

## **Kinds of Myth, Meals and Power: Paul and the Corinthians**

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Jonathan Z. Smith's comparison of the Corinthians known from Paul's letters and the Atbalmin of Papua New Guinea provides a remarkable opportunity for scholars of early Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The study of the New Testament has understandably been dominated by the internal perspectives of Christian theology. This means that approaches to Paul's letters continually reinscribe an incomparable uniqueness and irresistible relevance. Privileged meta-narratives insure that the ways scholars imagine Paul and the Corinthians elide many of the human social and cognitive processes that students of a contemporary culture or a scholar in a department of history would assume as requirements for construing the people in question as human. Smith's bold comparison breaks through these constraints that have dominated the field and creates an opening for imagining Paul and the Corinthians in ways that are quite normal in the humanities and the social sciences.<sup>2</sup> Thus Smith's comparative operation is only bold in view of the norms of New Testament Studies and quite familiar as a way of understanding human groups in the wider university.

In this essay, I want to take advantage of the opening created by Smith's article to raise some questions about certain social/cognitive processes that are usually hidden in traditional approaches. In a more comprehensive study, I would theoretically develop the concepts of *doxai* (hereafter *doxa*, *doxai*), interests, recognition, and attraction that I believe need to be added to Smith's concepts of incorporation and resistance.<sup>3</sup> I understand all of these as attendant to the processes of ongoing mythic formations that

Smith's paper allows us to imagine for the Atbalmin, and for Paul and the Corinthians. For the purposes of this article, I will stipulate the following. A doxa is a body of taken-for-granted beliefs, practical skills, assumptions and understandings that the researcher through historical investigation imagines that the people in question brought to a social situation.<sup>4</sup> Interests are the most basic and important projects and ends that motivated the people in question. "Most basic" should be a matter of debate and corrigible for scholars. Recognition is the process of someone taking someone else (or another group) to be someone of a certain type or identity (or of certain types and identities) that to various degrees makes sense to them and that often entails some degree of or a lack of legitimacy or social capital.<sup>5</sup> Attraction is the process of recognizing some sort of mutuality of interests that can be the basis for individuals or groups engaging in common practices or entertaining the possibility. In the latter, it is to be assumed that individual participation is differential and that individuals do not bring exactly the same skills, understandings and so on to practices in common with others, even while they share certain common practical understandings with all those who participate in a particular practice.<sup>6</sup> I will not so much explicate these concepts in what follows as to presuppose them as I first engage some facets of Smith's paper and then use Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper as a case to explore how one might imagine the mythmaking and ritualization of Paul and the Corinthians as dynamic social activities. At the end of the paper, I will return to Smith's construal of the incommensurability that he sees between the religion of Paul and the Corinthians and suggest another interpretation. I will preface the discussion by noting some key ways that what I want to do differs from typical approaches.

The dominant approach to Paul and the Corinthian letters I characterize as academic Christian theological modernism.<sup>7</sup> The approach has made enormous contributions to the study of the New Testament and contributes substantially to this essay, but its limitations are, I think, clear.<sup>8</sup> The tradition is thoroughly grounded in the situation developing from the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, but took form as a part of the crystalization of European modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the institutionalization of confessional faculties in the universities. The approach trades centrally on the dualisms of material/spiritual and orthodox/heretical. With regard to science and cosmology the ancients and the early Christians are other in a rather absolute sense, but with regard to religion, morals, sociality, and subjectivity, the early Christians are the same as us. They are same people in different clothes, with a different “science.” The early Christians are not only generally the same as modern Europeans, but also the same as the professors and Christian scholars who study them in their focus on specialized intellectual interests, i. e., doctrines, theology, ideas.

The basic moves of the approach are familiar. One first reads the letter for Paul’s explicit criticisms of the audience encoded in the rhetoric of the letter. Secondly, and much more importantly one reads passages with irony, sarcasm and where Paul seems to oppose something or seems defensive as reflections of an opposing point-of-view, often with supposed behavioral manifestations. Two moves, mirror reading and asserting that Paul uses the language of his opponents – of course he doesn’t really mean what he says in such cases – prove central to the enterprise. With these methods, one constructs opponents and reaches the goal of outlining the theological or ideological positions of these opponents or deficient Corinthians. Typically the scholar will identify this false

teaching with some intellectual position in Greco-Roman or Jewish culture often represented in the most extreme caricature. Then in a second major move the academic theological modernist reads Paul's rhetoric, and the theology supposedly behind the rhetoric, over against and as a response to the ideology of the opponents. Inevitably, the opponents turnout to be suspiciously similar to contemporary religious opponents of the scholar – e. g., pietist enthusiasts, evangelical or fundamentalist spiritualists, ascetic world renouncers, sacramentalists, worldly philosophers, libertine intellectuals and on and on.

The central pattern here is the model of orthodoxy and heresy. Religion is a matter of right and wrong depending upon what doctrines one holds, right belief and wrong belief. Doctrines are formalized or semi-formalized teachings. People consciously adopt beliefs and are conscious of their beliefs/positions as beliefs/positions. Thus a historian could, on this view, without anachronism ask, "what was Paul's or his opponent's position on, say, justification by faith or ecclesiology and so on." But there is an unanalyzed social phenomenon involved of taking positions. To provide perspective on this assumption, I would argue that it would be highly misleading to ask this question of, for instance, a typical Roman, Greek or Jew. Greeks ordinarily did not have positions on the doctrine of Zeus or the gods and Judeans on Yahweh or the nature of belief. There are social conditions for this kind of religion supposed as natural and universal in much scholarship. Rather, I will admit below that Paul does have some interest in religion with a certain focus on right and wrong positions, but one can only explain his interest within the social conditions of a field of intellectualist competition.

A key assumption in most theological modernist interpretation is that the people whom Paul addresses and whom he represents as the church at Corinth form a community. The idea of a community is the idea of a highly integrated social group based on a common ethos, practices and beliefs. Paul preached the gospel, people converted and Paul welded them into a community. With this assumption, Paul's words in 1:10 become the basis for asking the question, how did the Corinthian community become divided? What false doctrine from inside the community, or infiltrating from the outside, corrupted the community or seduced a portion of it? Usually the corrupting ideas have an external ideological or theological source, often false beliefs "left over" from "the pre-Christian environment." In positing a community, one is also assuming fully developed Christian subjects – these have to look like Christians that the scholars know from Europe or America shaped by Christian cultures and centuries of developed Christian institutions. Something cannot derive from nothing, including persons or subjects. The concept of community and communities has been enormously constraining for scholarship on ancient Christianity. Community is a highly ideal and ideological concept. There are a very many kinds of social formations that are not communities.

The approach that I am characterizing, simply assumes not only Christian community and Christian subjects, but also that the pre-Christian religious interests and formations would have to a substantial degree coincided with Paul's interests and formation. The Corinthians were looking for the truth about salvation, say, and Paul provided the true beliefs. But are all people just naturally looking for salvation? The approach overlooks the fact, long established from ethnography and the history of religions, that the vast majority of religious people have "practical" religious interests

focused on the household and family rather than specialized intellectual interests, such as explaining the nature of the cosmos and human destiny, the true doctrine of God, right worship, the true interpretation of authoritative texts, and the nature of the ideal human community. In fact, it takes a massive cultural-institutional structure, say with something like bishops, textually oriented religious education, the massive production and religious use of texts and so on in order to reproduce religions that focus on intellectual practices and doctrines of need and salvation.<sup>9</sup> Greek and Roman religion and the religion of the Judean temple were not such religions. It is unlikely that Paul's formation and interests substantially overlapped with those of most of the Corinthians.

On the modernist reading, Paul's first contact with the Corinthians must have been somewhat as follows. Paul knocks on a door in Corinth. Gaius comes to the door. Paul says, "Jesus Christ has died for your sins and you have been justified by God." Gaius joyously proclaims, "Thank God I am saved!" Now this may be an exaggeration of what is naively unexamined, but only a small one. The theological modernist approach fails to address the sociological questions of recognition – what are the conditions for someone recognizing someone else as a particular someone representing something; and similarly the questions of the coincidence of interests, of attraction, practical participation, negotiations of individual self-understanding (identity or subjectivity?) and social formation.<sup>10</sup> All of these remain unasked as the scholar posits Christian subjects and community.

In my view, two things are very clear from the evidence of the Corinthian letters: First, Paul very much wanted the people to whom he wrote to be a community and held a theory saying that God had miraculously made them into a community "in Christ";

Second, the Corinthians never did sociologically form a community and only partly and differentially shared Paul's interests and formation. In my estimation, it is very unlikely that "the Corinthians" ever had any more social organization than households that may have had previous ties with other households, and after Paul, a roughly shared knowledge that Paul wanted them to be an *ekklesia* in Christ and that he kept telling them that God had transformed them into one.<sup>11</sup> But Paul's relation with a fraction of the Corinthians that we know included some elites in the sense of being heads of households and potential heads was different and more cohesive.

That the primary social formations Paul encountered were households does not mean that there were not many other social formations that either cut across households or that involved individuals and sub-populations within households. The possibilities are numerous: e. g., circles of friends, trading networks, cultic associations, neighborhoods, ethnic identifications. One of which we have firm evidence is a field of intellectualist competition and cultural production that I will discuss below. Because, in spite of our romantic notions, even households might not be communities, individuals associated with Paul might not have ever belonged to any community. I follow contemporary social thought in holding that community or even groupness more broadly is something to be demonstrated and not assumed.<sup>12</sup> Community and groupness – that the category x (e. g., Jews, Christ followers, Corinthians, local aristocrats, a particular clan) actually constituted a group - should not be axioms of analysis. Holding to this approach typically yields two results, a separation of social ideology from social practice and the discovery that individuals participate in numerous social formations.

In addition, I want to insist that individuals under specific social conditions produce and interpret myths, not communities. One cannot simply identify the interests of the mythmakers and myth interpreters with the collective minds and wills of communities and peoples. A mythmaker is often best thought of as a kind of entrepreneur attempting to produce and shape groupness. Eytan Bercovitch in his analysis of Atbalmin religion, I think, is attempting to encompass some of these distinctions with his concept of social multiplicity, the idea that “people possess several, often contradictory, sets of beliefs and practices.”<sup>13</sup> He is explicitly trying to avoid an old fashioned now discredited identification of a posited group with its purported culture seen as a whole and notably including its myths. The approach will aid the imagination of the complexities animating Paul’s relations to the Corinthians. Thus I believe in agreement with the seminar that providing an account of this difference between Paul’s ideals and the recognition, interests, attractions and formations of the Corinthians is the key to a helpful way of reading the letter. Of course, we can know a great deal about Paul’s views, but must be very modest about those of the Corinthians.

Smith’s comparison gives permission to the scholarly imagination for construing the social situations reflected in the Corinthian letters in new ways. I want to engage three central aspects of the two situations in which he finds similarity and a basis for further comparison: localism, simultaneous experimentation, and changes in a small homogenous community. The relevant statements from the article are:

Two major elements stand out in which the New Guinea materials make more plausible the imagination of some early Christian social formations. The first is



the ability of a small relatively homogenous community to absorb a stunning series of situational changes within a brief span of time through strategies of incorporation and resistance. . . .The second element is the capacity of a small relatively homogenous community to experiment, simultaneously, with multiple modes of religion. (Bercovitch described four.) The Atbalmin have exhibited, within their social and religious history, the dialectical relations of processes of reproduction and transformation that constitute, with particular clarity, what Sahlins has termed “structures of conjuncture.”

As a generalization, all of this makes more plausible the presumption of the coexistence of multiple experiments by early ‘Christian’ communities as well as their localism. It alerts us to the presence of sorts of changes not necessarily captured by the historical record.”<sup>14</sup>

By localism, I take Smith to mean, in the case of the Corinthians, their practice of the religion of place manifest in their concern for the dead, for spirits, for kinship and ancestry and for their common meals.<sup>15</sup> The letters clearly give evidence of the Corinthian practice of religion of the household and family and religion of the temple.<sup>16</sup> Thus interpreters should take these, and especially the first, as expressing the religious interests of the people to whom Paul wrote and think of Paul’s religion of “anywhere” as at least novel for most of the Corinthians and perhaps with Smith as a problematic intrusion.<sup>17</sup> This then makes explaining mutual interests, recognition of Paul, and attraction – processes that precede Smith’s issues of incorporation and resistance – a central task for the scholar. Even a problematic someone is a someone to the other, but always under conditions. In the minds of at least some of the people whom Paul

addresses, what authorized Paul as a purveyor of certain cultural products and practices? In order to follow this approach, New Testament scholars will have to denaturalize their understandings of religion and not assume a contextless universal meaningfulness and attraction to “Paul’s gospel.” It is simply a fact of ethnography and the history of religions that the religious interests of most people focus on the locative religion of household and family.<sup>18</sup> I will argue that Paul’s teachings and mythmaking were centrally about kinship and ancestry, even if not in a typically locative way, and integrally connected to his discourse about the spirit (a poor translation) or *pneuma* (hereafter *pneuma*). An implication of this argument is that modes of religion that are distinctive enough to classify as types may not be pure. Tension, inconsistency and modes of hybridity ought to be taken as the norm.<sup>19</sup> The mode of religion imagined and advocated in Paul’s letters embodies tensions. It denies many of the principles and practices of the locative religion of land, temple and home precisely by thinking, including mythmaking, about family, kinship and descent. Is Paul simply incomprehensible to many or all of the Corinthians as Smith and Burton Mack suggest or does the very evidence of creative differential reaction and resistance to Paul on the part of the Corinthians argue for varied degrees of comprehension and creative response in light of that comprehension?

The case of the Atbalmin and their simultaneous experimentation with multiple modes of religion makes the internal early Christian perspective of absolute religious purity and mutually exclusive practice, a perspective generally adopted in New Testament scholarship, seem fantastic. We can conclude with confidence that even if the Corinthians had fully understood what Paul wanted them to do, they would have been

selective about what they wanted to do, and could not have given up their religion wholesale, even if they had wanted to do so.<sup>20</sup> This means that there is a very large gap between the idealized descriptions of the Corinthians as “in Christ” and the real situation. The deep failures that Paul sees among the Corinthians are likely the result of their selective and mixed appropriation and outright resistance to Paul.

Smith describes the social formation subject to these changes as “a small relatively homogeneous community.” While this certainly fits the Atbalmin and to some extent fits Paul’s Corinthians, I think it helpful to make some further specifications and modifications of the description. Although the case is complicated by the intrusion of Western modernity and the Indonesians in New Guinea, I would argue that the society of Roman Corinth was in important ways more differentiated and certainly more diverse than traditional Atbalmin society, even with the intrusions.<sup>21</sup> Slavery, for example, and a multi-ethnic urban context make a difference, but I want to draw attention to one feature of the culture/social organization of the Roman Empire in particular. Trans-local fields of knowledge with specialist who served as producers and distributors and a niche of people socialized as consumers of this culture had long been a feature of the Mediterranean. By field, I mean a space of norms and practices, a game if you will, that had gained a semi-autonomy from kings, patrons and the economy in general.<sup>22</sup> The dominant and broadly legitimized form of this knowledge and practices is well known to us as Greek and Roman *paideia* or according to the myth, a single *paideia* whose commonality to Greeks and Romans was based on an ancient shared ancestry.<sup>23</sup> The Augustan classicism and the classicism of the so-called Second Sophistic, for instance, both celebrated ancestral cultural heritage. The two major traditions of this *paideia* where

found in rhetoric or sophistry and philosophy.<sup>24</sup> But there were clearly other bodies of knowledge with producers, distributors and interpreters. Most obviously, these appear as ethnic knowledges, the wisdom of the Egyptians, Syrians and Jews, for example.<sup>25</sup>

Forms of these knowledges with their authoritative texts and interpretive practices ceased to be merely local and both competed with and overlapped with the dominant paideia at points. Translation of key texts into Greek and writing in Greek were conditions that facilitated the participation of ethnic fields or quasi-fields in the dominant field. The myth of the barbarian origins of Greek wisdom grew during the Hellenistic period and became very influential under the early Empire.<sup>26</sup>

The abundant evidence shows that only a relatively small number of people, often but not always elites of some sort, aspired to become producers, distributors and even dedicated consumers of paideia. The key point is this: Two modes of religion existed only by way of specific social conditions and in relative autonomy. Autonomy here refers to the larger fields or arenas of the modes setting and contesting their own rules and practices. Autonomy does not mean that the modes for individuals were mutually exclusive. The beliefs and practices of normal Mediterranean religion (e.g., Greek, Lydian, Judean) were doxic: It was given; for the most part, taken for granted.<sup>27</sup> This sort of religion was embedded in the everyday life of farm, family, household and the order of the city, and thus focused on place. The religion promoted among those in the fields in question was different in that contestation for defining what was true about the gods and the cosmos, and what was the true written tradition, created a dynamic struggle to produce intellectual and cultural products to promote the legitimacy of established or challenging specialists and their consumers. In this social space and game, religion is

contested not given. There must always be defenders of the current form of the dominant intellectual tradition and challengers. Greek philosophies once challenged traditional paideia and then became part of the dominant legitimized tradition. Dominant Greek paideia was challenged, especially in many local arenas, by claims that Greek wisdom derived from more ancient cultures. “Why not go to the original sources,” the challenging specialists said. Greek and Roman traditions kept reinventing themselves and facing new challengers. But none of this meant that those outside of these games felt that the givenness of their gods, temples, and practices was normally a matter of debate.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to imagine a hard impermeable boundary between the specialized writing and interpretation of the field and normal local culture outside of the field. Indeed if one avoids a more structuralist-like view of cultural or religious types seen as logical wholes, and introduce temporality, a typical process of domestication can come into view. The odd specialized productions of the field often become domesticated to culture outside the field. So, for instance, a generation of French people who found the paintings of the Impressionists shocking and incomprehensible was followed by another that viewed them as challenging and appealing.<sup>28</sup> In typical fashion the field moved on far ahead of the general population. The Impressionists became orthodox and a succession of rebelling movements arose such as Cubists, Dadists and Surrealists. Of course, most farmers and workers, for instance, may never have found the products of some of these field movements comprehensible, but some did and it was always possible for individuals to be “educated” into the taste for such products by entrepreneurs of art in the field.

A field is a social space that floats free of certain kinds of place, the reference to fixed objects and locations in the world made meaningful by human imagination. A family shrine has a context conditioned by its fixed site, but a text circulates without the context of its creation, although it must have a context of certain practices embodied as skills (e. g., reading) in order to be and remain a text. One does not have to be in any particular place to read or write a book or debate an idea. Once written, a text might go anywhere and does not need to have an author attached to it. Literates different from and far away from the time and place of a text's writing can modify it. As with markets, intellectual/cultural products circulate and have effects within fields that are mostly unseen by their producers and modifiers. Because producers in fields compete over the true, the good, and the beautiful and because the field cuts across particular places, the products tend toward universalizing knowledge and rhetoric.<sup>29</sup>

Where does Paul fit? His work was to find Greeks, Romans and other non-Jews whom he could convince that their religious and moral practices were utterly false and evil. The only true and living god was the God of the ancient Jewish writings that recounted the world's nature and beginnings, and the history and fates of all the world's peoples. Christ was a being possessed of God's own pneuma and all humans could possess a share of this divine stuff that God had given to Christ. Paul was certainly not a sophist legitimated in the dominant fraction of the field (as some have supposed), but belonged to one of the aspiring, competing illegitimate fractions that were every bit as necessary to the existence of the field as a field of cultural-production-as-contestation.<sup>30</sup>

By way of illustrating one kind of specialist, an instance of whom we know a good deal is Lucian of Samosata, a Syrian whose first language was probably Syriac

rather than Greek. He came from a family of stone carvers and yet he describes how paideia lifted him into the elite dominant field known via Philostratus as the Second Sophistic. Even though this was an archaizing movement of Greek linguistic and literary purity, Lucian suggests the potential power of dominated fields by writing about the Syrian goddess of his homeland and in several writings by constructing his authorial persona as that of the marginal disinterested educated barbarian who as outsider can critique other specialist producers of cultural products.<sup>31</sup> In his writings, one encounters every sort of cultural specialist, e. g., sophists, philosophers, astrologers, prophets, experts in foreign books, whom Lucian skewers as would-be competitors in the field of paideia. One vivid portrait of the specialist consumer's desire for the status brought by paideia appears in the aspiring target of the *Ignorant Book Collector*, another in the form of well-to-do householders who take in cultural specialists of various sorts to bring the status of learning to their homes (e. g., *On Salaried Posts*). It seems to me that even the arrival of Christian missionaries in New Guinea did not create a comparable cultural field.

I also see another relevant difference between the situation of Christianity among the Atbalmin and Paul's coming to the Corinthians. Christian missionaries and teachers in New Guinea, even when they were natives bringing domesticated forms of the religion, carried the background authority of an enormously powerful imperial culture from the west that exerted both attraction and repulsion. Paul, the diasporate Judean, carried no such background authority. The Corinthian reception of Paul needs explanation.

Although discussing the most important data for the thesis that I have been developing is far beyond the scope of this article, I can express the thesis theoretically. To explain Paul's recognition by, and attraction of, some Corinthians, one needs three elements. The first condition is a field, or perhaps, a set of overlapping fields of knowledges and intellectual practices in which specialists employed their skills to compete and "debate" in the production and interpretation of oral and written texts and discourses that contest the truth and legitimacy of both traditions and novel doctrines. These practices aimed at a niche of consumers who found social distinction in acquiring such paideia. Second, one needs to suppose a number of people among the Corinthians who desired an alternative paideia. This desire for an alternative esoteric and exotic paideia may have had a basis in their minority or mixed ethnic statuses or other status inconsistencies that both alienated them from the dominant legitimate paideia and attracted them to an alternative.<sup>32</sup> Beyond this, we know that certain people now and then have been attracted to the esoteric and the exotic because attachment to the different can involve social distinction in the eyes of the adherent and others. Such adherence can also express a person's broader social and cultural sympathies, a kind of "cosmopolitan" outlook beyond one's local and inherited culture. Lucian's ambition to leave stonecarving in order to gain fame and see the larger world illustrates this motivation. Third, one must view Paul as a producer and distributor of an alternative esoteric paideia different from the dominant sophistic or philosophical kinds, yet still recognizable as a form of the same broader game of specialized literate learning. With these assumptions, it makes sense that some Corinthians would have shared interests with Paul, recognized him as a person with a certain kind of legitimacy, and found an attraction to some of his



performances. It remains to show how Paul's mythmaking and other practices might make sense to such people.

If a minority among "Paul's Corinthians" shared various degrees of this attraction to the "intruder," there is every reason to believe that the attraction was not easily shared by the majority. Those who did not aspire to such *paideia* and did not see it as a feature of their roles, statuses and aspirations, would have had interests focused on the religion of household and family. They would likely have understood Paul on their own terms and exhibited both repulsion and attraction at points related to their strategic concerns. So, for instance, if those who were attracted found interesting Paul's cosmic *pneuma* doctrines and teachings about the nature of the gods and the one true god and the myth of a heroic martyr who created a mode of access to the most powerful and sublime kind of *pneuma* and to a renowned ancestry, the majority may have reacted differently. As Smith suggests, they may have seen in Paul's talk of ancestors and baptism, a pneumatic link to ancestors, an opportunity to experiment with a technique for accessing their own significant dead.<sup>33</sup> Baptism for the dead may have been seen as a way to improve the status of the recent or untimely dead, a well-documented concern of families.<sup>34</sup> Further, Smith is right that experimentation with ritual must have involved the Corinthians in their own mythmaking, both among those who did not aspire to be specialized consumers of Paul's cultural production and the attracted.

Who were these people attracted to Paul's myths, pneumatic doctrines and performances, and moral-psychological teachings? It has been a temptation of recent scholarship to make Paul into a champion of the underclasses and a critic of the elite. This preaches well, but goes against all of the evidence that Paul was a person of his age

and cultures. Likewise, it might be tempting to make Paul simply a mentor and client of the elite. We do indeed have evidence for this that is more than the rhetoric of Christ-like weakness and suffering and moral weakness to which the proponents of Paul-as-liberal-emancipator appeal. The letters name some of these people and provide valuable information about their activities with the “intruder.” Paul admits that the Corinthians understood their baptisms in different ways leading to a lack of unity and is glad that he only baptized Gaius, Crispus and the household of Stephanas (1:10-16). But the choice of these people for baptism by Paul does not appear to be arbitrary (in spite of 1:17) because these are precisely those who are noted as sharers in Paul’s specialist’s activities. At the end of the letter one reads (16:15-18):

brothers, you know that the household of Stephanas is the first fruit of Achaia and they have organized themselves for the service of those who are holy. I beg you to subject yourselves to such people and to all those who work and labor with them. I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus because they have made up for what you haven’t done (or your failings); for they have refreshed both my pneuma and yours. Give recognition to such kind of people.<sup>35</sup>

First, Stephanas and his peers and companions whom Paul describes as “such kind of people” (*toioutoi*) are participants in Paul’s teaching and organizing activities. Second, this gives them a kind of capital and legitimacy in Paul’s view so that the Corinthians who are not distinguished in this way ought to be under their authority. Third, Paul compares the valorized specialized activities of these people to the lack of valorized participation on the part of the rest of the Corinthians. When Paul later wrote Romans from Corinth, he sent greeting from one of the other named three that he baptized, Gaius (16:23). Gaius is Paul’s host and host to the whole assembly. Paul also

mentions an *oikonomos* of the city who from contemporary evidence is probably something like a city treasurer. Gaius is certainly an elite with a house large enough to host all of Paul's Corinthians and to provide extended hospitality to Paul. Some of these men are heads of households and in that sense elites. Only they could open the door to Paul. There would have been no "Paul and the Corinthians" without these people and their recognition of him and their attraction to his productions.

The basis of this attraction should be clear in the extensive evidence to which I have alluded that elites at various levels often, but certainly not always, strove for the distinction of learning and culture. Dare I cite the Petronius's proverbial Trimalchio, the wealthy freedman who invites cultural specialists into his house in order to pose as interested in the distinction of *paideia*. As outrageous as it might first seem to compare Paul's situation to the world of Petronius, there are some important analogies relevant to the issue at hand in this work that was written about the time that Paul composed his letter to the Romans. Certainly Paul employs his ethnicity in a way different from the characters in the *Satyricon* and the content of his learning is of a different tradition that is of a dominated wisdom of a people and not the dominant legitimized *paideia*. Paul also wants to organize people socially in a way that is rather distinctive.<sup>36</sup> But regarding fields of specialized cultural producers and consumers and attraction of the latter to the former, the analogy is helpful.

According to the influential interpretation of Gian Biagio Conte, the *Satyricon* is a parodic comic novel about *scholastici*, a word for which there is no English equivalent or near equivalent.<sup>37</sup> The word is a term for the primarily amateur devotees of Greek and Latin literature, learning and oratory.<sup>38</sup> The hero or rather anti-hero Encolpius seems to be some sort of itinerant lecturer. The fragmentary nature of the novel means that we

have lost some information about him. His companion, Agamemnon, heads a rhetorical school for older boys and has an assistant Menelaus. Eumolpus is a poet and poses as a moralist so as to be invited into a prosperous house in Pergamum as a kind of teacher advisor that the text compares to an old fashioned philosopher (*Satyr.*, 85). Encolpius meets Agamemnon outside of a hall where *scholastici* have been delivering speeches and launches into a learned tirade against the way declamation is taught and practiced and about the general decline of speaking (1-2). *Scholastici* were people who took themselves and their enterprise very seriously. This is why Petronius is able to so effectively satirize and parody them. At their meeting, Agamemnon improvises lofty words in Lucilian style – not the style of the Septuagint – about the calling of *scholastici*: “Ambition to fulfill the austere demands of Art, the mind moving to mighty themes, demands discipline, simplicity – disdain the haughty seats of the mighty, humiliating invitations to drunken dinners, the addictions, the low pleasures . . . .”<sup>39</sup> Here he expresses the field ideals of autonomy. The true intellectual does not produce for a patron, or for money or to please the powerful, but for the sake of truth or beauty or God. It is precisely these moral and intellectual ideals that the novel subverts as it makes the “heroes” exact opposites of the ideal.

Edward Courtney persuasively argues that the *Satyricon* is overall about educated freedmen and slaves.<sup>40</sup> He shows that Encolpius, Giton, Ascyltos, Agamemnon, Menelaus and Eumolpus are highly educated former slaves. The *Satyricon* trades on a social phenomenon that is important for understanding Paul and his reception by certain kinds of people. Only a small percentage of people in the empire were truly literate, but slaves were disproportionately represented among the educated.<sup>41</sup> A literate slave was

very valuable to a master and owners often educated them just to increase their value. Because Roman education developed under the influence of Greek education and by the first century CE most aristocratic and prosperous families wanted their sons to be educated bilingually, Greek speaking urban slaves were considered ideal tutors and teachers. Slaves and freedmen, then, in some sense, dominated most areas of learning, but faced a glass ceiling that kept them from the ranks of the aristocratic dominant culture of people like Virgil, Pliny and Aelius Aristides. Courtney shows that Petronius is enforcing this glass ceiling. Even though his freedmen characters have a higher education, instead of possessing the virtue and noble character that such education was supposed to bring, they are utterly debased and out of control. They can create poetry, interpret their experience by myths and epics, and produce learned speeches, but Petronius makes these skills opportunities to show that theirs is a pathetic parody of true culture. Courtney also shows that Encolpius and Ascyltos who are said to make their livings by their educations, are not *scholastici*, but only mistaken for such by being in the company of Agamemnon. Unfortunately just what cultural specialty characterized their itinerant lives is lost to the fragmentary nature of the text. Looking past Petronius's aristocratic slur of these characters, they represent the most successful of freedmen who aspired to paideia. We must imagine many more who never had their own school or were able to make livings through paideia, yet possessed it in various forms and degrees.

Good reasons exist, then, for thinking that among freedmen there would be people alienated from the dominant culture who would be attracted to an alternative wisdom and the autonomous pole of the cultural field. One option that illustrates the attraction of the "autonomous cultural pole" and seems to have been followed by growing numbers during

the early empire was the life of Cynic philosophy. Lucian from his perspective of the elite dominant *paideia* spends many pages depicting such people as charlatans who were inevitably runaway slaves, base freedmen and, like Paul, of the despised artisan class. If such people got no respect, there is much evidence to think that they often tried for respectability. Trimalchio, of course, is the cliché. He owns a huge twin Latin and Greek library, but cannot read (48.4). He invites *scholastici* to his house who turn out to also be of slavish character. Both Trimalchio and Ascylos pose as members of the equestrian class by wearing gold rings. When one of Trimalchio's freedmen friends finds offence at Ascylos' pretensions, he says, "You're a Roman knight, are you? Well, my father was a king." (57.4). Courtney thinks that the reason why so many slaves in this era were mockingly named Malchio, "little king," is that slaves and freedmen (and freedwomen?) had become proverbial for their obsession with ancestry.<sup>42</sup> So either posing as of a higher rank or claiming to have been enslaved though from some noble line was common enough that Petronius could make casual jokes about it. Such freedmen/women and slaves would surely have heard Paul's gospel of ancient wisdom, the *pneuma* of God, and Abraham's lineage "in Christ" in a different way than we moderns understand it.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that only elites – in the special sense that I have been using the term – might want to be consumers of Paul's learning and performances. A definitional feature of cultural fields is their semi-autonomy from the economy and outside order of sociality and power. They constitute a game that has its own distinctive order of power, of social and symbolic capital, through the skills, productions and prestige of its practices. Thus being a head of household might allow one to give hospitality and patronage to a specialist, but that status alone did not confer

an aptitude for skilful learning and literate practices. The elite certainly had advantages such as leisure for cultural activity, but anyone who could master the skills and learning could gain the capital that gave one power and place in the game. Admittedly, non-elites who made it into the cultural field usually had the advantage of a relatively prosperous household. In addition to the examples suggested above, one famous example is Epictetus, the slave who became the head of his own philosophical school.

It may be significant that Paul singles out not just Stephanas the lord of a household in order to praise him for his participation in activities that Paul promotes, but also praises his household for such activities. They have done what the rest of the Corinthians have not (16:17). Stephanas's household has organized itself (*etaxan heautous*) for serving those who are holy (16:15). They are fellow workers and laborers (16:16), terms that Paul uses for assistants in his specialist's activities. Stephanas's companions, Fortunatus and Achaichus, may have been relatives, freedmen of Stephanas or trusted slaves. It is easy to imagine a slave whose literacy had been encouraged in order to facilitate management of the household and family business having the ambition to become learned in Paul's wisdom and pneumatic practices. Except for Stephanas's people and some household heads that Paul singles out, then, he can generalize about the other Corinthians so as to imply by contrast his disappointment in the way that they have received and participated in his practices. I see no reason to posit some uniform ideology or reason for their resistance beyond attachment to their own interests and practices, and certainly not the corrupting outside heresy such as a fantastic "gnosticism" or "pneumatic enthusiasm" or "realized eschatology" imagined in academic theological modernism.

Thus I want to insist that instead of a simple model of myth and community, that one imagine the groups as socially and culturally differentiated. All of the Corinthians may have shared a similar doxa to a point, but the elites and the non-elites had some different interests, and some of the elites and others strove to be participant consumers in the field, or overlapping fields, of specialized knowledge that might make them cultured.<sup>43</sup> Unlike in New Guinea, specialized book-learning and literary/rhetorical production was an important means for distinguishing a whole class of elites from the masses, and fostering competition for honor among elites. Paul almost certainly in his letters intellectualized issues for the sake of attracting such people. So, for example, what might have been quite mundane interests in the extended family of ancestors and the dead for the non-elites was addressed by Paul with the culturally ambitious in view as an opportunity to expound on human nature and the science of the cosmos through the Christ-pneuma myth in 1 Cor 15. Paul treats issues among the Corinthians about the pros and cons of competing teachers (1:10-16) with a long discussion about the nature of divine and human wisdom. Many of the passages that the Christian church has cherished as theological are less anachronistically described as Paul appealing to the interests of aspirants to paidea by “showing his stuff” in intellectualizing issues that were “practical” and strategic for most of the Corinthians.<sup>44</sup> The letter treats issues about prostitutes, marriage and sacrificial meat that might have been quite local and mundane for most Corinthians as issues about moral freedom and correct worship of the truly conceived deity.

Some recent scholarship argues that Paul’s teachings about pneuma and about Christ as the link to the lineage of Abraham have not been fully understood in scholarship and



their centrality to his gospel not recognized.<sup>45</sup> These are also the themes, as we have seen, that in different ways most likely attracted the interest of the people Paul tried to make his audience. I will provide some comments about my understanding of these narratives in a list of components of Paul's mythmaking. The central vehicle for much of his mythmaking is Paul's interpretation of Judean scripture. His access to books, ability to read and write proficiently and exegetical practices gave him intellectual skills that few if any of the Corinthians were likely to have had. What follows is based on my work and on an important book by Caroline Johnson Hodge.<sup>46</sup> The components of the myth that Paul formed from scripture and other sources is fairly clear, but the order and relationship of the components is more difficult and the following could be arranged in a number of ways with emphases in different places.

- Ancient prophecy said that a descendant of Abraham, ancestor of the lineage chosen by the true God of the cosmos, a righteous forbearer out of a world of sinful nations, would bring a great blessing to the other peoples someday.
- It was part of the plan of this god that Paul would be appointed to teach the non-Jewish peoples about this promise and its fulfillment.
- This blessing makes non-Judeans into descendants of Abraham by means of their penetration by the divine pneuma that God used to refashion Jesus Christ when he raised him from the dead. Divine pneuma interacts with ordinary human pneuma, but is a vital substance of a vastly superior quality, the highest of all substances in the cosmos.
- Christ is thus the pneuma-bearer whose heroic martyrdom became an occasion for God to reconcile the world's peoples to himself and to perfect the human species.

- Since Christ was “in Abraham” as seed, and gentile believers through baptism gain a material connection to Christ, having a part of his pneuma (or participate in his pneuma), they have a material contiguity with Abraham back through the lineage of Christ just like any descendant.
- At the end of the current phase ordained for the cosmos, divine pneuma will entirely replace flesh (*sarx*) and blood in the constitution of the human person. Until then, divine pneuma only mixes or communicates with human pneuma, but gives special powers to such people who are to understand that their true selves are pneumatic and not of flesh.

Someone might reasonably object that there is nothing about Abraham and gentiles becoming a lineage of Abraham in the Corinthian letters. One must go to other letters for these. This is true, but evidence does exist to show that Paul presupposes the myth and speaks as if the Corinthians know it. First, it is necessary to establish that Paul thinks of the Corinthians to whom he writes as gentiles. As the seminar has encountered time after time, on this issue as with so many others, scholarship has subordinated the evidence from Paul’s letters to the stories in Acts. It is difficult to ignore 1 Cor 12:2, however: “Now concerning pneumatic things, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were gentiles (*ethne*), you were taken and led away by speechless idols.” If Paul were writing according to scholarly consensus that follows Acts and dogmatic definitions of the nature of “the church” or “Christianity,” he would have written, “now brothers and sisters, to the portion of the congregation that converted from a gentile background, I want to say.” One can be sympathetic to the difficulties that the later church faced in treating this passage in combination with 12:2. The language of 5:1

presupposes the same assumption that the Corinthians are people who used to be gentiles - of a non-Jewish ethnicity as seen from the perspective of Jews.

But what are they now? The evidence of the letters, I have argued, overwhelmingly militates against Paul having the idea of Christianity as a distinct religion neither Judean or gentile.<sup>47</sup> Rather, Paul thinks of gentiles who are “in Christ” as a new, but distinct, line grafted into the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Thus one reads in 1 Cor 10:1, as Paul interprets the Exodus legends, “I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all went through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same pneumatic food and all drank the same pneumatic drink.” There are many interpretive challenges here, including the assumption that the Israelites were already in some way given the divine pneuma.<sup>48</sup> The relevant point for the present argument is that Paul speaks of the Corinthians as former gentiles who are now descendants of the Israelite patriarchs, but not Jews.

Caroline Johnson Hodge has shown that Paul employs a way of thinking well known to the Greco-Roman world; ethnic mythmaking that employs an aggregative strategy.<sup>49</sup> No one thought that contemporary Romans and Greeks constituted the same social, political or religious entities, but a myth made them related by an ancient ancestor.<sup>50</sup> They were distinct, but related in ways thought to give them important privileges and commonalities, including supposedly the same gods and sacrificial practices. Paul is engaged in a complex and highly negotiable practice of making distinctions by ethnic-religious mythmaking. In his rhetoric, the Corinthians are not gentiles, but were gentiles who are importantly different from gentiles and who are now related to Jews, but are importantly different from them. As Smith writes in another essay, especially reflecting

upon the kinship system of the Hua people, “Meaning is made possible by difference. Yet thought seeks to bring together what thought necessarily takes apart by means of a dynamic process of disassemblage and reassemblage, which results in an object no longer natural but rather social, no longer factual but rather intellectual. Relations are discovered and reconstituted through projects of differentiation.”<sup>51</sup> The appropriation of Paul’s discourse under the category of theology makes Paul’s writing utterly new, *sui generis* and therefore unique. But the category of mythmaking renders it an ordinary human activity familiar to discourses that refer to gods, ancestors and other non-obvious beings from cultures all over the world and across history. Moreover, it is a form of speaking-writing-thinking that implicates itself in familiar human ways of making social distinctions implicated in social formation and power.

One other point: In both 10:1 and 12:1, Paul employs the expression “brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.” In the latter, this is followed by, “*You know* that when you were gentiles.” “I do not want you to be ignorant,” is the voice of the specialist in esoteric knowledge giving an authoritative interpretation of a discourse or story that the readers or in reality some of the readers – the class of those distinguished by consuming such knowledge – know, but “need” interpreted. At least in Paul’s rhetoric, the Corinthians know that they are now descendants of Abraham through pneuma, by participating in Christ. As I will show, participation in Christ is presupposed by Paul’s discussion of the Lord’s Supper and talk of the social body and the body of Christ.

A further clue to Corinthian interests might be found in their practice of baptism for the dead (1 Cor 15:29). Paul brought baptism to them, but they made their own uses of it, as Smith argues.<sup>52</sup> Paul taught them that they could share in the pneuma of the pneuma-

bringer, Christ, and that the divine pneuma would connect them to the renowned ancient ancestor, Abraham. They saw another ritual means for improving the lot of their more immediate ancestors. Baptism for the dead would incorporate those dead into the distinguished lineage and ancestry. Without baptism for the dead, their own baptisms might cut them off from their extended families of the significant dead. This scenario makes sense, if the Corinthians or some of them were people concerned about their own ambiguous and ignoble ancestry, a point to which Paul alludes politely in 1: 26 (“not many of you are of good ancestry”). Smith points out that the resettlement of Corinth in 44 BCE involved importing large numbers of freed slaves from Greece, Syria, Judea and Egypt.<sup>53</sup> Such people would not only have had the stain of slave origins, but also have been cut off from ancestral burial grounds.<sup>54</sup>

Imagining Paul and the Corinthians with the aid of Smith’s comparison and also the insistence on the differentiation of interests, recognition and attraction leads to imagining plausible religiously contextualized interactions. It allows reading the letters from non-Pauline perspectives. Yet that sort of reading provides a richer and more historically plausible sense of what Paul was about and up against because it casts both Paul and the Corinthians in terms of interests, practices and discourses from their time instead of in terms of the later and contemporary church’s interests. The Corinthians reacted in different ways to Paul’s mythmaking and ritual practice, partly with their own mythmaking and ritual experimentation. Much more could be said about such things as “speaking in tongues,” but by way of an example I will focus on the fact that Paul spends much of 1 Corinthians 8-11 worrying about Corinthian eating practices, his own meal practices and sacrificial meals. Can we also tease out likely Corinthian responses to

Paul's discourse and practices regarding meals and especially what he calls "the Lord's Supper"? In what follows, I will attempt an approach toward that end first by analyzing the senses of the practice and then by telling a just so story about the strategically differentiated reactions (e. g., interested recognitions, appropriations, resistances, accommodations) of the Corinthians.

Much scholarly interpretation of the Corinthian letters naturalizes the specialized intellectual interests and intellectual practices concerned with contesting truths, traditions and practices of the Corinthians rather than demonstrating them and makes theological ideas the significant essence of the activity imagined of Paul's addressees. At the same time, interpreters misrecognize and vastly under-appreciate the power of Paul as a specialist in intellectual practices. An antidote to these approaches begins with imagining the religious interests of the Corinthians as intelligible in a vast web of practices that made up a whole way of life and to do the same for Paul. The second aspect of the approach is to imagine the logic of the practices that were important to these people and to think of their beliefs, ideas and texts as embedded within these ongoing activities. Talking of practice provides a way of thinking about the social that avoids the individual/social and thought/action dualisms that have caused so much mischief in our intellectual history.<sup>55</sup>

Most of human life unfolds in kinds of activities based on practical skills that the individual did not invent. As such, practices are the primary unit that a culture or society reproduces over time.<sup>56</sup> On this view, a society or culture is not greater than the sum of its parts, but a large number of practical skills assembled and linked in characteristic ways that actors pass down from generation to generation. Thus I want to focus upon

practices rather than beliefs, texts, structures, symbols or particular actions and events. I say focus because beliefs, texts, actions and events will not disappear from the account. They are components of practices.

Eating a meal is a practice. Mythmaking and numerous other kinds of activities in which agents produce discourses are practices. In taking this perspective on a culture, it becomes clear that the wills of individuals do not control practices, nor are the supposed instruments of minds such as symbols, beliefs, intentions, texts, myths and theories the meaning or basis of practices. What is the meaning of dinner or of lunch? You would not persuade me if you said that *the* meaning of dinner for participants, the essence to which it reduces, was a determinate set of beliefs, or a foundational myth or meeting needs for nutrition or fellowship, although all of these might be involved. Practices are so complex that participants are never aware of all the implications, consequences, possible meanings or effects of their activity in a practice. To take the practice perspective is to become aware of the high degree of indeterminacy in both the participant's own interpretations of their activities, and in the interpretations of participants' activities and interpretations by scholars. But such actors have great intuitive knowledge. They know how to participate, to play the game. Such practical skill can be the object of analysis and historical imagination.

I will begin the task of locating the Lord's Supper as represented by Paul within the range and relation of practices in the cultures in question. To what other discourses were meals and mythmaking practices near, distant, comparable to and differentiated from at that time? How was mythmaking deployed in relation to and as a part of other practices? This move helps the historian to avoid one of the illusions created by focusing upon the

beliefs, symbols, and texts of particular groups or upon narratives of events. The illusion natural to focusing upon these is the essential or non-reciprocal uniqueness of the community in question. If the meaning of the Lord's Supper is the words of institution that Paul and the gospels provide, then it might easily seem incomparable. Those words should be situated first of all in writing practices not in eating practices. But if I do imagine Paul's writing as representing an eating practice, then I immediately notice that it shares central and numerous similarities with practices common to cultures throughout the Mediterranean. Any person from that world would immediately recognize it as a type of eating practice and already possess many of the skills necessary to participate, even if they found a particular intellectual/cultural specialists interpretation of it implausible, uninteresting or confusing.

Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper then can be seen as one interpretation of a broader practice. But the practice belonged to the culture and was not under his control as various people participated in that activity employing practical skills that may have involved a huge variety of social abilities, bodily skills, beliefs, symbols and strategic interests. The key to the question of why the Corinthians gave some recognition to who Paul was, and to what he did, and had some interests in him, is not that his message of a crucified Christ and the power of Christ's pneuma met a universal intrinsic need or was inherently intelligible or attractive.<sup>57</sup> Rather the Corinthians possessed fine-grained practical understandings, skill intelligibility, if you will, of most of the practices that Paul advocated, albeit differentiated in various ways, e. g., by age, gender, free/slave, elite/non-elite. They therefore already had practical dispositions toward the genre's of



Paul's doings and sayings, but not necessarily toward his particular interpretations of these practices.

The Lord's Dinner is a meal, one form of people eating together in the Greek East of the early Roman Empire. A meal has much of its potential for meaning to participants and observers simply because it is recognizable within the logical possibilities of eating socially in that culture. The meal practices of that culture existed many centuries before Paul was born and continued long after he was dead. However he might have used, interpreted and modified the meal practices, they were not his or "the Church's" invention; nor did his or "the Church's" will control such cultural formations with their "enormous amount of inertia."<sup>58</sup> The question, then, is what sort of eating practices would ancient participants and observers have been likely to compare and contrast with the Lord's dinner in order to make sense of it, if they were to reflect upon their implicit and instinctive knowledge of it as a practice? Three types of meals seem absolutely basic for locating the possible "meanings" of the Lord's dinner: the common meal at home; meals involving animal sacrifice; memorial meals for the dead.<sup>59</sup> In Paul's time, one can find Greek, Jewish and Roman versions of all three, although the Greek types were clearly dominant in the world of the Pauline groups.<sup>60</sup> A common idiom of meal practices and symbols transcended the particularity of ethnic practices and provided the possibility for articulating those distinctions.<sup>61</sup> Commonality in practice, in other words, was the condition for the endless elaboration of difference in practical meaning through ritualization or ad hoc strategic activity by individuals and groups.

The ordinary everyday meal and the meal involving the sacrifice of an animal formed the two most important poles for the meaning of meals in virtually all cultures of

the ancient Mediterranean. This is not a distinction between secular and religious meals. At center stood the differentiation of gender: women and slaves managed by women cooked bread or grain porridge at home for everyday meals; men sacrificed animals at home and at other sites for special meals, feasts.<sup>62</sup> The eating of meat constituted the highest form of eating in relation to the gods and involved some form of sharing of the meat with the gods. Food offerings stood in a hierarchy with meat at the top and grain and vegetable products normally below. According to the evidence of 1 Corinthians, the Lord's Dinner was constituted so as to distinguish itself from both an ordinary meal and a sacrificial meal, but was markedly closer to the ordinary meal than to the sacrificial meal in featuring bread instead of meat.<sup>63</sup>

If the Lord's Dinner seems to have some ambiguous status between sacrificial meals and everyday meals, then perhaps one can clarify the way it worked as a practice by comparing it to a practice for which we have much evidence, Greek alimentary animal sacrifice. I will use a number of examples from classical Attika because they are so rich and well documented, but every principle to which I point can also be documented in Paul's own time in the Greek East of the Empire. My main points here will be analogical and not genetic. Some of the most interesting sources come from the court speeches of the Attik orators.<sup>64</sup> That fact is interesting in itself. Although the Athenians kept deme and other records, they (surprisingly to us moderns) do not appeal to these when arguing cases concerning identity. These cases about identity - for example, citizen status, lineage, status as heir - make up the bulk of the cases in the orators. Instead of appealing to a birth or marriage record, the orators call witnesses who were present at various events, e. g., festivals, funerals, weddings, rituals of entry

into *oikoi*, *gene*, *thiasoi*, *orgeones*, phratries and demes.<sup>65</sup> All of these events involved *thusia*, animal sacrifice as a meal.

An example from Isaeus 8 (*Kiron*) is interesting because it explicitly draws attention to the physical contact with the meat that was crucial to the way that sacrificial rites indexed groups of people.

We also have other proofs that we are sons from the daughter of Kiron. For as is natural since we were male children of his own daughter, he never performed any sacrifice (*thusia*) without us, but whether the sacrifices were great or small, we were always present and sacrificed with him (*sunethuomen*). . . . and we went to all the festivals with him. But when he sacrificed to Zeus Ktesios he was especially serious about the sacrificial rite (*thusia*), and he did not admit any slaves or free men who were not relatives (or genuine Athenians, i. e., *othneious*) but he performed all of the sacrificial rites himself. We shared in this sacrifice and we together with him handled the sacred meat and we put offerings on the altar with him and performed the other parts of the sacrifice with him. (8.16)

Here, participation in the sacrifice constitutes membership in a certain social formation, the household (*oikos*) or family-lineage (*genos*) of Kiron.<sup>66</sup> Zeus Ktesios is god of the household property. The speaker claims that the *kurios*, his grandfather, was very pious about this sacrifice to one of the gods of his *oikos* and therefore allowed only his close blood relations to participate.<sup>67</sup> He emphasizes the close participation in the rite: e. g., touching meat with his hands; placing the meat on the altar.

The truth in such examples from the orators is a truth about the continuity of blood and of flesh from parent to child. This truth is determined through a particular medium, the body of a domestic animal. Like family members and citizens, such animals were members of the community and thus duly decked out in garlands as they "willingly" gave their bodies as food for gods and men. These were animals bred by the Greeks to

produce the best individuals from the best lineages. Greeks in theory only sacrificed the most perfect products of their breeding practices and put these animals through rigorous testings and scrutinies.<sup>68</sup> The ritualized use of the flesh and blood of animals with whom humans had a kind of kinship, precisely because they both were of flesh and blood, offered excellent ways of thinking about social relations deemed to be in some essential way based upon flesh and blood kinship.

Sacrificial meals involved very complex types of truth practices.<sup>69</sup> The animal had to behave well and give the proper signs of assent before the altar or hearth. Plutarch tells of a prophetess who died when such signs from the gods were ignored (*De def or.* 438 A-B cf. signs in 437 A-C). Next, the animal was killed, not because the meaning of sacrifice had anything to do with death or ritual violence, but because it is very difficult to eat a live animal. Then came the precise division of the animal into portions that would create relations of differentiation and hierarchy among those eating dinner. The higher ranking citizen males of whatever group the dinner represented, e. g., household, *genos*, phratry, tribe, deme, hero association, would gather around the altar and roast the sacred *splanchna* - heart, liver, lungs, kidney. Before they ate, they placed the god's portion on the altar and the feasting on the sacred *splanchna* coincided with the god's portion ascending in smoke. Any person being tested must be present at the altar, taste and touch the holy meat. If the individual was not who he claimed to be, the god would give signs and the men's barbecue would be aborted. To proceed would not truly be to have the god's dinner.

The men inspected the *splanchna* for signs. The liver got special attention. Both the animals that Greeks deemed proper to sacrifice and humans shared the same *splanchna*, with each organ given the same name. It makes sense that the *splanchna* was the locus of messages and effects from the gods when one observes that 5th and 4th century Athenians spoke of human *splanchna* as organs of consciousness and receptivity to the gods.<sup>70</sup> Feeling, mood, desire, emotion and thought were located not in a non-

physical mind but in the organs that made up the *splanchna*. This was a discourse of intelligent flesh and blood, not body and mind. Attributing thought or emotion to the heart, liver, gall and so on was not metaphorical. Greeks in this period and later believed that one's subjectivity arose from the movements and affections of these bodily parts.<sup>71</sup> One feels lust, anger and fear in the liver. "The liver is an emotional image receptor."<sup>72</sup> Thus the *splanchna*, both human and animal, is the receptor of communications from the gods.

One first poured blood on the altar, then removed and divided (*diaireo*) the *splanchna*. The word for divide can also mean distribute (e. g., as in sacrificial portions), distinguish, decide (e. g., vote), define and interpret. All of these activities can take place in conjunction with the division, interpretation, and distribution of the *splanchna*. Animals and their *splanchna* are indeed "good to think" with.<sup>73</sup> Plato compares the logical division of dialectic to division in *thusia*: "let us divide by parts as we divide a sacrificial animal" (*Pol.*, 287C). Everyone watched closely as the god's portion of tail, fat and bones burned on the altar. The movements of the tail and the color and motions of the flame were full of signs of the god's disposition toward the particular social group and the testing.<sup>74</sup>

Those celebrating could also establish the truth by touching the *splanchna* while taking an oath. The orators frequently mention such oaths and in various contexts every Athenian took them as a part of feasts of *dokimasia*, of testing. In Paul's time, such sacrificial testing was still important. The future citizens or elites of the Greek cities, for example, sacrificed with testings (*dokimasiai*) as they feasted and took oaths upon graduation from the ephebic training that made them adult citizens.

The feast entered a second stage as the wider group of men and sometimes women and children who had watched the episode around the altar or hearth were given portions of boiled meat from the thighs. All then merrily feasted on meat and accompanying dishes. Numerous versions – simpler or more complex - of this procedure

for meals with meat took place in settings such as temples, clubs, at private parties and banquets.

Now what does all of this have to do with understanding the Lord's Dinner? We can be certain that for most of the gentiles who constituted Paul's communities that any special meal - e. g., at a birthday, a friend's dinner party, a holiday at home, a wedding, a public feast - consisted of a version of the practices that I have described. Paul discusses Corinthian participation in sacrificial meals in chapters 8-10. Greeks believed that eating unsacrificed meat was an abomination that would surely be punished by the gods. Paul presents himself as attempting to train these Greeks or hellenized Corinthians in something called the Lord's Dinner that he relates to his Christ myth and that is also a special meal. Neither the Corinthians nor Paul could have made sense of it without at least implicit comparison with sacrificial meals. Indeed chapters 8-11 are replete with comparisons to *thusia*. Furthermore, even though I cannot tell you what beliefs and interpretations of the Christ myth that these people held when they feasted at the Lord's Dinner, I can describe many of the skills they possessed that allowed them to participate. They already possessed many of these skills merely by inhabiting a culture that centered on *thusia*. I will focus on four sets of these skills: testing and truth making skills; group formation and social differentiation skills; skills in interpreting signs and symbols; and skills at relating fragments of mythic narratives to the preceding activities.

Paul's interpretation of the Lord's Dinner shares a basic assumption with sacrificial practice: In both meals, participants make themselves liable to divine judgment and signs reveal truths about one's identity. In 1 Cor 11:19, there must be factions so that those who are tested might be revealed (*oi dokimoi phaneroi genontai*). An inscription from a cult to Zeus and other gods from late second or early first century B. C. E. Philadelphia in the house of a certain Dionysius makes an interesting case for comparison.<sup>75</sup> The inscription encourages participants of this extended household cult "who have confidence in themselves" at the monthly and yearly sacrifices to touch the

stele near the altar upon which the cult regulations have been written so that "those who obey the ordinances and those who do not may be revealed" (*phaneroi ginetai*). As in Paul's account, it will be dangerous for those who have not passed the test of self-examination to participate.<sup>76</sup>

Paul seems to say (11:27) that the one who eats the bread or drinks the wine in the wrong way has taken sides with those who betrayed Jesus and are thus guilty of destroying his body and blood. He is attempting to shape eating practices and testing practices by an interpretation of a kind of martyr myth that ties a specific manner of ritual practice to social loyalty and unity. The individual participant must test him or herself (*dokimazein*) and then eat only if the person's disposition toward the body and blood of Christ are correct (11:29). The person who does not distinguish the body, that is perform an action with a certain social and ideological disposition, will bring down the judgment of the god who is present in that ritualized eating environment. Paul explains that many have been weak and sick and some have even died because they ate the bread and drank the cup without this disposition (v. 30). If the individual makes herself/himself an object of self examination and is able to discover the truth about her/his loyalty and disposition for ritual action, then the person can decide that it is safe to participate or decline and save herself/himself from God's testing that might result in illness and a revelation to the community of the person's false disposition (vv. 28-29, 30-32).

In *Against Neaera*, Demosthenes says that when Phrastor attempted to admit his son by a woman not of Athenian citizen blood, his phratry, and his *genos* refused and voted against admission. Phrastor then challenged the rejection, but when he was required to swear an oath at the altar on a perfect sacrificial animal, he backed down and refused. The speaker then calls witnesses from the *genos* who saw Phrastor back down from the altar. Phrastor also had to decide about the truth of his disposition toward a body that was to become the body that constituted the social body in the act of eating: for Phrastor it was the body of a sheep to be rendered as food; for Paul's implied actor, bread

that symbolizes the body involved in a martyrdom on their behalf. Unlike Paul's, Phrastor's truth cannot be located in his own inner disposition by an act of self-examination.<sup>77</sup> Phrastor's truth was not about his loyalties and the correctness of his beliefs.

Strange as it may sound to the modern ear, unlike the flesh and blood body of the sheep and of Phrastor and his purported offspring, the body that is in question in the Pauline text is not a flesh and blood body. Nor is it a "merely metaphorical body." According to Paul's mythmaking, the body in which the Corinthians share and with which they have the most literal contact is the pneumatic body of Christ that he gained when the pneuma from God replaced his soulish (*psychikos*) flesh body at his resurrection. As Paul explains by good physics of his day (15:35-41), in the cosmic hierarchy of being, various earthly creatures have bodies of different qualities of flesh, and higher in the cosmos bodies are made of qualitatively better materials. Christ, the first fruit, died with a soulish flesh body made of dust and was raised with a pneumatic body (15:44-47). Chapter 6 develops the argument that for one who has been baptized into Christ, to be physically joined with a prostitute means joining the prostitute to Christ: "do you no know that your bodies are members of Christ. . . . the one who joins with a prostitute is one body with her . . . "the two shall become one flesh."(Gen. 2:24) ... your bodies are temples of the holy pneuma that is in you." (6:15-19) Those who are in Christ feel what he suffered and can thus "participate in the body and blood of Christ" (10:16) because they have a part of him, his divine pneuma, in them. Thus in the cosmic physics/myth by which Paul desires to gain legitimacy from Corinthians, those "in Christ" are physically connected both to Christ and to all other baptized people. There is one body and for one individual to divide from it in any way is an attack on Christ and the entire body. This is a pneumatic body composed of a stuff belonging to a higher order of existence. It cannot be touched and seen in the way that flesh and blood can, but this conception is radically different from the modern so-called Cartesian dualism of



material/spiritual for which there is a material world of cause and effect of uniform matter and principles, and a totally discontinuous and other spiritual realm.

The Greek and Christ myths that ancient interpreters used to manipulate and rationalize the skills of actors in ritual practice are different stories, but the Corinthian actors and the citizens of Athens exercised some of the same skills, skills that connected eating to truth practices and community formation.<sup>78</sup> Note that Paul uses exactly the same terms for testing and self examination that Greeks used for the testings involved in sacrificial practices: to become manifest (*phaneroi genontai*), tested (*dokimoi*), to test (*dokimazein*), to distinguish (*diakrinein*), and to judge (*krinein*).<sup>79</sup> Athenian failure to use deme records did not stem from poor record keeping, but from considering identity to be ritually constituted and confirmed. In the Lord's Dinner and in Greek sacrifice, who is in and outside of the community is not simply predetermined in some juridical or definitional way, but is negotiated in the very exercise of the skills of mythmaking, testing and eating. Phrastor's son did not become a member of his phratry because Phrastor feared that the god would know the truth. Therefore he would not swear on the animal and allow it to be cooked and distributed so as to form a feasting community. Other court cases show that if the community had eaten with him, then that fact would be compelling evidence about his son's identity and his truthfulness. Those who claimed to be Kiron's kin said (in my words) "we sacrificed with him to his household god, touched and ate the meat. No one else in the household did that. We are therefore the ones who are truly of his flesh and blood."

Paul assumes that the Corinthians possess similar skills, but does not like the way that they have used them. What more precisely is Paul's complaint? Some of the Corinthians used their skills to form eating groups that excluded others (11:18-22). Was the criterion social rank, family connection, ethnic origins? I do not know, but most of the possibilities suggest that the rules of the game followed by the Corinthians might have been for meat meals instead of bread meals, the ordinary meals cooked by women

that were much less intently focused on social differentiation. Meat meals organized groups on the basis of characteristics deemed by the ancients to have been based on blood, on ancestry. To add to the confusion, Paul taught a cult myth for baptism in which having fellowship with this new god connected one to a great ancient ancestor and lineage. Paul's account of what the Corinthians were doing attempts to make the ritual focus of the meal the bread and wine, but supposes a more elaborate meal. Perhaps some of the Corinthians, in Paul's view, had allowed the other cuisine, possibly even some meat to become the focus. Paul contrasts eating with the goal of satiating appetite in everyday meals to the correct manner of the Lord's Dinner. (11:21-22, 33-34). He associates eating meat with passion, desire, idolatry and sexual immorality in his warnings from the story of Israel in the wilderness (10:1-22).<sup>80</sup>

It seems to me dead wrong to take his account of the Dinner's institution as a script or liturgy for the ritual. If we did not know that the later church had incorporated these words into its liturgy, we would have no clue to even suggest that the words were repeated in worship. Furthermore, we also have no reason to think that Paul recounted the story in the same way with exactly the same words, even if the story was traditional and certain elements had become essential. The account is also an etiological myth, but that observation may lead us to miss the important point which is the way it functions in Paul's rhetoric.<sup>81</sup> I suggest that the account is the specification of a genre of eating.<sup>82</sup> Paul is saying that they have confused a genre of eating that focuses on the desire for food and drink and that produces a certain pattern of social differentiation with the genre of the Lord's Dinner.

But as I have tried to show, the signals and expectations suggested by the Lord's Dinner might be read as confusing and contradictory in the context of the codes of eating in Greco-Roman culture. Paul's account of the institution unquestionably shares in the genre of mortuary foundations right down to the words "do this as a memorial."<sup>83</sup> This is so even if it is odd for the dead to also be alive and to promise a return as judge of the

world. Paul's account yields a very peculiar yet familiar memorial feast for the dead. On the level of practices, whereas one expects a memorial feast for the dead to be a sacrificial feast, the Lord's Dinner features bread. Where one expects filet mignon, there is white bread. In this light, one can understand Paul's need to insist that the Dinner is not an ordinary meal like one eats at home.<sup>84</sup>

I suggest that Paul's martyr myth by which he attempts genre specifications about ritualized eating practices plays on a disjunction between the flesh and blood body and the self. The Greeks and Paul were concerned about group social formation and the identity of those who ate together. For Greeks, that truth was about the identity of one's flesh and blood.<sup>85</sup> The god provided signs about this truth during the skillful cooking, sharing and eating of meat in honor of the god. The medium for communicating this truth about flesh and blood was the flesh and blood of an animal from the best lineages that Greek animal husbandry could provide. For the kind of Greeks that we meet in the Attik orators, it would be nonsensical or inconceivable to say, "you can kill my body but you cannot touch me."<sup>86</sup> Body and identity are one.

Paul's Christ myth and ritual, on the other hand, work around a disjunction between the truest self and the body. Instead of the community being constituted and tested by eating meat, it exists by eating bread that is a symbol of an absent body that points both to the significance of giving up that body and to the loyalty of the social body toward that symbol. In the martyr myth, the martyr's obedience, will and benevolent intention triumphs over the body. The body symbolizes both what is expendable and the obedient resolve that triumphed. Because of this triumph of will and obedience to God, Christ lives on a new level of existence transcending the old existence of the body, a pneumatic existence.

The social group does not test for the truth about the identities of its members by observing the signs made by flesh and blood, but by making the true self an object of self-examination. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (15:50). In

testing oneself to see that one can discern the body, the true self consists in being beyond oneself just as the martyr surpassed himself in giving up his body.<sup>87</sup> Discerning the body means both entertaining Paul's pneuma-Christ myth and also acting so as to acknowledge the priority of the social body over the desires of one's body. "Because there is one bread, we the many are one body. Consider Israel according to the flesh; are not those who eat of the sacrifices partners in the altar? (10:17-18)"

The self surpassed is the kind of self seen in traditional Greek sacrificial practice that maintains no disjunction with the self as body in the act of constituting the social body. No wonder that Paul contrasts the Lord's Dinner to meals with meat.<sup>88</sup> Notice for example the implicit contrast with merely bodily *thusia* in Romans 12:1-3: "present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice (*thusia*) acceptable to God which is your rational cultic practice. Do not be conformed to this age but have your form changed by the renewal of your mind so that you might test (*dokimazein*) what is the will of God." Here true *thusia* is the surpassing and mastery of the body by "rational" practice and a mind that has gained the skills to test for the truth. Verses 3-8 employ the metaphor of the body and its parts to explain that this means consciously defining oneself as a part of a differentiated social body.

What is the yield of this analysis? Above all, I think this analysis can suggest a holistic interpretation of two historical moments. The goal of this type of study is the sense of an interpretation thick enough and with enough of our modern analytic contexts (e. g., religious, social, political, economic, semantic) that we can warrant some degree of success in bridging the gap between a distant culture and our own requirements for understanding. Comparison provides the leverage to dislodge the text from the categories and questions internal to the tradition that appropriated it and to display it in a new way.

The way of life in the ancient Greek polis worked through practices, including ritual and discursive practices, concerning place and the products born from that place.<sup>89</sup> Sacrificial practice was saturated with physical contiguity: altars on the land; meat of

animal lineages from the soil; smoke rising from the altar sending the bodies of animals from the land to the god who owns and occupies the land; the differentiated social body united around and touching the altar while ingesting flesh; meat passed from hand to hand; the god testifying to the truths about the continuity of flesh from parent to child.

If in this ideological construction, meat is the natural product of men according to the patrilineal principle of the seed of the founding ancestor passed on as flesh, then bread is the fabrication of food by art, like spinning wool, the artifice of women and slaves. In Greek sacrifice, the body is present to be touched and eaten. But where is the body in the Lord's Dinner? It is present in its absence. The bread of human art, is the reminder of a body that occupies no place. Christ who by the art of his obedience and will triumphed through God's power, lives on a new plane of pneumatic existence where a body that one can touch seems superfluous. Where is the dead and torn merely human body of the martyr? There seems to be a certain fit between a ritual of a body surpassed by the will and the kind of people associated with Pauline Christianity. Many, like Paul himself, were artisans without ties to the land who lived lives characterized by physical mobility. They also represent a new class of people in a polyethnic world with a predilection toward transcending their ascribed local and ethnic places.

Paul is above all an expert in a new knowledge and the practices that go with this knowledge. Paul's power is that of an intellectual. He is a purveyor of knowledges and truths in a way that the typical Greek citizen, even the priest of a particular cult, was not. The truths of Pauline Christianity are not common everyday truths about the disposition of one's social group(s) and the signs seen in the cooking and eating of an animal, but are truths about a person's interior, soul and mind, and the relation of these to the destiny of the cosmos. So instead of the social group watching the body of an animal, each individual looks inside and strives to obtain a newly socialized mind by reflecting upon a symbol for an absent body.

But how does this interpretation play out in terms of the historical particularities of the differentiated interactions between Paul and the Corinthians? I am half facetiously calling what follows a just so story to indicate its status as an explanatory proposal. Daniel Dennett has stolen the phrase from jaundiced critics of the stories that adaptationist Neo-Darwinian biologists tell as hypotheses about evolutionary episodes.<sup>90</sup> By the expression, I do not mean that the account, or such accounts, are just made up, are “merely” interpretations, or that they cannot in principle be justified by evidence and theory, or imply post-modern confusions such as there is no truth or falsehood, we are trapped in a prison house of language or that meaning is too slippery to pin down. Rather, instead of claiming a justified explanation of the historical situation among Paul and the Corinthians, it is an account to be tested by the refinement and debate over theorization and assessments of the evidence that ought to go on and on. This ought to be a process in which the activity of theorization transparently makes data into evidence. In other words, scholars should be as reflexive and as conscious as possible, and should reason not only by homology but also by analogy. In this case, the limitations and kinds of evidence should be clear. New discoveries of the most particular evidence regarding events and persons is unlikely (e. g., Gaius’s letter to his wife), if not impossible. Interpretation of the evidence from Paul’s letters and genetically related literature (e. g., Acts, Mark?) will, with critical appraisal of proposed explanatory interpretations and new interpretations, make old supposed evidence disappear and new evidence appear from the same data. Broader data about life in Corinth and the culture will become available, but it will be challenging to make into evidence; and so on. The limits to this format mean that I can only provide a barebones sketch of the story.

Paul’s message in 1 Corinthians (but not in 2 Corinthians where he battles with other specialist producers) is unequivocal: The Corinthians have by baptism into Christ and common participation in the pneuma of Christ become one body; they remain one body and total unity is required.<sup>91</sup> His caveat in the Supper text, however, suggests that

there may be unidentified individuals or groups who are not truly of the one body: “When you come together as the assembly I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it because there must be sects (*haireisies*) among you so that those who have been tested and approved can be revealed” (11:17-18). I find four hypotheses or parts to the story.

First, Paul drew elites to participation in the field, and that involvement in the field practices had the effect of causing or exacerbating a social distance from the, at least ideal, unity of the locative religion and household organization of the Corinthians, in spite of the baptism of whole households at the behest of their heads and other elites. As discussed above, some of these people get named such as Gaius, Crispus and the household of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus. These are participants in Paul’s missionary, teaching and organizing activities on whom he tries to bestow special legitimacy that would give them a kind of authority among the rest of the Corinthians.

My second hypothesis, is that Paul naturally places the responsibility for unifying the rest of the Corinthians and enforcing their “proper” participation in the practices Paul advocates on the elite fellow specialists. Paul addresses the Lord’s Dinner text most directly to the elites: “Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink; or do you despise those who have nothing.” (11:22) This cannot be addressed to everyone because in the previous verse he has distinguished people who have meal practices or meal participation who don’t get enough to eat and drink from those who feast. The latter have to include or be the elites. Moreover, only the elites truly have houses in the sense that they can control who eats and how people eat. I suggest that the rest of the text is primarily for them with the “institution” passage a model for their organization, leadership and ideological focus. In Chapter 12 where Paul outlines a hierarchy of “practical” skills and specializations, the elite specialists are the leading and more important body parts in the metaphor, like the head, and they are urged not to think that the less important, less honorable, parts are dispensable. The list that follows places at

the top specialists who are cultural producers involving intellectual practices with recognized identities that he ranks – missionaries, prophets, teachers – and follows with less well defined and perhaps single skills.

Third, the less or non-elite Corinthians resisted full participation in Paul's practices and reacted by experimenting with their own mythmaking and ritual activities based on their strategic locative interests. Thus 11:21 contrasts genres of meals that the Corinthians are having to the one true united Lord's Dinner. Scholarship agrees that all of chapters 11-14 are about "church worship" or less anachronistically ritual activities of the Corinthians. The body metaphor in 12:14-27 suggest that in Paul's view some of the Corinthians are saying or indicating with their actions, "I don't belong to the body." If I had time, I would develop the thesis that trouble that Paul sees with women participating in various ritual activities and the tongue speakers who need specialist interpreters to make their noises or words rational and intelligible are such non-elite resisters and experimenters. As I have argued, Paul's meal is gendered toward women's practices by lacking meat and featuring grain. The Dinner seems very domestic both as a grain meal at home and memorial meal for the dead, recalling the important participation of women in funerals and memorial practices. This might have been read as a signal by women that elicited their own creativity and participation. Paul clearly thought that it went too far. More broadly, since Paul's meal sent mixed messages pointing to various common locative practices, it likely encouraged creative interpretations of just such practices. Fourth, in addition to placing weight on the elites to weld the non-elites into one body, Paul addresses what he sees as the problem by adding the testing practices that typically part of sacrificial practices to his meatless meal of the Supper. But as I have noted this not only sent mixed messages, but also meant a translation into a new mode of religion that brought the texts and interpretations of specialists to bear on an inner-judging self enunciated by specialist. This religion shaped by the field would become a religion in which a certain kind of self and self-policing would play a central role.



I will summarize some central points of my argument and underline tensions in my proposals that need to be addressed. Paul's esoteric mythmaking and ritualization depend upon his claims to be a chosen spokesperson for the deity. But we can only imagine social legitimacy attaching to these claims by virtue of a field or game widely attested in ancient sources in which Paul played a position both recognizable and attractive to some Corinthians. Apart from broad terms of debate within the field such as the nature of the cosmos and its elements, critique of traditional religion and the nature of the gods, ancient epic and ancestry, the therapy of the passions and the means to self-mastery, the specifics of Paul's discourse was probably unfamiliar and therefore both exotic and esoteric. The core of Paul's legitimacy and thus his power among some of the Corinthians, derived rather from his skillful display of abilities native to the game/field such as his education in ancient books, his interpretive skills, his reading, writing and speaking abilities, and his pneumatic demonstrations, whatever those were. I have specifically argued that Paul's message and appeal focused on Christ as the bearer and dispenser of the most perfect stuff in the cosmos, the pneuma of God. These ideas were tied to a prophetic genealogical myth regarding Abraham's lineage and the non-Jewish peoples. Pauline ritual of baptism gave initiates a share of the pneuma that God had given to Christ, by connecting with his pneuma. Being "in Christ" or having Christ in you gave the baptized a physical connection back to Abraham. I also discussed the significance of the Lord's Dinner as a ritual practice in the context of everyday meals at home, sacrificial meals, and memorial meals for the dead. I concluded that Paul's version of the practice would have sent mixed messages connected with issues of food and gender. His use of the Christ myth in advocating and interpretation of the meal for the Corinthians points to a

Jonathan Smith's comparison shows how the local interests of the religion of place were likely to have provided the Corinthians with as basis for a limited and

differentiated hearing of Paul. His practices became the occasion for creative mythmaking and ritual experimentation among his hearers shaped both by the encounter itself and the interests and doxa of the Corinthians themselves. But for there to have been a sustained encounter between the Paul and the Corinthians at all requires the existence of a group among the Corinthians who were already habituated, not so as to want to be saved or become Christians, but so as to want to become consumers of Paul's foreign *paideia*, a known commodity supported by a dynamic social arena. The five to six year period for which we have evidence of continued relationship between Paul and at least some of those that I have been calling "the Corinthians" needs this sort of explanation.

In the important contributions of Smith and Burton Mack, Paul just misunderstood the Corinthians and their locative religious interests due to his utopian understanding. Smith in scholarship over many years has developed the idea of locative religion over against utopian religion. He uses the latter with reference to its sense of a-topic, without place. The categories appear especially as part of discussions about historical persistence and change and have proven an enormous advance over the Christianizing idea that all religion is about salvation or about either nature or salvation. Smith describes the two as "worldviews."<sup>92</sup> The locative "is concerned primarily with the cosmic and social issues of keeping one's place and reinforcing boundaries. The vision of stability and confidence with respect to an essentially fragile cosmos, one that has been reorganized, with effort, out of previous modes of order and one whose 'appropriate order' must be maintained through acts of conscious labour. We may term such locative traditions, religions of sanctification."<sup>93</sup> Purification and healing are two central modes of labor for keeping this order. Corpse pollution is the model for all sorts

of impurity. The living belong to the world of the living and the dead to the place of the dead. On this view, Paul's central idea of a resurrection of the dead is utopian and utterly antithetical to the basic premises of the locative worldview. Although in what Smith calls "locative ideology," everyone is responsible for the labor of maintaining and rectifying the boundaries, the thought suggests rigid social stratification.

By contrast, a worldview that finds the patterns and structures of the cosmos to be "fundamentally perverse" and that good and reality are to be found above and beyond this cosmos is utopian.<sup>94</sup> The utopian mode of salvation involves reversal and rebellion. On Smith's and Mack's interpretation, Paul fits the utopian mold. Unsurprisingly, they base this interpretation largely on the Paul of modernist theological New Testament scholarship since Albert Schweitzer that has constructed his thought as centered on two aeons, the domination and conquest of demonic powers, cosmic sin, personal transcendence and related familiar themes. The demolition of this Paul, or at least major parts, is already well under way.<sup>95</sup> Smith writes regarding Paul: "Any pretense of remediation, of rectification, of healing and sanctification is absent." I find it interesting that these are precisely what the divine pneuma does in the Christ-pneuma myth, and the rectifications are psychological, social and cosmic. But I will not try to argue for a new Paul beyond what I have done earlier and I do not simply want to deny that Paul is in some sense utopian. The latter may depend on how much of x and y it takes to push one into the utopian category. Instead I want to raise some questions about the locative/utopian concepts that I hope will contribute toward what Smith calls "the rectification of categories." I have both criticism and an explanatory proposal.

I believe that the categories are under-theorized. I also have some worries that with minds less brilliant than Smith's, the categories might prove dangerous. "Locative" partly originated as Smith's correction of Mircea Eliade's interpretation of cosmogonic myth and his "patterns of archaic religion." He sought to bring Eliade's timeless "archaic" into history and to show evidence of change in both directions between locative and utopian types of religion.<sup>96</sup> My first worry is that without more satisfactory explanations of the two that locative might against all of Smith's efforts seem to be primordial and utopian essentially psychological. After all, locative is the religion that most people and families just had and utopian seems to be an unnatural rebellion against it. But how does locative religion come about? It can easily seem like it is based upon the natural attitude toward the world. By insisting that these are rather like existential attitudes without further social explanation, the two categories could also seem at base to be psychological in origin and essence. According to Smith, then, Paul works out his thought "from a perspective of alienation and *ressentement*, to a thoroughly utopian understanding."<sup>97</sup> Smith is also admirably aware of the limitations of his suggested explanations. In an earlier note he writes, "I am aware that, in this formulation, I am offering a tentative and, undoubtedly, partial causal explanation for the co-occurrence of the shift to utopian interpretations, in the case of the Cybele-Attis cult, and of Paul, in terms of alienation and *ressentement*."<sup>98</sup>

My proposal is that much of what is or seems utopian in Paul and other ancient writers is a field effect. Indeed, utopian thought may be the result of the semi-autonomy and disinterestedness produced by the conditions of cultural fields. In Bourdieu's account of cultural fields, he attributes much of their creative dynamism to their

characteristic of possessing opposing dominant heteronomous and dominated autonomous poles. A field then is an arena of a certain type of social activity that sets its own norms, requirements and conditions for participation, but these norms and so on are matters of contestation. As noted above, Greek and Roman rhetorical culture, Greek and Hellenistic philosophy and intellectual arts such as Greek and Roman medicine and astrology occupied the dominant and heteronomous side of the field. Here we find official legitimation, financial support by patrons, the public honoring and financial support of cities and the imperial order.

But some philosophy, for example, defined itself as autonomous in opposition to the dominant philosophy and rhetoric and thus occupied the other pole of the field. Both sides of the field claimed to value autonomy as Agamemnon's speech above on the ideals of the *scholastici* asserts. But one side defined itself as truly autonomous over against the other side that had sold out. Cultural specialists on the autonomous pole derive their legitimacy and prestige – the ability to attract some – from demonstrating that they and their cultural products are pure and not compromised by the backing of power, money or conventional legitimacy. Classic figures who modeled the autonomous form of philosophy would include Socrates, Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno the Stoic, all known for their radical rejection of the wealth, honor, prestige and institutional power sought by other sorts of intellectuals. Their own prestige and power derived from their practices of disinterestedness regarding wealth, power and honor. Above all, they developed sharp critiques of traditional Greek religious beliefs and practices as attempts to buy the good will of gods, gods falsely represented as having human-like interests and motivations. Diogenes and Zeno banished temples, priests and offerings altogether from their

*Republics*. The right relationship with the divine was not to be one of traditional reciprocity.

Bourdieu's famous example of the field of art well illustrates the autonomous pole. The museums, academic artists, artists supported by patrons and the state, and by the market formed the heteronomous pole. With the development of the idea of pure and true art, art for art's sake, a succession of artistic movements and individuals defined themselves and their work in contrast to the heteronomous who they claimed produced for money, conventional approval and power. The ideal of the poor starving artist arose. The bohemian lifestyle expressed disinterest in conventional values, approval and material possessions. In the view of the autonomous pole specialist, true art as opposed to mere craft was of unlimited value, beyond economic price. Since the social and symbolic capital of the autonomous pole producer is only derived from comparison to those who are cast as more heteronomous than they are, autonomous producers must continually and competitively define themselves as even more disinterested than others who claim disinterest. Sociologically perhaps the most striking thing about Paul's letters is the astounding number of competitors – false apostles, evil workers, proponents of false gospels, super apostles, law binders of gentiles, “dogs” and so on – that the letters mention. And here is the interesting point: There is almost no discussion of the content of the “false teachings” (which has led to enormous speculation by scholars convinced that theological orthodoxy and heresy must be the problem): Rather, the letters refer to their false motives regarding money and gain, and desire for human prestige and approval. I see a fit between such disinterestedness and a religion focused on the myth of

a teacher without teachings whose totalizing act was to die faithfully, only for the interests of God, with no interests of his own.

My proposal then entails that the attitudes and practices that Smith describes as utopian derive from conditions of specialists whose religion is that of bookish interpretation whose norms are produced by the interactions with other such specialists in various degrees of distance and autonomy from “everyday religion” outside of the field. The most utopian would be those competing to outdo other producers of disinterested religion on the autonomous pole. In Smith’s *Drudgery Divine*, the central example for comparison to Paul is the Cybele-Attis cult. He shows its locative forms and then later utopian interpretation. The locative evidence is relatively extensive and largely archeological, but the utopian interpretations come from highly literate intellectuals with known locations in the cultural field.<sup>99</sup> The interpretations of the cult that take a utopian direction use intellectualizing conventions that are specialized skills (e. g., allegory, allusion to philosophical doctrines, intertextual interpretation). Fortunately, the activity of these largely late Platonic intellectuals has recently been studied in an illuminating way in view of the theory of cultural fields.<sup>100</sup>

None of this means that people who were not players in the cultural fields could not give intellectually sophisticated, creative and thoughtful practice and interpretation to their religion. It does mean that such people would not be constrained and habituated by the norms and social dynamics of specialists whose intense inter-activity produced and even required distinction from the normal, everyday, locative perspective on religion. I think it likely that Corinthians, including especially people who did not aspire to paideia, gave locative interpretation to Paul’s Christ-pneuma myth. When 15:12 refers to some

who say there is no resurrection of the dead and the long discussion that follows vigorously argues on a number of points about the reality of a resurrection of “all those n Christ,” or “of all,” and not of Christ only, locative logic over against utopian thinking seems the best explanation for Paul’s efforts.<sup>101</sup> After all, a hero who had broken the bounds of place and become a heavenly god was a familiar idea in Paul’s world. The two best-known examples are, of course, Heracles and Asclepius.

Heracles can help us to think about the resources that the Corinthians might have had for doing their own thinking and mythmaking about Christ.<sup>102</sup> Heracles was enormously popular in extremely complex varieties of myth, cult and literature. Most often his cult was heroic in form, but he had the unheroic characteristic of possessing no tomb. Heroes were normally intensely local, given cult where they were buried. Sometimes he was worshipped as an Olympian god, who had received apotheosis and ascended to heaven. The apotheosis was widely seen as a reward for his suffering and virtue. Myth and literature dealt with this category-breaking figure in several different ways. Pindar coined the oxymoron, hero god (*Nem.*, 3.22). Rationalizing writers sometimes claimed that there were two different Heracleses. One died and became a hero; the other was a god. Homer has his shade (*eidolon*) in Hades while he dwells on Olympus with the gods, another unresolved contradiction. About the time that Paul was in Corinth, Seneca wrote of Heracles, “He has crossed the streams of Tartarus, subdued the gods of the underworld, and has returned” (*Heracles Furens*, 889).<sup>103</sup> Here a writer can even have Heracles conquer death, but there is no reason to think that this would have disrupted the normal locative religion. He was treated as a singular figure and he didn’t change the normal course of human life and death, as Paul’s Christ did. Paul



taught that Christ had been rewarded for his faithfulness with a body of divine pneuma vastly superior to mortal flesh. By ritual means others could have some of his pneuma and become physically connected to Christ and a distinguished ancient lineage blessed by God. Only the claim that all the dead with this pneuma would soon come back from death and that the living would never die would have perhaps been non-sensical and have certainly contradicted the principles of religion.

Most of the Corinthians may have treated Paul's Christ-pneuma myth as an interesting and challenging opportunity for thinking about their religion of household, "ethnicity" and city. Christ like Heracles embodied opposites and contradictions that might be treated as exceptions and singularities, but also opportunities for thought. Most of the ways that writers, cultural specialists at least, treated Heracles did not eliminate the tensions, but led to novel and creative formulations. In cult apart from the practices of writing and literate fields, a person might be faced with giving heroic cult to Heracles one day and celebrating him as a god the next. Sometimes the cults were as mixed and as ambiguous as the Lord's Dinner. I would argue that both Heracles myth and cult could provide opportunities for thinking about boundaries, their transgression, and maintenance. So also Christ myth and cult.

What I have been suggesting only makes sense, if one sees this thinking with myth and cult as socially useful thinking. In view of my analysis of the Lord's Dinner, Smith writes, "Some Corinthians may have understood Paul as providing them, in the figure of Christ, with a more proximate and mobile ancestor for their new nonethnic 'Christian' *ethnos*."<sup>104</sup> "Non-ethnic *ethnos*" can be taken in various ways. Some of these would obscure rather than clarify the kind of social creativity for which I want to argue.

One could follow popular interpretation of Galatians 3:27-8 and say that Paul discovered the principle of non-ethnic liberal individual identity. But among other things, this ignores the argument beginning in 3:6. The gospel is the promise that all the gentiles will be blessed in Abraham's seed, Christ. The content of the Abrahamic promise, the blessing, is the divine pneuma.<sup>105</sup> The argument culminates with words of 3:29, "If you are of Christ, you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." "All are one in Christ" is not a (supposedly) liberal erasure of gender, ethnicity and social status, but the claim that all of those in Christ share the same superior ontological status, possession of Christ's pneuma, in spite of other differences. Thus "non-ethnic" should not be given this popular interpretation through 3:27-28.

Another, interpretation of non-ethnic might make ethnicity fixed, given, primordial, and essential over against Paul's mere ethnic language that is just made up. Here Paul represents the modern voluntaristic conception of religion over against the persistent conception of ethnicity as fixed and primordial.<sup>106</sup> Such an interpretation would mystify both religion and ethnicity and hide the fact that both are the result of human activity and social processes. Much recent scholarship in the social sciences has worked at explaining these activities and processes and critiquing the essential and primordial conceptions of ethnicity. Two points from one of these scholars will be helpful for interpreting "nonethnic ethnic." Rogers Brubaker writes, "The genealogical construction of relationality offers possibilities for extension that are obscured by the contemporary scholar's tendency to look for a neat boundary between inside and outside."<sup>107</sup> Further he says, "In almost all societies, kinship concepts serve as symbolic and ideological resources, yet while they shape norms, self-understandings and

perceptions of affinity, they do not necessarily produce kinship “groups.”<sup>108</sup> These are useful maxims for an area of scholarship that begins with premises about the existence and inherent qualities of groups such as “the Corinthian community,” “the Jews” and “the Romans.” Brubaker’s sentences occur in a discussion of the “Nuer” and the “Dinka” of East Africa, peoples that earlier scholarship had constructed as neatly bounded ethnic groups. A group here means a unity of people who interact and mutually recognize one another as belonging inherently inside its boundaries. Recent scholarship, especially of Sharon Hutchinson, has shown that no such ethnic group “the Nuer” ever existed.<sup>109</sup> Rather practices of creative genealogy, endogamy, and “fictive kinship” allowed varied populations over a huge region to relate in complex and flexible ways. In this light, and that of many such examples, Paul’s entrepreneurial activities employing genealogical myth and concepts and practices appealing to kinship may not appear as pseudo over against the “real” ethnicity and religion of the Corinthians (or normal Greeks, Romans or Jews), but as rather ordinary social activity. So also the varied resistances, appropriations and negotiations of “the Corinthians” in the face of Paul’s efforts seem unexceptional. Group-making and group-resisting are activities with varied actors who employ, categories, schemes of classification, organizations, activities of mobilization, cognitive schemas, taken-for-granted practices, expectations regarding patterns of proximity and distance and on and on.<sup>110</sup> The way I read the work of Smith and Mack, “non-ethnic ethnic” would best be interpreted as pointing to Paul’s activity as an attempt at groupmaking in view of the human constructedness of all social formations, including locative and ethnic. So I would claim that the tension between a Paul focused on genealogical and kinship mythmaking and his interpretation of the Lord’s Dinner/Christ

myth with its implications of breaking socio-religious boundaries is not so odd or rebellious and just the kind of tension required by the constructedness of the ethnic and the non-ethnic. I say “not so odd” only with the caveat that we see Paul as someone working from another quite ordinary form of human sociality, the rather more autonomous pole of a field of cultural specialization.

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<sup>1</sup> “Re: Corinthians,” *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004) 340-61

<sup>2</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to those people whom Paul depicts and addresses in his letters to the Corinthians as “in Christ” or believers or members of the *ekklēsia* in Corinth as “the Corinthians.”

<sup>3</sup> “Re: Corinthians,” 347. As will become clear in what follows the greatest influence on my use these concepts is Pierre Bourdieu. That said, I do not use them in just Bourdieu’s way(s) and in fact would admit debts also to Max Weber, Marshall Sahlins and others were I to attempt a genealogy.

<sup>4</sup> I borrow the concept from Pierre Bourdieu as used by him throughout his career beginning with his over-sited early work, *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

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<sup>5</sup> I borrow social capital from Pierre Bourdieu. In crafting this concept, Bourdieu drew upon Max Weber's concept of legitimation.

<sup>6</sup> For practical understanding, see Theodore Schatzki, *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). I agree with Schatzki over against Bourdieu on the role of practical understanding in practices.

<sup>7</sup> So, for example, this would be the scholarship documented by Werner Georg Kümmel in *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of its Problems*. Translated by S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> A very important spin off from this tradition, but remaining within it, in my view, is the movement to do social history and work inspired by the social sciences pioneered by such figures as John Gager, Wayne Meeks, Gerd Theissen and Bruce Malina. Some feminist interpretation amounts to another line of important work. Due to limitations of space I cannot treat these here in addition to the dominant stream of the tradition.

<sup>9</sup> Many scholars have worked long and hard over the last two centuries to construct a Judaism at the time of Christian beginnings that is a shadow of Christianity and a preparation for the gospel. In my view, this has resulted in a massive distortion of what the religion of Jews/Judeans was like for the sake of a construction of Christianity. The Corinthian letters, unlike Acts, give no hint of the existence of a Jewish community, synagogues, so-called godfearers or converted Jews. It is not impossible that there were non-Jews among the Corinthians who had had an interest in things Jewish, but there is

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little or no evidence for it in the letters except for the coming of Paul and other Jewish teachers. Furthermore, the Corinthian letters may be placed in contrast to Romans and Galatians in which the relation to Judaism looms large.

<sup>10</sup> Eva Ebel's *Die Attraktivitaet frueher christilicher Gemeinden: Die Gemeinde von Korinth im Spiegel griechish-roemischer Verein* (WUNT 2, 178; Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) provides an analysis of much important material regarding associations and possible parallels with the situation at Corinth, but she does not critically theorize attraction and to a large extent follows the modernist approach. Supposedly universal common sense categories like the "openness" of early Christianity and the sense of belonging, and "brotherhood" tend to beg the question and ignore the senses of the various modes of religion.

<sup>11</sup> Thus I do not find the assumption prevalent in the seminar that the Corinthians formed an association, either before or after Paul, likely for a host of reasons. Paul's language (e. g., 11:18, 19-33, 14:26-38 and places throughout the letters) suggests meetings of households and fractions thereof partly at Paul's encouragement aided by elites and partly for ad hoc reasons according to strategic interests of fractions, e. g., perhaps communicating with the dead, baptism for the dead and so on. Again, a group of elites and others formed a closer association with Paul and each other (e. g., Stephanas and others in 16:15).

<sup>12</sup> Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004).

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<sup>13</sup> “The Altar of Sin: Social Multiplicity and Christian Conversion among a New Guinea People,” *Religion and Cultural Studies* ed. Susan L. Mizruchi (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 211-35.

<sup>14</sup> “Re: Corinthians,” 347.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Stowers, “Theorizing Domestic Religion,” *The Religion of the Household and Family in its Ancient Mediterranean and West Asian Setting* ed. John Bodel and Saul Olyan (Blackwell, forthcoming); Johathan Z. Smith, “Here, There and Anywhere,” *Relating Religion*, 323-39.

<sup>16</sup> I Cor 8:10 and the discussions of meat sacrificed to non-Jewish deities.

<sup>17</sup> “Re: Corinthians,” 351-2.

<sup>18</sup> See the articles in n. 11 above and those from the forthcoming volume, with bibliography.

<sup>19</sup> I want to beg the pardon of readers for using the overused and misused term hybridity. The trendy umbrella concept needs analysis.

<sup>20</sup> I try to give some sense of the radical embeddedness of religion in life with my “Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not: Toward an Anthropology of Greek Religion,” *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* eds. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995) 299-320.

<sup>21</sup> See Smith’s qualifications and differences, “Re: Corinthians,” 347-48.

<sup>22</sup> I discuss the notion of fields, especially in relation to Pierre Bourdieu and his critics in “Pauline Scholarship and the Third Way in Social Theory” (an unpublished paper read at various venues).

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<sup>23</sup> There is a massive bibliography that is relevant here. Because paideia has not been treated - described or explained - sociologically, the literature uses mostly native categories such as Greek and Roman culture, education, rhetoric, sophistic, philosophy, ancient science and historical traditions (the First and the Second Sophistic, post-Hellenistic philosophy). There are some synthetic works constructed as the history of traditions such as Werner Jaeger's *Paideia : The Ideals of Greek Culture* (translated from the 2nd German ed. Gilbert Highet; New York : Oxford University Press, 1962), but to my knowledge, no one has treated the sociological field(s) that transcended the traditions, although Max Weber certainly understood and supposed it. A move in the right direction is Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press, 1996).

<sup>24</sup> The classic discussion has been Hans von Arnim, *Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa, mit einer Einleitung: Sophistik, Rhetorik, Philosophie in Ihrem Kampf um die Jugendbildung* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1898).

<sup>25</sup> The most influential treatment of Greek/non-Greek interaction seems to be Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975). This work is looking very dated now, both in light of more recent scholarship on particulars and its uncritical use of native categories and ideas of cultural purity and impurity.

<sup>26</sup> See Momigliano above and G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy : A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

<sup>27</sup> I owe the sociological conceptions of doxa, orthodoxy and heresy to many works by Pierre Bourdieu. One more recent synthesis by Bourdieu is *The Field of Cultural*



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*Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), although his first two books on practice contain greater consideration of pre-modern cultures.

<sup>28</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> On this tendency toward universalizing and systemitizing, see Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatio morum: The Idea of a Cultural Revolution," *The Roman Cultural Revolution* ed. T. Habinek and A. Schiesaro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1-22.

<sup>30</sup> Thus I find fantastic Bruce Winter's attempt to make Paul into a Sophist (and many recent discussions of 1 Cor 1:18-2:13): *Philo and Paul among the Sophists* (2d. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002). For suggestions about locating Paul's rhetoric and education see, "Apostrophe, prosopopoiia and Paul's Rhetorical Education," *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Comparative Studies in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe*, ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbricht, and L. Michael White (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 359-61. On how Paul's thought and practice places him in the "unorthodox" sociological fraction originally staked out by philosophy, see my, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?," *Paul Beyond the Hellenism-Judaism Dualism* ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 81-102 and in terms of social description my early (I would change much), "Social Status, Public Speaking, and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul's Preaching Activity," *Novum Testamentum* 26 (1984) 59-82.

<sup>31</sup> Recent opinion favors Lucian's authorship. See, C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986) 41. For Lucian claiming his barbarian identity, see especially *The Double Indictment, The Dream and The Dead Come to Life*.

<sup>32</sup> On evidence for many of Paul's "people" being freedmen, see my *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 74-82

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and Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 55-63.

<sup>33</sup> “Re: Corinthians,” 349-51.

<sup>34</sup> There is much evidence for such private concerns and the public festivals of the Greek Anthesteria and the Roman Parentalia and Lemuria concerned relations between the living and the dead, and bore on the status of the dead. See especially, Sarah Iles Johnston, *The Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> My translation.

<sup>36</sup> One difference that should not be claimed is that Paul’s letters are religious while the *Satyricon* is supposedly secular. Not only are the gods and religious practices prominent in the latter, but the anti-hero’s relation to the god Priapus is central to the plot. A genuine and central difference would stress that humor and satire involving the divine are inconceivable in Paul’s tradition. Moreover, the Judean god relates to human desires, aspirations and emotions in a way quite different than Greek and Roman deities.

<sup>37</sup> *The Hidden Author: An Interpretation of Petronius’ Satyricon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)

<sup>38</sup> George Kennedy, “Encolpius and Agamemnon in Petronius,” *The American Journal of Philology* 99 (1978), 171-78.

<sup>39</sup> *Satyr.*, 5. The translation is by J. P. Sullivan, *Petronius, The Satyricon: Seneca, The Apocolocyntosis* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986).

<sup>40</sup> *A Companion to Petronius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

<sup>41</sup> Stanley Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 65-75; Courtney, *Companion to Petronius*, 41. Johannes Christes studied forty-one slaves and freedmen who became famous enough to be remembered in the sources and who bore the titles of either *grammaticus* or *philologus*. See his, *Sklaven und Freigelassene als Grammatiker und Philologen im Antiken Rom* (Forschungen zur Antiken Sklaverei 10; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979). To this mix of the cultural aspirations and anxieties that would have characterized many freedmen should be added, ethnic origins. One of the constant liabilities of freedmen in the view of Greeks and Romans of good pedigree was genealogical uncertainty. I cannot treat this relevant issue here, but it is instructive that a large proportion of Christes examples originally came from the Greek East.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>43</sup> The fact that these Corinthian elites were attracted to Paul’s Jewish and esoteric *paideia* may have meant that they felt alienated from the mainstream legitimate Greek *paideia* or

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saw the alternative paideia as an opportunity for some distinction in the face of extreme difficulty in getting into the legitimated club.

<sup>44</sup> My claims here have been informed by the Brown University dissertation in-progress of Dana Chyung on knowledge and knowledge practices in Paul's letters.

<sup>45</sup> "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?" *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed P. Sanders* (Notre Dame University Press, forthcoming). Also especially Caroline Johnson Hodge in n. 31 below who has much bibliography on this point. Further, see Pamela Eisenbaum, "Paul as the New Abraham," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard Horsley (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 2000), 130-45; "A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123.3 (2004), 671-702.

<sup>46</sup> "If Sons, Then Heirs": *A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in Paul's Letters* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

<sup>47</sup> *A Rereading of Romans*, 23-25, 133 and throughout.

<sup>48</sup> In my view, the church in creating itself reversed Paul's story. Israel is not a prototype, a prophetic shadow of the real thing, the church. Rather, the same active powers of God's pneuma and the pneuma-bearing seed, Christ, go back to the beginning of the chosen lineages and one major latter day result is the incorporation of gentile lines into the larger family tree.

<sup>49</sup> "If Sons, Then Heirs."

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*; Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*

<sup>51</sup> "Differential Equations," *Relating Religion*, 246.

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<sup>52</sup> Re: Corinthians,” 348-51.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>54</sup> I think it only marginally possible that the descendents of these settlers had resisted assimilation and maintained ancestral burial practices for the several generations. Indeed, the settlers may already have been partly Hellenized in their homelands. The most likely scenario is that the descendants became assimilated to the dominant Greek culture of region and the gradually increasing patina of Romanization that has been over emphasized in recent scholarship on Christianity in the first century.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of the thought/action dualism, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1992) and for scholarship on practice, see *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, ed. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (London ; New York : Routledge, 2001).

<sup>56</sup> For the concept of practices and its role in recent social theory, see my “Third Way in Social Theory,” and nn. 6, 19 and 41 above).

<sup>57</sup> I do not wish to deny that there are structures to the human brain that should bear in important ways on our understanding of human religiosity and that provide a certain kind of fallibilistic scientific conception of a human nature. Much important, but very young work is being done along these lines in evolutionary biology, cognitive science, and related fields. See, for instance, Scott Atran, *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> Hilary Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992) 73.

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<sup>59</sup> I am wary about the term “meanings” because I think that the analogy that likens practices in general to written texts encoded and decoded is ultimately misleading and unhelpful.

<sup>60</sup>For Greek and Roman examples, see my "Elusive Coherence: Ritual and Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 10-11," *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack* eds. E. Castelli and H. Taussig (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996) 68-83. Most Jewish animal sacrifice took place in the temple, but the Passover, when celebrated outside the temple, was a domestic sacrifice. On Jewish meals for the dead, see Hans-Joseph Klauck, *Herrenmahl und Hellenistischer Kult: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum ersten Korintherbrief* (2nd ed.; Münster: Aschendorff, 1986) 86-88. For everyday Jewish meals see Klauck, *Herrenmahl*, 66-67, who must be read with caution seeing that he uses Jewish sources that are too late for his purposes.

<sup>61</sup>Dennis E. Smith, "Social Obligation in the Context of Communal Meals: A Study of the Christian Meal in 1 Corinthians in Comparison with Greco-Roman Communal Meals," (Th. D. diss. Harvard Divinity School, 1980) 259; Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1993) 68-69.

<sup>62</sup>Stanley K. Stowers, "Greeks Who Sacrifice and Those Who Do Not," 299-320.

<sup>63</sup>Normally all meals had a religious element that included some kind of offering, thanksgiving, or blessing directed toward the gods. The modern distinction between religious and secular meals can only be attributed to ancients at the cost of a misleading anachronism.

<sup>64</sup>See my "Truth, Identity and Sacrifice in Classical Athens."

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<sup>65</sup> I follow the common usage of rendering the two Greek terms as the English deme and phratry.

<sup>66</sup>The word *genos* clearly had a number of related meanings. Here I mean the "lineage" of Kiron in a sense similar to the expression "*oikos* of so-and-so." In the orators, speakers raise the spectre of their *genos* or *oikos* becoming extinct.

<sup>67</sup>The speaker claims to be the son of Kiron's daughter and he is fighting for the estate over against a son of Kiron's brother. The speaker is ignoring Athenian law which gave priority to the male line and trying to give the impression of closer kinship.

<sup>68</sup>Inscriptions use the same terms (e. g., *krinein*, *diakrinein*, *dokimazein*) for testing these animals to determine if they were perfect enough for sacrifice that the Athenians used for the testings that determined one's purity of lineage and descent from a pure Athenian mother and father. For evidence, see my "Truth, Identity and Sacrifice."

<sup>69</sup>For discussion of the following practices, see my "Truth, Identity and Sacrifice."

<sup>70</sup>Ruth Padel, *In and Out of Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) 12-48. The following discussion is based on Padel.

<sup>71</sup>A medical writer from the end of the fifth century, without questioning their status as inner parts, polemicizes against the popular view that people think and perceive with their *phrenes*, equate them with the heart, and that they are a kind of receptacle that receives things (Hippoc. , *Morb. Sacr.* 20).

<sup>72</sup>Padel, *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>73</sup>On Levi Strauss' famous phrase, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 117-18.

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<sup>74</sup>F.T. Van Straten, *Hiera Kala: Images of Animal Sacrifice in Archaic and Classical Greece* (Leiden: New York : E.J. Brill, 1995), 122-24.

<sup>75</sup>See my "Cult from Philadelphia."

<sup>76</sup>The emphasis on "confidence in oneself" may be a new development different from classical times, but caution is needed in making such assessments of change in the Hellenistic period. See my "Cult from Philadelphia."

<sup>77</sup>Paul places the self examination practices in the context of another myth, God's final judgment of the world. Making the self an object for judgment by the self is best, but if God must punish one whose ritual competence is untrue, then that chastening is an educational punishment to save the person from the final and absolute punishment.

<sup>78</sup>This should not surprize us seeing that this combination continued to be important to sacrificial practices in the Greek East of the early empire.

<sup>79</sup>Stowers, "Truth, Identity and Sacrifice," 8-9.

<sup>80</sup>Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 76-78

<sup>81</sup>The concept of myth often used in the study of religion treats myth as timeless or as a sort of general background knowledge or ideological foundation. I would argue that all of these are misleading. There is no myth without context, but only instances of particular individuals interpreting stories for particular purposes in specific settings.

<sup>82</sup>He presents the problem of the misapplication of eating skills in 11:17-22 and says he will not praise such behavior. Then he introduces the account as if it were a demonstration of the reason (*gar* in 23) why such eating is not the Lord's Dinner. He draws the conclusion (*hoste*) from it that unworthy eating places those dining among the betrayers of Christ.

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<sup>83</sup>Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 82, n. 49.

<sup>84</sup> One hundred years later, Justin Martyr has to insist on the same point as he tries to describe the meal to outsiders.

<sup>85</sup>Did the claimants to Kiron's household share his flesh and blood? Were the ephobic candidates truly of aristocratic or citizen blood?

<sup>86</sup>They were concerned about the issue of to whom a body belonged. If you were a complete master of your body, you were a free citizen. If you were a child, woman or slave, you were in varying degrees bodies under the control of others. There is no disjunction between the truth about your body and the self. Classical Greek myth and ritual can be seen as involved in effecting this order of things.

<sup>87</sup>The ritual actors inspect their own dispositions toward the eating to make certain that their actions will manifest the meaning of the martyr's death which is the triumph of the will over the body for the benefit of others.

<sup>88</sup>Stowers, "Elusive Coherence," 76-79.

<sup>89</sup>In their originary myth, Athenians were a lineage born from the very soil of Attika. All truly of the city could trace themselves back to the soil. To own no soil meant to be a non-citizen resident under the power of citizens: a slave; more ambiguously, a woman; an alien. The lineages of animals from Attika were also produce of the soil and had been given by the gods so that gods and humans might feast together.

<sup>90</sup> *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995) 242, 245—6, 308-9, 454-6, 461-6, 485.

<sup>91</sup> For a massive collection of evidence regarding the unity theme, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John



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Knox, 1991). My reservation about this important book is that it is too narrow to identify the concord theme solely with tradition of *homonoia* speech and its context. Appeals to unity were ubiquitous in the traditional but complex society of Paul's world.

<sup>92</sup> *Drudgery Divine*, 121.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>94</sup> *Relating Religion*, 15.

<sup>95</sup> Among the important literature I would cite are the work of Caroline Johnson Hodge and Denise Kimber Buell cited above. A particularly definitive and groundbreaking contribution to this reassessment of Paul is Emma Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology." (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2005).

<sup>96</sup> *Relating Religion*, 13-16.

<sup>97</sup> *Drudgery Divine*, 141.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 134, n. 35. Smith adds in the following sentence: "However, as indicated above, it is my belief that the determination of such matters 'will be the work of a generation.'"

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 133. The figures that Smith mentions are Sallustius, Julian, Firmicus Maternus, Damascius.

<sup>100</sup> Arthur Urbano, "Lives in Competition: Biographical Literature and the Struggle for Philosophy in Late Antiquity," PhD Dissertation, Brown University, 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Paul's argument assumes that the same people who deny the more general resurrection had no problem with Christ's resurrection.

<sup>102</sup> For what follows, I draw largely on the important article by David E. Aune, "Heracles and Christ: Heracles Imagery in the Christology of Early Christianity," *Greeks, Christians and Romans: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David L. Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 3-19.

<sup>103</sup> Translation by Frank Justus Miller, *Seneca's Tragedies* (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953).

<sup>104</sup> *Relating Religion*, 351. The quotation draws on Burton Mack's response to my paper, "On Construing Myths, Meals and Power in the World of Paul," (now partly incorporated into this article) read at the Consultation on Ancient Myths and Modern Theories of Christian Origins at the annual national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in New Orleans, 1996. The expression drawn from Mack is, "Christ the first father of a non-ethnic genealogy." I think that Mack's apt formulation here is close to what I would have. But one of Paul's most interesting passages about kinship and genealogy Rom 8:29 (brilliantly discussed in Johnson Hodge, "If Sons, Then Heirs"; see also my, "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?") has God foreordaining Christ as the firstborn of many brothers. The *pneuma* unites the baptized to Christ as contemporaries, brothers, of the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

<sup>105</sup> This reading depends upon what I and others have argued is a better translation of *ek pisteos* and related expressions. Paul is not arguing that Abraham and believers are saved by their faith, but that the status of those "in Christ" springs from Abraham's and Christ's faith or faithfulness. On this see my "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?"

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<sup>106</sup> Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 5-6 and throughout.

<sup>107</sup> *Ethnicity Without Groups*, 50.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>109</sup> *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War and the State* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995).

<sup>110</sup> For detailed discussion of these, see Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*.