PAUL AND THE BODY IN I CORINTHIANS

by

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Abstract

The purpose of my thesis is to understand the way Paul of Tarsus uses notions of the human body in I Corinthians. Paul's theories of the body have strong links to the Judaism of the late Second Temple Period and first-century Greek culture. These became strong influences in the way he regarded the human body and its application to resolving issues in his undisputed letters. The main themes concern the immaterial aspects of the body, and the individual body as a reflection of the greater social body. Within Greek culture, immaterial aspects of the body were highly regarded, which often caused the material fleshly body to be disregarded. However, Proto-Rabbinic Jewish perceptions towards the body heavily influenced Paul to take the opposite stance from the Greek and argue for a different view of the body. Paul also used the metaphor of a united-individual body to reflect the importance of the united social body for the purpose of eliminating arguments and divisions within the Corinthian community.

Three of Paul’s central themes regarding the perception of the body are unity, purity, and bodily control. Unity related to whether the body is itself united and how it relates with other individual bodies as part of the social body, which is created and maintained through control and purity. Paul indicates that when the physical body is controlled and kept pure, all aspects of the body, both material and immaterial, can then honour God. Through this communication, Paul argues against the duality of body and soul and advocates a unity between the material and immaterial parts of the body. Purity can be regarded as a form of protection and control; however, it does take on different
forms when related to aspects of the body. Purity is concerned with maintaining the holiness of the body and thus producing a reflection of God. Control of the body is necessary for abstaining from sins that will negatively affect the body. Paul's teachings concerning the body affect the individual body, but have a greater purpose in maintaining the cohesiveness of the social body.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work of the author, Miranda Iddon.
Table of Contents

Abstract................................................................................................................................. ii
Preface................................................................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................. v
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... vi
Dedication ............................................................................................................................. vii
Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
  The Corinthian Community ................................................................................................. 3
  The Torah & Late Second Temple Judaism ......................................................................... 3
Greek Culture ......................................................................................................................... 6
Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 7
Chapter One: Jewish Influence ........................................................................................... 8
  Bodily Purity ....................................................................................................................... 10
  Whole Body ......................................................................................................................... 19
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 25
Chapter Two: The Greek Sōma in Paul’s Letters ................................................................. 27
  Greek Definition .................................................................................................................. 28
  The Difference Between Σῶμα and Σάρξ ........................................................................ 31
  Paul’s Shifted Body .............................................................................................................. 34
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 39
Chapter Three: Sōma in I Corinthians ................................................................................. 40
  I Corinthians 12:12–26 ....................................................................................................... 42
  I Corinthians 9:24–27 ......................................................................................................... 47
  I Corinthians 6:15–20 ......................................................................................................... 50
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 55
Chapter Four: The Allusion to Body in Paul’s Letters ......................................................... 57
  I Corinthians 3:16–17 ......................................................................................................... 57
  I Corinthians 6:12–14 ......................................................................................................... 64
  I Corinthians 11:3–7 .......................................................................................................... 69
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................... 72
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................. 74
Bibliography .......................................................................................................................... 77
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To my parents
Introduction

This thesis hopes to convey two ideas: first, to demonstrate that Paul’s notion of control and purity of body is deeply indebted to the influences of proto-rabbinic Judaism and first-century Greek thought values concerning the body. Second, it will demonstrate that Paul uses the notions of control and purity to promote and consolidate an understanding of a body united – a means to bring harmony to his fractious Corinthian congregation. The concept of a united body acknowledges the connectedness of the spiritual body to a believer’s physical body, and the social body to the individual body. Paul indicated that the separate aspects of the body affect one another and, furthermore, he gives instructions to the Corinthian community concerning how best to achieve and act in a united state.

I Corinthians is saturated with imagery of the body in its various forms. Paul uses the body as a literal image to encourage the Corinthian church members to maintain the wholeness of their individual bodies, as well as the unity of the greater social body of the community. Two main ways in which Paul promotes this unity are by instructing individuals in the church to control their bodies and encouraging them to keep them pure. The notions of bodily unity, control, and purity arise from Paul's understanding and response to his background in Judaism and his current environment saturated with Greek culture.
I would like to explore the connection between Paul’s discussion of the human body and how it is regarded by the influences closest to Paul.¹ My intention is to reveal which aspects of Jewish and Greek culture are present in I Corinthians regarding Paul’s focus on the human body. Chapter 1 will focus on the notion of a pure and whole body in both the Torah and the Judaism of the late Second Temple period, specifically referring to the Pharisees. Chapter 2 will shift to the Greek word sōma (‘body’) to understand the precise implication behind the word that Paul himself used in I Corinthians and, furthermore, explore the Greek notion of opposing bodily forces. Chapter 3 is a detailed study of three key passages where Paul uses sōma for body and chapter 4 will look at specific passages from I Corinthians where Paul discusses the human body without specifically using sōma. In both chapters 3 and 4, I will further pinpoint aspects of Jewish and Greek understanding that Paul reveals through his letter to the Corinthian community. This study allows for a comparative look at both the Jewish and Greek influences found within specific passages, which contrast with chapters 1 and 2 that focused on the explanation of the body from the perspectives of Paul’s influences.

This thesis is important because the human body as a tool for Paul is worth detailed exploration. He refers to the human body significantly more in I Corinthians than elsewhere, and does so in a plethora of ways. My purpose is to understand the origin of his understanding of the human body and the resulting instructions produced for the community.

¹ I Corinthians is meticulously written; therefore, Paul is not considered passively influenced, but active in his message to the Corinthian community.
The Corinthian Community

Paul’s attempt to create a strong community in Corinth caused him grief.² In I Corinthians, Paul responds to news he has heard about an imminent split in the church and immediately remonstrates with them: "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose."³ Paul clearly has an issue with the community because they have not grasped his message. They are a diverse assemblage of people of different backgrounds and statuses, which contribute to a misunderstanding of fundamental concepts that Paul taught: “[I Corinthians] was probably written in response to news about Corinth… and reflects Paul's concern for the quality of community life. Those whose behaviour reflected the egocentricity of society should be ostracized.”⁴ Paul uses the body as a tool to outline the necessity of unity in the community. Each member is important; however, impurities to the community body need to be removed for the sake of the body.

The Torah & Late Second Temple Judaism

When Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, his clearest influence is Jewish groups from the late Second Temple period, which had a strong background in the Torah, particularly the Pharisees. The Pharisees had a distinctive understanding of the body,

² A further discussion of the Corinthian community will occur in Chapter 3. For more information, see James D.G. Dunn, Gordon Fee, Victoria Paul Furnish, Jerome H. Neyrey, and Dale Martin.
³ 1 Corinthians 1:10.
largely derived from the Torah.\(^5\) Throughout I Corinthians, Paul positively reinforces this message.\(^6\) The purity Paul promotes is an extension and reevaluation of the purity laws found in the Torah, which were then shaped into a specific understanding by the Pharisees in Paul’s time.\(^7\) Paul’s purity concerns dictate that individuals keep their body as a whole and united entity, which can act as a temple of God for the Spirit. The body as both a social and individual entity needed to be free of impurities and ‘dirt’ in order to be a pure place for the Spirit to reside.

Even within ancient Hebrew thought from the Torah, the body and soul/spirit were thought to affect one another; priests acted as the mediation between the individual and God and, therefore, encouraged the positive unity between the physical and spiritual bodies.\(^8\) An individual had to be in a state of complete purity before they could approach the Temple in Jerusalem where the Spirit of God was said to reside. Paul reflects his Second Temple Jewish influence when he refers to the Corinthian community as the Temple: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.”\(^9\) In order for the community to properly act as a temple, Paul encourages the people of the Corinthian church to keep their bodies holy and whole and remain a united community.

\(^7\) Pharisaism was not consistently united regarding their views on purity. The Shamai School was stricter concerning the needs of purity in the community, while the Hillel school was less strict. Due to certain limitations, I must operate under the assumption that Paul did not associate with one specific school of thought, and keep my discussion of Pharisaism general. See Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford UP, 2000), 136-57.
\(^9\) I Corinthians 6:19-20.
The ideal body in Hebrew thought was a whole body – one united through control of its various parts.\textsuperscript{10} Control of the body was significant for unity because a lack of control of the fleshly body results in immoral behaviour, which negatively affects the spiritual body.\textsuperscript{11} This control contributes to wholeness because of the collaboration between the physical and spiritual; since they are naturally connected, acknowledgement of their unity contributes to both bodies, and promotes overall wholeness. Control of the body entails a control of the flesh that, as Paul teaches, greatly affects the spirit within the social and individual body. Just as the physical body greatly affects the spiritual body, the individual body also greatly affects the social body. Therefore, an uncontrolled individual body can negatively affect the welfare of the social body.

Paul’s discussion reflects a Torah-based understanding of the effect that an individual body has on the welfare of the social body. Individuals must cease offensive actions resulting from pressure from the society they are a part of.\textsuperscript{12} "The 'one flesh' (the marriage) must be destroyed, the individual must reestablish the holiness of his own body and guard its sexual orifice… The control of individual bodily orifices replicates the group's concern with its social boundaries."\textsuperscript{13} Paul encourages a high level of bodily control, even to the point where one individual must separate from the social body in order to preserve the body. Paul promotes the notion of a united body, where all parts are acknowledged as affecting one another.

\textsuperscript{12} See I Corinthians 5:1-8. This passage will be discussed in Chapter 1.
Greek Culture

While Judaism and the Torah had strongly influenced Paul, he was raised in an established Greek culture. The Judaism of Paul’s day was deeply influenced by the Greek society that had taken over much of the Mediterranean. Before the time of Paul, the physical body had begun to be perceived as an entity opposite to that of the soul – the two were assumed to be in a dualistic relationship, where the body acted as a negative force against the soul. Paul argues against this understanding and thus communicates to the Corinthians the necessity of viewing the body as one unified entity that contains flesh and spirit. Paul’s use of the Greek word σώμα (‘body’) reveals how he views the body as a unified entity. Bodily unity is only possible through σώμα because it is linked to both the spiritual and physical body. In contrast, sarx (‘flesh’) is related to a purely physical state, which contributes to bodily unity.

A large portion of Paul’s message in I Corinthians centres on the necessity for the body to be whole and united. Many of his instructions are defended with the reasoning that the body needs to be made united with the spirit present within it. In his use of σώμα Paul argues against the Greek notion of dividing the body between the positive soul and the negative body. Rather, I Corinthians 12:12–41 reveals Paul’s belief that the unity of the individual body would create unity for the social body:

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.
If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.\textsuperscript{14}

An individual body can affect the well being of the greater social body of the Corinthian church. The primary methods that Paul adopts to instruct people on how they can maintain bodily unity are control and purity.

**Conclusion**

Paul consolidates values from Judaism and Greek thought to instruct the Corinthian community to control and purify their individual bodies in order to unite their community body. In the face of serious quarrels and divisions that arose in the community, Paul was advocating unity for both individual community members and the whole social community body. The entities within each type of body that could become united were the physical and the spiritual body. His two main approaches for maintaining both individual and social unity are bodily control and purity of the body.

\textsuperscript{14} I Corinthians 12:22–26.
Chapter One: Jewish Influence

The Jewish community in the late Second Temple Period had been shaped by the text of the five books of Moses. The human body is first mentioned in the Torah in two separate creation accounts. Even within the two accounts there are varied descriptions and focuses on the body of a man and woman. Instances where the human body is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible do not stop at the creation. There are many specifications, laws, and stories concerning the body that Paul would have likely been familiar with through his study of the Bible.

From strict purity laws to strong notions of control, the human body is seen within Judaism as a valuable object. The “human body was the object around which conflicting cultural representations met and clashed.”\(^1\) This fact was especially true for Jewish people because of their inclination to be set apart from other groups. The idea of a Jewish body was thought to be permanently separate – Hebrew people were ‘others,’ who had a large role in shaping their self-definition, and which differentiated them from the rest of society.\(^2\) Purity and control for the Jewish body created a wholeness that affected the individual body and carried over to affecting the larger body that a Jewish person was a part of. By maintaining the individual body, one further maintains the wholeness of society and themselves.

One of the focuses in I Corinthians is a unity of both the individual and community body. While this bodily understanding may not have been fully grasped by


the Corinthian church at the time Paul promoted it, it mainly originated from the Jewish attitude towards the human body and larger community. Paul likely absorbed the Jewish conception of the body during his upbringing and transmitted this to the community in Corinth.

In I Corinthians alone, Paul cites nine separate verses from the Hebrew Bible, the majority of them originating from Isaiah. None of the verses speak directly to a pure or a whole body; however, some of these verses do refer to parts of the human body. The significant use of the Hebrew bible throughout I Corinthians points to a thorough knowledge of Judaism for Paul. I maintain that the presence of Hebrew citations in I Corinthians supports the notion that Paul was greatly influenced by a variety of texts from the Hebrew Bible. The citations in conjunction with his discussion of body, which mirrors many Jewish themes, reveal the strong influence that Judaism had on his teachings and, more importantly, his regard for the human body to the Corinthian community.

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4 I am operating under two assumptions: 1) Paul was a Pharisee, a sect of Judaism that prioritized purity. 2) Paul incorporated Hebrew text 9 times into I Corinthians. Therefore, rather than interpreting the Judaism of Paul’s time, or attempting to prove that Paul would have been in contact with these texts, I am operating under these two assumptions based on available information. Therefore, I will focus on major body issues within the Hebrew Bible and purity laws the Pharisees would have concerned themselves with.
Bodily Purity

The Temple was the centre of utmost purity for the Hebrew people because that was the place where God resided on earth. Jewish purity laws required the purity of any individual before they could approach the Temple. Any member who did not preserve their purity was an impediment to the community because of their inability to interact with God. “The resulting impurity is temporary and easily resolved by rituals of purification such as washing and waiting for a prescribed length of time. For the duration of the impurity, however, the person is ineligible to interact with God in Tabernacle or Temple.”

The innermost part of the Temple in Jerusalem was thought to contain God within it. Jewish law dictated that only someone in a state of complete purity could even approach the Temple, and only the high priest was able to enter into the Holy of Holies at a specified time. Priests who worked in the temple were required to perform sacrifices in a state of complete purity with no discharge or disfigurement on their part. The temple was the centre of purity for the Hebrew people, and could not become pervaded by the dirt and filth of everyday life.

Jewish followers who were not priests were also required to practice purity and cleansing in order to maintain the overall purity of the cult. Purity reflects wholeness and by practicing purity, the Hebrew people were attempting to emulate God’s level of wholeness in the community through their individual bodies: “Purity systems are

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7 Leviticus 16:1-4.
symbolic systems in which purity rules are replicated throughout the social order.”

Therefore, purity does not just affect the individual, but the whole community.

Being impure was not considered a sin within itself; however, impurity did entail some sort of an alienation from God. One could not approach God because he or she remained in an impure state. If someone was impure, then they were defiled and not able to be close to God: “The idea of holiness was given an external, physical expression in the wholeness of the body seen as a perfect container.”

The need for purity was not necessarily viewed as a burden for Hebrew people, but rather was viewed as a means to become a closer reflection of God’s image. Though there were natural functions that would render someone impure, the ability to get back to a point of purity and wholeness was fully possible and encouraged for the well-being of the person. Impurity affects wholeness through the physical body, whereas bodily wholeness incorporates both the physical body and the immaterial body. Impurity is the indication of a potential threat to the well-being of the physical body; therefore, impurity is also a potential threat to the wholeness of the body because of an implied distance from God.

Many purity laws outlined in the Torah are accompanied by a solution for regaining one’s ideal state of purity, such as the passage of time, ablution, or sacrifice. However, certain actions and occurrences would render someone impure for a more significant amount of time. Permanent and internal impurity arises from sexual sins, idolatry, and murder. Washing or sacrifice does not erase the impurity; rather, these sins are considered ‘abominations’ that result in execution or excommunication from the

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community. The constant pursuit of a certain level of purity could, therefore, arise from a fear of alienation from God and alienation from the larger community.

Helpful here is Mary Douglas’ theory of parallels between abnormality/uncleanness and normality/holiness, which expertly clarifies the understanding of purity in society. This theory was based on Leviticus 21:17-23 and Leviticus 22:18-25, which state that only completely unblemished and pure men could be priests and only perfect animals could be used as a sacrifice. Those bodies, which consisted of blemishes and impurities, were considered abnormal. ‘Normality’ indicates a being that possesses life without threat – someone is normal when they can continue with life free from bodily issues. Blemishes, bleeding, and bodily impurities all carry the potential of future harm, disfigurement, and death that are abnormal to everyday life.

A person will have an 'aura' of death around them if they have lost any semen, menstrual discharge, or blood – referred to as 'life liquids.' While these persons are not dead, their bodies are unclean because of their closeness to a natural death by losing a portion of the matter that helps to keep them alive. This idea is applied to menstruating women – they are in an abnormal state that, if unchecked, could cause a 'natural' death. Therefore within the time that a woman is menstruating, she is considered abnormal and unclean because any sort of loss of blood is a symbol of losing her life. "For the life of

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12 Williams, “Purity, Dirt, Anomalies, and Abominations,” 212.
13 Douglas, Purity and Danger, 51.
the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you for making atonement for your lives on the altar; for, as life, it is the blood that makes atonement."\textsuperscript{18} The prerequisites for a Hebrew follower to be closer to God (whether in sacrifice or Temple worship) are to possess a whole body that has not lost any life-liquids, or rendered someone else as life-less.

The idea of impurity due to loss of life liquids, sickness and death can also indicate a certain weakness of the body. While the discharge of menstrual blood and semen indicates a weakness because someone has lost life fluids, these fluids can be washed off and eventually the person will become strong again. Sickness and death are described in terms of levels of bodily weakness.\textsuperscript{19} When someone is alive and clean, they are full of life. In contrast, when someone is sick or dead, they have lost a certain amount of that life power. "God, who is perfect life and perfect holiness, can only be approached by clean men who enjoy the fullness of life themselves."\textsuperscript{20} Through looking at these examples, it is clear that the state of the body is important for determining closeness with God.

The details within purity requirements are sometimes difficult to understand; however, one of the clearest facts is that the human body can act as either the barrier or the point of access to God, depending on its state. As a result, purity specifications are the focus in order to ensure a complete attainment of the ideal condition of one's own body, which allows one to participate in the community. “Despite the commands to include those with unwhole bodies, Israel’s priests officially and systematically excluded on the basis of bodily wholeness, with lameness and blindness at the top of the lengthy

\textsuperscript{18} Leviticus 17:11.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ephraim E. Urbach, \textit{The Sages – Their Concepts and Beliefs}, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), 216.  
\textsuperscript{20} Wenham, “Why Does Sexual Intercourse Defile,” 434.
list. Any inclusion offered to these people was probably of a secondary sort; they only rarely experienced full acceptance, and the social discrimination was on the basis of their bodily condition that violated the cultural expectations of bodily wholeness.” The Israelite people were commanded to include people with impurities in the community; however, if the body was a reflection of the relationship with God, then the community did not opt to fully associate with the community members that had an unwhole body and did not reflect God’s level of wholeness.

The body has many roles and, in the case of a relationship with God, it is the object that makes it either impossible or possible. It is the responsibility of the individual to maintain the purity of their body in order to respect the purity of the greater social body. “Just as every social group has external boundaries, internal structures, and margins so does each physical body. The external boundary of the physical body is its skin. Purity rules that focus on bodily surfaces and orifices often replicate a group’s anxiety about maintaining its political or cultural integrity... Just as everyone and everything should be clearly and precisely located in their properly delineated places within the social body, physical bodies ought to have clearly defined margins.” The social body continually keeps dirt and anomalies outside of the group; therefore, each individual body must ensure that they are responsible for their purity. When impurities arise, it is the responsibility of the body to put the ‘dirt’ in its proper place.

The Pharisees were among the Jewish groups in the time of Paul that were most concerned with the purity of each individual within the community. Within the various Jewish groups, there was a significant disparity in the concern for purity; however, the

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22 Williams, “Purity, Dirt, Anomalies, and Abominations,” 211.
Pharisees had been closely associated with very high purity requirements. Before the destruction of the second temple in 70CE, there were an overwhelming number of Pharisees and priests, both groups of whom regarded tradition as ‘absolutely binding’ and valued unanimity above all. The tradition they valued so highly certainly extended to maintaining the purity of the body. “…the Pharisees divided the body between an interior and an exterior, and that the importance of hand washing was attached to the need to keep one’s interior undefiled. A failure to do so would presumably disrupt one’s personal religious practice.” In this case, the religious practice referred to is prayer and Torah-study. These two practices were activities that would encourage a positive relationship with God and help to solidify one’s acceptance into the Pharisaic community. The Pharisees recognized the connectedness of the immaterial and material body, while also acknowledging the cleanliness necessary for both aspects of the body.

The clearest reason that Paul incorporates purity with his discussion of the body in I Corinthians is that Paul originates from a Pharisaic background. The Pharisees valued purity and unanimity while simultaneously acknowledging the connection between the immaterial and material body. Paul does not specifically discuss purity laws in I Corinthians; however, he does refer to the bodies of members as being a temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul retains the purpose behind the Pharisaic purity laws and applies them to his notions of bodies in the context of the Corinthian community. In I Corinthians, Paul informs the church members that, as a whole, they existed as a Temple.

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25 Williams, "Purity, Dirt, Anomalies, and Abominations,” 215.
of the Holy Spirit; he also states that each member was required to glorify God with his or her body. Each member of the community as a whole body was required to use their bodies to honour God and reflect their corporate values. Paul is using the Pharisaic understanding of the Hebrew purity system by instructing the community body to act as a pure temple for the Holy Spirit.

In I Corinthians, Paul applies this understanding from the Torah to the members of the church to steer them away from impurity. His followers were baptized upon entering the community; however, the necessity to maintain the purity of the body for the benefit of the church still existed. “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

According to Paul, the same sins that would cause excommunication within Judaism would exclude one from the kingdom of God. His instructions guide the members to remain as a whole and pure community together.

The intention and purpose of the purity laws in the Torah reflect a desire for a whole body—one without abnormality or unclean substance. Paul reflects the same intention in his statement about the larger body of believers: “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.”

28 I Corinthians 6:9-11.
29 I Corinthians 3:16-17.
is claiming that because of the death of Christ, believers now carry the Holy Spirit within their community; therefore, they must keep their social body free from impurities.

Paul creates a metaphor of the body as a temple and thus advocates maintaining the dignity of one’s body. If the social body is now a representation of the temple and the Holy Spirit dwells in it, then there is a challenge for believers to maintain the cleanliness of the community. “There is also an imperative in this image. The temple of God on earth must be protected, sheltered from profanation and violation. Every part of our bodies is holy to our God, and according to Paul we glorify God when we keep the body holy in all its dimensions.” Paul instructs his followers to maintain their bodies and temple through self-control and purity. The boundaries that Paul advocates for his followers apply to actions concerning the body like fornication, incest, gluttony, eating food offered to idols, greed; these actions render the person impure and unwelcome in the community.

Individuals who threaten the instructions of Paul further threaten the united following of the social body and are, therefore, considered an impurity to the whole body and could be expelled from the corporate body. This potential outcome is exactly what Paul does suggest in I Corinthians 5:1–8 when he hears that someone within the community is practicing incest.

Paul gives his judgment that they should be excluded from the community, and then further justifies his instructions: “Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you

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31 Ibid., 39.
really are unleavened.” Paul indicates that the act by the individual is so polluting, that it seriously threatens the social body to the point where the polluted individual body needs to be excommunicated. Paul reflects the understanding from Second Temple Judaism concerning the threat to society that comes from one individual who does not practice the same level of bodily control that is also found within society:

(a) the immoral act of the individual person; and (b) the corporate sin of the community in condoning, accepting, and tolerating the situation, with no overt sign even of concern… most writers see Paul’s concern here for purity of the community as reflecting his language about the holiness of the church as God’s temple, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (3:16-17)... The issue is one of corporate responsibility: what the individual member does is not merely an individual matter. The issue is the responsibility of the whole community

Paul’s initial concern is for the well being of the community because he hears the members within the Corinthian community are both condoning this incest and also bragging about it. Paul’s secondary concern is for the individual, who is only able to return to the community once he has repented and rid himself of his incestuous situation.

Paul’s instructions to the Corinthian church centre on the necessity to maintain a unified body; his purpose behind these instructions was to avoid divisions within the community. These instructions are reminiscent of Pharisaic practice, which followed a social order that dictated an inclusion of the pure and an exclusion of the impure Israelites.

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32 I Corinthians 5:6b-7.
Whole Body

A number of verses of the Hebrew Bible indicate the nature of the ideal body that followers should strive for. The type of ideal that is reflected is related to wholeness, rather than to physical fitness or beauty. Bodily wholeness entails closeness with God and an honouring of God. A whole body contributes to a united body through the cohesiveness of the material and immaterial body acting in unison in accordance with laws outlined in Judaism. A whole body is without flaws and problems; a united body requires wholeness because the flesh, spirit and soul are all interconnected. “For Israelites, a whole body was not only a prerequisite for social interactions, but also a symbol of society. Whole bodies were the promise and result of harmonious society; unwhole bodies were a threat to social cohesion at a symbolic level.” In order for the community to remain united, the individual bodies had to be whole and united themselves.

‘United’ refers to the understanding that both the physical and spiritual body have a great effect on one another. The physical body cannot do certain things to harm itself without the spiritual body being negatively affected. Similarly, an example of a united body reveals that a healthy physical body impressed an increased health on the spiritual body, and vice versa. A body has a variety of parts, which create the body as a whole; a united body is a symbiotic relationship between these parts. The body is an extremely important entity for the Hebrew people – so much so that one of their main concerns is

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2 Berquist, Controlling Corporeality, 20.
the care and preservation of their body in order to remain close to God. A whole and pure body represents commitment to God’s covenant.

When God initially made a covenant with Abraham, one of the components of that covenant included the necessity for all of his male kin to be circumcised: "This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between you and me."\(^3\) This sign is permanently 'imprinted' on a man's body to indicate a loyalty to the covenant of God; a male is, therefore, able to honour God through his body. For the Jewish male, this type of sign is seen as an ideal form because of the subsequent indication that that male is part of God's covenant originally made to Abraham.

Priests especially do not regard circumcision as an arbitrary sign, nor do they see it as an accident that God’s promise to give Abraham many descendants is imprinted permanently and directly on a man's penis.\(^4\) The ideal male body is one that carries the symbol that God gave a promise to Abraham. Priests also view the rite of circumcision as the physical inscription of God's oath to provide descendants on all of Abraham's descendants.\(^5\) Circumcision is seen as important enough to God to make it one of the absolute necessities of his covenant with Abraham and, as a result, to make it a priority for the Jewish people. Circumcision implies possession of an ideal body because of the clear sign of the covenant with God that is indicated on the man's body. This clear sign indicates divine favour and a promise from God through this commitment by his followers.

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\(^3\) Genesis 17:10–11.
\(^5\) Ibid., 8.
The Jewish people were called by God to circumcise their males in order to mark them as descendants of Abraham. Because of their commitment to God using their body, Jewish followers remained united individually and in the social group. In the same way that circumcision entails using one’s body to honour God, purity laws maintain the cleanliness and wholeness of a God-honouring body. Relating to what has been previously discussed, bodily impurity indicates an undesirable status – one that Hebrew people never wanted to remain in. If someone was impure, it meant that that person could not be whole. This draws a strong parallel to the idea of an individual body as a reflection of the whole social body of Israel. Therefore, an impure individual threatens the wholeness and purity of the society.

Purity deals with the boundaries that each individual is required to maintain. Liquid from a body is expected to either stay within the body or be washed off. Dirt is expected to remain where dirt belongs and any impurity out of place was dealt with. Leaking or oozing bodies violated certain boundaries and, therefore, contact with other bodies was limited and could also violate boundaries. There was a certain amount of bodily wholeness that could be controlled by the individual; however, there were certain instances where bodily unwholeness could not be helped: “Lameness, blindness, and deafness were acts of God, according to Israelite belief; they were beyond human control.” God was the cause of lameness, blindness, and deafness and, therefore, his favour resulted in the removal of such bodily unwholeness. Even though purity could be controlled to an extent, there was still the notion that an unwhole body originated from

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9 Ibid., 28.
God. Therefore, a person displayed God’s disfavour directly on their body, whereby the community recognized their unwholeness and responded.

Impure and un-whole bodies create hardship and rejection; however, pure and whole bodies allow for one to be accepted into society. “In view of the fact that these conditions [of impurity] break the boundaries of bodily and societal wholeness, only whole, unpolluted bodies were allowed excess into the realm of kinship relations.”10 An unwhole individual body contributes to an unwhole social body. If the individual body becomes alienated from God through its unwholeness, so then does the social body.

The workings of the social body reveal the construct of the group through the behaviour and treatment of the individual bodies within the social body. The expulsion of the polluted individual body from society reveals the power of the constructed ideal body within the collective.11 Society and the individual are closely linked because of the significant power that society has over an individual’s attention to their own body. The body is the object that forms basic social relations, expresses those relations, and constantly affirms them; as a result, broken and un-whole bodies occupy a place where they are stripped of their status and social membership.12 Anyone looking to remain in society needs to maintain their body to reflect the wholeness that society demands because of the group’s commitment to remaining united. The unity, based on a bodily expectation, is maintained through purity and control of the body. The rejection of the

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10 Basson, “Just Skin and Bones,” 291.
11 Ibid., 291.
12 Ibid., 291.
unclean and deformed is a way of maintaining the established social structure.¹³ The society must be maintained, and the body is its constitutive object.

By advocating for a united body, Paul acknowledges the effect that the body parts have on one another and, furthermore, advocates for a whole body. Paul displays this understanding of a united body as a reflection of wholeness and positive relationship with God. He states: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”¹⁴ Paul stresses, throughout the letter to the Corinthians, the need for believers to use their bodies as a reflection of their honouring God.

As was seen above in the discussion of a Jewish body, whole bodies were the ideal, and encouraged closeness with God. The argument is that “πορνεία [porneia] and union with Christ are mutually exclusive.”¹⁵ The ideal is to avoid porneia for the sake of a relationship with Christ; however, they are so connected that one cannot have porneia and have a union with Christ. They are mutually exclusive because of their connected affect on the entire united body. Rather than treating their bodies as an unrelated entity, their bodies are actually united with God in their relationship with God. There is a strong link between the Spirit and the human body; the relationship between one’s body and Christ is illustrated as though they were strongly bonded like husband and wife.¹⁶

¹⁴ I Corinthians 6:15-7.
is a connection between the Hebrew understanding of using one’s body to follow the laws of God and Paul’s use of the body as a way to house the Spirit.

An important ideal for a whole Jewish body was circumcision for all males. Rather than just supporting circumcision, Paul instead supports the notion of a whole body. Paul asks the Corinthian church: “Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called.”

Despite the Torah’s command to be circumcised, Paul now states that the way to maintain a united body that honours God is to follow the moral commandments of God.

Interpretations of this passage can be vague because Paul’s instructions are not thoroughly explained; however, the intention is that followers will follow the moral laws Paul provides, which starts with maintaining the current state of their body.

Circumcision is no longer an exact indicator of someone within the covenant and favoured by God. Instead the importance of one’s body centres on following the commandments of God, according to Paul’s instructions. Therefore, followers use the actions and state of their whole body to reflect their commitment to God. This is different from Abraham’s covenant because circumcision for Paul is not the primary indicator of a follower of God and has no weight in a covenant with God. Rather, it is the entire body, both material and immaterial that can affect one’s covenant with God.

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17 I Corinthians 7:18-20.
Paul communicates to the Corinthian community that the body is one cohesive entity, united in action and belief. If there is one individual within the greater social body who is considered impure or unwhole, this affects the rest of the individual bodies within the community. The community depends on one another for maintaining a certain level of purity, lead by an example of wholeness, and encourage others in the community to maintain a united individual body.

This theory is also echoed through Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church when Paul speaks about the role of each member of the community. “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.”19 This passage reflects the necessity for communal unity, the importance of each member, and the Jewish understanding of a community.

**Conclusion**

A thorough discussion of the human body is present in both the laws and stories of the Torah. Purity laws outlined in the Torah reveal the significance of the cleanliness of the body as a reflection of the wholeness of the body, which can influence the relationship with God and the social community. Bodily wholeness accompanies favour with God, which predicates inclusion or exclusion from the community. Because of how

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frequently the human body is referred to, there was plenty of influence that the Hebrew bible had on Paul before his writing of I Corinthians. Paul uses the human body to illustrate instructions to the Corinthian community, which often associates a united individual body to a united social body. Paul’s overall theories of bodily unity are clearly represented through instructions that centre in both purity and control of the individual and social body. He thereby hopes to heal the seams of a fractured body torn apart because of serious infighting.
Chapter Two: The Greek Sōma in Paul's Letters

The focus of this chapter is to understand the Greek use of sōma (‘body’) and analyze how Paul shifted the concept of sōma to fit his own meaning. Greek culture is a clear influence on Paul because he writes in the Greek language and refers to many aspects of the Greek society that pervaded the communities he was a part of. The fundamental concept behind the Greek sōma is the opposing forces linked to the entire body. The body is both immaterial and material; therefore, due to the Greek interest in opposing forces, the Greek understanding of body is closely linked to the opposing force between the material and immaterial body. One of the clearest ways to understand sōma is to compare its meaning to sarx (‘flesh’) in order to understand the fundamental difference which separates these closely connected words. There are certain passages within I Corinthians that contribute to Paul’s understanding of sōma; the purpose of studying these passages is to reveal the differences between the Greek understanding of sōma, how Paul uses it, and how he then applies that understanding to the Corinthian community.

As shown in the previous chapter, Paul’s discussion in I Corinthians centres on the necessity for the community to remain united through both their individual body and their social body. His use of sōma reflects his beliefs in the necessity for a whole, united body. Throughout his discussion of body, the themes of purity and control often arise as ways to both achieve and maintain a united sōma; however, the application of Paul’s advice is often applied to sarx as well. The majority of this chapter will focus on Paul’s

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1 A more thorough discussion of Greek opposing forces will be covered later in this chapter.
specific conception of sōma and how this word assists his understanding of the body and his instructions to the Corinthian community.

**Greek Definition**

The definition of sōma is difficult to pin down because the word has evolved through Greek culture and through the definitions that Philo and Paul have applied to it. In order to understand how Paul shifted sōma for his own use, let us first study sōma through the Greek lens. For a comparison first to English, 'body' has a diverse use, which is similar to how sōma can be used in a variety of ways. You can use ‘body’ to describe other things beyond just a material human in English: a body of water, the church body, the main body paragraphs, and body language. Sōma is also similar in this regard because of the broad variety of uses it has. It can refer to an ordered whole that is governed by some power like an army, people, or a herd. Even further, “σῶμα can thus refer to a celestial body or any other inanimate object, and then later to a slave, and not merely to the animal or human body as a vessel of a spirit.”

Within both Ancient Greek and English, sōma and 'body' stretch across many realms: essence, physicality, and embodiment as a whole person. Paul’s sōma often refers to a sinful body, a temple for God, and a united community. The difficulty with studying the word sōma is that much of what we know about sōma comes from Paul’s works and, therefore, separating Paul’s sōma from the isolated Greek word can present a challenge.

Sōma clearly comes from the Greek world but Paul uses it in three major discussions: the universality of sin, resurrection, and the Church. It is somewhat difficult

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to trace the specific Greek influence on Paul’s view of body because of how complex and original Paul’s discussion is.\(^3\) The Hebrew conception of body did not explicitly support the understanding of body as a united being, especially since there is no Hebrew word for body. However, Paul’s sōma in I Corinthians reveals a deep-seated influence from both Judaism and Greek culture.

Just as the body can be seen as opposite to soul, there are other opposites that are involved with the body. John A. T. Robinson outlines four major opposing forces within Greek thought that relate to the study of the body. This theory is useful because, in addition to Robinson’s presentation of the opposing forces in Greek thought, he also provides comparisons to the Hebrew use of body. The first opposing forces are form and matter: “a body is the concrete result of a certain form imposed upon a given definition to certain stuff.”\(^4\) There is a fundamental difference and similarity between form and matter. What a body is made out of dictates the form it takes and the corporeal form defines the material. They affect and create the body, yet they are separate forces. For the opposition of form and matter, he states that the Hebrews never had a word beyond bāšār (‘flesh’) to stand for the life-substance in a certain corporeal form. In Greek, however, the form is the sōma and the matter is the sarx.

The next opposing force in Greek thought that Robinson suggests is the difference between the one and the many: “A body stood over against its component parts or organs, each of which had its own function.”\(^5\) The human body contains a plethora of factors within it. In isolation, they each have a separate name and function; however, when all

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\(^5\) Ibid., 13.
are viewed together, the varied parts are all called 'body.' It is noteworthy that in Greek thought, Robinson identifies these as opposing forces, yet this is definitely not the case in Hebrew thought. There are approximately eighty body parts identified in the Hebrew bible; however, there is no Hebrew word that effectively indicates the body as the one whole entity. The concept of sōma was not established in the Hebrew tradition. Greek thinkers used and developed the term and then Paul also used it for his own purposes.

Next, there is the fundamental opposition between the body and the soul. With an increased understanding of immateriality just before the time of Plato, the soul came to be seen as a factor within the body as well as something that could exist beyond the body. They both have their separate powers: “The body is non-essential to the personality: it is something which man possesses, or, rather, is possessed by.”6 This idea is quite opposite to the conception of body and soul within Hebrew thought – the Hebrew definition of man is an animated body, which does not entrap a soul. The views here are opposite and unable to be unified. In Hebrew thought there is just the one being that God made as a united force, with no opposing entities. However, Greek culture sees the body as a physical entity that opposes the soul, which represents the immaterial and incorporeal aspects of a being.

The fourth and final opposition of the Greek conception of bodies is the opposition of sōma and sarx in regards to boundaries from others. “Thus σῶμα as opposed to σάρξ is the principle of individuation, that which marks off and isolates one man from another.”7 It is a human's body, which differentiates them as an individual; sarx as flesh is not able to fulfill this need for someone. Flesh on its own is not

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6 Ibid., 14.
7 Ibid., 15.
necessarily the entity that is concerned with space and bodily boundaries; however, sōma can represent a division between one person and another. This concept extends beyond just a human body – it can also reach to a body of people, which can be distinct and separate from other bodies. The Hebrew language did not have a distinction between sōma and sarx, or a concept of the ‘corporate personality’ as distinct from individuality. The Greeks were more interested in the opposing forces concerned with bodily material, form, and space. The opposing forces for sōma specifically related to material and immaterial entities; however, this makes sōma more difficult to define because of its inability to be solidified in one position with one specific opposing force.

### The Difference Between Σῶμα and Σάρξ

In exploring the meaning of sōma, there is a strong necessity to define it in relation to the word sarx (‘flesh’). Some scholars since the mid 1800’s state that sōma and sarx were virtually indistinguishable, yet there are others who saw them as opposite entities. Sarx can be viewed as related to the inner body, and sōma as related to the body as a whole: “sōma can sometimes stand for sarx in the meaning of ‘body,’ sarx can never stand for sōma in the significance of ‘form.'” At the time of Paul, sōma was not directly associated with any higher purpose in the cosmos. The theological significance grew over time because of both the use of sōma by Greek thinkers and because of Paul’s use of the body in his letters. This is significant against sarx because the theological importance sōma carries is different from sarx.

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8 Ibid., 15.
One might argue that it is easy to understand the difference between body and flesh – they certainly do not represent the same thing. However, body and flesh can be used as synonyms for one another. When people refer to their flesh, they are also technically referring to a fundamental part of their body. Within I Corinthians, Paul also uses σῶμα and sarx interchangeably. “σῶμα is synonymous with σάρξ when used in its simplest non-ethical sense… [and] where they are used to mean ‘a human being’, or used instead of a personal pronoun” and also “for man in his proneness to sin.”¹⁰ When σῶμα is not attached to a theological definition, it has much more synonymity with sarx; however, the difference lies in the theological significance that has become attached to σῶμα through the letters of Paul.

Although there are many instances in which σῶμα and sarx are used synonymously, there is still a fundamental need to have their meanings separated because of their important function in discussions about body. I Corinthians uses σῶμα in various ways, many of which cannot be replaced with sarx; there are even multiple examples where Paul specifically defines σῶμα against sarx in order to reveal his beliefs which were separate and different from both Judaism and Greek culture. The clearest example of this is I Corinthians 6:12-20 where Paul states that the fornicator sins against the body itself and that the individual should glorify God in their body, which indicates the whole individual consisting of both flesh and spirit. “Paul [...] needed to differentiate between the human being as he appeared to the race, and the human being as he appeared to God. A second term was needed, and σῶμα was taken to pursue a different course from

σάρξ.¹¹ For the purposes of Paul, *sarx* did not have the same significance that *sōma* did. However, to use *sōma* in the context of *sarx* broadens the use and effectiveness of *sōma*.

Paul uses both *sōma* and *sarx* in his own distinct way. Paul can use *sarx* in a way that indicates the whole body, the incarnation of Christ, and a person’s whole presence – it represents the external and visible side of the self. *Sarx* is seen as the *whole body* from the physical and external point of view rather than the internal and spiritual.¹² The *sōma* has the potential to be tied to the spiritual and the physical. The opposing force of *sōma* is both vertical to the soul and horizontal to the flesh. In the same way, *sarx* is a two-fold entity: there is strength and resolution in the flesh, yet there is also a weakness of the flesh in its separation from the spiritual.¹³ Paul does not reveal flesh as having the spiritual aspects that *sōma* has; yet there is still the possibility of both strength and weakness in the flesh. The duality that is present within Greek thought contains a differentiation between the flesh and the soul. Paul uses *sōma* in a way that becomes a middle ground, possessing both spiritual and physical aspects. Flesh represents the part of the *sōma* that can become associated with sin, yet it is not the entirely negative entity that is often portrayed in Philo’s thinking. Through this understanding of *sōma* and *sarx*, it is clear that Paul understood bodily unity as applied to *sōma*, which links the physical and spiritual together. *Sarx* is not the uniting entity, but rather is a component of the *sōma*, which can either contribute to unity or disunity for the *sōma*.

¹¹ Ibid., 184-5.
¹³ Ibid., 20.
Paul’s Shifted Body

The definition of sōma that has been presented thus far has been compared to sarx for perspective but the evolution in Paul’s mentality towards the body has not yet been explained. Paul’s use of the body broadened the Jewish perspective through his use of sōma – a word that had no equivalent in the Hebrew bible. Paul did not explicitly state his continuing alignment with either Pharisaic or Greek thinking; however, Paul does reveal the ingrained thought processes concerning the body, especially that of late second temple Judaism. Paul evolves both the Jewish Pharisaic and Greek concepts of the body so that one can have a life lived fully in the spirit because, as Paul claims, the crucifixion of Christ had made the body and the spirit remain as one whole body.¹ “The body is not a neutral thing, placed between nature and the city. Paul set it firmly in place as a ‘temple in the Holy Spirit.’”² The physical sōma is not an inferior component in relation to the soul; rather, according to Paul it has the possibility to contain God within it and, therefore, is a sacred part of the whole being of an individual. Paul states that the human body has become a temple of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit of God exists within communities and now it lives within each individual ‘in Christ.’³ Paul reveals the importance of each part of the sōma in reference to its useful contribution to the honour of God through both direct uses and allusions to the body.

Paul’s definition of sōma does not closely match anything within the Hebrew vocabulary because there were no Hebrew equivalent words, yet the implication behind

² Ibid., 51.
sōma for Paul still has a Hebrew understanding of the united body. Paul would have been privy to Greek sources, yet his anthropology clearly reflected his Hebrew background. Much of Hebrew thought concerning man centred in the vertical relationship between man and God and the vocabulary of the body parts reflects the concern for the ones that were involved in the relationship with God. Paul represents Hebrew thought because of I Corinthians’s focus, yet Paul also reflects the Greek understanding of body because of the vocabulary he uses and the cosmological questions that were asked before Paul’s time.

We must first note carefully that Paul, in common with his contemporaries and rather in contrast to classical antiquity, has ceased to isolate human existence for observation; it is no longer something objective to be schematized and manipulated, to be divided up into reality and appearance, form and matter, interior and exterior, soul and body (with the latter’s manifold components). Human existence is for him no longer autonomous, it is determined by its involvement in its universe; it is both the object and the arena of the strife between heavenly and earthly powers. It is conditioned by the answer to the question: ‘To which power do you belong? Which Lord do you serve?’

A significant fact regarding how Paul uses sōma is that he never uses it when referring to a corpse, even though this occurs in other Greek works and in the LXX. Sōma in reference to a corpse is found multiple times in other Greek writers; however, Paul sees the body in a different way. It is not just lifeless flesh: “Man is called sōma in respect to his being able to make himself the object of his own action or to experience himself as

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5 Ibid., 16.
the subject to whom something happens.”⁷ Man as a body is not lifeless or purely bound to a mortal existence. Paul sees the body as tied to the earth through the flesh, yet able to interact with an environment and connect to God.

As a result of the body being made of flesh, Paul is aware of the contributions that the sōma has in leading the self towards sin. The body pulling the self into sin can also be seen in the focus that Philo puts on the negative influence of the body. Paul’s view, however, is much more positive towards the sōma. He indicates that the body is not the sole cause of evil; however, the flesh is often associated with sins, which can corrupt the whole body.⁸ Because Paul was educated around the same time as Philo and Josephus, we know for certain that the idea of the body in conflict with the soul was a “fact of life” and that the sins that Paul warned the “Strongest” against were the ones that came from surrendering to the will of the flesh.⁹ Paul does not disregard the role that the body has in sin; however, it is not the focus of criticism in the same way that Philo attributes all sin to the body and elevates the soul. Paul does not see sōma as objectively remaining within the sense-perceptible world but, rather, as a being that is constantly in relation to God.¹⁰ Man’s body is an entity that Paul sees as able to be corrupted, but also able to connect with God.

Sōma has a broad spectrum of meaning – on one end there is the spirituality associated with sōma, but there is also the embodiment. The notion of sōma as an embodiment causes sōma to be thought of in a relational way, allowing an individual to interact with its environment, live within it, and to be interacted with. The narrow sense

⁹ Ibid., 48.
of the definition of body is often seen in the physical body because of a continual interaction with the physical environment; however, the definition of sōma goes far beyond just a physical entity when also defined as the ‘embodiment’ of a being.\textsuperscript{11} ‘Embodiment’ cannot be limited to just the individual body.

Because of Paul's use of sōma, it could now also be understood in the sense of a corporate body, which works together to honour God. Individual bodies as sōmata are able to cooperate with one another, and become the corporate sōma. The community sōma is similar to the individual one due to both the physicality and the embodiment that accompanies sōma. With respect to both the individual and corporate body, stating that the body is a ‘temple of the Holy spirit’ is exactly the same as stating that ‘the Holy spirit is in you’ because the Holy spirit is not solely involved with the physical body. In fact, it is strongly connected with the embodiment of an individual: “And the final call to ‘glorify God with your body’ is the deduction drawn from the fact that ‘you were bought with a price.’”\textsuperscript{12} Paul understands and portrays the importance of the body with regard to both sin and honouring God.

Paul recognizes the ability for the sōma, both individually and corporately, to corrupt the self. As a result, Paul advocates a higher bodily control for followers and, therefore, places firmer boundaries on the bodily ‘freedom’ of the community. As has been discussed in previous chapters, Paul is largely influenced by instruction from the Torah and applies knowledge of the body from there. “What makes a body whole among ancient Israelites? First, a whole body contains all its parts and functions. Arms, legs, hands, genitals, and eyes are all present and operating. Second and perhaps most

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\textsuperscript{11} James G. Dunn, \textit{The Theology of Paul the Apostle} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006), 56.
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\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 58. Dunn is quoting 1 Corinthians 6:20.
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important, a whole body contains itself with fixed boundaries.” Paul sees the importance of having a whole body in his letter to the Corinthian church and reflects a desire for them to also share in a whole body. The Greek understanding of sōma that has been previously discussed saw sōma as able to possess specific boundaries; however, sarx did not possess the capability of boundaries. Paul’s sōma requires control of boundaries, which sarx cannot maintain. Furthermore, a higher level of individual bodily control becomes necessary when there is also a desire for control of the society.

The social body can pressure the individual bodies to act in a certain way; likewise, the individual body can become a threat to the cohesion of the social body. Using sōma to maintain boundaries creates the possibility to balance the immaterial with the material body to reflect desires of the community. The body can be thought of as a source of representation, and also as a product of representation. The community shapes the sōma; however, there are also times where individual bodies tend to go beyond the boundaries of the social sōma. “The concern about the security of body boundaries mirrors a concern about society’s boundaries.”

The ancient Israelite ideal was for a whole body; however, any individual with low bodily control did not fit with a society like Second Temple Judaism, which demanded high bodily control in order to maintain a whole body: “Any individual interacted with the rest of the world through the body. If a body was not whole, then the rest of society might shun the individual in an

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attempt to protect its own wholeness as a society and as individuals.” The sōma Paul refers to requires control from each individual and, further, the purity of the greater society. Because sōma still is connected to the world, its unity is still threatened.

Conclusion

Paul's sōma is not one-dimensional, nor does it just refer to his attitude about the human body. His understanding of sōma extends to the need for a control of the individual body to protect against temptation and sin; however, the way in which he uses 'body' also clearly affects the larger group that he is writing to. His influences from Judaism and Greek culture greatly affect his message because of his need to support and refute fundamental ideas of each. The body is portrayed as something that should remain united and the method of creating this unity comes from advocation of purity, and control. Sōma and sarx differ due to their association with physical and spiritual functions, which further influences Paul’s belief in the ability for only sōma to contribute to a united being and not sarx. His views of sōma are not negative because of a potential proneness to sin but, instead, because sōma holds the ability to either remain in a close relationship with God or become pulled away because of having low bodily control. Paul sees the sōma as a very active part of one's existence and, therefore, an entity that needs constant care and attention.

16 Berquist, Controlling Corporeality, 20.
Chapter Three: Sōma in I Corinthians

Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church reveals many issues that Paul dealt with when instructing the people of Corinth. The variety of topics and clear instructions in I Corinthians point towards concerns Paul had about the conduct of the Corinthian people. Paul was attempting to plant his community in a harsh and difficult environment, a city whose god was material gain.\(^1\) One main advantage of starting a church in Corinth was the trade routes that provided heightened communication in the Mediterranean. Corinth was a natural crossroad for the South-North and East-West traffic because of the isthmus and canal, which linked Greece, the Peloponnese, and the Aegean.\(^2\) Another benefit of Corinth was wealthy people, like Gaius, Prisca and Aquila, who provided a meeting place for the church of approximately forty to one hundred people.\(^3\) The community is thought to have been eclectic and representing the make-up of the city, consisting of ex-slaves, slaves, and freeborn people; there is also reason to believe there was a Jewish minority.\(^4\) There were many advantages and drawbacks to starting a church in Corinth; many of the disadvantages arise in I Corinthians as issues that Paul must address.

Paul was in Corinth for eighteen months when he founded the church at Corinth (50–52CE) and, after his experience with the church in Thessalonika, maintenance and communication were necessary after he departed.\(^5\) I Corinthians was not the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, as is clarified in 5:9: “I wrote to you in my letter not

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\(^2\) James D.G. Dunn, I Corinthians (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 15.
\(^3\) Ibid., 17.
to associate with sexually immoral persons." The letter that we know as Paul’s first to the Corinthians was prompted by necessity due to imminent divisions in the community and because of the letter he received from the community (7:1). Paul got word from Chloe's people that there were arguments among members (1:11) and Paul sent Timothy to check the situation (4:17). There were social pressures on the Christian people within Corinth to participate in social occasions related to temples with idols; there were many shrines dedicated to different gods, which reveals how important various religions were to the city. Issues such as this caused potential rifts in the community due to differing opinions on how the community should conduct themselves in their private and public life.

As a result of news concerning divisions in the church, Paul composes a letter where the main theme is the unity of the social body and individual body. His thesis is clearly stated in the first section of the letter: “Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.” Paul’s concern throughout the letter is the unity of the church as Christ’s body, and he even reiterates his thesis through a body metaphor later on in chapter 12: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” Paul's instructions, however, were potentially challenged by the members of the community who were not aligned with the same understanding of the body as Paul.

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6 I Corinthians 5:9.
7 Murphy-O’Connor, “1 and 2 Corinthians,” 76.
8 Dunn, I Corinthians, 16.
10 I Corinthians 12:27.
Paul's technique in two parts of this opening section, namely, 2:6–3:4 and 4:8–10, is to subvert the terminology of those whom he believes to be at the root of the trouble in the community. The religious perspective betrayed by this terminology is that of Philo (the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, a recent contemporary), and strongly suggests that Paul has in mind the followers of Apollos, a converted Jew from Alexandria (Acts 18:24–8). For convenience we shall call them the Spirit-people... The Spirit-people attached so much importance to mind, wisdom, and spirit that they tended to undervalue the importance of the physical body in religious life. For Paul, however, the body was the sphere in which the following of Christ became real.\(^{11}\)

Paul used the notion of a united body to show the people of Corinth the best way to live in a community together. His purpose in using the body in I Corinthians was to ensure that they stayed as a united community body and did not dissolve into multiple groups. Through his metaphor of keeping the community body united, much of his advice also turned to maintaining the cohesiveness of each individual body through purity and control.

**I Corinthians 12:12–26**

12 For just as the **body** is one and has many members, and all the members of the **body**, though many, are one **body**, so it is with Christ. 13 For in the Spirit we were all baptized into one **body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14 Indeed, the **body** does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the **body**,,” that would not make it any less part of the **body**. 16 And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the **body**,,” that would not make it any less part of the **body**... 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the **body** of Christ and individually members of it.

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\(^{11}\) Murphy-O’Connor, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 77.
I Corinthians 12:12–27 reveals Paul’s view of the importance of bodily unity more than any other passage in this letter through his body analogy, which outlines the importance of each person in the community. He essentially states that each part of the body is important; the eyes, ears, mouth, and hands are all necessary. God honours each of the members of the body – whether inferior or superior – and subsequently the united body honours God: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.”12 Because the analogy of the body is relatively straightforward with respect to the parallel between the unity of the individual body and the unity of the community body, let us take a look at a few of the theories surrounding the creation of this analogy for Paul.

Paul is thought to draw on a variety of theories when he uses this analogy of the separated body parts. Some have traced the analogy to Greek philosophical writings, others to the Old Testament idea of ‘corporate solidarity,’ or even to the Gnostic concept of ‘primal’ or ‘pre-contaminated man.’13 Andrew E. Hill theorizes that Paul is using this analogy of the body to speak against the belief in the Asclepian Temple of the city of Corinth. Hill believes this theory to be legitimate because even though Paul does not specifically mention the Temple of Asclepius in his letters, he did live and work in Corinth for approximately eighteen months. Therefore, he would have been quite familiar with the healing cult of Asclepius in Corinth; he also makes a point of taking examples from things found in everyday life within Corinth, and the Temple of Asclepius certainly would have fallen under that criterion because it was so popular in Corinth.14

14 Ibid., 437.
Paul addresses many examples of everyday life in Corinth, such as the Isthmian games, prostitution and slavery, and idol worship in the Agora. He was likely familiar with the Asclepian temple because of his familiarity with customs and the lifestyle of Corinth. He would have seen a potential focus on the separated renderings of body parts that the people had created. Within this passage of I Corinthians, Paul attempts to take the focus away from the body parts as separate entities that require independent attention. Rather, Paul takes this example of multiple body parts and combines them together to create a cohesive unit of the body where all the parts have different and necessary roles within the body. The metaphor goes even further to include the concept of the Church community as a body; each member of the community is important and necessarily different. It is unclear whether Paul is directly speaking against the practices of the Asclepian temple; however, Hill still provides a useful theory due to his discussion of the result of Paul’s message. Paul preaches that just as the physical body is a unified entity, so also should the community be.

Another theory that coincides with this verse does not specifically address the group of people that Paul was referring to. Instead, Herbert M. Gale speaks to the two major ideas he sees in this passage which link up to the unity of the various members of the metaphorical body. This theory is promising because of the group body dynamics that Gale recognizes and elaborates on. The analogy that Paul introduces draws a clear parallel between the diversity of the different body parts that are all connected and necessary to the proper functioning of the human body. Through this, Gale sees the parallel to the community in Paul’s writing and extrapolates his ideas from there. The first aspect of this passage he sees is ‘the idea of unity in diversity.’ The strongest
parallel drawn by Gale is to state that the commonality between the members of the Church and the body of Christ goes beyond a likeness between them: “Christians are the body of Christ.”

Through this idea, it is apparent that the analogy of the body that Paul uses goes beyond just the idea of the members each having importance and significance in regards to the whole united body. Rather, the body of the Church is parallel to the sōma because of the presence of Christ within it; it is a composite of multiple members unified by the Spirit of God and a soul.

The other major idea within this analogy is ‘the relationship between the various factors in the diversity.’ Gale makes the argument that these various members are all dependent on one another. It is not just that each hand or eye is a part of the body and that they are in unity with one another but, rather, that they have a strong need for each other that causes their functionality to be the most efficient.

All the members that are thought to potentially have an inferior position within the body are to be treated with much honour and respect. Every piece of the body is important and to be cared for and respected: this is the image of the sōma functioning in its natural way.

Paul uses sōma in I Corinthians to reveal his attitudes towards individual conduct with respect to their relationship to the Spirit. This particular passage is unique because of its inclusion of both the Body of Christ and the direct parallel between the individual body and the social body. As has been previously discussed, Mary Douglas states that the physical body is often the main symbolic figure behind the social body and the level of bodily control usually indicates the pressure within the group to conform to high

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16 Ibid., 119.
17 Ibid., 120.
bodily expectations for both the individual and the group.\textsuperscript{18} Paul's attitude towards sōma fits together closely with Douglas' theory because of the ability for the individual body to act as a microcosm for the social body with regards to custom, structure, and order.

Where there is a strong ‘group’ pressure, the body is perceived as a bounded system, strongly controlled. It is considered as a ‘holy’ or ‘pure’ body and so it guards its orifices (eyes, ears, genitals) and maintains firm and clear boundaries. Its concern for order and clarity make it fear unconsciousness, fainting, or any loss of control; it will tend to take a negative view of ecstasy or spirit possession. It is a regulated and harmonious body whose individual parts are disciplined and coordinated for group actions, as in the case of an athlete\textsuperscript{19}

Paul has stated throughout passages in I Corinthians that followers have both to guard their bodies and guard the community they exist in. The main theme in his letter regarding the body is to maintain constant control over the urges and temptations of the body. Through this commitment to control, Paul's view of individual and social control is identical. His cultural view of the ideal structure of the churches in the Mediterranean is clear through his explanation of both the individual body and the social body.\textsuperscript{20} Much of the discussion concerning sōma does revolve around the interconnectedness of the individual and corporate/social body. Even when Paul is seemingly speaking to the individual, his words can be easily applied to the social body acting as one united being.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 132.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 132.
I Corinthians 9:24–27

24 Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. 25 Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. 26 So do I not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; 27 but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.

In I Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul strongly supports the need for bodily control. This passage is unique in its comparison to an athlete and the strong references to Greek athletic culture. The biennial Isthmian games were the second most popular events in Greece, which drew large crowds and many visitors. "Even outside Corinth, however, no one would miss Paul's point; athletic illustrations were among the most common employed by philosophers and others for their labours. The point is not competition but self-discipline."

The winner of the Isthmian games would often be crowned with a pine-wreath or similar material.

Athletes can be very disciplined in their body; however, Paul makes the claim that his bodily control is completely committed to claiming an imperishable wreath through his commitment to God. Paul is using an athletic metaphor to legitimize his life of sacrifice. Paul is drawing a parallel between the individual training for boxing and his own bodily punishment when he states that he does not beat the air when he boxes but, instead, he is controlled. Paul does not fully explain the connection between beating and the 'prize;' however, his use of the body does evoke an athletic image; a body that is not harshly disciplined will seek pleasure and "failure to discipline himself would lead to failing the test or being 'disqualified,' a designation that for Paul probably includes eternal

21 Craig S. Keener, 1–2 Corinthians (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 82.
22 Ibid., 81.
consequences." Paul continually advocates for consistent control of one's body and this passage reveals that instructions for daily conduct extend even to himself.

The indication of verse 24 is that the consequence of not receiving the prize is disastrous – it requires great exertion to achieve the prize. There is no single winner from the Christian group; rather, the entirety of the church runs in the 'race' and all the members share in the 'prize.' This prize that Paul refers to could also be influenced by his Jewish heritage: "Diaspora Jews also promised God's prize for those who sacrificed for virtue (4 Macc 9:8; 15:29); the prize for martyrdom was, as for self-discipline here, 'immortality' (4 Macc 17:12). Jews obeyed the law with a greater incentive than earthly treasures or victory wreaths." Paul reflects on the importance of the prize that he is competing for and shows the purpose and effort to be greater than that of the athletes competing for the perishable wreath.

Paul clearly separates himself from other athletes, however, because of where his efforts are directed. Paul states that his efforts are not wasted because he knows exactly the goal that he is attempting to attain. His effort refers to the punishment he puts his body through; however, his body is not the sole entity that pulls him away from God. Paul does not view his body as an antagonist, "rather, it is something, which becomes a bad master, if it is not made to be a good servant." He uses the athletic metaphor to reveal himself as a fellow competitor, but also to transmit the severity of the 'exercise' that must be maintained, even for himself. Robertson and Plummer state that Paul

23 Ibid., 82.
25 Keener, 1-2 Corinthians, 82.
26 Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 196.
27 Ibid., 197.
essentially mirrors the gospel by acting as the herald (κῆρυξ) to summon the runners through his gospel; however, he was also a competitor himself. They explain the notion of disqualification as harmful to Paul because he is the 'herald' calling followers to discipline their bodies and, as a result, he must also follow his own teachings so they will not be discounted through Paul’s inability to adhere to them.\(^{28}\) Paul gives precise instructions for actions, but also reveals that he himself strictly follows them for the sake of the community.

Even if the parallel between the Isthmian games and Paul's actions is understood completely, there is still the question of the treatment of his own body. He states that he punishes and enslaves his body in the same manner that an athlete would. The implication of this verse is that "he presumably refers not simply to an ascetic physical severity, but to a strict discipline of life and conduct."\(^{29}\) This passage is another instance where sóma and sarx can be used synonymously, without a rigid distinction.\(^{30}\) However, the essence behind the use of sóma in this passage coincides with the understanding that Paul's sóma refers to the entire united self and not just the flesh.

When Paul states that he controls his body, he does not just discipline his physical outer body, but his ‘self’ or his ‘person as a whole.’\(^{31}\) When sóma and sarx are synonymous with one another, it especially indicates that the human body is prone to sin.\(^{32}\) Normally when sóma and sarx are used in other passages, they tend to represent a

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 197.
contrast because sōma has a neutral sense and sarx represents a rebellion from God.  

Verse 27 outlines how sōma can be used as a pronoun "he pommels or subdues himself" to outline the importance of understanding sōma as the entirety of the person that is affected by the action. If it was just flesh that Paul referred to as the focus of his self-control, then sarx would have sufficed; however, because he uses sōma he includes all the aspects of his united body. He disciplines his entire united body through specific self-control and encourages the members of the Corinthian church to act as he does himself in order to have obedient, united bodies of their own.

I Corinthians 6:15–20

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, ‘The two shall be one flesh.’ 17 But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

In I Corinthians 6:15–20, Paul is addressing the Corinthian church about fornication and the effect that that particular sin has on the body. Here Paul does not use a metaphorical approach, but rather directly addresses the necessary conduct and importance of the body. There is no need to deduce what his understanding of the body is from a metaphor; however, even in direct reference to the body, there is still room for

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33 Robinson, The Body, 27.
interpretation. He states that “fornicators sin against the body itself,” and believers are supposed to “Glorify God in [their] body.” The Corinthian church believed that the phrase ‘freedom in the spirit’ meant ‘freedom from the body;’ therefore, some within the church may have assumed that they were able to participate in bodily sins because these did not affect the spirit. However, Paul still had to maintain the unity of the body and the spirit for the church, especially in the case of sexual immorality: “Since the body is morally irrelevant for the Corinthians, the whole force of Paul's refutation must, on this hypothesis, rest upon the ‘his own’ element in his reply—the fact that fornication affects one's own body in some peculiarly intense way.” Paul has evolved the Greek idea of the dualism between the body and spirit and reveals its clear links with the Corinthian church. He preaches against this because of the belief that the body deeply affects the soul and spirit.

To continue with this passage, verse 19 reveals the reasoning behind Paul’s statement that all believers should not commit fornication. “Or do you not know that your body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?” All of the verses leading up to this particular verse are speaking about the sexual immorality associated with the body. Here, Paul tells the Corinthian church to honour God with their body. This is understood as a reference to the earlier verse where Paul declares that the Corinthian church is God’s temple. There is the idea that both the individual and the community are able to honour God through their lack of sin, even bodily sin. “Some sins can be purely spiritual, e.g., pride. But no sin can be

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37 I Corinthians 6:19.
purely ‘unspiritual’ in the sense of not touching the personal core of one’s being. Sōma must preserve here its physical sense.” In this case, sōma is spoken about in the physical sense, and in the way that Paul uses it, the sin that is committed against the sōma is one that also affects the rest of the sōma, which involves the soul and immateriality.

Paul isolates the sin of fornication as affecting one’s own body directly, not in the same way he does with drunkenness or gluttony. Brendan Byrne gives a useful perspective when he speaks about the instrument for personal communication in the sexual act, which causes the phrase ‘sin against one’s own body’ to become clear: “the immoral person perverts precisely that faculty within himself that is meant to be the instrument of the most intimate bodily communication between persons.” Directly following this passage is I Corinthians 7, where Paul begins a discussion of his theology of marriage and explores the idea of the bodies of spouses belonging to one another. There is a collection of New Testament verses that draws parallels between a marital relationship of surrendering one’s body to one another, and one giving over their body to Christ. In referring to the Old Testament view of the ideal body, Paul’s ideal sōma is whole and has not been tied to fornication. The idea of the body as representative in the community is not just meant to refer to an entire group; rather, it can also refer to two people who represent a community and are able to be a temple for God in the way Paul describes it for the whole church community. “I Cor. 6:15 states in the form of an exact antithesis the proposition that intercourse with a prostitute creates a single body out of two human beings and makes members of Christ into the members of a prostitute.”

39 Byrne, “Sinning Against One’s Own Body,” 612.
40 Ibid., 613.
41 Ibid., 614.
Each member of the community needs to be whole; therefore, when one member joins with a prostitute, they are no longer whole and no longer contribute to the wholeness of the community.

There is much debate surrounding I Corinthians 6 about whether Paul is intentionally speaking to the individual or the community. Certain scholars state that he is most definitely talking about the individual, and others state that it is inarguably referring to the ‘body’ as the communal body. Nijay K. Gupta attempts to resolve this debate by looking at how sōma is used in the passage. When looking at it from the individual perspective, the issue of pluralisation of surrounding words creates a problem. The personal pronoun associated with the text is plural, yet the word sōma is used in the singular, which therefore translates to “your (plural) body (singular)” (τό σῶμα ὑμῶν). There are a couple of reasons for this usage: it could be the hortatory speech sometimes used in the LXX, or “σῶμα could be theological, drawing attention to the corporate while speaking particularly about each individual.” In this case, Gupta concludes that based on 6:14, “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power,” the body is an instrument of the Lord and will be raised; therefore, each individual body belongs to the Lord and has “permanent significance” in both an individual and communal respect. Gupta’s conclusion reflects the message of Paul where the individual bodily unity reflects a communal bodily unity. Whether this passage is relating to the individual or the community, the point is for the ‘body’ to be a cohesive unit that honours God with its actions because of the effect that sin has on both the body and the spirit.

44 Ibid., 524.
45 Ibid., 524.
46 Ibid., 527.
The openness to having one’s sōma used as a sacrifice reveals the openness to having the Spirit within the body: “Paul not only portrays the Corinthian church as God’s temple, but makes the believers individually the dwelling of His spirit. They are the temple of God since His spirit dwells in them; i.e. in their σῶμα… Paul thereby puts the emphasis on their unity, the lordship of God as well as their holiness…”47 The fundamental difference between Christians and pagans is their attitudes toward the body which essentially refer to the duality between the flesh and the spirit. The distinguishing factor to note here is that the strongest dualistic properties related to one’s self are not the body and soul, but rather specifically the flesh and the Spirit. It is the control of the flesh that allows for the Spirit to rule the body. Because of this differentiation, Paul has been seen to regard σῶμα Χριστοῦ and πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ almost interchangeably.48 The times when Paul sees the Body and the Spirit of Christ as interchangeable only occur under the circumstances of pure bodily control. Without any bodily control, the individual and corporate body cannot be the body of Christ, even though the Spirit may be present in some form.

I Corinthians 6:15-20 also shows two distinctly separate views on bodily control: the first is when the body is neutral and uncontrolled, and the second is Paul’s view, which requires bodily control. Paul believes that the body of a believer is holy and not neutral because it is both a member of Christ and the individual physical body is the container for the Holy Spirit.49 The Christian's body is also controlled because the actions that are not lawful for the body can enslave it; therefore, there are regulations for

control. This passage is mainly attentive to the pure interior of the body - other sins that are outside of the body are not considered pollutions or abominations; however, sexual sins create a pollution of the inner body.\textsuperscript{50} Paul views the body in relation to many of the same themes from the Hebrew Bible: purity, procreation, protection, and control of the body. There is a strong need for Paul to protect the body from tempting forces, to maintain a certain level of purity in order to allow the Spirit of Christ to dwell within and create a whole sōma, and to engage in procreation in the way that still allows the body to be used to honour God.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church to encourage them not to become divided or continue with their quarrels. It was a difficult group of people to teach because of the diversity in their backgrounds and the Greek culture that pervaded their environment. I Corinthians reveals Paul’s use of the human body as a metaphor to teach the Corinthians about the importance of a united individual body and social body. He provides an allusion to the body in order to communicate the necessity of each individual member of the body and highlight the unity that should exist in both respects. Paul is arguing against a cultural focus of separated body parts and vying for a perspective that views the body as one entity that honours God. Furthermore, Paul continues to instruct about the body through his analogy of the athlete who needs to control his body. Rather than aligning his values with the Greek society, Paul uses this imagery to refer to a common example of Greek athletic games, while providing his own explanation that the controlled body

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 140.
should be directed towards God. Finally, Paul gives clear instructions to the Corinthian church concerning the use of prostitutes. Within this passage, Paul outlines the importance of the body and how purity of the body must be maintained because the body is now acting as a Temple for the Holy Spirit. Rather than viewing the physical aspect of the body as separate from the spiritual aspects of the body, Paul reveals the connected nature of the body to the Spirit and how a disunited body becomes dishonouring to God. Through these three passages, Paul reveals the importance of the body of the members of the community as individuals and also as one united society.
Chapter Four: The Allusion to Body in Paul's Letters

The next chapter is dedicated to the study of allusions to the body. These passages do not directly focus on sōma; however, Paul gives instruction and guidance for matters associated with the body. Within the passages that will be explored, there is a clear link to Paul’s emphasis on the purity and control that is necessary for each human body. Paul encourages purity in the context of the body as a temple and control is important because of the effect that the physical body has on the immaterial parts of the body. Paul teaches that control and purity of the body contribute to bodily unity. Furthermore, he maintains this theme of bodily unity throughout I Corinthians in order to guide the community away from divisions. One instance among many is seen in his statements in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

I Corinthians 3:16–17

16 Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? 17 If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

This passage does not directly address a human body, nor does it have the word sōma in it; however, the passage contains a strong allusion to the body as a temple. Although this passage is only 2 verses, it contains many strong statements by Paul concerning his attitude towards the body. He provided the Corinthian community with
instructions about everyday conduct that they had not encountered in either Greek culture or Jewish customs.

Two of the main purposes behind this passage are: 1) to show the Corinthian people the significance of being God's people, and 2) to use imagery from verses 13-15 to warn those people who are threatening the cohesion of the community body by creating division in the church.\(^1\) There were specific people within the community that were creating problems and potential divisions; verse 17 is specifically targeting these people by threatening them with destruction.\(^2\) Paul does defend and explain his reasoning behind such a strong statement through verses 16 and 17b.

This warning of divine vengeance, however, reflects the Jewish conception of 'measure for measure' as the fitting punishment (rather than punishment with interest).\(^3\) The Corinthian community was given strong advice from Paul because they lacked the knowledge that Paul thought they should possess. His strong warnings and bombardment with rhetorical questions lead the reader to conclusions about their understanding of the community. The use of the rhetorical questions in the letter – frequent in I Corinthians – is to point out the nature of many things that should already be obvious to the church.\(^4\) Paul asks a rhetorical question such as this 10 times in I Corinthians, leading the reader to believe that the Corinthian community lacked basic knowledge of their faith.\(^5\) Paul was attempting to explain difficult concepts to people with different backgrounds in order to form the Christians into one cohesive unit. Paul had to clarify for his followers that they

\(^2\) Ibid., 148.
\(^4\) Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 146.
should not confuse their social realities (Greek/Roman law and Israelite jurisdiction) and the ‘oughts’ (non-enforced laws and customs) that were associated with the open access to God through Christ. The way Paul explained the difference between the dictated law of their culture and the unwritten necessities of being a follower was through allusions to the body.

I Corinthians 3:9-15 often uses the metaphor of a builder creating a building. Paul refers to himself as the skilled master builder laying the foundation (3:10) with Jesus as that foundation (3:11). It is later on in 3:16-17 that Paul clarifies that the building that he has created is God's Temple, and that each of his followers makes up the Temple. One of the main tenets relating to the Temple in Jerusalem was that there was only one Temple. That requirement is still maintained in Paul's statements because the wording implies that there are not multiple temples, but one Temple of God that is embodied in both the church and the individual. Furthermore, the image of the Temple also raises many issues concerning the sacredness of the Temple and purity laws surrounding the maintenance of the Temple.

A thorough discussion of the implications of purity associated with the Temple will be covered later on; however, the important aspect of the Temple metaphor is the innate holiness associated with the Temple of God. The passage refers to God as the master builder and, pushing that metaphor further, the temple in verses 16-17 could be referring to the Holy of Holies. This is the most central part of the Temple where God dwelt.

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7 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 146.
9 Ibid., 66.
Paul shifts this image of priestly service for the purposes of teaching his followers that they all now have access to the inner holy place of the cult: "their bodies are themselves temples enshrining God's presence." Therefore, Paul is preaching that the body of the community possesses the Holy Spirit, and through this presence, they are both made holy and expected to keep God's holiness inviolate. One issue of Paul teaching this is that the Corinthian people were considered a carnal people and had never before conceptualized a Spirit dwelling within them. Pagan temples were inhabited with images of their gods; however, the Christian church was different because it possessed the Spirit of God himself within it. Paul clearly states in verse 17b that "God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." The threat to the individuals creating divisions in the community is much more understandable when recalling the threat to any individual that would defile the Temple. "Both the Tabernacle and the Temple are frequently called ἅγιος, and in the instinct of archaic religion in the [Old Testament] the idea of danger was included in that of 'holiness.'" Paul emphasized the utmost importance of maintaining the holiness and sacredness of the temple – whether that was a physical building or a community.

The primary argument for Paul throughout his letter to the Corinthian church is the necessity for unity within the body. Through the earlier study of purity in Judaism, we understood that Paul would have associated purity with wholeness and holiness. For something to be holy, it first had to be whole; something stated to be 'holy' is set apart for God. Paul often referred to his followers as hagioi ‘saints,’ because they were set apart

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10 Dunn, Theology of Paul the Apostle, 330.
12 Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians, 66.
13 Ibid., 67-8.
Many of Paul’s instructions to his followers revolve around not giving into wrongdoings of the flesh because of the creation of bodily unwholeness and subsequent alienation from the community. To complement his warnings against certain actions, Paul uses the body in his letter to communicate the importance of his message.

Although Paul may connect the Spirit’s work particularly with sanctification, which sets believers apart as God's holy people and for the service of God, he does not actually make that connection here. He does make it, however, when, in support of his claim that one's whole being belongs to the Lord (6.13), he identifies the body of the individual believer as 'a temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit' (6.19); and again, when he calls on his congregation – a community of believers – to understand itself as 'God's temple,' made holy by God's presence through the Spirit (3.16–17).

Paul does not clarify the correlation between the body acting as a temple of God and the purity laws associated with this connection. The known purity laws from the Torah were very specific and also had the purpose of setting the whole being apart for God. However, the same purity laws were no longer in effect in Paul’s association. The members were made part of the community through their baptism, and they were then part of the 'temple' of God with the spirit existing within them; however, their conduct was important inside and outside the community because they were God's holy people. Rather than engaging in continual washing and maintenance of a certain level of purity, followers participated in a symbolic washing through baptism.

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14 Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 330.
15 Ibid., 497.
17 Ibid., 33.
Before any further explanation of baptism's role in purity, we must first look to the implications behind purity from an anthropological perspective. The important factors for purity involve the sacred and profane: the difference between the sacred and the profane lies in a thing, place, or time set apart for something. If the thing is set apart for someone, it is sacred; however, if something is not set apart for anyone, it is considered profane. In the context of a sacrifice, the sacred is an object that has been set aside for God; in the context of people, the Holy people of God have been set aside for God.\textsuperscript{18} Purity is a form of maintaining the distinction between the sacred and the profane. "Dirt is a way of speaking of something out of place. Dirt is a sort of metaphor for matter (and sometimes persons) out of place."\textsuperscript{19} Purity rules create social boundaries and a cultural map that defines exclusivity and inclusivity; defilement entails exclusivity and no longer being set apart for something specific. Uncleanness leads to the profane. Paul follows the idea of the purity system in place by following a particular understanding of the sacred and profane. Paul clarifies that by keeping one's body metaphorically pure, it is set aside for God and, therefore, it can remain a Temple for the Holy Spirit.

With dirt representing something out of place, it is the society that determines what is considered dirt and what is in its right place. "At an abstract level, purity refers to the generic process of ordering, classifying, and evaluating persons, places, things, times, events, and experiences so that everyone and everything is in its proper place and time."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 165.
Paul reflects this understanding by giving precise instructions of conduct for the Corinthian church so that they may stay within the community.

The form of purity does not consist of daily washing rituals; however, inclusion in their community does include one form of washing which alludes to baptism. Paul applies a spiritual nature to purity and sanctification when he claims that the Corinthians’ bodies are temples and that they must wash their heart and conscience; however, he does not consider baptism as an equivalent and replacement for circumcision because it is not an obligatory action like circumcision.\(^{21}\) Paul uses the fundamental understanding of purity of the body from the Torah and applies it to the church body that he has laid the foundation for. "Post-Jesus group purity rules will henceforth derive from the interaction of group members 'in Christ' rather than from previous biblical injunctions. These interactions become the new norms for situating persons and things in their proper places."\(^{22}\) The members of the church are considered part of the community if they follow the purity rules for their conscience in order to keep themselves whole.

The Temple was no longer the only sacred space of God; now it was the collective holy group, or Body of Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit, that represented the Temple.\(^{23}\) "Purity lines now consisted only of a distinction between inside and outside, in-group and out-group. The lines deriving from social status, gender roles, and ethnicity were to be levelled, at least when post-Jesus group members gathered (…1 Corinthians 12:13)."\(^{24}\) I Corinthians 3:16-17 reflects Paul's core understanding of the necessity to protect the purity of the social body in order to maintain the unity and wholeness of it.

\(^{21}\) Dunn, *Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 454.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 192.
\(^{24}\) Ibid., 192.
Paul states that if the body is a temple, it needs to remain pure because of its possession of the Spirit that, therefore, makes the temple holy. If the society is the temple, then the society is considered holy; therefore, Paul instructs the body to remain whole.

I Corinthians 6:12–14

12 “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. 13 “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food,” and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power.

It would not be a stretch to say that there is a lot of material packed into these three verses. At first glance, Paul makes large statements and incorporates a variety of viewpoints in order to communicate his arguments. Paul is strongly asserting his beliefs concerning a necessity for followers to control their body for the purpose of perpetuating a united body. The parts of verses 12 and 13 that Paul quotes for the Corinthian church are called slogans, thought to be excerpts from letters the Corinthian church sent to Paul. 25 Paul quotes back to the Corinthian church their own slogans, the first being 'All things are lawful for me,' and the second being 'Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food.' We are provided with very little knowledge concerning their side of this discussion. 26 Even though there are only four 'slogans' of the Corinthian church that Paul quotes back to them, it still provides valuable information concerning the “Strong” part of the church.

These “Strong” people claim to understand their freedom and knowledge and, therefore, do not fear other pagan gods: "They show no concern for the purity regarding food, and this seems tied to a deprecation of the body."  

Because of this disregard, there is a strong possibility that Paul's opponents in the Corinthian community possessed Gnostic ideas, which considered the body and soul in a dualistic relationship. The body was meant to decay and salvation was found in the elevation of the soul through knowledge. The bodily decay would manifest itself in either asceticism or libertinism, causing them to also reject the resurrection of the body. While they existed within the community, they caused issues with the 'weaker' Christians who did not possess the same understanding. Gnostics were much more prevalent at a later date than when the Corinthian community was established; however, Paul’s arguments do seem to oppose Gnostic concepts related to the secondary nature of the body.

Throughout I Corinthians, Paul argues against different opponents and specifically targets them in his letter. In this particular instance, Paul is arguing with an imaginary opponent because there is no specific action that he is arguing against, just the slogan itself. Paul is responding to two different slogans in these verses: one concerning freedom and the other concerning the stomach.

Finally, some, or perhaps even most, of the congregation believed that in reigning with Christ they were delivered from needing to worry with questions of right and wrong, and with distinguishing moral from immoral actions. To characterize this view Paul cited, or perhaps himself devised, the slogan, 'Everything is permissible for me' (6.12; 10.23). Others, however, seem to have embraced an almost opposite view, convinced that in reigning with Christ they were required to

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27 Ibid., 70.
28 Ibid., 70.
29 Hurd, The Origins of I Corinthians, 87.
distance themselves as far as possible from the moral stain of worldly involvements.\footnote{Furnish, \textit{The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians}, 11.}

Paul brought these two slogans together to discuss them at the same time because they deal with boundaries of the body. From the text, it is clear that the Corinthian church was attempting to figure out boundary levels, and often adopting extreme practices. The slogan 'All things are lawful for me' is also found in I Corinthians 10:23, suggesting that Paul was connecting his future argument against eating idol meat to the topic of fornication. Therefore, Paul is making a thorough argument against the Corinthians’ 'understanding' of freedom.\footnote{Hurd, \textit{The Origins of I Corinthians}, 88, 164.} Freedom in the body does not entail a lack of responsibility. The belly is associated with gluttony just as the body is associated with intercourse – in this way, Paul is arguing against the Greek justification that if food is meant for the stomach, then the body is meant for intercourse.\footnote{Craig S. Keener, \textit{1–2 Corinthians} (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005), 57.} Paul is, therefore, attempting to assert his theories against the Greek ideas of the body and insert his own ideas about staying within proper bodily boundaries. Rather than allowing a lack of bodily control, Paul is supporting the notion of control in order to not allow the self to be corrupted by gluttony or fornication.

Dale B. Martin believes that Paul is addressing the “Strong” group with his comments on bodily boundaries. They most likely do not condone visiting prostitutes or believe that sex and food should have control over someone; therefore, imprudence relating to both food and sex merits attention and not anxiety. Paul argues against the hierarchy of bodily issues and makes it clear that the body is just as important in comparison to the human mind and will. Paul puts \textit{porneia} on one side of the estranged
cosmos and God, Christ, and believers as embodied beings in their reality.\textsuperscript{33} "The connection between food and sex in 6:13 does not entail a conjunction of actual events… it is due to an underlying logic about the body and its boundaries: potentially, both eating and sexual intercourse are boundary-transgressing activities."\textsuperscript{34} By linking together chapter 5 and 6, Martin views Paul’s concern with bodily boundaries as important because of the greater social body that was at risk because of the actions of the “Strong.” Both the individual and social body were at risk because of the connectedness of the physical body to the spiritual body. Paul communicates that the body is united and, therefore, requires control in all respects.

In responding to the slogans of the community, Paul had a large task of attempting to correct the actions and beliefs of the community regarding the body. The Corinthian church misunderstood their freedom and their body; verses 12-14 consist of the first response from Paul. He directly argues against their misunderstanding by first looking at their view of freedom in verse 12 and then their view of the body in verse 13.\textsuperscript{35} The real question for Paul is not about whether it is 'right' or 'lawful,' but whether it benefits the person doing the action, hence his immediate response to the slogan in verse 12.\textsuperscript{36} An action that was lawful for a person was not necessarily good for a person – Paul warns followers about being dominated or enslaved by something one thinks they have control over: "In contrast to philosophers who denigrated or ignored the body, Paul emphasizes the body's sanctity, with an argument that climaxes in the exhortation to 'glorify God in your body' (6:20). The body, including its sexuality, was a divine gift to be used

\textsuperscript{33} Martin, \textit{The Corinthian Body}, 175-6.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{35} Fee, \textit{The First Epistle to the Corinthians}, 251.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 252. Furnish, \textit{The Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians}, 56.
responsibly. Their new identity in Christ must shape their behaviour (6:11, 13-17, 19-20)." The reasoning behind this response from Paul becomes clear when taking into account verse 14.

The central argument of verses 12-14 concerns porneia; the food for the stomach gives context, and the resurrection discussion is the reasoning behind it. Paul has been presupposing the resurrection the entire time: verse 14 supports his statements in verse 13b where he is clearly referring to more than just the 'body.' "He is thinking of the whole person, a 'self' which, precisely in its corporeality and creatureliness, is capable of communicating with and therefore relating to other selves. However, what he sees as finally definitive of one's humanity is the body's being 'for the Lord' and the Lord's being 'for the body.' He thus regards the body as the place where the claim of the resurrected-crucified Lord is received, and where his lordship is to be manifested." Although this passage at first seems to be an amalgamation of various thoughts and sentences, Paul has clearly laid out his argument concerning the body in its proper controlled boundaries. He supports his statements by providing the ultimate purpose of his instructions as resurrection. He is battling against the “Strong,” the influential group of the Corinthian church who have their own biases and preconceived notions about the role of their individual body within the greater community body. Rather than using his own arguments, Paul resorts to using the statements that the church has already made to address specific issues in their thinking concerning a unity of the body.

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I Corinthians 11:3-7

3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man; and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. 4 Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, 5 but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man.

In this passage, Paul is speaking to the Corinthian church about women covering their head while praying or prophesying. In many other places in the letters, Paul uses the metaphor of the body to represent the community itself and these metaphors are all related to the problem of control. Control in this context is not used in the way of one unit controlling the other, but in the sense of a ‘microcosmic’ order created, which mirrors the ‘divine macrocosmic’ order.39 This concept of order was necessary because of the necessity to control one’s physical body so that it contributes to the order of the community that each individual was a part of.

Paul was attempting to battle the idea of ‘freedom in the Spirit’ that the Corinthian church had misunderstood to mean ‘freedom from the body’ and, thereby, not following the methods of social control that Paul was attempting to advocate. Bodily control was an expression of social control; there were many women within the Corinthian church who were in a higher class. To these women, Paul had to communicate the necessity to maintain both social order and natural order.40 Within this

40 Ibid., 224.
passage, Paul is communicating that social and individual order starts with the head: “In the Greco-Roman social world, the ‘head’ was thought of as the source of rule or governance, just as in modern parlance we speak of the ‘head’ of a department. In Greco-Roman medicine and philosophy, the head was regarded as ‘the governing [leading] part \[to hegemonikon\] of the soul.”41 The dualism between the body and soul that is present within Greek culture and parts of Hellenized Judaism is seen clearly in the head as the leader of the soul; however, Paul does not reflect that understanding. Instead, he maintains a focus on the head as the ruler over other entities, not just one’s soul. Paul maintains his evolved definition of the sōma and states that freedom in the spirit does not entail that the physical body is to be left behind.

Paul clarifies his position on this matter by using a metaphorical use of the human body that unites the community of men, women, and God in the Corinthian church by stating that God is the head of Christ, Christ the head of men, and men are the heads of women.42 The fear in this passage stems from the idea that the women of the Corinthian church have ‘lost their heads’ and that the men potentially need to assist in their bodily control, which implies a reference to honour and shame of the community.43 The women are important in the community; in order for them to be ‘whole’ in the community, they must remain ‘whole’ as individuals and ‘keep their heads.’ Paul is attempting to clarify the physical unity of the individual as an effect on the unity of the community. The imagery of the body that he is using reflects his evolved definition of the united body in order to display an ideal view of the united community that works like a united body for the sake of honouring God.

41 Ibid., 225.
42 1 Corinthians 11:3.
Ernst Käsemann offers his own theory regarding the use of ‘head’ in this passage by looking at the implications of verse 7 when it suddenly refers to man having been made in the image of God. This passage is significant because of the relation it has to both the Torah and later Greek ideas – some of which are presented by Plato and Philo. This passage refers back to Genesis and follows the Rabbinic tradition of only man being made in the image of God and where the woman is said to be made in the reflection of man.\(^44\) However, the Greek idea of the ‘image of God’ translates to the cosmos becoming a reflection of God. “In Philo, Plutarch and the Hermetic Corpus, it is the cosmos which is thought of as the first-born and the image of God, and therefore as the Son of God and δεύτερος θεός. This was the starting-point which enabled Hellenistic Judaism to take over the predicate for Sophia and Logos, inasmuch as the former was similarly ‘the first-born’ and, as πάρεδρος, was in practice also δεύτερος θεός.”\(^45\) The Jewish tradition seen within this passage strongly links the Greek words εἰκών (image, likeness) and κεφαλή (head), which can be used almost synonymously. If the man is the reflection of God, then God is the head of every man. And likewise, if woman is in the likeness of man, then man is the head of every woman. “It is a characteristic mark of the eikon to stand within a series and, in its capacity as archetype, to throw off ‘copies’; it is this notion which Paul is reproducing when he uses the phrase ‘to be shaped to the likeness of his Son’. For, in contradiction to Judaism, Paul has given up the idea that man as such has retained the image of God.”\(^46\) This statement that Käsemann makes indicates the transfer of ‘likeness’ to being the head over someone.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 156-7.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., 157.
Käsemann’s theory does not explain the link between control of the society and the individual; however, it does reveal an effective understanding of the use of both head and likeness for Paul. While control is an implied understanding of one group being the head over another, it is not specifically explained in the passage. Rather, it is understood because of surrounding verses written by Paul. Throughout First Corinthians, Paul is showing his disapproval of the idea of a separation between the fleshly body and the soul. Instead he chooses to demonstrate through his letters the importance of treating the body as one united entity that all needs to be controlled.

Conclusion

Paul does not always use sōma when he refers to the body of either an individual or the community. The previous passages studied focused on Paul’s discussion of allusions to the body, without directly discussing sōma. This study is valuable because the body is such a large focus in I Corinthians. In the first passage, Paul refers to the Corinthian church as the Temple of God, with God’s Spirit dwelling within them. Paul uses and adapts the Hebrew purity laws to guide the Corinthian church in maintaining the purity of their bodies so as to act as a temple, with harsh warnings against any defiler. The next passage reveals Paul’s opposition to statements believed to originate from the Corinthian people concerning allowable actions. Paul gives direct rebuttals to each ‘slogan’ with the clarification that there is no separation between the body and spirit – what the body does is linked to the spiritual aspects of the self.

In the final passage, Paul uses a metaphorical approach to outline his instructions for the Corinthian church by using ‘head’ to indicate rulership. Paul is attempting to
maintain the unity of the social body by outlining the importance of controlling one’s individual body and ‘keeping one’s head.’ The Corinthian church is consistently given instructions that guide them towards a united social body. Through this, Paul’s guidance most often heavily supports both control and purity of the body. Paul uses his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew conceptions of body and adapts both influences to create his message of support for bodily unity.
Conclusion

In I Corinthians, Paul includes many direct discussions and allusions to the human body for the purpose of encouraging a united body. His understanding of the significance of the body arises from the influence of Second Temple Judaism and first-century Greek culture, which further influenced his instructions to the Corinthian community that centred on control and purity of the body. His conception of the Hebrew purity laws dictated that he considered the community body of the Corinthian church to represent the Temple of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, required that the members followed the underlying purity requirements of exclusion and inclusion. Furthermore, Paul consistently employed the notion of a strong controlled body in order to promote a united Corinthian community.

There was a strong focus within Judaism upon purity laws and the proper placement of ‘dirt.’ Unclean substances were required to remain in their dedicated place and those that violated this requirement were perceived as being out of place. Purity laws were most important surrounding the Temple because of the necessity to maintain wholeness and cleanliness around the presence of God. No one could enter the Temple unless they mirrored the image of God in complete holiness and cleanliness. Paul applies this understanding to the Corinthian community by claiming that they, as a whole, were the Temple of God and, therefore, needed to remain pure.

Paul is also heavily influenced by the Greek culture he was brought up in and through the language that he spoke. A close study of σῶμα in its proper context is necessary in order to understand how Paul used it and further employed σῶμα to fit his
own message to the Corinthian church. Unlike Hebrew, Greek does have sōma to indicate a body as a whole entity; however, Greek thought often generated opposing forces for the body in many different respects. The primary opposing force is found in the idea of the duality between the body and soul. Paul argues against this understanding of a duality and encourages the notion of a body where flesh and spirit are united. However, the Corinthian community did not accept this concept. Paul, therefore, instructs the community members to control their individual bodies’ flesh and spirit because it affected the community body.

Paul uses bodily concepts from both Second Temple Judaism and first-century Greek culture both as a support for his theories, and sometimes as a position to refute. Paul evolves the Hebrew purity laws to communicate his understanding of maintaining the purity of the individual and the greater social body in order to contain the Spirit within it. Furthermore, Paul also uses sōma in his own specific way to argue against the Greek notion of opposition to the body. Through these supports and oppositions, Paul consistently promotes a united body in both the individual members and the whole community of the Corinthian church.

The implication for these findings is that Paul was active in the influences that he used to communicate his principles to the Corinthian church. His understanding of the body lends itself to a clear understanding of how the Corinthian church ought to have functioned in the eyes of Paul. He chose specific aspects of both Second Temple Judaism and first-century Greek culture relating to the human body to portray the most understandable image to the community. It is no mistake that the epistle where Paul
employs the strongest image of a unified human body is for a community that is close to diverging from it.
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