

May the Spirit be Saved! (1 Cor. 5)

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It is well known that one of the consequences of the immoral behavior of a few believers may be their negative influence on a whole congregation. The church in Corinth is one such example. The New Testament contains a number of verses that speak about rooting out sin from among Christians, one of which is 1 Cor 5. But is it acceptable to apply this passage of Scripture to today's church practice in the way it has been used before? To answer this question we need to understand a number of other issues. Whose spirit does the author speak about in 1 Cor 5:5? What goes with the phrase "in the name of our Lord Jesus"? What does it mean to "deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh"? Who or what is meant by "Satan"? How should we understand the words "flesh" and "spirit" in Paul's theology? What was the apostle's purpose, when he recommended that a brother be delivered to Satan? Was it possible for Paul to talk about the salvation of a person's spirit while leaving aside the salvation of his body?

A Corinthian Christian was involved in incest, which was forbidden even by pagan law (1 Cor 5:1). Instead of dealing with the immorality, the Corinthians took just the opposite stand: they became proud and kept boasting, showing their tolerance of what was happening (5:2). How can this reaction be explained? Perhaps the answer lies hidden in the ethical standards of Greco-Roman society.

Formation of Moral Principles in Corinth

Immorality revealed itself everywhere in the Roman Empire: in the behavior of the mythical gods;¹ in the pri-

¹ Concerning drunkenness and incest among Greco-Roman gods, see Ovid, "Nauka liubvi" in *Elegiia i malye poemy* (Moscow: 1973); Menander, *Sami-anka* (2006). In *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius a leading Corinthian woman fell in love with a donkey when she saw it eating and had sexual intercourse with it, similar to the union of the goddess Pasiphae with a sacrificial bull.



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vate life of politicians; in the inventions of the famous philosophers of the day. All of this implanted in the human mind a conception of reality that was peculiar to Corinth.

The heroes of myths were among the moral guides in society. Because of this it is important to note the presence of incestuous ties among the gods. Many examples of this kind might be mentioned, crowned by the incestuous deeds of Zeus, the supreme god, whose wife was his own sister, Hera. An understanding of the role of incest among the gods can help us understand the fornicator's incestuous behavior in 1 Cor 5.

Furthermore, the private life of politicians was not always honorable. Just like the gods, their lives were full of hypocrisy, drunkenness, fornication and incestuous relationships.²

As for the philosophers, they made their negative contribution to the formation of ethical principles in Greco-Roman society along with the idea of high morality. Plato, in discussing the ideal government, showed his tolerance for cohabitation; however, 1 Cor 5 tells us about a member of the Corinthian congregation who was cohabiting with his stepmother.³

Another branch of Greek philosophy was Epicureanism which was directed towards ethical individualism and eudemonism. One of the goals of

the Epicureans was to be set free from religion and the fear of death and to learn to live a blissful life, the beginning and the end of which they considered to be enjoyment. As Metrodor said, "The belly is the place where the mind, agreeing with nature, finds its own real object."⁴

The New Testament mentions that Epicureanism was known in Athens (Acts 17:16-18). This city was close to Corinth. It is no accident that the sayings of the Corinthians such as, "all things are lawful for me" and "food for stomach and the stomach for food" (1 Cor 6:12-14) reveal one of the main branches in Epicure's philosophy.⁵

The moral laws mentioned in the literature of that time also were a reflection of reality and influenced people in different ways. Sophocles warned the reader against breaking the traditional, religious, and civil standards of life.⁶ Menander, who was quoted by Paul, says the same thing: "Evil company corrupts good character" (1 Cor 15:33). Plautus, in turn, showed the value system of the middle and lower classes of Roman society. The poet Ovid characterized his age from the negative point of view. He portrayed the immoral life of Rome with its love intrigues and moral corruption. The poem "The Science of Love" by Ovid is a book of advice on how to correctly seduce a woman.⁷

² For details see V. A. Ivliev, *Vlast' i strast'* (Taganrog: TRTU, 2001), 127; Iu. Lubchenkov, *Liubov' i vlast'*, vol. 1, *Istoricheskie miniatiury* (Polina, 1991), 107.

³ See A. V. Petrov, *Kul'turologicheskie issledovaniia iz istorii drevnego mira i srednikh vekov: Problemy zhenstvennosti* (St. Petersburg: Publikatsii Tsentra antikovedeniia SPGU, 1999), 95-112; F. F. Zelinskiy, *Drevnegrecheskaia religiiia* (Kiev: Sinto, 1993), 93; A. Bonaar, *Grecheskaia tsivilizatsiia*, vol. 1 (Rostov-na-Donu: Feniks,

1994), 167.

⁴ See V. G. Ivanov, *Istoriia etiki drevnego mira* (St. Petersburg, 1997), 191.

⁵ The explanation is found in vv. 12-14, see R. Hays, *Etika Novogo Zaveta* (Moscow: BBI sv. Andreia, 2005), 65; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 253-257.

⁶ See Sophocles, *Antichnaia drama. Tsar' Edip* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1970).

Could an individual refuse what was natural for almost all of society, starting from the common people and finishing with lives of political leaders and gods? Reality subordinated everything to itself. That is why Paul, writing of the new creation (2 Cor 5:17), meant that Christians are to be representatives of a new society.

The Institution of Marriage and Family in the Greco-Roman World

In ancient Greece, celibacy was regarded as misfortune and dishonor. Conjugal relationships had one of three legal positions, two of which were lawful matrimony and cohabitation. Only full citizens could marry. The children of this marriage received the right of citizenship.⁸ In cohabitation a woman had no right of inheritance and the children of such a union could not inherit citizenship. Marriage between close relatives was not considered shameful, but on the contrary was welcomed because it led to retaining the family inheritance.⁹

Roman laws did not encourage this kind of marriage. It was prohibited to marry the children of one's first marriage; a son-in-law could not marry his mother-in-law, or a father-in-law

his daughter-in-law.¹⁰ But in spite of this, Cicero, Tacitus, Suetonius, Apuleius, Marcellus, and Juvenal wrote about stepmothers who lived with their stepsons and about the complete lack of moral marital principals.¹¹

As in Greece, celibacy in Rome was considered to be an improper condition. Because of this widows had to get married within two years after their husband died, and divorced women had eighteen months for the same purpose.

Living together was regarded as legal and could last for a lifetime.¹² First Corinthians 5 speaks of just such an arrangement between a stepmother and stepson. Thus, the conduct of the man in 1 Cor 5 pertaining to conjugal issues was not beyond the scope of either Greek or Roman law.

The Institution of Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel

The Hebrew family was the basic unit of a single whole that was called to influence that whole. If the Greco-Roman world considered the family to be a reflection of society, in the Hebrew world, on the contrary, society was the reflection of a large family.

⁷ See O. Eger, *Vsemirnaia istoriia*, vol. 1 (Moscow: ACT, 1999), 658-659.

⁸ P. Giro, *Chastnaia i obshchestvennaia zhizn' grekov* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 31.

⁹ When Demosthenes' father was dying he gave over his affairs to his nephews. In addition he left his wife to one and his daughter to the other.

¹⁰ E. M. Boring, *Hellenistic Commentary to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 397.

¹¹ See I. S. Svenitskaia, *Istoriia drevnego mira. Upadok drevnikh obshchestv* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 1989), 136. In Apuleius we find an episode in which a stepmother, having fallen in love with her stepson, sought sexual intima-

cy with him and even wanted to send away her husband (see Apuleius, *Metamorfozy, ili zolotoi osel* [Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1969], 505-512.) See also the speech of Cicero in defense of Cluentio (Pro Cluentio): "Behold, a mother-in-law married her son-in-law without auspices, without guarantors, in the face of evil portent."

¹² See Ivlev, *Vlast' i strast'*, p. 94; Lubchenkov and Romanov, *Liubov' i vlast'*, p. 601; N. N. Trukhina, *Istoriia drevnego Rima* (Moscow: Miros, 1994), 70.71.162; John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, eds., *The New Testament in its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 30-31.

The Jews' concern for the responsibility for society can be seen in their clear perception that no one can live without influencing other people. That is why all violations (both individual and familial) were regarded by the Jews not only as separate incidents but as a threat to the whole society.¹³ This notion explains Paul's logic in 1 Cor 5:6-8.

It was possible to contract marriage not only between different clans but within the same clan. Marriage was considered to be incest if a man married his next-of-kin: stepmother, mother-in-law, sister (sibling, half-sister), mother, grand-daughter, aunt (also uncle's wife), daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, step daughter, wife's grand-daughter, or wife's sister.¹⁴ Officially, incest was forbidden and considered to be a crime similar to adultery which can destroy both family and society.¹⁵

Corinth and the Church

In Paul's time Corinth was a Roman colony but still remained a Greek city-state with its own proud history. Neither adultery nor fornication nor even incest was proscribed for native inhabitants and visitors.¹⁶

The church in Corinth consisted of different social levels of the population: poor and rich, educated and simple, free and slave, and was in search of its own identity. Possibly the relationships in the community

were modeled after the "patron-client," because this kind of relationship was inherent in Roman society. The patron was to provide his client with sponsorship and material assistance, just as the client was to be submissive and faithful to his patron.

One of the serious problems among the Corinthian believers was their wrong understanding of what Paul meant when he taught about freedom in Christ. Ignoring the second part of the conditional-eschatological formulation "not yet," the Christians in Corinth were completely concentrated on the first part—"already." The day of Christ had *already* come for them. That is why the "spiritual" members of the congregation decided that neither the demands of Jewish nor Roman law could be applied to them any more: no one could judge them, whereas they themselves could judge everything.¹⁷

Sexual Immorality as is not even Named among the Gentiles (1 Cor 5:1)

One of the members of the Corinthian congregation was committing incest with his father's wife.¹⁸ Paul indignantly called it "πορνεία". In the Greek world this word meant prostitution; however in Hellenistic Judaism it included all kinds of sexual immorality outside of marriage, including homosexuality. The apostle knowingly described the deeds of this man as "πορνεία" and not as "μοιχεία"

¹³ See Walter A. Elwell, *Bol'shoi bibleiskiy slovar'* (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2005), 955.

¹⁴ See Lev 20:11-12.14.17.19-21; Deut 22:30; 27:20-23.

¹⁵ See R. K. Harrison, "Polovaia raspushchenost' in W. A. Elwell, ed., *Evangel'skiy slovar' bibleiskogo bogosloviia* (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2000), 759.

¹⁶ See D. A. Carson, *New Bible Commentary, 21st Century Edition* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 1164.

¹⁷ See G. Sergienko, "A Case of Church Discipline in Corinth," *Theological Reflections* №2 (2003): 21-24.

¹⁸ γυναῖκά τοῦ πατρός meant a mother-in-law among the Jews (cf. Lev 18, Deut 23)

(adultery), which probably he would have used if his father had still been married to his step-mother.¹⁹

Perhaps the man and his stepmother-wife chose to live together because they wanted to be law-abiding citizens, since in the Greco-Roman world marriage was compulsory and a fine was imposed upon the unmarried. At the same time, this supposition conflicts with those very Roman laws on family and marriage that forbade the union of stepmothers with their stepsons.

If the relationships in the Corinthian church were developed according to the “patron-client” model and “the Corinthian sinner” was a rich person, then it would not have been profitable for the congregation to lose him and this might be a reason for hushing up his immoral conduct.²⁰

Nevertheless Paul condemns the Corinthians’ irresponsibility. He had a clear understanding of the new creation of which the Corinthians had now become a part in spite of their talent for confronting life in Christ with life outside of Christ.

Pride Instead of Mourning (1 Cor 5:2)

According to 1 Cor 5:2, it is clear that Paul was not as much perturbed by the fact of dissoluteness as he was

by the wrong attitude of the whole congregation to what was happening among them. Many interpreters of this passage note Paul’s eagerness for the church’s purity.²¹

Chrysostom and Theodoret propose the possibility that the Corinthians gloried not in the man’s lapse, but in his wisdom and eloquence.²² Possibly the Corinthians misunderstood Paul’s previous letter (5:9.11): having stopped associating with the people of this world that could lead them to pride, they chose instead to stay in contact with a fornicator.

In any case, Paul thought that the Corinthians should be grieving rather than taking pride in their situation. According to Hays, the apostle was guided by the example of Achan, who brought the Lord’s disfavor upon all Israel (Jos 7).²³ Even though the example of Achan is similar to the one in 1 Cor 5, these are, nevertheless, two different cases that occurred in the fulfillment of two fundamentally different covenants. It follows that the approaches to their interpretation will differ somewhat from one another.

Presenting the church as a renewed Israel,²⁴ Paul saw a menace for the whole Corinthian congregation in

¹⁹ See H. Balz and G. Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2,3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 137.

²⁰ See J. W. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles: First Corinthians* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1961), 73; Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 104; B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 157; G. Sergienko, “A Case of Church Discipline,” pp. 24-25.

²¹ See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 201; B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 151; R. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville:

John Knox, 1997), 82; J. D. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 691.

²² See A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 389; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 201.

²³ See R. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 82.

²⁴ “In Paul’s eyes the Church resembled Israel (though it is not equal with it), which is given a code of holiness. According to this logic the Corinthian church is commanded to expel the man who fornicates with his step-mother,” (R. Hays, *Etika Novogo Zaveta*, p. 525).

the fornicator's behavior. Having the spiritual authority to do so, the apostle later showed that he had already taken decisive action concerning the sinner.

Delivering a Person to Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh (1 Cor 5:3-5)

“As absent in body but present in spirit” By the emphatic «ἐγὼ μὲν» the apostle declares: “and though I am absent τῷ σω,mati (in my body), still I am present among you «τῷ πνεύματι» (in spirit)” Paul’s actual presence in spirit among the Corinthians becomes for him not a formality but a unifying factor between him and the Corinthian congregation. That is why in saying “with my spirit” (5:4), the apostle wants his spirit to be numbered among the Corinthians’ meeting at the time when they would deliver the sinner to Satan.

“In the name of our Lord Jesus” It is debated what the statement «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ» (“In the name of our Lord Jesus,” 5:4) should be connected with in the syntax of the sentence. The following are the three main solutions.²⁵

Option one – deliver to Satan in the name of the Lord. In this option, the word “in the name” is connected with the infinitive «παραδοῦναι»²⁶ (5:5(a)), which contains the content of the judg-

ment that Paul already pronounced. In this case the passage should read, “I have already pronounced the judgment: in the name of our Lord Jesus to hand over the sinner to Satan.”

It must be said that in the Russian language the words “in the name” can have the meaning “for the sake of the name.” But this interpretation is rather problematical as it seems odd for a man to be delivered to one opposing power for the sake of another.

A solution can be found by translating «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι» by the dative of means instead of as an adverbial modifier of place, which literally means “in the name.” In the Russian language it would correspond with the indirect object or a noun in the instrumental case meaning “by [means of] the name.” This option of handing an incestuous man over to Satan “by the name of Christ” looks like pronouncement of a legal sentence that has its own witness.²⁷

Option two – gathering together in the name of the Lord. The words “in the name” could be taken together with the participle «συναχθέντων»²⁸ which would render the clause “when you gather together (are gathered together) in the name of the Lord.” The author could have used the participle «συναχθέντων» as a “divine” passive form. Though God is not mentioned, it may be supposed that He is still ex-

²⁵ These variants are drawn from H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 206; C. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, p. 105; S. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 160; R. Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 84; K. L. Rodgers, *Novyi lingvisticheskiy i ekzegeticheskiy kliuch k*

grecheskomu tekstu Novogo Zaveta (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2001), 570.

²⁶ From παραδίδωμι - to pass, to give back.

²⁷ In the Roman Empire edicts were issued on behalf of the emperor, whose authority was absolute.

²⁸ From συναγωγή - “to assemble”, “to gather together” (see J. P. Louw and E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2 vols. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1989], 198).

ecuting some work.²⁹ In this case the phrase in question is applied to the Corinthian believers who are gathered by God in the name of Christ.

This interpretation agrees with Christ's teaching (Matt 18:20) which had become the motivation for the believers of the early church and their meetings in that the Lord Himself had promised to be present among those who gathered in His name.³⁰ The Synodal translation renders vv. 3-4 as "in your gathering together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" stressing the divine origin of this meeting. However, there some difficulties with this interpretation.

First, if "in the name" is joined with the participle «συναχθέντων»³¹ it causes a break in the expression «συναχθέντων ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος» ("when you are gathered together and also along with my spirit"), which is in this case one indivisible grammatical structure (the genitive absolute). In rupturing the syntax, it becomes unclear what the phrase "along with my spirit" refers to, as it attains an individualistic character, which presents some problems in translation.³²

Second, the word order in the Greek sentence is not "him who has done this: in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ when you will be gathered together" but "him who has done this in the name of our Lord Jesus when

you will be gathered together, along with my spirit." In this case it is better to keep the original word order. Also, the expression "when you are gathered" is better taken in combination with "along with my spirit" instead of "in the name." It makes the expression self-independent and can be translated as, "when you are gathered together and also along with my spirit."

Option three – "who has done this in the name of the Lord". The words "in the name" can be connected to the substantive participle «κατεργασάμενον». ³³ In this case the passage can be interpreted in several ways.

First, a fornicator could cover himself with the name of Jesus, defending his deeds by claiming freedom in Christ. Thus, translating «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι» with a dative of means we get the phrase, "who has done this by the name of our Lord."

Kistemaker correctly observes that in this approach Paul's rebuke for the wrong usage of the name of Christ is to be expected.³⁴ Even if Paul does not speak explicitly about profanation of the Lord's name, one can still observe in the actions of the apostle himself just how much in error he considered the Corinthians to be if they thought that freedom in Christ allowed them to behave immorally.

²⁹ Cf. the Beatitudes (Matt 5) where each word "blessed" is in the form of a Divine Passive and implies that the people who are talked about are blessed by God

³⁰ Although in Matt 18:20 another expression is used - «εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα» - literally "in my name"

³¹ From suna,gw - to assemble, to gather together (see Louw and Nida, p. 198).

³² According to Fee, a variant reading of vv. 3-4 «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ συναχθέντων ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος συν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου

[ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ» (in the name of our Lord Jesus when you are assembled both with my spirit and with the power of our Lord Jesus) is less likely, as it makes the phrase «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ» (in the name of the Lord) redundant to the next one «σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ» (with the power of the Lord), (see Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 207).

³³ From κατεργάζομαι - "to do", "to accomplish".

³⁴ See S. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 160.

Second, the literal translation of «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι» is “in the name.”³⁵ Taking this approach, 5:3-4 can be read as “who has done this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It then follows that being a Christian and abiding in Christ’s Body (the church), the man was committing adultery in [the presence of] His name.

There is a precedent for this reading when Scripture speaks of Israel fornicating in [the presence of] God’s name. Having been delivered from bondage in Egypt, the Hebrews soon began looking for help and consolation in pagan gods. This is why “in the name of our Lord” may explain Paul’s logic—because he was filled with a great eagerness “toward God” and “fought” for the purity of God’s holy name.

All three syntactical options³⁶ of the expression “in the name of our Lord” deserve serious attention. However, we prefer the third option which communicates that a man, being a Christian and abiding in the Body of Christ, had been fornicating in His name, covering himself with Paul’s teaching about freedom in Christ. This interpretation: a) fits very well in the context of the epistle, which shows that Paul had to remind the Corinthians that freedom in Christ was not intended to promote immorality;³⁷ b) does not break the original word order in the Greek sentence; c)

explains Paul’s implicit reaction in that he chose to hand the sinner over to Satan, ignoring other ways of chastising the offender.

“*Deliver to Satan to destroy the flesh*” What did the apostle mean by the words “deliver to Satan”? Assistance can be gained by inquiring into the way Judaic and early Christian traditions understood the term “Satan.”

1. *Satan’s appearance in Judaic theological thought.* Greek philosophers never mentioned such a concept as “satan.” They explained evil’s presence as a substance existing from eternity. The name “satan” itself originated from the Persian language and appeared in Judaic theology only after the Babylonian captivity (i.e. after 538 B.C.E.) as a result of the influence of Persian dualism which seeped into the Jewish worldview during their time in Babylon.

In the OT, Satan is met as a personal character only three times: in Job, 1 Chron 24:1, and Zech 3:12. These books were written after the captivity and it is possible that they incorporated the Persian tradition. Complexity arises, however, as to what to do with the mention of Satan in Job, which for various reasons is usually dated much earlier than the Babylonian captivity. There are, of course, those who date the composition of Job (especially chs. 1 and 2) to a date much later than the sixth century B.C.E.³⁸

³⁵ For the phrase “in the name” there a very widespread NT expression: «εἰς ὄνομα\$ οὐ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα»; for example, Matt 10:41-41; 18:20; 28:19; John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; Acts 19:5; 1 John 5:13; Heb 6:10.

³⁶ Conzelmann offers six variants of «ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι» (see H. Conzelmann, *1Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 97.

³⁷ 1 Cor 4:18-21; 6; 7; 8; 15.

³⁸ Bishop Filaret (Filaretov) referred the date of the Book of Job to the period of the Second Temple. In favor of this are some Aramaic words and also the life context: the author does not yet know about the resurrection; he writes at a time of severe tribulations; his language indicates the highest point of the development of Wisdom Literature.

It is helpful to observe how the usage of the word shifts in two parallel passages, 2 Sam 24:1 and 1 Chron 21:1. In these passages the authors describe the cause behind David's decision to take a census of Israel. The 2 Samuel passage, written before Israel went into captivity, reads: "Once again *the anger of the Lord* burned against Israel and he caused David to harm them by taking a census, saying 'go and count the people of Israel and Judah.'" The 1 Chronicles passage, written after the Babylonian captivity, reads, "*Satan rose up* against Israel and caused David to take a census of the Israelites" (italics added). The changes in the text are evident: "the anger of the Lord" is replaced by "Satan."

2. *Jewish tradition.* It is peculiar to Jewish literature to use the term "satan" (Heb. שָׂטָן) as a kind of impersonal power of evil, and it should be said that in Judaism Satan is represented either as an evil category or one who personifies evil.

In the OT, Satan is not God's rival because monotheistic Judaism neither supported the concept with sufficient reference sources, nor with sufficient logical (or illogical) space. The concept of Yahweh in the Hebrews' minds was so exalted, that it was impossible to imagine Satan as a detached and powerful evil strong enough to oppose the Mighty One. For the Hebrews, Yahweh is the only mer-

ciful and chastising God, while Satan is a slavish being, completely accountable to God.

In distinction from humans, angels (including evil ones), according to Judaism, are not considered to have free will. In traditional Jewish religious literature there is not one single example of an angel objecting to God's will.³⁹ The idea of Satan, who has an evil will, is found only on the periphery of Hebrew religion. According to the Talmud, Satan is an angel of death and an inducer of evil.⁴⁰

3. *Hebrew lexicology.* There was a time when Satan lacked not only a personal name, but also a common name. Therefore, when Balaam saddled his donkey and started off to curse the Hebrew nation, the text reads: "But God was furious that Balaam was going, so he sent the angel of the Lord to stand in the road to block his way" (Num 22:22). In Hebrew, "to block" sounds like "lesatan" (Heb. לְשָׂטָן), so "satan" is not a noun at all. It is an adverb which means "against." The nouns "adversary" and "obstruction" and the cognate verbs derived from it carry this idea. This is why the concept of Satan could not be taken from Torah because this term is not used as the name of a certain being, much less of God's antagonist, but only as an obstruction.⁴¹

In the meaning of "adversary," used in 1 Sam 29:4, the word "satan" is the way the Philistine princes who

³⁹ "Scholars believe that Jewish literature written in the period of the Old and before the New Testament (mainly apocryphal literature) reflect Zoroastrianism and influenced the further development of the Jewish teaching about demons." W. Raepfer and L. Smith, *Puteshestvie po miru mysli.*

Vvedenie v istoriiu filosofii (Svet na vostokey, 2000), 198.

⁴⁰ See W. M. Dannel, "Satan" in W. A. Elwell, ed. *Evangel'skiy slovar'*, p. 904.

⁴¹ Obstruction (lat. *obstructio*—barrier, hindrance) is an action intended to lead to failure.

wanted to fight against the Hebrews describe David. In Ps 109:4.6.29 we find the root in the word meaning “hate” (and also “the one who hates”). However, in each of these cases “satan” is a common noun.

When does the personification of Satan take place? In what instances is the word “satan” to be interpreted as a personal, malevolent being? One of the texts that could explain this is the Book of Job. Here Satan reached the peak of his career in Scripture by getting his own name and the role of a provoker or accuser. However, the Hebrews had little interest in him as a character. His role in Hebrew tradition, as compared to the position he has taken in Christianity, always remained insignificant and was discerned only to be an obstacle on one’s way to the Creator. Thus, in the second blessing after the evening “Shema” the Jews recite “and remove satan from before us and behind us.” How should “satan” be translated here? The European tradition would translate it as a proper name (i.e. “Satan”). But Hebrew tradition, which did not find a “worthy” place for Satan after the Book of Job, would translate this word as a common noun (i.e. “satan”).⁴²

4. *Christian aspect.* In Christianity the idea of Satan undergoes a very thorough change. An OT “satan”

turned a person away from God. But in the NT Satan is described more as an adversary of God than of humans. All the evil in the world is traced to Satan. All the ancient gods besides the whole pagan world were pronounced the embodiments of Satan, and his appearances in OT texts were reinterpreted along Christian theological lines.

5. *Some modern conceptions about Satan.* The church is not alone in its opinion about this issue. Some Christians deny the existence of the devil. Raeper cites the example of Bultmann, who tried to demonstrate on theological grounds that Satan is a relic of the ancient worldview and that belief in the devil is a part of NT culture. Science repeats Bultmann, saying that Satan is a product of a pre-scientific worldview. Many of the phenomena which were attributed to demons in the past today can be explained by modern medical science.⁴³

There are a variety of options regarding the translation of the phrase “deliver to satan.”

The first option is to “hand over the sinner to Satan as to an executer of God’s will.” Some scholars understand Satan in 1 Cor 5:5 as a being subject to God who will be allowed to destroy flesh, just as in case of Job.⁴⁴ However, this comparison is groundless because these two cases are different in

⁴² This request is reminiscent of the words of the Lord’s Prayer: “and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from *the evil one*” (Matt 6:13) [italics added]. The Greek form “ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ» can be translated not only as “deliver us from the evil one (meaning evildoer)” but as “deliver us from evil itself.” Here any evil thing can be meant, including any obstacles that do not allow a human being to know the Creator.

⁴³ See Raeper and Smith, *Puteshestvie*, p. 200.

⁴⁴ See F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 123; D. Prior, *Pervoe poslanie k korinťianam* (St. Petersburg: Mirt, 2002), 78; J. MacArthur, *Pervoe poslanie k korinťianam* (Kiev: Kievskaja dukhovno-obrazovatel’naia seminariia, 1993), 165-168.

their main point. We can agree with Hays that: 1) Job was not punished for sin and 2) in no sense did his suffering cleanse society or Job himself. Hence the analogy with Job is not especially helpful for interpreting the situation in 1 Corinthians.⁴⁵

The second interpretation is to “hand over the sinner to government officials as to representatives of Satan.” Since Roman law forbade the union of stepmothers with stepsons, the behavior of the “Corinthian fornicator” was to be punished not only from the Christian point of view but from the point of view of civil law. To deliver to Satan could mean “to hand over to the government for the penalty.”⁴⁶ But this notion is out of step with Paul’s theology. He states that all government is established by God and a magistrate is God’s servant (Rom 13:1-4). It is apparent from the text in 1 Cor that there is not the slightest notion that civil authority is identified with Satan.

Moreover, Paul encouraged the Corinthian believers to judge their own issues within the church (1 Cor 5:12-13). In 1 Cor 6:1-7, Paul is shocked by the idea of bringing local church issues before civil courts.

The third version is to “deliver the sinner to Satan as depriving him of God’s protection.” There is an opinion that in excluding the sinner from the church fellowship the Corinthians were handing him over to Satan’s power, depriving him of God’s protection, much like the blood of the lamb

that the Israelites spread on their doorposts in Egypt. But one can hardly compare the anointing of doorposts with the anointing which Christians receive. Moreover, if one follows this interpretation to its conclusion, it is apparent that the people in Egypt whose door-posts were not marked with the blood of the Passover lamb, were subject to the destructive action of the Angel of the Lord. If one translates this passage using this comparison, then the consequence of the exclusion should be death.

The fourth version is to “hand over the fornicator to Satan as exclusion from the community, meaning a complete break of any relations with him. The probability of this version is based on the way 5:5 is read in the light of the phrases: “Let him who has done this be removed from among you” (5:2); “I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people” (5:9); and also, “Purge the evil person from among you” (5:13)

First of all, this approach agrees with the teaching of Jesus according to Mark 6:11, and also with the deeds of Paul described in Acts 13:51. Often, seeing a threat to the well-being of the gospel or its rejection, Paul would break off all relationship with anyone who resisted the issue in question.

Second, the words “deliver to Satan” read in light of the expressions, “let... be removed from among you” and “purge the evil person from among you,” reflect a similar procedure of a sinner’s exclusion from Israelite society. In 1 Cor 5:2.9.13, Paul uses the same expression “purge out the evil person from among yourselves” (ἐξάρατε τὸν

⁴⁵ See Hays, *First Corinthians*, p. 85-86.

⁴⁶ This is the opinion of Darret, which is used by Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 397.

πονηρόν ἐξ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν), which is found also in the Septuagint.⁴⁷

Third, the early Christians had a somewhat dualistic understanding of the world: everyone who trusted Christ was protected by God, and those who had not accepted the sacrifice of God's Son remained under Satan's power. This understanding can be characterized as "ours and theirs." In accepting Christ a person became "one of us" to the church and a "stranger" to the world. Being excluded from the congregation, however, a person became not only a "stranger" to the Christians but did not receive the status of "one of us" in the world. He was caught between a rock and a hard place. This was a very dangerous state find oneself in because it entailed moral, social, and emotional problems. Therefore, expelling the sinner from the church can be considered as delivering him to Satan, where the expression "to give to Satan" is taken symbolically and stresses the dreadful, almost cursed prospects that awaited such an individual.

Fourth, it is possible that the apostle wanted to say that the incestuous man does not interest him anymore, because his deeds show his nature and all that he deserves is expulsion from the Christian community. This statement could be explained by his zealousness for the Lord and His church. If in Judaism the apostle cared deeply about Israel, then as a Christian his concern for Israel was replaced by

the church. It is the new Israel. The OT Yahweh was now identified with Christ and Christ with Yahweh, sharing equal status.

In this way, if the fornicator was cloaking his actions under "the name of the Lord" (or was fornicating "in the name of the Lord") Paul, of course, would have regarded this as blasphemous.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising that he decides to expel the sinner from their midst, implying a complete break in relationship with him because the name of the One for whom Paul was ready to die was being profaned (whether that name be Yahweh or Christ).

The fifth version is "to hand the sinner over to Satan as to damnation." From this interpretive stance, the judgment that Paul calls for is compared to the ancient pagan tradition of the magical curse, which was used when dedicating a person to avenging deities. For this purpose special tablets of curses with the names of demons were used, and Christians replaced these names with the name of Satan.

The covenant between God and a human being is an agreement with obligations. The consequences of obedience or disobedience to these obligations are blessings or curses. The one who obeys the agreement will reap a blessing and the transgressor a curse. The curse is a special form of the death sentence, just like anathema is a variety of curse. The person is excluded not from the biological but from the spiritual family which is the church of Christ. Breaking the oath which was taken in the name of the deity

⁴⁷ Deut 17:7; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21; 22:24; 24:7.

⁴⁸ The author of 1 Tim 1:20 delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander to Satan "that they may learn not to blaspheme."

would affect, first of all, the deity itself. If the sinner, who was accepted into the congregation by the confession of Christ (by an oath), lived in sin then he was desecrating the Lord by his action, which was unthinkable for Paul.

Christianity borrows the idea of church discipline and curse from the ancient cults and Judaism. Later another form of expulsion appeared—a “solemn expulsion.” This type was accompanied by pronouncement of the church’s curse and implied a complete break with the one excluded by the church.⁴⁹

Having analyzed five different approaches to this difficult question, the fourth variant is preferred, in which delivering the sinner to Satan means exclusion from the community and a complete break of any relations with him. This version: a) agrees with the teaching of Jesus in Mark 6:11 and with the deeds and convictions of Paul (Acts 13:51; Tit 3:10); b) reflects the process of expulsion of the sinner from the ancient Israelite community; c) agrees with the Septuagint’s terminology; d) is consistent with the twofold understanding of the world by Christians; e) is explained by Paul’s zeal for God because of which he uses extreme measures.

It remains to be seen, however, what was Paul’s purpose in the prescription: “deliver to Satan.”

“That the spirit may be saved.” The range of opinions regarding the final aim of 1 Cor 5:5 is rather wide and includes the following variations.

1. *The purpose is to save the soul of the incestuous man by the destruction of his physical body.*⁵⁰ Many commentators are inclined to conclude that in 1 Cor 5:5, Paul meant the bodily suffering of the sinner (including death) in order to save the spirit/soul.⁵¹ Such an interpretation raises various difficulties.

First, “the day of the Lord” mentioned by Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14) is not an ordinary day in his theology nor in the whole Bible. The Day of the Lord is a day of global scale. Although this day has a shade of individuality, still it is unlikely that Paul wanted to emphasize the personal nature of one man’s salvation (of his spirit, to put it more precisely) instead of the global one that will affect the whole universe. Moreover, if the question is really about the salvation of the man’s spirit then it is rather odd that the apostle “delays” this salvation until the last “Day,” allowing the Corinthian sinner do whatever he wants in the meantime. This contradicts Paul elsewhere, in whose theology “already” and “not yet” is clearly traced.⁵²

Second, it seems that the incestuous man who was expelled from the

⁴⁹ See S. I. Orekhov, *Kliatva i proklatie kak elementy religioznogo kul'ta. Otnoshenie cheloveka k irratsional'nomu* (Sverdlovsk, 1989), 198-215.

⁵⁰ The word ὄλεθρον means “destruction” (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 232).

⁵¹ See G. Forkman, *The Limits of the Religious Community* (Lund: CwK Gleerup, 1972), 146; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 97; R. Hays, *First*

Corinthians, pp. 85-89; J. MacArthur, *Pervoe poslanie k Korinfianam*, pp. 165-168; D. Prior, *Pervoe poslanie k korinfianam*, p. 78.

⁵² According to the way Schweitzer presents Paul’s mysticism we can identify “already” with the union of a human being with Christ and “not yet” with the future union of a human being with God.

community will gain the redemption of his sin by bodily suffering (or even death). Such a conclusion does not fit the NT teaching about salvation.⁵³

Third, the interpretation “the destruction of the flesh” cannot refer to bodily death because nowhere else in Paul’s theology does the apostle use the expression “the destruction of the flesh” as a synonym for death.⁵⁴

Fourth, the belief that only the spirit/soul (intangible constituents) can be saved is contrary to Paul’s teaching, which speaks clearly about the integral nature of salvation. Nowhere in the Bible does one find the conception of the eschatological salvation of a sinner’s spirit apart from his body—either both are saved, or neither is saved.⁵⁵ This clearly indicates that the expression “that the spirit may be saved” does not mean that the spirit of the Corinthian sinner as a substance can be saved without his body.

According to Paul, a human being is a whole being. When the apostle says: “and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23) he implies the preservation of a person as a single whole. The apostle sees the purpose of salvation in the future existence of a person who will be resurrected in a new glorified body, which the Corinthians did not believe, putting the emphasis only on the resurrection of the

spirit.⁵⁶ Thus, given his need to convince the Corinthians of the reality of a bodily resurrection, it is unlikely that Paul would have drawn their attention only to the resurrection of the sinner’s spirit and give them a reason to satisfy their carnal desires. In 1 Cor 6, Paul corrects the Corinthians’ beliefs that they have the right to do anything with the body because of its materiality. Paul says: “God will resurrect our bodies.”

2. The purpose is the salvation of the spirit of the incestuous man through repentance. This version suggests that physical suffering could draw the sinner to repentance so that he would be restored in the community and saved in the Day of the Lord. Such an interpretation is very humanistic and agrees with 2 Cor 2:4-11.⁵⁷ However in this case it is more logical to expect Paul to say: “Deliver him to Satan until he repents and then his spirit will be saved.” But Paul leaves no such indicators. Thus, this approach, in spite of its appropriateness, is based on a modern humanistic approach rather than on the Greek text.

Furthermore, there is no expectation of repentance on the part of the sinning brother if he is outside of the church. Of course it is possible but it is not axiomatic. Finally, this interpretation conflicts with the idea of the salvation of the whole person in Paul’s theology.

⁵³ G. Sergienko, “A Case of Church Discipline,” p. 16.

⁵⁴ See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 211.

⁵⁵ See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Augsburg: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 217.

⁵⁶ See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, p. 57; Sergienko, “A Case of Church Discipline,” p. 16; B. M. Metzger, *Novyi Zavet. Kontekst, formirovanie, sodержanie* (Moscow: BBI, 2006), 143.

⁵⁷ However, 2 Cor 2:4-11 does not necessarily have anything to do with 1 Cor 5.

3. *The purpose is to save the “spirit” (the new nature) of the incestuous man by the destruction of his “sinful flesh” (the old nature; deeds of the flesh).* Some scholars hold that by the “destruction of the flesh” Paul did not mean physical suffering or physical death, but that the words “flesh” and “spirit” should be interpreted in their ethical meaning because the Corinthian sinner had allowed the flesh to triumph over the spirit.⁵⁸

According to Fee, in Paul’s theology “spirit” designates the whole person as oriented towards God, but “flesh” means the whole person as oriented away from God. That is why Paul desired to have this man put outside the believing community—he hopes that the fleshly desires may be destroyed so that he may be saved on the Day of the Lord.⁵⁹

«Σαρξ» (*flesh*) u «Σῶμα» (*body*) in Paul’s theology. The apostle connects «σῶμα» (*body*) with the embodiment by means of which a person functions as part of creation. It is precisely the physical body that enables a person to participate in human society.⁶⁰ Paul treats the “sarx” (*flesh*) as the inferior part of the personality, the locus of the passions and covetousness. He attributes to it «ἐπιθυμία» (*passion, lust*) which is constantly opposing the

spirit (Gal 5:17).⁶¹ On the other hand, the flesh is not something that can be separated from a person. When Paul says, “So then with my mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom 7:25), he makes it abundantly clear that no one can stay away from the flesh.⁶²

This interpretation is supported by the verse, “And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal 5:24). However, Kistemaker notes that the explanation of the phrase “destruction of the flesh” as the destruction of the sinful nature that can be destroyed in Satan’s hands is unconvincing because Satan does everything possible to lead a sinner further away from God and never leads him to repentance.⁶³

4. *The purpose is to save the spirit of the community by the expulsion of the sinful nature.* Paul’s command should be understood to mean: “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh in order that the Spirit (either given to the community or present in it) might be saved (i.e. preserved) for the day of the Lord.” This emphasizes a single-minded focus on the well-being of the whole church, which is Paul’s central concern (1 Cor 5:2-6:1).⁶⁴

⁵⁸ See F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, The New Century Bible Commentaries (Eerdmans and Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1971), 55; Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, p. 105; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, pp. 216-217.

⁵⁹ See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 212.

⁶⁰ See J. D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 55-61.

⁶¹ See: C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Hendrickson, 1996), 238.

⁶² Dunn has proved that “flesh” is widely used

by Paul; it follows that we cannot limit it to the meaning of “sinful” (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, pp. 64-72).

⁶³ See Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 161.

⁶⁴ Collins believes that 1 Cor 5:5 speaks of the spirit of the congregation (“The Function of Excommunication in Paul,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 1980). Hays thinks that this hypothesis is worthy of serious consideration. (*Etika Novogo Zaveta*, p. 54). Campbell states that “flesh” in 1 Cor 5:5 relates to a sinful church, so the salvation of the spirit is the restoration of the church’s

Two aspects of the H/holy S/spirit. If salvation of the spirit of the community is understood as the salvation of the Spirit in its divine aspect (that is, the Holy Spirit) then it not only conflicts with Paul's theology but it takes on heretical meaning. However, in addition to the Holy Spirit (as God), the congregation has another holy spirit—the spirit of a new creation. As a new creation, its natural state (spirit) should be holy, that is, set apart for a new life. This is the idea is holiness in its classical sense. In this way the salvation of the spirit of the congregation is the preservation and salvation of the new state which they already have, but which they risk losing, depriving themselves of eschatological salvation in the Day of the Lord. The expulsion of the sinful man should entail ridding the entire congregation of its fleshly source—the old leaven (5:8).

In other words, Paul is possibly saying: “Remove the one who defiles you! Do not allow the sinful nature to destroy your new state in order that you might be saved on the day of the Lord.” The apostle does not recommend that they work with the sinner (cf. Gal 6:1) and this shows that he sees no other way to save the whole church from destruction. Paul's resentment is explainable; his spirit,

which was united as one with the spirit of the Corinthians, was offended by this sinner who had been fornicating “in the name of the Lord.” His offense was as deep as if a pious Pharisee had come into contact with something impure. And Paul once had been such a Pharisee.⁶⁵

5. The goal is to save both the spirit of the sinner and the spirit of the congregation. Some interpreters find two advantages in “handing over to Satan”: a) the salvation of the man's spirit; b) the cleansing of the community.⁶⁶ Others go even further, stating that the expression, “that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord,” means the salvation of both the spirit of the fornicator and the spirit of the congregation.⁶⁷

Certainly Paul would not have objected to the salvation of the fornicator's spirit if he had repented. At the same time it does not mean that the apostle was pursuing his goal to save just the sinner's spirit.

The Congregation of the New Exodus (1 Cor 5:6-8)

New creation. It is worth noting that 1 Cor 5:6-8 is a key point in Paul's demand that the Corinthians to expel the sinner. The words «καθώς ἐστε ἄζυμοι» (even as you are unleaven-

spirituality (*Flesh and Spirit in 1 Cor. 5:5: An Exercise in Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament* [1993], 331-342). According to Duke the translation “of his spirit” is not supported by the text. Duke believes that the center of attention is a congregation that can be spoiled by a little leaven (1Cor 5:6-13) (Ellwell, *Evangel'skiy slovar' bibleiskogo bogosloviia*, p. 523).

⁶⁵ The apostle frequently uses the expression related to the spirit of the congregation. In Gal 6:18

he writes, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers”; in Phil 1:25 we find, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be *with your spirit*” [italics added]; the phrase, “for though absent in body, I am present in spirit” (1 Cor. 5:3) shows Paul's unity with the church's spirit.

⁶⁶ See D. Stern, *Kommentariy k evreiskomu Novomu Zavetu*, vol. 2 (Rovno: A. Dolbin, 2003), 13.

⁶⁷ See A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 397.

ened) have something in common with the phrase, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) and emphasize that the essence of moral behavior for Paul is a new life in Christ.

In spite of fact that in modern evangelical Christianity the accent in interpretation of 2 Cor 5:17 is on the personal relationship between the individual and God, we cannot say that Paul’s conception of a new creation is limited to its personal aspect. The way the apostle understands the new creation has nothing to do with one-dimensional ethics.⁶⁸ In his theology the concept of the new creation is a many-sided one that contains many aspects: universal, local, personal, and eschatological. That is why Paul feels the responsibility to eliminate the Corinthians’ belief that sin is a blemish *only* on the human body that one day will cease its existence. According to Paul, the sin of one particular man casts a shadow on the whole community and on the universal church as the whole Body of Christ, whose health depends on each of its members.

Christ has been sacrificed as our Passover lamb. The fact that Paul uses the imagery of the Jewish Passover and quotes from the OT highlights the fact that the Corinthian congregation consisted primarily of Jewish believers who could easily understand his logic. Paul’s marked use of this imagery at this time has led to the generally accepted conclusion that he wrote

his letter shortly before the Jewish Passover season. Just as the Jews were to keep the feast without leaven, so the Christians should constantly celebrate their deliverance from sin. However, there is insufficient reason to suppose that the Jewish Passover was still celebrated by Christians.⁶⁹

It is important the way we read verse seven. Paul says, “Clean out the old yeast that you may be a new batch, unleavened as you are.” In the Greco-Roman world the word «εκκαθαίρω» meant “to make something clean”, “remove something that is dirty”...⁷⁰ We may suggest that Paul recommends that the Corinthians remove the fornicator, capitalizing on this idea of cleansing from defilement. Undoubtedly, “leaven as a fornicator” fits the context of the chapter well and is logically completed with the words, “therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person.” However, the expression «ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν» (“from among you”) can be interpreted in a different way, for instance “out of yourself” and also “out of your midst.” In this case, leaven can stand not only for a person but also for the old beliefs that still filled the Corinthians’ hearts.

Chrysostom, speaking about the old leaven, interprets it more broadly than pertaining to just one sinner. He thinks it can be applied to the whole congregation, including this man, which has to be rid of everything beyond the scope of the new creation. This conception agrees with Paul’s encouragement of the Corinthians to

⁶⁸ See N. T. Wright, *Chto na samom dele skazal Apostol Pavel* (Moscow: BBI sv. Andreia, 2004), 132.

⁶⁹ See Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, p. 156; Prior, *Pervoe poslanie k korin-*

fianam, pp. 83-84; Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 224.

⁷⁰ See Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 699.

live a new life with a new worldview: “Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8).

Disassociation from Sexually Immoral People (1 Cor 5:9-11)

This passage has some difficulties with its interpretation: «Ἐγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ» (I wrote you in my letter) (5:9) and «νῦν δὲ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν» (5:11). The Synodal version gives the translation of «ἔγραψα» as “wrote.” But this does not reflect the aorist form of the given verb, attaching an imperfect meaning to it.⁷¹

1. «ἔγραψα» as a secondary (*historic*) aorist in 5:9 and 5:11. The secondary aorist is meant to express an action which was in progress or has been accomplished in the past.⁷² To translate Paul’s expression as “I have written you in my letter” with the secondary aorist would then imply that the apostle has already written an epistle earlier for the Corinthian church and they have already read it.

A problem. If “written” in 5:9 should be translated as a secondary aorist, the meaning of the whole chapter becomes more abstract and mild. It seems as though Paul, leaving the previous problem behind, is trying to draw the Corinthians’ attention to a letter that was written for another

purpose, probably for preventive aims. Otherwise Paul would have said something like, “I have already written to you concerning this man—not to associate with fornicators,” using the common word combination «περὶ δε» (concerning).⁷³ Or else he would say something like, “I have already written you a letter where I said not to associate with sinners. But then I did not mean the sinners of this world. But I wrote you that you should not associate with the one who calls himself a brother but is actually a sinner.” But here a problem arises: this reading automatically points to the previous existence of the incest in Corinth which was known to Paul. However, he does not mention this anywhere.

If the case of incest did not exist in the community then it seems illogical that Paul, saying, “I wrote to you in the letter not to associate with sinners,” brings up another issue to support his argument which has nothing to do with incest.

2. «ἔγραψα» as an epistolary aorist in 5:9 and 5:11. If «ἔγραψα» should be translated with an epistolary aorist,⁷⁴ which supposes that by the time the letter is received the action would be in the past, and the infinitive «μὴ συναμιγνυσθαι» (not to associate) should be translated in the imperative⁷⁵ and we agree that this letter is actually the first Corinthian letter, not the second or third,⁷⁶ then in

⁷¹ The imperfect is the past continuous tense showing that the action was in progress in the past and was not completed.

⁷² For example, «καὶ ἔφαγον πάντες καὶ ἔχορτάσθησαν» (they have eaten and have been filled, Matt 15:37 [italics added]). Here it is clearly seen that the action of taking a meal has already been finished.

⁷³ Cf. Greek text 1 Cor 7:1; 7:25; 8:1; 12:1;

16:1; 16:12.

⁷⁴ Concerning the possibility of this translation see F. F. Bruce, pp. 57-58; Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, p. 160.

⁷⁵ In Greek the infinitive can function as an imperative (cf. Rom 12:15: χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, κλαίειν μετὰ κλαίωντων [to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep]).

⁷⁶ The translation ἔγραψα with the epistolary

paraphrase the variant reading would look as follows: “I wrote [am writing] to you—do not associate with sinners. Not with the sinners of the world in general, *but*⁷⁷ I wrote [am writing] to you—do not associate with those who are called brothers but who are sinners.” This variant preserves the meaning of the whole chapter, keeping the attention of the reader and developing the culmination even after verse eight.

However the translation «ἔγραψα» in 5:9 with an epistolary aorist is not without problems.

Problem one. The phrase «ἐν τῇ ἐπιτολῇ» (in the letter) combined with “wrote” meaning “am writing” (“I am writing you in the letter”) seems to be unnecessary.

A proposed solution. On the one hand, this phrase is a certain marker indicating the possible writing of an earlier letter. On the other hand, the definite article «τῇ» points not only to some other epistle that was known to the Corinthians but to this very letter which will sound like,

“I wrote [am writing] to you in [this] letter—do not associate with sinners,” and further specifies, “yet I certainly didn’t mean with the sexually immoral people of this world..., since then you would need to go out of the world, but now I have written [am writing] to you—do not keep company with anyone who is called a brother but who is sexually immoral.”

Problem two. There is a tendency among the authors of the NT to support the climax of their arguments with examples of Christ’s actions.

aorist excludes the fact that 5:9.11 talks about a previous letter.

⁷⁷ The word «νυν» can be interpreted as “now” as

Just so, in 5:7 there is a reference to Christ. This utterance is very like the culmination point in Paul’s argument because all the other facts pale against the backdrop of the Lord Jesus’ example.

A possible solution. In the opinion of this writer, the example in this sentence is not the action(s) of Christ, as such, which the Corinthians should follow (cf. Phil 2:1-16), but Jesus Himself, as one who has accomplished the great task of redeeming of His people from their sins. This is why the statement, “Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us” can be just as good grounds for 5:6-8 as the cause and effect described in 5:9-11.

3. «ἔγραψα» as a secondary aorist in 5:9 and as an epistolary aorist in 5:11. This variant looks attractive for several reasons. First, the phrase “in the letter” can be an adverbial modifier of place and connect with the word “wrote” in 5:9. Second, Paul’s tension is not lost because of the translation of «ἔγραψα» with an epistolary aorist in 5:11. Taken this way, 5:9-10 would be rendered: “I have written you in the letter not to associate with sinners. Not the immoral people of the world .., now I am writing to you—do not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is an immoral person.” But it is still a mystery why Paul refers to another letter. And why he does not mention it anywhere again if it really existed?

Thus, Paul writes to the Corinthians: «μὴ συναναμίγυσθαι» (not to associate) with the fornicator. What that mean? This verb «συναναμίγυσθαι»⁷⁸

well as “but,” “however.”

⁷⁸ From συναμίγνυμι—“to mingle with”, “to come together”, “to have dealings with someone”.

occurs in the NT in one other place (2 Thess 3:14). In the ancient world this word was used to define: a) the mix of different components; b) a mix of weeds with good seed; c) different nationalities of people “mixing” (according to Aristotle the rulers of Cyprus had spies who mixed with ordinary people to hear the rumors); d) the mixing of nations.⁷⁹ It is likely that Paul, in using the word «συναμιγνυσθαι», did not mean that the Corinthians had to stop verbal communication with the sinner but their obligation was to expel him from the congregation. It is likely that the apostle, encouraging the Corinthians to celebrate the Passover in a clean and pure way (5:6-8), implied that they should not share the Lord’s Supper with the sinner.⁸⁰

In ancient times, sitting at a table and sharing a meal had a ritual character, which demonstrated the fellowship of the participants. The main theme of First Corinthians is the unity of the Body of Christ. The main symbol of the union of the believers is their participation in the Lord’s Supper. This is why 1 Cor 11:17-34 can be described as the culmination of the epistle which is used by Paul as an argument—everything should lead to union and spring from it. A combined participation of the Corinthians with the sinner in Lord’s Supper could point to their unity with him not only in thought but in deed as well. Therefore, the apostle says “do not ‘mix’

with him! And, moreover, do not eat with him [*do not share in the Lord’s Table with him!*]”

Judgment Over Outsiders and Insiders (1 Cor 5:12-13)

Verse 12 contains two questions. The first relates to «ἐξω» (“outsiders”—unbelievers) and the second to «ἔσω» (“insiders”—believers). Both questions are rhetorical. The first question, “For what have I to do with judging those who are outside?” implies the answer directly from Paul’s side: “Nothing!” The second question: “Do you not judge those who are inside?” implies the answer from the Corinthians themselves: “We are truly given the power to solve the questions of the church and judge the brothers and sisters.”

Paul’s reference to “outsiders” in 5:13 is intended to stress the importance of church discipline for its own members. The apostle adds this phrase in case someone would be concerned about people who are not Christians and live irresponsibly in their life style. Paul says that God, not the community of believers, is their Judge. So it is unnecessary to put any obligations on them that are meant only for believers.⁸¹

Paul does not comment on the conduct of the stepmother of the “Corinthian sinner” and does not recommend punishing her. Why? Perhaps she was not a Christian and the apostle, talking about “outsiders,” relegates this woman to that category.

A Paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 5

It is actually reported [*that*] there is [*has appeared*] fornication among

⁷⁹ See Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. V, VII (1948), 852-855.

⁸⁰ See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 209, 218; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, p. 160; W. Wiersbe, *Bud’ mudrym* (Chicago: SGP, 1990), 65-66

⁸¹ See Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 417.

you, and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles: that someone [*instead of his own wife*] has [*his*] father's wife. And are you still arrogant? And [*instead of this*] you were not grieving that the one who has done this thing was removed from your fellowship? For [*as for me*] being absent [*from you*] in my body, but present in my spirit, I have already passed judgment as though I were actually with you: [*a man*] who has committed this deed [*abiding*] in the name of our Lord Jesus, [*covering up with freedom in Christ*], when you will be gathered together, and my spirit (also will be with you as I said that being absent with my body I am present with my spirit) with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh [*in your community*] in order that [*your*] spirit [*the spirit of a new creature who you are now*] may be [*preserved in purity and*] saved in the day of the Lord.

Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens all the dough. [*So*] purge out the old leaven so that you could be a new batch of dough, because you are unleavened, because your Passover, Christ, has [*already*] been sacrificed [*for us*]. Therefore, [*let us*] celebrate our festival not with the old leaven of evil and wickedness but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

I write to you in this letter not to associate with fornicators! Of course I do not refer primarily to fornicators of the world, or to the covetous, or to swindlers or idolaters, [*for*] if you were to avoid association with them you would have to go out of the world itself. But I write to you not to keep company with any one who is named a brother [*but he himself*] is a

fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a slanderer, or a drunkard or a swindler—with such a one [*even*] not to eat [*with him from the Lord's Table*]. For what have I to do judging those who are outsiders? Don't you judge those who are within? Whereas those who are outsiders God judges: put away the wicked man [*who is among you*].

Conclusion

Thus, from our point of view, in the expression “to deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that the spirit may be saved” the author is not talking about the salvation of the fornicator but the salvation of the community by the destruction of “fleshly principals.”

In spite of the singular situation of 1 Cor 5, this text might be used today in the sphere of church discipline. But how should it be applied in practice? Is it always easy for Christians to understand what the biblical authors meant? If not, then there is a danger that solving the problem can entail the death of a human soul.

Almost all the disciplinary steps in evangelical churches find their logical conclusion in 1 Cor 5 as a final attempt to discipline a sinner, saying: “to hand over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved.” However, neither Paul nor Matthew meant to establish a system of disciplinary rules for Christians of the twenty-first century church. They simply answered the questions and needs of the congregation to which the epistle was directed. First Corinthians 5 has its own specific context. That is why the implicit fulfillment of its instructions is quite dangerous.

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