implied as a result of the pause. Therefore, it is possible that this is a temporary situation based on the “present distress” (7:31) resulting in a prolonged betrothal.

It is easy to focus on the appearance, as does Gillian Beattie, saying “the woman herself is offered no opportunity to decide her own fate. The male prerogative in marriage is once again in evidence.”\textsuperscript{78} Attention is often directed toward Paul to locate him on a continuum from misogynist to egalitarian radical. This is theoretically interesting, but one

\textsuperscript{75} Ciampa and Rosner, \textit{The First Letter to the Corinthians}, 358.
\textsuperscript{76} Consent by both parties was required. \textit{Digest} 23.1.11; 23.2.2. It can be argued very young daughters could be easily pressured to consent. See Judith Evans Grubbs, \textit{Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood} (London: Routledge, 2002), 88–89. Even betrothal required the consent of all parties under Roman law; see \textit{Digest} 23.1.1–2.
\textsuperscript{77} Zeller, \textit{Der erste Brief an die Korinther}, 274.
\textsuperscript{78} Gillian Beattie, \textit{Women and Marriage in Paul and His Early Interpreters} (JSNTSup 296; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 35. Beattie cites Antoinette Clark Wire, \textit{The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric} (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1990), 88. Wire considers Paul to have little concern for the woman’s status, see her extended discussion on pp. 88–90.
real problem for the “virgin” was her legal status under guardianship. Liberation from lifelong legal guardianship was possible after mothering three children if a free woman, and four if a freedwoman.\(^79\) Otherwise, if she becomes a widow she would be returned to guardianship. Again, the woman had the legal right to consent, so the issue is not one of forced marriage. The real danger to the woman hangs on her legal status. Roman law must be considered in interaction with this passage.

The freedom of choice for a woman regarding marriage is expressed or implied in 7:11, 12, 13, 15, 28, 32–34, 35, and 39. Added to the conjugal rights she has in 7:3–5, there is a frame around the difficult text in 7:36–38 that should influence the interpretation of the woman’s situation. The context suggests Paul is not addressing the choice of the specific woman simply because she is desirous of marriage, while the man involved is struggling. This is likely a specific situation rather than a general principle.\(^80\) Paul encourages the man to find resolution in his own heart and to proceed on this judgement. It may be best to wait or perhaps not marry, but the concern about immorality remains a consideration in the decision. The freedom to choose a course of action here is a matter for each person to discern relevant aspects of the situation.

Such a consideration illuminates the situation of the widow, of whom Paul says, “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry (γαμηθήναι) anyone she wishes, only in the Lord.” (7:39). She does not “give in marriage” (γαμίζω), but rather marries (γαμέω). Even though she is free, she does not give herself in marriage. “But in my judgment (γνώμη) she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.” (7:40). Wolfgang Schrage comments, “Diese γνώμη ist jedoch kein bloß unverbindliches Ermessensurteil, das als quantité négligible

\(^79\) Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity*, 78.
abzutun wäre, denn Paulus rät als ein vom Geist Gottes Erfüllter (v. 40).“81 Yet as in 7:25, Paul does not appeal to authority, but demonstrates trustworthy, spirit empowered judgement. Paul’s own judgement, based on having the spirit of God, accompanies the urge to caution regarding marriage. The implication from the context is that men and women were urged to discern carefully what it meant for them to marry.

Noting the lack of scripture citations in 1 Cor 7, Rosner comments that “simply noting Biblical quotations leads one astray; the total Biblical and Jewish background must be brought into focus if one is to assess reliably Paul’s indebtedness to the Scriptures.”82 The broad grounding in the scriptures provides the foundational basis for appropriate decisions in matters affecting the community and the person in Christ becoming woven into this community.83 It is notable that neither the community nor Paul make certain personal judgements for believers. Freedom of choice in these matters reflects Paul’s expectation that within the ἐκκλησία, growth in knowledge, wisdom, and wholeness in Christ empowers the exercise of judgement in the normal affairs of life for each person.

Conclusion

Paul’s use of judgement language in 1 Cor 5-6 focuses primarily on decisions seen through ten uses of κρίνω and one of κρίμα. This chapter first examined Paul’s insistence upon judgement of immorality based on Torah. These judgements are restricted to those within the community, which juxtaposes them against the restrictions on judgement in 1 Cor 3–4. Next came examination of Paul’s articulation for community judgement in interpersonal conflict, which is also a precursor for some role in eschatological judgement. Judgement is currently applied to insiders who act immorally or whose actions against others must be

81 Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther: 1 Kor 6,12–11,16, 154–155.
82 Rosner, Paul, Scripture, and Ethics, 176.
83 Thompson, Moral Formation, 211. The “constant thread throughout the moral instruction of all the Pauline literature is the concern for communal formation.”
adjudicated in areas the community can address. These judgements are not comparable to those of the final eschaton, but even in the severe immorality addressed in 1 Cor 5, have a restorative goal in mind. Paul thus establishes a means for order in community self-regulation for the preservation of the community as well as protection of its members. A dichotomy is created between the spiritual person who is not subjected to judgement (2:15) and those whose actions require judgement. As a pragmatic matter, freedom from judgement is conditioned on behaviour that demonstrates true spiritual standing. The capacity for judgement is expanded through an apocalyptic ideal for the community participating in final judgement. At present, they must discern (διακρίνω) among themselves to maintain and develop the community.

Although the community has a powerful role in judgement, the flexibility for personal choices about marriage demonstrate the importance of judgement/discernment for each person in areas where the community does not judge. In 1 Cor 7 Paul models his own discernment in dialogue between principle and external contingent circumstances. His assertion that having the spirit makes him trustworthy to make appropriate judgements (γνώμη) in these matters of personal choice provides another example of making judgements based on ones’ spiritual standing. This is applied in 7:37 when Paul encourages a person to make concluding judgement (κρίνω) about marriage in consideration of relevant factors. Development as the people of God requires the appropriate exercise of judgement, even in the mediation of OT scripture to the new situation.
Chapter 4: Discerning Interrelationships within the Surrounding Culture (1 Cor 8:1–11:1)

Introduction

The moral/ethical issues predominating the previous section of the epistle now refocus on overlapping issues connected with idolatry, which becomes less about πόρνεία and more about offerings/rites and social issues. Beginning with 8:1, Paul argues from the standpoint of knowledge conditioned by love, freedom in service to others, devotion to God, and then in 11:2 begins to address actions appropriate in the assembly of the ἐκκλησία. In the context of idolatry, the issue of freedom becomes somewhat central. Paul responds to certain Corinthians who assert a right of freedom based on knowledge, which creates problems for others. The freedom is an actuality, but the knowledge is misappropriated in an unwise way. Paul realigns freedom as a right moderated by the cross through discerning proper conduct. The text is less ambiguous when Paul’s words are understood through his concern to cultivate discernment as the means to navigate the complexities of these issues.

The wisdom of God applied through discernment is the navigational tool to manoeuvre through the complexities inherent in applying knowledge to the abrasive interface between the ἐκκλησία of God and the very different external community.

This chapter first discusses the basis of Paul’s initial complex articulation about idolatry for the Christ-follower. Second, the proper use of freedom emerges as a concept relating back to the need to discern what is appropriate in view of the mindset of Christ that should preoccupy the believers. Third, it will be argued Paul brings this all together in his imperative for the Corinthians to judge for themselves as a sincere charge that reflects the dynamic interaction of their right thinking within the revelatory framework of the Christ-event as it shapes the new life in Christ. Finally, coherence for this section of the epistle is discussed as the basis for appropriate discernment in some of its manifestations.
toward others, including outsiders, and also the pervasive idolatry surrounding the community.

**Idolatry and the Christian**

Paul begins this section with the third περὶ δὲ statement in the epistle, Περὶ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων, οἶδαμεν ὅτι πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν (8:1a–b). Interestingly, εἰδωλοθύτων is unattested prior to Paul’s usage in this passage, with the combined εἰδωλον and θύω appearing to encompass any food offered to a cultic representation; therefore idol-offering or idol-food can be derived from the context.¹ If the issue at hand were simply idolatry, then εἰδωλολατρίᾳ should be the term used. Idol-food in 1 Cor 8 (see 8:10) seems primarily about believer’s attendance at feasts in temple precincts where idol-food is consumed.² This may reasonably have been unclear to some believers, but Paul challenges them based on what they did know.

The ironic statement “we know that we all have knowledge” focuses attention on the knowledge under discussion. The use of οἶδαμεν seems redundant unless it is there as paronomasia even if the phrase πάντες γνῶσιν ἔχομεν is a quotation due to the preceding ὅτι. In any case, this immediate context is not knowledge about idolatry per se, but idol-offerings. Paul may echo some Corinthian terminology, yet the presence of knowledge,

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wisdom, and the use of freedom are prominent throughout this issue. Application of
discernment is the means for knowledge to be applied properly in interaction with this
important aspect of the surrounding culture.

In 8:1c knowledge that puffs-up (φυσιόω) is contrasted with love that builds up
(σιχοδομέω). This evokes Passover imagery from 5:2, along with Paul’s other uses of this
terminology in 4:6, 18, 19, and perhaps especially anticipating 13:4 where love does οὐ
φυσιούται. Even if πάντες γνώσιν ἔχομεν is a Corinthian slogan, Paul does not assault
knowledge itself as he will continue to compare aspects of bad and good knowledge. Paul
states assertive claims about possessing knowledge demonstrate its lack (8:2). If God has
known those who love him (8:3), then knowledge must be potentially good. Negatively,
Paul cautions against pride in knowledge and likely appeals to some fear/reverence over
being known by God, who “turned the tables” by shifting the issue of knowledge to “being
known.”

More positively, the necessity of perfect knowledge is not preeminent. Paul’s
description of the love/knowledge relationship in 8:2–3 foreshadows the language of 1 Cor
13. Looking toward the fullness of the eschaton Paul will say, “Now I know only in part;
then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor 13:12). His words reflect
the same attitude toward the limited human knowledge of the current time (13:8), but also
the limitation of knowledge with respect to love that is not puffed up (φυσιοῦται, 13:4).
Elsewhere, he speaks of the Galatians coming from false gods to “know God, or rather to
be known by God” (Gal 4:8–11). Being known by God is of great importance in Paul’s
conception of the believer’s place, perhaps most importantly indicating the lack of perfect
knowledge does not separate people from God. Conversely, knowledge is not the criterion
for closeness to God. Paul’s emphasis on the proper form of wisdom from 1 Cor 2
continues, which in itself supports Paul’s careful parsing of knowledge here.

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3 Collins, First Corinthians, 311.
The concept of God knowing someone is an OT concept, likely echoing in 1 Cor 8:3. Yahweh knows people intimately (Ps 139:1; 138:1 LXX), and knows those taking refuge in him (Nah 1:7). These are translations of γινώσκω, which typically represents learned knowledge, although not necessarily here because the passive construction requires this verb (σποι is only available in the active voice). Nahum is intriguing because the passage speaks of Yahweh preserving his people through troubles (Nah 1:7, 12–13, 15), frustrating the plans of opponents (Nah 1:8–12, 15), and destroying idols/false gods (Nah 1:14). The arc of the passage has correspondence with troubles for the Corinthians, various opponents, and the issue of idolatry. Fleeing idols for refuge in the Lord results in a person being known by God, a suggestion pertinent for the knowledgeable (“flee from the worship of idols,” 1 Cor 10:14). Some apparently think they show strength through arrogant knowledge, which enables Paul to contrast “strong” and “weak” believers.

Terminology of the “strong” and “weak” becomes typical in literature about 1 Cor 8–11, with “strong” referring to those Corinthians who partake in idol-food (and perhaps more idolatrous practices) and “weak” referring to those who avoid these practices. “Strong” is derived from the stance that certain idolatrous practices are harmless to the believer. The “strong” are characterized by the terms of γνώσις (8:1–3, 7, 10–11), ἐξουσία (8:9), and possibly ἐνεμίζος (9:21). “Weak” is derived from language Paul uses to describe

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5 This general thematic correspondence of God knowing and preserving his people in the face of idolatry is plausible. The potential hypotext has “availability,” “thematic coherence,” “historical plausibility,” and is reasonable as an influence. On criteria, see Hays, Echoes, 29–32.


7 Good arguments can be made for the use of “those with knowledge” for “strong.” See Bruce N. Fisk, “Eating Meat Offered to Idols: Corinthian Behavior and Pauline Response in 1 Corinthians 8–10 (A Response to G. D. Fee),” TJ 10 (1989): 50. Still, “strong” works well as a clear antonym of “weak.”
those who are ἀσθενής or have ἡ συνείδησις αὐτοῦ ἀσθενοῦς (8:7–13). Each classification may represent actual or hypothetical groups, which makes little difference in analysing Paul’s argument. This terminology is helpful in tracking the dialectic in 1 Cor 8:1–11:1, so will be used here.

Paul is refocusing the narrative of strength through knowledge to one of love. Derek Newton comments regarding 1 Cor 8:1–3 that “love for God becomes the context of the issue of idol food.” But the love of others remains firmly in view. The idol-food is not so much a technical problem as it is one of practical theology for Paul. Wright asserts Paul discusses wisdom in Col 1–2; 1 Cor 1–3; 8:1–6 as “the energy which drives the epistemology which sustains the theology. . . . Paul’s Christian epistemology merges imperceptibly into what today we call, however loosely, spirituality.” This wisdom is from God, something Paul continues urging the Corinthians to apply through discerning love that can make use of knowledge properly.

The monotheistic reflection of the only God in v. 6 is often associated with the Shema. The formula is presented as true whether the source of the saying is Paul, the Corinthians, or broader tradition. In a short space Paul dismisses false gods while steadfastly affirming it is vital to be concerned about imposing difficulties upon other

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8 Khiok-khng Yeo, *Rhetorical Interaction in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10: A Formal Analysis with Preliminary Suggestions for a Chinese, Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic* (BIS 9; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 89 nn. 23–24. Yeo lists occurrences of “weak” (ἀσθέν-) and “strong” (δύν-) throughout the epistle on a strictly lexical basis which does not always accord with these juxtaposed groups.

9 Derek Newton, *Deity and Diet: The Dilemma of Sacrificial Food at Corinth* (JSNTSup 169; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 277.

10 Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives*, 85–86.

believers. Paul makes it clear that these believers are family who are weak and destroyed through the knowledge of those who are unconcerned about idol-food (8:5–13). He affirms the principle of sacrificial love for others in setting aside privileges arising through superior knowledge. Whether the “weak” are former pagans or believers with strong convictions about idol-food for other reasons (including a Jewish background), the outcome is the same. Those who perceive themselves to be strong should act in ways that build up the weak under the Lordship and self-sacrifice of Christ. This is enacting the mind of Christ in wise discernment.

David Horrell thinks issues of the “strong” in 1 Cor 8–10 are not about Christian freedom, but the social advantages of partaking in idol-food. To the “strong” it is a question of the benefits through knowledge about God and idols. They appear to find a sense of liberation in the application of their superior knowledge. For Paul, the knowledge they should have is that which is sensitive not only to freedom from limitations, but more importantly to the Christ-like concern for others in a variety of ways. Freedom enables the choice to yield rights for the benefit of another. In this area, Paul continues to place himself as an example to be judged according to his life and conduct. Social advantages are likely a key issue, but the “strong” misappropriate this advantage through the abuse of freedom. They fail to bring together scriptural truth as revealed through the prism of the Christ-event with the mindset of Christ. In supposedly enlightened understanding, they fail to discern the sum total of the situation in its full ramifications on others.

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12 N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 125–136. Wright argues that the Shema monotheism is central to Paul’s argument, working with the concern for others while making the first explicit association of Jesus with the Shema.

13 Garland, “The Dispute over Food Sacrificed to Idols,” 178. Garland argues based on 1 Cor 8:7 that Jews are excluded as not those “until now accustomed to idols.” The Greek text (τινὲς δὲ τῇ συνθείᾳ ἦσας ἐρτι τοῦ εἰδώλου ὡς εἰδολῶθυτον ἐσθίουσιν) does seem to support the idea that these are people habituated in the past to eating idol–food in ritual observance. See also Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 182–183. Cf. Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*, 143. Johnson sees the “strong” as Jewish because they knew the idols “were not real.”

The Proper Use of Freedom

Paul defends his own freedom against those who judge him in 1 Cor 9. Against what can seem a misplaced ἀπολογία, Richard Phua argues the Pauline reinterpretation of Torah into the sphere of Christ advances the gospel and is part of the flow of the surrounding passages. There is not a digression, but a component of the issues at hand. Paul advocates a yielding attitude balanced with an understanding of the complexity of social dynamics. He does not advocate for a “paralysis” through being “fearful of offending.” Paul’s ἀπολογία takes account of the status he has as a free apostle, having seen the Lord, and as founder of the Corinthian community. The gospel does bring the benefit of freedom from former bondages, but this freedom is often expressed in sensibly yielding rights for the benefit of others. The argument in 1 Cor 9 may appear to be a digression in the context of the idolatry issue, but this actually suggests its importance. Willis argues for cohesion here as the continuity of the first person singular following 8:13, the brief mention of apostleship continuing from 4:9–15, and ἐξουσία continuing as a focus. Paul asserts his own freedom before continuing to list rights or powers he has to certain conduct or benefits. This coheres with the overall argument as an appeal for the “strong” to understand not only how Paul exercises freedom, but also how this should apply to their own situation.

One element of Paul’s ἀπολογία is his assertion of freedom (ἐλεύθερος, 9:1). Elsewhere he uses this term with respect to freedom from slavery (7:21–22; 12:13), and also of a wife becoming unbound from her husband (7:39). In the closer context he uses it again of his freedom from all while becoming the slave of all (9:19). This can be seen as

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15 Phua, Idolatry, 206–207.
part of Paul’s freedom from “how others think he should behave.”\textsuperscript{18} Yet there is a broader principle at work, for here Paul follows the same oscillation that is apparent as he discusses the relationship to law in principle (6:12).\textsuperscript{19} There, as here, choices should be made for beneficial actions on behalf of God, others, and one’s life. The sum of the benefits imparted through freedom is not for indulgence of liberties with law, ethics, sex, food, or any potential self-fulfilment. The benefits are wiped away when another is undermined or destroyed in the exercise of freedom.

Paul confronts issues of idolatry with a statement of self-defence that appeals to his own standing as an apostle to the Corinthians. He states, ‘Ἡ ἐμὴ ἀπολογία τοῖς ἐμῇ ἀνακρίνουσιν ἐστὶν αὕτη (9:3) against those who judge him to be deficient. Is this merely an appeal to authority? It does not stand alone as an oversensitive reaction to criticism, but accords with Paul’s arguments in his own defence while simultaneously inviting judgement. Paul does not forbid judgement of his own standing, which he could have done. He is not making a stand only on his authority as an apostle, but seems confident that his view will withstand scrutiny. He risks much, which indicates something about his investment in what he believes to be necessary for the Corinthians to become what they are called to be. Aspects of judging Paul and his words provide an opportunity for dialectic over the interaction of these factors. Paul uses his personal situation as a foil for those who would engage in questionable behaviour under the cover of freedom in Christ, while in practice harming others.

It is often flatly assumed that Paul sets himself as an example for the “strong” to compare with themselves.\textsuperscript{20} Scholarly consensus varies on whether there is actually a

\textsuperscript{18} Phua, Idolatry, 192.
\textsuperscript{19} David J. Rudolph, A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 (WUNT 2.304; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 114–147. Rudolph argues for the repeated use of νόμος in 1 Cor 9 as one evidence for Paul’s reliance on Jewish thought and scripture, especially as related to the broader issues of 1 Cor 8–10. In these pages Rudolph develops the background of Paul’s attitude in connection with “Jewish missionary-apologetic activity.”
\textsuperscript{20} Gardner, The Gifts of God, 68.
defence in 1 Cor 9, or whether it is simply a rhetorical device. Phua surveys the question of example versus defence theories, concluding that the overall context of the epistle supports the conclusion that there were actual opponents to Paul’s authority; therefore this is both example and defence.21 Looking through the lens of identity, Love Sechrest views the passage as beyond a limited personal defence or missionary practice, but the theological expression of Paul as “he illustrates the principles that are to apply to interpersonal relationships within the community.”22

Paul addresses the issues at hand by acknowledging that he is being judged. There is more at stake than Paul’s own authority or status. Not only is this the case, but Paul would undermine his urging to judgement/discernment if he forbade judgement directed at him by others. His interest is in the development of the community to exercise discernment through a wide range of issues in appropriate ways. He demonstrates his authentic leadership in this way, as well as his own commitment to the eschatological vision of the people of God. To know that anything or anyone is true or right requires sound judgement that extends beyond fear of authority, blind obedience, or rigid adherence to tradition or text alone.

Paul is confident that good judgement will vindicate his position. He has no need to say more about the judgement he is facing, at least in terms of preventing or forbidding it. In 1 Cor 4:1–6 Paul has already dismissed concerns about the judgement to which he is exposed. His ἀπολογία in ch. 9 is respectable in large part because he invites further judgement of his words in 10:15. He continues to cultivate a discerning edge to the community. He invites them to discern because he has confidence not only in his standing, but also in the possibility that the judgement of the community will ultimately prove to be sound. He can therefore offer himself as one to be imitated, as he is confident he will be

Judge for Yourselves

In 1 Cor 10:1 Paul moves into a more overtly text-based argument drawn from the WT, which draws the Corinthians into the midst of the scriptural narrative as people of God with a common heritage. Immediately striking is his use of “our ancestors,” with the probable implication of the common heritage of the whole ἐκκλησία with Israel. Not only are they now incorporated into Israel (cf. 5:1), but Paul “assumes their identification with Israel as a given and tries to reshape their behavior in light of this identification.” This suggestion is more probable based on the continued first person plural usages in the passage about the example for “us” and the contrast between the current people with the failings of the former. The warnings inherent in the WT become more alive to the Corinthians, while at the same time beckoning them to become a people set apart as those who realize the fulfilment of God’s calling. This is something Paul will urge them to judge and to move toward proper judgement on idol issues.

The incorporation of the Corinthians into a common heritage with Israel creates an issue over the boundaries of separation and sanctification. The material in 10:1–13, standing alone, could be interpreted as a strict call for separation from any potentially idolatrous situation. In the larger context of Paul’s argument, it gives the overall sense of

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23 Raymond Pickett, The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus (JSNTSup 143; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 117. Pickett argues this is less about defending his rights than “arguing from that right.”

24 There is a stream of interpretation of 10:1–13 (or parts thereof) as a recycled midrash or other homily (perhaps even originally composed by Paul). See Gary D. Collier, “‘That We Might Not Crave Evil’ the Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians 10.1–13,” JSNT 17 (1995): 55 n. 1 for a summary of these opinions. If Paul did not mean to include the Corinthians, the substitution of a third person plural for the first person plural would have been simple.

boundaries between the Corinthian ἐκκλησία and outsiders as “somewhat ambiguous.”

Paul uses these things as examples or types (τύπος, 10:6, 11), “written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come (10:11).” How is this instructive as a type? Paul’s argument draws from these traditions and results in the urging to “flee from the worship of idols” (10:14). He uses the imperative φεύγετε to emphasize the importance of the issue.

Now it is not simply eating food, but image-worship that is at hand, a more direct affiliation with and assimilation of that which the idol represents. Still, it is not a mechanical instruction intended to cause flight into the wilderness in literal mimesis of ancient Israel. Such a literal practice would eliminate much ambiguity, but is not anywhere in view.

Supplying the tools to cut through ambiguity, Paul says, “I speak as to wise people; you yourselves judge what I affirm” (ὡς φρονίμως λέγω· χρίνατε ὑμεῖς δ' φημι, 10:15).

Several scholars think irony may be at work in Paul’s appeal to wisdom.\(^\text{27}\) Fitzmyer thinks Paul flatters the Corinthians to solicit compliance.\(^\text{28}\) Taking a different view, Garland argues that it would be counterproductive to use irony here, especially after writing “my beloved” in 10:14, and that Paul “believes that they are perceptive enough to see the illogic of their behavior and to discern the truth.”\(^\text{29}\) It is possible the statement is slightly ironic and completely serious at the same time, but he appeals to judgement in any case. His argument must be judged, but not only as to its veracity. The application of this argument in the lives of the Corinthian believers requires discernment. They must evaluate just how this fits, and then wisely enact this knowledge.

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\(^{27}\) Newton, Deity, 334–335; Witherington, Conflict, 224; cf. Paul Ellingworth and Howard Hatton, A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1995), 225–226; John Fotopoulos, Food Offered to Idols in Roman Corinth: A Social-rhetorical Reconsideration of 1 Corinthians 8:1–11:1 (WUNT 2.151; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 234. The latter two stress the connection with 1 Cor 4:10, where Paul uses irony, through the use of φρόνιμος for sensible or wise.

\(^{28}\) Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 389.

\(^{29}\) Garland, 1 Corinthians, 475.
The imperative to judge receives scant attention in many studies on this passage. One element of its importance emerges in the use of φημι as “an assertive or declarative speech-act.” This term may also provide some distinction from the λέγω of the first clause (15a), or clarify that it is not just this statement about the Corinthians that is to be judged. Additionally, the second person plural aorist imperative κρίνατε is more than a passing suggestion to consider Paul’s position. In one sense, this second imperative has the effect of softening the imperative to flee idolatry by implying choice. Paul urges them to reach a wise decision. Further, the aorist implies a conclusion rather than ongoing evaluation. To what does this firm instruction to judge apply? Is it only applicable to the imperative to flee idolatry, what has preceded or follows, or more general affirmations? The inferential conjunction διόπερ that prefaces Paul’s conclusion to flee idolatry subordinates 10:14 to the preceding material. This conjunction also interconnects 10:1–22 as a unit. This supports the following κρίνατε as an addition to that conclusion to some degree. Simultaneously, the consistent urge to judgement throughout the epistle suggests that a larger purpose is involved. The judgement of Paul and his words will lead to the conclusion that it is best to act in consideration of those who may be adversely affected by the bold and undiscerning abuse of freedom. Those who are wise must exercise discernment in being/becoming those “on whom the ends of the ages have come” (10:11).

Newton identifies the emergence of κοινωνία as a key term in 10:16–22, where community good is again a priority. This is a term of participation often translated as fellowship. In 10:16–22 the mutually exclusive fellowship with either demons or Christ

31 Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 231. Barrett observes, “He does not utter commands, but wishes to take the Corinthians with him.”
33 Used also as an inferential conjunction in 1 Cor 8:13; see Robertson, *Grammar*, 1154. Cf. BDF §451.
34 Kloha, “Idols,” 189.
35 Newton, *Deity*, 335–337.
evokes some of Paul’s strongest language against participation in idolatry. Winter calls out the “OT’s warning of judgement because of the nexus between idolatry and immorality,” which is one ongoing concern that remains at hand for Paul.\textsuperscript{36} Despite the softer language about idol-food per se, the separation from actual idolatry remains essential. In 1 Cor 5–6 the immorality question presses toward idolatry, a concern that reveals a shading of grey in the space between the two issues. The similar concern is expressed in 2 Cor 6:14–7:1, where temple imagery is invoked. About the Corinthians Paul declares, ἡμεῖς γὰρ ναὸς θεοῦ ἐσμεν ζῶντος (2 Cor 6:16). The language of the living God contrasts with the lifeless idols in 1 Cor 8:4–7. Elsewhere, Paul consistently shows his expectation that idolatry is a past issue for the believers (1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 1:9; Gal 5:19–21).

There is a shared experience of the Lord’s Supper in 10:16–17 that should enable judging the “exclusive” nature of this communion with Christ.\textsuperscript{37} This foreshadows what Paul will soon say about the Lord’s Supper as well as contrasting it with idol worship. Worship through the Lord’s Supper appears as the choice to be made over idolatrous social functions. Discerning this choice and what it represents is key to their progress in faith. The Corinthians should recognize who they are in Christ, in their common heritage with Israel, and how this affects their judgements.

Again that which builds up is at hand (οἰκοδομέω, 10:23), evoking an interweaving of this context with 8:1 and the following discussion around knowledge. Bruce Fisk properly identifies “Paul's persistent demarcation between the permissible and the profitable (6:12; 10:23),” which maintains the tension between freedom and excessive restrictions.\textsuperscript{38} This tension is only resolved through discerning the right path. Freedom through the gospel is not compromised, but further realized through the flexibility to be

\textsuperscript{38} Fisk, “Eating Meat,” 69.
concerned with positively supporting and encouraging the faith of others.

Additionally, there is an interweaving of this passage with 1 Cor 8 in its thematic use of the Deuteronomistic Shema and the Song of Moses (Deut 32). B. Oropeza argues both idolatry and the Shema from the Deuteronomistic tradition are influential, but also that an added dimension corresponds where the Israelites are shown to lack wisdom in the Song of Moses (cf. Deut 32:6, 28–29), including failure to consider effects on outsiders (Deut 32:26–28). Oropeza catalogues the significance of the similar warnings against apostasy to the two newly forming peoples of God, each on the way to a “promised land.” This is the eschatological fulfilment Paul anticipates, but with spiritual growth along the way. As Oropeza parses the argument, 1 Cor 8 warns the “strong” about causing the “weak” to stumble, but 1 Cor 10 warns about the “strong” stumbling. It is one thing to eat food that may have been used in some idolatrous fashion, but to actually participate in the offering acts is an open betrayal of Christ.

As Paul reiterates πάντα ἔξεστιν (10:23) as true, he again moderates this liberty with the concept of that which is beneficial (συμφέρω) or edifies (οἰκοδομέω). This has been his consistent argument as a corrective to the abuse of freedom. In 1 Cor 10:25–29 idol-food itself is again not an issue. Whether from the μάκελλον or in an unbeliever’s home, the only condition Paul places on the non-sacerdotal consumption of this food is the possible negative effect on someone else who may misunderstand. The concern for the “weak” (8:9–13) is now extended to outsiders. It reflects a level of care for those on the outside, who also may misunderstand (cf. 1 Cor 7:12–15; 14:22–25; 1 Thess 4:9–12).

Forming a judgement on the food from the market through conscience is discouraged (Πάντα τὸ ἐν μακέλλῳ πωλούμενον ἐσθίετε μηδὲν ἀνακρίνοντες διὰ τὴν

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39 Oropeza, “Laying to Rest,” 59–60. This use is more precisely echo through the prominent themes.
42 Smit, “1 Cor 8, 1–6,” 582. In 10:23–30 the problem is in “market-hall and the private home.”
This calls forward the weak conscience in 1 Cor 8. Paul’s position demonstrates his worldview. Instead of a magical worldview, where association with pagan rites contaminates idol-food, Paul asserts that everything in the earth is the Lord’s (10:26; cf. Ps 24:1). This is why it is best to suspend judgement about potential idol-food as a contaminated substance. The problem of such food is in the effect it has when empowered through the attitude of the partaker or the observer. It is, in itself, powerless.

At the home of an unbeliever, the specific instruction to eat μηδὲν ἀναχρίνοντες διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν (10:27) is the most overt correction of the “weak.” Paul brings around the issue of concern for the other in his statement of concern for the conscience of the unbeliever, who observes the believer knowingly eating idol-food. The coup de grâce is in the following question, ἵνα τί γὰρ ἡ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἄλλης συνειδήσεως; (10:28–29). Paul corrects the “weak,” for he maintains that his own freedom should not be thus judged through the weak conscience of another. Advice against judging the source of the food as well as being conflicted in conscience at an outsider’s home should be taken as an urging to know that this food is insignificant. It is difficult to imagine the weak in conscience hearing these words without some cringing realization that they have been excessively scrupulous.

Even in the sense of things not to be judged, there is the requirement for an exercise of discernment in recognizing the situation and adjusting to it with wisdom. It is not simply a matter of knowing the right thing to do and following blindly, but rather making considered choices that sprout from the realized status of the believer acting in accordance with the mind of Christ. There is balance in the approach Paul takes in asserting freedom in Christ while maintaining appropriate concern for others.
Coherence with the Surrounding Context

Taken as a subsection of the canonical text, 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 has much thematic regularity and coheres with the flow of the epistle. Issues over idol-offerings progress toward meals more broadly, and then the Lord’s Table in the context of Corinthian worship gatherings. Part of the broader temple context already discussed includes movement from the community as God’s temple (3:16–17), to sexual immorality (including its connections to idolatry) and a likely use of temple imagery about the believer’s body (6:19), into personal sexual conduct more broadly. The movement to issues surrounding idolatry can be seen more directly in continuity with this trend. Throughout 1 Cor 3–12 there is an aspect of temple/body imagery that juxtaposes God’s people as temple with things destructive of or in opposition to this temple, including elements of idolatry. Expressed differently, Paul is moving from questions of what one does with the body in sanctification (including sexual conduct and the use of food), toward acts more specifically involving assembled believers as a worshipping community. Interrelationships always figure in the mixture of issues, whether these are between believers, outsiders, or even with God.

In 1 Cor 8:1–11:1 elements of idolatrous practices interact with those inside and outside the Pauline community. In a limited sense, Paul’s various comments relating to idolatry can be seen looking from the perspective of the bad effects on moral, sex, food, and greed issues. Debate continues over precisely what issues Paul has in mind in various sections. John Fotopoulos argues 8:1–9 forms a miniature partitio within the larger epistle. He attempts to eliminate the tension in Paul’s approach to idol-food by attributing problematic statements to the Corinthian proponents of partaking. Fotopoulos draws from Mitchell, but contradicts her cautions against excessive fragmentation of compositional

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44 Fotopoulos, *Food*, 200–201. Cf. Fotopoulos, “Arguments,” 616–619. He claims Paul identifies a Corinthian propositio (vv. 1b, 4b–5a, 6, 8) and then provides a confirmatio (v. 7) or refutatio (vv. 1c–3, 5b, 9).
units through rhetorical analysis. Fotopoulos does “not wish to assert that Paul consciously applied learned rhetorical theory gained by formal education to his letters.” Even so, his very specific parsing requires a highly developed structuring that unsupportably atomizes the text.

Summarizing majority views on thematic cohesion, Fisk identifies 8:1–13 and 10:23–11:1 as involving previously offered idol-food from the market as Paul’s “primary focus,” where 10:1–22 involves idol-food within Paul’s “primary focus.” Garland classifies the issues as “(1) eating food sacrificed to an idol at the temple of an idol (8:7–13; 10:1–22); (2) eating food of unknown history that is bought in the market (10:23–27); and (3) eating food in the private homes of unbelievers (10:28–31).” Contention arises over the interrelationship of these issues and the overall coherence of Paul’s positions, or even the original unity of the text. Peter Gooch considers this section as one unit, but recognizes the tone in 10:1–22 is different from 8:1–13 and 10:23–11:1. Demons are a serious threat through what can be interpreted as idolatrous sacraments in 10:1–22, where the other two passages minimize the inherent danger of idol-food itself. Gooch’s reading nuances the levels of participation available at different temple functions ranging for active worship to passive presence. Greco-Roman society lacked differentiation of religious functions from other aspects of civic and social life, which produced layers of complexity for dissenters. This inherent layering contributes to the opacity of the text as different issues are addressed with varying levels of concern.

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48 Garland, “The Dispute over Food,” 177.
Perceiving the need for more background study on issues of idol-food, Newton notes the problem of excessive identification of sexual issues in Corinth with idolatry, where other issues confused the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.\(^5\) He further contends that scholarship has focused on the complexity of the text of 1 Cor 8–10, where the “real complexity was to be found in the dynamics of the sacrificial food issue itself.”\(^6\) Essentially, he argues that the more prohibitive condemnation of the acts in 10:20–22 are due to these being official/priestly acts at the sacrificial table, and thus open only to officiants and participants from the social elite.\(^7\) Newton’s reading accords with Gooch in this respect, and does relieve some tensions in the text. If true, Paul is relatively flexible about passive activities such as presence at a social/civic event where idolatrous connections are unavoidable. This flexibility evaporates where active participation in the sacerdotal functions becomes involved. Such a reading highlights why Paul urges discernment in this area, insofar as good judgement informs the Christ-follower.

Richard Phua situates Paul’s polemic against idolatry as similar to select Jewish texts including Wisdom of Solomon, Philo, Josephus, *Joseph and Aseneth*, and portions of the Sybille Oracles.\(^8\) He concludes monotheism, Torah, and “the Isaianic tradition that critiques idols and idol-makers” inform this literary tradition.\(^9\) Contrasting with this literary trend, Phua contends the “strong” Corinthians may follow a broader Diaspora tradition of “accommodation/participation in Gentile cults.”\(^10\) Horsley identifies this position as “enlightenment” that “idols have no real existence.”\(^11\) This notion supports an argument for Corinthian “strong” believers influenced by an accommodating strain of Hellenistic Jewish teachings, making the attendance at idol-feasts or other consumption of

\(^{50}\) Newton, *Deity*, 37–38.
\(^{52}\) Newton, *Deity*, 391.
\(^{53}\) Phua, *Idolatry*, 50–90.
\(^{54}\) Phua, *Idolatry*, 88.
idol-food an acceptable social practice. Thus the desire for social acceptability may be a driving force behind this position.

Paul’s restrained polemic against idolatry per se may reflect his lack of concern about actual idolatry as a Corinthian problem, which 1 Cor 8 ambiguously places in their past (but 12:2 clearly does). It may reveal something about Paul’s attitude and theology tempered by the eschatological standing of the community. This may actually be the source of some perceived incoherence. If, as Winter argues, Paul is less focused on “creedal” issues and more on “relational” issues, there is more coherence in the text.\(^{57}\) Such an argument helps with concerns both for the “weak” believer as well as the outsider. The argument for coherence is stronger when it is recognized that the issue transcends creedal and relational issues, and is rooted in what Paul perceives as beyond these concerns. If the believers are walking in the transforming spirit that brings the mind of Christ, they are able to discern what is the appropriate behaviour in all of their relationships. Paul’s position is not simply derivative, but transcends religious categorization.

Joël Delobel argues that the “impression of incoherence” for Paul’s argument is due to varied idol-food settings.\(^{58}\) He observes “the impression of incoherence is real, though the incoherence itself is only apparent.”\(^{59}\) His conclusions include an idea that the “strong” have a good theological case for the use of freedom, and that ultimately Paul’s solution is freedom limited rather than controlled by the “erring conscience.”\(^{60}\) Morna Hooker argues similarly, stating “the obligation is on those who are wise or strong precisely because they are wise or strong. That is what the gospel is about.”\(^{61}\) In this paradigm it can be seen that absolutism is not in view for Paul, but there is a balanced response that requires operative discernment for each situation. Conflicting approaches to the dilemma of the idol issues are

\(^{57}\) Winter, “Theological and Ethical Responses,” 222–223.


\(^{59}\) Delobel, “Coherence,” 186.

\(^{60}\) Delobel, “Coherence,” 188–189.

mediated in a cruciform application of love.

Where one might expect hard boundaries between Christian practice and idolatry based on a simple application of OT texts, the need to discern the situation in its complexities and act accordingly emerges as the argument progresses. The quantitative and qualitative level of contact with idolatry must be evaluated as to acceptability, which becomes evident. The issues surrounding idolatry require synthesizing discernment, addressing the issues on their own merit along with the resultant interaction with others. Conflicting applications of solutions must be resolved in an application of wisdom. The discernment motif is an additional thread of coherence binding this section with the surrounding material and as a transition to issues facing the gathered community.

**Conclusion**

This chapter placed discernment in dialogue with idol-food issues as the means to apply knowledge. It was argued Paul extends this principle through dialectic over the freedom problem to realign the community with its eschatological, discerning wisdom. Knowledge is misapplied to conduct when discernment is lacking. Paul exemplifies freedom used properly through modelling his personal conduct as withstanding the evaluation leading to judgement (ἀνακρίνω, 9:3). Opening his conduct to scrutiny, he also invites the Corinthians to judge (κρίνω) his affirmation (10:15). Contra claims Paul is insincere in urging the Corinthians to judge his words, his call to judgement was demonstrated to be sincere as part of his consistent urge to judge appropriately. Two cycles of language transitions from discerning to judging in 9:3/10:15 and 10:25, 27/10:29 give examples of the process of properly bringing judgement to conclusion. An expansion of Paul’s goal for discernment is seen in 10:25–29 where discernment (ἀνακρίνω) is required in knowing what things not to judge (κρίνω) on the basis of private conscience, including factors involving those outside.
For Paul, a prime indicator of worthwhile knowledge is concern for those who are weaker in conscience. There is room for “enlightened” action with regard to social relationships or cultural trappings, but avoiding harm requires the application of discerning knowledge tempered by Christ-like love. Discerning application of knowledge and freedom are essential to the positive building of community. Knowledge is a fine thing, but wisdom is applying knowledge through discernment.
PART III: DISCERNMENT AND THE GATHERED, WORSHIPPING ἘΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ

The issues of interactions in the preceding context of the broader public sphere shift into the worship gathering beginning with 1 Cor 11:2. Cultural and social challenges flow into the assembly, where they are addressed along with issues unique to the Corinthian ἐκκλησία as worshipping, divinely gifted people of God. The demands of embodying contact with the unseen require discernment to be operative in many ways. These include general conduct, recognizing the “body,” and discerning spiritual expression in varied forms. The material has much to do with propriety in the interactions between members of the ἐκκλησία in the worship setting. This precedes an additional movement from 1 Cor 12:1 into activities that are, on the whole, more overtly concerned with interactions in the spirit dynamic of worship.
Chapter 5: Discerning within the Gathered Ἐκκλησία (1 Cor 11:2–11:34)

Introduction

The two main sections of 1 Cor 11 differ on particulars as certain problems are addressed. The first includes praise for the Corinthians; the second has praise overtly denied. The distinction between topical content in each section creates some separation, yet the sections are unified by the worship setting and more narrowly by concern over demeanour at the community gathering. This demeanour is somewhat different from conduct more directly involved in the spiritual manifestations from 12:1–14:33a.

As this thesis proceeds, it will first be argued Paul’s call to judge (11:13) is one interpretive key for some difficulties in 1 Cor 11:2–16. Then it will be demonstrated judgement mediates among traditions, scriptural interpretation, and cultural issues affecting gender conventions. This will culminate in discussion of judgement making the web of issues more comprehensible. For 1 Cor 11:17–34 it will be argued the judgement question intertwines with the Lord’s Supper in several ways. This begins with the purpose of the Supper and the necessity for judgement at the table. The judgement/discernment of believers is shown to be critical to assessing oneself in interaction with the community, which extends through apocalyptic appropriation to the final eschatological judgement of God. Throughout this chapter, this thesis’ claims are supported for Paul’s broader use of discernment/judgement as an essential tool for the community to grow and become situated in the overall schema of the Christ-event.
Demeanour in Worship: Judge for Yourselves

First Corinthians 11:2–16 continues to defy readily coherent readings.¹ Many aspects of Paul’s complex arguments in this passage have been analysed from different perspectives to seek understanding.² Struggles with this passage are ongoing, but it can scarcely be doubted that the passage would make more sense to the original audience than to recent exegetes. The focus of the current study is not on the full understanding of this passage, but the sense in which Paul brings the concept of judgement to bear on the Corinthian interaction with his argument and its relevance to their demeanour in worship.³

The key statement for this study is, “Judge among yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered?” (Ἐν υμῖν αὐτοῖς κρίνατε· πρέπον ἐστίν γυναῖκα ἀκατακάλυπτον τῷ θεῷ προσεύχεσθαι; 11:13). Paul uses the second person aorist imperative κρίνατε, which indicates prima facie that there is a decision the Corinthians must make. The issue being judged also brings to a focal point the basic controversy in this passage, although surrounded by other relevant principles. The various arguments resolve into this one imperative, which is judging what is appropriate for the situation of women praying uncovered.⁴ Why is judgement necessary after Paul has given a barrage of data to make his point, or at least to make this statement within a more constrained part of the whole? Is it reasonable to infer that there is room for judgement to be made instead of simply

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³ One common debate derives from the meaning of κεφαλή as “head” or “source,” and the bearing on whether this passage is about creational subordination. This is beyond the scope of this thesis, so will not be addressed.

⁴ The passage addresses both men and women praying and prophesying in terms of head coverings and hair, as evident by the repetition of these issues in connection with various arguments.
acquiescing to apostolic command, however that might be interpreted? Can this particular instance of judgement in the worship setting contribute to a fuller understanding of the passage and also the broader concept in Paul? This frequently overlooked aspect of this difficult passage is important and illuminating.

**Tradition and Understanding**

The passage begins and ends with two sets of statements framing the discussion. The first set begins as Paul says, “I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions (παραδόσεις) just as I handed them on to you” (11:2). He concludes with reference to the custom (συνήθειαν) of the ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ (11:16).\(^5\) Traditions passed on and maintained become customary in practice. Unlike the passage that will follow, there is not a rebuke (11:17), so indications are something complies with a Pauline norm. Paul’s praise indicates consistency with customs of other communities (even if only Pauline communities). Examination of 11:16 occurs below in more detail.

The second conceptual set begins, “But I want you to understand” (11:3). This can be seen as reflected or culminating in the imperative “judge among yourselves” (11:13). Considering this as a pair, a reasonable inference is that Paul intends to develop the faculties of the Corinthians to assess and discern what is important. Paul implies the necessity for the community to exercise judgement based on understanding in the implementation of a practice, which mitigates power exercised over the community. The imperative to judge is surprising only when assuming Paul is uninterested in the capacities of the community to assess appropriate demeanour in worship. If understanding and judgement is the proper realm of the eschatological people, Paul’s imperative is expected and coherent. The pairing of these statement sets within this passage indicates concern both

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\(^5\) The content of this “custom” will be discussed below.
for continuity in practice as well as the goal of developing the discerning community. If a practice is worthwhile, it should withstand appropriate judgement by the community. This also complicates the dynamic at hand.

Based on the strength of the final appeal to church practice in v. 16, some have wondered why most of the passage is necessary. William Walker thinks the passage breaks the context of food and drink, so proposes 11:2–16 is an interpolation by a later redactor. Arguments for the interpolation theory are often undertaken to render a more egalitarian Paul, who is then uninterested in trivial concerns of head coverings and human social structures. Addressing context, Murphy-O’Connor notes the continuity of the discussion for 8:1–11:34 through issues of “public occasions,” over and above the “illusion created by the references to ‘eating’ and ‘drinking’.” Modifying Walker’s argument, Lamar Cope argues for the interpolation contra Murphy-O’Connor even while agreeing with some of his criticisms. The lack of manuscript evidence for an interpolation is problematic at the outset.

Aside from textual support, the interpolation theory is further suspect. If an interpolation was constructed to repress women, it is unlikely that it would effectively endorse women praying and prophesying in the assembly. Walker gives little attention to

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8 Walker, “1 Corinthians 11:2–16,” 104, 109–110. It is ironic that a passage showing such openness to women speaking in such important ways should be brushed aside supposedly from concern to protect elevated status for women in the ancient church.


11:13 except to say it may be an interpolator’s attempt to copy the similar language of 10:15. However, it is highly unlikely an interpolator would call for judgement of the matters discussed, but would likely rely on authoritative declarations within the interpolation. The passage is more plausibly understood as a complex interweaving of topics intended to bring the Corinthians, or some dissenting subgroup, into better understanding of appropriate demeanour for worship. In this sense, the passage does fit well in its contextual relationship as a transition to material about the worshipping assembly. Its placement also avoids confusing eating/drinking issues outside the community (1 Cor 8–10) with insider issues of the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34).

Understanding Distinctions

Paul bases part of his discussion on creation, which also includes the social situation of humans. Elements of gender distinction emerge from these, which lead to suggestions certain Corinthians may have adopted a genderless identity as part of their lifestyle. Whether or not this is the case, it is scarcely imaginable Paul would not have retained sensitivity to the language of the OT regarding gender distinction. Dress according to gender is a serious matter in Torah (cf. Deut 22:5). If some Corinthians adopted genderless identity, Paul may respond unfavourably to some degree, regardless of his view of these issues on a relative scale of importance. Additionally, this was a serious issue in the

12 Benjamin L. Merkle, “Paul’s Arguments from Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:8–9 and 1 Timothy 2:13–14: An Apparent Inconsistency Answered,” JETS 49 (2006): 533–534. Merkle summarizes Paul’s argument as “from creation (vv. 7b–9), from nature (vv. 14–15), and from practice (v. 16).”
14 Kenneth E. Bailey, Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 300. “From the outset, it is clear that the issue is gender distinctions, not gender subordination” (italics his).
surrounding socio-cultural milieu. Paul’s general concern over positive interactions among the broader culture would provide impetus for comments about the issues addressed in this passage.

Gender differences are complicated by Paul’s statement that man is not “obligated to have something coming down from the head” (σῶ σφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τήν κεφαλήν, 11:7). This contrasts with Torah requirements for priestly head coverings during priestly acts (see Exod 28:4, 37–41; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; 16:4), which suggests a positive aspect of male head covering while praying/prophesying. Perhaps the avoidance of priestly garb is intentional to avoid impropriety in identification with the OT priesthood. It should at least appear that head covering for a man in worship is not a problem per se based on precedent scriptures. While it is unclear how Paul reaches this conclusion, it may be one of the best indicators he is framing all of this in broader theological terms including sociocultural concerns in the Greco-Roman milieu of the Corinthian believers. It at least shows Paul is not extracting a one-to-one correspondence with simplistic readings of Torah.

Where Torah does not require head covering for women, something makes this an issue for the Corinthians. After discussing the men, Paul asserts, “Because of this the woman is obligated to have authority upon her head, because of the angels” (διὰ τοῦτο ὃφειλεὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους, 11:10). Translators often amend “authority” to “symbol of authority.”16 This interpretive translation may wrongly place excessive emphasis on some kind of physical covering. Francis Watson contends the woman with a head covering establishes her authority to “proclaim the Word of God to the congregation irrespective of her relation to any other ‘head’,” continuing that “the

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16 E.g. NRSV, NASB, ESV, NET, NCV.
underlying issue is still completely unclear,” at least in terms of covering. In a very different approach to the problem, George Brooke argues whether hair or other covering, this represents the woman’s own authority rather than a humanly derived authority. In this sense Paul may actually be stating a woman can have “authority upon her head” without an unnatural covering in theological terms regardless of social norms. This reading coheres with Paul’s later statement that her hair is her covering (11:15). Ultimately, it is the woman who expresses the authority.

One approach to resolving gender questions can be seen as Preston Massey takes the text in the direction of beauty and adornment according to gender conventions, arguing for women having unadorned long hair with the reflected glory of a veil. The beauty issue seems inadequate as Paul’s cultural concern. Massey elsewhere argues the issue is not about men/women, but husband/wife in the context of the cultural milieu of Corinth. But the passage becomes strange if addressing only husbands/wives. To the extent that the issues relate to gender distinction and modesty, they could not apply only to husbands/wives. The gender issues in the community are inescapable, regardless of their opacity. But elevation of the gender issue as primary in an overarching theological sense overstates the case.

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22 Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 137–138. Payne charts the strangeness that results from translating husband/wife in vv. 3, 7, 8, 12, with like results in vv. 4, 9, 11, 14, 15. E.g., “For as the wife was made from the husband, so the husband is now born through the wife.” Wife/husband must be replaced by woman/man respectively for this passage to make sense, especially with respect to the symbiotic creational source.
The issues of creation, social order, and gender become confused in many works on this passage partly due to a failure to account properly for the strong adversative conjunction πλὴν in 11:11. The shift in this verse, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman,” becomes more important. This is not a subsidiary point, but moves the discussion from limitations to one of possibilities similar to Gal 3:28, where categories such as male and female become “one in Christ Jesus.” Ultimately, this shift makes sense of Paul’s statement of mutual reciprocity between man and woman with God as source for both. This also makes more sense of the apparent contradiction in saying a woman’s hair is her covering (11:15).

Having presented various data before and after the adversative conjunction, Paul urges judgement in 11:13. Michael Lakey claims that in this imperative, Paul addresses whether it is “proper” for a woman to pray uncovered, and possibly only prayer is now in view because unlike prophecy, this is prayer addressed solely to God. Demeanour in prayer is significant in reverence toward God, but this reading undermines the public aspect of the speaking involved. There is no indication that a private matter of prayer is addressed. It is more likely that the public speech of prophecy and prayer are addressed together with blurred distinction, or simply in ellipsis. Lakey also makes the unwarranted conclusion that the masculine plural αὐτοῖς means that only the men, or perhaps male leaders, will make this judgement. In fact, the predicate intensifying pronoun is expected as a masculine plural in addressing the ἐκκλησία of Corinth through normal grammatical convention in addressing a mixed group. There is no indication that only a plurality of

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24 Michael J. Lakey, Image and Glory of God: 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 as a Case Study in Bible, Gender and Hermeneutics (LNTS 418; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 117–120.
25 It seems unlikely Paul would suddenly shift to an issue of private prayer in the midst of this discussion of the gathererd community. Regardless of Paul’s exact view of headcoverings, it seems likely a woman alone in private could pray without head covering. The ellipsis here is similar to the language addressed below about body/blood in 11:27 becoming body only in 11:29.
26 Lakey, Image, 117.
males is addressed here or that this judgement belongs to males alone. The entire assembly is the group addressed. It is of ongoing note in this epistle that no leadership group is identified as those judging the matters presented.

**Understanding Leads to Judgement**

The use of κρίνατε as an aorist imperative urges conclusion of the matter.\(^{27}\) It also is a term that in context suggests a serious level of judgement. In 10:15 this imperative is used similarly, but with the instruction to judge what Paul declares. Now they must judge the issue at hand. Michael Pahl suggests this may be “rhetorical flourish,” not genuinely serious due to Paul’s self-perception as continuing the “unquestioned authority” of OT prophets.\(^{28}\) Such a view is inconsistent with Paul’s repeated urge to judgement concerning that which he argues. In both 10:15 and 11:13 the term is evocative of coming to decisions about something reasoned and grounded in theological principle. In 11:13 the Corinthian assembly must judge among themselves. What are they really charged to judge in this instance? It is not simply to surrender to Paul’s authority, or even just to judge what he says. They must rise to the occasion by exercising good judgement in conclusion of a complex matter, thereby developing their own understanding.

A good contrasting example for comparison exists in 4:5, where the second person plural present imperative κρίνετε is used with μὴ to negate judging things left to God’s judgement at the Parousia. This prohibition is not related to assuming the mantle of divine judgement, but assessing the motives of another’s heart, including Paul. There does remain a place for exclusively divine judgement, which is perhaps rooted in the JT (cf. Matt 7:1–2; Luke 6:37). Beyond this, limitations of access to one’s true motivations place some

\(^{27}\) Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 843. There is no need for ongoing consideration, but rather making a decisive judgement.

boundaries on the nature of judgement of others. Recognizing these limitations is essential in balancing judgement with loving tolerance of others. This is consistent with Paul’s limitations on knowledge without love in 1 Cor 8:1–3 and 13:2.

Although Paul has developed a packed argument in this passage, his urging to judgement is consistent with the recurrence of this theme in the epistle. If this is not a sincere charge, other such charges in the epistle are suspect and the overall tenor of the admonition to be a discerning people becomes meaningless. Yet Paul has been consistent in the call to judge or discern in many situations and contexts, from uniting in the same mind, to judging Paul, and even on to judging angels. More situations will be presented later in the epistle. The recurrent attitude here is part of a coherent theme, whatever the particulars are in this case.

J. Roberts observes, “Such judgments taken as a whole might be defended on the grounds that our natures are derived from God and that the feelings impressed upon us by them are usually reliable.” 29 Respecting the openness to judgement in this issue, Peter Ellis comments, “Paul does not consider the matter trivial, but neither does he consider it vital.” 30 This position may derive from a desire to justify the simple fact Paul does call for judgement of the matter, but overlooks some important points inherent to Paul’s argument. Judgement must be exercised not only on non-vital issues. It is precisely over significant issues Paul expects the people to grow in judgement, to be able to come to critical decisions on matters affecting the community.

Paul concludes with reference to the instruction of nature (φύσις, 11:14–15) and church practice (11:16). Questions abound over this appeal to nature, which can extend the topic well beyond this limited space. 31 Giving attention to a straightforward literary

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30 Peter F. Ellis, Seven Pauline Letters (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1984), 87.
approach, Thompson draws from Philo’s frequent use of ‘nature’ to illustrate the relevant midrashic tradition, which interprets the OT to find practices that are “fitting.” That which is perceived to be natural, usual, and normal is derived from the scripture and experience of the goodness in creation. Human judging faculties are influenced by many things impressed and filtered through what should be “natural” in the best sense of the term. Nature is not the source of instruction in Paul’s discussion, but reinforces his argument. His revelatory framework for true wisdom is not undermined by what may be observed as “natural,” but he seems to assume something inherent to the Corinthian experience will support the best practice.

Church practice is more difficult to identify. Paul says, “But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God” (1 Cor 11:16). The “such custom/practice” (τοιαύτην συνήθειαν) likely refers back to the contentiousness rather than the whole discussion. This comment could not apply to the entire discussion, simply because the conflicting aspects discussed could not all fall under one custom. If more than contentiousness is in view, vv. 14–15 are unlikely because it would refer to the rhetorical questions or contradict Paul’s point about women’s hair as a covering. Philip Payne argues for the offending antecedent to be that of women letting their hair down, and possibly also men with effeminate hair. Payne dislikes the reference to “contentiousness” as he thinks it “neither summarizes the passage nor even refers specifically to either of the

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34 Barrett. The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 258. Barrett thinks the reference must be to women praying and prophesying uncovered, apparently because the apostles did have contentions. This is like saying that Paul was afraid to discourage sin because apostles also sinned.

35 Payne, Man and Woman, 208–209. An element of Payne’s argument is based on the assumption that συνήθειαν should be “custom” with reference to some or all of the hair practices mentioned.
two major head-covering customs the passage addresses throughout.” Paul gives no indication that he is summarizing the whole. The sentence is a first class conditional with the protasis as key to the expected reality of the apodosis.\textsuperscript{36} It remains that συνήθειαν is singular, and its logical referent is φιλόνεικος. If Paul refers only to the grammatically singular antecedent of contentiousness, then this changes the dynamic of Paul’s restrictive comment from trumping all discussion by fiat. His comment about judging the content of his argument is then an actual, sincere instruction in itself.

There is an additional reason why the imperative to judge is so important in this passage. Sometimes lost in the attempt to find a coherent reading for the passage is the relevance of Roman custom and law with respect to women and head covering. Head coverings performed a strong social function for married Roman women, publicly communicating a message of integrity.\textsuperscript{37} A married woman appearing publicly without the appropriate head covering created a declaration of divorce.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps worse, the lack of appropriate head covering becomes equivalent to a woman who has been shorn after public humiliation as an adulteress or prostitute (11:6).\textsuperscript{39} Shame accumulated to the woman, her entire family, and also to the worshipping community. This problem may have been magnified unintentionally by the confusion between public and private in the physical space of the house church.\textsuperscript{40} Payne concludes, “Paul’s argumentation challenges each church to use its collective judgement to exclude only what in its culture is disgraceful and symbolizes a repudiation of Christian sexual morality and marriage.”\textsuperscript{41} Whether intentional

\textsuperscript{36} Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 682–694.
\textsuperscript{38} Bruce W. Winter, Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 81–85.
\textsuperscript{40} Garland, 1 Corinthians, 520–521.
\textsuperscript{41} Payne, Man and Woman, 214.
or not, the social problems radiating into the surrounding community through violating cultural norms had to be considered. This theme also continues the concern for outsiders developed in 1 Cor 8–10.

One peculiarity of Roman head covering with respect to both women and men is identified in a reversal of customary practice. On certain occasions, such as funerals, males would cover their heads, while females would uncover and let their hair loose. The reversal of the norm is noteworthy as it shows some flexibility depending on setting and occasion. Thus it becomes even more plausible to envision a framework where some Corinthian women were breaking with a societal norm at the wrong time and place, thus bringing shame upon themselves, their families, and the community.

The issue as it was perceived in the Roman societal structure may also explain in part why Paul states the apparently contradictory conclusion, “because her hair is given for a covering” (ὅτι ἡ κόμη ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται [αὐτῇ], 11:15b). If Paul finds it necessary to show concern for the potential social reproach based on Roman conventions, then he could be mediating the contradiction of social issues as they are in Corinth. The argument from creation could advocate ultimately for the actual correct understanding that an artificial head covering is not a theological necessity for the woman, but may be a practical ethical issue for the social setting. The Corinthians would need to understand the various influences and then make a mature judgement “in/among themselves” on the correct demeanour in Corinth for a given setting. If this is correct, it is as if Paul acknowledges the sociocultural realities in tension with creation and redemption, but seeks to build understanding about disgrace brought on the community by acting in a manner that appears immoral or disreputable.

Summary

One clear thing in this passage is the power women have to speak out in prayer and prophecy, two different speech-acts held in high regard by both Paul and the Corinthians, each an affirmation of the vital role for women in the Pauline community. Still, the covering issue is difficult however it is interpreted. It calls for considered judgement, which the community must exercise to understand what is appropriate. Judgement between the interacting pressures of social norms, traditions, local practices surrounding or within the community, and what may be considered “natural” become entangled and complicated with perceptions of tradition, scriptural interpretation, “spiritual” life, and new life in Christ. Rather than applying a prescriptive approach through authority, Paul opens the complexity of the issues in a way that appears incoherent, but can be seen to be a prelude to the conditions necessary for the community to discern what is fitting on the basis of the data presented.

Discerning in and through the Lord’s Supper (11:17–34)

Problematic relationships within the Lord’s Supper provoke a response from Paul that includes specific language of discernment/judgement nine times in 11:17–34, which Paul uses to adjust the Corinthian situation through the application of discernment in different ways.43 These include discerning what is memorialized and anticipated in its ethical and apocalyptic meanings, approaching spiritual worship in appropriate self-assessment, and also discerning the community body of Christ in its composition of other believers. Paul draws upon these three areas to synthesize a milieu where the Corinthian community can enter into a deepened enactment of their role as a discerning eschatological people of God. In the following sections of this chapter the purposes of the Lord’s Supper will be

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43 BDF §488 lists six discernment/judgement terms following 11:29 as an example of paronomasia. Rather than simply wordplay, Paul is discussing discernment/judgement through interwoven uses.
considered, then how this relates to judgement in various ways. This demonstrates the necessity for discerning in the midst of this community function.

**Situating the Lord’s Supper**

Instruction about the Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11:17–34 includes five uses of συνέρχομαι in either verb or participle forms (11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34). Suzanne Watts Henderson argues that the frequency, along with the “framing *inclusio* of vv. 17 and 34” work with vv. 20 and 30 to “indicate that the explicit purpose for gathering is ‘to eat’.” Her reading stresses the inequitable approach of some wealthier Corinthians to those with less, but fails to consider adequately the true nature of the gathering. Uses of συνέρχομαι stress the community gathering for purposes beyond eating. Paul explicitly distinguishes between meals while gathered and regular meals in vv. 22 and 34, where he remarks on the regular meal as something for individual homes. Further, he identifies the gathering in community (συνερχομένων ὑμῶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ, 11:18), and then on the first mention of eating criticizes them for failing to eat the Lord’s Supper (οὐχ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν, 11:20). The Lord’s Supper contrasts with a regular meal in its worship function. It is not the Lord’s Supper because they eat together in the worship setting, nor is the Lord’s Supper simply a meal eaten in community. The eating and drinking problem is primarily one of superseding the worship purpose of the gathering with its special meal, but includes a failure to discern what the Lord’s Supper should accomplish.

If Paul simply intended to correct the disparity of the food distribution, he could have limited his instructions to this effect. The concerns about loving interaction are not

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invisible, but the emphasis of συνέρχομαι is on the community gathered for worship. The Lord’s Supper is one part of the community gathering purposes seen in various modes throughout 1 Cor 11:2–14:40. These passages demonstrate continuity between various activities as interlocking components for expression of worship in the community. The Lord’s Supper is one important component in this chain of worship.

The historical content of the Last Supper can be partially reconstructed from data in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25; Mark 14:22–25; and Luke 22:15–20. Historical here refers primarily to aspects of Jesus distinctly presenting bread and wine in a manner relating to his own body and blood, which is memorialized in the event. Debate also continues over the relationship of either the Last or Lord’s Supper with Passover, but Paul makes no overt linkage to the meal as a Passover celebration. One key difference between Paul and the Gospel accounts must be noted at the outset.

Representations of what Jesus did at the originating event are anticipatory, looking forward from this Last Supper to what is about to happen. Pauline practice of the Lord’s Supper memorializes the Last Supper while connecting it with present and future divine activity. Paul’s account is more directly involved in community formation through the new covenant already established in Christ’s outpoured blood, which carries the new covenant


47 JT contributes to material in the passage, but application of the tradition is not simply mimicking the Last Supper. See Albert Schweitzer, The Lord’s Supper in Relationship to the Life of Jesus and the History of the Early Church (vol. 1 of The Problem of the Lord’s Supper according to the Scholarly Research of the Nineteenth Century and the Historical Accounts; Translated by Matill, A. J. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1982), 110–111, 136–137. Schweitzer attempts the strongest distinction between partaking in bread and wine and the words spoken, which grow from the meal itself as an event celebrating Jesus broadly in eschatological terms. He claims the elements should be considered separately from words spoken.

allusion to Jer 31:31–34 shared in Paul and Luke.\textsuperscript{49} In the near context of 1 Cor 10:1–13, Paul also compares and contrasts the current eschatological people with the Israelites of Numbers.\textsuperscript{50} They are a new people in a new wilderness. Unlike the ancient Israelites or even the disciples present with Jesus at the initiating Supper, this community of spirit-empowered believers/disciples is expected to be a discerning people who have passed into the new standing described in Jeremiah. There is an essential intellectual reconstruction of the relevant historical events for the Corinthians as they are called into synthesis of the entire “cultic re-enactment” through proper knowledge.\textsuperscript{51} This is an apocalyptic wisdom leading to knowledgeable discernment as an essential aspect of worship, including the Lord’s Supper in the midst of worship.

Revelatory wisdom remains in view, as does knowing Christ crucified as part of what can only be spiritually discerned (1 Cor 2). The Corinthians are participating in an apocalyptic enactment with knowledge that requires revelation to grasp meaning through the Lord’s Supper. This wisdom is again applied through the discernment that enables mediation of the various components of the meal in its relevance to Christ as sacrifice (a cultic element) and connections to their own standing as part of this tradition and community. Failing to discern this community building aspect of the Lord’s Supper reveals a lack of understanding as well as failing to enter into its unifying, apocalyptic sense of new creation and covenant.

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\textsuperscript{49} Scott J. Hafemann, \textit{Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel: The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians} 3 (WUNT 1.81; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 426. Hafemann observes this is one of only two Pauline references (cf. 2 Cor 3:6) to the “new covenant,” with “being transformed by the presence of the Lord” part of the sum total of the worship. Use of \textit{καινὴ διαθήκη} (1 Cor 11:25; Luke 22:20) corresponds thematically with \textit{διαθήκην καινὴν} (Jer 38:31 LXX; Heb 8:8). This rare terminology is allusion because of the “verbal agreement” and “unique combination of significant words.” On criteria, see Thompson, \textit{Clothed with Christ}, 30–33.

\textsuperscript{50} For connections of the spiritual food and drink between this passage, 1 Cor 10, and 12:13 see Lee, \textit{Paul}, 132 n. 100. Lee surveys several works on the drinking and outpoured spirit motifs to argue for the interrelationship of “unity with ‘spiritual’ food and drink.” It is important to recognize this unity as something not important for its own sake, but for the extension of the people of God into a functional body of Christ.

\textsuperscript{51} Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, “\textit{τὰ δρόμημα καὶ τὰ λεγόμενα: The Eucharistic Memory of Jesus’ Words in First Corinthians},” \textit{HTR} 90 (1997): 367.
In the ongoing Corinthian supper practice, schism is a festering problem provoking Paul’s disapproval (11:17–18). As a positive outcome of these schisms, Paul states these are “in order that those approved may become revealed among you” (ἵνα [κα]ὶ ὑς ἀφιεῖται ἐν ὑμῖν, 11:19). Those who are genuine in Corinth are sorted in some way and “approved” if adequate. Rachel McRae suggests it is “unclear whether Paul is using the word δόκιμοι in connection with doctrinal attitudes or sociocultural attitudes.” More than attitude is involved because behaviour, which empowers schism, clearly reveals something about one’s intentions. The behaviour of self-indulgence and exclusion of the poorer members in 11:20–22 recalls the distinctions between the strong and weak in 1 Cor 8–10. Above in ch. 4 it is argued the strong and weak should revise their judgement regarding conduct around idolatry and food issues outside the community. The issues now involve some of the same failures to discern proper conduct, the status of others, and ramifications in the community.

52 Thiselton, First Corinthians, 857. Thiselton argues the existence of σχίσματα in this event is evocative of the same terminology used in 1 Cor 1:10–12, but is distinct because of the schisms between different house churches of ch. 1 versus those within house churches documented in the current passage. Similarly, Otfried Hofius, “The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 11:23b–25,” in The Lord’s Supper and the Lord’s Supper Tradition: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 11:23b–25 (ed. Ben F. Meyer; New Gospel Studies 6; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1993), 79–80. Cf. Stephen C. Barton, “Paul’s Sense of Place: an Anthropological Approach to Community Formation in Corinth,” NTS 32 (1986): 237–239. Barton details the various schisms as manifestations of the competing aspirations between households. There may actually be some overlap between these two positions. It is at least clear that the issue at hand is something happening within a gathering in one place for worship, even if it recurs in multiple house churches.


55 Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 262. Barrett thinks this is a comparative evaluation so “those who behave in a truly Christian manner may stand out from those who do not.” Similarly Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 433 n. 19. This word is used in 1 Cor 16:3 of a person they entrust with their financial gift for saints in Jerusalem.
In a different vein, Witherington’s view is that Paul’s eschatological interpretation of the situation is so “true believers may be discerned.”56 Witherington shifts the focus away from the primary concern about those approved among the Corinthians. But there is no indication this approval is only of “true believers,” because the schisms in the passage appear to be between those who are unquestionably in the community. Discernment here extends beyond those considered “true believers.” Regarding those approved, Hays perceptively comments, “This idea, foreshadowing the theme of God’s judgment that appears explicitly in verses 27–32, is rooted in Jewish apocalyptic soil.”57 There is a judgement motif of eschatological import permeating the passage. Paul’s intensity in handling this failure in the community is beyond mere matters of cohesive social dynamics. The social problems are real, but unchecked reveal a deeper flaw having further repercussions.

Munzinger recognizes the dual elements of apocalyptic and ethical discernment interacting in the anticipation of final judgement and daily life concerns.58 He cautions against the “eschatological dimension” overshadowing actions in community interrelationships as the beginning of judgement, especially as seen in this passage.59 There really is no dualism in these concerns, but rather a melding of the community life into the sphere of apocalyptic thought in their immersion into Paul’s representation of the Lord’s Supper as saturated with judgement. In the enactment of this apocalyptic worship, the community should step into the holy ground of all things being made new and set right. There is no real distinction between ethical and eschatological dimensions in the reality presented through the Lord’s Supper.

57 Richard B. Hays, First Corinthians (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 195.
58 Munzinger, Discerning, 24.
59 Munzinger, Discerning, 25–26. Munzinger correctly argues against “the final judgement” contextualizing “every decision” (emphasis his).
McRae stops short of the change envisaged. Witherington’s proposal negates the “approval” bringing believers to a place free of eschatological judgement. Munzinger frays the connection between ethical and eschatological. Hays appropriately links the extended judgement motif to the remainder of the passage, which expounds avoidance of the overshadowing judgement. One aspect of disapproval is clear in Paul’s initial complaint (11:20–22). The recalcitrant schismatics are not approved, and tear at the foundation and fabric of the community. Those approved are not schismatic, or at least emerge from the schism as approved by amending their way. The historical and theological meanings of the supper (11:23–26) preface the expanded judgement issues in the remainder of the passage.

**Judgement at the Table**

The meaning and syntax of 11:26 holds an underappreciated key to Paul’s meaning for worship not as a “celebration of one’s salvation” but rather something that “proclaims the death of Jesus and awaits his return.” In this proclamation and anticipation is a conflation of time bringing the believer into close proximity with the crucifixion of Jesus, bringing judgement to bear upon each participant. Apocalyptic elements resonate throughout: eschatological fulfilment through judgement is the hoped for and declarative essence of the Lord’s Supper; therefore entering into this worship is a choice to stand within this judging presence. The Lord’s Supper is an event of judgement regarding past, present, and future.

Judgement permeates the symbolic aspect of this event, which brings a sombre element

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**Note**

60 Proclamation here is the entire enactment of this meal. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “‘You Proclaim the Lord’s Death’: 1 Corinthians 11:26 and Paul’s Understanding of Worship,” RevExp 80 (1983): 380–383, 385. Cf. R. Alan Streett, Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord’s Supper under Roman Domination During the First Century (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 208–209. Streett focuses on anti-imperial praxis, but depends in part on mistaken identification of καταγγέλλετε as passive. His larger valid point is that there is more than a spoken declaration involved. The proclamation is rightly a present active verb reflecting the ongoing aspect of the declaration about Jesus through the actions of the community.

along with the celebration. Some Corinthians subsumed the former beneath the latter, especially in self-indulgence.

Paul states that anyone partaking “in an unworthy manner (ἀναξίως) will be answerable (ἐνοχός) for the body and blood of the Lord” (11:27). The term ἀναξίως is sometimes mistakenly considered an issue of “personal worth” when in reality it refers to “partaking in an unworthy manner.”62 As an adverb this term points to the action of partaking unworthily rather than to the state of the participant.63 This further cuts against approving “true believers.” The “insiders” of the community can fail to be approved. The “unworthy manner” places one “on the same side as those powers of darkness who put Christ to death.”64 Compounding the implied judgement, to be ἐνοχός here is a serious matter, akin to receiving a judgement of guilt before a judge.65 Accountability here implies a kind of guilt for participation in the crucifixion of Christ. The implied inverse is that partaking worthily does not result in this same guilt. This potential for culpability in body and blood prefaces a cluster of other forensic language in vv. 28–34 with respect to the gravity of the situation for believers in being “approved.”

The necessary step before partaking in the table is that “one must examine oneself” (δοκιμαζέτω δὲ ἐνθρωπός ἑαυτόν, 11:28).66 The imperative verb is from the same lexical form in 1 Cor 3:13 about testing by fire that will come to each person’s work. It shares the

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62 Ben Witherington III, Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord’s Supper (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 58.
64 Anders Eriksson, Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians (ConBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 190–191.
66 Paul builds on this principle in a different context, which expands its importance (Ἐαυτὸς πειράζεται εἰ ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἐαυτὸς δοκιμαζότας· ἢ οὐκ ἐπιγινώσκεται ἐαυτὸς ὡς ὁ Ἱησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν; εἰ μὴν ἀδέκαμοι ἔστε, 2 Cor 13:5).
same root as “approved” in 11:19. Testing is preliminary to approval, which accords with what Paul suggests about the positive purposes of testing so the standing of approval can be known.\(^6^7\) Part of his greeting to the Philippians uses this concept, “And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine (δοκιμάζειν) what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless” (Phil 1:9–10). Positive use for examination/approval is demonstrated in the ultimately redemptive goal.

Paul continues this judgement discourse, “For the one eating and drinking judgement to oneself eats and drinks without discerning the body” (ὁ γὰρ ἐσθίων καὶ πίνων κρίμα ἑαυτῷ ἐσθίει καὶ πίνει μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα, 11:29). Retaining this more literal structure maintains a closer relationship to the parallel concepts of 11:27–28.\(^6^8\) This parallelism has partaking in an unworthy manner (ἀναξίως) leading to guilt (ἔνοχος) in v. 27 expanded by the judgement (κρίμα) one eats/drinks on oneself, which is brought by failing in discerning the body (διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα) in v. 29. An additional parallel communicates between v. 29 and 31, which emphasizes both the inward and outward looking discernment.\(^6^9\)

This reading reduces a tendency to fragment Paul’s argument, while retaining the focus on the strong emphasis given to the need for discernment. Martin observes, “Since ‘not discerning the body’ is the primary problem in this section, it must relate to the unity

\(^6^7\) Therrien, *Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens*, 93. “Le v. 28 rejoint d’une certaine façon le v. 19: la table eucharistique où l’on communique à un pain unique en appréciant sa signification profonde et son réalisme comme sacrifice, jugement, gage d’espérance et source d’unité, ne doit être ouverte qu’aux δόκιμοι.”


of Christ’s body, the church.”

There is a particular focus on the community as the body paralleling Christ and foreshadowing 1 Cor 12. Partaking unworthily has the effect of bringing judgement, but discerning the body is also essential to prevent bad outcomes. Discernment opens the memorial and apocalyptic worlds inherent in the event. Self-examination works in mutual reinforcement with the discerning of the body to enter the world of meaning in what Christ has done, continues, and will accomplish.

**Discerning the Body and Divine Judgement**

Questions arise as to what body is being discerned in v. 29. Is this a reference to the actual physical body of Jesus, its literal representation in elements, or the community as the body of Christ continuing on earth? Reference to blood has dropped from this verse. Marshall sees body here as a “shortened” expression standing in the same place as body and blood, which due to its context with 11:27 remains the body of the “crucified Lord.” Andrew Das also argues that this is not the “ecclesiastical body, the body of believers,” but rather the sacramental body. He considers Paul’s use of “body” in 10:16–17; 11:27, 29; 12:12–31 to result in an acknowledgment of the ecclesiastical body only in 10:17; 12:12–31.

One major problem with this view is found through contextualizing 10:16–17 along with the remaining passages. The bread/body of 10:16 prefaces Paul’s use of this imagery to say in 11:17 that the many believers are one body through partaking in the one loaf. Paul moves from the pure Passover bread imagery (5:6–8), through believer’s bodies as “members of Christ” (6:15), then builds upon this concept to urge avoidance from uniting with idols (10:16–17). After the one loaf (11:17) he moves to body in the Lord’s Supper (11:27–29), and ultimately to the concept of the members of the body in service to one

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another (12:12–31). There is coherence to the thought and development in the motif of believers partaking in and becoming bread/member/loaf/body of Christ, united with him in symbiosis with the other members. Discerning the body becomes more urgent in this context. Recognizing the body, those who constitute it, or maintaining its purity are all part of the task in discerning.

Differing from Marshall or Das, Karl Sandnes thinks the lack of blood precludes thought about \( \tau \delta \sigma\nu\mu\alpha \) as “Christological,” but continues Paul’s thinking about the community, “probably by intention slippery here.”\(^73\) The “slippery” sense is that monochromatic renderings relinquish the full sense for the body metaphor. Murphy-O’Connor sees the community as called ‘Christ’ because the “believers were the means by which the Risen Lord acted in the world.” He denies the “holistic” interpretation of the “cosmic sacramental” body, as it is evident that the “corporeity” of this body is actualized through the community, which provides the “physical presence of Christ in the world.”\(^74\) The community of believers is in reality the body of Christ, intertwined with the historical reality of Jesus’ body as given to unite disparate peoples into one. This oneness does not stop at the notion of unity as an association of people, but points to a body visible and active in agency for Christ in the world of humans. This oneness is threatened by schismatic fracturing that undermines the theological actualization of the Christ-event. The schisms and lack of loving care for the other members of the body have the effect of dismembering the body of Christ, countering its sacrificial and symbolic capacities. These capacities mirror what is accomplished in the physical body of Jesus, neither diminishing nor exceeding these things by emulation or actualization. Discernment is necessary to grasp the reality of the blended literal and figurative body of Christ, which extends to

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discerning what it means to dismember either.

A fuller reading without excluding either sense is appropriate. Brower notes that the “two lines of interpretation are complementary . . . to fail to discern the body of Christ in the people for whom he died is tantamount to profaning the body of Christ in the bread.” The substances represent the greater realities memorialized and anticipated, even with some ambiguity by design. As an extended metaphor, there is an intentional construction of the imagery encompassing the Christ-event but also the community of Christ in its individual and collective parts continuing the corporeal presence of Christ, visible and active on earth.

Discerning the body is urgent as recognition of that which is represented as Christ in each aspect. The physical sacrifice of Christ is really one with the people redeemed through that sacrifice. The one body of people in Christ does not minimize what is memorialized, but in its unity reflects the accomplishment of divine intention through the original sacrifice. Discerning the body in 11:29 is part of the “symbolic world established

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75 Brower, Living as God’s Holy People, 72. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 617–618, esp. n. 83. Dunn sees the necessity of avoiding the “either-or exegesis” in choosing singular readings, observing “it is the eating and drinking as a communal act which is in view throughout.” See also Martin, The Corinthian Body, 194–197. Martin thinks the body here has multiple meanings as the actual “substance” of bread, “Church,” one’s own body or that of one’s “Christian neighbor.”


77 Martin, The Corinthian Body, 74. Martin describes the probable two-fold meaning of the body to be discerned as “Christ represented by the bread and the communal body of Christ represented by the gathered church.”

78 Murphy-O’Connor, Paul: A Critical Life, 286. According to Murphy-O’Connor, Paul’s approach to the overall Corinthian problem in the Supper is this: “He does not tell them how to solve the problem. He simply lays out the need for self-examination on their part and specifies the criterion they must use, ‘Anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the Body eats and drinks judgment on himself’ (11:29). Interpersonal relations within the community are the crucial factor.”

79 David K. Lowery, “The Head Covering and Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11:2–34,” BSac 143 (1986): 162. Lowery explains, “Only by recognizing (διακρίνων, “properly judging”) the unity of the body of the Lord—and acting accordingly—could they avoid bringing “judgment” (κρίμα) on themselves (1 Cor. 11:29).” Cf. Ellis, Seven Pauline Letters, 90–91. Ellis argues that “discernment of the body” in this passage grows from “the sin of ignoring the poorer members of the community.” Similarly, but with broader
by Paul in this letter,” which is about recognizing the collective body of Christ.\textsuperscript{80} The importance of discerning the body is linked to the same loving concern urged in the context of food in other settings (1 Cor 8:1–11:1; Rom 13:8–14:23). At the same time, one must discern that acting against the community is acting against Christ himself.\textsuperscript{81} The current context brings the issue to particular urgency as that which Christ’s actual body and blood were sacrificed to accomplish is trivialized, ignored, or otherwise trampled. What is represented in the Lord’s Supper is a melding of each part of a grand picture: Christ’s sacrifice of body and blood to redeem and bring into one a people to become his very own. This is the context for self-examination, discerning the body, and approaching a place of eschatological judgement.\textsuperscript{82}

Discerning remains in view as the passage continues. Sharon Ringe observes that “at issue is a forensic process of decision-making centering on the cross, as Paul’s word plays on ‘judgement’ make clear.” She concludes “one’s own behaviour at the supper” is the subject of examination, with an “eschatological urgency of the moment in which they lived.”\textsuperscript{83} A merely individualistic reading of discerning fails to account for the breadth of Paul’s urgency, so self-examination alone is inadequate. Discerning both self and community in “double discernment” abides closer to the mark.\textsuperscript{84} The manner of conducting oneself in this intersection of person, community, and Lord becomes crucial. One’s interaction with the importance of that which is memorialized is vital yet does not rise

\textsuperscript{81} Wolfgang Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther: 1 Kor 11,17–14,40 (EKKNT 7/3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1999), 52. According to Schrage, “Die Spitze des Verses aber ist darin zu suchen, daß der, der sich an der Gemeinde vergeht, sich damit zugleich am Leib Christi schuldig macht.” That which is against the community brings guilt for Christ’s death. Cf. Johnson, Among the Gentiles, 161. Johnson juxtaposes “communal awareness” with the literal body of Jesus.
\textsuperscript{82} Therrien, Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens, 295.
above the collective interests in the whole passage. The temporal dynamic of the event itself reaches back to the cross and forward to the Parousia, while merging time, persons, and narrative at an intersection that must be discerned. It is a holistic process of recognizing all that is interacting in this particular worship moment. This must also include discerning others as well, a formation of judgement both revealing those who are not approved and those who are truly the one body as elaborated in 1 Cor 12.

Failure to discern the body has the result that “many of you are weak and ill, and some have died” (11:28–30). Marshall contends that consistent with the high standard of “exclusive relationship with the Lord” evident in this passage and 1 Cor 10:22, “to fail to show love at the Lord’s Supper is to fail to realise the true nature of the Supper and hence to come under divine judgement.” The concern is about the potency of the holy becoming dangerous. Again, this must extend beyond self-examination. Those who are not ‘approved’ are in actuality those whose state contradicts that which is proclaimed and shared in the Supper through the interweaving of the various people in the community into one body. The use of σῶμα for the community as body of Christ coheres with Paul’s development of the motif. Without discerning the body in its community aspect, unworthy behaviour is unrecognized and given room to fester and infect others. Since it would be expected for the unapproved to be identified in this judgement, how are they viewed?

There is no hint of the kind of judgement such as 1 Cor 5 or 6, where disciplinary action is expected from the judging community. Here the improper behaviour at the gathering of the community could be corrected through proper action, that is, through

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85 Marshall, Last Supper, 154. Cf. his p. 115, where Marshall argues these terms typically refer to tangible physical outcomes. For an argument that these are spiritual illnesses and death, cf. Ilaria Ramelli, “Spiritual Weakness, Illness, and Death in 1 Corinthians 11:30,” JBL 130 (2011): 146–149, 155, 158, 163. Exploring the possibility that κημώνει is intended to convey spiritual death or stupor, Ramelli argues spiritual effects of the divine judgement fit the context of the passage, Paul’s broader usage, the NT record, along with synchronic use of the same terms without “spiritual” modifiers.

86 James D. G. Dunn, 1 Corinthians (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 78.

87 Cf. Oropeza, Paul and Apostasy, 212. The “social problems” here do not lead to the same “loss of eschatological salvation” observed in 1 Cor 5–6.
discerning the body of Christ in the whole community instead of despising (or ignoring) the poor or others within the community. As Paul states, “But if we were discerning ourselves, we would not be judged” (εἰ δὲ έαυτούς διεκρίνομεν, οὐκ ἄν εξερινόμεθα, 11:31). This is a second class condition, which has the imperfect “in both the protasis and apodosis” to express something counterfactual in the present. 88 Counterfactuality in the mind of the writer is made clear by the apodosis having οὐκ ἄν plus the indicative. 89 The grammatical construction in this case stresses the essential discernment without which judgement would occur in reality. As Ericsson states, “the object to διακρίνω in 11:31 is ἑαυτούς.” 90 Discerning “ourselves” is equivalent to discerning the body. The grammatical syntax strongly supports the body as community in 11:31, but also recalls the usage in 11:27. This reinforces the notion that 11:27 is at least communal body. The language of body progresses from the historical event of Last Supper and cross to the memorialization of this event and its actualization in the community of those redeemed through the originating event, collected into a new body of Christ.

The succession of judgement language in 11:31–32 shows judgement in the community is a preventative to divine condemnation, as “being judged by the Lord we are disciplined, in order that we may not be condemned with the whole world” (κρινόμενοι δὲ ὑπὸ [τοῦ] κυρίου παιδεύομεθα, ἵνα μὴ σῦν τῷ κόσμῳ κατακριθῶμεν, 11:32). 91 The judgement of 11:29, 31, and 34 indicates the beginning of “God’s eschatological ‘judgment’,” which requires the community to judge amongst themselves to recognize those who are “approved.” 92 The question of discerning the body must include self-examination, but

90 Eriksson, Traditions as Rhetorical Proof, 191 n. 58.
91 Cf. Horsley, 1 Corinthians, 162–163. Horsley comments on the importance of the community discerning and mitigating the judgement that is disciplinary.
92 Das, “Revisited,” 207.
along with this the continuity with those “approved” becoming revealed requires this discernment to be broader than an exercise in self-evaluation. Conflicts among the community members require wisdom in understanding and choosing correct behaviour. This extends to discerning what is destructive and brings divine judgement, including those who walk in an unworthy manner. As discussed above in ch. 2, Paul’s admonition to “be made complete in the same mind and judgement” (1:10) anticipates applying the wisdom to understand and build productively as a community of Christ. Difficulties in discerning the body positively and negatively precede the healthy body described in 1 Cor 12.

Paul’s conclusion to the passage in 11:33–34 is simple. To avoid problems provoked by meal sharing and hunger, he advises consideration for the other when they gather to eat, then eating at home to sate hunger. The plainly stated purpose is “so you would not gather for condemnation” (ἵνα μὴ ἐλήμυνησαν ἀναγκασθείς, 11:34). He has retained the use of the judgement motif in various connotations, and here closes with the idea of avoiding judgement by avoiding the behaviour that brings it. There is no trace of exacting any outcome of judgement on those unapproved, who are not removed like the immoral man in 1 Cor 5. The community is called to draw near and apprehend the redemptive discernment that must be exercised by eschatological people of God.

Participating in the Lord’s Supper is becoming part of all it represents, from Christ to his people. In this reciprocity between partaking and becoming, the scope of the divine project presented by Paul can be seen in its density. There is participation in the cross and

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93 The sense of ἐλήμυνησαν is “so that” in this use, see BDAG 290. The use of judgement here is reflective of condemnation, as guilt before the judge, BDAG 567.

94 Cf. Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. by John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 252. Schmithals argues that Paul has an issue with the performance of the meal as ritual as it had deteriorated in Corinth, but such an argument is simply not in the text. Paul makes issue of the schism, not ritual practice.

95 Bonnie Bowman Thurston, “‘Do This’: A Study on the Institution of the Lord’s Supper,” *ResQ* 30 (1988): 215–216. Thurston describes the importance of the actions in the eucharist saying, “As we share the elements, we become one with Christ in taking him in, but also one with each other by sharing common elements.” Cf. Gérard Therrien, *Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens* (EBib; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1973), 93.
what that means for redemption through the blood and body of Jesus, but this is never solely personal. The same loving concern that motivated the sacrifice of the cross must suffuse and motivate the participants. This self-yielding sacrifice through the mind of Christ brings others near to build the community into the body of Christ. One who would approach this seat of judgement must be prepared to discern in self-assessment—but also to discern the community as body, what has made this body possible, what it means to be a part of that body, and to yield selfishness for the good of that body. At the same time, there must be examination, or judgement (δοκιμαζέτω) that reveals other people as “approved” (δόκιμοι). Without this judgement, the “approved” are not revealed.

In sum, the groundwork for judgement at the Lord’s Supper is set in context of schism, which does reveal those “approved,” but first there must be the judgement of identification. The interplay of divine and human judgement demonstrates the urgency of human discernment to recognize the schisms in the food issues especially with respect to the table of the Lord and all it represents.96 Drawing into this space of judgement has serious consequences for the members of the community as the body of Christ on the earth, which must perceive what is memorialized and also transcends time through the event. This includes the imperative to examine oneself, and partaking in the bread/body, to discern the body beyond oneself.

Discerning the body extends to the realization of appropriate behaviour even as it reveals those approved through their own conduct, and with the potential further manifestations of unhealthiness. Those who are not approved can and must modify their behaviour in order to avoid real consequences of divine judgement for discipline. Paul gives the imperative to judge to the members of the Corinthian community in such a way that they can develop insightful and wise discernment. Rather than trampling the sacrifice

96 Meeks, The First Urban Christians, 179–180. “Apocalyptic” or “eschatological” represent modern abstractions, yet are concepts throughout the Supper.
of Christ, discerning evaluation as evident here gives the opportunity for mercy to work through appropriate discipline. The goal is to correct destructive behaviour that creates schism on the basis of inappropriate human judgements of others through merely human social constructs.

**Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated that in the complexities of competing ideas over gender distinctions, judgement is essential to assess the relative significance of tradition, scriptural interpretation, and social conditions. This imperative is the means to evaluate conflicting data. Paul gives the imperative to judge (κρίνω) the headcovering issue on the basis of understanding. He demonstrates confidence in the judging capacity of the community to make the necessary evaluations and bring the matter to conclusion through a sound judgement.

This chapter also demonstrated apocalyptic thought in the Lord’s Supper, which inherently requires the revealed wisdom Paul establishes in 1 Cor 2. The body of Christ as literally about Jesus the Lord and figuratively as the community in Christ brings the requirement to discern (διακρίνω) the event in its ramifications, oneself in relationship to this whole, and the body of Christ including its members and community manifestation. Failing to properly discern causes schism, defiles the body of Christ, and brings divine judgement (κρίμα) as discipline. In a counterintuitive turn, avoiding discernment promotes schism by failing to affirm weak members while failing to recognize those who are approved (δόκιμος). The importance of discernment in the face of potential divine judgement is a strong indication of its status for Paul. This approach to the Lord’s Supper brings forward the discernment/judgement from earlier chapters of First Corinthians. The community should gather together in unity through the mind of Christ, protect the weak members of the body, protect the community from the defilement of those not approved,
and worship appropriately. Paul considers the Corinthians able to discern, as well as needing to discern. This discernment is vital as they approach God in worship. Discernment in this way does not violate a prohibition against eschatological judgement, but emphasizes the importance of approval in Christ through the apocalyptic arc of events and time in the cross. The evaluative discernment Paul urges has the positive purpose of preventing God’s condemnation (κατακρίνω) in the current time.

The following material in 12:1–14:33a marks the entry into what Paul identifies as the “spirituals.” Having addressed the propriety of one’s demeanour in these phases of presenting oneself before the Lord in the worship assembly, Paul has established the foundation for interacting with the dynamics of the spirit-empowered aspects of Corinthian worship. Discernment continues to be a significant concern in Paul’s approach to these issues.
Chapter 6: Discernment of Spirits (1 Cor 12:1–13:3)

Introduction

Paul moves from the community at worship in 1 Cor 11 to a treatment of “spirituals” (πνευματικῶν)1 in the first part of 1 Cor 12. The gift identified as discernment of spirits is the primary focus for this thesis chapter, but is contained within the larger issue of “spirituals” as a category. As to spiritual gifts, Paul does not offer a detailed explication of each gift he mentions.2 Many issues remain unresolved due to the minimal detail.

Discernment of spirits may be the most obscure discernment to understand. In Paul’s use of discernment to this point in First Corinthians, it has been argued this is a cohesive concept that constitutes a major topical issue for Paul. Discernment of spirits produces some contrasts with uses of discernment demonstrated previously. It will be argued discernment of spirits is a more discreet bestowal of a gift on certain people, where until now discernment has been a developmental calling for the entire community. Distinction in ability is clearly involved in 1 Cor 5–6 for example, but discernment is still a duty of the community acting through its members. It also anticipates discerning of prophecy, which will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

Discernment of spirits will first be situated in its context among other gifts of the spirit. This foundation in spiritual gifts/manifestations is followed by discussion of “spirituals” and the relevance of this terminology. Then more specific issues for discernment of spirits are reconstructed, which leads to discussion of spirits and ontology with reference to what is being discerned. The function for discernment of spirits as a specific need in the community will then be based on the previous sections. Finally, it will

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1 This term will be discussed in full below.
be argued discernment of spirits is a subset of discernment rather than the prototype for positive analogy with the broad sense of discernment this thesis has advanced.

Discernment of Spirits among Other Gifts

First Corinthians 12:1–14:40 begins with another περὶ δὲ construction. As elsewhere, this may be an indication that Paul is answering questions from the Corinthians. More salient is the content of Paul’s statement, “Now concerning the spirituals, brothers and sisters, I do not desire you to be ignorant” (Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, ἀδέλφοι, οὐ θέλω ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν, 12:1). Paul often prefices instruction with similar wording about not desiring the ἀδέλφοι to be ignorant. This is the only instance where spirituals or any close connection with spiritual gifts is involved, with the other information being Israel in the wilderness, apostolic sufferings, death, Paul’s visit, and Israel more broadly. This precludes Paul’s use of this language to disparage a specific area of ignorance among the Corinthians. As in other uses, he intends to instruct them for edification.

Problems about the Corinthian “spirituals” can fuel pessimistic approaches to the gifts, especially when they are separated from the regular functioning of the early Pauline communities. Against this view, Dunn argues that “Rom 12; 1 Cor 12–14, and even Eph 4, do not permit the conclusion that 1 Cor 12 was determined solely in response to conditions at Corinth, or that Paul himself departed from his basic vision of charismatic community in response to developments within Hellenistic Christianity.” The Pauline conception at work in the early church has the spirit as the dynamic force of a community acting through

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3 Cf. 1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12.
4 Cf. 1 Cor 10:1; 2 Cor 1:8; 1 Thess 4:13; Rom 1:13; 11:25. Four of these have ἔθλω, two have ἔθλομεν, and all are addressed to ἀδέλφοι.
5 Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 570–571. Respecting περὶ δὲ, Fee claims, “throughout the letter, Paul’s answer is intended to be corrective, not instructional or informational.” His statement is too restrictive: Paul is informative, instructional, and sometimes corrective.
6 Contra Witherington, Conflict, 256.
its manifold gifts. The importance of this is to be able to draw from Paul’s writings to the Corinthians as representative of Paul’s theology in positive ways. Not least in these is the dynamic presence of God in the community as the living motive force. The interpretive lens must not be limited to the negative view of the Corinthians with Paul humouring their conceits about spiritual gifts.

Appearing among a listing of various manifestations of the spirit is “discernment of spirits” (διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, 1 Cor12:10). This listing contains nine distinct things given (δίδωμι). Taken separately, these gifts are distributed to individuals (ἐκάστῳ, δι’, ἄλλῳ, ἕτερῳ), yet are for the benefit of the community. In a sense it is better to consider this list as a multi-tiered gifting, because the manifestation of the spirit can be considered a gift to each one and also to all for the common benefit. Beyond the basic gifting of the manifestation come the specific things given by what Paul repeatedly specifies is one spirit. This stress suggests the importance inherent in this one spirit as the source of spiritual gifts, but also contrasts with the gift that involves discerning among a plurality of spirits. Among the multiplicity of spirits, only one is the legitimate source of gifts to the community. The one spirit distributes a gift that empowers some to discern between spirits.

This arrangement emphasizing the one giving spirit and the gift of discernment of spirits suggests in itself the need for caution about which spirit may be the source of gifts (cf. 1 Thess 5:19–22). Perhaps the inclusion of this gift at this point in the epistle is coincidental with the extended discussion about spiritual gifts/charismata, but it may reflect other concerns about Corinthian zeal to embrace spirits/spirituals. In either case the

8 José Enrique Aguilar Chiu, 1 Cor 12–14: Literary Structure and Theology (AnBib 166; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2007), 252–253. Working on the structure of the passage, Chiu argues that Paul’s use of “διακρίσεις” in 12:4 and “διαιροῦν” in 12:11 bracket a unit grounded in a plea for diversity instead of narrowness in the Corinthian appropriation of gifts.

9 This is not an exhaustive list of gifts, but demonstrates diversity as a sample. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 585. Fee notes Paul’s “flexibility” through different lists in 12:28, 29–30; 13:1–3, 8; 14:6, 26.

distinction may be of limited usefulness as there is no indication the gift is limited only to the Corinthian situation.

One aspect of this list calling for further consideration is the relationship of the various gifts with those ungifted in that specific area. For example, it can be assumed all people receiving such gifts have faith in some measure. The context is the worshipping community.\footnote{Gordon D. Fee, \textit{God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 148. Fee notes, “This is specifically indicated by the language ‘in church’ and ‘when you assemble together’ (vv. 18–19, 23, 26); it is implied throughout.” His n. 225 expands on the “implied”: “In vv. 1–5 by the intelligibility/edification motif; in vv. 6–12 by analogies that require hearers; in vv. 13–17 by the inability of others to respond by saying the Amen to what is said in tongues; in vv. 26–31 by the orderly sequencing of utterances.”} What is faith as a particular gift in this instance? It could not be faith in contrast with no faith, but represents a different or increased faith that may be specialized for some particular purpose. Similarly, in some way the word of wisdom (\(\lambda\̅\gammaος\ σοφίας\)) or knowledge (\(\lambda\̅\gammaος\ γνώσεως\)) can be seen as additions to wisdom and knowledge in certain persons by ability and experience. Discernment of spirits is also a gift of a particular, specific kind. Paul calls for discernment in many areas of life, so this particular gift represents a specialized kind of discernment beyond these abilities. It is not discernment in the broad sense that is identified as a gift, but only that which discerns spirits in distinction from other discernment.

The prepositions used in connection with this list vary, begging a question as to whether this changes meaning, or is perhaps a stylistic choice.\footnote{There is no indication of changes in meaning, so Donald A. Carson, \textit{Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14} (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 37–38. Similarly, Mehrdad Fatehi, \textit{The Spirit’s Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of its Christological Implications} (WUNT 2.128; Tübingen: Mohr, 2000), 175 n. 29.} The word of wisdom is given through (διὰ) the spirit, but the word of knowledge according to (κατὰ) the spirit. It is unlikely a gulf of difference between these nuances of word (\(\lambda\̅\gammaος\)) should require a distinct preposition adverbially modifying the manner of giving. Both faith and gifts of
healing are given in (ἐν) the same/one spirit. Prepositional phrases elide from the text in the following gifts. The text suggests that these gifts are given through/according to/in the spirit by some equivalent manner. This may be a literary consideration, but at the same time does present a fuller description of this working of the one spirit rather than a difference in the mode of giving.

The allotment of these gifts brings together the working, distributing, and intending of the one spirit for the various gifts in individual people. Thiselton rightly emphasizes the mutual edification of 12:12–31 establishes the purpose for distribution of gifts to individuals. Another consideration for these gifts concerns their duration in those receiving them. Paul uses the language of allotment (διαίρεσις/διαιρέω) about these gifts (12:11). This terminology is used of dividing or distributing people, families, material possessions, war booty, or land in the sense of implicit or explicit ownership. The use of this terminology with the distribution of lands among Israel upon entering the Promised Land is intriguing for this context. This concept is reminiscent of Paul saying “the gifts (χαρίσματα) and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom 11:29), which has a lexical parallel but different context. Although Paul is not more explicit, the primary sense should be taken as representing a continuing gift for the recipient due to lack of evidence to the contrary.

The Terminology of “Spirituals”

To examine discernment of spirits in more detail, the language of spirituals must be

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13 Fatehi, *The Spirit’s Relation*, 174–175. Fatehi observes that each preposition has an “instrumental force.” Unfortunately Fatehi’s discussion is muddled by attempting to use the instrumentality as a means of parsing the ontology of the spirit, where the issue is the gifting of the one spirit of God set against other spirits.


15 Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 989.

16 BDAG 229. See additional uses of the noun in Jdt 9:4; Sir 14:15. The verb διαιρέω appears in Josh 18:5; Jdt 16:24; and 1 Macc 1:6. *NIDNTT* 1:535 notes the noun occurs only in this passage of the NT, which represents distribution among many members.
grounded. The term πνευματικῶν and its specific usage is important for the passage.

Typically, τῶν πνευματικῶν (genitive plural masculine, feminine or neuter) is taken to refer to spiritual gifts if neuter and to spiritual persons if gendered. It may well be that the distinction between spiritual gifts or persons has little bearing on the interpretation of the passage. If about people as “spiritual,” the discussion is still primarily about things that operate by spiritual gifting. Either way, in Paul’s usage here the articular adjective functions substantivally and is genitive as the object of περί.

Exemplifying one approach to “spirituals,” Carson sets χάρισμα as Paul’s preferred term against πνευματικός for the same thing, while denying excesses of meaning poured into the words. He continues that elsewhere (2:15; 3:1; 9:11) Paul had used πνευματικός in his “normal” way, rather than in a “specialized” meaning that may have been adopted from the Corinthians. These terms are nearly interchangeable in his reading. This underscores concern for recognizing the gracious gift in the manifestation, but offers no real advantage by conflating gifts with spirituals. The relatedness breaks when looking at other uses of πνευματικός as a substantival adjective.

A useful comparison is found as Paul suggests, “If we planted the spiritual things in you, is it too much that we will reap material things from you?” (εἰ ἡμεῖς ύμῶν τὰ πνευματικὰ ἐσπείραμεν, μέγα εἰ ἡμεῖς ύμῶν τὰ σαρκικὰ θερίσωμεν; 1 Cor 9:11). The substantival adjective and usage suggests similarities with 12:1. The spirituals are clearly

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17 Some scholars connect τῶν πνευματικῶν with τὰ πνευματικά in 14:1 to support the neuter. Robertson and Plummer have it as “certainly neuter.” Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 259. Cf. Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 204. Conzelmann suggests the neuter χαρίσματά as an “interchange” referent for additional support. Others connect it with πνευματικός in 14:37 to support a masculine reading. Cf. Garland, 1 Corinthians, 564. Wright takes it to be “clearly ‘spiritual gifts’, but gives little direct support. See N. T. Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God (COQG 3; London: SPCK, 2003), 295.

18 Cf. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 278; Collins, First Corinthians, 447; Thielson, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 909–911; Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, 259.

19 Carson, Showing the Spirit, 23–24.

20 Carson, Showing the Spirit, 33.
shown to be immaterial by category here due to the parallel structure with the material things (σαρκικὰ). The spirit does not give these things, but people do. These ‘spirituals’ are distinct from those various spiritual manifestations distributed by the spirit as gifts, services, and activities in 12:4–7 simply due to being ‘planted’ by human activity.

Another comparison can be drawn from Paul’s statement about sharing with the poor saints in Jerusalem, “For if the Gentiles shared in their spirituals, then they also owe them to serve in the materials” (εἰ γὰρ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινώνησαν τὰ ἔθνη, ὤφελοσται καὶ ἐν τοῖς σαρκικοῖς λειτουργῆσαι αὐτοῖς, Rom 15:27). Paul makes use of the substantival adjective in a similar way that could point to either spiritual things or matters.21 The similar use of ‘spirituals’ and ‘materials’ is instructive. Both of these uses indicate a contrast between πνευματικὸς and σαρκικός in a broad sense that would not relate strictly to spiritual gifts as a category, especially in the context of what the Gentiles have received from Israel.22 The range of usage for πνευματικὸς in these passages identifies a fairly broad category of matters, concepts, or things, which are summarized by Paul as spirituals rather than gifts. The spiritual/immaterial contrasts with the fleshly/material things or matters.

Similarly, but with a variation, Paul contrasts the physical body with the spiritual, “a natural body is sown, a spiritual body is raised. If a natural body exists, a spiritual also exists” (σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν. Εἶ ἐστι σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐστιν καὶ πνευματικόν, 1 Cor 15:44). In this use the adjectives are predicate, describing body. Following is a shift to substantival adjectives, “yet the spiritual is not first, but the natural, then the spiritual” (ἀλλ’ οὐ πρῶτον τὸ πνευματικὸν ἀλλὰ τὸ ψυχικὸν, ἐπειτά τὸ πνευματικὸν, 1 Cor 15:46). Paul does not contrast a natural person with a spiritual person

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21 BDAG 837.
by referring to the person becoming πνεύμα, but the term is πνευματικός.\textsuperscript{23} Thus usage of this substantival adjective may refer to a person, but is most typically broader. The order Paul presents is greater than a question of specific bodies alone; suggesting the cosmic order of redemption is in view (1 Cor 15:24).

The usage of πνευματικός also may not be restricted to gifts or persons in a narrow sense, for the simple reason that the epistle continues to discuss many things touching on spirits and spiritually sourced things.\textsuperscript{24} These issues also include spirits and the spirit of God with a concern for the source of spiritual manifestations.\textsuperscript{25} Hence, a concern must also be for the actual spirit empowering something expressed verbally or otherwise as a gift of the spirit by a spiritual person. This is one reason for the repeated references stressing the one spirit, the spirit of God as the legitimating source acting in diverse ways and people. Paul begins with an apparently ambiguous term that will be unpacked in various aspects of spirit manifestation. A spiritual person interacts with some spirit to manifest something sourced extrinsically from the person, producing the concern to discern what spirit is the generative source for the manifestation. Maintaining the distinction in tone between χάρισμα and πνευματικός is more helpful and accurate than conflation of the terms.

The use of πνευματικός establishes the sphere within which different χαρίσματα function. Instead of imagining a “specialized” use for πνευματικός in response to an assumed Corinthian innovation, it can be seen from Paul’s other uses that this is a term that has meaning and relevance in speaking about a variety of things, issues, or even people within a certain sphere of reality that transcends the material realm. These things may be manifest in the material realm, but they are composed of something beyond the natural. As the spiritual things planted in others by human agency, the spiritual heritage of Israel,

\textsuperscript{23} Wright, \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 347–356. Wright stresses the spiritual in 1 Cor 15 as an enlivening of the resurrected body by the spirit, rather than the perpetuating of an incorporeal spirit being.

\textsuperscript{24} Ciampa and Rosner, \textit{The First Letter to the Corinthians}, 561–562.

\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 576.
spiritual gifts/manifestations, or the spiritual body of resurrection, these are collectively among things that are not subject to the same basic course of nature that informs most of life and even thought. Some spirituals (πνευματικός) are gracious gifts (χάρισμα) given (δίδωμι) by the spirit. Among these is discernment of spirits. As a gift among other gifts that also have corresponding analogues that do not require gifting by the spirit, discernment of spirits is distinct from other aspects of discernment.

Discernment of Spirits

What is this particular discernment as a process? Could this be discerning personal character, the content of utterance, or spirit identification? Is it exposing or identifying spirits only in connection with specific manifestations? What about simply determining whether unclean spirits are present instead of the holy spirit? Could it also be the determination that someone is acting apart from the holy spirit, even without evil spirits involved? If διακρίσεις πνευμάτων is a particular and discreet gift, then more specific identification of the gift is important to identifying its analogous potential with respect to discernment in broader terms. In other words, there is an analogy to be drawn using διακρίσεις πνευμάτων as a subcategory of discernment. The question really is whether it is a positive or direct analogy that typifies discernment, or something dissimilar and thus providing negative or indirect analogy in contrast with the discernment that has been more generally at the heart of Paul’s epistle to this point.

Various proposals for what specifically is meant by discernment of spirits tend toward either discernment of prophecy or spirits as sources. The following discussion of varied opinions frames the issue. Justin Ukpong traces the tradition from the specifics of 1 Cor 12:10 and identifying source spirits to a broader examination of motivation and
influence in traditions of Christian spirituality. Justin Ukpong argues that discernment of spirits “refers to the ability to recognize the genuineness of inspired communication.” He equates the concept to a kenotic emptying and acceptance where the “process of responding is a process of discernment of spirits,” which then becomes useful for interactions in the faith community or interreligious situations. Within this movement from general to specific, the spirits disappear from view. Why would discernment of spirits be useful for this application when Paul gives abundant directly applicable discernment material as discussed in previous chapters?

Some scholars associate discernment of spirits with discerning utterances generally, but with varying levels of harmonization. Often these approaches closely connect discernment of spirits with discerning prophecy. Building on a progression from 2TJ literature to the NT writings, Max Turner identifies a correlation between “emancipation from spirits” and a broader “spirit of prophecy” in “Jesus, Q, Mark, Matthew, and Paul (cf. 1 Cor 12:9b, 10a).” This leaves the connection somewhat vague. Being more specific, “inspired utterance” is a category Fee gives to “‘the message of wisdom’, ‘the message of knowledge’, ‘prophecy’, ‘the discernment of spirits’, ‘tongues’, and ‘the interpretation of tongues’ from 1 Cor 12:8, 10, and ‘teaching’ and ‘revelation’ from 14:6.” The real outlier in this grouping is discernment of spirits. Each of the others has a verb related to speaking, contextually involves speaking, or is modified to suggest speaking. This is plainly visible in statements about messages of wisdom or knowledge (λόγος σοφίας . . . λόγος γνώσεως, 12:8). Paul makes no overt linkage of this gift with speaking. Nothing in the text relates

29 For a detailed survey, see Munzinger, Discerning, 52 n. 36. Munzinger correctly questions the “exclusive link” to prophecy.
31 Gordon D. Fee, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 168. He also suggests “singing” based on 1 Cor 14:26, with Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 in support.
this discernment to speech alone or as a response to the content of utterance. The only reason to associate discernment of spirits with this collective list is the assumption that it deals with something spoken.

Relating discernment of spirits to discerning prophecy, Fee interprets the verb form of discerning in 14:29 to be an extension of the noun used in 12:10. If this reasoning extends to all other uses in First Corinthians of a word derived from the root νεφή prefixed with δια-, such a position fails. It is the assessment of a person (4:7), deciding matters between believers (6:5), discerning the body (11:29), and judging oneself (11:31). Each of these additional uses makes specific use of the language for the discernment/judgement involved with respect to persons. The bulk of Paul’s usage for this language in First Corinthians weighs against assigning particular importance to it as an evaluation of a prophetic utterance. To this can be added an ambiguity about what specifically is being discerned in 14:29 (see chapter 7 below). The argument from usage in this epistle does not support Fee’s position.

Dunn identifies “perplexity” caused in part by the plural spirits being discerned, with a recognition that traditionally there was “an almost unanimous opinion” favouring “distinguishing between (different) spirits” (italics his). Continuing, he observes a recent tendency viewing the object of διάκρισις as “interpretation of inspired revelations, on the analogy of the ability to interpret dreams and oracles.” Dunn gives emphasis to the plural διακρίσεις in 1 Cor 12:10 as a probable indication that discerning is of both the “spirit” (distinguishing between holy spirit or demonic) and the content/meaning of prophecy (taking 1 Cor 14:29 as confirmation of this reading). Elsewhere he sees discernment of

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32 Fee, Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God, 171.
33 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 233.
spirits and prophecy as closely related, with equivalence expressed as “interpretation of spirits = spiritual utterances, and distinguishing of spirits = sources of inspiration.” Dunn formulates a definition for ‘discerning of spirits’ as an “evaluation of prophetic utterances, an investigating and interpreting which throws light on their source and their significance.” This definition maintains a relationship between “fruit and root” as it can be expressed, while not completely losing sight of the basic meaning of διακρίσεις πνευμάτων.

Similarly, Paul Njiru portrays complementariness between discernment of spirits and prophecy, but he shades from the discernment of content toward source. He sees discernment as a “response” and also a safeguard from “abuse of power.” Both Dunn and Njiru exemplify the conundrum of parsing out discernment of spirits as a balance between distinguishing the content and source of prophetic utterance. In both, the evident need for protection is maintained, but ultimately discernment of spirits becomes limited if it primarily pertains to prophecy. The question of spirits as a source of manifestations must remain in view.

Critiquing Dunn’s position and similar lines of thought, Clint Tibbs considers discernment of spirits to be restricted to issues of the source spirit being. As to the means of discernment, Tibbs believes it was the “behaviour and speech of the spirit as it spoke through the prophet.” He distinguishes discernment of spirits from discerning prophecy, but then seems to mingle the two. There is a slippery slope from discernment of spirits to the imperative for prophecy to be discerned. Perhaps a bigger problem with Tibbs’ view is

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35 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 233–234.
36 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 360.
38 Njiru, Charisms, 163.
40 Tibbs, Religious Experience, 210–211.
the general availability of the discernment he describes, that of evaluating “behaviour and speech.” This moves discernment of spirits away from a specially distributed gift toward the aspect of general discernment Paul has been encouraging throughout the epistle.

Gerhard Dautzenberg closely connects discernment of spirits with discerning prophecy very specifically (cf. 1 Cor 14:29). In further work he claims that Paul does not consider multiple spirits to represent angels or demons, based on the assertion that, with the possible exception of 1 Cor 12:10, he never uses πνεῦμα for demon. Although true in the most literal sense, there is more to the picture than first apparent. In the undisputed Pauline epistles, Paul uses δαιμόνιον only twice (1 Cor 10:20–21). The context is the WT as a type for the Corinthians, which specifies demons as the actual recipients of sacrifices to idols (cf. ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ, Deut 32:17, also Lev 17:7; Ps 106:37). Elsewhere in the LXX, it is the πνεύματι πορνείας leading Israel astray to idolatry (Hos 4:12). Removal of unclean spirits (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον) is paralleled with cutting off the names of idols (Zech 13:2). In a related vein, it is “unclean spirits” that Luke uses to replace Mark’s demons, as discussed in the following section. Paul himself attributes to the lifeless dumb idols a hidden, deeper being he identifies as demonic. His dependence on the LXX for this makes the notion of demons as a type/class of spirits unsurprising and is also consistent with other NT uses. What are demons if not spirits? In any case, Paul likely would not write “discernment of demons,” for that would exclude a positive determination that the holy spirit is the source of something.

42 “Wer für 1 Kor 12, 10 weiter die Unterscheidung von guten und bösen Geistern oder das Vorhandensein einer Vielzahl von Geistern voraussetzt, muß zur Kenntnis nehmen, daß diese Voraussetzung weder vom Plural pneuma in 1 Kor 14, 12. 32 noch von anderen paulinischen Stellen gestützt wird und daß tatsächlich 1 Kor 12, 10 der einzige Beleg dafür wäre, daß Paulus für Engel und/oder Dämonen den Begriff pneuma gebraucht hätte.” Gerhard Dautzenberg, Urchristliche Prophetie: Ihre Erforschung, ihre Voraussetzungen im Judentum und ihre Struktur im ersten Korintherbrief (BWA(N)T 104; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1975), 141.
Dautzenberg tightly wraps 1 Cor 12:10 with 14:29, with the intention of correlating spirits with prophecy in an almost one-to-one sense, with discernment as the explanation of prophetic utterance.\(^{43}\) His approach goes beyond similar interpretations in that discernment is detached from source spirits in favour of discerning the rational mind behind prophetic utterance. He exceeds lexical limitations in contending for a better contextual reading by connecting 12:10 with 14:29 through translating \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \) \(\pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\) as “Deutung von Geistesoffenbarungen.”\(^{44}\) Explanation/interpretation, utterances, and revelations all exceed the actual meaning of \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\).

Contra Dautzenberg, Wayne Grudem argues that the “interpretation of prophecies in 12:10 and 14:29” (italics his) would require something with a different lemma than \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varsigma \varsigma \) or \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \nu\), respectively.\(^{45}\) In fact, no such uses for these lemmata are found through surveying the Greco-Roman or Jewish/early Christian literature with one possible exception in Stobaeus centuries later.\(^{46}\) The specific context of 12:10 follows a question about the influence of source spirits (12:2–3), confirming what well reasoned lexical research strongly suggests about the potential meaning for \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\). Grudem effectively exposes a misreading that strips \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\) of reasonably probable meaning, especially in the first century context. The appropriate range of meaning for \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\) excludes interpretation/explanation of prophecy as a directly equivalent translation.

\footnotesize
\(^{43}\) “Wir haben bereits dargelegt, daß der Ausdruck \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \sigma \iota \varepsilon \iota \varsigma \varsigma \pi \nu \varepsilon \mu \dot{\alpha} \tau \omega \nu\) sprachlich nicht auf die zu unterscheidenden Arten von Geistern hinweist und daß es sehr gute Gründe gibt, \(\delta \iota \alpha \kappa \rho \iota \nu\) als "Deutung" der prophetischen Äußerungen aufzufassen." Dautzenberg, \textit{Urchristliche Prophetie}, 135. Cf. general agreement on this point in Helmut Merklein, “Der Theologe als Prophet. Zur Funktion prophetischen Redens im theologischen Diskurs des Paulus,” \textit{NTS} 38 (1992): 418–419.


\(^{46}\) Grudem, “Response to Gerhard Dautzenberg on 1 Cor 12:10,” 259–265. In this fifth century use it is mantic interpretation, which likely indicates making the incomprehensible comprehensible. See Stobaeus, \textit{Ecl.} 4.5.95.
Additionally, Grudem favours separating 1 Cor 12:10 from 14:29 in part due to the different uses of ‘discern’ throughout 1 Corinthians, as well as the need to discern whether various activities are under the influence of the holy spirit.\textsuperscript{47} This approach maintains the analogical tension with broader uses of discernment throughout the epistle, where many others simply ignore such a connection. This holds true even if only examining words that are specifically derived from the διάκρισις or διακρίνω lemmata. Simultaneously, this recognizes the potential need for a specialized gift to discern among those things not necessarily accessible to human cognitive evaluation. Both of these factors are important and interwoven with any question about διακρίσεις πνευμάτων, however one may wish to translate away from the sense of spirits interacting with humans.

Munzinger attempts to carve a middle way between the differing poles of understanding discernment of spirits. For this purpose, he primarily contrasts Dautzenberg with Grudem. Munzinger proposes that “on the basis of a broader understanding of πνεύματα (as spirits and their manifestations . . .), the gift in 12.10 depicts a broad range of discernment, which is exemplified in 14.29.”\textsuperscript{48} Highlighting discernment as a broad and essential function in the community is appealing. Nevertheless, the connection of 12:10 and 14:29 in a direct correlation leads to problems. The language does not support it, but an additional conceptual/theological problem impacting the functioning of the community emerges as well.

As with other gifts in 12:8–11, διακρίσεις πνευμάτων is limited to certain people specifically gifted.\textsuperscript{49} It is questionable to broaden excessively this particular discernment, which is a discrete gift unavailable to those ungifted in this particular. Such a reading


\textsuperscript{48} Munzinger, \textit{Discerning}, 53.

\textsuperscript{49} Grudem, “Response to Gerhard Dautzenberg on 1 Cor 12:10,” 258.
confuses it with more generally available discernment, which is accessible and subject to
development in the wider community as a wisdom function. The sense of Pauline
discernment encouraged in other settings and issues is not a subset of discernment of
spirits. Discernment is available and necessary in the Corinthian community, and within
this sphere there is a specific gift, highly specialized and not available to all, that is called
discernment of spirits. Postulating this narrower gift as the exemplar of discernment
undermines the Pauline conception and disempowers the community. It also creates the
problem of essentially shifting the discernment taught, exhorted, and even imperatively
urged for the entire community to an exclusive few. What can initially appear as a
generous broadening of the concept of discernment actually imposes a limitation that
inhibits the growth of the community.

Where discernment of spirits is often made the paradigmatic discernment, it has
been argued it is rather a subset of discernment with unique characteristics. Understanding
the potential meaning and availability of this specific discernment itself is a central
question. There remains another key aspect in formulating a conception of διακρίσεις
πνευμάτων. Before expanding on the discernment aspect, it is necessary to clarify the term
“spirits.”

**Spirits and Ontology**

What spirits are subject to discernment? This section discusses spirits as a category due to
the range of manifestations potentially inspired. Is spirit a euphemism for human actors, or
perhaps just the manifestations? Is it proper or necessary to maintain an ontological view
of spirits in this context? The potential meaning for Paul’s use of “spirits” is interlocked
with the meaning of the gift he mentions. Clarifying the target of this discernment is
critical to understanding its basic meaning and indicates the importance of discerning the
one spirit of God as the source for “spirituals.”
The typical label for intermediate spirit/demon in the pagan Greco-Roman conception is δαίμόνιον, which can be the spirit/soul essence of a deceased person or other being between humans and gods on a continuum of existence. The Greco-Roman δαίμόνιον could be a helping presence or positive influence in one’s life. However this field of thought may have influenced various Greco-Roman groups, the NT writings have a different view about the influence of demons. There is also a conceptual distance between the 2TJ/NT use of πνεῦμα for a “self-conscious, intelligent, supernatural being” and that of the first century pagan context.

In strands of 2TJ, certain spirits are sometimes portrayed as those who have died. The “spirits of the souls of the dead” can be described as abiding in some other place (1 En. 22). This juxtaposition of persons existing in an extracorporeal state with those alive in body suggests at least that people have individual spirits as part of one’s essential being. Elsewhere, the spirit and body of humans are related in an essential manner.

In the NT, human spirits of the dead are sometimes portrayed as in a separate place, kept apart from the living (Luke 16:22–31; 1 Thess 4:13–17; 1 Pet 3:18–20; Rev 7:14–17; 20:13). The notion of disembodied human spirits interacting among embodied humans is at minimum not overtly taught or expected in the NT. It is unlikely Paul refers to disembodied human spirits in 1 Cor 12, but could he mean other aspects of human nature?

In his final greetings in First Thessalonians, Paul also points to a holistic, unified

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50 Peter G. Bolt, “Jesus, the Daimons, and the Dead,” in The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm (ed. Anthony N. S. Lane; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 76–94. Bolt surveys the literary remains and inscriptive evidence demonstrating the Greco-Roman worldview. He suggests belief in demons as “spirits of the dead” is more typical of the “uneducated lower classes,” but as “anthropomorphic gods” among the “upper educated class,” p. 78.

51 Cf. Hesiod, Op. 110–129; Plato Tim. 90a–c; Leg. 732c; 877a; Plutarch, Def. orac. 415. These works form a sampling of diachronic representations of demons as at least spirits of the dead, even if the dead from “races” of extinct peoples.


53 Cf. Q206 2 II, 3–4 (4QEnoch ar), where it is the נשמ of the dead. Also Bar 2:17; 2 Esd 7:78–80.

54 Apocryphon Ezekiel 1, where the symbiotic relationship of body/soul/spirit is described. Cf. Heb 4:12.
essence in the person, saying, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely (ὁ λοτελεῖς); and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound (ὁ λόκληρον) and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23). Both “entirely” and “sound” draw on terms involving compounds with ὁ λος to indicate wholeness in the believer at the Parousia. Paul does not refer to living persons as “spirits” in the context of the worshipping community, just as the use of “bodies” would be too narrow. Thus one would not exercise discernment of a person in a way that could be described through discernment of spirits. It appears unlikely discernment of spirits could refer to embodied human spirits, making evil/unclean spirits more probable. In other words, discernment of a person as an embodied spirit is foreign to Paul’s conceptualization of the person as a responsible agent, interacting in the community in various modes.

Clint Tibbs argues against collapsing the plural spirits into a euphemism for humans or manifestations of the holy spirit, while arguing for the first century understanding of spirits as incorporeal beings. He also critiques the flattening of terms such as “‘gifts’, ‘prophetic utterances’, ‘inspirations’, ‘manifestations’, or ‘powers’ ” into euphemisms for the “‘same spirit’ or ‘the one spirit’.” According to Tibbs, the early Christian world was dependent on the Jewish background with its rich spirit world of holy and evil spirits. Wesley Carr also identifies the close correlation of Paul’s general conception of the spirit realm with 2TJ.

The background belief in evil spirits as a subset of nonhuman spirits is complex,

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55 See Raymond Edward Brown, “Diverse Views of the Spirit in the New Testament,” Worship 57 (1983): 234; where the human spirit is “neither precisely of God nor of the devil; but unfortunately it is capable of working not only with God but also with evil.”

56 Bernard J. Cooke, Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 180–181. As Cooke describes it, the interrelationship of the human spirit with embodiment is a “fusion.” This could be seen as a human existential reality, which is necessarily unfragmented.

57 Tibbs, Religious Experience, 53–54.

58 Tibbs, Religious Experience, 53.

59 Tibbs, Religious Experience, 72.

but is attested from the OT through 2TJ to the NT.\textsuperscript{61} One elaboration of evil spirits is evident in the \textit{Book of the Watchers}, where nonhuman evil spirits victimize unwitting humans in many ways.\textsuperscript{62} In the arc from 2TJ to NT writings “indwelling possession begins to dominate the perception of humanity’s interaction with demonic and divine spiritual forces.”\textsuperscript{63} In contrast with earlier Greco-Roman literature, the NT never equates demons with good intermediate beings/angels, or explicitly as dead humans. Additionally, many disturbances in synagogue worship, of the community, or in a person’s mental state are perceived as caused by demonic possession in the Gospel accounts.\textsuperscript{64} Conversely, faithful humans exercise control over unclean spirits in the NT or 2TJ more broadly.\textsuperscript{65} Paul is portrayed in Acts as casting a python spirit (πνεῦμα πύθωνα) out of a woman, which had supplied her with information to speak and is apparently not her own human spirit (Acts 16:16–18). The word πνεῦμα requires “a qualifying word or context to indicate whether the spirit is demonic or divine.”\textsuperscript{66} While Paul may be reticent to discuss exorcism, 1 Cor 12:10 and 2 Cor 12:1–5 may provide the strongest evidence for possession-type issues as discussed by Paul.\textsuperscript{67} Of course, this latter point is dependent on accepting 1 Cor 12:10 as referencing actual evil spirits as objects of discernment.

The canonical Gospels contrast with the generally positive pagan conception of demons, which further articulates the relevant terminology. This is exemplified by descriptions of evil spirits where πνεῦμα is often modified by “unclean” (ἀκάθαρτος) and/or

\textsuperscript{61} Cf. \textit{1 En. 99:7}, on idolatry as worship of “evil spirits and demons.” Also \textit{T. Ben. 5:1–2} has “evil men at peace” with the good person, but “unclean spirits flee.” Passages from the LXX are discussed in the previous section.


\textsuperscript{64} Sorensen, \textit{Possession}, 124–127.

\textsuperscript{65} Luke 10:20; cf. \textit{T. Sim. 6:6} where future people of God will “have mastery over the evil spirits.”

\textsuperscript{66} Sorensen, \textit{Possession}, 121.

“demon” (δαιμόνιον). The particular control Jesus exercises over demons/unclean spirits is indicative of something quite substantial and well beyond “an indirect connection through some abstract concept of divine power or rule.” Whether one considers the demons tormenting people in Gospel accounts as spirits of the dead or other beings, Jesus exercises power over them. The precise nature of any particular demon is less important than are the problems caused by their presence and the availability of relief from these manifestations. The world of spirits reflected in the NT is one that involves these entities opposing the kingdom of God and threatening people while active in the surrounding environs. Jesus’ power over demons may be recognized as either good or evil in the Gospels, but is considered significant regardless (cf. Mark 3:22–30; Matt 12:24–29; Luke 15:15–26).

Examining the Luke-Acts material, Clinton Wahlen traces a purity line of spiritual influence throughout, while noting a general drift away from the use of πνεῦμα toward δαιμόνιον in descriptions of evil spirits, with a tendency for the former to be favoured in ‘Jewish’ settings and the latter in ‘Gentile’ settings. This distinction is potentially helpful in understanding Paul’s use of the terms, which would be influenced by the mixed audiences in his communities. Luke-Acts suggests problematic, interfering spirits possessing or influencing people in manifestations that can be discerned and addressed by Jesus or his followers. However the character of the person involved is portrayed, there are external impure/evil spirits that are separable from the person. Discerning that a

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68 Paige, “Who Believes in “Spirit”?, 434–435; noting that Luke “changes Mark’s ‘unclean spirit’ to ‘spirit of an unclean demon’ (πνεῦμα δαιμόνιον ακαθάρτου, Luke 4:33). This is the first occurrence in Luke of δαιμόνιον and also of πνεῦμα for an evil spirit, and it alerts the reader to two things: (a) that πνεῦμα can equal δαιμόνιον, thereby giving Gentile readers a familiar equivalent for an unfamiliar usage; and (b) that, contrary to normal Greek usage, δαιμόνιον is to be regarded as unqualifiedly evil.” Cf. Rev 18:2 where some equivalence between demons and foul/unclean spirits is expressed.

69 Bolt, “Jesus, the Daimons, and the Dead,” 102 n.104. Bolt stresses the idea of demons as dead humans, but even if this is the first assumption of one hearing a Gospel account, the impact on such a person would be substantial.

70 Clinton Wahlen, Jesus and the Impurity of Spirits in the Synoptic Gospels (WUNT 2.185; Tübingen: Mohr, 2004), 168–169. Note that he claims this is not a “programmatic” shift, just “terminological.”
manifestation derives from a spirit precedes the act of addressing, binding, or removing that spirit. Misdiagnosing a problem caused by a person’s volitional acts or bad character as arising through a spirit would fail to result in a positive outcome. This has implications for discernment of spirits and also discerning prophecy. If prophecy is discerned as false, it can be discarded. The issue presented by a problematic spirit behind such a prophecy would still be an open matter.

Concern about deception by external spirits is apparent in Paul’s conceptualization of the spirit world, yet he does not focus great attention on evil spirits. He does emphasize the difference between the holy spirit and the “spirit of the world” (1 Cor 2:12).71 Traditional roots for his thought can be observed in 2TJ literature. The book of Jubilees portrays Gentile nations as having spirits set over them to lead them astray (Jub. 15:31–32).72 This may be drawn from statements about the gods of the people being idols, with the LXX using demon (δαίμον) as a label for these gods (Ps 95:5). In rebellion or deception, even Israel can be seen to sacrifice to demons (Isa 65:3; Ps 105:37 LXX).

Sectarian Qumran documents describe two spirits at work in humans as a constituent part of human essence, which are each described using various adjectives with the basic dualist sense of good or evil.73 Ultimately the righteous will be purified from the spirit of injustice with the spirit of holiness (1QS IV, 18–26). A key in this tension between good and evil spiritual influences is the potential for the righteous to follow the wrong spirit, or even to be divided in loyalty. Part of this conception can be traced in Paul, which underscores a need for discernment of spirits.

71 Levison, Filled with the Spirit, 282–283. Levison prefers to minimize the “spirit from the world” as more representative of base humanity.
72 Cf. T. Ash. 1:3–9, describing the “two ways” of good versus evil, with “Beliar” the devil mastering those who choose the evil. Also, T. Jud. 20:1–5, which has the “spirit of truth” and the “spirit of error” with the “conscience of the mind” placed between the two. Although the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs have issues with provenance and potential later Christian interpolations, some of the material may be as early as the second century B.C.E.
73 1QS III, 13–IV, 26. The Rule of the Community has two spirits created as part of the human reflecting the internal struggle for righteousness, in distinction from Paul.
Becoming more specific about spirits, Paul attributes to Satan schemes and disguise as an “angel of light” (2 Cor 2:11; 11:24). Outside the undisputed Pauline epistles, there is additional colourful language about Satan: “The coming of the lawless one is apparent in the working of Satan, who uses all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception for those who are perishing” (2 Thess 2:9–10). This personalizing of an evil spirit supports the notion that Paul held a rich cosmology with various spirits acting on human reality. Some form of protection against such subterfuge would be helpful.

Strands of modern thinking sometimes psychologize these varied aspects of spirit/s in the preceding discussion. Ellis parallels this psychologizing with philosophies synchronic to Paul’s writing. Contra this Ellis argues, Paul’s “proclamation of Jesus as Lord had its origin in a ‘heavenly vision’ (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; cf. Acts 26:19) and found its continuing meaning in the context of a warfare of spirits in which he himself participated.” In a less overt sense, Guy Williams finds “the spirits are intertwined with the most basic themes of the letters.” It is difficult to dismiss the conclusion that Paul held a perception of spirits in an ontological category of beings occupying a separate status from embodied humans. When reading Paul, it is always questionable to abandon what is accessible about his viewpoint for a wholesale substitution of things quite outside that horizon. Additionally, many interactions with demons/unclean spirits in various manifestations of forces outside the human person have been demonstrated throughout the

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74 Cf. the language of angels as spirits (ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἄγγελους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα, Heb 1:7; Ps 103:4).
75 Cf. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). In this passage the one spirit is contrasted with these misleading sources.
78 This point can be conceded even by some scholars holding to the notion that Paul held the singular πνεῦμα in similar fashion to the Stoic conception. See Troels Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 97–98, 103. Engberg-Pedersen has no trouble connecting the plural spirits with demons in Paul.
Gospels and Acts. The Gospel demon accounts in particular are often subjected to attempts at psychological re-evaluation. Considering broader NT writings and their agreement or tension with Paul, it is at least difficult to locate completely different perceptions about spirits. The NT is consistent in the presentation of pluralities of evil spirits acting outside the human sphere in opposition to the kingdom of God. Some means of identifying and dealing with these spirits is found in the narrative structure of the NT, and elements of this should be expected in the epistles.

Contrasting with the plurality of spirits, Paul emphasizes the spirit of God as the one spirit distributing gifts and active in the body of Christ throughout 12:1–13. Various dative uses similar to ἐν πνεύματι support a distinction between what is ‘in spirit’ versus ‘out of that spirit’, which can further suggest ‘in another spirit’. Due to the discernment of spirits, Paul does not contrast something ‘in spirit’ with something done in the absence of the holy spirit. The contrast is between in the one holy spirit and other spirits. The plural use of πνεῦμα suggests on more than a prima facia basis actual sentient beings interacting with humans. A plurality of manifestations of the one spirit can be ruled out in this case as no discernment would be necessary, or perhaps even acceptable. If the one spirit of God is the only concern, there would be nothing about spirits to discern. Discerning whether

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81 Discerning evil spirits as entities occurs in 1 John 4:1–6, where the expression is δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα. This may have been influenced by Paul’s writing, which would give indications for part of the reception history of the concept in the NT period. First John is salient with respect to spirit involvement with the community. The multiplicity of spirits must be tested, examined, or approved. The change from διάκρισις to δοκιμάζω is not drastic. Paul mentions the process of discerning spirits, but in 1 John it is an imperative to discern, examine, test the spirits. Possible dependency on Paul is further suggested by additional confirmations through confession of Jesus in the flesh or denial of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 12:3).

82 The usage of πνεύματι with reference to someone being in or acting in the spirit of God or holy spirit is widespread in the NT, with approximately 60 uses; see Kendall H. Easley, “The Pauline Usage of pneumat as a Reference to the Spirit of God,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 299–302.

83 Cf. the notion that “the plural refers (at least) to a good and an evil spirit.” Ellis, “‘Spiritual’ Gifts in the Pauline Community,” 132–133. Ellis also points out the admonition to ignore false prophecies given διὰ πνεύματος (2 Thess 2:2) as support for these varied actual spirits at work.
something is from the one spirit instead of from no spirit is a different matter from discerning between spirits. Spirits are the objects of discernment, whatever they may be, but they are beings distinct from the one spirit of God.

For this study, further definition of these spirits is unnecessary. The prevailing background perception for Paul is one of spirits/demons as beings that are distinct from the one spirit of God. These spirits could supply various manifestations, so they are discerned for the purpose of protecting the community from their influence. This is the background data suggesting a need to identify spirits that may be influencing the community or its members in a misleading way. The main issue is to identify the one spirit of God as the source of spiritual manifestation. This is the only good and holy source of manifestations that are positive gifts.

**Discernment of Spirits as a Functional Necessity**

The differing views regarding διακρίσεις πνευμάτων highlight important complexities in reconstructing meaning for this expression. Seen as a continuum, these views helpfully show the difficulty in parsing out the differences in discernment of spirits along with their potential manifestations. At the same time, the weight of evidence indicates that discernment of spirits must not be limited to an exact equivalence with discerning prophecy. Even separating discernment of spirits virtually completely from discerning prophecy, the well-constructed definition Dunn gives is still useful in retaining discernment of the “source” of the manifestation.84 The problem remains, however, that bringing interpretation into the definition stretches beyond what the text supports. It remains a troublesome hermeneutic whether it is a component part of the definition as in

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84 Additional to Dunn’s definition previously cited, a related version is “a special ability to evaluate the origin, authority, and application of a prophetic message.” Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 574. Each has three essentially similar parts, but the problem is the “interpretation” (Dunn) or “application;” neither of which are supported by the text or context.
Dunn or Ciampa and Rosner, or the encompassing purpose as in Dautzenberg.

Interpretation or application is separate from discerning the source or spirit of anything, whether it is associated with a different gift or simply discernment being developed and used in the community more broadly.

One major issue of language is the use of διακρίσεις, from the lemma διάκρισις. The ending -σις, along with the derivation from the verbal root κρινω indicates that this is a verbal noun that can be translated using the English gerund ‘discerning’. The construction of the phrase uses πνευμάτων as an objective genitive,\(^{85}\) which makes clear that the discernment is actually applied to spirits as the object of discerning (construal as discerning of spirits, with spirits as the subject, is incorrect). The plural διακρίσεις should not be taken to represent manifold discernments of various beings and things, but matches the plural πνευμάτων. This is grammatically preferable and consistent with the syntax of the sentence, for although the genitive plural πνευμάτων modifies the nominative plural διακρίσεις, the process described is that of discernment that could be distinguishing between different spirits, including recognizing the spirit of God as the source of a manifestation.

Another basic issue is Paul’s specific vocabulary. Paul easily could have retained the τῶν πνευματικῶν from his opening comments to yield διακρίσεις τῶν πνευματικῶν, instead of the well-attested text form διακρίσεις πνευμάτων. It is difficult to perceive any reason for such a shift in expression if Paul meant to associate these aspects of spirituals and spirits. The difference in use of the respective substantival adjective in 12:1 and the noun in 12:10 appears to reflect a distinction in meaning. Discernment of spirits would broaden considerably if the adjective recycled in 12:10. Various spirituals would be included, whether gifts, persons, or whatever might possibly be represented. Prophecy in

particular would readily fall under this umbrella. In other words, if prophecy is the actual object of discernment in this expression, the use of either “spirituals” or “prophecies” would be more accurate and expected. The use of the noun “spirits” instead should be taken as a limitation of the kind of discernment here as a particular, specific gift to particular people. It is dissimilar to Paul’s other uses of discernment earlier in the epistle as well as that of 14:29.

Refocusing discernment of spirits to prophecies as its actual province creates a void in the potential for this gift. Too often, what fades from many of these views is the discernment of spirits outside of speech concerns, which can be an important distinction. Paul clearly shows concern for the Corinthian interaction with ‘spirituals’, therefore it follows that among gifts available and accessible to the community, some means of safeguarding these interactions is unsurprising. Other gifts identified in 12:8–10 such as a word of wisdom or knowledge, or even tongues or interpretation of tongues are all speech-oriented gifts subject to the same potential concern as false prophecy. Each of these would be subject to discernment, but that does not have to be discernment of spirits by a limited number of specially gifted individuals. Broader forms of discernment could be applied to these various manifestations, while a specialized gift for discernment of spirits could operate in its own discrete way concerning the source spirit/spirits. The Corinthians are not dependent on this gift to allow prophetic utterance, or other manifestations of ‘spirituals’. Those who do not possess the gift of διακρίσεις πνευμάτων can discern these things with respect to content or effect. The empowerment of discernment in various forms and people then builds and strengthens the community overall in and through its constituent parts.

The formulaic test that “no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit” (12:3) stands in a somewhat strange dialectic with discernment of spirits as a gift. In this formula, the assessment of the source spirit initially appears simple through rote declaration. Other
proposals for the meaning of the curse language involving Jesus have limitations, whether it is to call him cursed, to speak of his accursedness as the sacrifice, or to invoke him in placing a curse.  

On the other side of this issue, the declaration of Jesus as Lord is itself likely to be more than it could seem. The declaration can be seen as a culmination of that which is expressed altogether in word and deed. Further, the distinction between these two declarations can be seen as a movement from a characterization of the Jesus “who died as a curse under the law (see Gal 3:10–13)” to the fuller meaning of the “risen, vindicated, and exalted Lord.” A movement of discerning understanding is buried in the superficially mundane “Jesus is Lord.” What is most important for this study, though, is to understand that these formulaic statements in no way stand in place of discernment of spirits. They are supplementary, baseline confessions that immediately rule out certain utterances and behaviours as grounded in the spirit of God. The formulaic test in 12:3 is actually a separate means of detecting something about a source spirit without the gift of discernment of spirits. This test has grounding in cognitive assessment, or discerning capabilities that may be sharpened with experience.

Discernment of spirits can be viewed in part as an additional tool for prophylaxis against that which leads to idolatry (12:2–3). The Corinthian believers are no longer ἔθνη

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86 Thiselton documents there are “no less than twelve distinct explanations” for ἀνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 918. To this must be added the unique proposal by Winter that it represents a pagan practice of invoking a god to curse one’s enemies, see Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 167–169.

87 Cf. Victor Paul Furnish, “‘Where is ‘the Truth’ in Paul’s Gospel? A Response to Paul W. Meyer,’” in *Looking Back, Pressing On* (ed. E. Elizabeth Johnson and David M. Hay; Pauline Theology 4; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997), 171. Furnish sees this confession as “simultaneously accepting the crucified Jesus as Lord, acknowledging that one is subject to his rule alone (1 Cor 7:22–23).”


90 The potential allusion to Hab 2:18 is discussed in Steve Moyise, “The Minor Prophets in Paul,” in *The Minor Prophets in the New Testament* (eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; LNTS 377; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 98. In Habakkuk, the idols are unable to speak, so the most direct correlation is in the deficiency of idols.
(12:2), which indicates they are conceptually now numbered among Israel. Like Israel in the wilderness, the new covenant people must be cautious not to be seduced into idolatry. Paul has already acknowledged that there are demonic spirits involved in idolatry (8:5; 10:20–21); therefore it is not difficult to perceive that there is a need for multiple means toward community protection from the wrong spirits. If the actual spirit behind the manifestation is not discerned, there is a “potential loophole that deceptive spirits could exploit by masquerading as good or truth-bearing spirits.”

Discernment of spirits is one part of the new kingdom in which the Corinthians walk, a walk that requires sanctification from defiling spirits.

As Paul’s discussion using terminology of spirits/spirituals transitions into that of the community as body, he says of the spirit’s manifestations, “All these the one and same spirit works, distributing in each individually just as he wills” (πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἐνεργεῖ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα διαφοροῦν ἵνα ἐκάστῳ καθὼς βουλέται, 12:11). He continues that “for also in one spirit we all were baptised into one body; whether Jew, Greek, slave, or free; and we all were given one spirit to drink” (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἓν πνεῦμα ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἑλληνες εἴτε δούλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν, 12:13). Drawing on the Pauline language of the given spirit elsewhere, John Levison asserts that “filling with the spirit, in brief, sets believers in the context of a magnificent drama that stretches from Abraham and Sarah to an unknown future.” The merging of the Corinthians into this great ongoing story has much to do with the working of the spirit in them. They are part of the grand narrative of God’s people gathered into one, a community set apart from the idolatry of the nations, or Gentiles. The struggles and failures of Israel in the WT loom over the Corinthian assembly, just as the broader context

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91 Hays, First Corinthians, 209. Hays comments that for Paul, the opposite of being ἔθνη was not Christian, but “Jewish.” Cf. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 457. Fitzmyer thinks Hays goes too far, even while acknowledging the prevalent use of ἔθνη with reference to Gentiles in distinction from Israel.
92 Tibbs, Religious Experience, 55.
93 Levison, Filled with the Spirit, 258–259.
has indicated (1 Cor 10:1–21). The identity of the spirit/spirits influencing the Corinthians is a concern Paul expresses through his juxtaposition of demons with idols. This pairing corresponds with his juxtaposition of the Corinthians with Israel in the wilderness (as a type), for just as demons are the particularized threat represented by idols, the Corinthians are a particularized instantiation of God’s people journeying toward a destination in the one holy spirit of God.

**Discernment of Spirits as Analogy**

It is difficult to move beyond historical-critical analysis for discernment of spirits. The data with which to work is limited from the start. Current Western worldviews on the unseen spiritual realm have horizons different from those of the first century of course, but the issues are complicated when attempting cognizance of the invisible and immeasurable. Modern preferences for positivist data can stand in the way of theological understanding. As Ukpong aptly says, “We must admit the impossibility of holding God captive within our human structures, and the limitation of human wisdom to fully comprehend divine transcendence.”94 Despite the difficulties, the conceptualization regarding discernment of spirits in Paul’s context does contribute to an analysis of discernment more broadly considered by way of both positive and negative analogy.

Recent literature tends to reframe διακρίσεις πνευμάτων as either another means of describing discerning prophecy, or perhaps as a form of broader spiritual interpretation. The former collapses the sphere for this discernment substantially into what really amounts to the interpretation/evaluation of speech. The gift becomes more accessible by producing a readily perceived object for evaluation. Since this kind of evaluation is commonly applied in life, it is more comfortably understandable even if it is considered a specially heightened discernment. In this approach, the analogies available are abundant and quite

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direct. The latter reframing as spiritual interpretation applies to more functions than prophecy, but moves the gift into vagueness produced by misapplication of the range of meaning. If discernment of spirits is broadened as the positive analogy for Pauline discernment, then discernment is excessively limited to the few and is only available by special gifting.

Paul describes the one spirit distributing a limited, discrete gift for discernment of spirits. The gift is not distributed to the entire community, however discerning they may be by ability, experience, or training. This discrete gift yields an analogy with other forms of discernment as Paul details them, with this analogy giving opportunity to evaluate discernment through its varied manifestations as an essential practice in the community. If there is a specialized, discrete gift of discernment of spirits, there can be other forms of discernment available more broadly by means that include practice and development as a wisdom application. Discernment is available by several means, which are not restricted to special gifts.

A working definition derived from this chapter for διακρίσεις πνευμάτων is:
Discernment of spirits is a specific gift distributed to specific people by the spirit of God, according to the will of God, as a process of discerning whether and what spirit(s) are empowering particular spiritual manifestations or presences, especially with reference to the source of that spirit as to its holy or unclean status.

This aspect of discernment can be the differentiation among spirits or simply discerning the spirit of God as the source for a given manifestation. This moves the gift away from the arbitrary limitation of assessing utterances to a more rounded ability to exercise judgement over a range of “spirituals” or manifestations of spiritual presence/power. It also grounds the gift in the intentional distinction Paul makes between the term “spirituals” and spirit/spirits. Simply put, it makes sense there should be a
discernment gift for a people expected to interface with an unseen realm containing various spirits.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated discernment (διάκρισις) of spirits as a discreet gift to specific individuals in distinction from other kinds of discernment as a calling for the entire community. Discernment of spirits is discretely given to some as a specific gift for a particular purpose. Analysing this purpose more closely, this discernment is demonstrably different from discerning prophecy or spiritual interpretation. To better situate this gift, a survey of “spirits” demonstrates Paul is consistent with other NT writings, the LXX, and broader 2TJ uses of πνεύματα for extracorporeal beings, especially those acting on embodied humans. Recognizing this awareness in Paul demonstrates the necessity of a gift protecting the community from the potential influences of unclean/demonic spirits.

Several things are illuminated by evaluating discernment of spirits in negative analogy with what can be gleaned from Paul’s use of discernment throughout First Corinthians. First, realization of the wide conceptual range for discernment and its importance becomes possible. Second, discernment occurs along a continuum from the development and exercise of a loving, yielding cognition in the mind of Christ to the discrete and limited gift of discernment of spirits. Within this continuum falls discernment as applied wisdom in relationships, knowledge, moral integrity and character, community protection, self-awareness/judgement, and spiritual awareness/sensitivity. Discernment does not collapse into a catchword for the exercise of ethics or knowledge. Third, the available range of discernment demonstrates the positive view Paul has toward the Corinthian community as a gifted, functional instantiation of the people of God.

The Corinthian community has many available gifts, graciously distributed by the one spirit of God for the mutual edification of the community. The specific gift of
διακρίσεις πνευμάτων therefore fits with other gifts as one of the specialized tools for the Corinthian community to understand and potentially apply in dealing with the “spirituals.” Rather than diminishing the importance of other forms of discernment in various aspects of life, this discrete gift operates as a subsidiary category of the more fully orbed discernment the community is urged to undertake through their realized eschatological role in the kingdom of God. In other words, discernment of spirits is not the threshold into a new world of discernment, but the community by exercising discernment in its various permutations will grow into a healthier, functioning community of God’s sanctified people.

The question remains as to how this fits together along with the imperative to discern prophetic utterances. This has significant ramifications for the Corinthian community in its relationship to divine authority, distribution of gifts, and the status of the community members in relation to everything spiritual and to others. The next chapter addresses these issues.
Chapter 7: Discerning in the Context of the Prophetic (14:1–14:40)

Introduction

Discerning in the context of congregational prophetic utterance is an underappreciated issue. The audacity of human discernment in the face of what could be God-given revelation should seize one’s attention. This chapter builds on last chapter’s demonstration of discernment of spirits as a discreet gift different from discernment of prophecy, with the latter presented as the consequence of Paul’s urging for the Corinthian ἐκκλησία to be discerning in all aspects of life. The imperative to discern in 1 Cor 14:29 requires specific examination apart from other types of discernment. In prophetic utterance, two major concerns are over the source spirit inspiring the utterance and also specific word content. Discernment of one is not necessarily equivalent to discernment of the other. An impure spirit could be the source of true or false prophecy, so it will be argued the words remain a separable object for discernment.

This chapter will situate the background for this discernment through Paul’s characterization of prophecy in the community. Second, this discernment will be demonstrated as a responsibility of the entire community as a means to develop the community and limit the power of prophets. Finally, reconstruction is developed for Paul’s imperative to discern as an essential tool with respect to prophecy in the community. It will be argued actual words of prophetic utterance offer the clearest target for this discernment, with additional concern for revelation. The results will support the broader conceptualization of discernment throughout First Corinthians as part of Paul’s efforts to build the realized eschatological community.
Pauline Characterization of Prophecy in the Corinthian Community

Prior to discussing discernment of prophecy, a brief measurement of prophecy itself as described in First Corinthians will give indications of what is potentially discerned. Paul first establishes the desirability of prophecy saying, “Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts, and especially that you may prophesy” (1 Cor 14:1). Paul saying all may prophesy one by one (14:31) underscores possibilities for each member. Desirability and availability are further exemplified when Paul adds, “be eager to prophesy” (14:39).

Similarly, the importance of this gift is demonstrated in his imperative to the Thessalonians, “you should not despise prophecies” (προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε, 1 Thess 5:20). Paul’s openness to prophecy as a community expression is supported in First Corinthians as well as in his intratextual corpus. Relevant in this context is Paul’s statement, “We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith” (Rom 12:6).

Because prophecy has this priority, David May says, “For Paul, this gift above all gifts was critical for a community to survive.” Even if overstating the case, May neglects the corresponding necessity for discernment to survive prophecy. Nevertheless, prophecy is important to Paul. Why does Paul show this openness? Echoing throughout may be Moses, “Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!” (Num 11:29). Prophecy presents risks, but Paul anticipates benefits and demonstrates a positive outlook for community prophecy. Below, positive potential for prophecy will be interlinked with discernment.

Paul stresses community-building functions of prophecy in contrast with the opacity of glossolalia because “those who prophesy speak to other people for their upbuilding (οἰκοδομήν) and encouragement (παράκλησιν) and consolation (παραμυθίαν)” (1

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1 Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 329.
2 See Appendix 2 for more on First Thessalonians.
Cor14:2–3). The first of these three key terms, ἐκδοσμή, translates well as edification or building up,⁴ which is applicable to “everything” (πάντα, 14:26) done in the assembly. The second, παράκλησις, is encouragement or “emboldening another in belief or course of action.”⁵ The third, παραμυθία, is consolation of the downtrodden or grieving.⁶ These essential aspects of prophecy are at the core of Paul’s teaching about prophecy in the local ἐκκλησία. Additionally, Paul repeatedly uses the verb λαλέω with reference to prophecy (1 Cor14:3, 6, 29), which in the context of verbal expression throughout strongly supports the primary use of prophecy as speech in words.⁷ In the broadest sense, there are many functions that can be derived from prophecy in First Corinthians. Basically, Paul characterizes prophecy positively constructing community through spoken words.

Aune acknowledges the “characteristic activity” of prophetic speech as having these three essential aspects, but with occasional future or deep personal insight, or “second sight.”⁸ This additional aspect avoids the pitfall of excessively limiting prophecy through the functional terminology used in 1 Cor 14:3. Similarly, Forbes argues Paul references predictive prophecy as part of his apostleship through the use of προλέγω and προεἶπεν in foretelling events (1 Thess 3:4; 4:6; Gal 5:21).⁹ Taking a different perspective, Crone recognizes prediction as too limiting as a description of NT prophecy when the other ways of encouraging the community are considered.¹⁰ It is impossible to eliminate prediction from prophecy, but it is not the definitive function.

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⁴ BDAG 696–697.
⁵ BDAG 766.
⁶ BDAG 769.
⁷ BDAG 582–583. The verb λαλέω (to speak) covers the range of normal speech through more formal speech.
⁹ Christopher Forbes, Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 224.
Exploring the function of prophetic speech, Grudem notes that the “edification, encouragement, exhortation, and consolation” aspects of prophecy are true of many kinds of Christian speech, but the component of revelation sets prophecy apart. Similarly, Ulrich Luz emphasizes the aspects in 1 Cor 14:3 as the “effect of prophetic preaching” (emphasis his). The prophecy itself is revelation (1 Cor 14:26), which in content is mystery (1 Cor 13:2), “a divine reality which is not accessible to ‘normal’ earthly knowledge.”

Elim Hiu proposes “true prophecy required divine inspiration that accurately conveyed the words of God with a view to advancing God’s plan or people.” Grudem, Luz, and Hiu emphasize the textual description of the essential aspects of prophecy along with the need for revelation to qualify something as prophecy. Revelation is not prediction, but can include things unknown to the receiver. Luz’s comment also introduces preaching as a prospective form of prophetic speech.

David Hill defines prophecy as “pastoral preaching.” He claims the prophet has a revelation of “scripture’s meaning” as well as offering “correction, guidance, and pastoral exhortation.” Martin claims prophecy is “exhortatory preaching.” He introduces a distinction between exhortatory and kerygymatic preaching with the latter presenting the gospel message. This distinction seems artificial. Either has overlapping content, perhaps distinguishing insiders or outsiders as intended audience. Prophetic utterance is not limited to only one audience type, further undermining the distinction (see below).

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17 Martin, The Spirit and the Congregation, 81.
Leaning toward the kerygmatic preaching model, Thomas Gillespie defines prophecy as “theological and ethical exposition of the gospel (1 Thess 4:13–18).”\(^{18}\) His supporting passage says nothing about prophecy. Later, Gillespie argues the expression “words taught by the Spirit” represents prophecy as the subject of 1 Cor 2:6–16, claiming that Paul’s use of the verb λαλοµεν (we speak) in the passage instead of κηρυσσοµεν (we preach or proclaim, used in 1:23) is consistent with various forms of λαλεω in 1 Cor 14 for prophetic utterance.\(^ {19}\) Yet Paul does use καταγγελλω in the near context regarding his own “proclaiming the mystery of God” (2:1). It seems strange, if Paul thinks prophecy is primarily preaching the gospel that he does not use the expected verb for preaching or proclaiming in 1 Cor 14. The use of κηρυσσω for making an “official announcement,” or “public declaration,” works well for preaching generally.\(^ {20}\) The LXX sometimes applies κηρυσσω to proclamations by prophets (cf. Joel 4:9; Jonah 1:2; 3:2; Isa 61:1). Yet Paul does not use κηρυσσω or the related noun κηρυγµα for prophecy in the assembly.\(^ {21}\) Perhaps Paul avoids the term because it is too limiting for the scope of NT prophecy. The usage of λαλεω for prophetic discourse is itself an argument against limiting prophecy to ‘preaching’ alone. Representations of prophecy are richer and more varied than can be accounted for by preaching as its primary function.\(^ {22}\) Paul does further clarify both content and audience for prophecy.

Additional data is supplied through the effects on unbelievers by messages in unknown tongues or prophecy. Transitioning from tongues toward prophecy, Paul seemingly contradicts himself. He states, “tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for

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\(^{18}\) Thomas W. Gillespie, *The First Theologians: A Study in Early Christian Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 164. See also pp. 142, 144, 147, 149.


\(^{20}\) For κηρυσσω or the related noun κηρυγµα as proclaim/proclamation see BDAG 543–544.


\(^{22}\) Plainly stated, “There is insufficient evidence that prophecy was mainly inspired preaching.” Hiu, *Regulations*, 103.
unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers” (1 Cor 14:22). Then he says an unbeliever observing speaking in tongues will say the ἐκκλησία is insane (μαίνεσθε, 14:23). If through prophecy an unbeliever is “reproved,” “called to account” (ἀναχρίνω) and the “secrets of the unbeliever’s heart are disclosed,” that person will worship and acknowledge that God is present (14:24–25). Why the difference? Hays interprets the unintelligible speech as “a sign of condemnation, symbolizing the inaccessibility of divine revelation” based on Paul’s use of Isa 28:11–12 in 1 Cor 14:21, where the “negative formulation” of prophetic disclosure brings a positive outcome (emphasis his). Discerning works even through the process of prophecy by exposing what has been concealed. The sign value of tongues for unbelievers brings exclusion through unintelligibility. Contrariwise, prophecy is not simply kerygmatic and is primarily for believers, but the message can have good effects on unbelievers. It is possible to observe in this passage prophecy does contribute positively, even if the words cause discomfort. Additionally, the disclosure of secrets to the one prophesying must be by revelation. Prophecy comes to a person as revelation, but ultimately finds expression in intelligible utterance toward the positive intention in the revelation. Revelation and utterance are the consistent framework within which prophecy is described and must be discerned. The essential aspects of prophecy may not appear positive, which accentuates a need for the message to be discerned. The validity of the revelation itself is an additional and different area for discernment to apply.

Paul does suggest one near equivalence between interpreting from a message in tongues and prophecy. “Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you speaking (λαλῶν) in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I speak (λαλήσω) to you in some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?” (1 Cor 14:6). A message in tongues could be

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24 Hays, *First Corinthians*, 244.
prophetic, therefore a message in tongues is not judged to be inferior on any basis other than its contribution to building up the community. Speaking in a tongue can also be prayer, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unproductive. What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the mind also; I will sing praise with the spirit, but I will sing praise with the mind also” (14:14–15). Each of these utterances can correspond with intelligible speech of various kinds.

Along with the intelligibility issues raised over glossolalia, prophecy is subject to questions about the state of the speaker especially in the receipt of revelation. Some scholars suggest correlation of an altered state of ecstasy (ἐκστάσις) particularly with glossolalia.25 The pejorative attitude toward glossolalia typically includes equating it with supposed Greco-Roman ecstasy. Others maintain both glossolalia and prophecy as examples of ecstatic speech in the NT communities. Paul seems quite comfortable shifting between these speech forms without reference to moving into and out of ecstasy. His differences are based primarily on intelligibility without reference to the speaker’s ecstatic or non-ecstatic state.

Grudem contrasts prophecy in 1 Cor 14:29–33 using four criteria for ecstatic experience where the prophet will “speak against his will,” “lose his self control and begin to rave violently,” “speak things which make no sense to him,” or temporarily become “unaware of his surroundings.”26 Contrasting with these criteria, Paul describes self-control in prophetic speech and the ability to yield to others (vv. 30–32), learning and encouragement (v. 31), peace instead of disorder (v. 33), and evaluation/discernment (v.

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25 See Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 212. Hill compares the presumed Corinthian practices with their background pagan situation, but he does acknowledge that the terms of the Greek “ecstatic model” such as “mainomia, mantis, enthousiasmos, etc.” are not associated with NT prophecy. Similarly Callan, “Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians,” 136–140; Gillespie, *The First Theologians*, 111; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 180–186. Contra assertions ecstasy is never associated with NT prophecy, Acts 22:17–21 quotes Paul describing being in ecstasy (ἐν ἐκστάσει) and receiving predictive prophecy.

26 Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy*, 150–151. Similarly Philo on ἐκστάσις: “frantic delirium, causing infirmity of mind,” “excessive consternation,” “tranquility of mind,” “the best description of all is a divinely inspired and more vehement sort of enthusiasm, which the race of prophets is subject to” (*Heir* 249).
It may be a false dichotomy between early Christian and possible Greco-Roman ecstasy. Forbes demonstrates the exaggeration of ecstasy/mania as pagan practices, especially regarding their supposed transposition into the early church. Paul’s writings at least model prophetic speech that is understandable through rational processes.

Laura Nasrallah argues Paul does not dichotomize glossolalia and prophecy on the basis of one being ecstatic speech, but engages in a complex web intended to fracture some Corinthian notions of fulfilled spiritual identity. She thinks Paul continues to challenge “human pretensions to wisdom,” where “foolishness and wisdom are inverted” in the current human limitations even in spiritual gifts. Nasrallah points toward an epistemology in which spiritual gifts actually demonstrate human weakness. Various gifts then are not disparaged as they testify to human weakness and work together simply as tools for a limited time. On the other hand, excessively exalting these tools fails to recognize the inherent human shortcomings. Issues in 1 Cor 14 are not over the ecstatic or nonecstatic state of persons, but rather the beneficial expression of worship. Levison suggests for Paul “ecstasy without restraint” is destructive to the community, but “order without ecstasy is simply unthinkable.”

Callan supposes Paul views prophecy as something forming in the prophet’s own mind, then is interpreted through expression. He admits this is assumed from Paul’s descriptions of prophecy as intelligible. But nothing is said in First Corinthians about the internal process of prophecy except that it begins with revelation and is under the prophet’s

28 For a detailed critique of “ecstasy” as a factor in the NT and its limited significance in the Greco-Roman world, see Forbes, Prophecy, 103–123; esp. 106 n. 6.
30 Nasrallah, An Ecstasy of Folly, 93–94. She frames this in Paul’s “periodization of history,” which has some equivalence with apocalyptic thought as described in ch. 1.
32 Callan, “Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and in 1 Corinthians,” 138.
control (1 Cor 14:30–32). Drawing from Paul’s statements about interpreting tongues, the intelligibility factor concerns the hearer’s ability to comprehend and benefit. The process of revelation does not appear to require complete comprehension by the one receiving revelation.

The terminology of prophecy in its desired objectives establishes some essential characteristics of prophecy. Thus prophecy is not simply foretelling something future, nor is it simply a message of positive encouragement or other “forthtelling.” A wide range of prophetic content could have the effect of edifying, exhorting, and consoling. Within the range of possible meanings for these terms, messages that could be perceived as negative messages of warning or a call to repentance ultimately can have positive effects. Prophetic utterance then must contain a message that originates in revelation and carries something of true value for building the community. The content of the message must work together with the originating impetus of revelation. The objectives of prophecy and its root in revelation together begin to point toward the need for discernment to accept or evaluate prophecy. Both content and revelation are potential objects for discernment.

Paul reiterates that prophesying is for edification (οἴκοδομή, 14:26) and strengthening encouragement (παρακαλέω, 14:31), as in 14:3. These things are to be orderly and in the peace of God (14:26–33). The text yields little other data about the form of prophecy with respect to phenomenological aspects or structural frameworks such as messenger formulas. As speech, prophecy is interwoven into the fabric of communication in the Corinthian church. The ultimate objective of prophesying is to “build up (οἴκοδομεῖ) the church” (1 Cor 14:4), which has a correlation with the more general pursuit “for peace and for mutual upbuilding (οἴκοδομῆς)” (Rom 14:19). The building process involved can also include the broader milieu of the prophetic in the community response and management of the prophetic. Paul’s charge to discern the prophetic is evidence of just such a developmental aspect. The community is not the passive recipient of prophetic
utterance, but should be actively engaged in discerning and evaluative interaction with prophecy.

Who Discerns Prophecy?

Ultimately, prophecy must be subject to the discernment of the others (οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν, 14:29). Identifying the “others” is important to understanding this discernment for two main reasons. First, it does entangle with the meaning and process of this discernment. There are implications about discernment whether these others lead, prophesy, discern spirits, or have other gifts. Second, it is more vital for ecclesiology than first apparent. It is impossible to dismiss the power shift that entails from this question. Limiting the potential influence or authority of a person prophesying is a consideration. Following this are issues concerning the authority of the ‘discerners’. If the entire community is involved in discerning prophecy, the overall capacity of the assembled people to assess and come to conclusions about prophetic utterances indicates remarkable confidence in their collective standing. This cuts to the heart of Paul’s vision for the community to become discerning.

Some interpreters limit discernment by “others” in 1 Cor 14:29 to other prophets present.33 This interpretation has the advantage of confining the pool of potential discerners to those already mentioned in the main sentence clause, which is not a grammatical necessity. Conzelmann gives no great detail about discerning, but he does connect it with 12:1–3 and 12:10. He claims “others” are other prophets because “all one by one” (14:31) must represent those who prophesy.34 Contra Conzelmann, “all” in 14:31

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33 Sometimes little or no rationale is supplied. Cf. James Moffatt, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (New York: Harper, 1938), 228. Lenski assumes the article in οἱ ἄλλοι refers to the other prophets; Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians, 611.
34 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 245. See also Ulrich B. Müller, Prophetie und Predigt im Neuen Testament: Formgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur urchristlichen Prophetie (SNT 10; Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1975), 205. For Müller, “In 1 Kor 14,29.31 war das Beurteilen der prophetischen Verkündigung anderer Propheten selbst schon prophetische Funktion.” Cf. Hill, New Testament Prophecy, 133. Hill argues
specifically refers to prophesying, which could potentially be “all” in the community rather than simply all prophets. This “all” has no dependence on “all” in 14:29. Although Aune uses Conzelmann’s position, Martin identifies an apparent contradiction between the two as Aune thinks the community “evaluates” prophecy.\textsuperscript{35} In fairness, Aune appears to see Paul urging community discernment in 1 Thess 5:19–22, but testing by a “restricted group” in 1 Cor 12:10; 14:29.\textsuperscript{36} Considering these passages together actually weights the evidence toward community evaluation, especially allowing some interdependence.

As discussed above in ch. 6, Paul in 1 Cor 12:7–11 makes a distinction between gifted utterances by the spirit and discernment of spirits. The distinction among these gifts implies potentially different people as recipients. On this basis, conflating these two identified types of discernment in 12:10 and 14:29 should exclude limiting discerning prophecy to prophets alone. If there is a doubly gifted smaller group of prophets who also have the gift called discernment of spirits, who are also the discerner of prophecy, then this group would have nearly unchecked power over the community. Additionally, the primary discernment would be limited to identification of source spirits. Paul could easily specify discernment of spirits in 14:29 if that is intended. Conversely, he could simply identify a gift of discernment in 12:10 if that particular gift is so broadly applicable.

Ellis attributes discerning prophecy to prophets and a “circle of pneumatics,” but not the entire community.\textsuperscript{37} In later work by Ellis, the other prophets discern prophetic utterances.\textsuperscript{38} It should be noted that he really speaks of pneumatics as the specially gifted

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\textsuperscript{35} Martin, \textit{The Spirit and the Congregation}, 150 n. 10. See Aune, \textit{Prophecy in Early Christianity}, 402 n. 36.
\textsuperscript{36} Aune, \textit{Prophecy in Early Christianity}, 219.
\textsuperscript{37} Ellis, “‘Spiritual’ Gifts in the Pauline Community,” 129, especially n. 7.
\textsuperscript{38} Ellis, \textit{Prophecy}, 25, 214 n. 2.
believers who “exercise the role of prophets.” Since Paul never equates prophets with pneumatics to the exclusion of others, this becomes problematic. In a slight variation, Horsley thinks it is the other prophets, who could be “potentially anyone.” This is true based on Paul’s encouragement of the Corinthians to pursue prophecy, but provides little help in identifying the target group. If anyone could prophesy (1 Cor 14:1, 31), then anyone could potentially discern prophetic utterance in this framework. Since one must begin somewhere, it would seem anyone in Paul’s audience could receive a gift and express it during the assembly. This suggests any community member could potentially spontaneously prophesy or discern prophecy. It is difficult to restrict prophecy to a specific group, and at least as difficult to limit discerning prophecy to that group. The difficulty is magnified due to the porous boundaries of the group.

In some cases, the others are seen as some larger group than those who prophesy or might be called prophets. Carson shifts the responsibility to the “congregation as a whole,” but this responsibility is carried by some smaller segment of the community. Carson’s suggestion lacks direct support in the text and is contradictory. Fitzmyer moves in this direction as a possibility based on a distinction between prophets and a potentially different group of those with the gift of discernment of spirits. As argued in the last chapter, direct equivalence between discernment of spirits and discerning prophecy fails to consider adequately the range of protective needs provided by these functions working separately, even if both are applied to both the source spirit and the prophecy as an utterance.

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39 Ellis, Prophecy, 50.
40 Horsley, 1 Corinthians, 187.
41 Carson, Showing the Spirit, 120.
42 Fitzmyer, First Corinthians, 526. Fitzmyer’s position demonstrates some of the problems in defining the gift of discernment of spirits as evaluation of prophecy. Additional to the inattention to source spirits, the rest of the discernment gift involved becomes muddled as well as shifting power to this group, among whom there would no doubt be prophets.

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Some scholars attribute discerning prophecy to the entire congregation without much discussion. This reflects the most straightforward reading of the text. Expanding further, Lindemann sees the context as pointing toward the whole community. Extending the contextual argument, Barrett thinks the “others” are likely the rest of the community based on the longer teaching about spiritual gifts and their assessment beginning in 1 Cor 12, with additional support from 1 Thess 5:21 and 1 John 4:1. It was Paul’s customary practice, according to Collins, to have “all members of the community” discern prophecy, based partly on 1 Thess 5:19–22 and Rom 12:1–2. These arguments for discerning prophecy as the responsibility of the entire community are well supported on contextual grounds ranging from the immediate context to the broader NT. No limitation within the text identifies a smaller group. Restricting the “others” appears to be imposed on the text through a common assumption that only other prophets, leaders, or other specially gifted people could discern prophecy.

The meshing of lexical/grammatical issues with context strengthens the case for community discernment. Garland argues for “all” to mean the entire assembly due in part to the overall context of chapter 14 and the triple repetition of “all” (πάντες) in 14:31 as an encouragement for participation of the whole group. Garland suggests that if Paul meant the rest of the prophets, he would use οἱ λοιποί as he did in 9:5, but additionally uses ἀλλος referring to the other members of the congregation in 14:19. The near and more distant context, language issues, and Paul’s sustained call to discernment together form a strong basis for discernment of prophecy by the entire community.

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43 Hays, First Corinthians, 234; MacGorman, “Glossolalic Error,” 399.
44 “. . . vom Kontext her näherliegend, die übrigen Gemeindeglieder . . .” Lindemann, Der Erste Korintherbrief, 314.
45 Barrett. The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 328. Cf. Marion L. Soards, 1 Corinthians Understanding the Bible Commentary (Understanding the Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 298. Soards sees this as a charge for “active listening” by the whole church, especially as an extension of the exhortation for all to desire prophecy.
46 Collins, First Corinthians, 519.
47 Garland, 1 Corinthians, 660–661.
48 Garland, 1 Corinthians, 663 n. 13. Similarly Hiu, Regulations, 122.
The issue of who “the others” are affects other issues. Hui argues discernment of prophecy is not the gift of discernment, but “the process of discernment,” which then contributes to the possibility that the others are the whole congregation. He continues to argue the meaning of “the others” in 1 Cor 14:29 as the whole congregation is supported on “good contextual and grammatical grounds.”49 Paul uses language in 1 Cor 14 that stresses the role and ability of the entire community to exercise gifts and to interact in this area. The various expressions in the gathering are for the benefit of others, who are then in the position to respond. There may still be differences in abilities based on any number of factors, but it remains that Paul did nothing to restrict this discernment to any subset of the community. Taken together with the limited number of prophecies, all indications are that Paul is limiting those who prophesy, not those who discern. The limitation of prophecy and the imperative to discern shifts power toward the community.

Concern about the power of prophets seems inevitable. Pahl attributes the responsibility for discernment of prophecy to the entire community as a limitation of power abuse.50 Simon Légasse comments on 1 Thess 5 that allowing prophetic utterance while not quenching the spirit, holding to the good, and abstaining from evil requires community discernment to trump individual prophetic utterance in authority.51 Limitation of this discernment to prophets does not provide much protection. Also, if only one prophet is present, there are no others to discern. The prophet would be empowered to self-validate prophecy over any objections.

Ciampa and Rosner comment that the rest of the community are able to pass judgement, although those with the gifts of prophecy or discernment of spirits would tend

49 Hui, Regulations, 121–122.
51 “En cas de conflit entre les manifestations du charisme prophétique individuel et le charisme communautaire de discernement, c'est ce dernier qui doit l'emporter.” Simon Légasse, Les Épîtres de Paul aux Thessaloniciens (Lectio Divina Commentaires 7; Paris: Cerf, 1999), 332–333.
to have more influence. The experience of prophets is useful, but this notion retains disproportionate power in a prophet group. Recognizing this problem, Fee views the discernment of prophecy by the community as a limitation of authority, which he thinks has an analogy with the interpretation of tongues. In his scheme, the interpreter/discerner has a powerful role of actually defining the content of the utterance. This view fails to make an appropriate distinction between the interpretation (διερμηνεύω) as a translation or explanation, and the judging/evaluation of discernment (διακρίνω). It is actually more helpful to perceive the distinction in Paul’s parsing of these functions as an aid to understanding his terminology. The structural similarities in these descriptions demonstrate that discerning prophecy is clearly not interpreting or explaining the prophecy, but remains more directly in the broader sphere of discernment. Prophecy, after all, is an intelligible utterance open to the hearing and understanding of the community.

An additional consideration emerges from the comparison of interpreting tongues and discerning prophecy. In 14:28, Paul urges someone who speaks out in a tongue to be silent if there is no interpreter present. Applying this to prophetic utterance causes further restraint of prophesying if those properly gifted are absent. Paul writes nothing about this, which points toward an interpretation that sees the “others” who discern as the others who are present at the occasion of the prophecy. There is no precondition involving the presence of individuals with specific gifts. If this is a concern, it seems likely Paul would give a corresponding instruction about silencing prophetic utterance without other

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54 BDAG 244.  
55 James Greenbury, “1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited,” *JETS* 51 (2008): 727–728. Greenbury makes a distinction between these, but suggests the implication is for both to undergo “theological discrimination” based on intelligibility to all.  
56 Fee draws on the comparison to argue that the similar structure in vv. 27 and 29 indicates “no special group of persons,” which extends the idea that anyone might prophesy. See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 694–695. See also Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 248–253; Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*, 171. N.B. the stress on this comparison by Fee is developed, but consistently limited to an argument against a specialized group of prophets in control of the utterances apart from the whole community.
specifically gifted people available, whether gifted in prophecy or discernment of spirits. The instruction for the others to discern is just that, an instruction for the community to exercise the responsibility to be discerning of prophecy.

Conceptual issues raised in the passage support the need for community discernment. In 1 Cor 14:37 Paul says, “If anyone thinks they are a prophet or spiritual they must acknowledge what I write to you is a command of the Lord.” (Εἴ τις δοκεῖ προφήτης εἶναι ἢ πνευματικός, ἐπιγινωσκέτω ὃ γράφω ύμίν διὰ κυρίου ἐστίν ἑντολή·). Ciampa and Rosner insightfully recognize this as support for community discernment, including Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:19; and 1 John 4:1 as further indications of broader community examination of prophetic words.\(^{57}\) Paul’s inclusion of “spiritual” broadens this caution beyond prophets to anyone who would presume to be spiritual. If this is not the entire community, it is at least those who are expressing themselves under claims of gifting. Wire notes the Corinthian’s emphasis on “speaking in the spirit, and it thrives on the expression and interaction of many voices.” One of her following observations is that Paul reverses this, where the “listener’s reflection is favored over the speakers’ expression.”\(^{58}\) The community must have an opportunity to hear and assess what is supposedly said in the spirit. The peace and effectiveness of the gathering is united in the balancing need for reasonable interaction within the spiritually charged atmosphere in which the community is immersed.

Beyond the dynamic of the gathering, there are additional theological concerns in discerning prophecy. Three “aspects” Munzinger identifies regarding this discernment is that it “grounds prophecy in the reality of community life,” discernment of prophecies by the whole church maintains unity and limits authority, and this inclusive form of

\(^{57}\) Ciampa and Rosner, \textit{The First Letter to the Corinthians}, 715.

\(^{58}\) Wire, \textit{The Corinthian Women Prophets}, 147.
discernment actually enhances the prioritizing of each prophecy. Munzinger further observes that discerning prophecy by the church is part of Paul’s implementation of “self-regulation” of the church. Perhaps this places the locus for the conception too closely to Paul’s personal preference. It minimizes the dynamic interaction of spirit, mind, and wisdom drawn from the mind of Christ in the community as gifts. Paul draws from a deeper well than an agenda for effective church governance, but balances order with the expression of a new reality.

Beker speaks of “the others” as the entire community, which “interprets the utterances of the prophets.” This is part of an argument for “the church as the dawning of a new age,” part of Beker’s detailing of Paul’s vision for the community as inaugurated by God. Beker argues that Pauline ecclesiology is the sum of eschatology and Christology, with the church as the body of Christ distinct from the “risen body of Christ” and also the kingdom of God. This expansive view extends the task of discerning prophecy beyond a select few. Beker’s insight correctly identifies the importance of discerning prophecy as part of the functional realization of eschatology in Paul’s theology.

In brief comments on 1 Cor 14:29 Hays remarks, “One of the most intriguing aspects of Paul’s directives is that the other members of the church (not just the other “prophets”) are told to judge (diakrinein; cf. 11:31) the prophetic words that are spoken in the assembly, exercising spiritual discernment about whether these words really are authentic words from God.” In the same place, Hays brings 1 Thess 5:19–21a with 1 Cor 12:3, 13 to his argument for the shared spiritual standing among members of the community as they are privileged to share in the assessment of prophetic utterance. It is important for the overarching objective of Paul’s message to the Corinthians that the

59 Munzinger, Discerning, 61–64.
60 Beker, Paul, 321.
61 Beker, Paul, 303.
upbuilding standards of actions and words includes the entire community in receiving and walking in various gifts and abilities. Discerning the prophetic word arises in this nexus as one responsibility of the community in becoming what they are collectively called to become.

Although scholarship varies in answering who discerns prophecy, arguments from context, language, and conceptual/theological issues support community discernment as the clearest answer to this question. Considering the extended use of discernment throughout First Corinthians further supports this position. It is not those who have the gift of discernment of spirits, prophecy, or are otherwise a subset of the community. Prophesying is limited in number of utterances and further in the submission of prophecies to community discernment by the others. This limitation makes space for the whole community to become the realized eschatological people of God. Having addressed who the “others” are, attention now turns to the actual discernment involved.

**Discerning Prophetic Utterances**

First Corinthians 14:26–33 begins with the question of what should be done in response to the issues of assembling (συνέρχομαι), especially regarding various means of verbal expression. Several imperatives follow a prefacing, πάντα πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν γινέσθω (14:26c).

In this context Paul states, “Two or three prophets shall speak, and the others shall discern” (προφήται δὲ δύο ἢ τρεῖς λαλεῖτωσαν καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι διακρινέτωσαν, 1 Cor 14:29). This provides specific limitations on prophecy and those who prophesy as well as raising a critically important question about precisely what is discerned.\(^{63}\) Textual specifics describing discerning prophecy as a process are limited. The relative wealth of detail about

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\(^{63}\) N.B.: For the purpose of this chapter, no distinction is made between an ‘office’ or role of prophet and one who prophesies. The previously well established examples of Paul subjecting his words to community judgement support judgement of all messages.
prophecy in 1 Cor 14 does help, as does the foundation Paul establishes for discernment throughout First Corinthians.

Paul gives the imperative to discern prophetic speech using διακρίνω. Thiselton points to the force of meaning here as “distinguish between,” as in the “authentic is to be sifted from the inauthentic or spurious, in the light of the OT scriptures, the gospel of Christ, the traditions of all the churches, and critical reflections.”64 This expansive definition retains several pertinent factors reasonably gleaned from Paul. It is grounded against the background of scriptures as a guide within the context of the redefining Christ-event. Tested practices and traditions emerging in the nascent communities of Christ are important, as in 1 Cor 11. The sum total of revealed wisdom applied through discerning, appropriate knowledge can work through “critical reflections.” Thiselton’s definition captures the broad essence of this discerning in some of its likely components. The Corinthians should utilize this discernment along with the range of available gifts. Within this milieu good is separated from bad by all means, including the application of “critical reflection.”

Collins proposes the verb διακρίνω “suggests the idea of discrimination, judging among several possibilities.”65 He includes distinguishing “true prophets from false” and also “authentic prophetic utterance from what is not authentic prophetic utterance.” Adding prophets is one step too far as prophecies appear to be subjected to discerning. Garland argues discernment here strictly evaluates speech rather than repeatedly judging those who prophesy.66 Similarly, Dunn argues the evaluation is of spiritual things/gifts (pneumatika), but not the people (pneumatikoi). For prophecy, it is evaluating whether there is a “genuine

64 Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 1140.
65 Collins, First Corinthians, 519. Cf. Ciampa and Rosner, The First Letter to the Corinthians, 715. Ciampa and Rosner think “Paul could mean the evaluation of the prophets themselves, but more likely he has in mind the evaluation of the messages given by them.”
word of the Spirit, or a word to be ignored and rejected." The important judgement here is over prophecy.

The assessment of the speaker as a true prophet injects additional problems. It is doubtful the moral character of the prophet would be judged differently from any other member of the community (see the Lord’s Supper, above) or that these judgements are modified in the context of prophecy. Since there may be a difference between a prophet and someone who prophesies, a different kind of process would apply to this determination. Not all could be prophets, but all could potentially prophesy (cf. 1 Cor 12:29; 14:1, 24, 31). If those prophesying have already been part of the discerning/judging processes of the community, then it remains for the specifics of prophecy to be weighed.

Finally, it seems unlikely those judged unworthy for character reasons would be allowed to prophesy.

The discernment itself, according to Hill, is actually to weigh the prophecies as to the “source of inspiration, their genuine or counterfeit quality.” He shifts concern away from the content. If prophecy is simply preaching, the discernment of the speaking as either genuine or counterfeit on each occasion of preaching creates a unique dynamic for the community. Leaders would be ignored or dismissed over the most general basic messages. These issues go beyond what 14:29 addresses about prophecy. In another connection of prophetic utterance with exhortatory preaching, Martin notes this moves the gift away from predictive prophecies evident in Acts 11:28 and 21:9–11, but thinks it aligns better with evaluation or discernment by the “others” in 1 Cor 14:29 due to the difficulty of assessing a future prophecy. Martin makes an excellent point, but it has several problems. He assumes that the evaluation was comprehensive and final, which it

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67 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 235–236.
68 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 235–236.
69 Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 222.
70 Dunn, Jesus and the Spirit, 235–236.
may not have been. He also assumes that the evaluation was related to the eventual outcome of the prophecy, without consideration of the overall content. More applicably, Martin does observe the discernment of 14:29 must be a matter of “scrutiny in the sense of its utterance being weighed and tested to see if it is in accord with the “mind of the spirit.””\textsuperscript{71} This kind of accord reaches back toward the mind of Christ issues discussed previously. But how would such an accord be reached?

Attempting to find a means for assessing prophecy, Hui suggests the discernment called for in 1 Cor 14:29 may be interwoven with the prayer and fasting of Acts 13:3, saying prayer and fasting are subsequent to the revelation.\textsuperscript{72} Problematically, Acts 13:2 has them already worshipping and fasting prior to the revelation and discernment is unmentioned. In 1 Cor 14, discerning prophecy appears necessary as a spontaneous response to prophetic utterance in the course of the assembly. Prayer and fasting as a unified subsequent additional process is possible, but not indicated in the text. Hui attempts to locate a procedure for discernment, but it is more likely that discernment of prophecy works in multiple ways through the foundation Paul lays throughout this epistle. The community has access to revelatory wisdom, which should unite them and facilitate the application of their gifts as they assume the responsibility to be discerning people. This is how they can perceive the value of the prophetic word as they discern its content.

The content of the prophetic utterance has much to do with its potential value to the ἐκκλησία. Arguing for a low level, minimal quality content for congregational prophecy, Grudem asserts that the NT prophet is held to a different standard than the OT prophet on the basis of a lesser authority, and that “the prophets at Corinth must not have been thought to speak with a divine authority of actual words, but rather with just a divine authority of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{71} Martin, The Spirit and the Congregation, 80–82.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{72} Hui, Regulations, 80.}
general content.”73 Hiu views this lower quality prophecy as unsupportable etymologically and “inconsistent from a historical understanding of prophecy in a Hellenistic Jewish background.”74

Aside from Hiu’s excellent point, there is a strange dichotomy produced by Grudem’s position, which raises several other problems. What purpose would low quality prophecy serve in contrast with high quality prophecy? Would discernment be simply sorting out the human from the divine? If this sorting is necessary, does that mean no discernment would be applicable to higher quality prophecy, say from an apostolic authority? If there are not any NT prophets with the same kind of authority as OT prophets, does that mean the NT is of lower quality as scripture? If only certain apostles could have the prophetic gifting to compare with OT prophets, or at least the “scriptural literary prophets,”75 then NT books written by others could not be equivalent in quality to writings of the greater apostles. Grudem’s continuum of prophetic quality based on office also suggests a continuum of authority for scriptural writings based on authorship. The sometimes-unattested authorship in scripture makes this especially problematic.

It can seem safe to relegate congregational prophecy to a kind of low quality, pseudo-prophecy as a means of protecting scripture, local leadership, or perhaps apostolic authority. It could seem a safe way to conceive of congregational prophets free to speak without fear of competition with scripture. Ultimately, this view creates more problems than it solves. There really is no basis upon which to accept low quality prophets or prophecy as a NT innovation or general principle. There is not a different solution to the

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74 Hiu, Regulations, 126–127. For an extended argument against Grudem’s position on the “general content” of congregational prophecy, see Farnell, “Fallible New Testament Prophecy/Prophets.”
75 See the helpful discussion about prophets in 2TJ and the NT in George J. Brooke, “Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament,” in Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity: Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jointly Sponsored by the Hebrew University Center for the Study of Christianity, 11–13 January, 2004 (eds. Ruth Clements, and Daniel R. Schwartz; STDJ 84; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 34. Less precise terms such as “writing prophets” are common. There are of course prophets in the OT who do not write, but are written about as prophets.
need for prophetic utterances to be discerned. There is no prophecy exempt from
discernment, as Paul’s constant urging for the Corinthians to discern/judge his words
amply demonstrates.

According to Jeffrey Aernie, Corinthian prophetic utterance is located “within the
Isaianic movement from exile to eschatological restoration,” with reference at least to their
place as seen by Paul.76 This situates the Corinthian exercise of prophetic utterance in
continuity with the OT “prophetic tradition.” In terms of the distinction between Paul’s
words and Corinthian prophecy, Aernie suggests that the discerning of prophecy in 1 Cor
14:29–33 may “signify a qualitative distinction in Paul’s presentation between himself and
the Corinthians in this regard.”77 While Aernie’s concern is to show Paul’s self-awareness
especially with respect to the presentation of his gospel, his argument does surface
persistent issues over many aspects of authority within the early church. With respect to
the discernment of prophecy, however, there is no indication that it is only certain people’s
prophesying that should be subject to discernment. Paul simply gives the imperative for the
others to discern, which suggests any prophetic utterance should be discerned. Considering
Paul’s other repeated admonitions for the Corinthians to judge/discern what he says, it
seems that Paul submitted himself to the same process of discerning wisdom that he
expected the Corinthians to exert on themselves and others. Effectively, if one takes Paul
to be intentionally writing as a prophet in the fullest sense of the concept, then his
admonitions to discern what he says or does heighten the authority of community
discernment. This is especially true if the community is expected to grow into
“eschatological restoration.”

76 Jeffrey W. Aernie, Is Paul also among the Prophets? An Examination of the Relationship between
Paul and the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition in 2 Corinthians (LNTS 467; London: Bloomsbury T&T
Clark, 2012), 111.
77 Aernie, Is Paul also among the Prophets?, 111 n. 147.
Discernment of prophecy refutes notions of prophetic utterance as singularly authoritative in the earliest Christian communities. The potential for prophetic utterance to be rejected through discernment is a substantial empowerment for the community. One result is reduced effective power of those prophesying as subjected to inherent limitations through the authority of those discerning. Paul’s emphasis on discerning prophecy is significant for the church in terms of ecclesiology, but speaks volumes about the community as a gifted spiritual body. Prophetic specialists would have difficulty imposing their own will without question or challenge, so long as discernment was operative in some way. Discernment is the balancing factor, but not an overcorrection intended to muffle prophecy. Discernment reflects Paul empowering the community to grapple with prophetic utterance as a maturing body, while manifesting their calling as part of the realized eschatological people of God.

Scripture provides some background for Paul’s conception. Prophetic evaluation in the OT was largely based on future fulfilment as well as fidelity to Yahweh, so it is reasonable for this criteria to remain in force (Deut 18:9–22). It is puzzling Paul does not allude directly to this material, but he may echo Deuteronomy in a related context. The most relevant echo may be found in 1 Cor 12:3. The distinction between those speaking either Ἄνάθεμα Ἰησοῦς or Κύριος Ἰησοῦς may be directly influenced by the fidelity to Yahweh aspect of prophetic assessment. Future fulfilment unfolds in time, where the most immediate criterion of dedication to Jesus as Lord in the actual sense of the statement is clear. The magnitude and force of declaring Κύριος Ἰησοῦς should not be muffled. Just as scripture citations in the NT often insert Jesus in place of Yahweh in the citation of OT passages (cf. Phil 2:10–11; Isa 45:23), or the application of Yahweh’s exclusive characteristics to Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; Rom 10:9–13; Joel 2:32 LXX 3:5). This is in itself a

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78 Pahl, Discerning the ‘Word of the Lord’, 30. See also Hays, First Corinthians, 242.
79 Evidence is thin, but there is availability of a hypotext, it has “thematic coherence,” and “historical plausibility.” On criteria, see Hays, Echoes, 29–32.
particular, specific declaration of Jesus not as a lord, but the Lord. Paul prefaces his discussions in 1 Cor 12–14 about speaking by the spirit of God in multiple ways with this restriction so that no person can claim any spiritual speaking that betrays a lack of fealty to Jesus. This can spiral outward into potentially related areas, but may be a central focus of the discernment at hand. The words of the message could undermine the nature, person, or other aspect of Jesus. The community could be induced to improper actions that should be prevented through proper discernment.

The more predictable, mechanical means of evaluating/discerning spiritual speaking applies to any speech. Discerning prophecy in the more specific sense of 1 Cor 14:29 then is a more specialized application of discernment. It is related to Paul’s broader calling into discerning as an essential characteristic of the community, but has a specific function. It is related to his imperative to evaluate all things in 1 Thess 5, but that is a more general process. The significance in the distinction between 1 Thess 5:21 and 1 Cor 14:29 is the reflection of the movement from general to specific. Such a view does not require strict literary dependence, yet does consider the different situations and the setting addressed.

The setting of Paul’s imperative for discerning in the context of prophecy is the worship gathering of the community. This setting is characterized by Lewis as “the deliberative assembly,” which accords with his view that “Paul’s vision of church life shows a clear tendency to elevate the rational and cognitive over the ecstatic.” Taken too far, Lewis’s position reverses Paul’s expansion on wisdom and revelation in 1 Cor 2. The extreme poles between rational and ecstatic creates a false dichotomy. As discussed above in ch. 2, Paul has a balanced approach to the dynamic between cognition and spiritual

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80 For an extended discussion, see Fee, Pauline Christology, 127–142. Fee asserts, “… transfers of biblical language from Yahweh to Christ are a part of what Paul does regularly. None of this is argued for, as though some kind of christological innovation was a point Paul wanted to make. To the contrary, they are used in such a way that Paul assumes them to be common knowledge between him and his readers,” 24–25.

81 See appendix 2.

82 Lewis, Looking for Life, 120–121.
realities, with the former subject to the latter. In a related vein to Lewis’ approach, Tibbs visualizes a scene in which the congregation holds a discussion about the content of the prophecy, and perhaps seeks and receives clarification.\textsuperscript{83} This observation has merit as it indicates consistency with the process of discernment based on the language of διακρίνω.

In a different perception about the assembly, John Barclay comments, “1 Corinthians 11–14 provides a fascinating glimpse of the electric atmosphere of such gatherings: the sparks of the spirit, in the shape of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge (13:8) flew indiscriminately between male and female \(\pi\nu\varepsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\tau\iota\kappa\iota\) (11:4–5).”\textsuperscript{84} Intensity does appear to be a given characteristic of the gathering for worship, even without the troublesome “ecstatic.” In the midst of this “electric atmosphere,” there are traces of Paul’s call for edification (14:3–12), mature thinking (14:19–20), and orderly peace (14:33). As is often the case, there is a ‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’ distinction possible. Paul’s reaction to the Corinthian situation does counter ecstatic excesses, but does not elevate the “rational and cognitive” as supreme. He will, after all, pray and sing in both spirit and mind (1 Cor 14:14–15).

In 1 Cor 14:29 the imperative to discern is related to the speaking of two or three prophets.\textsuperscript{85} In simplest terms, it is often suggested that this discerning is of the prophets/spirits, the speech, or sometimes a combination of these. The pattern of this imperative follows 14:27–28 very closely, where it is clearly the message (\(\lambda\alpha\lambda\acute{e}\omega\)) in tongues that is interpreted. The interpretation concerns what is said, clearly without consideration of the speaker. Likewise, in 14:29, speech is the object of discernment.

Summarizing his own thoughts on discerning prophecy, Dunn concludes:

In short, it is probable that the earliest Christian communities not only rejoiced in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[85] The use of \(\lambda\alpha\lambda\acute{e}\omega\) as a normal expression for prophetic utterance has been discussed earlier in this chapter.
\end{footnotes}
the prophetic Spirit freely bestowed upon them, but also recognized from very early on, if not from the first, that prophecy is regularly accompanied by false prophecy, that enthusiasm all too often outruns inspiration, and that consequently all prophetic utterances must be tested as to their origin and significance for the congregation addressed.\footnote{Dunn, “Prophetic ‘I’— Sayings and the Jesus Tradition,” 187–188.}

The distinction between origin and significance of the utterance in this summary underscores a necessary aspect of discernment applied to prophecy. The concern about the source of a revelation is not easily dismissed, while simultaneously the content in words of a prophecy must be subjected to discernment to be validated as true, good, and applicable for the community.

Lacking specific details of possible procedures or practices in the text, inferences must be drawn from the generally available material. Aune observes that discerning prophecy is “not regarded as a spiritual gift or the result of spiritual insight, but appears to be a fully rational procedure whereby prophetic utterances (among other things) are judged on the basis of their coherence with accepted customs and norms.”\footnote{Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 219–220.} Although Aune conflates discernment of spirits with discerning prophecy, his statement drives a wedge between the two because the former is an identified spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:1–11).\footnote{Aune, Prophecy in Early Christianity, 220–221.} If discerning prophecy is not a spiritual gift, it clearly is something other than discernment of spirits. Nevertheless, he does identify an important aspect of discerning prophecy in a rational manner. At the same time, there is no reason to exclude consideration of multiple means of discernment working together, from the rational to whatever “spiritual insight” may be available, including discernment of spirits.

The source of the message is not restricted to discernment of spirits. There is an intermediate step regarding the revelation given. If someone prophesies a message that is not based on actual revelation or is simply expressing personal objectives, then
discernment of spirits is not the only or perhaps even the correct means of assessment. This is one example of the discrete gift of discernment of spirits working with other forms of discernment. Where no evil spirit is detected or this gift is unavailable, it would be possible to discern the validity of prophecy on the basis of the words. Three aspects surrounding prophecy continue to be readily understood as requiring discernment: the source of the message, the actual message, and also the goals of the message are all potentially candidates for discernment. Discerning true prophets is unlikely as part of this specific action as portrayed in 1 Cor 14:29, where the actual message is the clearest object for discernment.

The goals of the message are imbedded to great extent in the actual words, but some elements are not apparent. Included would be future fulfilment or even applicable truth in a future situation. What sounds right could actually be damaging in ways not immediately apparent. Thus it seems in this arena of discernment, final judgement may await further evidence or events to determine prophetic legitimacy. Stated differently, discerning prophecy may not require an immediate yes or no verdict. Discernment in its varied forms operates between faith and reason, trust and evidence.

False prophecy could contradict the known gospel message, scripture, or firmly established legitimate teaching or tradition. Multitudes of specific examples could be adduced, yet it this multitude that also demonstrates further the need for discernment to operate apart from simple procedures. There is no basis for assuming the words are judged on issues such as the precision of basic grammar or vocabulary issues, but rather on the comprehensible content in terms of meaning. The revelation stirs within the human, who then expresses the prophecy in his or her own grounded, human context and limitations. Discernment must be free to flexibly respond to various potentialities.
Conclusion

This chapter first demonstrated the function of prophecy in First Corinthians as found in “building up” the church through an intelligible message in words sourced through revelation. The message may be predictive or simply insightful about things beyond the knowledge of the speaker (including contributing to discernment, ἀνακρίνω, of secrets), but must result from revelation given for edification.

Second, Paul’s imperative for the “others” to discern (διακρίνω) prophecy was addressed as the responsibility of the entire community. This has significant implications for the reception of prophecy, the authority structure within the community, and Paul’s expectations for the community. Discerning prophecy is important to Pauline ecclesiology in large part because of the limitation of power accorded those privileged to speak prophetically.

Third, detail lacking in Paul’s language about discerning creates some ambiguity and enigma. In one sense, additional specifics could nullify discerning activity by replacing judgement with procedures. The underlying notion is for the community to mature into people who are able to be discerning in all aspects of life. Discerning motives, spiritual source, affectation, or any other potential target is of value, but remains nebulous. Even the character of the prophet as the object of discernment fails to provide an adequate target for the specific purpose of discerning prophecy. Inherent to Paul’s context is complete loyalty to God alone, evidenced by the words and reliability of the message. This is rooted in OT standards for prophetic speech, but does not evaporate in NT light. Varieties of gifts can work together in a complex matrix. Recognizing this complexity avoids oversimplification through seeking the least common denominator for any given gift or ‘spiritual’. Words spoken as revelation require particular discernment distinct from discernment of spirits. Both may be complementary, but problems with conflating these types of discernment have been demonstrated in this and the previous chapter.
In a certain sense, discerning prophecy is preeminent among all forms of discernment in First Corinthians. This is simply because it is an examination of speech supposedly from God, which brings discerners into a powerful position vis-à-vis rejecting, amending, or accepting something that carries both explicit and implicit divine revelation and authority. The dynamic of prophecy and discerning response are a remarkable pair of modalities, which by simply being available for the Corinthians reveal an extraordinary glimpse into what Paul considers the high standing and growth potential for the community of Christ.
PART IV: CONCLUSION

Chapter 8: Conclusion, Contribution, and Areas for Further Research

This study has demonstrated discernment as a key process in Paul’s conceptualization of the dynamic interplay at work in the development and renewal of the community as they are called into wisdom through spiritual grounding in the mind of Christ. The net result of this dynamic is development of the mindset of Christ expressed in areas of improved cognition and evaluation/assessment of matters pertaining to all aspects of the community. Parting with some approaches, it has been argued epistemology alone is not Paul’s concern, but rather access to revealed wisdom given to the community through the Christ-event. Discernment/judgement in varied modes emerge through this interpretive schema in dialectic with scripture and Paul’s experiences with the newly forming communities.

The foundation for the concept of discernment in wisdom/epistemological, ethical/moral, community/relational, and spiritual applications was established for this thesis. These areas correspond with the first four sections of First Corinthians. Apocalyptic thought, in distinction from apocalyptic literature and other potentially anachronistic understandings, yields a productive unifying factor to understand Paul’s confidence in the Corinthian potential. A conceptual and intertextual methodology was implemented to draw from Paul’s grounding of discernment in 2TJ thought and scripture.

Paul’s call for the same mind and judgement (γνώμη, 1 Cor 1:10) begins to establish the importance for discernment/judgement, which Paul connects to revealed wisdom from God as essential and available. Discernment was shown to flow from this wisdom. Paul models this in his own judgement (κρίνω) of what is important on the basis of Christ crucified. Discernment (ἀνακρίνω, 2:14–15) of reality for the community of Christ must be grounded in this new way of life, where the Christ-like mindset prevails. A key principle for Paul is the mind of Christ (2:16). The self-sacrificing love in this mindset
is the basis for all activities and reverses the impossibility for human perception of God’s mind. This enables appropriate interpreting, comparing, examining, judging, or discerning as functional wisdom for the community. Spiritual discernment emerges as something possessed by those who are spiritual by virtue of having and acting in accordance with the mind of Christ. These people also are not subjected to judgement. Paul creates a tension in the application of discernment/judgement by setting these forth as a necessity, yet also stating restraints on judgement. These tensions are relieved through the varied examples of what and who are the objects of discernment/judgement, but also in recognizing the distinction between the process of discerning and completed judgement. Recognition of these distinctions is aided in Paul’s use of κρίνω with prepositional prefixes for something more like discernment, or without prefixes for completed judgement.

Paul uses Torah constructively for both morality and the protection of community, which also extends the judgement motif through providing scriptural warrant for community judgement in temporal matters. Paul’s shock over immorality in the community and their lack of concern provoke him to judge (κρίνω, 5:1–11). Judgement is for the welfare of the ἐκκλησία as well as the long-term benefit of the member involved. The community must judge insiders to maintain morality (5:12–13). The immoral person in the community has lost status by egregious fault, which then provokes the need for judgement. This situation shows one clear area for the community to judge a member. The restraints on judgement are contextualized as Paul continues to model appropriate judgement. The situation of the immoral man also serves as a transition to a different issue.

Paul asserts the saints will judge (κρίνω) the world and angels, so are qualified to judge issues of daily life (6:1–11). This extends the validation for completed judgement by the community on a conditional basis. It was argued that Paul asks those wise to discern (διακρίνω), so the linkage of the discerning act with the state of apocalyptic wisdom becomes explicit. Paul recognizes varieties of abilities in different people, which
demonstrates the expectation for different stages of development based on life experience. Different members contribute according to ability, indicating a developmental aspect for the discerning, judging community in distinction from strictly divine gifting of discernment.

As Paul articulates the need to become discerning people, he stresses the need for judgement at each step. They are to properly judge among themselves to protect the community and also to realize part of their eschatological status as the people who will even judge angels. There is no need to resort to the Roman legal system to adjudicate disputes in the community because they are equipped to complete this task. Paul takes this community, already struggling with internal conflict, and then requires them to discern between one another. The fragmentation of the community is due to a lack of appropriate judgement in accordance with the mind of Christ.

The contingencies of 1 Cor 7 allowed examination of Paul’s personal judgement over certain issues and the relationship this has with his use of scripture. The recollection of γνώµη points to a deeper purpose in Paul’s demonstration of discerning appropriate to times and occasions. Paul again gives a clear example of appropriate judgement (κρίνω) based on the perception of one’s life situation as a basis for decisions (7:37). Paul demonstrates flexibility to adapt to the current situation while continuing to stress the need for discerning the times, outside circumstances, and the needs of various people with respect to choices about family. This is revelatory wisdom applied to exercise discernment as a part of a mature, Christ-centred life. His encouragement of personal choices in these matters demonstrates his optimistic view of the potential for the Christ-followers to discern the means of living in the current world.

Discernment in issues of idol-food and the complex social aspects surrounding the community demonstrates the proper use of discernment in the application of knowledge to cultural issues. It was argued Paul opens his own behaviour and words to judgement in a
sincere gesture consistent with his schema for moving from discernment to completed judgement (ἐνακρίνω, 9:3; κρίνω, 10:15). The same discerning process leads to knowledge about restraint of judgement regarding another’s conscience (10:25–29). Paul draws from scripture to advise the Corinthians on the situation of idolatry as well as their own standing as the people of God, but even here there are questions that are only resolved through discerning scripture and different problematic situations. Paul’s flexible, discerning approach to idol-food while maintaining distance from overt idolatry demonstrates faithfulness to scriptural restrictions while applying flexibility in judgement over unclear situations. Paul expects the Corinthians to discern with him what are the concerns over harm to others where one may find liberty of conscience. This extends the Christ-like attitude into areas of social interactions both within and outside the community.

Demeanour through appropriate attire was demonstrated as something the community must also judge for resolution. Relationships internal and external to the community are ultimately affected by the socio-cultural issues, so once again effects on others should be a concern. Paul challenges the Corinthians to judge (κρίνω) in/among themselves (11:13). Paul’s arguments inform the Corinthians, but the call to exercise judgement in the matter is often overlooked. It connects with the continuing framework of discernment in the epistle, where data is considered and appropriate judgements are made on issues.

The transition into the assembled body raises new issues over eating and drinking as a gathered community, including the “Lord’s Supper” (11:17–26). Even their factions yield an opportunity for those approved (δόκιμος) to be revealed. There is a discerning process to reach this understanding about others in the community. This aspect of the gatherings leads to the imperative for self-examination (δοκιμάζω) and discerning (διακρίνω) the body of Christ (11:28–34). Paul emphasizes the serious nature of the Supper in its apocalyptic ramifications for potential judgement by God. The serious and weighty
matter of judgement/discernment includes responsibilities for each member to exercise loving caution and wisdom as they approach this aspect of worship. There is a judging dynamic throughout the Lord’s Supper that brings together the judgement in the whole Christ-event, from cross through final judgement. This judgement becomes active as the community approaches and requires judicious consideration of the extended body of Christ and human relationship with this reality. Aspects of discernment are essential in the community gathered for worship, with discernment forming a basis for interactions among the community with respect to matters affecting the gathering in various ways.

Discernment (διάκρισις) of spirits (12:10) was differentiated from the more general sense of discernment running through the epistle. Paul does not locate an innate ability to discern spirits in believers. Instead, this is a discrete gift for some people, which is dissimilar to the discernment Paul urges for the entire community. Additionally, retaining Paul’s approach to spirits as extracorporeal beings underscores the need for prophylaxis against influences of evil spirits. Discernment of spirits on this basis contributes an adjunct form of discernment that is clearly not based on human perception, but rather a divine gift to a limited number of people. Seen in this way among other “spirituals,” this specific, limited discernment speaks more about the necessity for broader discernment in the community as something other than a special gift for few people. This is also more consistent with Paul’s other imperatives for discernment/judgement as exercised by the entire community in the development of the full range of abilities for Christ’s people. The interpretation articulated in this thesis resolves several problems introduced by the most typical scholarship conflating discernment of spirits with discerning prophecy.

Discernment (διακρίνω) in connection with prophetic utterance in the assembly (14:29) was unpacked in context with this overall study. The validation or negation of words spoken from purportedly divine revelation is a powerful duty, but the imperative to discern protects against false messages, assesses revelation for validity, and assures fidelity
to God alone. While Paul does not quote or allude to scripture in his admonition, the OT requirements can certainly be maintained in the process of discernment. The calling for the entire community to discern prophecy is critical to protection against excess power accruing to certain groups or individuals in the community. Discerning prophecy was demonstrated as a substantial responsibility for the community to act together in the realization of their potential.

The necessity for judgement/discernment in the community has been shown to be of continuing concern throughout the epistle. Defragmenting these makes explication of discernment and appropriate judgement possible. The process of discernment is vital for the community across the spectrum of issues confronting them in general life or in the worship gatherings and spirituals. Oscillation between restraints and requirements for concluding judgement frames Paul’s portrayal of proper judgement. Final eschatological judgement over others is inappropriate, but the community will have a role in eschatological judgement. Concluding judgements must be made with respect to matters affecting the integrity of the community in the current time. These include issues of immorality, disputes, personal life choices, words, and culturally bound practices. Through the revealed wisdom of God, the community is able to discern relevant data and to come to a concluded judgement about many things. This is vital for growth and development of the community.

The first area of contribution for this study is expanding the field of knowledge on discernment as a Pauline conceptual/theological area. This primary goal contributes knowledge to an understudied aspect in Pauline studies, and more broadly in NT studies. It is surprising the wealth of language and concepts related to discernment in First Corinthians has not been given more focused study. The relative lack of scholarship specific to discernment as a concept developed in First Corinthians necessitated a broader
examination of the ways in which Paul brought this to bear on the situational dynamics of that community.

As a second area of contribution, intertextual evidence provides support for the conceptual development of discernment in the community of God’s people. Paul’s use of Torah in the requirement for the community to judge was demonstrated to be important for this topic within the epistle. Additionally, the analysis of Paul’s use of the WT to establish a basis for the community to judge provides a foundation for further related study of ecclesiology. Paul’s thought was linked primarily to his Jewish roots and the background of OT/2TJ literature. The links through allusion or echo build upon a confluence of OT narrative and mediation of this narrative through the Christ-event.

A third area of contribution is provided for understanding the integrity of First Corinthians through the strand of coherence in the discernment/judgement concepts. This coherence brings Paul’s diagnosis of problems in Corinth into interaction with the varied issues throughout the epistle. Building on this coherence, Paul continually calls the community to discern/judge in response to many issues of spiritual and practical application. His insistence on discernment is counterintuitive as a solution for a fragmented community of believers. Not only does Paul have an optimistic outlook for the future of the Corinthian community, this thesis suggests the division issues are often overemphasized in other studies.

Contribution has also been made to reconstruction in the area of spiritual manifestations and gifts. This is not only applicable through discernment of spirits and discerning prophecy, but also in the broader area of discernment as a developmental aspect for the community of Christ in the gift of renewal.

Research remains to be done with individual areas of discernment. Additional focused studies on applied wisdom as a NT area of concern and praxis are needed. Study of the interaction of discernment with ethical concerns would be helpful in further
understanding Paul’s thought as well as early Christianity and its relationship with Judaism and the Greco-Roman world. Further contributions remain to be made in many areas of OT influence on the NT in the area of appropriating and applying Torah. The impact on ecclesiology by various modes of discernment leaves much work that can be done with respect to both leadership and community. This includes questions of community judgement and discipline with respect to behaviour, but also could include studies on the role of discernment in resolving problems. Discernment and its interaction with spiritual manifestations, including its interaction with prophecy, could be studied with respect to broader NT areas, other stages of early Christianity, and/or the broader cultural milieu. The relatively few biblical studies specific to discernment and its interaction with other issues leave a wide range of potential topics in need of further research.
### APPENDIX 1

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Note: This table was derived in part using various functions of Logos Bible Software ver. 6
APPENDIX 2
Discernment in 1 Thess 5

If First Thessalonians is taken to predate First Corinthians, some material within it could reflect less developed forms of related concepts.\(^1\) Additionally, 1 Thess 5:16–22 may reflect some form of material upon which Paul draws.\(^2\) As an earlier and perhaps formulaic version of material Paul develops later, a broader foundation may exist for Paul’s expansions than can be proven. Regardless, the brief mention of prophecy and discernment in context with the spirit in 1 Thess 5 has some characteristics which correlate well with Paul’s longer discussion in 1 Cor 12–14. Four of these correlations impact this study.

First, cautions about suppressing the spirit or despising prophecies reflect a generally optimistic view toward spirit manifestations.\(^3\) For the Thessalonians, Paul’s paired imperatives not to quench the spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα μὴ σβέννυτε) or to despise prophecies (προφητείας μὴ ἐξουθενεῖτε) suggest more than a coincidental relationship between these paired prohibitions. It is interesting that where the Corinthians exhibited

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\(^2\) Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 1986), 237, 241. 1 Thess 5:16–22 are potentially traditional material, which Best relates to Rom 12:1–13. Also Jan Lambrecht, “A Structural Analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4–5,” in *The Thessalonians Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?* (eds. Karl P. Donfried and Johannes Beutler; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 171–172. Lambrecht sees 5:12–22 as a unified paraenetic section. Cf. Fee’s discussion of vv. 16–18 as potentially recycled a decade later in Phil 4:4–6, especially considering the “imperatives” of “rejoice,” “prayer,” and “thanksgiving” repeated “at the same point;” Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 202. See also pp. 216–217, where Fee splits vv. 19–22 as if they are “surprising;” even if they would be naturally connected for Paul. On the potential of linkage throughout 19–22, see Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 201. Wanamaker observes, “it seems much more probable that the conjunction δὲ in v. 21 has its normal adversative function and therefore that a close link exists between the thought of vv. 20 and 21.” Additional to the issues cited above, the rhythm and meter of 1 Thess 5:16–22 in Greek rotate around 18b as if composed intentionally for sound and repetition, as also indicated by the structuring in NA\(^\text{19}\). On the imperatival phrases each containing at least one word with the Greek pi sound as a poetic device, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians* (Interpretation; Louisville: Knox, 1998), 83–84.

\(^3\) “Quench” (σβέννυμι) is a term ranging from stifling or restricting to annihilating something. Similarly, “despise” (ἐξουθενέω) carries with it the meaning of dismissing with contempt. The situation is not entirely clear, but the imperatives about what not to do are. Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (TPNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 260–264.
overenthusiasm in their pursuit of spiritual manifestations, including prophecy, the
Thessalonians apparently “despise” (ἐξουθενέω) such activity.⁴ These early epistles reflect
Paul’s moderation between restraining prophecy altogether and unconsidered abandon in
the face of spiritual manifestations. Paul’s communities are charged to honour prophetic
utterance, which he expects to be heard in the midst of the community. Paul’s caution
about silencing the prophetic voice in 1 Thess 5:20 correlates with his positive
encouragement to seek prophecy in 1 Cor 14:1–5, 12, 24–25. Both epistles contain
verbiage against excessive restraint of spiritual activities, while Paul maintains an open
view toward spirit manifestation. The very fact that he does so in settings where people
alternatively despised or ran to excess in spiritual manifestations indicates that something
essential was inherent in this activity.

Second, casting prophecies within the overall sense of spirit activity in 1 Thess 5
contextualizes prophetic activity within the same general sphere as that portrayed in 1 Cor
12–14. It is a domain of spirit manifestation, or spirituals, in which the suppression of the
gift suppresses the giver. Because prophecy is such an important manifestation of the
spirit, May says, “For Paul, this gift above all gifts was critical for a community to
survive.”⁵ Stifling prophecy at Thessalonica is a particular, specific quenching of the spirit
that cut off the life-giving source. If Paul was warning against something not actually yet
in practice, perhaps the warning as a general prohibition is even more serious. He intends
either to preserve this activity or to stimulate its genesis.

Third, legitimate concern about impure/evil spirits is not a reason to avoid spiritual
manifestations as a general practice. This is made clearer yet when Paul says, “abstain

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⁴ Paul may have been proactively preventing such actions, but the key point is his imperatival
cautions. See Steve Walton, Leadership and Lifestyle: The Portrait of Paul in the Miletus Speech and 1
from every form of evil” (1 Thess 5:22). Reminiscent of the arc beginning with protection against evil/unclean spirits in 1 Cor 12:1–11 through the management of spiritual gifts for the community benefit through 1 Cor 14:40, there is coherence in the correlation of the work of the spirit in proper manifestations while guarding against evil. This coherence is even clearer in the interrelationship of discernment. It is the means given through which the community can be exposed to the spirit of God, yet have the means of protection against evil spirits, their effects, or both taken separately or together. The means of protection is not closing off spiritual manifestations, but rather operating with various modes of discernment flourishing.

Fourth, discernment is a definite necessity. In 1 Thess 5:21 the term is δοκιμάζω. There is a shift of terminology in 1 Cor 14:29 to διακρίνω, but there having a very unambiguous reference to prophecy. These terms both indicate an evaluative judgement or examination with some overlapping lexical meaning. Taken together, these terms are likely to give a less simplistic view of the kind of discernment Paul anticipates. Why might Paul have used different terms in these contexts? Prior to this question, it must be asked what is even subjected to testing in 1 Thess 5:21. It is true this use occurs in close context with the mention of prophecies, but this does not mean that Paul is writing strictly about testing prophecy.

Fee considers the context and the “verbal plays between the final two clauses,” which consist of the “good” and “bad” in vv. 21–22, “seems to demand” the clause of v. 22

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6 Moberly argues Paul “does not simply urge submission to prophecies, but rather counsels thorough testing, i.e. critical discernment (verse 21a).” He sees the “strong likelihood” for “strong moral content” as the means of testing. R. W. L. Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment (CSCD; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 170–171. Contra Moberly, I would argue this is insufficient in itself.

7 “Das Wort δοκιμάζεται für die Beurteilung relevanter Elemente der Lebensführung vor Gott ist Paulus auch sonst geläufig.” Traugott Holtz, Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher (EKKNT XIII; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 261. Holtz’s observation on the familiarity of this theme is based partly on Rom 12:2 and Phil 1:10, where the same word is used, but he also includes the discernment of 1 Cor 12:10.

8 BDAG 255–256; 231.
also refers to prophetic utterances. He continues that this testing includes “by implication all other such ‘Spirit utterances’ in the community.” It is not clear why the inclusion of prophecy as the object of testing by necessity would in turn extend the same requirement to other utterances. Fee’s somewhat inconsistent statements point out a real difficulty in limiting this discernment to prophecy. In this case, there is no compelling reason to limit the examination to various utterances at all. Additionally, if the testing is extended “by implication” to other types of utterances, why would it not also extend to everything transpiring as purported spirit activity? On what basis would it be limited to utterance?

Morris begins with the testing limited to prophecy, but with an intentional modification of “everything” as a means to really test for good or evil in all matters. Furnish recognizes Paul may have given a readily understood call to “moral discernment,” with the use of δοξιμᾶζω bringing the sense of “careful moral inquiry, reflection, and appraisal” (cf. Rom 12:2 and Phil 1:10). Discernment of various kinds is needed to evaluate spirit manifestations and utterances, but also to discern more broadly between good and evil in all aspects toward understanding God’s will. In short, the eschatologically realized people of God are charged to discern everything.

If the passage from 1 Thess 5:16–22 can be understood as a unit reflecting something broader about practices in the nascent Pauline communities, possibilities emerge for grasping more of what Paul intends. As Wanamaker seems to acknowledge, the paraenesis of the previous passage cannot be completely severed from the passage under study. It makes sense that Paul did not fragment prophetic utterance from other aspects of

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9 Fee, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, 224.
10 Fee, The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, 224.
12 Victor Paul Furnish, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 121.
13 “Soumettre toute chose à l’épreuve pour retenir ce qui est bon (1 Th 5, 21), c’est discernir les interprétations pneumatiques de la volonté de Dieu dans l’événement.” Gérard Therrien, Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens (EBib; Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1973), 291.
the community experience. The full continuum of experience in the close context runs from rejoicing, prayer, thanksgiving, and continues through not quenching the spirit, not despising prophetic utterances, testing everything. Together these make possible holding fast to good and abstaining from every form of evil. What follows then in v. 23 makes sense: Paul wishes for their entire sanctification, for complete soundness until the eschatological consumption.\(^{15}\) Taking such a view of this material broadens the application of the discerning evaluation by the community from prophecy alone toward that which is good or bad, whatever the form or content of the object under discernment. Prophecy has a prominence in this because of the potentially authoritative communication involved, but this by no means displaces the need for general discernment. Evaluation of prophecy in addition to more mundane forms of discernment underscores the high level of responsibility placed on the community to grow into a mature body of faith.

The \(\pi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha \ δ\eta \ δ\sigma\chi\imath\mu\alpha\zeta\eta\tau\epsilon\) of 1 Thess 5:21 actually does mean to test/examine all things. This coheres with the argument in this thesis about Paul’s exhortation to discernment as a broad, functional tool in the community throughout First Corinthians. It is evident that discernment of prophecy is a subdivision of this discernment. It happens that Paul is writing specifically about prophecy in 1 Cor 14:29, where the best term is \(\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega\). In 1 Thess 5:21, \(\delta\sigma\chi\imath\mu\alpha\zeta\omega\) is perhaps the best term as a broader net is cast concerning other matters of evaluative discernment as well as the outcome of that process.\(^{16}\) Paul’s uses of \(\delta\sigma\chi\imath\mu\alpha\zeta\omega/\delta\omicron\mu\iota\mu\omicron\omicron\varsigma\) in First Corinthians appear only in connection with tested, approved people. In 1 Cor 3:13 the testing of one’s work by fire is contextually related to the people

\(^{15}\) Attempting to demonstrate a ring structuring of the epistle, Timothy Milinovich relates 4:1–8 as sanctification by “what to avoid” with 5:16–25 as the corresponding unit of “positive activity” toward sanctification. His method highlights the importance of 5:16–25 as a cohesive unit with a specific goal. Timothy Milinovich, “Memory and Hope in the Midst of Chaos: Reconsidering the Structure of 1 Thessalonians,” \(\text{CBQ} 76\) (2014): 513.

\(^{16}\) Contra Munzinger, \(\delta\sigma\chi\imath\mu\alpha\zeta\omega\) is not synonymous with \(\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\iota\nu\omega\) in 1 Cor 2:15 where he says “Paul also claims all things can be evaluated.” The distinction in 1 Thess 5:21 is that the outcome is stressed as shown in the following material through and including v. 23. See Munzinger, \textit{Discerning}, 8–9.
who are the building. In 1 Cor 11:19, 28 it is the other or the self in the community being tested. In 1 Cor 16:3 it is a trustworthy person set apart for a mission. As the dynamic of 1 Cor 11:19, 28–29 demonstrates, one arrives at the stage of tested approval after first having been discerned. In this same sense the process of discerning prophecy can yield something that has been tested, and is therefore approved. Nothing can be “approved” unless it has been subject to a process of discernment.
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260


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