

## Erastus of Corinth (Romans 16.23): Responding to Recent Proposals on his Rank, Status, and Faith

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Studies on Erastus, the Corinthian *oikonomos* (Rom 16.23), continue to dispute the fundamental make up of his identity, including his administrative rank, socio-economic standing, even his status as a believer. Ultimately seeking to defend the view that Erastus was a Christian who served as a Corinthian municipal quaestor, this article responds separately to two recent essays, replying initially to Weiss' charge that Corinth did not have the municipal quaestorship, then critiquing Friesen's claim that Erastus was an unbelieving public slave.

**Keywords:** Erastus, Romans 16, Corinth, Roman colonies, social status

The administrative rank and corresponding socio-economic status of Erastus, the *oikonomos* of Corinth (ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως, Rom 16.23), continue to produce more scholarly reflection than one might expect of an individual mentioned only once in Paul's undisputed letters. Even in the past year, three new essays appeared (including one of my own) that have sustained the perennial debate about Erastus, each positing independent, yet somewhat controversial claims inviting critical interaction. Since my essay has already received a response, this piece comprises my engagement with, or (in the case of my respondent) my rejoinder to, those other two essays, each in turn. While I make no attempt to solve definitively any of the central quandaries of the debate (i.e. rank and status), it is my intention to identify a number of problematic assertions and thus to clarify some areas of confusion.

### 1. Alexander Weiss

In January of last year, my initial contribution on Erastus appeared in this journal.<sup>1</sup> In that piece I utilized a number of Greek inscriptions to build a case for

<sup>1</sup> John K. Goodrich, 'Erastus, *Quaestor* of Corinth: The Administrative Rank of ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως (Rom 16.23) in an Achaean Colony', *NTS* 56 (2010) 90–115.

interpreting Erastus' rank as that of a municipal quaestor (treasury magistrate), a thesis first defended by Gerd Theissen in 1974 and adopted by a host of other NT scholars over the past three and a half decades.<sup>2</sup> The centerpiece of my argument focused on a new inscription featuring a certain Neikostratus (*SEG* 45.418), a prominent politician in the Achaean colony of Patras who held the office of *oikonomos* in that city. Based on the offices Neikostratus had held earlier in his career, I deduced that his tenure as *oikonomos* was equivalent to that of a municipal quaestor.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since Patras as a colony possessed the same municipal rank as Corinth and was located in close proximity to it, I proposed that the inscription serves as a valuable comparative text in the quest for deciphering Erastus' rank and status. I then presented four quaestor inscriptions from Corinth suggesting they might show that the colony in fact recognized this municipal office.<sup>4</sup>

Last October, however, Alexander Weiss authored a 'short study' in this journal in which he responded critically to two points of my earlier article.<sup>5</sup> Although he initially affirmed my proposal for the equivalence of οἰκονόμος and *quaestor* in Patras, Weiss argued that Erastus himself could not have held the municipal quaestorship in Corinth because Caesarian colonies did not appoint individuals to that office: 'Welches Amt auch immer Erastos in Korinth bekleidet hat—die Quästur kann es jedenfalls nicht gewesen sein, denn diese existierte nicht als städtisches Amt in der *colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*'.<sup>6</sup> Corinth, re-founded by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, would have probably been granted the same constitution as the colony of Urso in Spain (also colonized in 44 BCE), which prescribed the offices of aedile and duovir, but not quaestor. Weiss then contended that the Corinthian inscriptions I identified as possibly referring to municipal quaestors in fact do not refer to that office at all. Weiss argued instead that those inscriptions refer to a senatorial position on the staff of the provincial governor based in Corinth.<sup>7</sup> Weiss therefore concluded that Erastus must have held another position in the Corinthian municipal administration, but did not suggest an alternative.<sup>8</sup>

2 Gerd Theissen, 'Soziale Schichtung in der Korinthische Gemeinde: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des hellenistischen Urchristentums', *ZNW* 65 (1974) 232–72, at 238–46; cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983) 59.

3 Goodrich, 'Erastus', 108–12.

4 Goodrich, 'Erastus', 112.

5 Alexander Weiss, 'Keine Quästoren in Korinth: Zu Goodrichs (und Theißens) These über das Amt des Erastos (Röm 16.23)', *NTS* 56 (2010) 576–81.

6 Weiss, 'Keine Quästoren', 581.

7 Weiss, 'Keine Quästoren', 579.

8 Elsewhere Weiss considers Erastus to be an aedile (*Sklave der Stadt: Untersuchungen zur öffentlichen Sklaverei in den Städten des Römischen Reiches* [Historia Einzelschrift 173; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004] 51–2).

Admittedly, both of Weiss' insights are valid. His criticism of my use of the Corinthian quaestor inscriptions is especially sound. My analysis of those texts lacked the critical engagement they required and I am grateful to Weiss for offering this much-needed corrective. Moreover, his assertion about the omission of quaestors from the Urso charter is also accurate. While quaestors eventually appear in the Flavian *municipium* charters, they are absent in the extant copy of the *Lex Ursonensis*. But, even after acknowledging the validity of these insights, I am not as certain as Weiss that it was impossible for Corinth to have appointed municipal quaestors. I acknowledge that quaestors are generally rare in the settlements founded under Caesar,<sup>9</sup> but several municipal quaestors have been attested in Caesarian and other pre-Augustan colonies that must be taken into consideration.

Leonard Curchin, for instance, has shown that, while Urso did not appoint quaestors, this office is attested in some of Caesar's other Spanish colonies.<sup>10</sup> The bulk of examples identified by Curchin are from Tarraco. Originally the principal city of the Cessetani tribe, Tarraco 'was captured and turned into a Roman town by the Scipios, and later became a Julian colony' in 44 BCE (the same year that Urso and Corinth were founded), eventually becoming under Augustus the capital of the largest Roman province in Europe.<sup>11</sup> Curchin identifies in Tarraco no less than 14 municipal quaestor inscriptions erected for 12 different

- 9 This is affirmed by Edward Bispham, *From Asculum to Actium: The Municipalization of Italy from the Social War to Augustus* (Oxford Classical Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University, 2008) 332: 'Quaestors are commonly found in Latin colonies, and also under the Principate, but very rarely if at all in the *municipia* of the period between the Social War and the Triumvirate; the same is by and large true of Roman colonies'.
- 10 Leonard A. Curchin, *The Local Magistrates of Roman Spain* (Phoenix Supplementary 28; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990) 29–30. See also Leonard A. Curchin, *Roman Spain: Conquest and Assimilation* (London: Routledge, 1991) 67: 'Although quaestors are provided for in the Flavian municipal law and also occur in substantial numbers at colonies like Tarraco and Valentia [a Latin colony], there are many other cities where no quaestors are attested at all. This may mean either that some cities did not have this type of magistrate, or that for some reason (such as the lowness of the office compared with the other magistracies, or the unpopular role of the quaestor as tax collector) mention of a quaestorship was frequently omitted from inscriptions outlining the careers of local aristocrats'.
- 11 Curchin, *Roman Spain*, 112. See also Géza Alföldy, 'Wann wurde Tarraco romische Kolonie?', *Epigraphai: miscellanea epigrafica in onore di Lidio Gasperini* (ed. Gianfranco Paci; Tivoli: Tipigraf, 2000) 3–22, at 22: 'Wir gehen kaum fehl in der Annahme, daß die *colonia Iulia Urbs Triumphalis Tarraco* im Herbst 45 oder Anfang 44 v. Chr. konstituiert wurde. Sonst wäre nach dem Beispiel der Kolonie-gründung in Urso noch am ehesten denkbar, daß dieser Akt einem Vorhaben Caesars folgend erst nach seiner Ermordung am 15. März 44 v. Chr., aber noch in demselben Jahr, vollzogen wurde'. Cf. Edward T. Salmon, *Roman Colonization under the Republic* (Aspects of Greek and Roman Life; London: Thames & Hudson, 1969) 164, who dates Tarraco's colonization to 45 BCE.

individuals.<sup>12</sup> Curchin also identifies a quaestor inscription found between Emerita and Norba, the former being an Augustan colony, but the latter being founded under Caesar.<sup>13</sup> In Italy, Edward Bispham explains that Venusia, a Latin colony re-founded as a Roman colony under the Triumvirate (ca. 43 BCE; Appian *Bell. civ.* 4.3), elected municipal quaestors by 34 BCE (*CIL* 13, 254–255).<sup>14</sup> Bispham further notes that the Roman colony of Grumentum, though founded in the early first century BCE under Sulla, elected a municipal quaestor as late as 57 BCE (*CIL* 10.219).<sup>15</sup>

Because these colonies appointed quaestors, we must conclude either that the constitutions of these settlements diverged from the Urso charter—this would be especially surprising of Tarraco considering it was founded the same year as Urso—or that these cities recognized offices that were not expressly prescribed in their constitutions.<sup>16</sup> I concede that quaestors are still absent from the majority of Caesar's colonies, and as Weiss has demonstrated, there exist no (extant) inscriptions attesting to municipal quaestors from Corinth. Nevertheless, as the foregoing survey has attempted to show, we cannot conclude that it was impossible for Corinth to have had quaestors simply because they are omitted from the Urso charter. In my view, then, the municipal quaestorship remains a viable interpretation of Erastus' position.

12 Curchin, *Local Magistrates*, 224–7 (##890–4, 896, 897, 899, 903, 907, 909, 910). In Tarraco the municipal quaestorship is indicated by three designations: *qua[est]or = RIT* 278; *quaest. = RIT* 157, 356; *q. = RIT* 164–8, 171, 272, 312, 349, 918, 922 (*RIT* = Géza Alföldy, *Die römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* [2 vols.; Madrider Forschungen 10; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975]). Curiously, each of these quaestor inscriptions dates to no earlier than 70 CE. But this should pose no problem for the purpose of comparison, since Erastus himself also served in the second-half of the first century. Moreover, since the Urso charter is a copy dating to the Flavian period, we can be confident that the Flavian Municipal Law did not impact colonies and is therefore not responsible for Tarraco's new quaestors. The point to be made here is that colonies themselves had the autonomy to elect individuals to offices not previously prescribed in their constitution.

13 Curchin, *Local Magistrates*, 178 (#393). For the date of the colonization of both cities, see Salmon, *Roman Colonization*, 164.

14 Bispham, *Asculum*, 367 n. 174; cf. 142. For the date of Venusia's receipt of colonial status, see Salmon, *Roman Colonization*, 164; Josiah Osgood, *Caesar's Legacy: Civil War and the Emergence of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006) 108.

15 Bispham, *Asculum*, 332 n. 287. A. N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2nd ed. 1973) 90, references this inscription and states, '[T]he burgeoning of the lower magistrates in the colonies cannot be confined to the post-Caesarean epoch'.

16 Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 1.89–90: 'The evidence from Antioch and elsewhere shows that [eastern colonies] were not immune to local influences since inscriptions frequently mention Greek magistracies in the colonies, including gymnasiarchs, *grammateis*, *agonothetai*, and *agoranomoi*. Colonial charters could readily be modified as circumstances changed'.

## 2. Steven Friesen

The third publication on Erastus appearing last year was authored by Steven Friesen, whose essay reasserts his previously advanced position—here with supplementary theses—that Erastus was probably a public slave in Corinth and therefore did not belong to the economic elite.<sup>17</sup> Friesen's argumentation can be divided into three sections, the first being his strongest and perhaps most important contribution to the Erastus debate. Here Friesen reevaluates the date of the infamous Corinthian inscription mentioning Erastus the aedile (*IKorinthKent* 232) and clearly demonstrates the circular reasoning employed by the text's original editors, who dated the slab—along with the plaza to which it may have originally belonged—to the mid-first century CE.<sup>18</sup> Friesen then reconfigures the date of that plaza to the second century CE, effectively differentiating between Erastus the aedile and Erastus the *oikonomos*.

Having distinguished between the two Erasti, Friesen secondly argues that the Greek term οἰκονόμος corresponded to two Latin correlatives, *dispensator* and *arcarius*, both a kind of public or imperial slave: 'An *oikonomos* would have been a low to mid level functionary in the city's financial administration, not a Roman citizen, and probably a slave'.<sup>19</sup> Here Friesen excludes the possibility that οἰκονόμος could be translated either *quaestor* or *aedilis*, since he knows of no data to support a correlation with the former term,<sup>20</sup> and in the first section of the essay he ruled out the principal evidence (the Erastus inscription) in support of a correlation with the latter.<sup>21</sup> Finally, based on the observation that Paul in Romans 16 failed to give Erastus a Christian attribution, which the apostle included for nearly every other individual in the chapter, Friesen argues that 'Erastus the *oikonomos* was someone who was not a believer but who had positive, ongoing contact with Paul and his assemblies'.<sup>22</sup>

Friesen's insights pose a considerable challenge to those of us on the 'other side' of the Erastus debate. His concerns about the methods employed in the original dating of the aedile inscription and the entire plaza pavement are certainly valid. Furthermore, his reevaluation of the date of the aedile inscription is hugely significant considering how long the original date has held sway. There

17 Steven J. Friesen, 'The Wrong Erastus', *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* (ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters; NovTSup 134; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 231–56.

18 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 238: '[T]he identification of the two Erastus references (the inscription and Rom 16.23) proved that the plaza came from the 1st century, and the 1st century date of the plaza proved the identification of the two Erastus references'.

19 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 245.

20 Although it appeared in print shortly after mine, Friesen's essay was originally a conference paper read in January 2007; he thus had no opportunity to consult my work.

21 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 245 nn. 42–3.

22 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 251.

remain, however, several omissions and oversights in Friesen's argumentation which need to be addressed.

First, it is not altogether clear in his documentation how Friesen can be so confident about the date of the aedile inscription and its original association with the plaza. He maintains that both the pavement slabs and the inscription are composed of the same porcellanite material, but he also concedes that the inscription could have belonged to another, albeit unidentified, paving project.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Friesen provides minimal explanation for how he has been able to re-date the plaza pavement itself. Friesen's conclusions are heavily reliant on the opinion of Charles Williams, who suggests that the apsidal latrine over which the plaza was laid was used until the Hadrianic period.<sup>24</sup> As the former director of the excavations at Corinth, Williams' estimation is definitely to be respected. But how both Friesen and Williams can be certain about this date receives no explanation in the essay. After all, how does one determine how long a latrine was used? Furthermore, Friesen concedes that Latin pavement inscriptions as a genre date largely to the early imperial period.<sup>25</sup> To be sure, I am in no position to cast great doubt on these proposals, and Friesen certainly adds some support by observing that most public places in Corinth were not paved until after the late first century CE. But it seems that each of the most important pieces of Friesen's argument leaves the reader desiring additional information. (Through personal correspondence Dr Friesen has indicated to me that Williams is currently preparing something on this material for publication, which should lend support to Friesen's thesis.)

Secondly, Friesen's definitive claim regarding the humble rank and status of municipal *oikonomoi* ignores the evidence in support of the title's use for high-ranking magistrates (*CIG* 2811; *I AphrodMcCabe* 275; *SEG* 26.1044; *TAM* 5.743; *ISmyrna* 24.761; 24.771; 24.772; *IStratonikeia* 22.1).<sup>26</sup> In fact, his explicit dismissal of *quaestor* as a possible translation for οἰκονόμος must be reconsidered in light of the Neikostratus inscription mentioned above (*SEG* 45.418). Thus, while Friesen maintains that it is purely a fascination with upward mobility which has led scholars toward the 'wrong/wealthy Erastus', in actuality there exist numerous texts which point us in this very direction.

Thirdly, Friesen's theory that Erastus was an unbeliever not only rests on silence, but attempts to exploit an alleged Pauline anomaly that is far less

23 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 242.

24 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 242; cf. 237 n. 24.

25 Friesen shows that of the 19 known Latin pavement inscriptions, 18 are datable, 17 of which date well before Hadrian: 11 from the Augustan period, 3 from either the Augustan or Tiberian periods, and 3 before the late 70s CE; 1 inscription dates from the early third century CE ('Wrong Erastus', 242-3).

26 Goodrich, 'Erastus', 94-5. Precisely what magistracies these *oikonomoi* inscriptions refer to is not entirely clear, but these individuals were probably not public or imperial slaves.

exceptional than he supposes. Friesen's argument is based, in the first place, on the observation that Paul refers to Quartus by a *Christian* designation (ἄδελφός), but to Erastus only by an *administrative* title (οἰκονόμος). As Friesen remarks, '[T]he omission of the term "brother" in reference to Erastus must be deliberate. This is confirmed when the reference to Erastus is compared to the rest of the chapter. In fact, Erastus is one of three persons mentioned in Romans 16 who are not described as believers'.<sup>27</sup> According to Friesen, the other two individuals are Aristoboulus and Narcissus (Rom 16.10–11), whom Friesen believes 'appear only because some people in their household were believers while they were not'.<sup>28</sup> But Friesen's argument is simply a case of denying the antecedent; there is no actual data here to support his claim about Erastus, only the assumption that Paul must provide an explicitly Christian attribution if a named individual is to be considered a believer.<sup>29</sup> Admittedly, Aristoboulus and Narcissus may not have been believers. But this is indicated largely through their plausible identification with prominent first-century unbelievers.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, if Erastus was not a believer, it is not at all clear why he greeted the church in Rome. Friesen maintains that Erastus was already known by the letter's recipients, but their acquaintance would be far more plausible if in fact he were a believer.<sup>31</sup>

Beyond this, at least two of the terms Friesen believes to express 'spiritual affinity' in Romans 16 almost certainly do not carry such significance in this passage. Paul's designation of Andronicus, Junia, Herodion, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater as οἱ συγγενεῖς μου (Rom 16.7, 11, 21) is not an indication of fictive, Christian kinship ('relative/compatriot') as Friesen supposes,<sup>32</sup> but of shared Jewish ancestry, just as συγγενής signifies in its only other Pauline occurrence at Rom 9.3, where it is applied to Jewish *unbelievers*—who incidentally are also referred to as ἀδελφοί.<sup>33</sup> While the believing status of Andronicus and Junia remains

27 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 250.

28 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 250.

29 The fallacious syllogism would thus go: *If Paul grants somebody a Christian attribution, then s/he is a believer. Paul does not grant Erastus a Christian attribution. Therefore, Erastus is not a believer.*

30 James Dunn suggests that Aristoboulus could have been the grandson of Herod the Great, perhaps the namesake of Herodion in Rom 16.11, and Narcissus a former freedman aid of Claudius (*Romans* [WBC 38; Dallas: Word, 1988] 896). The unbelieving status of Aristoboulus and Narcissus is also suggested by Paul's failure to greet them, which I grant is not positive data. But, on the other hand, there does not appear to be any reason to assume these men were believers, since Paul's mention of them is only in reference to others, whereas his reference to Erastus is self-standing.

31 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 250 n. 56.

32 Friesen, 'Wrong Erastus', 251.

33 The ethnic sense of συγγενής is a virtual consensus in NT scholarship. See, e.g., Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress,



secure, Paul provides no additional attribution for the other four individuals. Does this imply that they were unbelievers? If so, the inclusion of all four would be quite surprising. Add to these exceptions the reference to the 'mother' of Rufus and Paul (τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐμοῦ, v. 13). Again, in this instance μήτηρ does not imply Christian status,<sup>34</sup> but the woman's biological relationship to Rufus and her hospitality towards Paul.<sup>35</sup> Naturally, we are to assume that the woman's demonstration of hospitality was occasioned by her participation in the church, but Paul does not tell us as much. Thus, we are left with an additional five persons mentioned in Romans 16 to whom Paul does not explicitly afford Christian status, but whom we should confidently presume to be believers, since this is in keeping with the general tenor of the passage and there exists no actual evidence to the contrary.

What then are we to make of the faith status of Erastus? We cannot know definitively why Paul did not include a Christian attribution for Erastus. But it seems likely that Paul's Christian readers would have assumed everyone offering greetings from across the Mediterranean and in an overtly theological treatise were themselves Christians. *Such is the apparent status of every other individual sending or receiving greetings in Paul's letters.* As for the reason for including Erastus' office, Robert Jewett's assertion is just as plausible as any: Paul sought to reassure the Roman church that a believing Roman official was supportive of the apostle's politically subversive Spanish mission.<sup>36</sup> Beyond Romans 16, it is at some point also appropriate to consider what later Christian testimony might suggest about Erastus' faith (Acts 19.22; 2 Tim 4.20). To be sure, there is no consensus regarding the trustworthiness of these later Christian attestations or whether the Erasti depicted as believers in Acts and 2 Timothy even refer to the Corinthian *oikonomos*.<sup>37</sup> But the numerous correspondences shared by the

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2003) 161: 'Paul's use of the word in 9.3 occasions its use again in chap. 16'. Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979) 788; Dunn, *Romans*, 894; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 934; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 962.

34 In his undisputed letters Paul never uses μήτηρ to signify Christian kinship (cf. 1 Tim 5.2) even if other kinds of maternal imagery can be used this way (1 Cor 3.2; 1 Thess 2.7).

35 Jewett, *Romans*, 969: 'To refer to Rufus' mother as "mine" indicates that she had provided hospitality and patronage in such a manner that Paul at some point in his career became virtually a member of their family'. Cf. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 183.

36 Jewett, *Romans*, 982–3. Others posit that Paul may have included Erastus' title in order to distinguish between individuals bearing the same name. Cf. Justin J. Meggitt, 'The Social Status of Erastus (Rom. 16.23)', *NovT* 38 (1996) 218–23, at 218–19.

37 Friesen considers 2 Timothy to be a pseudonymous letter containing 'hagiographic, creative fiction', which is therefore unreliable ('Wrong Erastus', 245 n. 41). But even if one or both of the disputed narratives (Acts 19.22 and 2 Tim 4.20) is found to be unreliable in their



three NT Erasti,<sup>38</sup> in addition to the fact that Paul did not attribute faith status to several other believers in Romans 16, should at least cause significant pause before proceeding to the unexpected and unsupported conclusion that Erastus of Corinth was not a believer. Thus, just as with Herodion, Lucius, Jason,

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recounting of history, it does not follow that one or both is based on untrustworthy tradition about the faith commitments of the persons to whom they refer; cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998) 921. Thus, if there is found to be sufficient warrant to identify either or both of the later NT Erasti with the Corinthian *oikonomos*, there is no reason why the traditions they perpetuate regarding his faith status should be considered unreliable. Other commentators dismiss the possibility that Paul's companion(s) in Acts and 2 Timothy is the same individual in Romans, because, after concluding that Erastus the *oikonomos* was a city magistrate, they assume his administrative duties would have prevented him from traveling abroad. But since his term would have lasted only a single year, and it could have either been served earlier in his career (civic honors were often recorded retrospectively) or commenced between the events narrated in Acts 19.22 and 20.3—Paul probably having written Romans from Corinth during his three months in Greece—there is no reason why Luke's Erastus could not have held political office as well as served alongside Paul in Ephesus. In fact, Erastus' freedom to travel would have been far more restricted were he a public slave. Moreover, if Luke's Erastus is not to be identified with the Corinthian *oikonomos*, it is curious that he did not also send greetings to Rome since he was probably in Corinth when Paul wrote the letter, having accompanied Timothy there from Macedonia (Acts 19.21–22; Rom 16.21).

- 38 All three Erasti are linked to Corinth/Achaea, Paul, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila, and perhaps Ephesus; cf. Henry J. Cadbury, 'Erastus of Corinth', *JBL* 50 (1931) 42–58, at 43–6. For these reasons, many NT scholars confidently identify at least one, if not both, of the later Erasti with the Corinthian *oikonomos*. For the identification of all three, see, e.g., William A. McDonald, 'Archaeology and St. Paul's Journeys in Greek Lands: Corinth', *BA* 5 (1942) 36–48, at 46; Oscar Broneer, 'Corinth: Center of St. Paul's Missionary Work in Greece', *BA* 14 (1951) 78–96, 94; P. N. Harrison, *Paulines and Pastorals* (London: Villiers, 1964) 101–2; Anthony Tyrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1966) 104; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987) 164; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 653; I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1999) 829. For the identification of either the Lucan or later-Pauline Erasti with the Corinthian *oikonomos*, see, e.g., Victor P. Furnish, 'Corinth in Paul's Time: What Can Archaeology Tell Us?', *BAR* 14 (1988) 15–27, at 20; Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (ECC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 833; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 35A; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 444, 449; Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) 290.

Sosipater, and Rufus' mother, we should presuppose Erastus' faith in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

### 3. Where from here?

Given the significant collection of literature now available on Erastus in comparison with the minimal biographical data he is afforded in the NT, it is probably surprising to many that there remains anything worthwhile left to say about him. Still, the debate persists, and deservedly so. As Peter Oakes remarks, '[T]he question of whether an early Christian can be securely identified as a member of the civic elite is one that raises sharp questions for various scholars' overall constructions of the nature of early Christian communities within their urban environments'.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in the quest to access the nature of early urban Christianity, the question of Erastus should remain front and center.<sup>40</sup> But after all that has been posited so far about Erastus' rank, status, and faith, where do we go from here?

On the dating of the Erastus inscription, and thus whether Erastus the *oikonomos* is to be distinguished from Erastus the aedile, Friesen's hypothesis looks promising. However, because of the limited data presented in his essay, we must wait to see the published excavation reports of Charles Williams. Beyond the aedile inscription, the Erastus debate might benefit from further analysis of the relevant *oikonomos* inscriptions, since the precise rank of most known, high-ranking *oikonomoi* remains uncertain, and scholars continue to disagree on the interpretation of other parallels (e.g. *IGRR* 4.813).<sup>41</sup> In defense of the quaestor interpretation, since it appears that quaestors were not (normally) included in Caesarian colonial charters, it would be helpful to know whether and how often

39 Peter Oakes, 'Contours of the Urban Environment', *After the First Urban Christians: The Social-Scientific Study of Pauline Christianity Twenty-Five Years Later* (ed. Todd D. Still and David G. Horrell; London: T&T Clark, 2009) 21–35, at 33.

40 It is striking, given the focus of his work, that Bruce Longenecker relegated an initial treatment of Erastus to a single footnote ('Socio-Economic Profiling of the First Urban Christians', *After the First Urban Christians* [ed. Still and Horrell] 36–59, at 47 n. 22). This has been recently lengthened to four (partial) pages, though I do not understand why Longenecker, after disassociating Erastus the *oikonomos* from the Corinthian aedile and acknowledging the wide variety of positions occupied by municipal *oikonomoi*, would resist positioning the Pauline Erastus any lower than the ES4 category ('Economic Profiles within Paul's Communities', *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010] 220–58, at 236–9).

41 The commonly cited *oikonomoi* in *IGRR* 4.813 have been considered aediles (Mason; perhaps Winter and Clarke), free aedile assistants (Landvogt), aedile assistants (Cagnat), public slaves (Friesen), and possibly public slaves (Weiss). See also my forthcoming study on Paul's *oikonomos* metaphor in 1 Corinthians (*Paul as an Administrator of God in 1 Corinthians* [SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University]).

quaestorships and similar administrative offices were purchased in early Roman municipalities as *munera* (cf. *Dig.* 50.4.18.2). Can this be the reason why quaestors unexpectedly surface in Tarraco and elsewhere, yet are omitted from other inscribed *cursūs*? Issues such as these could be fruitfully pursued in the future. Parallels of course have their limitations. But the data in this debate are restricted almost exclusively to such extra-biblical texts. Consequently, whatever the future has in store for the Erastus debate, interpreters must continue to re-engage these disputed materials.