

Physical and/or Spiritual Exclusion? Ecclesial Discipline in 1 Corinthians 5*

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When Paul asks for the incestuous man at Corinth to be handed over to Satan is he calling for mere physical expulsion from the community or is he calling for something more? We argue in this paper that the nature of the man's offense—i.e., an ostentatious display of sexual immorality that also receives theological justification from the perpetrator—demanded a harsher sentence beyond mere physical exclusion. Drawing on the book of Job, we show that the disciplinary practice Paul advocates in 1 Corinthians 5 is a spiritual practice that aims to remove the spiritual protection enjoyed by the incestuous man while he remained in the body of Christ, thereby exposing him to Satan's attacks. Paul's hope was that the affliction suffered by the man at the hands of Satan as a result of this exposure would lead to his repentance and ultimate salvation.

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1 Corinthians 5 deals with the important practice of ecclesial discipline. Paul has received a report¹ of incest in the Corinthian community and, in response, issues a harsh sentence on the man cohabiting with his 'father's wife' (5.1).² 1 Corinthians 4.18–21 provides the crucial segue into 1 Cor 5. In 4.18–21,

* I am grateful to the editor and the reader for their valuable feedback.

1 Cf. 1.11; 16.17.

2 The language is likely taken from Lev 18.7–8, where this specific union is forbidden. For condemnation of this practice in Judaism, see Lev 20.11; Deut 22.30; 27.20; *Jub.* 33.10–13; 11QT 66.11–12; *Philo Spec. Leg.* 3.12–21; *Jos. Ant.* 3.273–74; *m. Sanh.* 7.4; *m. Ker.* 1:1. It is plausible that the woman is not a member of the Corinthian congregation, since Paul does not issue a judgment on her as well (cf. 5.12). The present active infinitive of the verb ἔχω suggests an ongoing sexual relationship between the man and his stepmother. See G. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 200, 278; M. Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde: Eine Studie zur Bedeutung und Funktion von Gerichtsaussagen im Rahmen der paulinischen Ekklesiologie und Ethik im 1 Thess und 1 Kor* (BZNW 117; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003) 297–8. C. S. de Vos ('Stepmothers, Concubines and the Case of πορνεία

Paul warns those who, presuming that he will not be coming to Corinth, are 'puffed up'. To these people, Paul announces his imminent visit (4.19) and a test of their 'power': 'I will come quickly to you, if the Lord wills, and I will know not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power [of those who are puffed up]' (4.19).³ The kingdom of God, Paul avers, is not a matter of word but of power. The Corinthians have a choice: Paul could either come to them in a loving and gentle 'spirit' or with a rod. The contrast between Paul's physical presence and absence is put to the test in this ordeal, for Paul issues the harsh sentence against the immoral man of ch. 5 with the assurance that he will somehow be present with the church (in spirit) when the church disciplines the immoral man. In order to show the Corinthians that the power about which he speaks can be manifested even while he is physically absent, Paul decides to come to this immoral man with a rod (ἐν ῥάβδῳ, 4.21) in the spirit. As the segue into our pericope, the latter reference is crucial for our own reading of this passage, not least because it echoes Ps 89.32–33.

This Psalm recounts God's covenant with David and his descendants. God warns his elect that if they forsake and violate the divine commandments and statutes, he will visit their transgressions (lit. 'lawlessness', ἀνομία) with a rod (ἐν ῥάβδῳ). But God still holds out his steadfast love and faithfulness to the covenant, even while punishing their iniquity (Ps 89.32–33).⁴ This point is crucial, for Paul himself, being the apostle and representative of God,⁵ will come down on this man's iniquity with a rod (ἐν ῥάβδῳ);⁶ yet he leaves open the possibility of the man's salvation (5.5).

1 Cor 5 is a notorious *crux interpretum* in the Corinthian correspondence. As a result, we can expect a rich profusion of solutions to be offered for the many thorny exegetical issues raised in this chapter: (1) How are we to understand Paul's order for the immoral man to be handed over to Satan? What does Paul mean by destruction of the flesh? (2) Whose salvation is at stake in 5.5: is it the

in 1 Corinthians 5', *NTS* 44 [1998] 104–14) has argued for the possibility that the woman may have been the man's father's concubine. Against this view, see A. Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9/1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 124.

3 All translations in this paper are our own, unless otherwise indicated. We also have to note upfront our decision to include Colossians and 2 Thessalonians in the Pauline evidence presented in this paper. While we remain open to the idea of non-Pauline authorship of these two letters, the evidence for pseudonymity remains, in our view, inconclusive. For careful discussions on the authorship of these letters, see (on Colossians) J. M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997) 18–36; and (on 2 Thessalonians) A. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 364–70.

4 Cf. 2 Sam 7.14–15.

5 See K. H. Rengstorf, 'ἀπόστολος', *TDNT* 1.407–47.

6 This is the only occurrence of this word in the Pauline corpus.

immoral man, the community, or the $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$? Whose $\pi\nu\epsilon\hat{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ is to be saved: is it the spirit of the man or the Spirit of God that indwells the body of Christ? (3) Is this sentence to be carried out for all cases of sexual immorality and of the vices listed in 5.9–10 within the body of Christ? In the next section we critically evaluate the solutions scholars have offered to each of these questions. We will then proceed to offer our own interpretation of this passage, drawing on the book of Job as a helpful key to understanding this passage.

1. Proposed Solutions

(1) Some scholars argue that ‘handing over to Satan’ is a death sentence; Paul expects his sentence to result in the man’s death.⁷ Scholars who hold to the death interpretation often point to Ananias’s and Sapphira’s deaths in Acts 5.1–10, the death Paul mentions in 1 Cor 11.30–32 occurring within the Corinthian community as a result of their aberrant observance of the Lord’s Supper, curse and expulsion pronouncements in Qumran texts,⁸ and curse formulae in magical papyri.⁹ In an essay entitled, ‘A Critique of the “Curse/Death” Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5.1–8’, James T. South has provided compelling refutations of the death interpretation, even if his own proposed solutions fail to convince.¹⁰

South notes that the Greek and Jewish curse formulae are not genuine parallels to 1 Cor 5.5: not only are all the Greek magical texts at least a century later than Paul, but in none of the Greek magical texts is a person handed over to Satan. In

7 See, for example, Tertullian *On Modesty* 13–14; E. Käsemann, ‘Sentences of Holy Law in the NT’, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969 [1957]) 66–81; R. Kempthorne, ‘Incest in the Body of Christ’, *NTS* 14 (1968) 569–70; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 97; C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 126–7; R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2007 [1951–55]) 1.233; V. G. Shillington, ‘Atonement Texture in 1 Corinthians 5:5’, *JSNT* 71 (1998) 39. G. Forkman speaks of death in ‘both the physical and ethic-religious meaning’ (*The Limits of the Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community within the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity* [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1972] 146); and S. D. MacArthur speaks of ‘a slow death which involves physical suffering’ (“Spirit” in Pauline Usage: 1 Corinthians 5.5’, *Studia Biblica* 3 [ed. E. A. Livingstone; JSNTSup 3; Sheffield: JSOT, 1978] 251).

8 E.g., 1QS 2.5–6, 12–18; CD 7.21–8.3. See C. J. Roetzel, *Judgement in the Community: A Study of the Relationship between Eschatology and Ecclesiology in Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 1972) 112–25.

9 Cf. *PGM* 4.1247, 5.70–95, 5.174–80, 5.185–210, 5.335–36. See A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927 [1911]) 302; A. Y. Collins, ‘The Function of “Excommunication” in Paul’, *HTR* 73 (1980) 255–6.

10 J. T. South, ‘A Critique of the “Curse/Death” Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5.1–8’, *NTS* 39 (1993) 539–61; Cf. South, *Disciplinary Practices in Pauline Texts* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Biblical, 1992) 23–88.

addition, the magical documents are not communal documents.¹¹ Concerning the Qumran formulae, South concludes that the evidence is inconclusive.¹² We may note that those outside the community of the sons of light are to be destroyed by Belial (CD 7.21–8.3), and this would, therefore, by definition apply to those expelled from the elect community.¹³ This destruction is eschatological, however; it will occur on the ‘day of God’s visitation’. 1 Corinthians 5.5, in contrast, does not posit eschatological death or destruction of the incestuous man, but rather eschatological salvation. Finally, as South notes, Acts 5.1–11 and 1 Cor 11.30 are also not genuine parallels. None of these deaths are due to Satan’s agency; instead, the Spirit or divine agency may be involved in both deaths.

The most recent detailed study of 1 Cor 5 attempts to recover the curse/death interpretation. David Raymond Smith surveys a wide range of ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman curse (or ‘binding’) traditions and situates 1 Cor 5 within the wider context of cursing in Paul’s cultural milieu.¹⁴ While acknowledging the weaknesses of previous curse/death interpretations, Smith argues that Paul’s words in 1 Cor 5.5 bear a ‘conceptual resonance’ with the wider common language of cursing in his cultural milieu. Most, if not all, of the arguments presented in Smith’s work will be dealt with directly or indirectly in the course of our own treatment of this passage. For now, we note that at best Smith’s arguments do establish that 1 Cor 5.5 envisions some form of physical affliction and exclusion, but not necessarily death. Smith, for example, points to the phrase *γυνή πατρός* as establishing a biblical context of cursing and ‘destruction’ (i.e. death) in Deuteronomy and Leviticus.¹⁵ The Deuteronomy and Leviticus background to 1 Cor 5 cannot be denied. As a number of commentators have noted, for example, the six sins Paul lists in 1 Cor 5.11 correlate with six passages in Deuteronomy that call for the death penalty, followed by the formula of exclusion that Paul quotes in 1 Cor 5.13: ‘So you shall drive out the evil person from among you’.¹⁶ Nonetheless, as William Horbury has shown, commandments for execution were widely

11 South, ‘Critique’, 545–6.

12 South, ‘Critique’, 546.

13 Thus, South’s argument against the Qumran evidence could be a bit more nuanced. For example, he seems to deny the connection between Belial and Satan (‘Critique’, 546). In Qumran and Second Temple Jewish literature, however, Belial and Mastema are often designations for the leader of demonic angels. Thus, it is not farfetched to see Satan and Belial as equivalent figures. See our discussion below.

14 D. R. Smith, *Hand This Man over to Satan’: Curse, Exclusion and Salvation in 1 Corinthians 5* (LNTS 386; London: T&T Clark, 2008).

15 See Smith, *Hand this Man over*, 123–34.

16 Cf. Deut 13.1–5; 17.2–7; 19.16–20; 21.18–21; 22.21–30; 24.7. See B. Campbell, ‘Flesh and Spirit in 1 Cor 5:5: An Exercise in Rhetorical Criticism of the NT’, *JETS* 36 (1993) 339 n. 31; P. Ellingworth and H. Hatton, *A Translators’ Guide on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians* (London: United Bible Societies, 1985) 105; and especially B. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 69.

interpreted in the Second Temple period as implying exclusion and expulsion from the community.¹⁷ Indeed, in light of the Deuteronomy background to 1 Cor 5, if death is meant in 1 Cor 5.5, then it is difficult to see why others in the Corinthian congregation who indulge in, for example, sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor 6.9–20; Deut 22.13–30) and idolatry (cf. 1 Cor 10.19–22; Deut 13.1–5; 17.2–7) should escape a death curse. Herein lies a major weakness in Smith's position and other studies on this passage: a failure to establish the uniqueness of the man's case in 1 Cor 5. We will develop this thought in subsequent sections.

Smith also notes 'resonances' between 1 Cor 5.5, 1 Tim 1.20, and Job 2.6.¹⁸ These 'resonances', however, do not establish death as the fate of the incestuous man at Corinth. In both 1 Tim 1.20 and Job 2.6 'handing over to Satan' involves some form of physical affliction that does *not* result in death, but rather produces transformation in the afflicted person. We will argue this position in detail later. Finally, we should also note that the evidence from 1 Cor 11.30–34, which Smith points to, might seem to support a curse/death interpretation of 1 Cor 5. But this seems to us specious reasoning. 1 Corinthians 11 is a case of judgment inflicted directly by God.¹⁹ More specifically, it concerns irreverent contact with the dangerous presence of God; and this evokes OT images of God's holiness and the danger that God's holiness poses to those who fail to handle it with care.²⁰ This must be distinguished from 'handing over to Satan'.

Against the curse/death interpretation, we may note in addition to the above that Paul never describes death anywhere as a 'destruction of the flesh';²¹ and, as we shall argue below, Paul's mode of dealing with deviant believers elsewhere (specifically 2 Cor 2.1–11; Gal 6.1; and 2 Thess 3.14–15) does not fit with the death interpretation. In the end, the biggest challenge to the curse/death interpretation of this passage is how to account for the soteriological purpose of the $\pi\nu\epsilon\delta\mu\alpha$ expressed in 5.5.²² Indeed, as Matthias Konradt notes, Paul's soteriology rules out the possibility of ascribing atoning significance to the death of the incestuous man: 'Sühnende Kraft hat allein der Tod Jesu'.²³

17 See W. Horbury, 'Extirpation and Excommunication', *VT* 35 (1985) 13–38.

18 See Smith, *Hand This Man over*, 146–50.

19 We note in passing that a novel reading of 1 Cor 11.30–34 has been suggested by S. W. Henderson in her study of the social dimension of this passage. Henderson notes that death in 1 Cor 11.30 could be the natural consequence of leaving some in the community hungry and weak. See Henderson, "If Anyone Hungers...": An Integrated Reading of 1 Cor 11.17–34', *NTS* 48 (2002) 195–208, esp. 206 n. 42.

20 See, e.g., Num 4.17–20; 1 Sam 6.6–7; 2 Sam 6.19–21.

21 Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 211.

22 Cf. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 210; Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 315–17.

23 Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 316.

The latter objection forces us to detect that some notion of repentance or transformation is implied in Paul's sentence in 1 Cor 5.5.²⁴ That is why the alternative position that views Paul's sentence as referring to some form of physical suffering,²⁵ with remedial purpose, seems more plausible.²⁶ This is the position we adopt in this essay; and we will later argue for this position using the book of Job.

(2) Some scholars argue that the 'spirit' of 1 Cor 5.5 is not the 'spirit' of the incestuous man but the Holy Spirit who resides within the community.²⁷ While this view is correct to draw attention to the fact that $\pi\nu\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\mu\omicron$ in 5.5 is not preceded by the pronoun $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$, it still fails to take seriously the soteriological significance of the verb $\sigma\acute{\omicron}\zeta\omega$ in Paul. Claims such as, 'if they [the community] have defiled the Spirit by, for example, sexual sins, the Spirit will be lost to the community and they [the community] will be excluded from the kingdom of God'²⁸ or 'by removing the one immoral member from the community the membership keeps the Spirit of Christ, while the Spirit is effectively taken from the immoral man',²⁹ are unsuccessful attempts to circumvent the setbacks confronting this view. It is perhaps significant that this view quickly elides the salvation of the 'Spirit' into salvation of 'the community', and thereby collapses the distinction between the two entities. In the final analysis, this position stumbles on the very fact that the Spirit, as God's own Spirit (1 Cor 2.12) and the sign of believers' adoption as 'sons' with Christ (Rom 8.14–17; Gal 4.6), never requires salvation in Paul.

24 Cf. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 213; South, 'Critique', 546; C. Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (THKNT 7; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1996) 104–5; R. B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Interpretation; Louisville: Knox, 1997) 86; Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 317.

25 See, for example, J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London: Macmillan, 1895) 204; G. W. H. Lampe, 'Church Discipline and Interpretation of the Epistle to the Corinthians', *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (eds. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule, and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1967) 337–61.

26 While Smith discusses briefly two proponents (one patristic and one contemporary) of a physical suffering and exclusion reading of 1 Cor 5 (see Smith, *Hand this Man over to Satan*, 29–33), he fails to engage extensively with this position, since his main target throughout seems to be proponents of an *exclusion alone* reading of this passage, a position which he attributes to a desire to establish a contemporary application of this passage for today's church (38–56).

27 This view was first proposed by Tertullian *On Modesty* 13; also Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles* (CSEL 81:54). See also Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 128. Cf. D. B. Martin (*The Corinthian Body* [New Haven: Yale University, 1995] 174), who argues that the spirit to be saved is both the spirit of the man and that of the church, and the flesh to be destroyed is both that of the man and that of the church.

28 A. Y. Collins, 'Function', 260; so also R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* (Sacra Pagina 7; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999) 213: 'He directs the community to excise the fleshly individual—so characterized by reason of his incestuous behavior—from its midst so that the community might live under the power of the Spirit and be preserved for the day of the Lord'.

29 Shillington, 'Atonement Texture', 35.

The view that ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ in 1 Cor 5.5 denote Paul’s typical contrast between these two terms also needs to be evaluated. According to this view, by putting the man out of the believing community, Paul’s desire was for the destruction of the fleshly or carnal nature in the man (or the church³⁰) to be destroyed.³¹ This position expands our semantic range beyond anthropological categories and acknowledges the view, present in early Judaism and Christianity, that Satan can at times serve God’s purpose.³² Nonetheless, if ‘flesh’ in 1 Cor 5.5 refers to the fleshly or carnal nature, then this passage contradicts everything Paul has to say about the fleshly nature elsewhere. In Paul, Satan is never the agent through whom the fleshly nature is overcome. It is actually the reverse: Satan seeks to entice and revive the fleshly desires. That is why Paul refers to Satan as the ‘Tempter’ (ὁ πειράζων) in 1 Thess 3.5; and only two chapters after our pericope, Paul admonishes married couples not to deprive each other of sex, so that Satan will not tempt (πειράζω) them (1 Cor 7.5). On the contrary, it is the Holy Spirit who aids believers in their struggle to curb the desires of the flesh (Rom 7–8; Gal 5–6). Thus, it is exegetically unsupportable and theologically unwarranted to posit Satan as the agent of destruction of the incestuous man’s fleshly desires.³³ Paul’s own characterization of the man’s transgression shows that he does not expect those outside the body of Christ to have control over their fleshly nature: ‘Actually, sexual immorality is reported among you, and of a kind that is not condoned³⁴ even among the Gentiles’ (5.1). *Not even* Gentiles condone *porneia* of this kind, which means, in essence, that Gentiles *do* condone certain kinds of *porneia*, while all forms of *porneia* are forbidden in the body of Christ (cf. 5.9–11). In addition, Paul’s statement to the Corinthians that to shun the sexually immoral, covetous, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards,

30 Campbell, ‘Flesh and Spirit’, 340–1.

31 A. Y. Collins, ‘Function’, 259; South, ‘Critique’, 544–5, 552–3; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 213; R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 212; J. Cambier, ‘La Chair et l’Esprit en 1 Cor v. 5’, *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 221–32; N. G. Joy, ‘Is the Body Really to Be Destroyed? (1 Corinthians 5:5)’, *BibTr* 39 (1988) 429–36; A. C. Thiselton, ‘The Meaning of ΣΑΡΞ in 1 Corinthians 5:5: A Fresh Approach in the Light of Logical and Semantic Factors’, *SJT* 26 (1973) 204–28; Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 395–8; L. Vander Broek, ‘Discipline and Community: Another Look at 1 Corinthians 5’, *RefR* 48 (1994) 5; V. C. Pfizner, ‘Purified Community—Purified Sinner: Expulsion from the Community according to Matt 18:15–18 and 1 Cor 5:1–5’, *ABR* (1982) 46–7.

32 That Satan can on occasion serve God’s purpose does not mean that Satan is not God’s enemy. T. C. G. Thornton (‘Satan—God’s Agent for Punishing’, *ExpTim* 83 [1972] 151–2), therefore, overstates his case.

33 Thus, 2 Cor 12.7 is inapplicable to this argument (contra South, ‘Critique’, 560). 2 Cor 12.7 is applicable to 1 Cor 5.5 only if Paul’s ‘thorn’ in 2 Cor 12.7 is a reference to some physical ailment (though this position is contested) and ‘flesh’ in 1 Cor 5.5 refers to the man’s physical flesh, not ethical flesh.

34 The verb must be supplied here. On our word choice here, see the discussion below.

and robbers of *the world* would mean having to escape the world entirely (5.10) tells us all we need to know about what Paul thinks of moral standards outside the body of Christ. Thus, it seems absurd, to say the least, to suggest that Paul, who views the Holy Spirit given to the body of Christ as the believer's aid in the battle against the impulses of the flesh, would put an incestuous man *outside* the church to learn to control his fleshly nature.

(3) We turn now to our final question—whether handing over to Satan is a sentence to be carried out in each case of immorality (including the vice list in 5.9–10) in the church. Paul had previously written to the Corinthians not to associate with certain immoral persons (5.9–10). The Corinthians (mis)understood Paul to be saying that they should not associate with *all* immoral persons. Paul, therefore, clarifies his position in the present letter by emphasizing that the 'judgment' about which he speaks applies only to someone who is called believer (lit. 'brother') and yet lives in immorality (5.11). Believers are within their place to judge those within the body of Christ; but God will judge those on the outside (5.12). Thus, the 'brothers' and 'sisters' who practice sexual immorality, covetousness, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, or robbery must be excluded from the fellowship of believers (5.11). As previously noted, the vices are likely taken from a list of offenses in Deuteronomy that call for the death penalty. And since some of these offenses were already present in the Corinthian community (e.g., 6.7–8, 9–20; 10.18–22; 11.21), it is highly unlikely that Paul would recommend that every believer caught in one of these sins be handed over to Satan.³⁵

The sentence Paul wants the church to mete out to this offender is extremely severe and goes beyond mere exclusion (though the sentence involves exclusion [5.2, 13]). Thus, contrary to a number of commentaries on this passage,³⁶ Paul is not dealing with mere exclusion or excommunication *per se*.³⁷ Paul could have phrased his demand in a number of ways if he wanted the congregation merely to expel this man from its fellowship. For example, Paul could have written:

As for the man who is incestuous, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him (Titus 3.10; adapted).³⁸

35 Cf. Gal 6.1; 2 Thess 3.14–15.

36 See, for example, South, 'Critique', 544, 553–5; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 208–9; S. K. Kistemaker, "Deliver this Man to Satan" (1 Cor 5:5): A Case Study in Church Discipline', *TMSJ* 3 (1992) 41–2; Campbell, 'Flesh and Spirit', 332 n. 8; J. M. Gundry Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying in and Falling Away* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991 [1990]) 117–18; A. T. Robertson and A. Plummer, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2nd ed. 1914 [1911]) 99.

37 So also MacArthur, "'Spirit' in Pauline Usage", 249–50; Lampe, 'Church Discipline', 352; Smith, *Hand this Man over*, 55–6.

38 Cf. 1 Tim 5.20.

The above proposal could have been accomplished without the context of worship, without Paul being present in spirit, and without the power of Jesus Christ.³⁹ Thus, the practice to be carried out is first of all a *community practice* and can only be accomplished with the *power of Jesus*.⁴⁰ A correct interpretation of this passage must, as a result, go beyond mere expulsion in attempting to account for the nature of the punishment. It must also account for why this particular man receives such a severe sentence. In short, there is a causal thread between the man's actions and his severe sentence that must be established for a correct interpretation.

Paul's harsh sentence cannot be explained simply by appeal to the gross nature of the offense, one that supposedly 'does not occur'⁴¹ even among the Gentiles (5.1). As evidence from Tacitus (*Annals* 6.19), Martial (*Epigrammata* 4.16), and Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 58.22) shows, cases of incest are well documented among Gentiles, though they were unlawful and unacceptable.⁴² Thus, if this was simply a case of human weakness on the part of the offender, or indifference on the part of the church, one would expect Paul's response to be admonishment, as is found in Gal 6.1 (cf. 1 Cor 8–10; 2 Thess 3.14–15; Titus 3.10; Matt 18.15–17). The connection between the man's deeds and Paul's decrying of the church's lackadaisical response is significant, for it is likely that this man's deeds were an ostentatious display of depravity that also received theological justification from the perpetrator.⁴³ As Paul tells us, the man was performing his deeds 'in the name of the Lord Jesus' (τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, 5.3–4). The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου

39 Pace Kistemaker, 'Deliver this Man to Satan', 41: 'Handing someone over to Satan is akin to the prescription Jesus gave his disciples: treat an unrepentant sinner as a pagan or a tax collector (Matt 18:17)'.

40 Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles* (CSEL 81:53), who notes correctly that something more than common consent is being demanded from the community in the expulsion of the man; and G. Harris, 'The Beginnings of Church Discipline: 1 Corinthians 5', *NTS* 37 (1991) 16–18. Consequently, nothing could be farther from the truth than J. D. M. Derrett's thesis that Paul intends the Corinthians to hand over the incestuous man to civil authorities for his execution ("Handing over to Satan": An Explanation of 1 Cor. 5:1–7', *Revue internationale des droits de l'antiquité* 26 [1979] 11–30).

41 It may be inaccurate to supply a verb of non-existence here, as is found in a number of translations and commentaries (see, e.g., NIV; NRSV; NASB; Wolff, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 98; E. Fascher, *Der erster Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* [THKNT 7/1; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975] 1.155; Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 120; J. Murphy-O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 5:3–5', *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting Major Issues* [Oxford: Oxford University, 2009] 12).

42 For further discussion, see A. D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993) 74–88.

43 Cf. A. Y. Collins, 'Function', 253: 'Paul's response is more understandable if the illicit relationship was put forward, not only as a legitimate, but even as a commendable act of Christian freedom'.

Ἰησοῦ could be taken as modifying the verb συναχθέντων ('When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus'),⁴⁴ or the verb κέκρικα ('I have already pronounced judgment in the name of the Lord Jesus').⁴⁵ The word order, however, rules out the first option, since elsewhere in Paul the same prepositional phrase follows the verb it modifies (cf. 1 Cor 6.11; 2 Thess 3.6; Col 3.17). And since in its occurrences in Paul the phrase is never far removed from the verb,⁴⁶ the second option is weakened, if not entirely eliminated. Thus, with a number of commentators,⁴⁷ we take the prepositional phrase with the verb immediately preceding it, καταργάζομαι. This seems to us the more natural reading of the text. This reading not only dovetails well with the general tenor of the letter to the Corinthians, but it also helps us to account adequately for Paul's harsh sentence. J. Murphy-O'Connor has argued persuasively that the situation addressed in 1 Cor 5 was viewed by Paul as representative of the arrogance and boasting that characterized the Corinthian community (see 5.2, 6; cf. 3.21; 4.6, 7, 18–19; 6.12; 8.1; 10.23).⁴⁸ The Corinthians thought themselves to be in possession of a wisdom and knowledge that permitted them to do whatever they pleased (cf. 6.12–20). Murphy-O'Connor writes: 'This overweening confidence in their own rightness was born of the sense of difference from others, which was rooted in the fact that they had been baptized in the name of Jesus (cf. 1.13)'.⁴⁹ Given such an outlook it is not hard to see the man giving theological justification to his incestuous relationship on the basis of his freedom in Christ (cf. 6.12).

In short, through his deplorable actions, the man seized the freedom to persist in his lifestyle as occasion to perpetrate a false gospel. The man, in essence, had become a false teacher.⁵⁰ Paul's severe reprimand of this man, then, is consistent with how he treats false teachers in his letters.⁵¹ Earlier in the letter to the Corinthians, Paul identifies the community as God's temple (3.16) and asseverates that God will destroy anyone who destroys the temple of God (3.17). The

44 So, e.g., NIV; JB; NASB; NEB; NET; REB; LUTH; J. Weiß, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (KEK 5; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 9th ed. 1910) 127; Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles*, 204; Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 124; South, *Disciplinary Practices*, 35.

45 So, e.g., RSV; NRSV; NAB; NLT; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 207–8; Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 311–12.

46 See Murphy-O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 5:3–5', 11–19, esp. 12.

47 See, e.g., E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 64; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (EKK 7/1; Zürich: Benziger, 1991) 1.372; Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 125–6; Murphy-O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 5:3–5', 11–19; A. Y. Collins, 'Function', 253; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 84.

48 Murphy-O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 5:3–5', 12.

49 Murphy-O'Connor, '1 Corinthians 5:3–5', 12.

50 Schrage is, therefore, on the right track when he claims that Paul confronts a 'provokativ-ideologischen Akt' (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 1.372), though he does not develop his argument persuasively.

51 Cf. Gal 1.8; 5.10; 2 Cor 11.1–15; Phil 3.2.

context suggests that Paul is referring to those who harm the church through false teaching and divisiveness. The same applies to the incestuous man in 1 Cor 5: by justifying his sinful deeds as a theological practice, the man's actions have become analogous to the messengers of Satan masquerading as angels of light (2 Cor 11.1–15).⁵² Consequently, when this man is handed over to Satan, *with the power of Jesus*, it will reveal whose side he truly is on. It is also important to note that in the only other example of persons being handed over to Satan in the early church, 1 Tim 1.20, the culprits are propagating false teaching. In 1 Tim 1.20, we catch a glimpse of how one of our earliest interpreters of Paul sought to apply Paul's enigmatic phrase. The author hands Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan (παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾷ) so that they will learn not to blaspheme. Persons who were handed over to Satan were those who had the capacity to spread their corrosive views within the body of Christ.

The incestuous man's influence,⁵³ if unchecked, will spread like cancer through the body of Christ.⁵⁴ He, therefore, needs to be unmasked quickly before he corrodes the church, like yeast working through a batch of dough (5.6).⁵⁵ With such a one in the body of Christ, there is no room for boasting (5.6); when tolerating such behavior, the church has no grounds to take pride in its spiritual achievements. As a matter of fact, this is where the church ends up when it begins to focus on, and take pride in, its spirituality, arcane knowledge, and spiritual gifts (4.6–18; 8.1; 13.4; 14.12).⁵⁶

52 Cf. 1 John 2.18; 4.1.

53 Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 74–88, has argued for the possibility that the incestuous man may have been of high social standing within the community; so also J. K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (JSNTSup 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992) 130–41. If this hypothesis is correct, it may provide some explanation for the urgency of Paul's call, since this man would command even greater influence.

54 A brief word about Shillington's thesis is in order. Shillington argues that the scapegoat ritual of Lev 16, where the scapegoat is handed over to Azazel on the Day of Atonement, informs Paul's dynamistic sentence of 1 Cor 5.5 (Shillington, 'Atonement Texture', 29–50). The incestuous man becomes the sin-bearing victim who bears away the sins of the community. There are many problems with this thesis. It should suffice, however, to note that Paul never transfers the sins of the community to the incestuous man. The sin in view is not that of the community but that of the man. If there is any potential transfer that might take place it is the sinful influence of the one man that has the potential to spread to the community, not the other way around. In addition, in order to find some parallel between the goats of Lev 16 and the ritually unclean incestuous man of 1 Cor 5, Shillington avers: 'Goats were desert dwelling animals, already impure even before they entered the sacred precincts' (45). It is significant that Shillington cites no evidence for this claim. Goats are not included in the impure animals lists of Lev 11 and Deut 14. Moreover, according to the Torah (see Lev 11), mammals that both ruminant and have cloven hooves are kosher. This will include goats.

55 See Gal 5.9, where Paul again uses the same yeast proverb in a context in which he is arguing against the spread of false teaching.

56 Cf. Pfizner, 'Purified Community', 41.

Having shown the uniqueness of this man's case and the difficulties inherent in the various proposals for this passage, how do we make sense of this pericope? What do we make of the man's fate? In the following section, we turn to the book of Job, which is echoed in this pericope, as a helpful key to shed further light on this enigmatic Pauline passage. Our own interpretation may not eradicate all the problems this text presents, but we hope to add another dimension to the discussion.

2. Job as Interpretive Key

Paul alludes to the book of Job throughout his letters.⁵⁷ He offers direct quotations from Job in Rom 11.35 (Job 41.11) and 1 Cor 3.19 (Job 5.12–13). 1 Corinthians also contains at least four allusions to Job: 1 Cor 1.20 (Job 12.17); 1.24 (Job 12.13); 2.10 (Job 11.7); 4.4 (Job 27.6). Thus, if we can detect a strong echo of Job 2.4–6 in 1 Cor 5.5,⁵⁸ we may be on safe grounds to look to Job as a possible background for our interpretation of 1 Cor 5. The concepts are similar and the verbal resemblances are stronger than any of the parallels often adduced for 1 Cor 5.5, despite some divergences. A closer examination of Paul's anthropological terms may account for the divergences in anthropological terminology.

Both texts are worth quoting at this point:

ὑπολαβὼν δὲ ὁ διάβολος⁵⁹ εἶπεν τῷ κυρίῳ
 δέρμα ὑπὲρ δέρματος
 ὅσα ὑπάρχει ἀνθρώπῳ ὑπὲρ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ ἐκτείσει
 οὐ μὴν δὲ ἀλλὰ ἀποστείλας τὴν χειρὰ σου ἄψαι τῶν ὀστέων
 αὐτοῦ καὶ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτοῦ
 εἰ μὴν εἰς πρόσωπόν σε εὐλογῆσει⁶⁰
 εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος τῷ διαβόλῳ Ἴδου παραδίδωμί σοι αὐτόν
 μόνον τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ διαφύλαξον (Job 2.4–6).⁶¹

παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός
 ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου (1 Cor 5.5).⁶²

57 Cf. 1 Thess 5.8 (Job 2.9); 5.22 (Job 1.1; 1.8); 2 Thess 2.8 (Job 4.9); Gal 6.7 (Job 4.8); Phil 1.19 (Job 13.16); 2 Cor 4.6 (Job 37.15); Rom 1.20 (Job 12.7–9); 8.34 (Job 34.29); 9.20 (Job 9.12); 11.33 (Job 5.9); 11.33 (Job 9.10); 11.34 (Job 15.18).

58 Cf. Job 1.12; 19.25–27.

59 Hebrew = שָׂטָן ('the *satan*').

60 Hebrew euphemism בָּרַב.

61 'Then the Slanderer carried on and said to the Lord, "Skin for skin; whatever a man has he will give in payment for his life. However, stretch forth your hand and touch his bones and his flesh; surely, he will curse you to your face." Then the Lord said to the Slanderer, "Behold, I am handing him over to you; only guard his life".'

62 'Hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, in order that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord'.

In both Job 2 and 1 Cor 5, a man is handed over (παραδίδωμι) to Satan. The OG translates the Hebrew שָׂטָן ('The *satan*') with ὁ διάβολος. In the NT, διάβολος and σατανᾶς are synonyms for the Devil.⁶³ Paul, however, never uses the term διάβολος; his preferred term is σατανᾶς.⁶⁴

The anthropological terms used in the two texts present a challenge, though not an insurmountable one. In Job, God permits Satan to afflict Job's ὀστέον καὶ σάρξ (bone and flesh [MT בָּשָׂר וָעוֹץ]; cf. 2.7), but Job's ψυχή (MT נַפְשׁוֹ) is off limits.⁶⁵ Paul relatively seldom uses ψυχή in his letters.⁶⁶ Paul never places ψυχή in proximity to σάρξ, and he never contrasts ψυχή with σάρξ.⁶⁷ His preferred pair is σάρξ and πνεῦμα.⁶⁸ On one occasion he contrasts ψυχή with πνεῦμα (1 Cor 15.45); and this contrast may also be implied in the antithesis between the cognate terms ψυχικός and πνευματικός (1 Cor 2.14; 15.44, 46; cf. Jas 3.15; Jude 19). ψυχικός is also synonymous in Paul with two cognates of σάρξ, σάρκινος and σαρκικός, words also often contrasted with πνευματικός (1 Cor 3.1–3; 9.11; 2 Cor 1.12; 3.3; 10.4; Rom 7.14; 15.27). Thus, if the author of 1 Peter, for example, can set σαρκικός in opposition to ψυχή (1 Pet 2.11), such a move would be extremely unlikely for Paul, because Paul seems to regard the ψυχή as being very close to the σάρξ.

These observations may explain the verbal divergences between Paul and the OG translation of Job. If Paul's wording in 1 Cor 5.5 is based on OG Job, it should come as no surprise that Paul would move away from the OG translator's pair of

63 Cf., for example, Matt 4.10–11, where both terms are used.

64 Rom 16.20; 1 Cor 7.5; 2 Cor 2.11; 11.14; 12.7; 1 Thess 2.18; 2 Thess 2.9.

65 It is probable that the OG translator of Job holds to an anthropology in which the ψυχή could represent either life in general or the inner, invisible aspect of a person, while the σάρξ represents the outer, material aspects of a person. This is confirmed by the wording of such passages as Job 7.15; 9.21; 27.4—passages that bear almost no resemblance to their MT counterparts. Thus, one could read Satan's own words as a desire to afflict Job's outer person (ὀστέον καὶ σάρξ [bone and flesh]; cf. Job 2.7). God, therefore, gives Satan permission to afflict Job's flesh and bones, but he is commanded to guard carefully Job's ψυχή. ψυχή here, and almost always elsewhere in the LXX and OG, translates the Hebrew נַפְשׁוֹ. Since the ψυχή and σάρξ may represent the inner and outer person, respectively, for the OG translator of Job—it is at least possible that Paul read the OG Job this way—then ψυχή and σάρξ could be viewed as diametrically different components of the human being for the translator. If Paul understood the verse this way, it may help explain Paul's deviation from the OG translator. See our discussion below.

66 The term appears only 12 times in the authentic Pauline letters (counting Colossians). Two of the instances are taken over from OT quotations (Rom 11.3; 1 Cor 15.45). The terms πνεῦμα and σάρξ are, however, ubiquitous in the Pauline letters.

67 When ψυχή is used, it can carry the connotation of 'being' or 'life' (cf. Rom 2.9; 11.3; 13.1; 16.4; 1 Cor 15.45; 2 Cor 12.15; Phil 2.30; Col 3.23; 1 Thess 2.8); it has the sense of 'mind' in Phil 1.27; and in 1 Thess 5.23 it is included in a list with spirit and body (σῶμα).

68 See, e.g., Gal 5.16–18; 6.8; Rom 7.14–8.17. Cf. Gal 2.20; 2 Cor 10.3.

σάρξ and ψυχή to his own preferred pair of σάρξ and πνεῦμα.⁶⁹ When σάρξ and πνεῦμα stand together in Paul, they are often theological pairs denoting different human orientations toward God.⁷⁰ However, in Col 2.5 Paul provides a σάρξ–πνεῦμα contrast that has anthropological emphasis. It is perhaps also significant to note that Paul uses σάρξ to refer to human and animal physical bodies in passages such as 1 Cor 15.39 and 1 Cor 15.50. Finally, in 1 Cor 2.11 Paul speaks of the human πνεῦμα.⁷¹

It seems, therefore, plausible that Paul has Job in mind when he formulates 1 Cor 5.5. If there are divergences in vocabulary, and if these divergences seem to stand in tension with Paul's general anthropology,⁷² it is the result of Paul's desire to conform the basic form of his OT text with his own preferred terminology, while still retaining an echo of his source. And if Paul has the book of Job in mind, the point of contact is not between the sexually immoral man and Job;⁷³ rather, the points of contact lie in the role Satan plays in both 1 Corinthians 5 and Job, and the role God plays in Job, which is assumed by Paul and the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians. It should come as no surprise to the attentive listener that Paul (together with the church) assumes the role God plays in Job, for in the segue into this pericope (1 Cor 4.21)—which we have argued echoes Ps 89.32–33—Paul has already assumed God's rod of chastisement. Thus, in both Job and 1 Corinthians God, or a representative of God, hands a person over (παράδίδωμι) to Satan for the affliction of his physical flesh.

When we first encounter Satan⁷⁴ in Job, we are given a hint that he may have attempted previously to gain access to Job's life. But this has been unsuccessful,

69 The possibility that Paul goes directly from the Hebrew OT to the Greek in some instances must also be left open.

70 Cf. Rom 8.4–10; Gal 5.17–19; 6.8.

71 See also 2 Cor 7.1; 1 Thess 5.23.

72 What our brief outline of Paul's anthropological terms and 1 Cor 5.5 may suggest is that we may need to exercise some caution in our attempts to reduce each of Paul's anthropological terms to single concepts. For a discussion of Paul's anthropology, see R. Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); G. H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (WUNT 232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010) 38–57.

73 The charge that Paul could not have Job in mind because Job deals with a righteous and blameless man while 1 Cor 5 deals with an immoral man should be taken seriously, though, in our view, this charge should not be permitted to have the last word by virtue of the fact that Paul deems all humans to be under the power of sin (see, e.g., Rom 3.9–18, 20, 21–24). Thus, it seems plausible to posit that Paul would not have put Job in any special category. I am grateful to John Barclay for this insight.

74 It is indeed the case that a distinction needs to be made between the *satan*, a (benign?) member of the heavenly court in the OT (cf. Job 1–2; Zech 3.1–5), and Satan, an evil arch-enemy of God and the elect in later Jewish and Christian literature. But since this modern

since, in his words, '[God has] put a fence, on every side, around [Job] and his house and all that he has' (Job 1.10). For Satan to get to Job, God must remove this protective hedge, though God still places limits on Satan's power. God gives Satan permission to afflict Job's flesh and bones, but Satan can go no further.

In 1 Cor 5 also the sexually immoral man is enjoying a protective hedge by being a member of the body of Christ. Paul's own argument presupposes this: he orders the man to be handed over to Satan and in an equivalent command also orders that the sexually immoral person be put out of their fellowship (5.13). In other words, the only way that Satan can have access to this man is if the protective hedge the man is enjoying is removed.⁷⁵ Christ has rescued believers from the present evil age (Gal 1.4), but those who are outside the body of Christ are ruled by the god of this age (cf. 2 Cor 4.4; Gal 1.4).⁷⁶ Participation in the body of Christ ensures some protection from the evil powers of this age.

This insight finds further confirmation in Paul's allusion to the Passover in 1 Cor 5.8: 'Cleanse out the old yeast that you may be a new batch of dough—just as you really are unleavened; for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed'. Paul introduces the Passover as the occasion to purge all leaven, a symbol of all that is unclean and pollutes. This image provides an explanation for Paul's call for the immoral man's expulsion.

Yet our discussion of the limits of Satan's power recalls another important aspect of the Passover. The Passover was instituted to commemorate the passing over of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when the angel of death came to strike down the firstborn of the Egyptians (Exod 12.26–27). All the Israelites who marked their doors with the blood of the lamb were protected from the angel of death. The reverse is also true: those Israelites who did not distinguish themselves with the mark of blood would have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians. Inherent in the Passover celebration, then, is the conviction that members of the community of the elect do enjoy God's protection from the destructive powers of evil. The blood of the lamb marked the Israelites out as a community under God's protection.⁷⁷ In the same way, believers, having been bought with a price—the precious blood of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1.30; 6.20; 7.23; 1 Pet 1.18–19; Rev 5.9)—are under God's protection from the power of Satan.

distinction was insignificant to Paul, we have kept Satan in our treatment of the figure in Job. We have also argued elsewhere that the *satan* in Job is not as benign as this modern distinction often supposes; see our article, "'The *satan*" in Light of the Creation Theology of Job', *HBT* 34 (2012) 19–34.

75 Cf. Theodoret of Cyrus *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 193 (Migne PG 82:262): 'We are taught by this that the devil invades those who are separated from the body of the church because he finds them deprived of grace'; translation in ACCS 7.47.

76 Cf. 1 John 5.19; Eph 2.1–2.

77 Hays, *First Corinthians*, 83.

Thus, this immoral member will need to be thrust out of the body of Christ before Satan can have full access to his flesh.

It is important for us to qualify the protection believers enjoy from the powers of evil, since the protection is not absolute. This point not only picks up an important theme that runs through Paul's letters—that the total destruction of the powers belongs to the end (cf. 1 Cor 15.24–25; Rom 8.22–23)—but it also helps to make sense of the urgency with which Paul treats this case. The powers are actively operating in the world; and if their devices are not quickly unmasked, they can gain entry into the church. While members of the body of Christ may enjoy some protection from the powers, believers have to be vigilant in this ongoing struggle with the powers, for the powers are continually working to gain entry into the body of Christ.⁷⁸ Here 2 Cor 2.5–11 provides a very instructive parallel to our pericope, not only because it reflects the remedial purpose behind the church's discipline of offenders but also because Satan emerges as a factor in the church's handling of the offender.

In 2 Cor 2.1–11, Paul recalls a painful visit made to Corinth that occasioned a painful letter (2 Cor 2.3–4). A member of the Corinthian church has committed a grave offense. The identity of the offender and the nature of the offense are matters of speculation.⁷⁹ What can be said with certainty is that Paul made calls for the punishment of this offender, which the Corinthian church eventually heeded (2 Cor 2.6). In 2 Cor 2.1–11, Paul appeals for forgiveness of, and reconciliation with, the one who caused both him and the church much grief. It is within this other context of church discipline that Paul again introduces Satan, just as he had done previously in 1 Cor 5: 'But if you have forgiven anyone, I also have. And what I have forgiven—if I have forgiven anything—I have done so in the presence of Christ (ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ) for your sake, in order that Satan might not take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his schemes' (2.10–11). The key to understanding Satan's role in this passage may lie in the phrase ἐν προσώπῳ Χριστοῦ. While this phrase could mean 'in the person of Christ', or 'as representative of Christ' (REB; NEB),⁸⁰ the reference to Satan suggests that a Semitism from the Hebrew לפני, 'in the presence of Christ', is preferable. The phrase echoes the tradition of Satan as the Accuser of the elect before God, which we have already encountered in Job (cf. Job 1.6–9; Zech 3.1–2). This OT tradition is developed further in Second Temple Jewish literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls, where Mastema (מַשְׁטֵמָה)—likely a variation of שָׂטָן⁸¹—and his cohorts accuse humanity

78 Cf. Eph 6.10–13; 1 Pet 5.8.

79 There is a long tradition of identifying the offender in 2 Cor 2 with the incestuous man of 1 Cor 5, though this is unlikely. For a discussion of the various positions, see V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (AB 32A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984) 160–8.

80 See BDAG, 'πρόσωπον', 887–8.

81 Cf. *Jub.* 10.7–9, where Mastema is explicitly identified as Satan. See J. W. van Henten, 'Mastemah מַשְׁטֵמָה', *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 553–4.

before God.⁸² Paul echoes this tradition in the letter to the Romans: ‘Who will bring accusations against God’s elect? God does the acquitting; who is to render a verdict of guilt?’ (Rom 8.33–34).⁸³ It is probable that this is the tradition Paul has in mind in 2 Cor 2.10–11 when he connects Satan with forgiveness ‘in the presence of Christ’.

According to this tradition, Satan is able to bring accusation before God against the elect upon discovery of some perceived transgression on the part of the elect. In Second Temple Jewish literature, Satan is often barred by angels from bringing accusations.⁸⁴ However, in Paul’s own appropriation of this tradition, it is Christ Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, who intercedes for believers against the one who might bring accusations (Rom 8.33–34). Thus, in 2 Cor 2.10, when Paul forgives in the presence of Christ, he is in essence calling on the believer’s intercessor as a witness⁸⁵ to his actions, and thus arms Christ—the defense attorney, to use a modern analogy—with evidence to counter Satan’s charges.⁸⁶

Within the worldview described here, how believers live their lives matters, for Satan uses perceived transgressions of believers as an opportunity to gain access beyond the limits God has set for him. This is precisely Satan’s scheme; and Paul is not ignorant of this scheme against the Corinthian body. If the Corinthians do not forgive and become reconciled with the repentant brother, Satan will exploit the situation.⁸⁷ Satan seeks to ‘take advantage of’ (πλεονεκτηθῶμεν,⁸⁸ 2 Cor 2.11) the church. In the OG of Hab 2.9 and Ezek 22.27 the verb πλεονεκτέω translates the Hebrew נצב, which denotes an ‘unlawful gain’.⁸⁹ Paul declares that Satan will attempt to use the unmerciful stance of the church as a means to claim more than his due with the church and afflict the Corinthian body.⁹⁰ This insight suggests that if the church demonstrates an unmerciful stance in their dealing with the incestuous man—i.e., deal with him in a way that leaves no room for repentance and reconciliation—then Satan will attempt to take more than his due with the community.

The above discussion may also provide us with a reason for why Paul wants the Corinthians to expel the incestuous man from their midst: Satan will seek to

82 See *Jub.* 17.16; 48.15–18; *1 En.* 40.9. Cf. CD 16.3–6; 4Q225 2.2.13.

83 Cf. *1 En.* 41.9.

84 See, for example, *Jub.* 48.15–19; *1 En.* 40.9.

85 So also C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York: Harper & Row, 1973) 93.

86 Cf. 2 Cor 1.23, where Paul calls on God as a witness.

87 Margaret Thrall, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (2 vols.; ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1994) 1.181.

88 G. Delling, ‘πλεονέκτης’, *TDNT* 6.267–74.

89 See BDB, ‘נצב’.

90 In the words of the author of Ephesians, ‘Do not give the Devil a foothold’ (Eph 4.27).

gain access into the community if this transgression is not purged. While the body of Christ may be providing a protective hedge around this immoral person, it is also the very presence of this immorality within the body that, if unchecked, would eventually give Satan access to the body. The church, therefore, ought to be mourning⁹¹ this man's deeds, rather than boasting of their newly discovered wisdom (5.2). The immoral man needs to be thrown out of the body (5.13). Paul is not as concerned with the evildoers outside the body of Christ, since Satan already has access to these people: those outside the believing community are governed by the wisdom of this age and ruled by the god of this age (2 Cor 4.4). It is the body of Christ that Satan wants access to; and as long as there are unrepentant transgressors—who also give theological justification to their deplorable deeds—within the body, Satan will find his way into the body. That is why immorality within the body needs to be unmasked quickly and expelled, for it will damage not only the immoral person but also the body of Christ: Satan must be prohibited from gaining access into the body of Christ by means of the corrupting influence of an unrepentant immoral member. In short, in order to prevent Satan from taking more than his due with the body of Christ, the believing community has a responsibility to purge corrosive sins from its midst and to do so graciously, leaving room for repentance and reconciliation.

Nonetheless, as noted previously, Paul is not demanding mere excommunication in 1 Cor 5. A letter of expulsion would not achieve the result Paul desires. Neither would a delegation sent to inform the man that he could not return to the church achieve this result. Paul's claim that the kingdom of God is not a matter of speech (4.20) rules out these possibilities. The kingdom of God is a matter of power (4.20); that is why the 'power of our Lord Jesus' (5.4) must be present in order for the Corinthian community to be able to carry out this practice. The community's action is a spiritual practice that results in spiritual exclusion, one that places a person spiritually outside the body of Christ. A comparison with Paul's own physical absence is apt. While Paul is physically absent from Corinth, he will actually be present at Corinth in spirit (5.3) when this practice is carried out.⁹² In contrast, when this spiritual practice is effectively carried

91 B. Rosner's argument that Paul urges the Corinthian community to mourn because God holds the whole community responsible for the sin of the incestuous man is not entirely convincing; see Rosner, "'ΟΥΧΙ ΜΑΛΛΟΝ ΕΠΙΕΝΘΗΣΑΤΕ": Corporate Responsibility in 1 Corinthians 5', *NTS* 38 (1992) 470–3. Paul thinks the Corinthians are implicated in their indifference to the incestuous man's presence in the community. But this is a far cry from imputing corporate guilt to the community.

92 Contra Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 124 ('[Paul] will make his contribution, as the Corinthians reflect on what they remember of his convictions, character, and ways, and on what they know of his mind in the present matter') and G. A. Cole, '1 Cor 5:4 "...with my spirit"', *ExpTim* 98 (1987) 205 ('Paul's presence at Corinth in 1 Cor 5.4 could have taken the form of an authoritative verbal one, located in his written judgment') this is more than

out, even if this incestuous man may make his way to the gathering of the church on occasion, as long as he remains unrepentant, he is spiritually excluded from the body. Unlike what Paul has to say about his actual presence in 5.3, then, should this man remain unrepentant after the community's action, even if he should find himself physically present with the church, he will be absent in the spirit. Yet for the sake of protecting the body from Satan's schemes, and in order to prevent this man's influence from spreading like yeast, this practice must also include physical expulsion from the church. All this is difficult for the modern mind to grasp; but we need to remember that Paul was not writing for twenty-first-century rationalists.

As discussed earlier, a number of scholars understand the phrase 'hand over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh' to mean death.⁹³ But 2 Cor 2.5–11, as a parallel incident of the church's dealing with a wayward member, shows that Paul is not calling for the incestuous man's death.⁹⁴ The allusions to Ps 89.32–33 and Job 2 also establish Paul's demand as a call for some sort of physical suffering, in hopes that the man will repent and return to the church. God still holds out his love and steadfastness to the covenant amidst punishment in Ps 89.32–33; and Job's suffering results in a change in Job: Job's suffering leads to penitence and Job acquires a new vision of the cosmos (cf. Job 42.6).⁹⁵ This interpretation

mere psychological and epistolary presence. What Paul means here may be difficult for us to grasp, but Paul believed he would be present when the church gathered to carry out the sentence. Thus, the phrase ὡς παρών (5.3) should not be translated as 'as if/though present' (NIV; RSV; NRSV; NASB; etc.); there is almost nothing in favor of this translation. Paul has already judged the man as one who is actually present; so, correctly, G. G. Findlay, 'St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians', *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (ed. W. R. Nicoll; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1961 [1900]) 808.

93 The major challenge this camp may raise against the argument presented here has to do with Paul's use of the word ὄλεθρος, for the word often carries the strong meaning of death or annihilation. In 2 Thess 1.9, however, Paul contrasts ὄλεθρος αἰώνιος—which he describes as exclusion from the glorious presence of God—with eternal life. ὄλεθρος in this (eschatological) context cannot mean death or annihilation (see Malherbe, *Letters to the Thessalonians*, 402), but rather an eternal life of affliction that is the opposite of an eternal life of glory. Paul is, therefore, capable of using the same term to describe the physical affliction that will come upon an offender as a result of his being excluded from the body of Christ. Paul's hope is that the affliction suffered will save the man from ὄλεθρος αἰώνιος. Ultimately, as we hope to have shown, the cumulative evidence of Job 2.4–6, 1 Tim 1.20, 2 Cor 2.5–11, and Ps 89.32–33 point in the direction of physical suffering leading to repentance.

94 Cf. Gal 6.1; 2 Thess 3.14–15.

95 The NRSV translates Job 42.6 as 'Therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes'. We have argued elsewhere that a better translation, in light of the logic of the book of Job, might be: 'Therefore I recant and adopt a different opinion concerning dust and ashes'; see "'The satan' in Light of the Creation Theology of Job', 19–34. Both translations, nonetheless, capture the transformation in Job, which is the result of his suffering and encounter with God.

receives further support from 1 Tim 1.20, where Hymenaeus and Alexander are ‘handed over to Satan’ in hopes of achieving a change in their character. Handing over to Satan, therefore, also has a remedial purpose for the author of 1 Timothy. Our own analysis of 1 Cor 5 confirms the author of 1 Timothy’s interpretation of this sentence in Paul. Paul’s hope is that the incestuous man’s physical affliction will result in a change in him and an eventual return to the community of believers.⁹⁶

Was this severe discipline by Paul and the Corinthian church successful, and did the incestuous man repent of his deeds? We have no way of verifying what was the outcome of the church’s discipline on the incestuous man. But if this discipline achieved its intended purpose, we can easily imagine Paul penning these words to the man:

But even if I caused you sorrow by my censure, I do not regret it. Even if I did regret it—for I see that my censure hurt you, if only for a little while—now I rejoice, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. *Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation* (2 Cor 7.8–10; adapted).⁹⁷

96 Cf. Konradt, *Gericht und Gemeinde*, 320–1. Konradt argues for a similar position: that the physical afflictions suffered at the hands of Satan would eventually bring about a change in the incestuous man. Thus, his dismissal of Job in his treatment of this passage (317) is quite unfortunate. We hope to have shown that if one is to arrive at an interpretation of 1 Cor 5.5 that sees Satan’s physical afflictions leading to transformation in the incestuous man, then the strong echoes of Job and 1 Tim 1.20 will need to be taken very seriously and developed. We may also note in passing that the interpretation presented here finds an instructive parallel in the rabbinic concept of atonement by suffering, especially in the rabbinic teaching that affliction leads a person to examine his/her ways, which in turn engenders repentance and an earnest seeking after God (see, e.g., R. Akiba’s reflection on Manasseh in *Mek. Bahodesh* 10).

97 Cf. 2 Tim 2.25–26.