BUILT: (RE)CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY AND AUTHORITY
IN 1 CORINTHIANS 7

by

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Date **APRIL 29, 2000**
Abstract

This thesis contains two movements. In the first chapter, I evaluate the Apostle Paul's self-presentation in the city of Corinth (as reconstructed through his Corinthian correspondence). Employing the insights of recent scholarship on gender in antiquity, I arrive at the conclusion that Paul's deficiency as a public speaker, his unnamed physical affliction, and possibly his circumcision combined to feminize his image. All three of these characteristics contravene the Greco-Roman canons of masculine appearance and deportment. And, although the social situation in Corinth is by no means clear, it appears that some were challenging Paul's leadership on the basis of his damaged masculinity. In chapters 2 and 3, I explore one element of the Apostle's self-presentation that may have ameliorated his problematic image: sexual renunciation. Self-control in the culture of antiquity was closely associated with the masculine activity par excellence, control over others. Thus, by simply practicing this virtue, Paul was making a meaningful statement both about his body and about his ability to lead. I go on, however, to identify the places in 1 Corinthians 7 (Paul's only extended treatment of marriage and celibacy) where he diverges from classical models of ascetic practice. I contend that these very alterations to the meaning of self-control further rehabilitate his damaged masculinity. This thesis is intended to be, not only a contribution to the social history of early Christianity, but also part of a broad movement in contemporary scholarship to destabilize the foundations of 'masculinity' in the West.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Anchor Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABR</td>
<td>Australian Biblical Review</td>
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<td>AJP</td>
<td><em>American Journal of Papyrology</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRBS</td>
<td><em>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HNTC</td>
<td>Harper’s New Testament Commentaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td><em>Harvard Theological Review</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td><em>Hebrew Union College Annual</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td><em>Journal of Biblical Literature</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JRS</td>
<td><em>Journal of Roman Studies</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSNT</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>JSPs</td>
<td><em>Journal for the Study of the Psuedepigrapha</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCC</td>
<td>Library of Christian Classics</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>MJ</td>
<td><em>Modern Judaism</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>New International Greek Text Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td><em>Novum Testamentum</em></td>
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<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series</td>
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<td>SPS</td>
<td>Sacra Pagina Series</td>
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<td>YCS</td>
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Introduction

1 Corinthians 7 is Paul’s only extended treatment of marriage and celibacy – indeed it is the only such text in the New Testament – and the proliferation of secondary literature purporting to expound it suggests that it may currently be the sexiest topic in Pauline studies. A summary of this scholarship here would be superfluous, since Will Deming has carried out this task very thoroughly in his recent monograph, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, but I shall briefly identify the characteristics of the secondary literature that I find most problematic.

The most troubling tendency of twentieth-century exegetes of this passage is the palpable drive to dissociate Paul from anti-marriage or broadly ascetic views. This is characteristic of no one particular class of scholar. Naïve and sophisticated, male and female, Protestant and Catholic, all are implicated in a grand march to reclaim Paul for our modern sensibilities. Remaking Paul in one’s own image is nothing new, of course. He has suffered this at intervals since the deuto-Pauline epistles began to circulate mere

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2 Dale Martin (The Corinthian Body [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995], 209) lodges a similar complaint, but he identifies the advocates of this view as being primarily Protestant, male, and married. This is true, but then this class of scholar dominates New Testament Studies in general. I think that those who want to rehabilitate Paul’s “attitude toward sexuality” represent a cross-section of the discipline. See, for example, the Catholic Michael L. Barré, “To Marry or to Burn: Πυρόσβασις in 1 Cor 7:9,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 193-202; and the Catholic and female Carolyn Osiek RSCJ, "First Corinthians 7 and Family Questions," *The Bible Today* 35, no. 5 (1997): 275-279. See also W. E. Phipps, “Is Paul’s Attitude towards Sexual Relations Contained in 1 Cor. 7.1?” *NTS* 28 (1982): 125-31; Jeremy Moiser, “A Reassessment of Paul’s View of Marriage with Reference to 1 Cor. 7,” *JSNT* 19 (1983): 103-22; G. J. Laughery, “Paul:
decades after his death. He has been, at turns, ascetic and defender of marriage, orthodox and gnostic, pro-slavery and anti-slavery, Jewish and anti-Jewish, misogynist and feminist. To be sure, some of these hinge on Paul’s own elusiveness, and, in some sense, it is the fate of every author to be misread. But the pro-marriage, anti-ascetic readings of 1 Cor. 7 have become so implausible, the ruses to make Paul say what we want so elaborate, that it is surely time to readjust our sights.³

One of the strategies employed by contemporary scholars to explain away “ascetic” elements of 1 Cor. 7 is to claim that they are governed by eschatological expectation. This is the second characteristic of contemporary scholarship on this passage that I find problematic. If the world is about to end, so the logic goes, there will be a deemphasis on marriage and procreation. Paul’s ostensible ascetic tendencies in 1 Cor. 7, therefore, represent nothing more than “an interim ethic”.⁴ It is true, of course, that a belief in the imminent end of the world left its mark on early Christian ethics, but this insight is not a panacea for every conundrum of contemporary Pauline scholarship. So often, eschatological expectation is invoked as a final answer to issues that are surely much more complex. I am convinced that the ascetic strain in earliest Christianity is one

of these issues that have been vastly oversimplified. What we need, if we intend to do any justice to the complexity of human actions, is to build up layers of meaning, meticulously pieced together from ancient ascetic discourses. We need to lay these overtop of, and wrap them around, existing end-time readings. In other words, we need to put some flesh on our interpretations of 1 Cor. 7. The present project represents a modest venture in this direction: to find meaning outside of the eschaton.

The focus of my inquiry is Paul's body, and more specifically Paul's body-as-text. If a text, in its broadest sense, is simply a meaningful sequence of signifiers, then the human body certainly qualifies. One's appearance and deportment are interpreted by observers according to the grammar of a "body language" that is specific to each culture. At the beginning of the twenty-first century in North America, one can make a "statement" by extending a middle finger, body piercing and tattooing, weight training, and any number of other acts on or with the body. As with any text, the language of one's body is open to interpretation, but each signifier possesses a conventional sense that allows the entire communicative act to be meaningful. The same holds true for the inhabitants of Greco-Roman antiquity, who had, of course, their own vernacular body language. The first chapter of this thesis begins with an outline of the grammar of a single, but highly significant, referent of one's body-talk in antiquity: gender. This provides a prelude to my reading of Paul's body (as it can be reconstructed from the Corinthian correspondence) according to the logic of classical gender codes. I consider three elements of the Apostle's appearance and deportment: his oratorical deficiencies,
his circumcision, and his unnamed physical affliction. I conclude that these draw Paul into a semiotics of feminization.5

Chapter one sets the stage for my treatment of Paul’s enkrateia (self-control).6 Continuing to read the body as a text, I explore in chapters two and three some of the conventional meanings of this physical act in antiquity. For philosophers and moralists from Classical Greece to the Roman Period, enkrateia was the masculine virtue par excellence.7 Chapter two treats the role of agonistic imagery in constructing enkrateia as a masculine (or masculinizing) activity. And chapter three treats the isomorphic relations between self-control and the male realm of domestic and political authority. These


6 For this and other Greek terms that appear in Latin script, see below, p. 119.

7 By using these sources I am not assuming that Paul was exposed to them in any significant way. It is possible, of course, that Paul did receive a standard (i.e., for the elite) Greco-Roman education (see below, chapter one), but this is not necessary for these sources to be useful in our analysis of the Pauline epistles. First of all, I contend that the meaning of Paul’s body-text is not coterminous with his own intentions (see below, note 7). In other words, meaning depends at least as much on the expectations and assumptions of the reader/audience, making any conventional construction of self-control in antiquity potentially constitutive of the meaning of Paul’s self-control. Secondly, philosophy in antiquity was not conducted in an ivory tower; it was a public activity, and philosophers were public figures. The ideas discussed in these circles, therefore, in outline if not in their particulars, were available for popular consumption. One did not need the very best education to be exposed to some of the debates that occupied more speculative minds. Thirdly, in a very real sense, Pauline Christianity had more in common with philosophical schools than it did with traditional forms of religious practice. (See Stanley K. Stowers, “Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?” Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Dualism, ed. Troels Engberg-Pederson [forthcoming].) Because his Christian communities were structured in similar ways to philosophical groups, Paul faced some of the same issues and problems. This insight will
traditional associations contribute to the conventional meaning of enkrateia, which means that they must be taken into account when considering Paul's practice of this virtue. Whether Paul is employing a conscious strategy of masculinization or not, his self-control serves to offset the image of effeminacy established in the first chapter.

It is my contention, then, that part of the meaning of Paul's self-control is to be found in the conventions of Greco-Roman antiquity. But part of its meaning is also to be found in the idiosyncrasies of Paul's own encratic discourse. Does Paul endorse the conventional elements that made enkrateia a masculine virtue, or does he manipulate or even contradict them? And, if Paul is offering a different construction of enkrateia from most classical models, what effect does this have on the masculinization that is produced in a general way by his practice of self-control? These questions are explored in the second and concluding sections of chapters two and three. I offer exegeses of passages (sticking mainly to 1 Corinthians 7) that explicitly or implicitly treat sexual self-control. After piecing together a peculiarly Pauline encratic discourse, I suggest that his manipulation of the conventional meaning(s) of this virtue actually serves to further combat his problematic body image and ensconce him in a position of authority.

be especially useful in chapter three when I consider social organization and authority in the Cynic and Stoic cosmopolis and in Paul's universal community of faith.

8 This assumes a perspective on 'meaning' that does not equate it with 'intention.' A useful analogy for understanding my approach is the division of a speech-act into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary forces. (The classic treatment of these terms is contained in J. L. Austin, How To Do Things With Words [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961].) The fact of Paul's celibacy (the locution) is a given, and the actual effect it had on his audience at Corinth (the perlocution) is irrecoverable. But the illocution – the act's conventional sense – can be built up through analysis of the meaning of sexual continence in antiquity. This orientation allows me to bracket the empirical Paul's motivations.

9 The conflation of authority and masculinity in antiquity ensures that issues of power are also implicitly about gender and vice versa.
Gender has become an important category for thinking about the social world of antiquity. This is true because it is now widely recognized that "masculine" and "feminine" are not simply descriptive terms applied to certain "natural" traits, but are rather prescriptive terms that smuggle in a whole series of social and cultural corollaries. As such, gender is not merely about sorting out the women from the men (or identifying anomalous figures like the "girly" man and the "butch"); it is about relations of social dominance. A consideration of Paul's gender, therefore, is neither frivolous nor deliberately provocative. It provides one way of thinking about such canonical topics as status and authority within the early Christian communities. But, before we turn our attention to the gendered body of Paul, a few statements about masculinity in antiquity are in order.

1.1 Masculinity in the Roman World

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* is a useful one for exploring the gender codes of Roman antiquity.¹ I shall not discuss it here in great detail, but a brief outline will help to structure the inquiry. *Habitus* is a Latin word, meaning "condition, expression, demeanor, character," from which our English words habit, habituate, and the
like are derived. But it assumes a central position in Bourdieu's theory of socialization as a designation for the coherence of unconscious activity - those things we do without deliberation, the things that are “natural” or “second nature”. According to Bourdieu, these “natural dispositions” (the *habitus*) are not inherent traits (if by that we mean “biologically encoded”), rather they are acquired practices. As such, individual praxis (like all things learned) is a fundamentally social phenomenon. It is the result of a society’s cumulative history, and the reproduction of a society’s most deeply held beliefs.² Like a child’s first language, *habitus* is learned more frequently through experience and unconscious mimesis than through explicit instruction and conscious reflection. What makes the dispositions “natural” is that we are unconscious of their very acquisition. But the great advance of Bourdieu's theory over most rival theories of socialization is his emphasis on the body's place in this process. He treats body rather than mind as the locus of a society's shared values. Acquisition of the *habitus* comes through learning how to control and manipulate the body according to the conventions of the group - something Bourdieu calls “bodily *hexis*”. Seemingly innocuous commands given to a child - e.g., “stand up straight,” “look at me when I'm talking to you” - encode the society’s values in the habitual behavior of its constituent members. “A whole cosmology” is instilled, says Bourdieu, through these insignificant injunctions.³ And it all takes place “below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose.”⁴

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¹ See, e.g., Gleason, *Making Men*.
³ Ibid., 69.
⁴ Ibid., 73.
Such a theory is perfectly suited to a discussion of masculinity in antiquity. The practices that defined a Roman man as either masculine or effeminate were encoded in the *habitus* that was learned (below the level of consciousness) from virtually the time of birth. Even the birthing process itself was a chance to reaffirm Roman values through an evaluation of the offspring's body. A child who survived the delivery was examined by the midwife for signs of deformity and imperfection. If she found any cause for dissatisfaction with the baby, it was her prerogative to see to it that the child did not survive.\(^5\) The criteria to be used by midwives were bodily signs such as the sound of the infant's cry, size and shape, complexion, and physical intactness. Furthermore, the baby might be accepted or rejected by the father on the basis of sex as well as physical vigor. While unaware of what was taking place, the child was nevertheless being initiated into a process of acquiring the values of the social group.

The acquisition of the *habitus* began in earnest, however, with a regimen of bandaging, bathing, massaging, stretching, and shaping, all finely orchestrated to produce a "normal" figure.\(^6\) The infant's body was wrapped entirely in bandages. Boys were wrapped with even pressure around the thorax while girls were wrapped tightly around the chest and loosely around the loins to produce respectively masculine and feminine body types (2.15). When it came to bathing, the nurse took care not to bathe the infant too frequently, for this produces a child who is weak in both body and mind (2.30). After being softened in the bath, the child should be held upside down "in order that the vertebrae may be separated, the spine given the right curves, and the sinews be untangled,\(^5\) Soranus *Gynecology* 2.10. Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 51.
so to speak" (2.32). The nurse should then massage and mold the baby's features. The malleable skull of the young child should be brought "into proper proportions, so that it may become neither too lengthy nor pointed" (2.33). Flat noses are to be raised, aquiline noses pressed down (2.34). And a short foreskin should be stretched and fastened, "for if gradually stretched and continuously drawn forward it easily stretches and assumes its normal length, covers the glans and becomes accustomed to keep the natural good shape" (2.34). Soranus seems to detect no contradiction in his call to produce the "natural" body, as when he advises the nurse to "model every part [of the child's body] so that imperceptibly that which is as yet not fully formed is shaped into its natural characteristics" (2.32). But the invasive production of these "natural characteristics" is, of course, a reproduction of the society's most deeply held beliefs about normal masculine and feminine traits (and hence about normal masculine and feminine social roles).  

Physical manipulation of the body, such as I have just described, is more immediate than the unconscious mimesis that characterizes Bourdieu's notion of bodily hexis, but it operates according to a similar logic. Shared ideas about the "natural" appearance of both male and female bodies are impressed (quite literally) upon young children. With the corporeal impression comes a mental one in which socially agreed upon notions of the "beautiful" are unconsciously conflated with the "normal" and ultimately the "natural". These dispositions are then reproduced again and again in social

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6 Sor. Gyn. 2.12-16, 30-35; English translations of this treatise are from Soranus' Gynecology, trans. Owsei Temkin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956). See Rouselle, Porneia, 52-54.

7 See Bourdieu, Logic, 69.
interaction and finally impressed upon the bodies of the next generation, thereby ensuring the durability of the *habitus*.

A more conventional application of Bourdieu's theory, and the one explored by Maud Gleason, is to be found in what Gleason calls the "semiotics of gender". The "rules" of masculine deportment - i.e., bodily *hexis* - comprised a sort of language that was learned "below the level of consciousness" by young Roman boys. It was primarily a negative code that required men, among other things, not to waggle their hips while walking, not to depilate their bodies, not to coif their hair with too much flair, and not to scratch their heads with one finger. As Gleason notes, the boundary drawn is often ostensibly one between men and women, but it is intended to separate the effeminates from the virile men. Polemo provides an excellent example of the ostensible division of characteristics into male and female, as well as an example of the essentially negative quality of masculine deportment:

"Now I will relate the signs of male and female physique and their physiognomical significance. You will note which prevails over the other (in any single individual) and use the result to guide your judgment. The female has, compared to the male, a small head and a small mouth, softer hair that is dark colored, a narrower face, bright glittering eyes, a narrow neck, a weakly sloping chest, feeble ribs, larger, fleshier hips, narrower thighs and calves, knock-knees, dainty fingertips and toes, the rest of the body moist and flabby, with soft limbs and slackened joints, thin sinews, weak voice, a hesitant gait with frequent short steps, and limp limbs that glide slowly along. But the male is in every way opposite to this description, and it is possible to find masculine qualities also in women."  

Although arbitrary, these rules were tacitly accepted as naturally occurring norms of appearance and deportment. They show up in physiognomic literature, of course, but

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also in speeches and rhetorical handbooks, satirical epigrams, histories, in almost every form of cultural production that has come down to us, and always bearing the weight of the obvious. Fluency in this “language” included not only the largely unconscious performance of masculine traits, but also the ability to detect fissures in the performances of others. It is well known that the ancient Mediterranean world was characterized by intense rivalry among public males. One of the most important skills to master in this context was the ability to manipulate the code of gender performance to one's own advantage and to the disadvantage of one's rivals. Oratory in particular was a privileged site for the performance of masculinity (not to mention rival charges of effeminacy), and it is to this realm that I shall now direct my attention.

1.2 Paul and Sophistic Performance

The performative nature of masculinity, which remained largely implicit and “below the level of consciousness” in day-to-day social relations, became explicit in the realm of public declamation. Here the crafting of a speech and the crafting of a masculine identity, forged in the intensity of audience scrutiny, were melded into a single but complex performative act. Maud Gleason has suggested that the “semiotics of gender” formed a parallel discourse to the formal oration. While words - the skill of expression, the subtlety of argumentation, etc. - were important, equally important in the entire communicative act were such considerations as the pitch and tone of one’s voice, the refinement of one’s appearance, the tempo of one’s movements, and myriad other
signs. These are, of course, precisely the same signifiers of gender that were acquired through the *habitus*, but raised to a higher level of conscious reflection.

The hegemonic paradigm of masculine deportment was the one considered above and championed by orators-*cum*-physiognomists like Polemo, who was perhaps more zealous than most in both guarding his own masculine persona and detecting fissures in the performances of his rivals. The rivalry between Polemo and Favorinus, the brilliant eunuch-rhetor from Gaul, forms the backdrop for Gleason's consideration of constructed masculinities in the Second Sophistic. But the cultural logic of "making men" (and unmaking them too) infuses oratory going back to Cicero's Rome and beyond him to Demosthenes, Aeschines, and their predecessors in the Athenian tradition. It was always necessary to produce and sustain a masculine identity in each performance, for the threat of gender slippage was ever present.

Paul's place in this sophistic milieu is a matter of debate. Bruce Winter has recently suggested that Paul was probably highly trained in rhetoric, and yet ineffective in public declamation.13 The ground for this proposal is Paul's claim, in 2 Cor. 11.6, that he is *idióτης τῷ λόγῳ ἄλλῳ οὐ τῇ γυνῷ*. Based on the use of *idióτης* in Isocrates, Philodemus, and Philo of Alexandria, Winter argues that Paul is declaring, not his ignorance of rhetoric, but rather his "amateur" status.14 In other words, he was not a professional sophist or teacher. This perhaps is not so controversial, but his reading of

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11 E.g., Cicero's famous attacks on Mark Antony (*Orationes Philippicae* 2.18.44), and Aeschines' accusation that Demosthenes was *ἀναπήπτως* (*Timarchus* 131).
12 Winkler (*Constraints*, 50), for example, remarks on the Greeks' "odd belief in the reversibility of the male person, always in peril of slipping into the servile or the feminine".
the rest of the phrase is. Winter proposes that the *gnosis*, which Paul claims to possess (i.e. he is not ἰδιώτης τὴν γνώσιν), is in fact a reference to his knowledge of rhetoric. If this is so, the strong adversative, ἀλλὰ, points to a contrast between professional sophistic practice (which Paul claims not to do) and rhetorical training (which he has in abundance).

The verse seems more intelligible, however, as a modified version of the conflict between sophist and philosopher. Glen Bowersock has pointed out the degree of overlap between these two vocations during the Second Sophistic.\(^\text{15}\) It was possible, indeed, for a philosopher to be a sophist;\(^\text{16}\) just as it was possible for a rhetor not to be a sophist. Nevertheless, as Bowersock himself acknowledges, there was a “genuine rivalry between philosophers and rhetors.” Rhetors, like Aristides, denigrated philosophers for their lack of oratorical and literary production and for their lack of public spirit.\(^\text{17}\) And philosophers, like Epictetus, in turn, castigated rhetors for their preoccupation with outward appearance over moral beauty, style over substance.\(^\text{18}\) This sort of disdain for sophistic practice is evident in Paul's letters. His position in the Corinthian correspondence, as Winter himself has duly noted, is “anti-sophistic”. Paul contrasts the πίστις manufactured by skillful argumentation with the πίστις resulting from God's power alone.\(^\text{19}\) He is adamant that the gospel should not be unequally yoked with sophistic practices. Elsewhere in the Pauline correspondence, the Apostle insists that he does not speak with guile, but rather with παρρησία (frankness, true speech), a virtue that Cynic

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\(^{17}\) Aelius Aristides 46. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists*, 11.

philosophers contrasted with the emptiness of sophistic rhetoric.\textsuperscript{20} Paul’s consistent disavowal of rhetorical excess does not in itself refute Winter’s interpretation of the phrase ἡδοτής τῷ λόγῳ, ἄλλῳ τῇ γνώσει, but it does cast some doubt on it. Why would someone, who was at such great pains to distance himself from sophistic practice, proudly boast of his own training in the art? It is far easier to believe that Paul is contrasting his amateurishness in the outward show of public speaking with his inward possession of something true (γνώσει), presumably knowledge of the true gospel.

The only other possible evidence for Paul’s rhetorical training is the evidence provided by a study of his epistolary style.\textsuperscript{21} There is a general consensus that Paul employs a number of rhetorical conventions, and Winter has shown (conclusively, in my opinion) that he is aware of and opposes some very specific sophistic practices. It does not follow, however, that Paul must have received the highest levels of rhetorical education.\textsuperscript{22} Quintilian remarks that it was common among Romans and Greeks (although he himself disapproves of this current state of affairs) for students to begin their more formal rhetorical training under the tutelage of grammatici, teachers responsible for a child’s rudimentary literary education (ἐγκυκλιαῖς παιδεία).\textsuperscript{23} At an intermediate level, then, boys would have been exposed to celebrated speeches, which they were required to recite. When doing so, the students would stand and deliver the oration as if they were

\textsuperscript{19} 1 Cor. 2.1-5; also 1.17.
\textsuperscript{21} Winter includes the speeches in Acts as evidence for Paul’s rhetorical ability. But this remains, in my opinion, a dubious source.
\textsuperscript{23} Quintilian \textit{Institutio Oratoria} 2.1.1-3.
actually pleading a case, thereby practicing their delivery (\textit{pronuntiatio}), their vocalization (\textit{vox}), and their recall (\textit{memoria}).\textsuperscript{24} Thus, even during the period of general education, the goal was to train up a boy for public life. When we add to these considerations the fact that professional sophists practiced their craft in public for all to hear and scrutinize, it hardly seems necessary to postulate that Paul received his knowledge of rhetorical convention at the foot of a \textit{praecceptor eloquentiae} (their equivalent of higher education). But it does seem prudent, given a degree of skill displayed in his letter writing, to concede that Paul received at least something resembling the primary or secondary education of young Roman boys. After all, his (rhetorically trained?) opponents in Corinth apparently found Paul's epistles to be weighty (\textit{bapòς}) and powerful (\textit{iaxupòς}).\textsuperscript{25}

Whatever Paul's credentials, it is probably safe to say that his audience in Corinth would not have mistaken him for a professional sophist. Bruce Winter has argued that Paul's arrival at Corinth was explicitly "anti-sophistic".\textsuperscript{26} He did not submit to the usual "test" for sophists upon coming to a city - a sample of extempore declamation that was often an encomium of the citizens.\textsuperscript{27} Instead, Paul chose his own subject: the Christian gospel. In addition, he was not of the highest classes, like most sophists, nor was he wealthy. There would be no public building projects and no political office for Paul.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. 1.11.14.
\textsuperscript{25} 2 Cor. 10.10.
\textsuperscript{26} Winter, \textit{Among the Sophists}, 147-170.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 149-151.
\textsuperscript{28} On the status and wealth of sophists, as well as their contributions to public construction, see Bowersock, \textit{Greek Sophists}, 17-29.
fact, he performed manual labor to support himself and his ministry. But the most obvious indicator of Paul’s distance from the sophists was his lack of eloquence.

Early on in the Corinthian correspondence, before the supposed confrontation with sophistic opponents, Paul exhibits a palpable awareness of his own inadequacy as a public speaker. He admits, for example, in 1 Cor. 1.17, that his proclamation of the gospel lacks eloquence. But this, he says, is by design, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. Paul says much the same a little further on:

> When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Cor. 2.1-5, NRSV)

The efficacy of Paul’s gospel resides neither in the skill of his argumentation nor in the grace of his delivery, but rather in the power of God that persuades without recourse to human wisdom. Paul’s apparent deficiency in the art of rhetoric ensures that his audience is won over not by the skill of the messenger, but by the power of the message itself. His admission of oratorical weakness is herein transformed into an argument for the power of his gospel. We should not forget, however, that 1 Cor. 2.1-5 is Paul’s reflection on the initial visit to Corinth from a position that is temporally and geographically distant. Whatever successes may have resulted from Paul’s anti-sophistic “strategy”, his explanation of the weakness, fear, and trembling that characterized his self-presentation strikes this reader (as it may have struck some of the Corinthian readers) as a rearguard

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29 See Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); he has proposed the working Cynic philosopher as a background for Paul’s labor. Winter, on the other hand, proposes that Paul’s working was part of his anti-sophistic stance.
action and a trifle revisionist. One suspects that Paul is in fact rationalizing his own lack of oratorical skill.\textsuperscript{30}

It is moments of rhetorical subtlety like this, achieved in writing (i.e. when he is absent), that must have led Paul’s opponents in Corinth to contrast his bold and persuasive correspondence with the weak persona he evinced while among them.\textsuperscript{31} Paul himself records the slander: \textit{For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”} (2 Cor. 10.10, NRSV).\textsuperscript{32} The interesting part of both this verse and the passage cited in the previous paragraph is the conflation of rhetorical ability with bodily presence. In 1 Cor. 2.1-5, Paul’s argument for the value of a gospel unadorned with sophistic flourish houses an admission of the weakness (\ensuremath{\alpha\sigma\theta\acute{e}v\iota\alpha}), fear (\ensuremath{\phi\omicron\sigma\varsigma}), and trembling (\ensuremath{\tau\omicron\rho\omicron\mu\omicron\varsigma}) that characterized his self-presentation when he was in Corinth. The charge against Paul, preserved in 2 Cor. 10.10, contains the same association of body and word. His letters are weighty (\ensuremath{\beta\alpha\rho\epsilon\iota\iota\iota}) and powerful (\ensuremath{\iota\sigma\chi\upsilon\rho\alpha\iota}) - full of the seriousness and strength one might expect from a virile

\textsuperscript{30} I am fully cognizant of the fact that this flies in the face of contemporary opinion on the subject. Most modern interpreters view these passages as examples of a mere rhetorical topos. (See, e.g., E. A. Judge, “Paul’s Boasting in Relation to Contemporary Professional Practice,” \textit{ABR} 16 [1968]: 44; Martin, \textit{Corinthian Body}, 47-68; David G. Horrell, \textit{The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement} [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 135.) If Paul were simply being demure – “I apologize for my ineptitude, it’s a wonder you still want me as your leader” – then it would undoubtedly be of a piece with similar tricks employed by Greek and Latin orators. But Paul’s argument – that God’s power is displayed through weakness and not rhetorical skill – is unintelligible if Paul himself was a virtuoso sophist. The argument seems to me to be a justification for his very real lack of skill.

\textsuperscript{31} For the debate over writing versus extempore declamation, see Winter, \textit{Among the Sophists}, 205-206.

\textsuperscript{32} Some have suggested that this verse follows typical diatribal conventions and that the enemies are therefore fictional. But Stanley Stowers, in his detailed examination of the diatribal form in Paul’s letters, refutes this position. Stanley K. Stowers, \textit{The Diatribe and Paul’s Letter to the Romans}, SBLDS 57 (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981), 179.
man - but his bodily presence (ἡ παρουσία τοῦ σώματος), by contrast, is weak (ἀσθενής), and his speech contemptible (ἐξουθενημένος). Ἀσθενής - the opposite of ἰσχυρός (that manly quality applied to Paul’s letters) - is a word frequently used to characterize a woman’s weakness over against masculine strength. But here and elsewhere in the Corinthian correspondence, it describes the impression made by the Apostle’s physical presence. In the eyes of Paul’s Corinthian audience, the masculine character of his epistles is undermined by the weakness of his body and speech.

In the context of sophistic rivalry, it was not uncommon for one rhetor to accuse another of effeminacy. Even Cicero, most revered of Latin orators, who frequently laid bare another man's effeminacy, was occasionally tarred with the same brush. The basis of this charge, however, was often a distinction between Attic and Asianic styles of oratory. The Asianic style, a highly refined and theatrical variety of public speaking, left its practitioners susceptible to the charge of effeminacy. These orators would sometimes even sing their speeches in a display of rhetorical, musical, and histrionic skill. And, despite the fact that they were accused of being effeminate, their style of oratory was extremely popular.

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33 Cf. the expression ἀσθενέστερον σκέδος (“the weaker sex”) in 1 Pet. 3.7. Cf. also 4 Macc. 15.5, and Dio Chrysostom 3.34, 70, 72. In the latter passage, he says: ὅσοι δὲ ἀνδρὶ ἀσθενειάν τε καὶ μαλαικιάν ἐξήλωσαν τὸν κέινον [i.e. γυναῖκων] βίον, ὥσπερ Σαρδανάπαλλος, διαβόητοι μέχρι νῦν έσυν ἐπί τοὺς αὐθεντούς.
34 E.g. 1 Cor. 2.3, 2 Cor. 11.21, 13.3.
35 For the ubiquity of rivalry among sophists, see Bowersock, Greek Sophists, 89-100.
37 On the unpopularity of the Attic style during the middle of the first century BCE, see Cic. Tusculanae Disputationes 2.3.
fashion. But it is reckless to suppose that he could have declaimed in the grand style before the Corinthians and then averred in all sincerity that the gospel is incompatible with rhetorical sophistication. We can confidently say that the charge of weakness/effeminacy leveled against Paul does not reflect an Atticist-Asianist controversy.

What, then, was at the root of this accusation? It appears that it stemmed from some flaw or flaws in his physical appearance and/or manner of public speaking. Perhaps it was his carriage, or an insufficiently rigid face, a high-pitched and faltering voice, or sickly and frail body. Paul may have spoken with a nasal snort characteristic of the citizens of Tarsus, a sound that Dio Chrysostom associates with effeminacy and the sounds made by a pathic homosexual during sex. Perhaps it was some combination of these and other bodily signs that formed an eloquent indictment of Paul’s manhood. We cannot say with any degree of certitude. What we can say is that Paul's Corinthian opponents detected a certain weakness, a certain effeminacy in his self-presentation. Paul’s body was caught up in a semiotics of feminization.

But even as his body was drawn into “telling” its effeminacy, it had already been discursively constructed as a site of dubious gender in texts of the hegemonic culture. That is, Paul’s embodiment was already problematic owing to stereotypes of the (circumcised) male Jew that pervaded the first-century Greco-Roman world. These

39 Paul does say that he came to the Corinthians with much trembling (1 Cor. 2.3). Quintilian states that an orator must not speak with the shrillness of a woman or the tremulousness of an old man (Inst. 1.11.1). On Paul's “thorn in the flesh" as a possible reference to physical infirmity see below, 31-3.
40 D.Chr. 33; see discussion in Gleason, Making Men, 82-83.
stereotypes would have profoundly affected both the way Paul’s body was perceived by a
gentile audience, and the way he himself perceived it.\footnote{The following does not situate me on either side of the debate over “pagan
antisemitism”. I am less interested in determining whether Greco-Roman attitudes
toward Jews reflect antipathy or attraction than in determining how these attitudes
operated in the construction of both Jewish and Roman identities.}

1.3 Circumcision and Damaged Masculinity

For both Greeks and Romans, the beautiful penis was characterized above all by a
long foreskin.\footnote{Kenneth J. Dover, \textit{Greek Homosexuality} (London: Duckworth, 1978), 125-6.}
And this was not necessarily left to chance. A boy born with a short
prepuce might have been subjected to attempts at lengthening it. His nurse, as part of a
routine of bodily manipulation, was urged to stretch the boy’s foreskin and fasten it with
string so as to conceal the entire glans.\footnote{Sor. Gyn. 2.34.}
For those who were unlucky enough to take a
short prepuce with them into adulthood, there existed a surgical procedure to lengthen it,
called epispasm.\footnote{For a description of the procedure, see Celsus \textit{De Medicina} 7.25.1.}
The very existence of manipulative and surgical practices aimed at
approximating the aesthetic ideal is an indicator of the great significance placed upon the
appearance of one's penis. Rousselle remarks that “men of ancient times were very
particular about the shape of their penis” because of the periodic display of male bodies
in the baths and gymnasia.\footnote{Rousselle, \textit{Porneia}, 54.}
In a culture that admits a degree of public nudity, then, the
malformed or “damaged” penis is a stigma that results in a discredited rather than a
discreditable person.\footnote{For these terms, see Erving Goffman, \textit{Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled
Identity} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), 41-42.}
In other words, a man stigmatized in this manner was required to
manage the uneasy social situations produced in the wake of public recognition of his “damaged” body.

An excellent example of one attempt to conceal the stigma of circumcision that leads ultimately to an embarrassing denouement is contained in Martial’s epigram about a certain Menophilus. This man wears a sheath over his penis while bathing and participating in the activities of the gymnasium. Martial assumes that he merely wants to prevent sexual activity for the sake of his voice. But one day, while Menophilus is in the palaestra in full view, his sheath slips off: Delapsa est misero fibula: verpus erat. What is interesting for our purposes is not only the embarrassment this man apparently feels (misero), but also the way in which he is exposed, with everyone watching (populo spectante). Others present (including his opponent) were surely naked, but the public gaze skips over unproblematic, “normal” bodies. It is this invisibility of the “normal” that Menophilus hopes to restore by “covering” his stigma.

An even better example of restoring one’s invisibility is the aforementioned surgical procedure, epispasm, a process of cutting and stretching that aims to draw the skin of a circumcised penis over the glans. These both represent strategies for diverting the gaze of the populus spectans, a gaze that comes to rest on anomalous bodies.

47 Reading fibula in this case as a sheath or some sort of covering, I am following Peter Schäfer, Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 251, n.69.
48 “The fibula fell off the poor guy; he was circumcised.” Martial Epigrammata 7.82. Shaye Cohen has questioned whether, in fact, Menophilus was circumcised, suggesting that verpus may be a reference to erection in this case. Shaye J. D. Cohen, The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 358-59. But I remain unconvinced.
50 “If people are derformed, they may be converted into things, and treated in an altered manner.” Norman R. Bernstein, “Objective Bodily Damage: Disfigurement and
Segal has warned against placing too much emphasis on the circumcision stigma because it was not normally open to public scrutiny.\textsuperscript{51} But this underestimates the invasiveness of the public gaze. Other markers of membership in the Jewish community, such as kashruth, sabbath, and, after 69 CE, payment of the \textit{fiscus Iudaicus}, meant that the circumcised penis of the practicing male Jew was always "visible", as it were.\textsuperscript{52} As long as his ethnicity could be identified, his "damaged" body was open to view.\textsuperscript{53}

Perhaps it was the permanent visibility of the Jewish penis that made it such a significant feature in Roman constructions of Jewish male identity. It seems that Romans could not imagine Jews without imagining a circumcised penis. Martial's epigram 30 of book seven is an apt illustration. Here he mocks Caelia who will take any man as her lover except a Roman. Martial catalogues the various foreigners who have shared her bed. When "Jew" appears in his inventory, however, it is precisely not the Jew but rather his anomalous penis that is in view. Caelia links herself with men of all nations, but it is the \textit{inguina recutitorum Iudaeorum} ("the loins of circumcised Jews") that she


\textsuperscript{52} Cohen also argues against taking kashruth, sabbath, and payment of \textit{fiscus Iudaicus} as reliable indicators of Jewishness. But, while each one on its own may not have been a positive marker of identity, in all likelihood it would have been assumed that a male who observed all three was also circumcised.

\textsuperscript{53} Even when other steps were taken to conceal one's Jewish identity, imperial agents had ways of facilitating an unobstructed gaze. Suetonius records seeing a 90 year old man stripped naked to inspect whether or not he was circumcised (\textit{Domitianus} 12.2). However, a change in the collection strategy for the \textit{fiscus Iudaicus}, probably implemented under Nerva, meant that only professing Jews paid. This eliminated the "big brother" approach of Domitian. See, e.g., Martin Goodman, "Nerva, the \textit{Fiscus Iudaicus} and Jewish Identity," \textit{JRS} 74 (1989): 40-44.
welcomes. This is not the only place in which the circumcised penis dominates a Roman picture of Jewishness. For Horace, Jews were the *curtis* (circumcised) *Iudaeis*; Persius calls them simply “the circumcised” without any further description; in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, Giton suggests that he and Encolpius should circumcise themselves to dupe others into believing them Jews. In Juvenal and Tacitus a meditation on the significance of circumcision is foremost in their discussions of the Jewish people. The circumcised penis of the male Jew was a stigma that remained perpetually open to the *populus spectans*.

It is Martial, however, who forges the most complete identification of the male Jew with his “damaged” penis. In fact, the circumcised member tends to take on a life of its own in his epigrams, and its growth in importance is mirrored by an attendant increase in size. In 7.82, the epigram about Menophilus, Martial notes the enormity of the man’s *fibula*. It is so large, he says, that by itself it could hold the penises of all Rome’s comic actors. In another epigram, Martial uses the expression, *Iudaeum pondus* (“Jewish weight”). Pondus here means penis, but it connotes especially large, heavy genitalia. And, in 7.55, the huge circumcised penis entirely eclipses any man to whom it might be attached. In this epigram Martial threatens Chrestus with irrumation. But he considers his own penis, which is *proba et pusilla* ("well-behaved/refined and small"), not

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54 Martial *Epigrammata* 7.30.5. Peter Schäfer (*Judeophobia*, 100) makes the same observation about this epigram in his excellent discussion of circumcision.
55 Horace *Satirae* 1.9.69; Persius 5.184; Petronius *Satyricon* 102.
56 Tacitus *Historiae* 5.5.7; Juvenal *Satirae* 14.96-9.
57 Comic actors were traditionally depicted with enormous and grotesque phalli.
58 Mart. 7.35.
menacing enough, so he invokes a *mentula de Solymis* ("cocks from Jerusalem"), which is presumably salacious and enormous.

One might expect the large penis, in a phallocentric culture, to be a signifier of sexual and social dominance. And, indeed, it can be. But it can also be grotesque - a site of the obscene, the bestial, the lewd. As for Martial’s construction of the “well-hung” male Jew, it falls into this category of the grotesque and taps into a traditional stereotype of Jewish venality. The word *verpus* itself is evidence of the connection Romans made between circumcision and lustfulness. *Verpa* was a highly offensive word for penis, one which usually indicated that a sexual act (especially an aggressive homosexual act) was at issue. J. N. Adams describes its connection to *verpus* ("circumcised") this way: "*Verpa...* indicated a *mentula* with foreskin drawn back as a result of erection, or, perhaps, excessive sexual activity, or, in the case of the Jews, circumcision." The permanently exposed glans of a circumcised penis resembled the exposed glans of an erect penis involved in a sexual act. Male Jews were thus seen to be hypersexual, as if the foreskin was always drawn back in a display of sexual excess.

This makes Martial's invocation of the "cocks from Jerusalem" a little more intelligible. To make his point more forcefully, he relies on a stereotype (that is shared by his audience) of Jewish lustfulness for proscribed acts. There are thinly veiled references to the venality of circumcised bodies in several other of Martial’s epigrams (e.g. 7.30, 7.35, 7.82, 11.94). The last of these is the famous confrontation between Martial and a *verpus poet*a ("circumcised poet"). Martial repeatedly and derisively calls

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60 I am thinking of the Priapic model generally, but also of a particular scene in the *Satyricon* when witnesses of Ascyltus' huge penis are drawn to his aid because of its inherent power (Petr. *Sat.* 132.11).

him _verpus_, making explicit the man’s availability to view. And significantly, as Schäfer has noted, this epigram revolves around a supposed sexual misdemeanor committed by the _verpus poeta_. Martial feels that this rival has been buggering a boy who was the property of the disgruntled Roman poet. Schäfer remarks that there are perhaps equal parts fear and jealousy that a Roman could not compete with “the alleged sexual potency of the Jews.” I would add only that Martial’s request for the _verpus poeta_ to swear by Anchialus rather than Zeus is clearly another reference to the man’s venality. Anchiale is the site of Sardanapallus’s tomb and his famous epitaph extolling the sensuous life. This is the one thing, Martial implies, that will be truly sacred to the circumcised poet.

The stereotype of Jewish lustfulness, which Martial obviously shares with his audience, reaches perhaps its fullest expression in the _Histories_ of Tacitus. He accuses Jews of practicing incest and engaging in all manner of illicit behavior; they are, in short, _proiectissima ad libidinem gens_ (“a people very much inclined to lust”). And, as we might expect by now, his discussion of Jewish sexual depravity leads directly into a consideration of circumcision’s significance. Tacitus says that they avoid relations with outsiders, but among themselves they give free reign to their lusts (_inter se nihil illicitum_). He then immediately writes: _circumcidere genitalia instituerunt ut diversitate noscantur_ (“They instituted genital circumcision so that they might be known by their difference”). The connection is unmistakable. Circumcision is the physical signifier of

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63 Ibid., 102.
Jewish difference, which finds expression in their hypersexuality, their misanthropy, and their hatred of the gods.\textsuperscript{66}

This begins to get at another way of explaining the relationship between circumcision and venality, one that brings us back eventually to the notion of "damaged" masculinity. The explanation offered in passing by Adams (and appropriated by Schäfer and myself) – which posits an exposed glans at the root of the convergence of circumcision and sex – is useful, but it yields, I think, to a deeper reading of the stereotype of the lustful male Jew. At the heart of this alternate reading is the notion of difference introduced by the citation from Tacitus. But in what sense can we say that circumcision is a signifier of difference? The obvious answer is that the circumcised penis looks different. And yet there is more.

In a recent essay, contained in the volume \textit{Roman Sexualities}, Jonathan Walters has offered a description of the Roman myth of male inviolability.\textsuperscript{67} It is, he says, based on a view of sex that allows for only one-way sexual activity. The role of a man is to penetrate others, and the role of a woman is to suffer penetration. But the whole system founders in cases such as the \textit{cinaedus}, a man who suffers penetration, or the \textit{tribas}, a woman who penetrates others. As a result, they are marginalized as anomalous figures. Because, for example, the \textit{cinaedus} willfully violates the rule of male impenetrability, he is considered something less than a man. He is feminized. In many ways the plight of

\textsuperscript{65} Tac. \textit{Hist}.5.5.7. 
\textsuperscript{67} Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought," \textit{Roman Sexualities}, ed. Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner
the circumcised male is the same. The very implement with which he penetrates others, his very claim upon manhood, bears the scar that testifies to his own penetration by a phallic knife. The pierced body of the male Jew - his detachable foreskin even - is an extreme affront to the myth of male wholeness and inviolability. When confronted with circumcision, therefore, the hegemonic male culture must either dispense with this myth that encodes their inherent physical and social superiority over women, or, as with the cinaedus, feminize (i.e. marginalize) the circumcised (i.e. permeable) male body. There is no doubt as to which of these two options – if in fact we can consider the former an option in the Greco-Roman culture – was enacted.

The difference of the circumcised man, therefore, is that he has much in common with the female body, that ultimate realm of difference.\(^\text{68}\) His genitalia and his personhood share in the incompleteness and imperfection associated with the moral and physical structure of “woman”. The stereotype of Jewish venality, then, further reinforces the feminization implicit in the male Jew’s permeable body. For, as any Roman knew, lustfulness makes a man womanish.\(^\text{69}\) And this characteristic is not primarily something to be admired, but rather something dangerous, something to be feared. This manifests itself in the paranoia of Martial, who demands oaths from the

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\(^\text{68}\)\(\) I say this despite the claim of Thomas Laqueur that the Ancients understood male and female bodies to be fundamentally the same (Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990], 25-62). Whatever the merits of his interpretation of the ancient medical literature, it remains painfully obvious that the female body was an other, strange realm, vilified by the hegemonic male culture (see, e.g., Richlin, The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor, revised edition [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], passim).

\(^\text{69}\)\(\) If we consider only opinions that are roughly contemporary with Paul we find e.g. Musonius 35; D.Chr. 4.101, 103-115; Seneca De Vita Beata 13.4; Epict. Diss. 11.10.17, 11.16.45; (Diogenes Laertius De Clarorum Philosophorum Vitis 7.8).
verpus poeta that he did not bugger Martial’s boy, and Tacitus, whose account of Jewish sexual deviance resembles a report of seditious activity.

The male Jew’s proverbial venality, along with his ethnic otherness and his permeability (both to the knife and to the public gaze) mark his body as a site - one might even say a signifier - of difference and dislocation from Greco-Roman standards of masculinity.\textsuperscript{70} Elements of this stereotype are evocative of Edward Said’s exposé of the highly artificial category, “Oriental”.\textsuperscript{71} In fact, the comparison is rendered even more plausible if we consider that, while the male Jew was being constructed as a cultural type, Roman political power in the region left little doubt as to who held the authority to draw lines, as it were, on the map or on the physical body.\textsuperscript{72} Whether it was the control of priestly vestments, the system of patronage established between Roman emperors and the regional leaders, the ability to define and redefine boundaries, or sheer military force, Rome was clearly the dominant power and Jerusalem the dominated receptor. We would do well, then, to observe the imperial weight that lurks just behind this ostensibly harmless stereotype: \textit{linges non mihi - nam proba et pusilla est - sed quae de Solymis}

\textsuperscript{70} Louis Feldman’s claim - that the stereotypes preserved in Latin literature represent good-natured gibes - entirely underestimates the role of humor in the production of deviant bodies; “Reflections of Jews in Graeco-Roman Literature,” \textit{JSPs}, 16 (July, 1997): 51. As Cicero saw (\textit{De Oratore} 2.58.236), laughter has its origin in ugliness and deformity. See also Richlin, \textit{Garden of Priapus}, 57-63; and especially Anthony Corbeill, \textit{Controlling Laughter: Political Humor in the Late Roman Republic} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).


\textsuperscript{72} This provides my justification for treating Roman attitudes toward the circumcised body. As the hegemonic culture, Rome was largely responsible for defining deviance. Their constructions of the deviant body would have remained highly relevant during relations between minority groups. The Roman construction of the male Jew, for example, must have affected Greco-Jewish relations in the East. We need only consider how relations among minority groups in North America (e.g., Jews and Blacks, Blacks and East Asians) are governed in large part by the attitudes of a traditional WASP establishment.
venit perustis damnatum modo mentulam tributis. ("You will lick a cock – not mine, which is refined and small – but one that comes from burned-out Jerusalem, recently condemned to pay taxes.")

The construction of the Jewish male body that I have tried to identify was part of the cultural koine in the first-century Mediterranean world. It was not a peculiarity of literary Romans like Petronius and Martial. We have it on Philo’s authority that circumcision was derided by the masses (οὶ πολλαὶ) in Egypt. And Josephus’ accounts of Syllaeus and Izates highlight the revulsion caused by circumcision among the general population in diverse parts of the East. Of course, it is difficult to say how this prejudice would have worked itself out in day-to-day social relations. Those Jews who had limited interaction with gentiles may have been largely unaffected by the prevailing attitudes. And even those who had significant contact with non-Jews, whether through business transactions or civic activities, were probably little affected. But for the upwardly mobile male Jew, the one who was caught up in the agonistic world of politics, oratory, philosophy, or athletics, it is to be expected that his “unmanly” body would become an issue. The circumcised man in Martial’s epigram who competes in the gymnasium is only the most obvious example. We could also include Martial’s literary

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73 The references are, of course, to the capture of Jerusalem in 70 CE by Titus when it was burned to the ground, and to the fiscus Iudaicus, which, Suetonius reports, was collected by Domitian with a peculiar lack of mercy (Suet. Dom. 12).
74 I endorse John Gager’s caution to avoid making assumptions about widespread antipathy toward Jews based on a few lampoons John G. Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 57. But, as I suggested earlier (p. 20, n. 41), the debate over hatred and attraction does not exhaust the possibilities presented by non-Jewish statements about Jews and Judaism. Even the authors whom Gager lists as philosemites betray certain prejudicial attitudes. The picture is much more complex than ‘yea’ or ‘nay’. See below, n. 80.
75 Philo De Specialibus Legibus 1.1.
combatant whose circumcised body is the most salient feature of the epigram. But the most compelling evidence comes from the palpable anxiety displayed in Jewish texts of the period. For example, the politically minded Hellenizers mentioned in 1 Maccabees found it necessary to remove the marks of their circumcision.\footnote{1 Macc. 1.15.} And Philo, who pleaded before the emperor and against a gentile party on behalf of Jewish rights in Alexandria, offers a detailed apologia for the circumcision rite, emphasizing especially its association with manliness.\footnote{Philo De Specialibus Legibus 1.1-11.}

Paul's bid for authority in gentile Corinth would have thrust his body into this same prominence.\footnote{Space constraints prevent a lengthy treatment of Paul's view on circumcision. I will, however, draw attention to his consistent attempts at stripping the circumcised penis of any significance whatsoever. On three occasions (Gal. 5.6; 6.15; 1 Cor. 7.19) he says that "circumcision means nothing and uncircumcision means nothing." In all three of these passages he goes on to say that what matters is something spiritual ("faith expressing itself through love," "new creation," or "keeping the commandments of God"). These comments strike me as being infused with a logic of dissimulation. Circumcision was the signifier par excellence of Jewish male effeminacy, but Paul says that it signifies nothing. And, in each case, he quickly installs some other, incorporeal thing as "what really matters." Cf. Phil. 3.1-3, where Paul calls the act of cutting the foreskin "mutilation," and reserves "circumcision" for those who "worship by the Spirit of God" and who "put no confidence in the flesh." By stripping circumcision of meaning and by devaluing the physical, Paul draws attention away from his own "mutilated" penis. Daniel Boyarin also identifies Paul's dismissal of circumcision as a way of escaping the flesh, but construes this as an example of his universalist discomfort with the "fleshiness" of Jewish ethnocentrism. E.g., Radical Jew, 68-9: "Flesh is the penis and physical kinship; it is the site of sexuality, wherein lies the origin of sin; it is also the site of genealogy, wherein lies the ethnocentricism of Judaism as Paul encountered it. All of these could be opposed, Paul came to see, by a spiritual or ideal set of counterparts which would enable the escape from the two elements of human life that Paul felt most disturbing: desire and ethnicity...Paul came to oppose the Law because of the way that it literally — that is, carnally — insisted on the priority and importance of the flesh, of procreation and kinship, symbolized by the mark in the flesh, par excellence, the penis."}
that emerged when male Jews engaged in an agon for power with non-Jews? Before attempting to answer this question and beginning to draw together the disparate strands of this chapter, I would like to consider a famous Pauline verse that may have some bearing on our discussion.

1.4 Paul's 'Thorn in Flesh'

No account of Paul's physical presence as it emerges in the Corinthian correspondence would be complete without taking stock of his “thorn in the flesh”. This opaque phrase has elicited considerable discussion, not least in the most recent major commentaries on 2 Corinthians. For this reason, then, I shall forego a detailed philological analysis in favor of a brief meditation on the possible significance of Paul's thorn for our investigation into his weakness.

The sentence in question is as follows: διό ὅνα μὴ ἐπεραίρομαι, ἐδόθη μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, ἀγγελός σατανᾶ, ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ, ἵνα μὴ ἐπεραίρομαι (2 Cor 12.7). The expression, σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, is sufficiently abstruse to warrant deliberation. On its own it could indeed refer to a person or group of persons who were hindering the spread of Paul’s gospel. Paul Barnett, for example, has recently proposed that Paul’s thorn was a

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80 The fact that some of Paul’s opponents may have been Jewish (2 Cor. 11.21-22) does not compromise my argument. It is not implausible that gentile Corinthians valued Jewish heritage as a status marker and yet remained under the influence of the common stereotype of Jewish male embodiment. Consider for a moment white teenagers in contemporary American culture who idolize black rap stars and athletes. The “blacker” these icons are (vis-à-vis language, gesture, clothing, provenance – i.e. how close to the “projects”) the more credibility they have with white kids. But we would be naïve to suggest that the white kids are therefore free from the influence of racist stereotypes of the black male. Rather, the two exist side by side and are even mutually dependent.
"Judaizing, anti-Paul movement, such as was then all too obvious in Corinth[!]". But, as Victor Paul Furnish notes, it is difficult to imagine how the singular ἀγγέλος, which stands in apposition to σκάλοψ, could refer to a group or movement. And how would a Judaizing party prevent Paul from being too elated? Rather, we should probably understand his "thorn in the flesh" to be something more personal, perhaps even more embarrassing. Sexual temptation certainly fits this description, but it seems unlikely that Paul would describe this as a weakness that he can boast in (v. 9), and the context contains nothing to commend this reading. Furthermore, ἀσθένεια (weakness), as we have seen, is the term Paul typically uses to refer to some deficiency in his own self-presentation. Thus, I align myself with the majority of interpreters and take σκάλοψ ἔτη σαρκός to be a reference to physical affliction.

Any attempt to go beyond such a generalization, however, crosses over into the realm of pure speculation. Epilepsy, impaired vision, speech impediment, malarial fever, and hysteria have all been suggested as possible ailments. It is probably best to reserve judgement in this case (although hysteria does have an intriguing resonance with the feminization of Paul's physical presence). Many have conflated the "thorn" in 2 Cor. 12.7 with the infirmity mentioned in Gal. 4.13. It is often decided on this basis that Paul

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suffered from a painful, debilitating, and chronic illness, one that may have caused revulsion among those who saw him. Peter Marshall supposes that this was the basis of the charge against Paul contained in 2 Cor. 10.10 (namely that his physical presence was weak and his speech contemptible). In the ancient world, illness or deformity was generally thought to be detrimental to an orator’s performance. Such a condition contravened the canon of masculine deportment. If Marshall is correct in linking the “thorn” of 2 Cor. 12.7 and the illness or deformity of Gal. 4.13 with the slander against Paul contained in 2 Cor. 10.10, then we have here further reason for the Apostle’s perceived weakness. Other than the appearance of ἀορτέων, however, there is no reason to suppose that the same condition lies at the heart of all three passages. In the end, we must admit that the evidence does not allow us to draw precise conclusions about Paul’s affliction. But, at any rate, the psychological observation is probably more important than the physiological one. Whatever Paul’s condition was in fact, his patent awareness of physical weakness is what dominates the Corinthian correspondence.

1.6 Conclusion

There is a general consensus that the source of Paul’s weakness was a physical ailment or deformity and perhaps also a certain lack of oratorical skill. I agree. And yet, I also believe that the prevailing stereotype of Jewish effeminacy might have ultimately determined the nature of the charge against him. How can this be? Consider another analogy drawn from contemporary American culture. Clarence Thomas is an African-American judge who abused his office. His own misconduct was unquestionably the

cause of the inquiry that nearly brought him down. But, having said that, I believe that the trial evolved into an opportunity for Americans, perhaps even unwittingly, to reinforce age-old stereotypes of the black male. The public clamored for lurid details about Thomas’s hypersexuality, his penchant for pornography, and the size of his penis. While his mistreatment of employees was the ostensible reason for the trial, stereotypes of black male aggression and hypersexuality operated implicitly to structure the evidence brought against him. There is a similar logic at work in the charge of weakness brought against Paul in Corinth. I am not suggesting for one moment that his image in this community was cut from the whole cloth of cultural bias. He probably was an unimpressive figure. But the perception of his bodily presence during public performance was in some sense already determined. The circularity of Paul's predicament is vertiginous: effeminacy was inscribed on his body by the hegemonic culture, and then (not surprisingly) discerned in the signs that his body displayed. It was discursively constructed, then read like a book.

In the course of this chapter, I have attempted to trace the intersecting patterns of physical and verbal signification that resulted in what I am calling the discursive construction of Paul’s body. While this nexus of signifiers puts him at a considerable disadvantage in his bid for authority, it is the very convergence of body and word that ultimately allows for the rehabilitation of his physical presence. He could almost build

87 And we must not forget that Paul is a part of the larger society whose attitudes towards Jews have been impressed upon him. Perhaps more important, then, than Corinthian attitudes towards Jewish embodiment is Paul's own expectation of (and anxiety about) an unfavorable reception of his self-presentation.

88 Bourdieu (Logic of Practice, 72) believes that social psychology is mistaken when it places emphasis on an actor's conscious response to body representations. His point is well taken, but I would rather say much, and not all, takes place "below the level of conscious reflection." In particular, when there is a serious breakdown in the production,
muscle mass through rhetoric, using words to dismantle the image of a weak body that had been established on his initial visit to Corinth. He achieved this, for example, by cleverly arguing that weakness is actually a sign of strength. But he could also operate in the opposite direction – use bodily praxis to make a statement. It is this latter phenomenon that will be the focus of the subsequent chapters. In particular, I shall explore Paul’s self-mastery as an argument for his masculine presence.89

and reproduction of a social code - as is the case, for example, with Paul’s effeminate body - the individual is often thrust into a heightened awareness of both the code (e.g. of masculinity) and his or her breach of the code. Therefore, while I appreciate Bourdieus’s critique of dualism (conscious individual vs. social group), his alternative is at times overly deterministic.  
89 On treating the discursive, rhetorical component of ascetic practice, see the essays collected in Semeia 57 (1992) and 58 (1992).
Contending With Desire

Paul's biography is largely unknown. We cannot even know for certain whether he was ever married. Some suggest, based on a rather dubious reading of 1 Corinthians 9.5, that Paul had a wife who did not travel with him.¹ But to assume that he is married when 1 Corinthians was written is to make a mess of his preference for celibacy over marriage in chapter 7. More plausible is the conjecture that he was a widower or had left a wife upon receiving his “call” to the service of Christ.² But even these reconstructions rely on dubious supports. The most we can say with certainty is that Paul appears to have been single and devoted to a life of celibacy both during his time spent at Corinth and when 1 Corinthians 7 was composed.³

Paul’s reticence about his own sexual continence makes a study of its meaning somewhat more difficult than it might otherwise be. The only references to his sexual status occur in 1 Cor. 7. In fact, some have concluded that, because Paul does not write

¹ See John Elliott's remarks in David Biale, From Intercourse to Discourse: Control of Sexuality in Rabbinic Literature, ed. Christopher Ocker, Sixty-Second Colloquy of the Center for Hermeneutical Studies (San Anselmo, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1992), 58-9.
³ Statements made in 1 Cor. 7.7 and 7.8 confirm this, but the chapter as a whole is almost unintelligible unless we assume that the Corinthians were well aware of Paul’s celibate lifestyle. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer (A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, second edition, ICC [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1914], 138-39) note that “[i]n all his writings, as also in Acts, there is no trace of wife or child,” making it most probable that he was never married.
often of his own celibate lifestyle, it must have been relatively unimportant to him. But this conclusion is faulty for at least two reasons. First of all, boasting of one's ascetical virtue was always a tricky business. James A. Francis has made this point with respect to the philosophical culture of the second century, but his conclusions are not without significance for Paul's milieu. A boast or an ostentatious display of ascetic virtue was a sign of the religious charlatan or false philosopher (γυρης). For Paul to make much ado about his sexual continence, therefore, would be to play the part of the γυρης and jeopardize his image as a legitimate teacher and "community organizer". One's virtue should be apparent without being flaunted. Secondly, we should not underestimate the significance of Paul's celibacy because the act itself – quite apart from anything he might say about it – is replete with meaning. As I have already emphasized, the very practice of sexual continence is a statement, and the next two chapters will be devoted to reconstructing its illocutionary force.

2.1 The Agonistic Construction of Self-Control

2.1.1 The development of the agonistic idiom

A complete account of sexual renunciation in antiquity is obviously beyond the scope of this thesis. As a constraint, therefore, I shall consider only the aspects of classical belief that make self-control (enkrateia) a particularly masculine virtue. Chief among

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these is the agonistic stance taken up against one’s passions. Ancient philosophical opinion is virtually univocal with respect to the identity and nature of the passions. Lusts for food, drink, and sex are ineluctable bodily dispositions, implanted in every human being. But, despite being necessary, they are also inimical to the cultivation of reason. These natural desires have the power to override one’s rational element and influence behavior. Plato’s formulation of this struggle between reason and passion is perhaps the most familiar. He identifies the two forces as parts of the same soul, engaged in perpetual battle, with one or the other always having the upper hand: “the soul of a man -within him has a better part and a worse part, and the expression self-mastery [κρέιττω -αυτωί] means the control [ἐγκρατείς]of the worse by the naturally better part. It is, at any rate, a term of praise. But when, because of bad breeding or some association, the better part, which is the smaller, is dominated by the multitude of the worse, I think that our speech censures this as a reproach, and calls the man in this plight unselfcontrolled and licentious [ὡς ἐαυτῷ καὶ ἀκύλαστον].”

This agonistic aspect manifests itself most concretely in the image of two armed combatants. Xenophon, for example, exhorts his readers to “fight for our freedom against these tyrants [gluttony, lechery, drink, and ambition] as persistently as if they

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8 On the association of alimentary and sexual ethics, see Ibid., 50-52.

were armed men trying to enslave us.”

And Plato writes of desires that execute military maneuvers: “in the end, I suppose, they [ἐμβολίας] seize the citadel of the young man’s soul, finding it empty and unoccupied by studies and honourable pursuits and true discourses, which are the best watchmen and guardians in the minds of men who are dear to the gods.”

Martial imagery must have been especially resonant in the world of the Greek polis, where, unlike the professional army of the Romans, militaries were comprised of private citizens. Every adult male knew what it was to engage in combat with an enemy. The image, however, continued to be a popular one right down to the first century of the Common Era and beyond. Dio Chrysostom, for example, warns: “But there is another battle more terrible and a struggle not slight but much greater than this [i.e. hardship] and fraught with greater danger, I mean the fight against pleasure.”

Dio goes on to present a rather muddled picture of the agon with pleasure, comparing it not only to war but also to athletics, dance, and even sorcery. In fact, it is probably fair to surmise that much of the battle imagery employed in first-century discourses on self-control is merely conventional. The figure of dueling combatants seems somehow less salient in the world of wandering Cynics and otiose aristocrats. Nevertheless, it remains an important component in the collective imagination of a culture fascinated by the ascetic impulse.

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Many things could be said about the tendency to compare self-control with warfare. But, for our present purposes, it is especially significant because it brings the hoplitic ideal to bear on the question of what it means to be self-controlled. The hoplite—and here Achilles is the outstanding representative\(^\text{13}\)—embodies all those qualities that the Greeks deemed manly: strength, courage, daring, endurance.\(^\text{14}\) The self-controlled subject, therefore, being a kind of victorious soldier, also has a share in these virile traits—he replicates inwardly, as it were, the hoplitic ideal. He confronts the inimical passions with an iron will, boldly spurning their insurrection, and asserts the preeminence of his rational element.

To describe self-control in these terms is to associate it with those manly characteristics that are essential to combat, thereby making it a masculine (or masculinizing) virtue.\(^\text{15}\) But it also inscribes enkrateia within an agonistic culture that excludes everyone but the adult, male citizen. By ‘agonistic culture’ I mean war of course, which is paradigmatic, but also such Athenian institutions as the adversarial court system and democratic assembly,\(^\text{16}\) not to mention a philosophical milieu that privileges dialectic over bald assertion. Women and children were not expected—and indeed, not permitted—to participate in these public activities. They must remain at home while the men debate, or within the city walls while men go to war. In a similar vein, while men are (or should be) capable of confronting and overpowering their passions, others are not. Women, in particular, are defenseless against their own hostile passions just as they are

\(^{13}\) See, e.g., Katherine Callen King, *Achilles: Paradigms of the War Hero from Homer to the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

\(^{14}\) On the hoplite as the masculine pole of male identity, see Winkler, *Constraints*, 50.

\(^{15}\) E.g. X. *Agesilaus* 5.4-7; cf. X. *Cyropaedia* 8.8.15 where the Persians are deemed effeminate (soft, unfit for war) because they have ceased to practice enkrateia.
defenseless against an invading army. Those females who exhibit a capacity for self-control receive ambivalent praise, sometimes described as possessing a masculine character. The agonistic construction of enkrateia, therefore, makes it a masculine trait, and incontinence, its opposite, is a feminine (or feminizing) weakness.

It is difficult to believe that such an intricate semiotic web could survive intact the journey from Greece to Rome, particularly when allowance is made for a radical restructuring of the cultural experience of war. But, in effect, this is what happened. The Roman cultural elite was not as close to the battlefield as the citizens of classical Athens. They relied on large armies of well-trained professionals and could live in relative security under the protection of a powerful imperial hegemony. Yet the agonistic idiom, which is so important to earlier constructions of self-control, remains. I have suggested that this may owe something to convention, as Greek authors in the Roman period (like Dio and Plutarch) as well as Latin authors (like Cicero and Seneca) unreflectively mimic the classic postures of Plato, Xenophon, and others. But this cannot be the entire story unless we suppose that the Roman period is wholly derivative. And this is patently untrue.

A more prudent, if still only partial, explanation for the appearance of the Greek agonistic idiom in Roman guise is to be found in those activities that replaced combat as the definitive occupation of important men. Increasingly, under Roman rule, rhetorical training replaced military exercise and success in declamation superseded glory

16 The word agon itself can mean not only “struggle” or “competition” but also “assembly” and “lawsuit”.
17 Cf. the ‘observation’ made by Plato’s Socrates: “the mob of motley appetites and pleasures and pains one would find chiefly in children and women and slaves and in the base rabble of those who are freemen in name.” (Pl. R. 4.431C)
18 E.g. X. Oec. 9.19.
battle. More importantly for our purposes, this shift in cultural perspective was accompanied by an attendant shift in perceptions of the masculine ideal from the warrior to the temperate public man. At least this is the position argued by Halvor Moxnes in a recent article. He suggests that when agonistic competition became obsolete, first-century figures like Dio and Plutarch turned away from this model and toward other modes of being masculine. This is a plausible (if unoriginal) reconstruction, but it suffers, in my opinion, from a lack of insight into the emerging masculine ideal of the Roman period. The point is precisely not that the agonistic idiom disappeared. Rather it was suppressed and then reemerged in modified form—a kind of cultural sublimation. It reemerged as the spirit of competition in public rhetorical contests, whether forensic or purely-declamatory. Orators attacked their opponents and defended themselves with gesture, voice, and wit as their only weapons. Observe, for example, the explicit comparison made by Quintilian between oratory and war: “let the youth whom we are training devote himself, as far as in him lies, to the imitation of truth and, in view of the fact that the battles of the forum that await him are not few, let him strive for victory in the schools and learn how to strike the vitals of his foe and protect his own.” To be sure the sort of military example that the Athenians found so pertinent to their own experience became less so in the Roman period, but it still retained a modicum of relevance as the paradigmatic image of an agonistic idiom that continued to inform the normative definition of masculinity. Perhaps, then, the use of agonistic imagery to describe self-

20 Ibid., 266-70.
control in the first century and beyond (during the so-called Second Sophistic) is not as surprising as it first appears. At any rate the idiom continued to form that vital link between the virtue known as self-control and constructions of the masculine ideal.22

2.1.2 The goal of combat: enslavement, not extirpation

Perhaps it is a needless thing to say at the close of this bloody century, but I shall say it nonetheless: warfare during the classical period was not nearly as destructive as modern warfare has been. This owes much, of course, to the development of military technology, especially weapons of mass destruction; but it also owes something to a transformation of military objectives. The goal of combat in classical Greece was not usually to destroy as many enemy soldiers as possible. Rather, success was achieved when the opposing army turned back. To be sure, battles often resulted in huge numbers of casualties (although not by our standards), but more frequently slavery was visited upon the vanquished.

In some of the passages considered above it is already apparent that the agon between reason and passion is a battle for supremacy rather than a fight to the death. Consider, for example, Xenophon’s image of the aggressive passions: “fight for our freedom against

22 This is not to say, however, that there are no differences between the earlier Greek and later Greco-Roman models. Nicole Loraux has argued that the paradigmatic death for a hoplite in Greek epic is through the thrust of a weapon (The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man, trans. Paula Wissing [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995], 98). But femininity is introduced into the masculine body precisely at this point of penetration that brings a glorious death. Loraux suggests that this indicates some appreciation for the role of the feminine in masculine identity. For Romans, however, wounds won in battle are glorious only when one can later reveal a scar—a testament to bravery but also evidence of the true entirety of the male body (i.e. not the gaping wound,
these tyrants [gluttony, lechery, drink, and ambition] as persistently as if they were armed men trying to enslave us.\textsuperscript{23} The passions are tyrants and armed men.\textsuperscript{24} A battle must ensue, but they aim only to enslave reason, not to extinguish it. The converse is also true. The bodily urges one feels for food, drink, or sex cannot be eradicated entirely.\textsuperscript{25} Rather, the goal of agonistic self-control is merely to master them, to decide when they should be indulged and when they should not.\textsuperscript{26} In other words, it is desirable to enslave one’s passions, undesirable (and impossible) to slaughter them.

This enslavement metaphor, which is frequently coupled with agonistic imagery, continues to hold currency in the Roman period. Cicero, for example, provides this picture:

They say that the fountain-head of all disorders is intemperance (\textit{intemperantiam}), which is a revolt from all guidance of the mind and right reason, so completely alien from the control of reason that the cravings of the soul cannot be guided or curbed. Therefore just as temperance allays the cravings (\textit{appetitiones}) and causes them to obey right reason, and maintains the well-considered judgments of the mind, so intemperance its enemy kindles, confounds and agitates the whole condition of the soul, with the result that from it come distress and fear and all other disorders.\textsuperscript{27}

For Cicero, as for Xenophon and others, the goal is to avoid the shackles of slavery by establishing the inverse relation – mastery over pleasure. In fact, once controlled, pleasure can even become an ally. Seneca makes just this point, and in doing so extends but the restoration of the body’s integrity is valorized). See Ibid., 88-90; Walters, “Invading”, \textsuperscript{23} X. Oec. 1.22-3. \textsuperscript{24} For other examples of the passions, or more specifically \textit{Eros}, as a tyrant, see, e.g., Pl. R. 9.573B, 9.573D; Euripides \textit{Hippolytus} 538. \textsuperscript{25} Bruce S. Thornton, \textit{Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality} (Boulder, CO: WestviewPress, 1997), 13; see also Foucault, \textit{Use of Pleasure}, 69 \textsuperscript{26} Foucault, \textit{Use of Pleasure}, 53-62.
the agonistic metaphor: "if we shall count that the gratifications of the body [corporis grata], unessential as they are, have a place like to that of the auxiliaries and light-armed troops in camp - if we let them serve, not command - thus and thus only will these things be profitable to the mind."\textsuperscript{28}

Nevertheless, although Cicero and Seneca continue to employ images of warfare and enslavement, they do not exhibit the same sense of ineluctability that appears in Classical Greek constructions of desire. Seneca calls the "gratifications of the body" unessential, and Cicero declares that desire is entirely voluntary.\textsuperscript{29} In fact, Stoics from Zeno to Aurelius maintained that there was something unnatural, or at least unnecessary, about desire. Perhaps it could even be extirpated altogether. Epictetus, for example, says:

"Have you not heard over and over again that you ought to eradicate desire utterly [\textit{\text{\v{e}pe\v{e}n \\\v{a}rai se de\,\,\,παντελω\v{c}c}]}.\textsuperscript{30} “Desire” (\textit{\text{\v{e}pe\v{e}c}) is “a general word for all kinds of appetency” (LSJ),\textsuperscript{31} including, of course, sexual desire. This is clear enough from the third book of his Discourses in which he spells out in what sense the Cynic should eliminate desire: "you must utterly wipe out desire [\textit{\text{\v{e}pe\v{e}n \\\v{a}rai se de\,\,\,παντελω\v{c}c}]... no wenches must look fine to you, no petty reputation, no boy-favorite, no little sweet-cake.”\textsuperscript{32} Seneca notes the difference between this Stoic view of desire and philosophical perspectives inspired by Aristotle: “The question has often been raised whether it is better to have moderate

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{28} Sen. Vit. Beat. 8.2; trans. John W. Basore, volume 3, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932). See also ibid. 11.1; Epict. Diss 3.15.11.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{29} Cic. Tusc. 4.76.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{31} LSJ, 1247.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. 3.22.13. Cf. Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 50.
emotions [adfectus], or none at all. Philosophers of our school reject the emotions; the Peripatetics keep them in check."\textsuperscript{33}

The case seems to be settled, then: many Stoics advocated extirpation of the passions. But this should not be misconstrued. While they did aim to eliminate the mental disturbances (πάθη, adfectus) caused by love, anger, and the like, they generally accepted the inevitability of physical urges (ἐρωτ).\textsuperscript{34} In other words, it is not whether you feel an inclination for sex (for example), but whether it affects you adversely.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, while the common perception of Stoic apatheia is that it is utter insensitivity, in actual fact Stoics typically adopted the conventional position that there is a bodily urge that must be mastered if it is not to become a passion.\textsuperscript{36}


\textsuperscript{34} Plutarch Moralia 501D, 750D.

\textsuperscript{35} See Helen F. North (Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966], 215, n. 55), who notes that "Stoics themselves distinguished apatheia ("absence of passion") from total lack of feeling, which was considered a fault... According to Zeno, passion (pathos) is ὅμη ἀλλαξάσια (SVF 1.205)... Pleonasmos transformed hormê into pathos, and it was only the pleonasmos, not the hormê, that the Stoics sought to extirpate." Cf. Francis, Subversive Virtue, 35 (emphasis his): "Apatheia lies not in the suppression of emotion, not even if such emotion has an irrational basis, but of irrational reaction to such emotion." This is a distinction that Martha Nussbaum appears to overlook in her treatment of the subject (The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics, Martin Classical Lectures, New Series, Volume 2 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 359-401).

\textsuperscript{36} Thus, Seneca, for example, after stating that it is better to drive out the passions altogether, writes: "how can these pleasures [voluptates] help coming more readily to your call, if you are their lord rather than their slave" (Ep. Mor. 116.1). Cf. Cicero Tusc. 4.72.
2.1.3 The body as locus of self-control

As an image of the psychological struggle between sexual drive and willpower, the agonistic idiom is perfectly comprehensible to a modern audience. But this is only superficially related to the ancient model. The greatest difference lies in the sheer physicality of the classical metaphor. The agon is not simply an appropriate symbol for what is primarily psychological; it is an actual somatic occurrence with a definite locus (or loci).

Bodily passions were located in corporeal space. More specifically, the belly was home to appetite (for food, drink, and sex). The following citation from Plato is representative: "that part of the Soul which is subject to appetites for foods and drinks, and all the other wants that are due to the nature of the body, they planted in the parts midway between the midriff and the boundary at the navel, fashioning as it were a manger in all this region for the feeding of the body."37 This is an opinion that persisted long after the classical period, and not only as a kind of folk biology. Galen, the leading physician of his era (second century CE), maintained that the desiderative power is located in this region.38 And, although there were some dissenters in the centuries between Plato and Galen, it should be noted that they substituted another corporeal locus for the appetites rather than a purely psychological etiology.39

The belly, moreover, is not only that place where irrational passions are born and reside but also the site of their physical confrontation with the forces of reason.

38 Galen, De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis 3.7.24-33.
39 See Appendix A, 137-8.
Incredible though it sounds to modern ears, self-control could be explained on an organic model as the relationship between the organs of the lower abdomen.

[I]nasmuch as they knew that it [the desiderative component of humans] would not understand reason, and that, even if it did have some share in the perception of reasons, it would have no natural instinct to pay heed to any of them but would be bewitched for the most part both day and night by images and phantasms, - to guard against this God devised and constructed the form of the liver and placed it in that part's abode; and He fashioned it dense and smooth and bright and sweet, yet containing bitterness, that the power of thoughts which proceed from the mind, moving in the liver as in a mirror which receives impressions and provides visible images, should frighten this part of the soul.40

This biological explanation of self-mastery renders the use of agon imagery somewhat more “literal” than it first appeared. But it also makes available to view the interior space of the body. We moderns have a vague sense that restraint takes place more or less behind the eyeballs (i.e. it is invisible, psychic). But Plato directs the gaze downward, where we can see – as if the flesh of the thorax has been incised and folded back for inspection – the actual, physical locus of self-control.

After exposing the operations of lust and reason among internal organs, Plato draws our attention still lower to the penis, a highly contested site in the classical anatomy of self-control. This is the point at which the interior bodily agon is replicated externally:

The marrow, inasmuch as it is animate and has been granted an outlet, has endowed the part where its outlet lies with a love for generating by implanting therein a lively desire for emission. Wherefore in men the nature of the genital organs is disobedient [ἀπελθής] and self-willed [αὐτοκρατής], like a creature that is deaf to reason, and it attempts to dominate all because of its frenzied lusts.41

40 Pl. Ti. 71A-71B.
41 Ibid. 91B. For women, it is not the genitalia, but the womb that is desirous (91C). Cf. Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 28.
The penis is not merely an outlet for irrational passions. It has a mind of its own, so to speak; and it tries constantly to overcome and enslave the better part of the soul.\footnote{Cf. the slang term for penis, τὸ ἄναγκαῖον ("the thing that compels"). It could compel and coerce, in short it was a tyrant. Once controlled, however, the penis became a valuable asset in a phallocentric social order. Cf. Michel Foucault (The History of Sexuality, volume 3, The Care of the Self, trans. Robert Hurley [London: The Penguin Press, 1986], 34): "The penis thus appears at the intersection of all these games of mastery: self-mastery, since its demands are likely to enslave us if we allow ourselves to be coerced by it; superiority over sexual partners, since it is by means of the penis that the penetration is carried out; status and privileges, since it signifies the whole field of kinship and social activity."} Self-mastery, therefore, consists in successfully defending against this opposition and asserting the dominance of reason over one's penis. Again we see that enkrateia was constructed as a contest in which the body - and especially the lower abdomen - became an object of intense scrutiny. This will be of considerable interest when we come to consider Paul's practice of self-control in light of his problematic embodiment.

The trope of the disobedient penis continued its currency during the Roman period, but it became more closely associated with sexual humor than with earnest accounts of self-mastery.\footnote{And, while agonistic imagery remained an important link between self-control and masculinity, it never again attained the kind of physicality that is evident in Plato's Timaeus. To be sure, sexual desire was still widely believed to be a physiological (rather than purely psychological) phenomenon, but the importance of the body itself as a site of conflict seems to have receded slightly in Greco-Roman philosophical discourse. This shift can be attributed almost entirely to the influence of the Stoics and their unique perspective on the nature of desire. Unlike the Academics, Peripatetics, and Epicureans, who all held that desire was intrinsic to the human organism, Stoics maintained that desire was simply bad belief. Cicero is representative. In the context of a discourse} And, while agonistic imagery remained an important link between self-control and masculinity, it never again attained the kind of physicality that is evident in Plato's Timaeus. To be sure, sexual desire was still widely believed to be a physiological (rather than purely psychological) phenomenon, but the importance of the body itself as a site of conflict seems to have receded slightly in Greco-Roman philosophical discourse. This shift can be attributed almost entirely to the influence of the Stoics and their unique perspective on the nature of desire. Unlike the Academics, Peripatetics, and Epicureans, who all held that desire was intrinsic to the human organism, Stoics maintained that desire was simply bad belief. Cicero is representative. In the context of a discourse
about love, he writes: “This characteristic, too, of all disorder must be made clear, namely, that there is no instance where it is not due to belief, due to an act of judgment, due to voluntary choice.” Because desire and other disturbances are seen to be due to belief, mind replaces body as the primary locus of self-control for most Stoics. This is articulated with no greater force than in Epictetus’ constant reference to το σώματος. His “little body” is so small (as it were) and so insignificant, that it is or should be invisible. This contrasts sharply with the classical notion of the body as a highly conspicuous site of combat where enkrateia was won. Nevertheless, Stoic disdain for the body is easily overestimated. At any rate, Epictetus’ teacher Musonius Rufus, while he does place greater emphasis on the life of the mind, also affirms the body’s place in human identity and in the practice of self-control: "Since it so happens that the human being is not soul alone, nor body alone, but a kind of synthesis of the two, the person in training must take care of both, the better part, the soul, more zealously, as is fitting, but also of the other, if he shall not be found lacking in any part that constitutes man." Although the traditional emphasis on body in the practice of enkrateia was mitigated somewhat by Stoic preference for internal attitudes, it still played a subordinate role in philosophical constructions of self-control.

Meanwhile, a different and more compelling link between self-control and the masculine body was emerging in the medical literature of this period. Most physicians during the early centuries of the Common Era maintained that sexual continence (or at

43 E.g. Petr. Sat. 132.12-13; Mart. 1.58; 7.91. For discussion see Amy Richlin, Garden of Priapus, 115-19.
44 Cic. Tusc. 4.76; cf. ibid. 4.65.
least moderation) was healthy.\textsuperscript{46} Soranus, a doctor of the early second century, endorsed celibacy for both women and men as the surest way to protect against the dangers presented to one’s constitution by sexual intercourse.\textsuperscript{47} But the biology of sex and abstention found its most elaborate expression in the works of Galen. He places great emphasis on the benefits of retaining one’s semen though sexual continence. Because it contains vital pneuma, semen is an important source of the body’s warmth, strength, vigor, and courage. In short, the presence of semen in the body produces a masculine appearance and character.\textsuperscript{48} During frequent sexual activity, this substance (and the vital pneuma with it) is exhausted: "So it is not at all surprising that those who are less moderate sexually turn out to be weaker, since the whole body loses the purest part of both substances."\textsuperscript{49} The continent man, on the other hand, is warmer, stronger, and more courageous – that is, more masculine – owing to the higher concentration of vital pneuma in his system. Once again a connection has been established between the masculine body and the biological processes of self-control. And, as with the Platonic model, the body itself is the locus of intense scrutiny, this time as the object of a health regimen.

Traditional constructions of enkrateia placed the subject's body squarely in the foreground (either as the site of physical conflict, or as the object of a health regimen), and guaranteed the subject's masculinity (through its agonistic character or through the retention of semen). Paul's practice of self-control, therefore, vouched for the masculine

\textsuperscript{46} See especially Foucault, \textit{Care of the Self}.
\textsuperscript{48} Galen \textit{De Semine} 1.16.2,16-18. This is proved, Galen says, by the fact that males whose testicles have been excised are effeminate.
authority of his person. By participating in the discourse of enkrateia, he could eloquently rehabilitate his bodily presence without uttering a word. But what of the few words he did utter about sexual continence? Do they affirm the traditional notions of self-control? Or can we observe an encratic discourse that is peculiarly Pauline? This is what I shall tentatively proffer in this chapter: a Pauline construction of self-control that ostensibly participates in traditional, masculinizing norms but diverges in ways that are significant for his particular situation at Corinth.

2.2 Paul's Anti-askesis

2.2.1 Corinthians 7.1-2

Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians begins with an intriguing introduction to the topic of sexual continence: Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε, καλῶν ἀνθρώπων γυναικῶς μὴ ἅπτεσθαι. ("Concerning what you wrote, it is a good thing for a man not to have sex with [lit. touch] a woman.")⁵⁰ How sweet it would be to hold in our hands the document to which Paul alludes, evidently a letter drafted by some members of the Corinthian community and sent to Paul with the hope of procuring his response. But, like listening to one end of a telephone conversation, we are reduced to speculative reconstruction of the actual dialogue. Even so, there are a few things to be said about the nature of their exchange based on Paul’s remarks. First of all, it is clear that the issue of sexual renunciation was one of the topics of the Corinthian letter. Paul’s response is clearly addressed to some specific concerns of that community. Secondly, as we will discover, the position Paul

manhood (degenerans viro); Epict. Diss. 2.10.17; Aretaeus On the Causes and Signs of Chronic Diseases 2.5 (cited in Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 15).
takes on celibacy seems designed to mitigate Corinthian zeal for this practice. We can
deduce, then, with some confidence that a significant group of Corinthian Christians
would have agreed with the statement, “it is a good thing for a man not to have sex with a
woman.” In fact, most modern commentators propose that this is a Corinthian slogan
cited by Paul.51 If this is the case, then we do indeed possess a portion of that letter to
which Paul is responding. But far too much has been made of the difference this makes
for our assessment of Paul’s position.52 Whether the slogan is his or someone else’s he is
clearly not in disagreement with it and only wishes to limit its application under certain
circumstances.

These “circumstances” are made clear in verse 2: διά δὲ τὰς παρνέας ἐκαστὸς τὴν
ἐαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐκέτω καὶ ἐκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐκέτω. (“But because of [cases of] sexual
immorality, each man should have intercourse with [or remain married to] his own wife
and each woman should have intercourse with her own husband.”) The adversative δὲ
indicates that this advice qualifies the valorization of celibacy expressed in verse 1, but it
is not a call for everyone in the community to get married (as some have taken it).53 The

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50 English translations of Pauline texts are mine unless otherwise noted.
51 E.g. Barrett, First Epistle, 154; O. Larry Yarbrough, Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage
Rules in the Letters of Paul (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 93-4; Gordon D. Fee, The
First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing
Company, 1987), 274-277; for a slightly modified view, see Robertson and Plummer,
First Epistle, 132. For the position that the phrase is Pauline, see F. W. Grosheide,
Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B.
Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 154-55; Hans Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians,
52 E.g. William E. Phipps (“Paul’s Attitude,” 130) who, based on the position that this is a
Corinthian slogan, arrives at the conclusion that Paul shared the “Hebraic view of the
goodness of sexuality.”
53 E.g. Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle, 133. They place a good deal of emphasis
on the appearance of ἀνδρόμυ (“man”) rather than ἄνδρὰ (“husband”) in verse 1b. They
argue that this indicates that Paul wants everyone in the community to get married. But if
verse 1b is a statement of the Corinthian position, then it is Corinthians who are
verb ἕξεν is a common euphemism for sex,\textsuperscript{54} so Paul's concern is with the sexual practices of those who are already married. This indicates that some married couples in Corinth were practicing celibacy in accordance with the rule, “it is a good thing for a man not to have sex with a woman”. Paul objects to this practice on account of τὰς πορνείας. The plural recommends an interpretation such as “actual cases of immorality” rather than simply “the possibility of immorality”.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, Paul seems to be saying: “Because of some actual cases of immorality, all husbands and wives should maintain sexual relations with each other.” Some commentators have suggested that, in light of the discussion immediately preceding chapter 7 (6.15-20), τὰς πορνείας refers to a situation in which married men are turning to prostitutes because of a commitment to celibacy within their marriages.\textsuperscript{56} This is a plausible reconstruction, but also highly speculative. The most we can say with certainty is that Paul opposed the practice of conjugal celibacy (i.e. spiritual marriage) by emphasizing the sexual obligation owed to one's spouse, a principle that he develops at length in verses 3-5.

2.2.2 1 Corinthians 7.5

Verse 5 is extremely important for our investigation into the peculiar development of Paul's encratic discourse. Here is the text in full: μὴ ἀποστειρεῖτε ἀλλὰ λύσα, εἰ μὴ τὰ ἐν ἐκ

suggesting that (or asking whether) it is good for any and every man (ἀνθρώπω) to abstain from sex. Paul answers in verse 2 that husbands (ἀνδρεῖς) should have sex with (or remain married to) their wives.

\textsuperscript{54} E.g. Fee, First Epistle, 278.

\textsuperscript{55} E.g. Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle, 132-33; Grosheide, First Epistle, 155; Barrett, First Epistle, 155; Fee, First Epistle, 277-78. The abstract singular is attested in Codices F and G, but these witnesses are late and notoriously unreliable.
Do not deprive each other, unless you agree to do so for an appointed time so that you might devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan might not tempt you on account of your akrasia.”) Here Paul qualifies his initial qualification. He makes allowance for married couples to suspend sexual relations during times of prayer. Presumably, as John Poirier and Joseph Frankovic have argued in a recent article, this separation is for the sake of ritual purity, a common practice in both Jewish and Gentile contexts. But Paul is quick to stipulate that this period of abstinence must not be overlong. And his reason for curtailing the ascetic aspirations of married folk is their akrasia (the traditional opposite of enkrateia). But what does this mean?

It might be useful at this point to introduce the classic definition of akrasia as developed in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. Akrasia is unrestraint vis-à-vis the bodily passions. The word is not used to define a state in which the individual simply chooses (without any sense of compulsion) to eat or drink too much or to engage in frequent or depraved sex. Aristotle calls this condition *akolosia* (akolasia). Rather, it is a state in which the individual is overcome by passion despite every intention to resist. In other words, desire has been victorious in its agon with the will.

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58 Arist. *EN* 7.4.4.
59 The opposite of akrasia is enkrateia: a state of successfully keeping strong desires under control. And the opposite of akolasia is sophrosyne: a state in which only good and moderate desires are experienced (7.9.6). Helen North (*Sophrosyne*, 203) claims that
government with bad laws that are upheld, and akrasia to a government with good laws that are repeatedly broken.\textsuperscript{60} Whereas both conditions are undesirable, the former implies willful wantonness and is therefore the greater vice. Akrasia, on the other hand, is not only the lesser vice but even forgivable, especially when caused by impetuosity rather than weakness.\textsuperscript{61} Furthermore, the akrates individual can be cured.\textsuperscript{62}

Paul’s use of akrasia in verse 5 bears some resemblance to the Aristotelian model just summarized. Clearly, for example, Paul is not worried about the intentions of his audience. It is not as though married couples have separated for the sake of pursuing their evil lusts. \textit{(According to Aristotle’s grid, this would be akolasia)} On the contrary, Paul is concerned that they are weak (or impetuous), unable to stick to their initial ideals. This appears to be the essence of akrasia for Paul as it is for Aristotle. However, a simple identification of Pauline with Aristotelian usage may create more problems than it solves. Whatever akrasia is for Paul, it appears to be something that is tolerable in the context of marriage. He does not advise the married Corinthians to cure their condition. In fact, he seems to assume that akrasia is always present in marriage.\textsuperscript{63} And it becomes problematic only when a licit avenue for erotic activity is closed off, i.e. when conjugal relations are interrupted. If we plug in Aristotle’s model, which postulates that akrasia is a condition of habitually being overcome by desire, then Paul truly does view marriage as a haven for the incontinent. His logic would run something like this: “Because you are

\textsuperscript{60} Aristotle “makes the first rigorous distinction between sophrosyne and enkrateia.” But this becomes the dominant explanatory grid.
\textsuperscript{61} Arist. \textit{EN} 7.10.3-4.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid. 7.7.3.
\textsuperscript{63} “For incontinentia is of course of the nature of married people; otherwise they would have remained unmarried” (Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 118, n. 28). Also Barrett, \textit{First Epistle}, 157.
habitually overcome by sexual desire, do not suspend conjugal relations with your spouse. This will surely result in fornication. Instead, you should continue your current pattern of mutually satisfying each other's lusts.” While this has a certain appeal owing to the putative freedom created for polymorphic sex between husband and wife, it requires a laissez-faire attitude that is uncharacteristic of Paul. In particular, we should recall that in 1 Thessalonians 4.4 he urges men to take their wives in consecration and honor, and not in the passion of lust like outsiders do. It would be perplexing, then, if here in the Corinthian correspondence Paul is suddenly willing to turn a blind eye to sexual incontinence, stipulating only that it be indulged in the marriage bed.

Perhaps the biggest difficulty with the absolute identification of Pauline and Aristotelian usage is the question of rehabilitation. Aristotle insists that a person who is habitually overcome by desire (i.e. akrates) can be “cured”. Paul, on the other hand, seems to treat the presence of akrasia in married people as an irreversible given. Surely, if Paul believed (as Aristotle did) that they could convert their akrasia to enkrateia, their incontinence to continence, he would have encouraged the exercise of some restraint within marriage. Thus, akrasia in Paul is related to but significantly different from akrasia in Aristotle, and it remains to be seen in the subsequent verses precisely in what this difference consists.

2.2.3 1 Corinthians 7.7

The classical model of enkrateia-akrasia, which seems to be altered somewhat in verse 5, is exploded in verse 7. After exhorting the married Corinthians to continue
conjugal relations, Paul says in verse 7: \( \text{θέλω δὲ πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἶναι ὡς καὶ ἐμαυτὸν· ἀλλὰ ἕκαστος ἰδίον ἔχει χάρισμα ἐκ θεοῦ, ὃ μὲν οὕτως, ὃ δὲ οὕτως.} \) ("I wish that all people were as even I am; but each one has his own gift from God, one this and another that.")

From earliest times, most commentators have assumed that the charisma in question in this verse is enkrateia. Paul has urged married couples not to interrupt their regular pattern of sexual activity because they are akrates (which remains for the moment an undefined term in the Pauline lexicon). He now says that he wishes it were otherwise, but alas they are not gifted. The implication seems to be that enkrateia is a gift, available to only a few. Paul, of course, is among the few. But others (such as the married folk he addresses), since they were not granted this gift, are akrates. They are not required — indeed, not even able — to mimic his encratic posture. Or as Hans Conzelmann has succinctly written: "Since ἐγκράτεια is a charisma, it is not practiced as a virtue. It is not a standard that has to be achieved and is measured by criteria of a general kind, but it is an individual gift which cannot be acquired by imitation."\(^64\)

This reading of verse 7 remained self-evident for centuries, but in recent years it has come under some scrutiny. Michael Barré, for example, insinuates that this interpretation is especially amenable to a "Lutheran" position which seeks to contrast divine grace with human effort.\(^65\) Surely North American scholars have outgrown the phase in which "Lutheran" was a dirty word and everything German suspicious. Barré, it should be noted, offers no alternative reading of verse 7. There are others who are willing to


\(^65\) Michael L. Barré, "To Marry," 199, n.16.
concede that enkrateia is a charisma if only marriage is also recognized as such. This interpretation hinges on positing specific terms for the antithesis that concludes the verse (ὁ μέν... ὁ δὲ). On such a reading, Paul wishes that everyone could possess his gift (enkrateia), but declares that one (ὁ μέν) has the gift of enkrateia and another (ὁ δὲ) the gift of marriage. This strips charisma of any meaning whatsoever. For what significance could we possibly attribute to charisma if it is applied equally to those who are single and to those who are married? No, it is much more likely that Paul refers here to other gifts, such as divine speech and prophecy, which the Corinthians clearly valued. Another recent alternative, which at least has something to commend it even if it is not finally persuasive, champions prophecy as the charisma in question. Francovic and Poirier plausibly identify the issue of separation during times of prayer as one of ritual purity, but incredibly they go on to infer from this that Paul is thinking of celibacy in the context of a more general prophetic calling. Thus, Paul wishes that everyone could have the prophetic charisma (which he himself possesses) but concedes that only a few are so gifted while others possess their own charismata. Nothing in the preceding verses, however – not even the implicit context of ritual purity – prepares the reading audience (ancient or modern) for such an oblique reference to prophecy in verse 7. This seems, therefore, an unlikely candidate to replace enkrateia simpliciter as the charisma possessed by Paul but not by the married Corinthians. Thus, in the absence of a compelling

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67 Poirier and Frankovic, “Celibacy and Charism”. Much of this study follows in the wake of David L. Balch, “Backgrounds of I Cor. vii: Sayings of the Lord in Q; Moses as an Ascetic βείος ἀνήρ in II Cor. iii,” NTS 18 (1972): 351-364.
alternative, I will accept the "traditional" interpretation. In fact, I hope to demonstrate over the next several pages that this reading is really quite consistent with Paul’s logic.

"Since ἐγκράτεια is a charisma, it is not practiced as a virtue." If Conzelmann’s assessment is accurate – and I believe that it is – Paul’s encratic discourse differs significantly from the agonistic construction of self-control that was prevalent in antiquity. The traditional struggle to defeat and enslave one’s passions, typically in the context of a bodily askesis, has yielded to blind luck. Human agency, so important to classical discourses of self-control, has been utterly usurped by the will of God. Because of this there is no willful conversion from akrasia to enkrateia, which explains why Paul is so skeptical about the decision of some married couples to give up sexual relations. They are akrates (i.e. lacking enkrateia), and they cannot become enkrates through sheer force of will. Married folk who decide to give up sexual relations remain akrates, because true self-control is a gift from God. This is in opposition to the classical emphasis on practice (askesis), and it is the primary innovation of Paul’s encratic discourse: that enkrateia is given, not practiced.68

2.2.4 1 Corinthians 7.8-9

Ἀλήγο δὲ τοῖς ἁγάμοις καὶ ταῖς χήραις, καλὰν αὐτοῖς ἕαν μείνωσιν ὡς κἀγὼ· εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύομαι, γαμησάτωσιν, κρείτταν γάρ ἐστιν γαμήσαι ἤ τυρφώθησαι. ("I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is a good thing for them to remain as I myself am. But if

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they do not have self-control, they should marry; for it is better to get married than to go on burning.”) I have dealt with these two verses elsewhere in more detail. Here it is my intention to treat only those elements of verses 8-9 that impinge directly upon our elaboration of Paul's encratic discourse. The crucial word, of course, from our perspective, is (ei oûk) ēγκρατείονται. There are two schools of thought regarding its semantic value. Most commonly the verb is thought to contain a notion of potential. Thus: “if they cannot control themselves” (NIV). This implies that ēγκρατείονται is being able to control one's passions rather than simply practicing self-control - that enkrateia is something you have, not something you do. Some commentators, however, have criticized this rendering, saying that the word simply cannot be construed in this way. Michael Barré, for example, postulates that the phrase ei dê oûk ēγκρατείονται should be rendered, “If in fact they are not practicing continence”, rather than, “If they cannot exercise self-control”. Barré calls the “cannot” “not only an unwarranted interpolation which weakens the sense of the passage, but actually misleading.”

This is absolutely correct if we base our reading of the verb on Aristotelian usage. According to Aristotle's model, it is patently ludicrous to say that people who have successfully resisted the urge for sex are lacking in self-control (oûk ēγκρατείονται). This expression would ordinarily be reserved for those who are, in fact, incontinent. Barré and Fee, therefore, confidently assert that the usual, unexamined view of 1 Cor. 7.9 cannot be correct. El oûk ēγκρατείονται must mean “if they are not practicing self-control”. And,

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69 See Appendix A.
70 Also Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 120.
71 Barré, “To Marry”, 199; also Fee, First Epistle, 288-89. Barrett (First Epistle, 161) is horribly confused. He appears to be in agreement with Barré and Fee when he writes: “there is no ground for watering this down into ‘if they find it difficult to live
because the addressees are unmarried, Barré and Fee conclude that Paul is addressing the issue of fornication. But, while their point about the meaning of ἐγκρατεύεσθαι might be true in general, it should not be slavishly applied to the occurrence in 1 Cor. 7.9 without also considering potential discrepancies between Pauline and Aristotelian models. We have already determined that the pair enkrateia-akrasia takes on new significance in 1 Cor. 7. Rather than a practice (askesis), enkrateia is a gift. Likewise, akrasia is not actually a state of being “out of control”, but simply the lack of that gift. We should expect this difference to be reflected also in Paul’s use of the verbal form ἐγκρατεύεσθαι. Thus, while it is true that Aristotle uses this word with the sense “to practice self-control”, this is only because he treats enkrateia as a virtue that one practices. Paul, on the other hand, understands enkrateia to be a gift and not a practice, something you have, not something you do. The verb, therefore, must mean something like “to be gifted with enkrateia.”

If this is correct, then it is conceivable that there exists a class of people who are celibate but still not enkrates (i.e. not gifted). In fact, I am convinced that the occurrence of πυροῦσθαι (“to burn”) in verse 9b requires us to believe that Paul is addressing his advice to precisely this class of people. Unless we suppose that Paul is threatening fornicators with a fiery judgement, πυροῦσθαι is only intelligible in the context of a lack of sexual activity. Burning is a symptom of unsatisfied sexual desire. In physiological terms, it results from the body’s accumulation of semen (this is true of both males and

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continently”.” But he then falls back on the position that πυροῦσθαι (9b) is “to be consumed with inward desire, even if one does not yield to it” (emphasis mine).

72 Grosheide, First Epistle, 161; Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 120.

73 This is Barré’s thesis (“To Marry”).
females) and is quenched only when the sufferer ejaculates. Paul's exhortation to marry, therefore, is for people who are celibate but suffer (because they are not gifted with enkrateia) from symptoms brought on by the accumulation of semen. He could have advised autoeroticism, but undoubtedly Paul viewed masturbation as an illicit sexual act.

These two verses significantly advance the case for a peculiarly Pauline encratic discourse. Merely resisting the sexual urge is not sufficient for someone to be considered enkrates. For Aristotle, holding out against strong desire is the very definition of self-control. But, for Paul, the determining factor is giftedness, not willpower. The person who lacks enkrateia but attempts to remain celibate will experience the distracting symptoms that derive from an excess of semen, especially burning. The obvious corollary, therefore, is that whoever abstains from sexual activity without burning must possess the gift of enkrateia. It appears that this charisma is actually some disruption of the body's normal desiderative mechanism. People like Paul, who are truly enkrates, are blessed with an insensitivity to sexual desire. This also explains why Paul is content with the existence of akrasia within marital relations. Akrasia is not so much "lack of control" as "sensitivity to desire", a state in which the body craves sexual contact. Thus, it is not

74 See Appendix A, 139-41.
75 It is tempting to say that Paul's position on masturbation is part of the Jewish moral code of his day. While this may not be entirely wrong, Michael Satlow has argued that the rabbinic prohibition on masturbation is relatively late and primarily of Babylonian provenance. Michael L. Satlow, "'Wasted Seed', The History of a Rabbinic Idea," HUCA 65 (1994): 137-75.
76 Barrett (First Epistle, 157) writes: "Incontinence (in the sense of irrepressible desire for sexual relations)." But he does not appreciate the truly unusual character of this definition. As we have seen, Aristotle's influential view was that the enkrates person and the akrates person alike experience strong desire, but one resists and the other gives in. Cf. Walter Grundmann, "ἐγκράτεια (ἀκρασία), ἐγκρατής (ἀκρατής), ἐγκρατεῖομαι," TDNT,
in itself sinful;\textsuperscript{77} it only becomes problematic when a licit avenue for erotic activity (i.e. marital sex) is closed off.

2.2.5 \textit{1 Corinthians} 7.36-38

This reading of Pauline enkrateia in verses 7-8 is reaffirmed in verses 36-38, where Paul addresses the hypothetical case of a man and his betrothed. The text is as follows:

Εἰ δὲ τις ἀσχημονεῖν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον αὐτοῦ νομίζει, εἰὰν ἢ ὑπέρακμος καὶ οὗτος ὁθελεῖ γίνεσθαι, ὁ θέλει ποιεῖται, οὐχ ἀμαρτάνει, γαμεῖταισαν. ὡς δὲ ἐστηκέν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐδραίς μὴ ἔχων ἀνάγκην, ἐξουσίαν δὲ ἔχει περὶ τοῦ ἰδίου θελήματος καὶ τοῦτο κέκρικεν ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ καρδίᾳ, τηρεῖν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον, καλῶς ποιήσει. ὃστε καὶ ὁ γαμίζων τὴν ἑαυτοῦ παρθένον καλῶς ποιεῖ καὶ ὁ μὴ γαμίζων κρεῖσσον ποιήσει. (“If anyone thinks that he is acting unseemly toward his virgin, if his desire is too strong and it must be this way, let him marry as he wishes; it is no sin. But whoever stands firm in his own heart having no necessity, whoever has authority concerning his own wishes and has decided in his own heart to keep his virgin, he does well. The one who marries his virgin does well, and the one who does not marry does better.”) There are conditions under which the man should marry, and conditions under which he should not. He should marry if “he is acting unseemly toward his virgin, if his desire is too strong.” The word ὑπέρακμος (translated here as “his desire is too strong”) is notoriously difficult. If, however, the word describes the man’s libido, as most commentators believe,\textsuperscript{78} it seems to place the condition for

\textsuperscript{77} Grosheide, \textit{First Epistle}, 161-62; Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 120.

\textsuperscript{78} E.g. Barrett, \textit{First Epistle}, 182-84; Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 135-36. For the position that it refers to the virgin’s stage in life, see Robertson and Plummer, \textit{First
marriage on the amount of desire he experiences (ὑπέρ—over, ἀκμὸς—limit). There is a
similar logic at work in the opposite scenario. The man should not marry if, “because of
a lack of sexual desire, he stands firm in his own heart.”

There is a similar logic at work in the opposite scenario. The man should not marry if, “because of
a lack of sexual desire, he stands firm in his own heart.”

avaymri, often left
ambiguously as “necessity” in English translations, is here specifically the compulsion or
urge for intercourse. Paul says remarkably that one should only seek a life of singleness
and celibacy if one does not experience sexual desire. This confirms the hypothesis
spelled out above – that Paul believes a certain class of people (those gifted with
enkrateia) to be free from the constraints of sexual desire.

2.2.6 1 Corinthians 9.25-27

This passage contains the only other occurrence of ἐγκρατεύομαι in the Pauline
corpus. It is a highly conventional example of agon imagery (here taken from athletics).

Athletes exercise self-control [ἐγκρατεῖται] in all things; they do it to receive a
perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box
as though beating the air; but I punish my body [ἀσκῶ; lit. “I beat it”, “I treat it
roughly”] and enslave it [δουλάω; so that after proclaiming to others I myself should
not be disqualified (NRSV). At first glance these verses might appear to refute the
picture I have been sketching of Paul’s anti-askesis. Clearly we have here an image of

Epistle, 159; Grosheide, First Epistle, 182. Dale Martin has suggested that ἐπέρακμος
refers to the virgin’s desire (Corinthian Body, 219-28). The point I am making here is
not changed appreciably if we accept this alternative reading.

It is my opinion that a close connection should be retained between the participial
clause (μὴ ἔχων ἀνάγκην) and the phrase to which it is subordinated (ὅτι δὲ ἐσταθεὶ ἐν τῇ
καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἐθραίνοι). Because current translations treat them as though they are in a
paratactic construction (which substantially alters the sense), I have here offered my own
translation.
the ascetic, that is, the one who practices virtue through bodily control. And yet, a closer examination of the context will reveal the near irrelevance of this passage for our present purposes. First of all, the occurrence of ἐγκρατείας in verse 25 is not a reference to sexual self-mastery. Secondly, and perhaps even more decisively, it does not describe Paul's relation to his body at all. As Victor Pfitzner has pointed out, we should not understand these verses to be a description of the Apostle's ascetic mortification. Rather Paul employs a conventional image – the athlete who practices self-control – for the sake of elucidating his commitment to the gospel.  

2.2.7 1 Thessalonians 4.3-5  

Although the topic of enkrateia (or lack of it) dominates parts of the Pauline corpus, there are very few passages outside of 1 Corinthians 7 that deal explicitly with sexual continence. I introduced one of these, 1 Thess. 4.4, into my discussion of marital akrasia as though it were more or less straightforward. It is not. Here is the full text of verses 3-5:  

Ταῦτα γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἄγιος ὡς ὕμνον, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας, εἰδέναι ἐκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἐαυτοῦ σκέενος κτάσθαι ἐν ἄγιοις καὶ τιμῇ, μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν. (“This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication, that each of you know to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in passionate lust like the gentiles who do not know God.”) The sense is by no means clear, particularly on account of the expression σκέενος κτάσθαι (4),  

80 Yarbrough, Gentiles, 103, 107.  
82 See Stowers, Rereading, 42-82.
which, rendered literally, is “to take a vessel”. Some have argued that σκεφτός means “body”.83 And there is support for this reading in at least one other New Testament text (2 Cor. 4.7). A variation on “body”, not attested elsewhere in the New Testament, but possible in the context of 1 Thess. 4.4, is “penis.”84 And a third possible translation, attested both in the New Testament and in other contemporary literature, is “woman, wife”.85 Thus Paul might be saying, “this is the will of God… that each one of you know how to control your own body [or penis] in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God” (NRSV). Or he might be saying, “this is the will of God… that each one of you take a wife for himself in consecration and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”86

From a grammatical and lexicographical standpoint there is really very little to choose between these readings.87 If we accept “body” or “penis”, these verses represent a position appreciably different from the one Paul adopts in 1 Cor. Here there is an explicit emphasis not only on ascetic control, but also on the body (or even the penis) as the site of self-mastery. In the conclusion to this chapter I shall argue that it is precisely the anti-ascetic impulse and the substitution of spirit for body that define Paul’s encratic

84 LSJ, 1607; AGD, 754.
85 E.g., 1 Pet. 3.7; see AGD, 754.
86 AGD, 455, 754.
discourse. For this reason I prefer the second proposed translation of 1 Thess. 4.4: “this is the will of God...that each one of you take a wife for himself in consecration and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.” This, then, is the installment of some constraint on the expression of desire between men and women. There is no reason to follow Dale Martin’s suggestion that Paul means for married couples to eliminate desire completely from their sexual relations.

2.2.8 Galatians 5.16-25

This passage offers an interesting comparison to the pneumaticization of self-control in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul begins: Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want (5.16-17). Verses 16-17a are reminiscent of the conventional agon, but with an important difference: Spirit is substituted for reason. Furthermore, Spirit is not a component of the human soul; it is rather an external power, the Spirit of God. Some

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88 We could, however, account for the differences between 1 Thess. and 1 Cor. by appealing to the different rhetorical purposes of each. See below, for example, the discussion of Gal. 5.16-26 and its relation to 1 Cor. 7.
89 Bassler (Σκεδος, 57-8) maintains that this reading conflicts with 1 Cor. 7.8-9, where Paul depicts marriage as a haven for those whose sexual desire is out of control. I have been trying to make the case, however, that “those who lack self-control” in 1 Cor. 7 are not sex maniacs, but merely people who experience a natural physical urge for intercourse. There is no reason why these people cannot “take a wife in consecration and honor.” Just because they experience desire, and seek to satisfy it in the marriage bed, does not mean that they should be unrestrained.
90 Martin, “Paul Without Passion”.
91 J. B. Lightfoot, The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians (London: MacMillan and Co., 1884), 210; Ernest De Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921), 297; Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians,
suggest that flesh, in this case, is also an external force in conflict with Spirit, making this passage an obvious analogue to Romans 7.15-24. Hans Dieter Betz, for example, says of Gal. 5.17: “the human body is a battlefield on which the powers of the flesh and the Spirit fight against each other.”92 This seems to express a similar anthropology to that found in Rom. 7.15-24 where Sin (ἁμαρτία) is a power that resides in the person and forces her to do what she does not want. At any rate, the essential point expressed in both passages is that human will (i.e. reason) is not an active participant in the struggle for control.93 As Gal. 5.16 relates, control over “desires of the flesh” comes from walking in the Spirit. The fundamental passivity of the self-controlled subject is reaffirmed in verses 22-23 where enkrateia is listed as a “fruit of the Spirit” (i.e. something you receive) in obvious contrast with the “works of the flesh” (i.e. something you do),94 and again in verse 25 where Paul writes: If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course.

The second outstanding feature of Paul’s encratic discourse in 1 Cor. 7 is also present in Galatians 5, namely the idealization of complete lack of sexual desire. In verse 17b, it is already apparent that Paul has moved away from the valorization of agonism, which,
according to most classical models, is *sine qua non* for acquiring self-control. He says that the very struggle between flesh and Spirit prevents a person from exercising her will. The Spirit may suppress actions that stem from desire, but the same desire is a hindrance to walking in the Spirit. Each keeps the other in check. Paul seems to suggest that the agon itself is counterproductive, a distraction.\(^95\) The resolution to this quandary is not, as we might expect, a hierarchical relationship in which Spirit governs flesh; instead it is complete eradication of flesh, which then allows one to walk in the Spirit unopposed. The striking image for this idea appears in verse 24: *Those who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*\(^96\) Rather than mastering the body and its desires, one should aim to eliminate them altogether.\(^97\) This passage tends to corroborate


\(^{95}\) There is considerable debate over this verse. Most of the disagreement stems from the ambiguity in Paul’s phrase, *to prevent you from doing what you want*. There are four possibilities: a) Spirit prevents desires of flesh, b) flesh prevents desires of Spirit, c) Spirit and flesh mutually frustrate each other, and d) the absolute opposition between Spirit and flesh prevents anyone from remaining neutral (which is what they want to do). I have adopted the third. The first two are contrary to the reciprocity that characterizes the rest of the verse. The fourth, advocated by Fung (*Epistle*, 251) and Matera (*Galatians*, 207), is criticized by Dunn (*Epistle*, 299) for being “too remote from the sense of the Greek.”

\(^{96}\) On the unusualness of this image, see Dunn, *Epistle*, 314.

\(^{97}\) Paul’s use of the aorist suggests that this act has already been accomplished in those who are “of Christ Jesus”. Such a perspective seems to be at odds with 1 Cor. 7 where *enkrateia* is only for the gifted few. There are several ways to reconcile the two passages. We might follow Lightfoot’s suggestion that the aorist denotes “that the change is complete and decisive, without reference to any distinct point of time” (*Galatians*, 213). On the other hand, we might understand the aorist as a reference to either Christ’s death or the believer’s baptism as that time in the past when a decisive victory was won over the flesh. Between that point and the eschaton, there may be some residual effects of fleshly existence, but the ultimate eradication of desire is inevitable. To my mind, the second option is preferable, but it still falls considerably short of a declaration that enkrateia is a *charisma*, available to some and not others. In the end, these two passages cannot be reconciled on this point. They say slightly different things that are probably best accounted for by pointing to the different situations at Corinth and Galatia. In Corinth, Paul wants to curb the zeal for asceticism that apparently existed in segments of the congregation. In the Galatian churches, on the other hand, Paul has no such concern and can afford to advocate enkrateia for all who would walk in the Spirit.
the two primary features of Paul's encratic discourse from 1 Cor. 7: that enkrateia comes from above rather than within, and it consists of eliminating rather than merely modulating desire.

2.3 Conclusion

I contend that Paul's mere "practice" of enkrateia is itself a masculinizing commentary. Its close association with philosophical and medical paradigms of manliness makes it a crucial and often contested element of a man's identity. The very fact, then, of Paul's enkrateia, for which he clearly had a reputation in Corinth, challenges the image of effeminacy discussed in the previous chapter. It contributes to the rehabilitation of Paul's manhood. This form of rehabilitation is especially germane to his situation if the construction of a "weak physical presence" was governed in part by stereotypes of the male Jew. Of course, one of the effeminate traits attributed to male Jews was a lack of sexual control. Paul's reputation for enkrateia, therefore, does not merely speak to his manliness in a general sense; it breaks an important link in the semiotics of his feminization.

In the course of this chapter, however, two fundamental incongruities have emerged between Paul's encratic discourse and traditional models. The first and most striking is his substitution of charisma for askesis. In every other construction of self-control, from the fifth century BCE to the second century CE, the onus is on the individual to struggle against desire. For some philosophical schools, like the Cynics, self-sufficiency was

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This discrepancy should not overshadow the fundamental similarities between these two passages.
highly valued. But one hardly requires this sort of commitment to eschew the notion that enkrateia might be granted or refused by something external to oneself. Paul's position, as far as I can determine, is unique.\(^98\) To be sure, there are subsequent Christian writers who approximate Paul's anti-\textit{askesis}, but they are writing from a tradition that has already been heavily influenced by the Apostle. Consider, for example, \textit{The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians}: "He who is continent must not put on airs. He must recognize that his self-control is a gift from another."\(^99\) And Clement of Alexandria writes: "The human ideal of continence, I mean that which is set forth by Greek philosophers, teaches that one should fight desire and not be subservient to it so as to bring it to practical effect. But our ideal is not to experience desire at all. Our aim is not that while a man feels desire he should get the better of it, but that he should be continent even respecting desire itself. This chastity cannot be attained in any other way except by God's grace."\(^100\) He does not say that self-control is a gift exactly, but it comes from divine grace rather than human practice.

Clement's words in the previous paragraph also reflect the second outstanding feature of Paul's encratic discourse: the apparent eradication of sexual desire. As with Paul's charismatic construction of enkrateia, this idea provides a sharp contrast with the classical models. Almost everyone thought that desire was an intrinsic component of human existence. At most one might prevent it from raging out of control. It is true that the Stoic belief that a wise person is free from passion seems to be much closer to the Pauline model. But, as we have seen, \textit{apatheia} is not complete insensitivity; it is rather

\(^98\) With the possible exception of \textit{Letter of Aristeas} 290.
freedom from mental disturbance. For the Stoics, passion (πάθη) is not equivalent to urge or desire. It is a mental state, a bad judgement, and can therefore be eradicated through reason. Could this be what Paul means mutatis mutandis\(^{101}\) when he tells the Galatians that they have crucified the flesh with its passions (παθήματα) and desires? After all, he uses the same vocabulary. But the crucial association with flesh (σάρξ) indicates that Paul categorizes passions and desires as a part of physical existence. Furthermore, the appearance of the verb πυροσθαίνω in 1 Cor. 7.9 suggests that dysfunction stemming from the physical urge (and not bad judgement) is at stake. The individual gifted with self-control is freed not just from the mental disturbance but from the physical urge itself. It is not that Paul and others like him are unperturbed by an inclination for sexual intercourse; they do not experience an inclination for sexual intercourse in the first place.\(^{102}\) His true ideal is the disruption or eradication – the crucifixion – of natural desire. It is anorexia.\(^{103}\)

What difference do these modifications of the classical models make? How do they alter the initial illocutionary force of Paul’s sexual renunciation? For theologians, the obvious answer will resemble Victor Pfitzner’s conclusion about the agonistic motif in Paul: "Not the honour and glory of the 'spiritual athlete', but the honour of God who has set the contest, is that which is sought in the good contest of faith for the faith."\(^{104}\) With respect to enkrateia, then, Paul removes the emphasis from struggle and personal victory,


\(^{101}\) By this I simply mean substituting Spirit for reason.

\(^{102}\) As a further warning against equating Paul’s nullification of passions and desires with Stoic apatheia, I think it extremely doubtful that Paul would have assimilated such a technical and idiosyncratic philosophical position as the Stoic distinction between urge and passion.

\(^{103}\) An-orexia is literally the negation of desire.
and places it on God's grace to grant it as a gift.\textsuperscript{105} There is much to commend this reading. But what if we consider it against the backdrop of Paul’s self-presentation in Corinth? How do his anti-ascetic and anorexic tendencies alter Paul’s image?

The first thing to note is that an anti-ascetic construction of enkrateia undermines forms of renunciation that were being practiced by members of the Corinthian community. The first to be attacked on the basis of Paul’s anti-askesis are married couples who have suspended sexual relations. Because they are not gifted they should resume regular conjugal sex. But even widows and those who are not married should only continue in their present state if they have been gifted with lack of desire. Paul implies that there are some in this group who are indeed akrates despite the fact that they are practicing celibacy: circumstances that can only lead to dysfunction. They should marry, for it is better to get married and have sex than to go on burning. Why does Paul seek to limit the practice of celibacy in this manner? Ostensibly it is because of παραθηκαί (1 Cor. 7.2), and it is certainly not due to Paul’s deep appreciation for marriage. But there may be another reason that lurks just beneath the surface. Antoinette Clark Wire has argued convincingly that much of Paul’s correspondence with the Corinthians concerns a group of women prophets who were using celibacy to augment their authority.\textsuperscript{106} Thus, by calling into question the ascetic practices of this group (probably made up of wives who had separated from their husbands [verses 1-7] and unmarried widows [verses 8-9]), Paul challenges the legitimacy of their leadership. Paul’s absolute

\textsuperscript{104} Pfitzner, \textit{Agon Motif}, 185.
\textsuperscript{105} Grundmann, “ἐγκράτεια,” 342.
status may increase marginally by declaring his enkrateia to be a divine gift, but his relative status increases significantly by implying that others (even those who are outwardly continent) are in fact akrates.

There is another way, however, in which Paul's manipulation of conventional encratic models serves to further rehabilitate his image. I have been arguing that Paul benefits from the general association of self-control with masculinity, but there is a sense in which the traditional discourses are genuinely problematic. Whether on the agonistic model that emphasizes bodily struggle, or on the medical model that measures bodily humors, the subject's physical self is made conspicuous as a privileged site for the operations of self-control. But, in Paul's case, his body is the very source of his damaged masculinity. The paradox for Paul, therefore, is that the very act (self-control) that masculinizes his image simultaneously reinscribes his weakness. Drawing attention to his damaged corporeality threatens to reverse the rehabilitative potential of enkrateia. But Paul's manipulation of the classical models goes a long way toward resolving the paradox. His brand of enkrateia redirects public attention from flesh to spirit, and it does so precisely through its anti-ascetic and anorexic qualities.

This statement requires some unpacking. It will be remembered that one of the fundamental differences between Paul's construction of enkrateia and virtually every other ancient model is his rejection of askesis, or practice, as the cornerstone of self-control. In place of this traditional emphasis on the subject's relation to the body, Paul substitutes an emphasis on the subject's relation to God. For him enkrateia is an act of God (a charisma), and not a human practice. The audience's attention, therefore – because self-control is a performance of sorts – is drawn away from the body as a site of

107 Perhaps this is especially true in Corinth, where charismata were so highly regarded.
struggle and toward spiritual endowment. It is a classic example of “covering” in social interaction – one lessens the impact of a stigma by diverting attention to another feature.

Paul achieves a similar effect through, what I call, anorexia. Desires (ἐρήμης) in antiquity were usually described as physical processes, and, whether they were indulged or confronted, the body itself was the conspicuous site of this activity. By establishing enkrateia, therefore, as the complete absence of desire, Paul defines this condition as a kind of withdrawal from the body. And so, not only does he define enkrateia in terms of the relation between subject and God/Spirit rather than subject and body (his anti-askesis), but he also constructs the enkrates body as the serene site of an absence of activity (his anorexia). The result is a deemphasis on the subject’s body, a wasting away of the flesh, which makes anorexia an apt descriptor, quite beyond its obvious etymological pertinence. Like Paul’s peculiar encratic discourse, anorexia nervosa is a condition that moves relentlessly toward the complete disappearance of flesh. And, also like Pauline enkrateia, it is both a response to images of the self and a means of exerting social control.¹⁰⁸

In conclusion, the illocutionary force of Paul’s enkrateia is established in part by the agonistic elements of classical encratic discourses. These make self-control a masculinizing virtue, and Paul’s image undoubtedly benefited from this common

¹⁰⁸ On these aspects of anorexia nervosa, see, e.g., Bryan S. Turner, The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory, second edition (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), 187-90. Unlike Paul’s charismatic anti-askesis, which is extremely unusual, his anorexia is quite at home in a certain Greco-Roman philosophical milieu. I have argued in this chapter that Stoic apatheia is something altogether different from Paul’s rejection of desire. But there are individual philosophers who come very close to preaching the eradication of not only the passions (mental disturbances) but also the very physical urges themselves. Epictetus is the supreme example of this tendency (Diss. 1.4.1; 3.13.21; 3,22,13; 4.4.33). Cicero also displays anorexic tendencies. See, e.g., Cic. Tusc. 1.44.
association. On the other hand, the agonistic construction of enkrateia revolves around the subject's relation to his body and the physical battle that ensues. In Paul's case this tends to reinforce his physical deficiencies (by making them conspicuous) rather than rehabilitate them. But his peculiar alterations to classical encomic models go a long way toward ameliorating the tension. His anti-ascetic and anorexic discourse draws the gaze upward from physical agon to spiritual giftedness. Thus, while he rehabilitates his body in a general sense by engaging in masculine activity, he makes the condition for manliness and authority spiritual rather than physical.
Man of the House

3.1 The Power to Govern
3.1.1 The Household Virtue

The preeminent virtue of the Greek household for both men and women (although
construed somewhat differently for each) was sophrosyne. This is a simple statement.
But when dissected the simple casing is shown to conceal a rich mixture of associations
that derive from the word sophrosyne.\(^1\) The many ingredients of this virtue – intestinal
fortitude, soundness of mind, moderation, and other qualities that are unknown or only
hinted at – combine to make the link between sophrosyne and the household a complex
one indeed. In light of this complexity, I propose to limit the following discussion to the
convergence of sophrosyne and enkrateia and its significance for the ideal householder.

Before Aristotle, who was, as Helen North claims, the first to differentiate
systematically between sophrosyne and enkrateia, the two were frequently
interchangeable. In North’s estimation, although our earliest sources indicate that
sophrosyne began as a designation for shrewdness,\(^2\) by the middle of the fifth century it
had come to mean, among other things, self-control. This nuance is first evident in the
tragedies of Euripides, but also dominates in Antiphon the Sophist, Gorgias, Xenophon,

\(^1\) For the diverse meanings of this word, see especially North, *Sophrosyne*.
\(^2\) Ibid., 3.
and Plato. Plato, for example, puts these words into the mouth of Agathon: “Moderation [sophrosyne], by common agreement, is power over pleasures and passions.” According to Helen North, by the close of the fifth century, this had become the most common definition for sophrosyne.

This imprecision was ostensibly brought to an end by Aristotle, who erected a rigid semantic barrier between sophrosyne and enkrateia. The former is a state in which one’s desires are moderate and always in accordance with reason, while the latter amounts to successfully contending with strong physical urges. This schema had a great impact on later thinkers. Galen, for example, whose floruit was 500 years after Aristotle, faithfully reproduces the Aristotelian grid:

I speak of reason resisting an affection when a person does not hold the opinion that the enjoyment of the pleasure at hand is noble and good but is somehow pulled toward the pleasure through the strong motion of the desiderative power. If reason prevails, such a man is, and is said to be, in control of himself and his affections [ἐγκρατής ἐαυτῷ τε καὶ τῶν ἐαυτοῦ παθῶν]; if desire (prevails), he is described in the opposite way and is said to be incontinent [ἄκρατής]. But when a person is led by reason alone to the experience of pleasant things, such a person is called temperate [σώφρων], for he has made his aim in choosing them not the enjoyment but the benefit; and in the same way, the man who is led by desire alone is self-indulgent [ἄκολαστος], his reason following his desire like a servant.

However, the influence of this model was not absolute. In fact, examples of the old lexical imprecision are quite frequent in the Roman Period. Cicero certainly

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4 Pl. Symposium 196C; cf. idem Gorgias 491D, idem R. 430E.
5 North, Sophrosyne, 158; Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 63-64.
6 Arist. EN 7.
recognized the polyvalence of sophrosyne: “[Greeks] apply the term σωφροσύνης to the virtue which I usually call, sometimes temperance (temperantiam), sometimes self-control (moderationem), and occasionally also discretion (modestiam).” Dio Chrysostom makes the familiar link between sophrosyne and enkrateia in his phrase σωφροσύνης ἑγκρατεστέρας. And Musonius teaches that the foundation of temperance [sophrosyne] is self-control [enkrateia] in eating and drinking. Thus, despite the ascendancy of a model that partitioned these two virtues into discreet (even antithetical) realms, there existed a long tradition of convergence and overlap that was also influential.

Sophrosyne, as I have already stated, was the preeminent virtue of the Greek household. Its various meanings – intelligence, moderation, ability to manage, fidelity – made it a convenient tag for everything that a householder should strive to attain. At first glance, enkrateia seems out of place in this domestic context. Self-control is won on the battlefield; it is strength of will and continual vigilance. But self-control is also mastery over the passions, which makes for a tidy isomorphism with the householder’s mastery over slaves and other inferiors. Ancient moralists seized on precisely this relationship to insist that self-control (enkrateia or simply sophrosyne) is sine qua non for the effective management of one’s estate. Isocrates’ advice to Demonicus, an aristocratic householder, is typical: “govern your pleasures on the principle that it is shameful to rule over one’s servants and yet be a slave to one’s desires.” Xenophon claims that enkrateia is befitting not only the male householder, but also his wife, who would

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8 Cic. Tusc. 3.16.
9 D.Chr. 3.10.
10 Muson. fr. 18A.
11 Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 70-71.
typically manage much of the business, and any other inferior who might be installed in a position of limited authority. Ischomachus, for example, is lauded for choosing a housekeeper who is "the most self-controlled [ἐγκρατεστάτη] in food, drink, sleep, and men."\(^{13}\) Thus, especially in the works of Xenophon and Isocrates, self-control is (or should be) the hallmark of domestic authority.

Michel Foucault has advanced the influential theory that relations within the household underwent a radical shift during the Hellenistic and Roman Periods.\(^{14}\) The political authority traditionally vested in householders was on the wane, and the relationships between husbands and wives were becoming more symmetrical. Marriages were based less on the exercise of the man's domestic authority and more on mutual obligation, including bonds of fidelity and affection.

They [the texts that he considers] show that marriage was interrogated as a mode of life whose value was not exclusively, nor perhaps even essentially, linked to the functioning of the oikos, but rather to a mode of relation between two partners. They also show that, in the linkage, the man had to regulate his conduct, not simply by virtue of status, privileges, and domestic functions, but also by virtue of a 'relational role' with regard to his wife.\(^{15}\)

But the declining influence of the householder qua householder should not be exaggerated. At any rate, the isomorphic relation between mastery over self and mastery over the members of one's household (including especially one's wife) was by no means obsolete in the first century CE. Consider, for example, the words of Plutarch: "As, therefore, it is possible to exercise care over the body without being a slave to its

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\(^{13}\) X. Oec. 9.11. Cf. Muson. fr. 41.

\(^{14}\) Foucault, Care of the Self, 72-80.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 80.
pleasures and desires, so it is possible to govern (ἀγορεύειν) a wife, and at the same time to delight and gratify her.”  

Thus, while Foucault's theory traces an observable trend in Roman constructions of familial relations, the traditional isomorphism of self-mastery and domestic authority was still operative.

3.1.2 The Civic Virtue

In his letter to Nicocles, King of Cyprus, Isocrates dispenses a revealing bit of advice. He writes: “Manage the city as you would your ancestral estate.” Just as the Greeks saw a relationship between self-control and domestic authority, they also saw a relationship between these two activities and the exercise of political control. The king in particular, as an absolute ruler, is a potent symbol of the connection between moral, domestic, and civic authority. That is to say, the king governs his body, his household, and his state, and the quality of his rule in one is isomorphic with the other two. This is spelled out even more clearly in Nicocles’ purported reply. He confirms that “if kings are to rule well, they must try to preserve harmony, not only in the states over which they hold dominion, but also in their own households [οἶκως].” And he adds that this is the work of sophrosyne, which is the preeminent virtue of both the oikos and the polis. Once again, it is important to emphasize that self-control is only one component of this complex virtue, but it is perhaps the vital link between the moral, domestic, and political spheres. Having established the isomorphism of the first two (considered in the previous

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17 ὁικεῖ τὴν τῶν ὁμοῖος ὁσπερ τὸν πατρίδαν οἶκον (Isoc. Nic. 19).
section) and the last two, Isocrates also gives unambiguous evidence for a similar relationship between the first and third. He advises Nicocles: “Govern yourself no less than your subjects, and consider that you are in the highest sense a king when you are a slave to no pleasure but rule over your desires more firmly than over your people.”

The office of kingship may be the most obvious peg from which to hang these associations, but the importance of self-control as a political virtue was extended to all forms of public activity. Certain sexual misdemeanors, for example, disqualified Athenians from sitting on the city council, because a dissolute person cannot be a good politician. This sort of logic also lies behind those occasional accusations of sexual perversion leveled by one politician against another. In any modern proceeding such charges would be considered irrelevant and slanderous, but in Athenian politics these were tools for undermining a rival’s power. It is not surprising, then, to find moralists identifying self-control as a sine qua non for effective rule. Xenophon, for example, opens the second book of his *Memorabilia* with a discussion of political activity and its proper moral correlative. His Socrates declares: “If then we classify those who control themselves [τοὺς ἑγκρατεῖς] in all these matters as ‘fit to rule,’ shall we not classify those who cannot behave so as men with no claim to be rulers?” And earlier in the work he makes a similar statement about politico-military leadership: “if we were at war and wanted to choose a leader most capable of helping us to save ourselves and conquer the

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19 Isoc. Nic. 29. Cf. X. Cyr. 7.5.76, 8.1.37. See Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 71-72
20 Foucault, *Use of Pleasure*, 76: “Governing oneself, managing one’s estate, and participating in the administration of the city were three practices of the same type.” Also ibid., 160.
enemy, should we choose one whom we knew to be the slave of the belly, or of wine, or lust, or sleep?"²³ The question, of course, expects a negative answer and clearly rests upon an important axiom: self-control signals political power, incontinence political weakness.²⁴

Philosophers of the Roman Period continued to insist on the isomorphism of self-control, domestic authority, and political power. Plutarch, in a statement that is reminiscent of Isocrates, advises that a man ought to have his own household well harmonized if he is going to harmonize state, forum, and friends.²⁵ And the prominent first-century Stoic, Musonius Rufus, offers a familiar teaching: that it is essential for a king to possess sophrosyne. He goes on to declare that sophrosyne, while it renders the average man dignified and in command of himself, renders the king godlike and worthy of reverence.²⁶ It is a virtue that lends authority to one who has none, and makes the powerful even more so.²⁷ But the most sustained development of the link between authority and self-control (as distinct from sophrosyne in all its vagueness) is contained in Dio Chrysostom’s discourses on kingship. A tyrant, he says, who would be successful,

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²³ Ibid. 1.5.1. See also Xenophon’s description of the self-control displayed by Agesilaus, Lacedaemonian king and general (Ages. 5).
²⁴ Foucault, Use of Pleasure, 61: “Moderation was quite regularly represented among the qualities that belonged – or at least should belong – not just to anyone but particularly to those who had rank, status, and responsibility in the city.”
²⁵ Plu. Mor. 144C. Cf. 1 Tim. 3.2-5.
²⁶ Muson. fr. 8.
²⁷ Cf. Aretaeus’ statement about enkrateia: “such as are naturally superior in strength, by incontinence [akrasia] become inferior to their inferiors; while those by nature much their inferiors by continence [enkrateia] become superior to their superiors [kreittones]” (as cited in Foucault, Care of the Self, 121). Cf. Muson. fr. 12.
must possess ἀνδρεία (manliness), ενκρατεία, and σοφροσύνη. A fine example of the unity of the second and third virtues in this list, and further support for the case that self-control is a kingly virtue, appears also in Dio's third discourse on kingship. Who, he asks, should exercise more self-controlled σοφροσύνη (σωφροσύνης ἐγκρατεστέρας) than a king? There are several similar statements in the kingship discourses, leaving little doubt that Dio imagined a strong link between self-control and political authority.

This is also a favorite theme in Jewish narratives that have a strong philosophical flavor. 4 Maccabees, for example, develops the argument that Antiochus, ostensibly the most powerful character in the story, is inferior to the Jewish martyrs because he lacks their ενκρατεία. In the Letter of Aristeas, Jewish sages advise the king that self-mastery is true kingship and that self-control is the highest form of sovereignty. And in the story of Joseph and Aseneth, Joseph's authority as a high-ranking government official is augmented by his austere self-control. It gives him an almost preternatural power in his social relations.

The links between self-mastery, domestic authority, and political power were well established in the moral and philosophical literature of antiquity. But this constellation of

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28 D.Chr. 3.58. The order of these virtues is surely not arbitrary. At least as early as Plato (Politicus 307A-311A), ἀνδρεία and σοφροσύνη were considered to be antithetical. The former is a fierce, manly courage required by a soldier, and the latter is a peaceful virtue associated with the well-ordered household or state. Like Dio, Plato recognizes the value of both virtues in the realm of politics, but they remain at odds with each other. Enkrateia, appropriately placed by Dio between the other two, is the bridge that makes these three a unity. The connection between enkrateia and ἀνδρεία was the subject of the previous chapter, and it should be apparent by now that there is considerable overlap between enkrateia and σοφροσύνη. Insofar as the two antithetical virtues are related, therefore, it is through enkrateia (North, Sophrosyne, 217).

29 D.Chr. 3.10.

30 E.g. ibid. 1.13; 2.56, 75; 3.85.

power relations, which reinforced the authority of the elite, was threatened by the restructuring of social relations that took place in the cosmopolitan theory of Cynics and Stoics. It is to this potential destabilization of the traditional associations that I now turn.

3.1.3 Cosmic City and Household of the Gods

3.1.3.1 Stoics

The genre of the *Republic* became a popular one in Greek philosophical literature during the fourth century BCE. These treatises were essentially descriptions of utopian states: reflections on the true nature of the city (polis). Of course, Plato’s magisterial *Republic* is the outstanding example of this genre, and the only one that is extant in its entirety, but other philosophers, including Zeno, who is the putative founder of the Stoa, also have works of this title in their oeuvres. Zeno’s *Republic* is known only through references in doxographical texts, but enough exists to sketch an outline of his utopian society. To be sure, this task requires an adroit use of sources, which are often either polemical or attempt to force his work into the mold of later Stoic theory, but a number of experts have tried to put the pieces together. One of these is Malcolm Schofield in his monograph, *The Stoic Idea of the City*. According to Schofield, Zeno’s ideal state was a communistic society of sages that enshrined Love (Eros) as its governing principle. The emphasis on passionate love in a Stoic treatise is unusual, to say the least. Indeed,

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32 *Letter of Aristeas* 211, 222; also 209, 290.
33 Diogenes Laertius 7.4.
35 Ibid., 27
Zeno’s *Republic* seems to have been a source of some embarrassment to later Stoics who developed a very different doctrine of the ideal city. In what follows, I propose to trace in outline this development of the “Stoic idea of the city” along with its Cynic alternative, paying particular attention to the traditional isomorphism between self-control, domestic authority, and political power.

One of the characteristics of early Stoic political theory, if we may call it that, is that it remained purely utopian. The cosmic city of Zeno and Chrysippus was a kind of never-never land, made up of gods and perfected sages and governed by natural law. It seems that these early Stoics made no attempt to articulate the relationship between this utopian cosmopolis and the social conventions of mundane polities. Their cosmic city was born of philosophical escapism. At some point this began to change. It is difficult to say precisely when or why a change occurred, but the extension of citizenship in the Stoic cosmopolis from gods and sages (who are rare) to all rational beings may have played a role. Now there was an actual citizenry, not to mention a natural hierarchy based on virtue (i.e. the conformity of one’s life to natural law). This was a real community (although not characterized by physical proximity), and the new theory demanded elaboration of its relationship to mundane political structures.

The earliest evidence, however, for relating the cosmopolis to earthly politics is not found in the Roman Stoa (primarily Musonius, Seneca, Epictetus, and Aurelius) but in a relatively early Stoic, Diogenes of Babylon (early second-century BCE). In 1991, Schofield (Ibid., 8-21) argues that it is Zeno’s proximity to Cynic doctrine that causes later Stoics to react. For a dissenting voice to this common opinion, see Dirk Obbink, “The Stoic Sage in the Cosmic City,” *Topics in Stoic Philosophy*, ed. Katerina Ierodiakonou (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 178-95.
Dirk Obbink and Paul Vander Waerdt published a fragment (part of the Herculaneum cache) from Philodemus' *De Rhetorica.* The fragment offers a glimpse of the way in which Diogenes of Babylon constructed the relationship between the mundane city and the cosmopolis. Here in full is the translation given by Obbink and Vander Waerdt:

> [gap of 6-8 words] that the statesman always fills all offices in the city  
> [gap of 10-12 words] not only [gap of 2-3 words] prudence [gap of 2-4 words]. And he is not only a good dialectician and grammarian and poet and orator, and perfect in method, having become good at all the arts, but also, in addition to (that kind of) practical utility, he shares in the government of cities, and not only with those inhabiting Athens or Lacedaemon. For among the foolish there exists no city, nor any law, but in the confederacy made up of gods and sages he is even truly called general and admiral, treasurer and collection agent, and he is said to administer the rest of the offices in like fashion, since the statesman must of necessity have knowledge of all these matters. But even so, if one must point out [text breaks off].

Diogenes is clearly drawing a parallel between the exercise of authority in the universal state and the exercise of authority in the city. In fact, he conflates the two, suggesting that the philosopher, who governs the cosmopolis, will also be the best manager of the city’s affairs. Athens, after all, is simply a smaller and imperfect reproduction of the universal state.

This Diogenic brand of Stoic cosmopolitanism, which became dominant in the Roman Period, is easily laid over top of traditional ideas about civic authority. The laws and institutions of the state are upheld rather than subverted by a theory of

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38 See, for example, Cic. *Leg.* 1.23; idem *N.D.* 2.154; Sen. *De Otio Sapientis* 4; Epict. *Diss.* 1.9.5; 1.10.10; 2.10.1-3; Aurelius 2.16; 3.4.4; 3.9; 4.4; 4.29.
40 Ibid., 368. Obbink offers a slightly modified and expanded translation in “Stoic Sage,” 192-3.
41 Obbink, “Stoic Sage,” 193-5. For the later Stoic endorsement of the philosopher’s participation in practical politics, see Cic. *Fin.* 3.68; Sen. *Ep.* 90.4-7; Epict. *Diss.* 2.23.38-9; 3.2.4.
correspondence. A prime example of the social conservatism inherent in this model is the later Stoic view of the household. Unlike Zeno, whose utopian society included the dissolution of the household and the introduction of institutionalized promiscuity, later Stoics strongly endorsed marriage and family as an expression of the natural order. A second-century (?) BCE representative of this position is the anonymous Stoic author of a fragment attributed to Ocellus Lucanus. As Will Deming notes, this author assumes the necessity of marriage and goes on to argue that there is also a general obligation to produce children. He writes:

Thus it is first necessary to observe this one thing, that sexual intercourse is not for the sake of pleasure, and, thereupon, also the very place of the human being with respect to the Whole — that, being a member of both household and city-state, and, most importantly, of the kosmos, he is obligated to replace each person who departs these institutions, if he does not wish to be a deserter either of the ancestral hearth of his household, or the altar of his city-state, or, indeed, the altar of God.

The author superimposes his cosmopolitanism over the old Greek polis model of domestic and civic responsibility. The traditional duties of a citizen, including marriage

42 For Zeno's view on holding women in common, see D. L. 7.33, 7.131 (where Chrysippus is said to agree with him). At other places, Athenodorus, one of Diogenes Laertius's sources, tries to make Zeno and Chrysippus conform to later Stoic theory: "Again, the Stoics say that the wise man will take part in politics, if nothing hinders him — so, for instance, Chrysippus in the first book of his work On Various Types of Life — since thus he will restrain vice and promote virtue. Also (they maintain) he will marry, as Zeno says in his Republic, and beget children."(D. L. 7.121). Trans. R. D. Hicks, volume 2, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1958).
43 Deming, Paul on Marriage, 70.
and procreation, are also made out to be the duties of the world-citizen. This becomes the dominant Stoic mode of relating household and city to cosmopolis.\textsuperscript{45}

Given Stoic support for existing political and domestic structures within the framework of their theory of the cosmic city, we should not be surprised to find a correlative emphasis on the value of self-control. Continuing from the passage cited in the previous paragraph, for example, Pseudo-Ocellus writes: "For those who have intercourse not at all for the sake of having children do injustice to the most revered systems of partnership. And if, in fact, such persons as these give birth, by means of wantonness and lack of self-control, then those born will be wretched and pitiful, and loathsome in the sight of gods, and divine beings, and men, and households, and city-states."\textsuperscript{46} Stoics admitted the necessity of sex, even for sages, but only under the auspices of the strictest self-control. One might be spurred on to sexual intercourse by a natural inclination (\textit{doi\varphi\eta}), but the purpose of this act was not to indulge in passion (something the Stoics abhorred), it was to procreate. The Stoic emphasis on self-control, therefore, is highly conventional. It retains its traditional isomorphism with domestic and political authority, all three of which are absorbed into their theory of the cosmic city.

\textsuperscript{45} See, e.g., Antipater of Tarsus apud Stobaeum 4.507.6-512.7; Musonius, fr. 14. The Stoic theory of oikeiosos may have linked the household with the cosmopolis even more closely. The bonds of affection that derive from the household were seen to work outward in concentric circles to encompass finally all the constituents of the cosmic polity. See, e.g., Cic. \textit{Fin.} 5.65, and discussion in S. G. Pembroke, "Oikeiosis," \textit{Problems in Stoicism}, ed. A. A. Long (London: The Athlone Press, 1971), 123-4.

3.1.3.2 Cynics

The traditional isomorphism, which was carefully preserved in Stoic circles, was shattered by the Cynics. And they did so, I propose, within the framework of a competing theory of the cosmic city. The Greek word κοσμοπόλιτης ("world citizen"), which is ostensibly of a piece with the Stoic theory of the cosmic city, was first attributed to Diogenes of Sinope. But the relationship between Cynic and Stoic doctrines of the cosmic city is a matter of scholarly debate. The common opinion says that Diogenes' cosmopolitanism is simply a rejection of all forms of government, and thus the citizen of the world a mere loner who calls no city home. Those who advance this thesis often link up Diogenes' cosmopolitanism with his claim to be "without a city, without a house, without a fatherland, a beggar, a wanderer with a single day's bread." In other words, he had no theory of the sort that is evident in Stoic sources: that there exists a common bond among people who are unconnected by physical proximity and shared resources. But this received wisdom has come under periodic scrutiny, most recently in an article entitled "Cynic Cosmopolitanism" by John Moles. He argues that, although Cynics believed the polis to be against nature, they nevertheless endorsed the notion that the cosmos as a whole is an organized community and that there are genuine bonds of

47 D. L. 6.63.
48 Schofield (Stoic City, 141-5), for example, adopts this view. See also Luis E. Navia, Diogenes of Sinope: The Man in the Tub (Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 1998), 122-7
49 D. L. 6.38.
kinship among the citizens of this cosmic polity. Thus, as Moles rightly observes, "[o]n [his] interpretation, Cynic cosmopolitanism influenced Stoic cosmopolitanism far more than current opinion recognizes." I am inclined to accept Moles's reading, but I would like to consider what happens to the constellation of power relations (mastery over self, household, and state) in the context of the Cynic cosmopolis.

For Stoics, as we have seen, the cosmic city is entirely consistent with the local polis and its institutions; it is simply a universalized and perfected form of the same natural order. Cynics, however, espouse a very different notion of nature, one which is incompatible with human convention. Their model for the natural state is the animal world, and animals neither live in cities nor enter into marriage. The classic expression of this existence has already been cited: Diogenes Laertius quotes two line of verse, purportedly written by Diogenes of Sinope, in which he declares that he is without city (ἀπόλες) and without household (ἀοικος). The Cynics were known especially for their opposition to marriage. It is true that Crates married, but his wife, Hipparchia, was a philosopher and the two of them did not establish a traditional household. In most cases, Cynics held that the wise man would not marry. Diogenes, for example, praises those who were about to marry but did not, and when asked about the appropriate time to wed he answers, "For a young man not yet: for an old man never at all."

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52 Moles, "Cosmopolitanism", 119.
53 D. L. 6.38.
54 Ibid. 6.96-98. Cf. Epict. Diss. 3.22.76.
55 D. L. 6.29. This passage is sometimes cited as a parallel to 1 Cor. 7.29-31.
56 D. L. 6.54.
spurious Cynic epistles of Diogenes, the author maintains that having a wife and children is burdensome and that the person who is passionless (ἀπαθὴς = a sage) will not marry.\(^{57}\)

It is clear, then, that the Cynic vision of the cosmic city was not simply a human city writ large. But what was it? The limitations of our sources make this question impossible to answer, except in the vaguest and most speculative terms. John Moles has suggested that the Cynics perceived all humanity, not just perfected sages, to be citizens or potential citizens in the cosmic city, and that the role of the Cynic sage in this economy is to guide the rest of humanity along the path of virtue to full citizenship.\(^{58}\) Cynics clearly viewed the moral betterment of humanity as an important part of their vocation, and the suggestion that this formed the basis for their identity as κοσμοπόλιται is compelling if not entirely certain.\(^{59}\) If this thesis can withstand scrutiny, Cynics claimed a moral authority in the economy of the cosmic city that was traditionally isomorphic with domestic and political authority. But, by rejecting marriage and politics, they set the morally superior philosopher over against the householder and politician, and claimed that true authority resided with the former.\(^{60}\) There is a Diogenic anecdote that plainly illustrates this dynamic. About to be auctioned off as a slave, Diogenes was asked, “What do you do?” He answered, “I rule over people,” and proceeded to announce that whoever was looking for a master would do well to purchase him. According to the anecdote, Diogenes went on to assume control over his new owner’s family and

\(^{57}\) Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 47.

\(^{58}\) Moles, “Cosmopolitanism”, 115-6, 119.

\(^{59}\) See, for example, Epictetus’ invocation of Diogenes during his discussion of the pedagogical role of the Cynic philosopher in the cosmic city. Epict. Diss. 3.22.45-8. Cf. D.Chr. 4.13.

\(^{60}\) Moles, “Cosmopolitanism,” 111.
household, demonstrating that his moral authority was indeed superior to his new owner’s domestic and political authority. 61

Self-control, as we might expect, played an important role in this revaluation of true authority. Traditionally, this virtue was linked very closely with domestic and political mastery, but the Cynics ripped it out of this context and made it the possession of the unmarried, apolitical philosopher-pedagogue. This follows quite logically from their radical cosmopolitanism. The Stoics maintained that self-control was a common possession of all good people (citizens of the cosmopolis). Good people, of course, were householders and politicians; so the Stoic theory accommodated quite comfortably the traditional isomorphism of mastery over self, household, and state. The Cynics also believed that self-control was common to all good people. 62 But good people, on their model, were unmarried and apolitical; so the Cynics set self-control over against the household and the state.

Cynics continued to use traditional images for enkrateia. In fact, some of the statements attributed to them sound very much like Xenophon or Isocrates or any of the Stoics. The Cynic Epistles of Diogenes, for example, appeal to the conventional agonistic imagery discussed in the previous chapter: he speaks of the necessity of waging war against the passions like a general and marshalling auxiliary forces against them. 63 Diogenes Laertius also reports a very conventional statement: that bad people obey their desires as servants obey their masters. 64 Unlike the authors mentioned above, however, Cynics divorce these constructions of self-control from the institutional settings whence

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62 E.g., Cyn. Ep. of Anacharsis 9; Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 35.3.
63 Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 5.
64 D. L. 6.67.
the images are drawn. Thus, although Cynics appeal to the politico-military role of the
general for the purpose of describing an appropriate response to the passions, they
disparage the vocation of real generals.\textsuperscript{65} And, although they draw on traditional images
of domestic management to describe self-control, they both reject domesticity for
themselves and attribute incontinence to those who are householders.\textsuperscript{66} Self-control is
the sign of true mastery. And true mastery is the possession of the philosopher, who may
be a slave in the human economy but is a ruler in the cosmopolis. The inversion achieved
in Cynic cosmopolitanism is striking. Far from endorsing the authority of householders
and politicians, their theory of a universal polity places authority in the hands of the
unmarried and the apolitical.

3.1.3.3 Epictetus

The discourses of Epictetus present us with a third cosmopolitan model that
combines elements of the first two. The tenth discourse of the second book begins with a
description of the human being:

Consider who you are. To begin with, a Man; that is, one who has no
quality more sovereign than moral choice, but keeps everything else
subordinate to it, and this moral choice itself free from slavery and
subjection. Consider, therefore, what those things are from which you are
separated by virtue of the faculty of reason. You are separated from wild
beasts, you are separated from sheep. In addition to this you are a citizen
of the world (\textit{πολίτης ἐν τοῦ κόσμου}), and a part of it.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 5; D. L. 6.8, 92.
\textsuperscript{66} Cyn. Ep. of Diog. 28.5-7.
\textsuperscript{67} Epict. Diss. 2.10.1-3.
Here is the conventional Stoic model of a cosmic citizenship based on the principle of rationality. On at least two other occasions, Epictetus identifies reason as the bond that unites members of the universal community: once in a reference to the teaching of Chrysippus, and again when he elaborates in more detail the nature of the cosmopolis. Furthermore, in this second case, Epictetus follows the Stoic convention of imagining a community, not of humans only, but of humans and gods (or, in this case, of humans and God). He writes of rational beings: “by nature it is theirs alone to have communion in the society of God, being intertwined with him through the reason.”

All of this is consistent with Stoic orthodoxy. But in Discourse 1.9, referred to above, there are intimations of a more idiosyncratic approach to the question of a cosmic community. It deserves to be quoted at length:

Well, then, anyone who has attentively studied the administration of the universe and has learned that ‘the greatest and most authoritative and most comprehensive of all governments is this one, which is composed of men and God, and that from Him have descended the seeds of being, not merely to my father or to my grandfather, but to all things that are begotten and that grow upon earth, and chiefly to rational beings, seeing that by nature it is theirs alone to have communion in the society of God, being intertwined with him though the reason,’ – why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the universe? Why should he not call himself a son of God?

The striking feature of Epictetus’ version is the addition of familial metaphors to political ones. The cosmic identity of the rational being is not only citizen (κόσμος = κοσμοπολίτης), but also son of God (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ). This only confirms the generative language that appears earlier in the quotation: seed (σπέρματα, sperm) falls from God into

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68 Ibid. 1.10.10.
69 Ibid. 1.9.5.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid. 1.9.4-6.
father, grandfather, and everything that is begotten and grows (γεννώμενα τε καὶ φυόμενα) on earth. Further along in the same discourse, Epictetus calls God “maker, father, and guardian”, demonstrating that, on this occasion at least, he imagines the cosmic community to be more like a household than a city. As seen in the previous paragraph, Epictetus does not abandon the conventional political metaphors. But he does, on occasion, find domestic and familial imagery more amenable to a description of the structure (σύστημα) and management (διοίκησις) of the universal community.\(^2\)

In typical Stoic fashion, Epictetus’ cosmopolitanism is not elaborated over against earthly duties, including marriage and procreation. In confronting an Epicurean, for example, he lists these as the principle things: “The duties of citizenship, marriage, begetting children, reverence to God, care of parents.”\(^3\) Or again, he advises a young philosopher to “eat as a man, drink as a man, adorn yourself, marry, get children, be active as a citizen.”\(^4\) Thus, the cosmopolis or the universal household of Epictetus is simply superimposed over a conservative model of society.

If this were the sum of Epictetus’ teaching on the relationship between cosmic and earthly roles, there would be no need to treat him separately from other Stoics. But, of course, this is not the case. In the well-known twenty-second discourse of the third book, he adopts a modified Cynic position on the question of marriage. Here Epictetus is confronted by a young, would-be Cynic who asks him, “will marriage and children be undertaken by the Cynic as a matter of prime importance?”\(^5\) Epictetus responds by saying that in a city populated solely by wise people, a philosopher would not be

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\(^2\) Cf. ibid. 2.14.25-27.
\(^3\) Ibid. 3.7.26.
\(^4\) Ibid. 3.21.5.
\(^5\) Ibid. 3.22.67.
prevented from marrying and having children, but “in such an order of things as the present, which is like that of a battle-field, it is a question, perhaps, if the Cynic ought not to be free from distraction, wholly devoted to the service of God, free to go about among men, not tied down by the private duties of men.” Thus, although the majority should fulfil the responsibilities of citizenship, including marriage and procreation, there are a class of people who are better off remaining unmarried. These Cynics exchange management of mundane household affairs for management of God’s affairs – they are “wholly devoted to the service of God”. And, as on the Cynic model discussed above, this gives them higher status within the cosmic economy. The unmarried Cynic

has made all mankind his children; the men among them he has as sons, the women as daughters; in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all. Or do you fancy that it is in the spirit of idle impertinence he reviles those he meets? It is as a father he does it, as a brother, and as a servant of Zeus, who is Father of us all.”

Thus, while Epictetus sets up marriage and procreation as the norm, he allocates the oversight of God’s household to a few unmarried Cynics, who are wholly devoted to their cosmic vocation because undistracted by mundane responsibilities.

Just as the Cynic manages the affairs of a more important, cosmic household, he also engages in a more exalted politics than the local sort. Epictetus writes:

You ninny, are you looking for any nobler politics than that in which he is engaged? Or would you have someone in Athens step forward and discourse about incomes and revenues, when he is the person who ought to talk with all men, Athenians, Corinthians, and Romans alike, not about revenues, or income, or peace, or war, but about happiness and unhappiness, about success and failure, about slavery and freedom? When a man is engaging in such exalted politics, do you ask me if he is to

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76 Ibid. 3.22.69.
77 Ibid. 3.22.81-2.
engage in politics? Ask me also, if he will hold office. Again I will tell you: Fool, what nobler office will he hold than that which he now has?\textsuperscript{78}

The Cynic has exchanged management of a mundane household for management of a cosmic one, and he has passed on political office to exercise authority in a nobler polity. That this does give the Cynic an exalted status in the cosmic economy is made explicit a little further along in the same discourse:

> To the kings and tyrants of this world their bodyguards and their arms used to afford the privilege of censuring certain persons, and the power also to punish those who do wrong, no matter how guilty they themselves were; whereas to the Cynic it is his conscience which affords him this power, and not his arms and his bodyguards. When he sees that he has watched over men, and toiled in their behalf; and that he has slept in purity, while his sleep leaves him even purer than he was before; and that every thought which he thinks is that of a friend and servant to the gods, of one who shares in the government of Zeus; and has always ready at hand the verse

> Lead thou me on, O Zeus, and Destiny,

> And "If so it pleases the gods, so be it," why should he not have courage to speak freely to his own brothers, to his children, in a word, to his kinsmen? That is why the man who is in this frame of mind is neither a busybody nor a meddler, for he is not meddling in other people's affairs when he is overseeing the actions of men, but these are his proper concern.\textsuperscript{79}

While Epictetus expects most of the population to marry, procreate, and participate in politics, he does allow for a few exceptional individuals to forgo these duties in the interest of all humanity. Their unconventional authority is exercised in a divine household and universal polity.

I have devoted considerable space to this discussion of Stoic and Cynic theories of the cosmopolis. And, if my reasons for doing so are not yet entirely clear, I hope they will become more transparent over the next several pages. By way of bridging the gap, however, between the foregoing discussion and my treatment of Paul below, I shall offer

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. 3.22.84-5.
a preview. I contend, not only that cosmopolitan theory provided the context for a creative manipulation of the classical isomorphism between sexual, domestic, and political mastery, but that Paul himself was engaged in a similar project.

3.2 Paul: Man of the House

The first thing to note about Paul’s treatment of the isomorphism between moral, domestic, and political authority is the opposition that he sets up between enkrateia and the household. In 1 Cor. 7.5, after conceding that married couples may abstain from sexual relations for a time to devote themselves to prayer, Paul commands them to come back together on account of their akrasia. There is no indication that he supposes some of them to be self-controlled and others not; he extends his prohibition on lengthy hiatus to all married couples equally. It is almost as though akrasia defines the marital condition. And, in fact, Paul says as much in verses 8 and 9. He writes to the unmarried and widows: “It is good to remain as I myself am. But if they lack self-control (οὐκ ἐγκρατέομαι) they should marry.” Those who possess enkrateia should not marry, and those who do not (i.e. who are akrates) should. In the previous chapter, I suggested that this view reflects Paul’s peculiar construction of enkrateia, but I now want to focus on the fact that Paul makes enkrateia incompatible with the married household. Like the Cynics, and in contrast to the dominant Greco-Roman tradition, Paul removes enkrateia from its close association with domestic management and makes it the possession of the unmarried few.

79 Ibid. 3.22.94-7.
80 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 118, n. 28.
As noted in chapter two, this does not mean that Paul abandoned married couples to their lusts. He expected some sort of restraint, but mere restraint was not equivalent to enkrateia. Although the word sophrosyne does not occur in the genuine Pauline epistles, perhaps he imagined this virtue (chastity, sobriety, temperance) to be the mark of a successful householder. If so, this is a harbinger of the later opposition between enkrateia and sophrosyne that mirrors the conflict between the celibate, unmarried apostles of the apocryphal acts and the conservative social order that they subvert. At any rate, Paul reserved enkrateia, and with it the strong links to masculinity and authority, for the few like him who were capable of spurning marriage and household.

This is the Paul who is an embarrassment to more than a few modern commentators. But, despite the fact that he creates a gulf between conjugality and unmarried celibacy, Paul does not deny the validity of marriage and the household. Indeed, he upholds these at every turn. He encourages sexual relations between husband and wife (1 Cor. 7.2-6), admits the value of marriage for some (7.8-9, 36), and discourages divorce, even between believer and non-believer (7.10-16). The unmarried life may be better, but marriage is also good (7.38). Furthermore, Paul advises slaves not to actively seek the dissolution of their bonds (7.21), thereby offering support for the continuing validity of the extended household. In fact, the chapter's governing principle – when possible, remain as you were when you were called (7.17, 24) – is an unmistakable expression of social conservatism.

That Paul's valorization of the unmarried, celibate life and his support for the oikos are at least mildly contradictory is clear enough from the fact that both ascetics and

81 Cf. 1 Tim. 3.2-5.
apologists for domesticity have appealed to his authority. But we should not be surprised at this marriage of opposites. Although Paul is inclined toward celibacy – and I hope to have persuaded the reader by now that the reasons for this inclination are more complex than mere eschatological expectation – he is nevertheless not in a position to advocate the dissolution of the traditional domestic structure. Whatever the situation of other Christian communities may have been, it is apparent that the Pauline churches relied heavily on the patronage of their members who were householders.\(^83\) Not only did these figures provide the physical spaces for meetings and the financial resources necessary to fund both the operation of the assemblies and the travels of Paul and others, but they were also vital to the dissemination of Paul’s message at the local level.\(^84\) It is almost certain that Paul would not have been able to retain control over his churches without this network of \(\textit{oikoi}\).

The result is a preference for singleness coupled with support for the existing social structure. This combination of Cynic sexual ethics and Stoic conservatism is a bit of an oddity, but not unique to Paul. Epictetus, it will be remembered, tried to integrate the radical lifestyle of the Cynic sage with a Stoicized idea of society. And, in fact, Paul’s logic, insofar as it can be reconstructed, is not so different from this model. For Paul, like Epictetus, marriage is the normal condition – the rules of nature and society

\(^{82}\) See, e.g., Kate Cooper, \textit{The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 56.


\(^{84}\) On the importance of householders for disseminating Paul’s message, see Brown, \textit{Body and Society}, 54: “And to abolish the household would have undermined Paul’s own authority in the distant city. It would have broken the subtle chain of command by which his own teachings were passed on to each local community through the authority of local householders.”
apply to a majority of people.\textsuperscript{85} And not only is it normal, but it is also good (7.36). The only people who should remain unmarried are those who have a divine gift (7.7-9). Their call to celibacy and rejection of marriage sets them apart from the rest of the community, and their austerity is not to be imitated. Others have remarked on this similarity between Paul and Epictetus, but it has never been considered in the context of Cynic and Stoic cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{86} I propose to do just that. Such an approach will, I believe, shed considerable light on the connection between sexual status and communal authority, and will therefore advance my investigation into the illocutionary force of Paul’s self-control.

3.2.1 1 Corinthians 7.32-35

Θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἅμερόμονας εἶναι. ὁ ἄγαμος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ; ὁ δὲ γαμήσας μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῇ γυναικί, καὶ μεμέρισται. Καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, ἵνα ἡ ἁγία καὶ τῷ σῶματι καὶ τῷ πνεύματι ἡ δὲ γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ ἁνδρί. Τούτο δὲ πρὸς τὸ ὕμων αὐτῶν σύμφορον λέγω, αὐχ ἵνα βρῶσαν ὕμων ἐπιθάλμου ἄλλα πρὸς τὸ εὐσχήμον καὶ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπεριπάτωτος. (“I want you to be free from anxiety. The unmarried man cares for the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; the married man cares for the things of the world, how to please his wife, and he is divided. Likewise, the unmarried woman and the virgin care for the affairs of the Lord, so that she might be holy in both body and spirit; the married woman cares for the affairs of the world, how to please her husband. I say


this for your own advantage, not to place restrictions on you but to promote good order and devotion to the Lord without hindrance.

These four verses have figured prominently in attempts to elucidate possible connections between 1 Cor. 7 and Cynic-Stoic marriage debates. One of the first to broach this subject in the English-speaking world was David Balch in his influential 1983 article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature.* Following the German scholar, Johannes Weiss, Balch understands ἀπεριστάσιος to be a technical word found in the marriage debates of late Stoicism. Its appearance in 1 Cor. 7.35, therefore, and precisely in the context of a discussion of marriage, signals to Balch that Paul is drawing on a traditional Stoic topos. According to Stobaeus, the ancient anthologist who excerpted some of the participants in this debate, there were three stances on marriage, all aimed to avoid distraction: it is good (i.e. the wife can keep house allowing her husband to pursue the contemplative life), it is bad (i.e. distracting in itself), and it is good for some and bad for others. Balch, in employing this schema to locate Paul’s position relative to several Stoic philosophers, arrives at this conclusion:

In partial summary, Antipater, Epictetus, Hierocles and Paul agree that one should be “undistracted” from one’s primary duty or call. Musonius, frag. 13A, Epictetus, *Dis.* 3.22, and Hierocles, in Stobaeus 4.22.22, agree (against Antipater) that marriage is helpful for some but not advantageous (would be distracting) for others. Like these Roman Stoics, when Paul advises the Corinthians about marriage, he writes for their “advantage” (σύμφορον, 1 Cor 7:35). Like these three Roman Stoics, in 1 Cor 7:32-35 Paul chooses Stobaeus’s third option; he advises the Corinthians that marriage is helpful for some, but not advantageous for others.

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88 Ibid., 431.
89 As Deming notes (*Paul on Marriage, 7*), Stobaeus has four other categories, but the ones mentioned by Balch get at the heart of the debate.
90 Balch, “Stoic Debates”, 434. Vincent Wimbush, who follows Balch closely, oddly suggests that Epictetus belongs in the second category (*Worldly Ascetic, 63*). But I
To this point I am in complete agreement. But Balch goes on to adopt C. K. Barrett's proposal that μερισμάω ("to be anxious") as used by Paul in verses 32-34 is "uniformly negative". In other words, anxiety for the things of the Lord is not compared favorably with anxiety for the things of the world; both are undesirable. If this is indeed the sense, then Paul is here reiterating his claim (first made in verses 7-9) that some are better off being married and others are better off being single. As Balch writes: "since every person has his own special gift from God' (1 Cor 7:7), Paul observes that celibacy makes some men and women anxious and distracted while marriage makes others anxious and distracted."

The reading proposed by Barrett and Balch is problematic on at least two fronts. First of all, there is the position of these verses in the chapter. If Paul were arguing here against ascetic tendencies, these verses would logically appear alongside the arguments contained in 1-9, where this issue is addressed. As it is, they occur in the middle of a long stretch of verses in which Paul argues that, while marriage is permissible, singleness is better. The second difficulty with Balch's reading is this: although Paul adds a gloss explaining how the married person is distracted from service to God, he does not do the same for the single person. And, if anything, it is the latter scenario that needs to be explained. These deficiencies far outweigh the solitary support offered by Balch for his reading: an undocumented claim that μερισμάω is always negative for the Stoic. For, even

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91 Barrett, First Epistle, 178-82
if this claim is true, he is still begging the question, surely, by assuming that Paul’s use of the word is typically Stoic.93

Vincent Wimbush has produced a very different reading of these verses. Unlike Balch and Barrett, who suggest that Paul is countering ascetic tendencies in Corinth, Wimbush proposes that Paul is encouraging a kind of “ascetic” detachment for married people.94 Whatever the external conditions of one’s life, whether one is married or single, undistracted devotion to “the things of God” should be sought. These verses are an elaboration, therefore, of Paul’s advice in 29-31, and particularly his exhortation to those who have wives to live as though not having wives. Living as though not having a wife means cultivating spiritual withdrawal (innerworldly asceticism), and it does not depend upon one’s external relation to the world. Wimbush concludes his reinterpretation of these verses by claiming that the expression μεμνημένα τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, which is the inner attitude that both married and unmarried should strive for, is equivalent to Stoic ἀπάθεια.95 “It is assumed by Paul that the supreme commitment must be to the Lord (v. 35). So what is required is inner detachment (apatheia), not physical withdrawal…. What Paul recommends is a relativizing of all things in the world.”96

The primary difficulty with this interpretation has been clearly identified by Will Deming:

[I]t depends on equating the notion of living a life free from distraction, which Paul invokes in 7.32-5 and which some Stoics invoke in their discussions of marriage, with a Stoic ideal of apatheia. Yet these are not analogous concepts. The former has to do with the proper management of one’s outward routine, the result of which is a measure of freedom from civic, social, and economic obligations, and access to leisure time. The

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94 Wimbush, *Worldly Ascetic*, 49-54.
95 Ibid. 56-71.
96 Ibid., 70.
latter, by contrast, concerns release from mental and emotional attachment to things and people, resulting in an inner freedom of the soul. For this reason, too, the notion of apatheia plays no part in the Stoics’ discussion of marriage.97

The attempts made by Balch and Wimbush to identify Stoic themes in verses 32-35 are hardly satisfactory. Much more compelling is Deming’s careful analysis of these verses in the context of Stoic and Cynic marriage debates. His reading of 1 Cor. 7 is set up by a comprehensive summary of Cynic, Stoic, and hybrid positions on marriage.98 For my present purposes, the most important thing about Deming’s summary is his recognition of the role played in these debates by cosmopolitan theory.99 He correctly views the contrasting perspectives on the value of marriage as being representative of a larger disagreement over the relationship between the cosmopolis and contemporary social-political norms. Stoics believed that marriage (which entails procreation as well as domestic, economic, and political responsibilities) was consistent with the duties of a world-citizen; Cynics believed that they were in conflict.

In his reading of 1 Cor. 7.32-35, however, Deming does not develop the comparison between Paul’s logic and Stoic-Cynic cosmopolitanism.100 He concentrates instead, and with justification, on the issue of distraction. He notes that Paul’s position in these verses is identical to the Cynic claim that marriage is distracting. They represent, therefore, a defense of the unmarried life. This is a welcome corrective to the problematic readings of Balch and Wimbush, but it leaves so much unexplored. In what follows I shall extend his comparison of Paul and the Cynics to include the Cynic-influenced cosmopolitanism of Epictetus.

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98 Ibid., 50-107.
99 Ibid., 54-61.
Any interpretation of verses 32-35 must account for the relationships between ἀμέρίμνος, μεριμνᾷ, and μεμέρισται. Paul begins by saying, “I want you to be without anxiety.” There is little doubt that ἀμέρίμνος (“without anxiety”) here is a positive descriptor – it is, at any rate, what Paul wishes for the Corinthians. The difficulties occur in the subsequent sentence when Paul says that “the unmarried man μεριμνᾷ the things of the Lord (how he might please the Lord), but [or and] the married man μεριμνᾷ the things of the cosmos (how he might please his wife).” It has been commonplace to understand the first occurrence of μεριμνᾷ as a positive word and the second as a negative word.  

To be anxious for the things of the Lord is a good thing; to be anxious about the things of the cosmos is a bad thing. On this reading, the expressed desire that the Corinthians be without anxiety (ἀμέρίμνος) refers only to the anxieties of marriage and not to the anxieties of singleness. But this seems irredeemably arbitrary.

I have already noted how C. K. Barrett and David Balch resolve the problem. They make both (or, including verse 34, all four) occurrences of μεριμνᾷ negative. It is bad to be anxious for the Lord, and it is bad to be anxious for the cosmos. I have already registered my dissatisfaction with this solution. A much better reading is offered by Gordon Fee, who suggests that μεριμνᾷ is the same in all occurrences, but positive rather than negative. He wants to translate the word with “cares for” rather than “is anxious about.” On this view, Paul is not elaborating on his wish for the Corinthians to be without anxiety. Rather, he is indulging in a little paronomasia: “I want you to be

100 Ibid., 197-205.
101 E.g., Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle, 157; Moffatt, First Epistle, 94-5; Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 134.
without anxiety (ἀμέριμνος). The unmarried man cares for (μεριμνᾷ) the things of the Lord... the married man cares for (μεριμνᾷ) the things of the cosmos."104 If this is correct, then verse 32a is not as closely connected to 32b-35 as most have thought. In fact, I propose that 32a concludes the previous section (on detachment from one’s activities)105 and 32b begins the new section (on the relative merits of marriage and singleness). Paul’s punning, then, provides a clever bridge from one topic to another.

The advantage of Fee’s translation for μεριμνᾷ is that it clearly identifies the topic of verses 32b-35 as the management of external responsibilities. Will Deming’s work has shown that ancient marriage debates were always about the externals – the demands on one’s time and energy – and not about inner turmoil or anxiety. The division between μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου and μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, therefore, is the delineation of two sets of responsibilities. Unmarried men and women are responsible for managing the affairs of the Lord; their goal is to please God. Married men and women, however, are responsible for managing the affairs of the household.106 Epictetus, who makes a similar division, goes into more detail about what the latter existence involves: “...To make a long story short, he must get a kettle to heat water for the baby, for washing it in a bath-tub; wool for his wife when she has had a child, oil, a cot, a cup (the vessels get more and more

104 This reading is strengthened by the fact that there is already an unmistakable pun in the pericope (μεριμνᾷ and μεμέρισται).
105 32a makes excellent sense when attached to the preceding. After exhorting those who have a wife to live as though not having a wife, those who mourn to live as though not mourning, etc., Paul says, “(31b) for the form of this world is passing away, (32a) and I want you to be free from anxiety.”
106 Managing a household in antiquity meant more than washing dishes and raising children. The οἶκος (domus) was an economic entity. It was more like operating a small business, often including the oversight of workers and relations with patrons and clients.
numerous); not to speak of the rest of his business, and his distraction.”

As for the Cynic, “it is his conscience which affords him this power [i.e., to censure and punish], and not his arms and his bodyguards. When he sees that he has watched over men, and toiled in their behalf... and that every thought which he thinks is that of a friend and servant to the gods, of one who shares in the government of Zeus..., why should he not have courage to speak freely to his own brothers, to his children, in a word, to his kinsmen?”

What we have then, for Epictetus as for Paul, are two separate economies: a heavenly one and an earthly one. Unmarried followers of Christ are administrators in the former economy; married followers of Christ, while they do participate in that realm, are primarily taken up with managing the earthly economy, and therefore cannot serve the Lord with undivided devotion.

Is this an argument against marriage? Some have read verses 32-35 in this way. But elsewhere in 1 Cor. 7 Paul attempts to limit the practice of ascetic activity. Indeed, we have concluded, based on other verses in the chapter, that he establishes marriage as the norm — it is celibacy that requires a special dispensation. Thus, I propose that, rather than a general call to celibacy, verses 32-35 promote a division of labor among followers of Christ. Most members of the community are concerned with the affairs of the world. This is a good thing: it is necessary for the maintenance of the community (not to mention the maintenance of Paul’s mission). But the unfortunate

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107 Epict. Diss. 3.22.71-2.
108 Ibid. 3.22.95.
109 E.g. Robertson and Plummer, First Epistle, 157; Hodge, 130-1; Moffat, First Epistle, 94-7. But many recent exegetes, in reaction to this reading, have substituted their own implausible interpretations in an attempt to recover Paul as a supporter of marriage. See, for example, Jean Héring’s (First Epistle, 60-1) conclusion: “Has celibacy moral superiority? The opposite rather, for it is easier to remain faithful to the Lord when one is not ‘divided’.”
consequence of this lifestyle is a division of interests between the cares of the world and devotion to God. Those who are called to a life of celibacy, on the other hand, operate solely in the spiritual economy. Paul identifies their primary responsibility as the administration of the affairs of the Lord, thereby ensconcing the unmarried (i.e. those who possess enkrateia) in positions of privilege within the power structures of God’s community.

Verse 35 begins, “I say this for your own benefit.” It has often been thought that τοῦτο here refers to a putative general exhortation to celibacy in the preceding verses. If this is the case, then Paul says that he urges them to be celibate for their own good. The exhortation is not intended to restrict them, it is intended to bring about good order and devotion to the Lord without hindrance. This view has been very influential, but, since I do not believe that verses 32-34 contain a general exhortation to celibacy, I read this verse in a different light. I propose that τοῦτο refers, not to a call for celibacy, but to the division of labor that I have already outlined. Paul does not intend the division of labor to be a noose around anyone’s neck (βρόχον) – i.e. a curtailment of their freedom. Rather, it is for their own good; it is intended to produce good order in the community and allow the community to wait on the Lord without hindrance.\footnote{Cf. Collins, \textit{First Corinthians}, 292-3.}

3.2.2 1 Corinthians 7.32-35 and Cosmopolitanism

The argument of these verses bears some resemblance to Cynic cosmopolitanism. There are two realms: one mundane, made up of the conventional social relations of the
household and city, the other universal.\textsuperscript{111} In contrast with most Stoics, both Paul and the Cynics set these two realms over against each other.\textsuperscript{112} On the Cynic model, whoever assumes a position of authority in the mundane realm, as householder and politician, is distracted from the duties of the universal realm. He occupies a low-status position in the cosmopolis. But whoever shuns domestic and political power to devote himself to higher things will occupy a high-status position in the universal economy. Even if he is a slave or a beggar, however powerless or degraded according to conventional standards, he has authority over those who exercise power in the mundane realm. Likewise, for Paul, it is not the householder, the one with conventional power, who occupies a privileged place in the spiritual economy (the ouranopolis), for his interests are divided. It is the unmarried person who administers the things of the Lord, and therefore possesses authority over the other followers of Christ.

Unlike the Cynics, however, Paul does not want everyone to abandon marriage and become like him. Not only would this erode the foundations of his support, but it

\textsuperscript{111} One of the peculiarly Christian characteristics of Paul's model is the use of (\textit{αὐτος}) \textit{kόσμος} to designate mundane associations. In addition, it is not reason but faith that is the bond between citizens of the heavenly polity. See Gal. 6.10: "And so, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially those who are related by faith [πολίτευμα]" (NRSV) But these should not obscure the considerable similarities.

\textsuperscript{112} In addition to 1 Cor. 7.32-34, consider Philippians 3.18-20: "For many people, about whom I have spoken to you often, and now speak in tears, live their lives as enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly and glory in their shame, who think about earthly things [τὰ ἐπίτευμα]. For our commonwealth [πολίτευμα] exists in heaven, whence we expect the savior and Lord, Jesus Christ." (NRSV) The notion of a heavenly commonwealth is picked up by later Christian authors. E.g. Hebr. 11.10, 16; 12.22; 13.14; \textit{Letter to Diognetus} 5; Augustine, \textit{De Civitate Dei}. With the exception of the Letter to Diognetus, however, these texts are clearly future-oriented. Perhaps Paul is merely operating with a horizon that has been foreshortened, but his ouranopolis seems to exist already in the Christian communities on earth. See discussion in Wayne A. Meeks, \textit{The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries} (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 37-51.
would undermine the special authority that he is trying to claim for himself (more about this below). So, Paul constructs a scenario in which it is incumbent upon most people to fulfil the conventional domestic, economic, and political responsibilities, but in which a gifted few give these up to manage the things of the Lord, including his community of followers. This is almost identical to the Cynic-influenced cosmopolitan theory of Epictetus considered above. He admonished people to fulfil the duties of a citizen, including marriage and procreation, but left open the possibility that a few Cynics would reject marriage so that they might devote themselves to God and become, in effect, the chief administrators in God’s cosmic household.

On Epictetus’ model, the relationships that define one’s status within the mundane household – brother, father, servant – are used to define the Cynic’s status within the universal, cosmic community. He

has made all mankind his children; the men among them he has as sons, the women as daughters; in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all. Or do you fancy that it is in the spirit of idle impertinence he reviles those he meets? It is as a father he does it, as a brother, and as a servant of Zeus, who is Father of us all.  

These are precisely the titles that Paul applies to himself in his role as unmarried overseer of the Christian churches. He is father and brother to Christians, and slave of Christ.  

As Dale Martin has demonstrated, “slave of Christ” is not an admission of low status. It is quite the reverse. By claiming to be the οἰκονόμος (managerial slave) of a very important person (Christ), Paul is claiming the considerable authority (albeit derivative)

113 Epict. Diss. 3.22.81-2; cf. ibid. 3.22.96.
114 Brother: 1 Thess. 1.4; 3.2; 4.13; 5.12, 14, 25; Gal. 4.12, 28; 6.1, 18; Philem. 20; Rom. 1.13; 8.29. Father: 1 Thess. 2.11; Phil. 2.22; Philem. 10; 1 Cor. 4.14-15; cf. Gal. 4.19 and 1 Thess. 2.7. Slave: Phil. 1.1; Rom. 1.1; 15.16.
that accrues to one who manages the master’s affairs.\textsuperscript{115} 1 Cor. 7.32-35 seems to be of a piece with this logic. The unmarried few (Paul included) manage the affairs of the Lord, their only goal is to please their master. This gives them higher status within the Lord’s (universal) household than the married majority whose interests are divided.

As with Cynic cosmopolitan models, Paul recontextualized the social power that was traditionally ascribed to householders, making it the possession of the unmarried “fathers” or “administrators” of the cosmic/heavenly realm. It will be remembered that, in keeping with this transvaluation, the virtue of enkrateia (with its links to domestic and political mastery) was also transferred from the household to the realm of the unmarried philosopher/pedagogue. Paul’s model is similar. I have already discussed at length his allocation of enkrateia and akrasia, one to the gifted, single person, the other to the household. This logic is implicit in 1 Cor. 7.32-34 where he distinguishes between the unmarried men and women who operate in the spiritual economy on the one hand, and husbands and wives who are divided between the duties of this world and service to the Lord on the other. But Paul also makes an explicit connection between akrasia and earthly things, over against the heavenly polity, in Philippians 3.18-20. Here he says that those who think about earthly things (οἱ τὰ ἐπίγεια φρονοῦντες) have as their god the belly (ἡ κοιλία) and glory in their shame (δόξα ἐν τῇ αἰσχύνῃ αὐτῶν). To have one’s belly as a god is a classic expression for akrasia. People of this sort are contrasted with the citizens of the commonwealth in heaven (τὸ πολιτεία ἐν οὐρανοῖς).\textsuperscript{116} Thus, self-control is to be found not in earthly structures, but among the things of the Lord.


\textsuperscript{116} Paul would not include married Christians among those who are “enemies of the cross of Christ” and have “the belly as a god”. He says in 1 Cor. 7.34 that they are divided,
3.3 Conclusion

Unlike the anti-askesis and anorexia encountered in the previous chapter, Paul’s manipulation of the traditional domestic and political correlatives of enkrateia is part of a much broader movement among Greco-Roman moralists. Above all, his tendency to associate enkrateia with the unmarried, undistracted individual, who then assumes the role of father figure in the universal community, resembles Cynic cosmopolitanism. Certainly, there are elements of Paul’s ouranopolis that make it unique. Citizenship, for example, is based on faith rather than reason.\textsuperscript{117} And, perhaps most significantly, Paul’s community is eschatological, which means that its contrast with the mundane is even more radical.\textsuperscript{118} But the social dynamics of both Cynic and Pauline universal polities seem to be the same: a few people who reject traditional social roles exercise authority over the cosmo-/ouranopolis, a universal community defined by reason/faith.

In many ways, Cynic (and Cynic-influenced) cosmopolitan theory as well as Paul’s ouranopolis share in a much broader revaluation of domestic and political roles in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods. I have already made reference to Michel Foucault’s analysis of the changing social relations within the Greco-Roman household. These innovations reflect new ways of relating the subject to himself (sic) and to others. In addition to the shifting power relations within the household, however, a gradual shift was also occurring from local forms of knowledge centered around the aristocracy to

\textsuperscript{117} See Gal. 6.10: “And so, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially those who are related by faith.”
specialized knowledge that transcended regionalism. Stanley Stowers has advanced this hypothesis in a recent essay. It is worth quoting at length.

The traditional religion and wider cultures of Greeks, Judeans, Romans and so on were based on the local knowledges of face to face communities led by aristocrats who administered the lore and practices, e.g., how to sacrifice an animal, calculate when to have a festival, read events for signs from the gods of the place. Led by the so-called Greek enlightenment, the centuries before the common era saw a massive growth in the specialization of knowledge that was no longer local. Greek philosophy led this trend for many areas of knowledge. The particular character of the Hellenistic philosophies derived from creating specialized knowledge and practices about the soul or "how to live an entire life." Judean scribes and scholars also attained a similar authority as specialists in knowledges that were becoming increasingly important to Judean culture. The shift in knowledge practices also meant a shift in authority toward the specialists and away from the local knowledges of the aristocrats who now had to employ specialist [sic] themselves.\footnote{Stowers, "Pauline Christianity," 19}

Increasingly, knowledge was being managed by philosophers and teachers rather than the local elite. And, as a reflection of the authority that had been usurped from householders, philosophers occasionally adopted fictive kinship roles, notably as a component of cosmopolitan theory. Epictetus' hierarchization of the divine household/cosmopolis is a prime example, and Paul's use of fictive kinship also shares in this dynamic.\footnote{Stowers ("Pauline Christianity," 19) writes: "The dominant [Pauline] metaphor of a family, albeit an oxymoronic family not founded on marriage, descent and property, might be counted as a dissimilarity from the Hellenistic philosophies, but needs to be better understood." He remarks on the tendency of philosophers to associate as friends. This is true, but as we have seen, they also draw on kinship as a source of metaphors for describing social relations.} Thus, the transference of authority – from householder and politician to unmarried philosopher/pedagogue – that is observable in both Cynic cosmopolitanism and in Paul's ouranopolis is part of a broader revaluation of traditional social roles.
The effect of Paul's discourse is to ensconce him more securely in a position of authority. By creating a division of labor in which married folk administer worldly things, and an unmarried few administer the affairs of the Lord, he has shifted the balance of power from the householder to the celibate leader (i.e., himself). This shift is further reflected in the allocation of enkrateia (with its strong link to the exercise of authority) to the realm of the celibate leader. And, as I have stated repeatedly, a claim on authority is simultaneously a claim on masculinity.
Conclusion

If Paul’s body is a text, this thesis represents an extended reading of a rather minor passage. I have demonstrated how certain bodily signifiers drew him into a semiotics of feminization. And, because gender, as I have been emphasizing all along, is a grid for charting power relations, his feminization is equivalent to a decrease in authority. Paul’s enkrateia, on the other hand, has a masculinizing effect, and is therefore rehabilitative. It too is a kind of bodily semiotics. In the first place, the physical act itself is a conventional signifier of masculine authority. But also important is Paul’s textual construction of the meaning of enkrateia, which makes it the spiritual possession of a minority who are given authority over the rest. The general connection between self-control and authority, along with Paul’s peculiar encratic discourse, make for a complex semiotics of masculinization that rehabilitates his image as an effective leader.
Nomenclature

Enkrateia = self-mastery, self-control, continence
Enkrates = adjectival form of enkrateia = self-controlled, continent
Akrasia = lack of self-control, incontinence (usually paired with enkrateia)
Akrates = adjectival form of akrasia = incontinent
Sophrosyne = moderation, temperance
Akolasia = intemperance (usually paired with sophrosyne)
Encratic = an adjective that I invented for the purposes of this thesis meaning “of or relating to enkrateia”

N.B. Going against my usual practice, I have tended to use masculine pronouns for the generic. The subject matter dictated this decision. It would simply be too confusing to discuss the masculinizing effects of enkrateia on a generic subject who is designated by feminine pronouns.
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Aristophanes


Aristotle


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Clement of Alexandria


Clement of Rome


Cynic Epistles


Dio Chrysostom


Diogenes Laertius


Epictetus


Euripides


Galen


Isocrates

Joseph and Aseneth

Josephus

Juvenal

Longus

Lucretius

Martial

Musonius Rufus

Persius
Petronius


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Appendix A

Πυροῦσθαι in 1 Cor. 7.9

"It is better to marry than to burn" (1 Cor. 7.9b) is a phrase that scarcely requires introduction. For some this excerpt from Paul's advice to the unmarried in Corinth represents the very worst of Pauline (indeed of Christian) sexual ethics – marriage as remedium concupiscendiae. But if the meaning of the verse seems obvious, this is only the result of a rather vague "consensus" that has won the day. At the heart of this "consensus" is an implicit move to replace πυροῦσθαι ("to burn") with something like ἐπιθυμεῖν ("to desire"), yielding an unbearably pessimistic view on marriage – i.e. "better to marry than to experience desire". More than a few commentators have marshaled their creative talents in an effort to weaken the ostensible thrust of Paul's rationale. While most of these point to mitigating contextual details like the Apostle's expectation of an imminent end, others challenge the "consensus" interpretation of the verb πυροῦσθαι. Of the latter sort, Michael Barré's article of a quarter-century ago is the most significant.

After surveying Jewish literature from the Septuagint forward, he concludes that

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1 This paper was originally delivered at the Northwest Regional Meeting of the AAR/SBL, May 7-9, 1999 (?) (Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA). I have chosen to append it without major revision. As a result, there is some repetition of material that appears in the body of the thesis. There is also a disagreement between my interpretations of 1 Cor. 7.32-35 in this appendix and in chapter three. I leave it up to the reader to resolve the discrepancy, but I will say that chapter three represents a later and more sustained reading of these verses.

2 The full text of verses 8-9 is as follows: Λέγω δὲ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ ταῖς γυναικαῖς, καλὸν αὐτοῖς ἐὰν μείνωσιν ός κἀγὼ· εἴ δὲ οὐκ ἔγκρατεύονται, γαμφάτωσιν, κρείττον γὰρ ἐστιν γαμφῆσαι ἢ πυροῦσθαι. ("I say to the unmarried and the widows, it is a good thing if they remain as I also am. But if they lack self-control, they should marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.")

πυροῦσθαι in 1 Cor. 7.9 can only be a reference to the fires of judgement. A metaphorical reading of the verb ("burn with desire"), Barré suggests, is poorly attested and not to be countenanced. But, besides the obvious limitations of his study, Barré appears to be possessed of the same misunderstanding that plagues the old "consensus" – an assumption that "burning desire" could only be metaphorical. The modern reader imagines a smoldering fire to be romantic convention – cliché even – for what is primarily a psychological phenomenon. But Bruce Thornton has recently demonstrated how far removed our insipid figure is from the ancient fires of Eros (Amor). The burning sensation was real and it was symptomatic (rather than symbolic) of sexual desire. I employ a medical vocabulary advisedly in this instance, as erotic passion is frequently delineated on the model of a pathology. It might be argued that this too is part of a well-developed metaphorical topos, except that the medical tradition itself treats sexual desire largely as an illness that requires diagnosis and treatment. Before reconsidering 1 Cor. 7.9, therefore, I shall first outline the classical physiology of desire paying special attention to burning as a symptom, and secondly compare accounts of a related pathological condition known as satyriasis. I shall then proceed to construct a reprisal of the old "consensus" – i.e. that Paul does indeed treat marriage as a remedium concupiscendiae, or better yet, a remedium incendii.


Any attempt to relate the classical physiology of sexual desire is perhaps a doomed task from the outset. Diversity of opinion, and even inconsistencies within the corpus of a single author, render any one account necessarily reductive. A highly detailed study of the subject, on the other hand, while interesting in its own right, would soon outstrip its usefulness for our purposes. Thus, although cognizant of the pitfalls, I have chosen to present a synoptic account based largely on Galenic theory. But I shall also incorporate supporting (and sometimes dissenting) opinions from other medical texts and literary sources, the latter often containing strikingly physiological descriptions of sexual desire. While an approach such as this may run the risk of manufacturing an illusory consensus, I think that the resulting synthesis will fairly represent the outline of a classical physiology of desire.

Virtually all of our sources, medical and otherwise, agree that the desiderative mechanism is initiated by an external stimulus. Paradigmatically this stimulus is the sight of something beautiful as in Aristotle’s classic expression: “passion arises through the pleasure of sight. For no one loves without being charmed by a beautiful image.” This simple etiology is also adopted by medical writers in the transmission of a common

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6 I use Galen as the backbone of my inquiry because (from our perspective) the sheer volume of his extant works makes him the preeminent medical authority of the Roman period. He flourished some 120 years after Paul’s career, but represents a kind of crystallization of accumulated medical opinion from the preceding centuries.

Typically in these accounts the physician is able to properly diagnose a mysterious illness (actually sexual passion) when he observes the deleterious effects on the patient’s condition produced by viewing his or her object of affection. It is the image of something beautiful that initiates (and also exacerbates) sexual desire. The connection between an external stimulus and the internal operations of desire is also rendered explicit by Lucretius: “[Youths] meet with images from some chance body that fly abroad, bringing news of a lovely face and beautiful bloom, which excites and irritates the parts swelling with seed, so that, as if the whole business had been done, they often pour forth a great flood and stain their vestment.”

I shall comment on the accumulation and emission of semen below, but for now it is sufficient to acknowledge that an external stimulus (especially a beautiful image) triggers the body’s desiderative mechanism.

This perspective on the genesis of erotic desire was appropriated to great effect by the novelists, especially Achilles Tatius, who provides a more poetic version of Aristotle’s observation: “the eye is the path for love’s wounds”. He claims that this image enters through the eyes and imprints itself on the heart. But an object of beauty is not the only effective stimulus: wine (2.3.3), erotic songs (1.5.5-6), embraces (5.15.5), and kisses (Longus 1.17) are a few other conventional examples. The body’s immediate response to these stimuli is, more often than not, a burning sensation. Longus, in his tale

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8 E.g., Valerius Maximus Facta et Dicta Memorabilia 5.7.ext.1; Plutarch Demetrius 37.2-3; Galen De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis 6.1-10; Caelius Aurelianus Celeres Passiones 3.180-1.
10 For this reason Galen advises that desire is controlled by avoiding erotic images and spectacles (De Locis Affectis 6.6). Cf. Lucr. 4.1063-67.
12 Ibid. 5.13.4.
about Daphnis and Chloe, describes the torments of desire as an actual physical heat that Daphnis attempts to quench by drinking cold water (1.23). This heat is intensified by external stimuli like kissing (1.17) or watching animals mate (3.13). In the story of Leucippe and Clitophon erotic songs and stories are said to burn one’s heart and fuel desire (1.5.5,6). Vision, as I have noted, is also central to the production of desire in this novel. The villainous Thersander, for example, burns at the sight of Leucippe (1.18.1). Melitte likewise burns for Clitophon (5.15.5, 22.3, 26.1), and his embraces only kindle the flame (5.15.5).

We might be tempted to dismiss these as nothing more than inane clichés, except that we find in these novels further elaboration of the physiological process. Achilles Tatius, for example, describes the conflict between love’s fire in the liver and anger’s fire in the heart.\textsuperscript{13} This may sound bizarre but it is taken directly from medical arguments about the precise location of sexual desire (and its attendant heat) in the body. Aristotle maintains that desire is generated in the heart when some stimulus produces a surge of blood kindling the organ’s innate heat.\textsuperscript{14} Chrysippus holds a similar position: “it is evident that the affections of angry men arise in the region of the chest, and also those of lovers; therefore desire also arises especially in these regions.”\textsuperscript{15} The citation from Achilles Tatius, on the other hand, is in agreement with Galen who, following Hippocrates and Plato, locates the desiderative part of the soul in the liver. In either case, it is a matter of general agreement that the stimulated heart/liver triggers an increase both

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. 6.19.2.
\textsuperscript{14} Arist. \textit{De Anima} 1.1.403B is a description of anger, but he imagines a similar process for desire. Cf. \textit{De Partibus Animalium} 3.3.665a10-13, where Aristotle calls the heart the source of life as well as all movement and sensation.
in body temperature and ultimately in the production of seed. In fact, in animals that have internal testes, the warm lower organs serve as a kind of heating element that aids the transformation of excess blood into hot semen. Given these widely accepted "scientific" claims, we can conclude that the literary descriptions of erotic conflagration, while surely conventional, are nevertheless rooted in a broader cultural understanding of the desiring body.

With the introduction of semen as an important element in the desiderative mechanism it appears that the desiring subject (purporting to be generic) is again shown to be male. But we should not overlook the fact that semen was not always (perhaps even not usually) considered a uniquely male humor. Following Hippocrates, Galen asserts that both men and women have testicles - men outside the body, women inside - and both secrete seed during sexual intercourse. Although the male's is thicker, hotter, and more copious, female semen is also required for conception to take place. Galen identifies two separate mechanisms for the production of this vital fluid. First of all, it is generated in the large artery and vein that extend from the heart to the genitals. As the blood flows along this track it gradually alters to become the white, frothy substance that is ultimately excreted. But there is also a second, better kind of semen which is produced wholly within the testicles themselves and contains more vital pneuma, a compound of air and

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17 I am trying to avoid the error of treating literary accounts as "mere metaphors" for the "literal" or "scientific" discourse of medical texts. I place primary importance on the latter in this paper simply because, in the detail of their analyses, they render more explicit the logic of cultural assumptions.
18 Gal. Sem. 1.7, 10; 2.4.
19 Ibid. 1.12.5-6.
fire that contributes to the increasing torridity of the desiring body.\textsuperscript{20} This testicular semen is the all-important final component in the desiderative mechanism. Galen, at least, insists that the urge for intercourse would not exist without the testicles and their special kind of seed. One has only to observe, he says, those (animals or humans) who have had their testicles excised to know that this is true. Galen deduces from this observation that testicular semen houses an intrinsic desire for ejaculation.\textsuperscript{21} No semen, no desire. And conversely, abundant semen, abundant desire. This, then, is the body’s mechanism for maintaining balance: desire for sexual activity as a means of evacuating excess seed.

The ambivalence of ancient medical discourse vis-à-vis desire and sexual intercourse is well known. Although they were recognized to be natural and necessary for perpetuating the species, Soranus speaks for many anxious souls when he remarks that the body is made ill by desire.\textsuperscript{22} Indeed, as we have already seen, there existed a common diagnosis \textit{topos} in which a patient who displays physical symptoms that could derive from any number of illnesses is discovered to be suffering from acute sexual passion. Apuleius, in his version of this \textit{topos}, says that the effects on one’s health and appearance are the same in those who are ill (\textit{aegris}) and those who are in love

\textsuperscript{20} For \textit{pneuma} as air and fire see Gal. \textit{Plac. Hipp. et Plat.} 5.3.8.
\textsuperscript{21} Gal. \textit{Sem.} 1.15.29,48, 2.1.32, 2.4.13; cf. Lucr. 4.1041-1046: “As soon as the seed comes forth driven from its retreats, it is withdrawn from the whole body through all the limbs and members, gathering in a fixed place in the structure, and arouses at once the genital parts alone. Those parts thus excited swell with the seed, and there is a desire to emit it towards that whither the dire craving tends.”
\textsuperscript{22} Soranus \textit{Gynecology} 1.30. Cf. Longus 1.14, 18 and Chariton 1.1.10, where desire is called \textit{νόσος} (disease). Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella attribute the systematization of the concept of desire as disease to Aristotle (Jacques Ferrand, \textit{A Treatise On Lovesickness}, translated and edited and with a critical introduction and notes by Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University
More specifically, excess semen – the culmination of the desiderative mechanism – has pathological consequences when retained. Here, for example, is Galen’s opinion: “Scrutinizing these [observations] it appeared to me that the retention of semen does greater harm to the body than the suppression of the menstrual flow, [especially] in persons who have an abundance of poorly conditioned humors, who lead a lazy life, and who initially had indulged quite frequently in sexual relations but suddenly stopped their previous habit. I realized that in these patients the physical desire for seminal discharge was the cause [of the disorder], because all people of this type must ejaculate their abundant semen.”

Galen’s realization gets at the crux of the matter for our present purposes. The desiderative mechanism is always cause for concern, something to be guarded and controlled. But when it is allowed to spiral out of control, producing an abundance of semen that is retained, the result is pathological imbalance. The cure for this condition quite simply is ejaculation. Sometimes masturbation is advised, although never for women. Just as often sexual intercourse is identified as a cure, or at least a temporary reprieve. And frequently it is “burning” in particular that is purportedly quenched by the ejaculation of hot sperm. Lucretius, for example, admits: *tandem ubi se erupit nervis conlecta cupido, parva fit ardoris violenti pausa parumper.* Once again there are parallels in the novels. Marriage (i.e. sex) is proposed as the only remedy that will save

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23 Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 10.2. He also claims that the diagnosis is easily made when one sees an individual who burns without having a fever (*aliquem sine corporis calore flagrantiem*).  
Chaereas and Callirhoe from wasting away. Apuleius tells a tale of a woman who, in the course of propositioning her stepson, calls him both the cause of her illness (i.e. sexual desire) and its cure (medela et salus). Even more striking is Clitophon’s description of his sexual liaison with Melitte, who was burning with desire: he says that he healed her (iastos mou). This pathological complex – erotic passion as disease, burning its most salient symptom, and ejaculation an antidote – was already firmly established by the Roman Period and it retained its currency right through the middle ages in both Christian and Muslim medical traditions.

If we end the inquiry right here we have already garnered enough evidence to improve upon the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor. 7.9 (i.e. marriage as remedium concupiscendiae). But I would like to extend the discussion a little further to include a related pathological condition known as satyriasis (priapism) – a state of persistent genital tension in non-sexual situations. Galen provides the most comprehensive, if somewhat inconsistent (not to mention entirely androcentric), description of this dysfunction. Of particular interest is his etiological analysis. After concluding that

26 Ibid. 4.1115-16.
27 Chariton 1.1.11.
28 Apuleius Metamorphoses 10.3.
29 Achilles Tatius 6.1.1.
30 There is some confusion about whether in fact these two names designated the same disease. Caelius Aurelianus, in his fifth-century Latin paraphrase of Soranus’ works on acute and chronic diseases, considers them related but distinct pathologies. If this division goes back to Soranus, then it is at least as old as the second century CE. But in the Gynecology, and in the works of Galen and others, there is no indication that there were two distinct pathologies. In fact, Aetius titles his version of Rufus’ account Περί σατυρίασεως, ἣτοι πριασματος (Oeuvres de Rufus D’Éphèse, texte collationné sur les manuscrits, traduit pour la première fois en français, avec une introduction, publication commencée par Ch. Daremberg, continuée et terminée par Ch. Emile Ruelle [Paris: Impr. Naitonale, 1879], 119). For the purpose of this paper I too will consider them one and the same. (Note: satyriasis should not be confused with a stage of elephantiasis that bears the same name.)
priapism results most often from a widening of the arteries that allows excess pneuma to flow into the tendinous cavities of the penis, Galen goes on to say that this dysfunction of the normal erectile mechanism can occur when there is a protracted abstention (contrary to one's habits) from sexual intercourse. He elaborates on this scenario by saying:

There are some foodstuffs which produce much sperm and, therefore, stimulate the desire for intercourse. This confirms my statement, which I made a short time ago, that abstinence from intercourse occasionally induces priapism. This occurs in persons who have much sperm but remain continent at the same time, contrary to their usual behavior. By lack of much exercise these patients fail to get rid of an excess of blood, particularly when they do not refrain from erotic ideas. Likewise do persons suffer who are chaste by nature and accustomed to self-control over a long time but who indulge in [erotic] imaginations in order to stimulate themselves by such spectacles and memories.  

Here again is the correspondence between an abundance of semen and the urge for ejaculation (i.e. sexual desire). I have already noted the pathological consequences of failing to void this excess. But Galen states that it may result, more specifically, in priapism, especially if a) one has interrupted a previously regular sex life and/or b) one is indulging in erotic spectacles and memories. 

Most of the elements of Galen's etiology appear also in works by Rufus of Ephesus. He notes, for example, that the sexually continent are susceptible to satyriasis because they retain much sperm. He also warns against witnessing erotic spectacles or indulging in memories of sex. But when it comes to symptomatology Rufus provides a little more elaboration. Of particular interest in the present context is the pain and burning (φλεγμόνη) induced by satyriasis.

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32 Rufus *Περὶ σατυριάσεως, οἳ τοι πριαπικοῦ* apud Aëtium 11.32.
34 Ruf. apud Aët. 11.32.
The other important medical discussions of satyriasis occur in Soranus’ *Gynecology* and in the Latin paraphrase of Soranus’ works on acute and chronic diseases made by Caelius Aurelianus. In the truncated description that appears in *Gynecology*, Soranus reports that the disease is more common in men (perhaps partly justifying Galen’s androcentric treatment), but also occurs in women. It manifests itself as an intense itching of the genitals that induces desire for sexual intercourse. Caelius includes a more complete list of symptoms: “severe tension of the genital organs, with pain and a burning sensation, and an unrelieved itching that goads the patient on to sexual lust; mental aberration, rapid pulse, thick and rapid panting, despondency, sleeplessness, wandering of the mind.”

The most important of these for our purposes is, of course, the “burning sensation” (*incendia*). But also of considerable interest is the inclusion of “mental aberration” (*mentis alienato*) and “wandering of the mind” (*hallucinatio*).

Soranus makes mention of this symptom in *Gynecology*, adding a further explanatory note that connects satyriasis in women with hysteria: “they develop an irresistible desire for sexual intercourse and a certain alienation of the mind (because of the sympathetic relation of the meninges with the uterus) which throws aside all sense of shame.”

These four sources – Galen, Rufus, Soranus, and Caelius – comprise the bulk of our extant evidence for this pathological condition. There is, however, an early literary document that is of extreme interest not only for the way in which it

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prefigures the later analyses we have already covered but also as a treatment of satyriasis in non-medical discourse. I am referring to Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*. Set during the Peloponnesian War, the play revolves around a sex-strike initiated by the wives of warring soldiers on both sides. Their tactic, designed to bring an end to hostilities, succeeds in drawing the men of Athens and Sparta together to discuss a truce. Of course, that they are motivated less by desire for peace than desire for sexual release is a point made most emphatically by their huge erections – weapons, as it were, that only the women can break. Besides the comic and social-political significance of Aristophanes’ play, it is also remarkable for its consistency with later medical descriptions of satyriasis. The men are afflicted because of an interruption in their regular sexual habits (cf. Galen, Rufus), they experience an all-encompassing sexual desire (cf. Soranus, Caelius), and they burn\(^{38}\) (cf. Caelius, Rufus). Furthermore, they seek sex as a cure for what ails them, which, according to Caelius, will work in the early stages of satyriasis.\(^{39}\) Galen dispenses similar advice to his patient: “I advised him to excrete the accumulated semen but afterwards to refrain completely from [erotic] spectacles, nor to tell stories or recall memories which could stimulate his sexual desire.”\(^{40}\)

The evidence from *Lysistrata* suggests that the etiology and symptomatology of satyriasis (priapism) were established early on, even if the technical elaboration found in Galen and Rufus was developed only later. There is considerable overlap between this disease and unsatisfied sexual desire (as

\(^{38}\) During a segment of rapid punning and double entendre the men are said to burn: \(\text{πεθερμοῦσθαι ἵνα κεῖται φαίνεται} \) (Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 1079).

\(^{39}\) Cael.Aur. *CP* 3.177

considered above), a confluence that stems evidently from the excess semen characteristic of both conditions. Of the symptoms found in both descriptions of erotic passion and descriptions of satyriasis we can confidently assign a position of primary importance to “burning”.

Finally, I should make a brief lexicographical note before moving on. Numerous terms are employed in medical and literary texts alike to designate the “burning” sensation as it relates either to sexual desire or to satyriasis. In literary contexts words for “fire” (e.g. τὸ πῦρ, ignis) are more common, although τὸ καῦμα (“heat”) is not infrequent. Medical writers, on the other hand, prefer the more prosaic “burning” (e.g. ἥ φλέγμονή, πυρετός, incendia). Forms of καῦμω are the most commonly used verbs for describing this phenomenon. But φλέγω, θερμαίνω, and πυρήω among others are also employed, and there is no basis independent of context for distinguishing between them. It cannot be ruled out, therefore, that Paul’s use of πυροῦσθαι in 1 Cor. 7.9b reflects the common symptomatology of sexual desire or indeed of a graver pathology like satyriasis. But we must now consider the passage in more detail.

1 Corinthians 7.9b: the threat of disease

In the only significant article devoted wholly to the occurrence of πυροῦσθαι in 1 Cor. 7.9b, Michael Barré levels a criticism at “the usual interpretation” (i.e., “to be tortured by [unsatisfied] desire”). This, he says, “is stretching the semantic possibilities
of the word to the breaking point! But Barré’s exclusive use of Jewish sources and his failure to consider words other than πυρός artificially constrict the inquiry. His alternative reading – better to marry than to burn in hell for committing sexual sins – supposes a Jewish apocalyptic context that I, for one, have a hard time envisaging. Everything in the surrounding verses points to the proper management of sexual desire and the threat of immorality as Paul’s primary concern. Even if Paul had intended to introduce the notion of final judgement into this discussion, it is dubious at best that his gentile audience would have understood it in this way. In any case, whatever the particular merits of Barré’s thesis, he cannot justifiably reject “the usual interpretation” on “semantic grounds.”

Gordon Fee recognizes the weaknesses of Barré’s position, but his own resolution is even less satisfying. He suggests, following Barré, that Paul is addressing the situation of unmarried believers who are fornicating. The Apostle advises them to marry not because their fornication will bring judgement but simply because it is better to marry than to fornicate. Or, as Fee himself says: “Paul intended that those who are committing sexual sins should rather marry than be consumed by the passions of their sins.” But, besides the fact that an argument for marriage over fornication seems superfluous at this stage, it is not at all clear how πυροῦσθαι can be a synonym for πυρεῖεν. When “burning” is used to describe a body stricken by sexual desire, it almost always connotes

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41 Barré, “To Marry”, 201.
42 So does Gordon Fee, First Corinthians, 289.
44 Fee, First Corinthians, 289.
45 C. K. Barrett, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, HNTC (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 161. Paul has already argued in chapter 5 that the community should not associate with brothers and sisters who are sexually immoral.
desire that has not yet culminated in a sexual act. And, while verbs like πυρός and καίω or ardeo appear in contexts where the desire is illicit, the words themselves contain no nuance of moral judgement. Even in the Hellenistic Jewish literature one is hard pressed to find parallels.\(^{46}\) The burden of proof, therefore, is wholly on Fee to demonstrate that the Corinthian passage demands such an unusual rendering of πυροίσθαι.

Both of these interpretations (Barré’s and Fee’s) rise or fall with their analysis of a second problematic verb in verse 9, ἐγκρατεύονται. They postulate that the phrase \(\text{ει δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται}\) should be rendered, “If in fact they are not practicing continence”, rather than, “If they cannot exercise self-control”. Barré calls the “cannot” “not only an unwarranted interpolation which weakens the sense of the passage, but actually misleading.”\(^{47}\) This is absolutely correct if we base our reading of this verb on Aristotelian usage. According to Aristotle’s model, it is patently ludicrous to say that people who have successfully resisted the urge for sex are lacking in self-control (οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται). This expression would ordinarily be reserved for those who are, in fact, incontinent. Barré and Fee, therefore, confidently assert that the usual, unexamined view of 1 Cor. 7.9 cannot be correct. Paul must be addressing the issue of fornication among unmarried Christians. But, while their point about the meaning of ἐγκρατεύομαι might be true in general, it should not be slavishly applied to the occurrence in 1 Cor. 7.9 without first considering Paul’s concept of ἐγκράτεια (“self-control”; henceforth enkrateia). Obviously, a nuanced treatment of this topic is beyond the scope of the present study, but I shall briefly consider a few of the important verses in chapter 7 before endorsing a different reading of εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται.

\(^{46}\) Sirach 23.16 (LXX 23.17) may be the leading candidate. But even here it is far from certain that the burning itself refers to fornication.
Traditionally, *enkrateia* is a virtue that entails the victory of reason over passion. Victory in this case is not construed as the eradication of passion, but rather as the establishment of a master-slave relationship that threatens to reverse itself at any moment. The key, therefore, to remaining ἐγκρατής (self-controlled) is to cultivate one's strength and resolve through practice (askesis). With this in mind, the reader of 1 Cor. 7 will discover that Paul has some very different ideas about the nature of sexual continence. His idiosyncrasies are especially apparent in verse 7: "I wish that all were as I myself am [i.e. ἐγκρατής]. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind." If indeed *enkrateia* is the charisma in question, this represents a significant departure from all other models of sexual continence.\(^{48}\) Whereas the classical construction of *enkrateia* emphasizes effort, practice, and perseverance, verse 7 suggests that it is a matter of divine dispensation.\(^{49}\) The upshot of this, of course, is that some people – no matter how much effort they exert – can never be truly ἐγκρατής. It is a gift – either you have it or you don't.

\(^{47}\) Barré, "To Marry", 199.

\(^{48}\) There have been some recent challenges to the assumption that Paul is in fact speaking of *enkrateia* in this verse, but I have yet to come across a plausible alternative. The most recent and most implausible reading is contained in John C. Poirier and Joseph Frankovic, "Celibacy and Charism in 1 Cor 7:5-7," *HTR* 89/1 (1996): 1-18. They deem "facile" the equation of *enkrateia* with the charisma mentioned in verse 7 (16). Incredibly, they proceed to suggest that Paul is referring to prophecy. But even if this were true (and that seems to be a stretch), there is nothing in the surrounding verses that prepares the reading audience for such an oblique reference. If meaning, then, is something more than authorial intention – and surely it is – we cannot accept their shaky reconstruction.

\(^{49}\) Hans Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, tr. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 120) is most perceptive: "Since ἐγκράτεια is a charisma, it is not practiced as a virtue. It is not a standard that has to be achieved and is measured by criteria of a general kind, but it is an individual gift which cannot be acquired by imitation." Barré dismisses this interpretation with a fashionable (for its time) and mean-spirited swipe at German scholarship ("To Marry", 199, n.16).
This opinion appears to lie at the root of Paul’s advice in the chapter’s initial seven verses. He exhorts married members of the community to maintain sexual relations on account of their ἀκρασία (akrasia; i.e. because they are not gifted with enkrateia). Paul does not encourage them to practice enkrateia with greater diligence. Nor does he pass judgement on them because they are ἀκρατής. And why should he? It is not a matter of choice. Rather he is concerned that they might be tempted to seek out extramarital sex if their regular conjugal relations are interrupted. Akrasia, therefore, is not fornication; it only renders one susceptible to fornication. We might describe it as a sensitivity to sexual desire that only becomes problematic when a licit avenue for erotic activity is closed off. Paul expresses his wish that they too were gifted so that they would not experience temptation. But, alas, they have their own gifts and he has his.

This peculiar sense of self-control is reaffirmed in verses 36-38, where Paul addresses the hypothetical case of a man and his betrothed. There are conditions under which this man should marry, and conditions under which he should not. He should marry “if he is not behaving properly toward his fiancée, if his passions are strong.” The word ἡπέρακμος (translated here as “his passions are strong”) is notoriously difficult. If, however, the word describes the man’s libido, as most commentators believe, it seems to place the condition for marriage on the amount of desire he experiences (ὑπέρ=over; ἀκμός=limit). There is a similar logic at work in the opposite scenario. The man should

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50 This does not mean that Paul abandoned them to their lust so long as it was expressed in the marriage bed. He expected the married members of the community to be moderate in the expression of their desire (see 1 Thess. 4.3-5).
51 The point I am making here is not changed appreciably if we accept Dale Martin’s suggestion that ἡπέρακμος refers to the virgin’s desire (Corinthian Body, 219-28).
not marry if, “because of a lack of sexual desire, he stands firm in his own heart.”

The Greek word "ναγκη" is often left ambiguously as “necessity” in English translations, is here specifically the compulsion or urge for intercourse. Paul says remarkably that one should only seek a life of singleness and celibacy if one does not experience sexual desire. Presumably this is the gift of enkrateia, which, we can now say, resembles Aristotle’s notion of insensitivity more closely than it does traditional notions of self-control. The gift of enkrateia is actually the disablement of one’s desiderative mechanism.

If this tentative reconstruction of Pauline enkrateia is accepted, then the reading of ἐγκρατεύονται offered by Barré and Fee is problematic. While it is true that Aristotle uses this word with the sense “to practice self-control”, this is only because he perceives enkrateia to be a virtue that one practices. For Paul, however, enkrateia is a gift (the gift of insensitivity), which is granted rather than achieved. Thus, while ἐγκρατεύεσθαι (merely the verbal form of enkrateia) conventionally means “to practice self-control”, Paul employs it differently with the sense “to be gifted with enkrateia”. Those who ὅκ ἐγκρατεύονται are to be pitied rather than condemned. Their hearts are in the right place, but without the gift of enkrateia (insensitivity) their bodies crave sexual contact. The danger inherent in such a condition has already been established: images (or stories, songs, memories) stimulate the hotter organs and generate excess blood, which in turn

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52 It is my opinion that a close connection should be retained between the participial clause (μὴ ἔχων ἀνάγκην) and the phrase to which it is subordinated (ὁς δὲ ἐστηκέν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἔδραυσεν). Because current translations treat them as though they are in a paratactic construction (which substantially alters the sense), I have here offered my own translation.

53 See e.g. Arist. EN 3.11.7 (my translation): “People who are deficient as regards bodily pleasures [τὰς ἥδονας], and enjoy them less than they should, don’t come along very often. For such insensitivity [ἀναπληρωμα] is not characteristic of the human experience.”

54 This also accounts for the construction with ἐι rather than ἔοι. The real, present condition indicated by ἐι is an absence of the gift of enkrateia among would-be celibates.
results in an abundance of semen (as well as heat) and the natural desire for its excretion. If there is no occasion for the release of seed, the heat and desire continue to mount producing adverse effects in the body. Thus the “burning” is a result of restraint rather than indulgence. By admonishing those without *enkrateia* to marry and presumably have sex for the sake of voiding excess seed, Paul treats marriage (actually, conjugal sex) as indeed a *remedium incendii*. After all, it is better to marry than to go on burning.

This physiological reading of Paul’s advice presses me into dialogue with the formidable interpretation of Dale Martin. While his take on 1 Cor. 7.9 prefigures parts of the present inquiry (especially in its emphasis on the literalness of “burning desire”), his conclusion is the exact inverse of the one argued in this paper. According to Martin, Paul perceives sexual desire to be a polluting force, something that must be eliminated altogether. And marriage is a technology for accomplishing this: “Paul seems to be suggesting that marriage functions not as a legitimate avenue for the expression of desire but as what will preclude it altogether. Paul does not say that persons should marry so that they will burn only moderately (as if it were acceptable for them to “simmer”). He presents a clear either/or: marriage is the prophylaxis against “burning”; that is, marriage guards against the experience of desire.”

Martin’s line of reasoning is ingenious to be sure. But is it plausible? In the first place, I am not convinced that Paul does erect an either/or between marriage and desire. It is clear from the opening verses of chapter 7 that Paul believes sexual intercourse to be a fundamental component of marital life. Does he really imagine that this will take place without sexual desire? The verses are more intelligible when read according to a balance etiology. “Burning” is not merely desire for

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intercourse; it results from an accumulation of seed, and ejaculation (which, for Paul, is licit only in the context of marriage) is a cure of sorts—it quenches the fire. While it is true that this brings only temporary relief, Paul’s vision of marriage includes regular sexual relations that would periodically restore the balance. Thus, the terms of the either/or are not marriage and desire, but rather balance and pathological excess. Pace Martin, there is no need to think that Paul believed the marriage tie itself to magically ward off sexual desire. Rather sex (practiced within marriage) is a necessary release for those who do not have the gift of insensitivity to passion.

The evidence adduced thus far tends to corroborate the “consensus” position, in all the latter’s generality, but it allows for a more detailed and coherent picture to emerge. Above all, it allows us to focus the discussion around burning as a pathological condition.

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56 Martin recognizes this difficulty and proposes “sexual inclination” (a kind of urge that is non-polluting) as an intermediate category (Ibid. 216).
57 Those with fewer scruples would likely advise masturbation (e.g. Lucr. 4.1063-67; Galen Loc. Aff. 6.6.451) or perhaps a liaison with a prostitute (although the former usually and the latter always were considered options for men only). In Paul’s eyes, however, these are proscribed acts.
58 This points up the significance of the present infinitive (πυρόωθαι). I.e. “better to marry (and have sex) than to go on burning continually.”
59 I should hasten to add that this is not an argument for dismantling Martin’s larger point about the conflict of ideologies. It seems to me entirely intelligible that Paul should elsewhere employ the rhetoric of pollution and yet here appeal to an imbalance etiology of disease. I am thoroughly convinced by Dale Martin’s claim that the ascetic impulse in Corinth may derive from a medical or “scientific” milieu (Corinthian Body, 207). It is well known that medical authorities in the Roman period endorsed sexual continence, or at least moderation. Part of the rationale for this opinion lies in the value of retaining a moderate amount of semen. This provides warmth—a valuable quality in the ancient humoral idiom—and vitality. The Corinthian ascetics likely believed that their askesis was making them more vital, healthier. It is not unreasonable, then, that Paul (despite, or even because, holding to a different ideological position) counters this logic by exploiting an ambivalence in the Corinthian “upper-class” ideology: namely that the retention of some semen is beneficial, but the accumulation of too much semen leads to pathological excess. Paul suggests that they may in fact be making themselves sick by perpetuating a humoral imbalance. He appeals to the Corinthian disease etiology to confront their own radical asceticism.
If we merely treat πυροῦσθαι as a metaphor for sexual desire (as desire appears in our twentieth-century lexicon, i.e. a natural, ineluctable, and healthy “drive”), the resulting logic is rather garbled. But if we sympathize momentarily with the ancient consensus – that desire is a threat precisely because it is unhealthy (especially when allowed no occasion for release) – Paul’s counsel appears judicious and in line with both the medical and popular opinion of his day.

If the reader has found anything convincing up to this point, I would ask a little indulgence to press my thesis even further. I have already argued for πυροῦσθαι as a reference to the potential pathological consequences of retaining one’s semen, but it is also possible to detect in the word a reference to satyriasis in particular. The occurrence of πυροῦσθαι alone is clearly not enough to warrant such a suggestion, but there are some intriguing contextual details that resonate with the medical accounts of satyriasis considered above. In the first place, there is the category of persons addressed by Paul in verses 8-9. His advice in this section is for “the unmarried (ἀγάμοις) and the widows (κύραις)”. The latter are an easily defined group, but it is not clear who exactly the ἁγάμοι are. The word means “unmarried”, and this is how it is frequently rendered. But if Paul is addressing everyone who is not married, why does he then single out the widows? Surely they too are unmarried. A secondary definition holds more promise. As Gordon Fee points out, ἁγάμος was also a common word for “widower” in the Greek of Paul’s day. Perhaps then the advice is directed at “widowers and widows”. This translation is attractive because it replicates the symmetry found between male and

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female throughout much of the chapter. On the other hand, Paul is clearly applying the word more broadly at other points during the chapter, such as verse 11 where he uses ἀγάμος in reference to a divorcée. Neither one of these explanations, then, is entirely satisfactory. On the whole, I think it is preferable to understand ἀγάμοι as a term for all unmarried people except widows (who are differentiated from the ἀγάμοι in verse 8) and virgins (παρθένοι, who are differentiated from the ἀγάμοι in verse 34). This class of people would include divorcée(s), widowers, and those who have never married but are not virgins. Of the three categories of unmarried people, therefore — virgins (παρθένοι), widows (χώραι), and ἀγάμοι — the second and third are the recipients of Paul’s advice in verses 8-9. These are people who once had an active sexual life that has since been interrupted. And, as Rufus and Galen inform us, abstention from intercourse contrary to previous habits can induce satyriasis, especially if one is also indulging in erotic images and memories. Paul’s target group in verses 8-9, therefore, corresponds precisely to a segment of the population that both Rufus and Galen identify as being high-risk for contracting this disease.

A second feature of the Corinthian passage that resonates with medical accounts of satyriasis is the absence of a potential sexual partner. In most literary examples of a kindled desire the subject is inflamed by the sight (or thought, kiss, embrace) of a lover. But there is no indication that the ἀγάμοι and the widows in 1 Cor. 7.9 are pining for someone in particular. Unlike the situation in verses 36-38, where the attention is

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62 Cf. verses 32, 34.
63 These two smaller categories may have comprised special groups within the community.
64 Gal. Loc. Aff. 6.6.450-451. Cf. Ruf. apud Aët. 11.32; Ar. Lys., where the men who suffer from satyriasis do so because their wives have broken off sexual relations with them.
focussed primarily on a man's relationship with his betrothed, verse 9 focuses on the overheated body without any suggestion of an object of affection. This is what makes Paul's remedy so scandalous for a modern reader – he does not advise them to marry their lovers, he advises them to marry (whom?) for the sake of their own wellbeing. Similarly, satyriasis, according to Galen, is not an overabundance of desire for someone, but rather a dysfunction of the physical mechanisms for sexual intercourse – all the symptoms of desire without any particular object of affection.65

The third possible link between our passage and satyriasis is a little more speculative but still, I think, worth mentioning. It has always been assumed – and plausibly so – that Paul's counsel in verses 8-9 is driven by a fear of immorality (πορνεία). But if we consider briefly Paul's argument for the advantage of a celibate lifestyle, it might become clearer why he argues against celibacy in some cases. He writes: "I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are anxious about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord" (1 Cor. 7.32-35). The single and celibate existence is advantageous because it promotes "good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord." But what if the burning experienced by celibate ἀγάμοι and

65 This is true also of Caelius' account. He says that women with this condition "accost all who come to see them, and on their knees beg these visitors to relieve their lust" (CP 3.178). While the pornographic ethos that informs his "observation" is unbearable, this
widows causes a greater distraction than the cares of marriage? Of particular interest in this regard is Soranus’ statement, which is echoed by Caeius, that satyriasis causes a certain alienation of the mind.\textsuperscript{66} Alongside the possibility of fornication, therefore, mania may have been of equal concern for the Apostle.

Eschewing both metaphorical and moralizing interpretations of \textit{πυροῦσθαι} in 1 Cor. 7.9, I have tried to build a case for the quasi-medical import of the word. It is difficult to determine whether the pathology in question is simply sexual desire or something more specific like satyriasis. But, in the end, it is probably not necessary to decide between the two. Paul’s audience may have heard in the word \textit{πυροῦσθαι} both the insinuation of lovesickness and the threat of something more severe.

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\begin{itemize}
\item passage does illustrate that the lust is not directed at anyone in particular. Cf. Ar. \textit{Lys}. 952-58; 1090-92.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Sor. \textit{Gym}. 3.25; Cael.\textit{Aur. CP} 3.176, 180.
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