

**Testamentum Imperium**  
An International Theological Journal

www.PreciousHeart.net/ti

Volume 1 – 2005-2007

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**11 – Delivered to Satan: 1 Cor. 5:3-5 and 1 Tim. 1:18-20**

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**Introduction**

Like any religious community, the Church must make a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders, between those who belong to its number and those who do not. A member of the Church is expected to subscribe to the community’s core values, its fundamental beliefs and principles. There are many points on which we may differ; should we baptise our infants, for example? But one point is non-negotiable: church members must be committed followers of Jesus Christ. We should certainly welcome outsiders, whatever their beliefs, and be pleased to engage with them. But one cannot be, for example, both a practising Muslim and a member of the Church. Neither the Muslim nor the Christian community could accept such a dual membership, for the core values and beliefs of the two communities,

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.Trinity-Bris.ac.uk](http://www.Trinity-Bris.ac.uk).

though they share many common features, are nevertheless fundamentally incompatible.

To be a follower of Jesus Christ is to commit oneself to obey his teachings; a deep and serious commitment to live as he commanded is an absolute condition of membership of the Church. Before one's conversion one might well have practised sexual immorality, or have committed oneself in heart and mind to the acquisition of personal wealth and prestige, or have engaged in criminal activities. But as a condition of baptism one is required to repent of these sins, to detest them and turn away from them. Some sections of today's Church argue that the old standards of sexual ethics are outdated; they probably would not countenance incest, but adultery and other extra-marital sexual relations are often accepted, or dismissed as "mere peccadilloes", and homosexuality is no longer regarded as a sin. This article concerns the teaching of the apostle Paul, and attempts to interpret his thought within its first century setting. I hope that those readers who feel unable to accept Paul's sexual ethics today may nevertheless find the following discussion enlightening, even challenging.

First Corinthians is our principle source for the ultimate sanction of church discipline, "delivering to Satan", and the bulk of this short paper will therefore be concerned with the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5. A very brief comment on a passage from the Deutero-Pauline letter 1 Timothy then concludes the article (1:18-20). My aim is to elucidate the purpose and the nature of this sanction, and the circumstances in which the apostle would have us resort to it.

Corinth was a wealthy and successful Roman colony, situated on the isthmus of Greece at the intersection of important north-south and east-west trading routes. Paul wrote at least four letters to the church he had founded there, two of which have been preserved in the New Testament. Some of its members were themselves quite wealthy and, not surprisingly, some of the issues Paul deals with in these letters have direct and immediate relevance for the wealthy churches of the developed world today. One such issue is sexual sin, and the damage that the private behaviour of individual church members can inflict upon the community as a whole.

The fifth chapter of 1 Corinthians deals with a particularly serious form of sexual sin, incest; but as we shall see, Paul's

comments apply equally to adultery, homosexuality and other sexual sins, as well as greed, theft, drunkenness and slander. In short, he tells the church that so-called believers who practise such things, claiming that they are perfectly compatible with their claim to be Christ's followers, defile both themselves and the church, and must be excluded from its number. It is important, however, to keep in mind that Paul also wrote Galatians 6:1-2:

Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. (NLT)

Practical guidance on the procedure to be adopted when a brother or sister falls into sin was also given, of course, by Jesus himself, and is preserved in Matthew 18:15-20.<sup>2</sup>

#### **A. Translating 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 on “Deliver Him to Satan”**

Ancient Greek was written without punctuation marks or, indeed, any text formatting whatsoever. For this and other reasons, 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 can be understood and translated in a number of different ways. In the Greek the whole passage is actually a single sentence. The main verb is “have come to a decision (concerning)” (*kekrika*), and the subject “I” is emphasized by means of a pronoun (*egō*)—“I for my part have decided”. The main verb has an accusative object, “the one who has done such a base thing” (*ton houtōs touto katergasmenon*), and also an infinitive clause, “to hand over this man to Satan” (*paradounai ton toiouton tō Satana*): “I for my part have decided concerning the man who has done this base thing, to hand him over to Satan”. This thought is then expanded by various means.

The sentence consists of the following elements (in the order of the Greek):

I for my part / though absent in body / yet present in spirit / already / I have decided / as though [I were] present / [concerning] the one who has so basely done this / in the name of our Lord Jesus / when you are assembled / and my spirit [is present] / with the power of our Lord Jesus

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<sup>2</sup> On which see now John Nolland's magnificent, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2005): 741-51.

/ to hand over this man to Satan / for the destruction of the flesh / so that the spirit might be saved / on the Day of the Lord

The major syntactical issue is the attachment of the adverbial phrase *en tō onomati tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou*, “in (i.e. with mention of) the name of our Lord Jesus”.<sup>3</sup> There are three possibilities.

### 1. The NIV Possibility

The NIV takes the phrase with “when you are assembled” (*sunachthentōn humōn*):

I have already passed judgment ... *When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus* ... hand this man over to Satan.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the Greek “in the name of our Lord Jesus”, since it precedes “when you are gathered together”, would then be prominent in the resulting adverbial clause, adding the nuance, “when you assemble *and call on the name of our Lord Jesus*” (in opposition to, when you call on some other name); and such a nuance was surely not intended.

### 2. The First NRSV Possibility

The NRSV takes the phrase with “I have decided” (*kekrika*):

I have already *pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus* on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled

In this construction, “in the name of the Lord Jesus”,<sup>5</sup> now attached to the main clause, is no longer prominent, and in this respect the NRSV is therefore to be preferred over the NIV.

### 3. The Second NRSV Possibility

However, the NRSV margin presupposes a third construction: it takes “in the name of our Lord Jesus” with “concerning the one who has done such a thing”. From a purely grammatical perspective, this is a perfectly natural reading:

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<sup>3</sup> F. W. Danker (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd edition, revised and edited by F. W. Danker; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; known as BDAG): s.v. *onoma* 1d. *gamma.gimel*.

<sup>4</sup> Italics mine, as in the following two versions.

<sup>5</sup> The NRSV follows a variant reading of the ancient manuscripts that omits “our”, giving “the Lord Jesus”; but the currently accepted critical text reads, “our Lord Jesus”.

I have already pronounced judgment on the man who has done such a thing in the name of the lord Jesus. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present<sup>6</sup>

In this case, “in the name of Jesus” will have the sense of (by metonymy) “while calling upon the authority of Jesus”. To the modern reader it may seem highly improbable that anyone would claim that Jesus had granted them permission to commit incest; but when one reads the letter as a whole against the cultural backdrop of first-century Roman Corinth, one begins to see that such a judgment may be premature. I maintain, indeed, that this is the most probable construction of the text.

There is a second major issue. The NIV translates v5, “hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and *his* spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (emphasis mine; similarly, the NRSV also has “the flesh’ and ‘his spirit”). But the Greek original has only, “the flesh” (*tēs sarkos*) and “the spirit” (*to pneuma*); it does not specify *his* flesh or *his* spirit. “His flesh” and “his spirit” could certainly be the implied, since the pronoun “his” would not be required; but the ambiguity must be acknowledged. We will return to this question later (see, “Being delivered to Satan”).

### **B. Not even among the Gentiles**

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 Paul sternly rebukes the church for, in effect, giving their blessing to an illicit relationship involving a particularly serious form of sexual immorality (*porneia*): a member of the church was having an affair with his father’s wife (v1). Paul does not say his mother, but his father’s wife—his stepmother. Winter has argued persuasively that the incest was especially grave, in that the offender’s father was still living.<sup>7</sup> The offender “*has (echein) his father’s wife*”, Paul writes (v1): the relationship was ongoing.<sup>8</sup> Had the father been dead, then under Roman law the relationship would have been considered an illicit marriage of a type that, though

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<sup>6</sup> See also the defence of J. Murphy O’Connor, “1 Cor. 5:3-5”, *Revue Biblique* 84 (1977): 239-45.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001): 45-49.

<sup>8</sup> In this context the present tense of the verb translated “has” (*echein*) portrays the affair as an ongoing situation, the man “having [sexual relations with]” his stepmother; see BDAG s.v. *echō* 2a, and cf. 1 Cor 7:2.

technically illegal, was generally tolerated. But Paul says that the couple is engaged in such *porneia* as was not (named/tolerated<sup>9</sup>) even among the Gentiles; and being a Roman citizen, Paul would have known the law. It must follow, therefore, that the father was still alive, for in that case the relationship would have constituted the serious criminal offence of incest-with-adultery, which was certainly not tolerated; it was punishable by banishment, possibly to an island.<sup>10</sup>

It is remarkable, then that the relationship was public knowledge; for Paul actually says (5:1), “It is bandied about (*houtōs akouetai*) that there is *porneia* among you”.<sup>11</sup> The legal situation would have been very hostile. Because adultery was occurring, the father would have been required to divorce his wife within sixty days of learning of the relationship, and then to prosecute the couple; otherwise he himself would have been liable to prosecution and ruin at the hands of some social or political rival.<sup>12</sup> How did they expect to get away with it? The most likely explanation seems to be that the couple enjoyed the protection of the father, who was a rich and powerful patron; that they resided in his household. No one from the household could then bring a prosecution, and it would have been difficult for anyone outside the household to secure anything more than hearsay evidence.

But if Winter is right and the father was still living, then what could possibly have inspired him to tolerate such a relationship under his own roof? And why would the church have tolerated such immorality in their midst, and such flouting of the law? Though this question cannot be ignored, any attempt to offer an answer must necessarily involve a degree of speculation. Nevertheless, the following brief outline may have some merit.

### C. The Corinthian Enthusiasm

Rhetoric, the art of persuasion and of public speaking, was of central importance in the Greco-Roman culture, and successful professional orators, known as sophists (*sophistai*), provided

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<sup>9</sup> The Greek lacks a verb: *tautē porneia hētis oude en tois ethnesin*, “such *porneia* as is not even among the Gentiles”. But the general sense is clear: it was not tolerated.

<sup>10</sup> Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 46-49.

<sup>11</sup> BDAG s.v. *houtōs* 1.

<sup>12</sup> Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 49-52. There was no public prosecutor, but any citizen of sufficient rank could bring a case before the Proconsul; cf. Acts 18:12-15.

expensive training for the young men of the social élite. The voice, dress and bodily presence of the orator were as important as the content of his speeches, and his students would try to imitate their role model closely in every way they could. The profession was extremely competitive, and the students participated vigorously in their teacher's fierce rivalries, employing verbal abuse and, occasionally, even violence as they sought to demonstrate their own teacher's superiority, and their contempt for his rivals' students.<sup>13</sup> Though Paul took great care, when he came to Corinth, to ensure that he could not be mistaken for a sophist (1 Cor. 2:1-5), by the time of 1 Corinthians sophistic rhetoric had become a major force in the life of the church. Winter concludes that the church had split into two factions, one claiming loyalty to Paul, the other to Apollos; though both leaders were absent, they were behaving like the students of rival sophists.<sup>14</sup>

In view of the highly hierarchical social structure of Roman Corinth, I think it more likely, however, that certain wealthy patrons in the church had taken on the role of spiritual leaders and, using their rhetorical training, were competing with one another like professional sophists. Their clients had then quite naturally taken on the role of typical students, and the church had split into rival factions (1 Cor. 1:12, 3:4, 4:6).

Paul responds to the divisions by contrasting the "strength" of the social élite, their merely human wisdom, their wealth and their social status, with the scandal of the Cross and God's elective grace towards the poor and ignorant (1:18-31). God's wisdom, the message of the Cross, cannot be made known through the merely human wisdom of the rhetorical arts, and to unbelievers it is foolishness; it is revealed only by the Spirit (2:1-16). Therefore Paul does not employ the rhetorical arts in proclaiming the Gospel (2:1-16). The factional squabbling is childish. Paul and Apollos are not in competition with one another; rather, their ministries are complementary; they have built the church together, each carrying out the task God assigned to him. God alone will judge their work, when the time comes; it is not

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<sup>13</sup> See Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 31-40, and for a full discussion of the primary sources, his *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists* (SNTSMS 96. Cambridge and NY: CUP, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 40-43.

for the Corinthians, or anyone else, to evaluate them, or compare their relative merits (3:1-4:5).

The NRSV translates 4:6 as follows:

I have applied all this to Apollos and myself for your benefit, brothers and sisters, so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying, "Nothing beyond what is written," so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another.

However, the verb here translated “apply”, *metaschēmatisō*, in the active voice, actually means “transform, change”.<sup>15</sup> Though BDAG does list the sense “apply” (s.v. 3), 1 Corinthians 4:6 is cited as the only known instance. Since David Hall has convincingly demonstrated that “change, transform” makes perfectly good sense in 1 Corinthians,<sup>16</sup> there is no need to postulate a unique sense for this verse. Paul had substituted his own name, and that of Apollos, for the names of the faction leaders in the slogans of 1:12 and 3:4 (“I belong to Paul”, “I belong to Apollos”). This enabled him not only to avoid naming these leaders, but also to offer a familiar example of true leadership. He thereby transformed “these things”—the actual factional strife, with its actual leaders—into a situation in which the church was (for the purpose of his discussion) divided over the leadership of himself and Apollos.<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the discussion of 3:5-4:5, then, was that they might learn through the example of Paul and Apollos not to go beyond “the things that are written” (probably a reference to Scripture), so that none of them will be “puffed up” in favour of one of their leaders and against another.<sup>18</sup>

The sophistic arts drew upon all aspects of the wisdom and knowledge of the day, and even the non-élite church members would have had some knowledge of Cynic movement, and of popular Stoic ideas, and such influences can be clearly seen throughout 1

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<sup>15</sup> BDAG, s.v. 1.

<sup>16</sup> David R. Hall, “A Disguise for the Wise: *metaschēmatismos* in 1 Cor. 4:6”, *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 143-49; and in response to Johannes Vos, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (London and New York: T&T Clark International, 2003): 19-25.

<sup>17</sup> Hall actually defends the view that the faction leaders were not elite members of the church, but the intruders Paul brands “false apostles” in 2 Corinthians. For the purposes of the present article, this disagreement is not important.

<sup>18</sup> J. R. Wagner, “Not Beyond the Things Which are Written: A Call to Boast Only in the Lord”, (1 Cor. 4.6), *New Testament Studies* 44 (1998): 279-87.



Corinthians 6:12-11:1.<sup>19</sup> The Cynics were solitary, peripatetic wisdom teachers who despised not only labour and its material rewards, but also the laws and customs of civilised society. Their founder Diogenes of Sinope (4th Century BC), known also as “The Dog”, was widely reputed to have advocated both incest and the sharing of wives. Though his behaviour had frequently aroused both hostility and revulsion, in Paul’s day his fierce independence of thought and action was greatly admired not only by the Cynics but also by the Stoics, the most sophisticated moral philosophers of the age. It seems that the incestuous man, and his father, had chosen to follow the example of Diogenes. For as Gerald Downing points out,

It is only here among Cynics in the cultural context of the Graeco-Roman world of the day that we find articulated views at all close to those discerned by Paul in Corinth.<sup>20</sup>

No doubt they appealed also to the slogan, “food for the belly and the belly for food, and God will destroy both the one and the other” (6:13), which asserted the moral neutrality of the human body.<sup>21</sup>

It is suggested that their resort to such radical individualism was driven by the factional rivalry of a divided church. For both Stoics and Cynics agreed that virtue consisted in acting in accordance with reason or the “law of nature”. By daring to pursue “reason” far beyond the bounds of custom and law the father, a wealthy patron, sought to demonstrate his superior credentials as a spiritual leader. Others were appealing to the same principle to justify sexual intercourse with escort girls as they dined in the idol temples, and at least part of the church seems to have responded to the affair with admiration.<sup>22</sup> For having highlighted the presence of such *porneia* in the community, Paul exclaims, “And you are puffed up

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<sup>19</sup> For the Stoic and Cynic influences on the argument of 1 Cor. 6:12-20, see Stanley Stowers’ “A Debate Over Freedom”, in Everett Ferguson, ed., *Christian Teaching: Essays in Honor of LeMoine G. Lewis* (The Abilene Christian University Bookstore 1981): 59-70. See also Will Deming, *Paul on marriage and celibacy: the Hellenistic background of 1 Corinthians 7* (SNTSMS 83; Cambridge: CUP, 1995) and Abraham J. Malherbe, “Determination and Free Will in Paul: The Argument of 1 Corinthians v8-9”, in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995): 231-255.

<sup>20</sup> Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Epistles: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (NY & London: Routledge, 1998): 92.

<sup>21</sup> For the identification of this slogan as a representation of the Corinthian position see J. Murphy-O’Connor, *Corinthian Slogans in 1 Cor. 6:12-20*, CBQ 40 (1978): 391-94.

<sup>22</sup> Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 82-85.

(*pefusiōmenoi*)!” The rare verb *fusioō*, a substitute for the more usual *fusaō*, means “to have an exaggerated self-perception, *puff up, make proud*” (BDAG).<sup>23</sup> Since Paul certainly uses word play in 1 Corinthians 5 (*pornos / ponēros; proneia / ponēria*), it is worth noting that *fusiōw* sounds like *fusis*, “nature”, which was commonly opposed in philosophical (and especially Cynic) discourse to *nomos*, “law; custom”.<sup>24</sup>

The offender’s behaviour, and the church’s tolerance, even admiration of that behaviour was the result of the incorporation into their belief system of principles and values from the surrounding pagan culture, principles and values that were radically incompatible with the biblical world-view of the Gospel. Paul therefore rebuked the church for their pride in the offender: “shouldn’t you rather have mourned, and expelled from among you the one who committed this evil deed?” (1 Cor. 5:2).

#### **D. Background of Paul’s Response**

In characterizing the *porneia* as “not [tolerated<sup>25</sup>] even among the Gentiles (*ethnē*)” (5:1), Paul contrasts the church not with the pagans, but with the Gentiles. Under the new covenant, as proclaimed by Paul, God’s covenant people are those who are “in Christ”, the heir of the Abrahamic covenant and the promised Davidic King. Hence he addresses his letter “to the church of God in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy” (1:2). In contrasting the Corinthian believers with the Gentiles, therefore, he identifies the people of the new covenant, metaphorically at least, with God’s chosen people Israel. Paul then further characterizes the *porneia* in the words, “for a man is living with his father’s wife”. Such son-stepmother relationships are forbidden in the Law of Moses (Lev. 18:8, 20:11; Deut. 23:1, 27:20); the Holiness Code characterizes them as “abominations”—they are detestable to the God of Israel, causing

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<sup>23</sup> So, *fusioō* is confined almost exclusively to Christian literature, though it does occur in the writings of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus (1st century BC). In the New Testament, it occurs only in 1 Corinthians (4:6, 18, 19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4), and in Col 2:18.

<sup>24</sup> H. W. Hollander & J. Holleman, “The Relationship of Death, Sin and Law in 1 Cor. 15:56”, *Novum Testamentum* 35 (1993): 270-91; see 284-86.

<sup>25</sup> The verb must be supplied from the context. For discussion see Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 47-49.

defilement (Lev. 18:27, 30). Those who commit such acts are to be put to death (Lev. 20:11); they are accursed (Deut. 27:20).

As has been noted already, Paul sets the demand of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5 in the context of the church's pride in the offender: "And you are puffed up! ... Your boasting is not good" (5:2a, 6a). They should have known better: "Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough?" (5:6b). Leaven was a traditional sign of impurity, a symbol that played a key role in the annual celebration of the Passover.<sup>26</sup> At the very beginning of the festival the dwelling was to be cleansed of every trace of leaven; then for seven days, only unleavened bread could be eaten. Anyone who ate leaven that week was to be cut off (*krt / exolethreuthēsetai*) from the community of Israel (Exod. 12:15, 19f). The point of the symbolism is obvious: the one who eats leaven defiles himself, and has no place in the sacred assembly. Paul continues

Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new batch, as you are in fact unleavened; for Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. So then, let's celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of depravity (*kakia*) and wickedness (*ponēria*), but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (5:7-8)

The identity of the Church with the Israel of the new covenant is now made explicit. The corporate life of the church is an ongoing celebration of the new Passover, the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross.<sup>27</sup> The incestuous man is leaven; he is defiled, and has no place at the Lord's Table. He must be expelled from the sacred assembly.

Paul now reminds the church that he has already written them, that they should not associate with sexually immoral people. Evidently his words had been either misunderstood or deliberately misconstrued, for he now gives clarification: he is not speaking of those outside the church, but of those within (5:10-13). It is not the business of the apostle, or any other believer, to judge those outside the church—God will do that (v13a). But we *do* have a responsibility to judge those within (v12). In support of this proposition he quotes

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<sup>26</sup> *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 7:1237.

<sup>27</sup> Note the present tense of the verb *heortazōmen*, subjunctive active of *heortazō*, "celebrate a festival".

from Deuteronomy, “Expel the evil person from among you” (*exarate ton ponēron ex humōn autōn*, v13b). This command occurs almost verbatim in the LXX of Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21, 24; and 24:7.<sup>28</sup> In each case the expression is a demand for the removal from the community of someone guilty of serious sin: they are to be put to death.<sup>29</sup> The verb *exairō* translates the Hebrew *bʿr* (Piel); and as Ringgren points out, the *bʿr* formulae are concerned, not with the punishment itself, but with the purification of the community.<sup>30</sup> Those who are outside the church cannot defile it.

In 1 Corinthians 5:10-11, Paul gives a partial list of the categories of sinners who, by their presence within the church, defile it. We must not associate with anyone *who calls him/herself a brother or a sister* but is sexually immoral (*pornos*), or greedy (*pleonektēs*), or an idolater (*eidōlatrēs*), or a slanderer (*loidoros*), or a drunkard (*methusos*), or a robber (*harpax*). The list is not exhaustive, for in 1 Corinthians 6:9b-10 Paul repeats all these terms, adding also adulterers (*moichoī*), thieves (*kleptai*), and those who engage in homosexual intercourse (*arsenokoitai*, *malakoi*).<sup>31</sup> Such wrongdoers (*adikoi*) will not inherit the kingdom of God (6:9a); “such were some of you”, says Paul, but you were cleansed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (6:11). Such sinners can certainly enter the holy assembly and take their places at the Lord’s Table, Paul implies, but first they must repent and be cleansed, sanctified and justified. Like suing one another in the civil courts (6:1-8), Paul warns, such activities are fundamentally incompatible with membership of God’s covenant people.

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<sup>28</sup> The LXX has the singular *exareis* in place of the plural *exarate*.

<sup>29</sup> P. Zaas, “Catalogues and Context: 1 Corinthians 5 and 6”, *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 622-29.

<sup>30</sup> G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (eds.), *Theological dictionary of the Old Testament* (Vol. 2; translated by John T. Willis; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974): 203-04; quoted by South, “Critique”, 555 (see note 34 below).

<sup>31</sup> BDAG glosses *malakos*, “pertaining to being passive in a same-sex relationship”, commenting that “male prostitutes” (NRSV) is “too narrow a rendering”, and ‘sexual perverts’ (REB) is “too broad” (s.v. 2; the term can also mean ‘soft’). *Arsenokoitēs* is glossed, “a male who engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex”. See also Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 114-119.

As is shown in the following table, seven of the ten categories of sinner listed explicitly in 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and in 6:9-10 are specified in the Law of Moses among those who, because of their sin,

1. Have defiled themselves and threaten the purity of the sacred assembly, and/or
2. Must be cut off (*krt* / *exoleqreuthēsetai*) from Israel, and/or
3. Must be put to death.

The remaining three items, “robbers”, “thieves” and “the greedy” appear to be jointly derived from “slave traders” (Deut. 24:7) and “those who use false measures” (Deut. 25:16).<sup>32</sup> All ten categories of sinners, therefore, were to be excluded from the sacred community:

**Table 1. Ten Categories of Sinners**

	Defilement	Cut off ( <i>krt</i> )	Death penalty
Sexually immoral	Lev. 18:30; Deut. 22:21, 22, 24	Lev. 18:29	Deut. 22:21
Idolaters	Deut. 13:15; 17:4; 27:15; 32:16		Deut. 17:7
Adulterers	Lev. 18:20, 30	Lev. 18:29; Deut. 22:22	Lev. 20:10
Submissive homosexuals	Lev. 18:22, 30; 20:13	Lev. 18:29; cf. Deut. 23:18-19	Lev. 20:13
Dominant homosexuals	Lev. 18:22, 30; 20:13	Lev. 18:29; cf. Deut. 23:18-19	Lev. 20:13
Thieves	Deut. 25:16		
Greedy	Deut. 25:16		
Drunkards			Deut. 21:21
Slanderers			Deut. 19:19
Robbers			Deut. 24:7 (slave trading)

Levine has helpfully summarized the Old Testament concept of purity:

Becoming impure as the result of an offence against the deity introduced a kind of contagion into the community. The more horrendous the offence, the greater the threat to the purity of the sanctuary and the surrounding community by the presence of the offender, who was the

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<sup>32</sup> The category of ‘slanderers’ clearly corresponds to “those who bear false testimony” (Deut. 19:19).

carrier of the impurity. The person required purification if the community was to be restored to its ritual state, which, in turn, was a precondition set down by the resident deity for his continued presence among the people. The deity had made a vital concession to the Israelites by consenting to dwell among the impurities endemic to the human situation (Lev. 16:16). If his continued residence was to be realized, Yahweh required an extreme degree of purity (Ex. 25:8). In his heavenly abode, Yahweh was well guarded from impurity, and this condition was to be reproduced as nearly as possible in his earthly residence.<sup>33</sup>

Paul shared this conception. Under the new covenant, the church is God's sanctuary (*naos*), and his sanctuary is holy (1 Cor. 3:16).<sup>34</sup> In 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 Paul argues again from God's presence among his people. The church must be (morally) pure; it must not enter into spiritual partnership with the pagan world:

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what have lawlessness and righteousness in common? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What agreement has Christ with Beliar? Or what do the faithful share with the unfaithful (*apistoi*)? What agreement has God's sanctuary (*naos*) with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as it is written,

“I will dwell among them and walk among them; and I shall be their God, and they shall be my people.” “Therefore come out from the midst of them, and be separate,” says the Lord; “and do not touch the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” “And I shall be to you a father, and you shall be my sons and daughters”, says the Lord Almighty.

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.<sup>35</sup>

Unbelievers are certainly to be welcomed at church meetings (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24); but those who, though they claim to be believers, are

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<sup>33</sup> Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974): 75. Cited by M. Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (SNTSMS 53; Cambridge: CUP, 1985): 84.

<sup>34</sup> For the dependence of 1 Cor. 5:1-13 on 3:16, see already Brian S. Rosner, “Temple and Holiness Imagery in 1 Corinthians 5”, *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991): 137-45.

<sup>35</sup> For the authenticity of this section of 2 Corinthians, see e.g., G. K. Beale, “The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1”, *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 550-81; James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of UIOTHESIA in the Pauline Corpus* (WUNT 2.48; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992): 215-20; William J. Webb, *Returning Home: New Covenant and Second Exodus as the Context for 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1* (JSNTSS 85; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

sexually immoral, or who fall into any of the other categories listed above, must be excluded from the holy community. They must not participate in the Lord's Table.

One may well ask, if this is the case, how can anyone enter? Are we not all sinners? Doesn't Jesus teach that one who lusts for a woman is guilty of adultery, and that the one who in anger calls his brother a fool is guilty of murder? Indeed, with distressing regularity seemingly true believers fall into temptation, and commit serious sin. Does Paul require that they be summarily expelled from the church? Surely not, if they show true repentance; for he preached Christ crucified, and the forgiveness of sins, and the justification of the believer. One can fall, and fall badly, yet retain one's status as a true believer. In the case of the incestuous offender, Paul takes care to specify that the offender was claiming to act "in the name of our Lord Jesus"—he maintained that, as a disciple of Jesus, he was permitted to engage in his incestuous affair. There was no question of his repentance; he believed that he was doing nothing wrong. Consequently Paul describes him as "leaven": Despite being a member of the church he was unclean, not only in Paul's eyes, but also in the eyes of God.

The categories of sinner Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and 6:9b-10 are susceptible of judgement by the church, or by any competent authority, for by their actions and their refusal to repent they contradict their profession of faith. The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, practising homosexuals, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers and robbers will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10), and we must not give them false comfort. If a church member is known to fall into one (or more) of these categories, and will not repent, then he or she must be expelled from the covenantal community as directed in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5. We must not even eat with them (5:11).

#### **E. Conclusion on Being Delivered to Satan in 1 Corinthians**

Having considered the overall argument of 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, and its connections with 6:9-11, we turn once more to 5:3-5. In light of the preceding discussions, the following translation is offered:

Even though I am absent in body, yet I am present in spirit; and I have already come to a decision concerning the man who so basely did this in the name of our Lord Jesus: when you are assembled and I am with you

in spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus, he is to be handed over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved on the Day of the Lord.

The once popular view that “the flesh” refers to the offender’s physical body, and that what is commanded is a ritual curse that will result in his death, is untenable.<sup>36</sup> Even in the Judaism of Paul’s day, those sinners who under the Law of Moses would have been subject to the death penalty were not killed, but were excluded from the community.

More popular now is the view that Paul uses the terms “flesh” and “spirit” in reference to the two opposing orientations of the mind present in any believer, the one hostile to God and self-seeking, the other seeking to obey God as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.<sup>37</sup> The purpose of handing over the offender to Satan would then be that his flesh, his self-centered hostility to God, might be destroyed, leaving his spirit to be saved at the Parousia. However, Paul’s focus throughout 5:1-13 is not the restoration of the offender, but the holiness of the church. He may well have been concerned for the offender’s welfare, but one would expect that the purpose clause of 5:5 would reflect this central concern.

A few scholars have considered the possibility that “the flesh” might refer to something other than the offender’s flesh. Donfried, for example, has suggested that “the flesh” actually refers to “the works of the flesh”, the ungodly actions of those within the church;<sup>38</sup> but he takes “the spirit” to refer to the Holy Spirit, present within the congregation, which is to be saved for the Parousia. This identification of the “the spirit” has been adopted by a number of interpreters, but it is hard to imagine Paul speaking of the Holy Spirit as, in effect, the object of the verb *sōzō*, ‘save’, ‘rescue’. However, their proposals have led Barth Campbell to a new and compelling proposal.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Compare the flesh / spirit antitheses of Rom. 8:1-16; Gal. 5:16-26 in J. T. South, “A Critique of the ‘Curse/Death’ Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8”, *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 539-61.

<sup>37</sup> A. C. Thiselton, “The Meaning of *Sarx* in 1 Cor. 5:5. A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantical Factors”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 26 (1973): 204-28.

<sup>38</sup> P. Donfried, “Justification and Last Judgment in Paul”, *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 150-51.

<sup>39</sup> Barth Campbell, “Flesh and Spirit in 1 Cor. 5:5: An Exercise in Rhetorical Criticism of the NT”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 36/3 (1993): 331-42.



Campbell argues that “the flesh” and “the spirit” both refer to the church. Since in v7 Paul images the church, minus the offender, as a batch of unleavened dough, and since in chapter 12 he images the church as a human body, it seems perfectly credible that in 5:5 he has imaged the church as the mind of an individual believer. An unregenerate mind, hostile to God (“the flesh”) is dwelling in the same “body” as the regenerate corporate mind of the rest of the church (“the spirit”). Urgent action is therefore required: the offender must be expelled so that the undivided mind of the church may be saved, may be cleansed, sanctified and justified for the Day of the Lord. This image then gives way smoothly to that of v6b-7: the offender is a little leaven, unclean, defiled, and a serious threat to the batch of unleavened dough which is the rest of the church. He must be expelled, or the whole church will become leaven. This coherent development of the imagery of 5:3-8 then argues forcefully for Campbell’s proposal.

Finally, what exactly is involved in “handing over to Satan” a member of the church? Well, the action is to be taken by the assembled community, “with the power of our Lord Jesus” (v4). The offender is to be formally expelled from the church, not merely shunned. He is to be returned to the world, the realm of Satan, the enemy of the people of God. Evidently this is to be effected by means of an authoritative word, spoken in the presence of the assembled church. There is no reason to suppose that the action is irrevocable. The offender is to be treated as an unbeliever; if he truly repents and expresses his faith in Christ, he may be welcomed back into fellowship. Indeed, I am persuaded that in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul orders the incestuous offender’s restoration: he must now be treated as a believer. But one so expelled must return as one who is cleansed, sanctified and justified, a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Did he finally repent and come to true faith only after being expelled from the church? Or, is it possible that he lost his faith, and hence his justification, when he fell into serious sin? I do not think that Paul’s theology allows for the latter option, but an adequate response would require a much longer and wider-ranging study.

#### **F. Use in 1 Tim. 1:18-20 Compatible with 1st Use**

I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them

you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme. (NRSV)

Despite their salutations, not many scholars today believe that the apostle Paul composed the Pastoral Epistles; it is widely agreed that they were composed after his death.<sup>40</sup> However, since the author of 1 Timothy has used the exact language of 1 Corinthians 5:5, “deliver to Satan”, one may well ask if he shared the apostle’s understanding of this sanction. Unfortunately the precise circumstances of the actions mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20 are not made known to us. I believe, however, that the passage reads quite naturally against the conceptual background of 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, as developed above in A-E, though the OT background of removing defilement is not in view.

First, one might reasonably suppose that Hymenaeus and Alexander were disciplined because they were claiming the authority of Jesus to engage in the sorts of sin Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and 6:9-10. Such a scenario would certainly account for the purpose clause, “that they may learn not to blaspheme (*hina paidēthōsin mē blasphemēin*)”<sup>41</sup>

Second, though Paul’s stated purpose in delivering these men to Satan was “that they might learn not to blaspheme”, the context of this remark is his charge to Timothy to “fight the good fight” (1:18). He is to stand firm in the faith with a good conscience, in opposition to the heretics (cf. 1:3-7). Clearly the implication is that, in his struggle against the heretics, Timothy may need to take similar action. Paul acted against them in defence of the faith.

Finally, though the author uses a first person verb, “whom I turned over (*paredōka*)”, it is certainly possible, without straining the text, to suppose that Paul had acted with the full support and participation of an assembled local church.

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<sup>40</sup> For a helpful discussion see I. H. Marshall, *The Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; NY & London: T & T Clark, 1999): 52-79.

<sup>41</sup> Alternatively, if they had been disciplined for maintaining other blasphemous views, we may note that blasphemy was punishable by death under the Law of Moses Code (Lev. 19:12; 24:16). In either case, the basis for these expulsions would be consistent with the apostle’s teaching in 1 Corinthians.

I simply note, therefore, that the reference to the delivery of two apostates to Satan mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20, which uses the terminology of 1 Corinthians 5:5, is not incompatible with the apostle's thought as set out in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.