



CHAPTER

2 Body Work: Slavery and the Pauline Churches

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Abstract

In the urban settings of Paul's ministry, slaves he encountered were likely to be engaged in a variety of occupations, from production of commodities to bookkeeping to domestic service. Because slaves were sexual property, a slaveholder had the right to force a slave into prostitution, and indeed, most prostitutes were slaves. In 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians, Paul decries *porneia*, or sexual immorality, but he does not define *porneia*. Slaves were not in a position to protect the sexual boundaries of their bodies, a limitation that requires us either to reconsider the receptivity of the Christian body to slaves or to reformulate our understanding of expectations for sexual purity among the membership of Pauline churches.

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Travelers to the towns and cities of the Roman Empire customarily sought shelter with those they knew, or they carried letters of introduction from families and friends. When Lucius, the hero of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, arrives in the town of Hypata in Thessaly, he inquires at a public inn for the home of Milo. Lucius is previously unacquainted with Milo, but a friend has provided him with a letter of introduction. The old woman who directs Lucius to Milo's house notes as a sign of Milo's meanness that, although he is a wealthy man, the only inhabitants of his house are his wife and a single female slave. Lucius knocks at Milo's gate and his knocking brings the slave, Photis, to the gate. The rudeness of the house is apparent in her interrogation of the visitor. When Lucius presents her with the letter of introduction, she again bars the gate as she brings the letter inside to Milo.¹ Acts of the Apostles presents a scene with similar details, set in another urban environment in the Eastern Empire, Jerusalem. After King Herod orders the killing of James, the brother of John, he orders the arrest of Peter. The night before Peter is scheduled to appear before Herod, an angel appears in his cell and releases his chains. The angel leads Peter past the guards. The iron gate opens for them, and they go into the city. Realizing where he is, Peter proceeds to the house of his fellow believer Mary. A prayer meeting is in progress at her house. When Peter pounds on the gate, Rhoda, a slave, arrives at the gate to see who is causing the disturbance. Like Photis, she leaves the visitor at the gate while she runs into the house to report the appearance of the visitor, although the text attributes her behavior not to rudeness but to flustered joy (12:2–14).²

The appearance of these two slaves when visitors knock at the gates of the houses in which they dwell ushers us into the world of urban slaves in the Eastern Empire. Both Photis and Rhoda live in modest slaveholding establishments. Households with a hundred or more slaves existed but were far less numerous than smaller slaveholding establishments, families that held one or two slaves or a half dozen slaves. In

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contrast to the miserly Milo with his single slave, the traveler Lucius is eventually joined even on his travels by two of his own slaves, who follow him on foot. Milo's hospitality to Lucius extends to these two slaves. This is only a minor act of generosity; hosting a few extra slaves causes Milo little trouble. Apuleius mentions the crude mattress shared by Lucius's slaves when its relocation to a place in the courtyard farther from Lucius's door signals that Photis has been preparing for an evening of erotic activity with the visitor. One of these slaves later arises from a heap of straw in the stable to beat a troublesome ass, whom he fails to recognize as his master, Lucius, transformed. Acts of the Apostles does not specify the extent of Mary's slaveholdings, but we may infer that she does not have an opulent household. Rhoda does not seem to be exclusively a gatekeeper: she must come to the gate when she hears the knocking.

By contrast, a grander household would feature a slave for whom gatekeeping was an exclusive duty. For example, in the Gospel of John a woman who seems only to serve as a gatekeeper guards the entrance to the high priest's complex.³ The *Acts of Paul* includes a reference to the enslaved doorkeeper of Thecla's household because he serves as a witness to her nocturnal comings and goings.⁴ Seneca remarks on a surly doorkeeper who expects visitors to drop a small coin in his hand as he lets them cross the threshold. The wise visitor placates the doorkeeper, says Seneca, "as one quiets a dog by tossing him food."⁵

Gatekeepers, cup bearers, hairdressers, *paedagogi* accompanying young masters through the streets to school—roles played by domestic slaves in antiquity may seem at odds with images of slaves' work influenced by the paradigm of heavy slave labor on the cotton producing plantations of the American South. Domestic slaves did not always contribute to the wealth of the household, while the costs of maintaining the household increased with every slave. ("The only servant he [the miserly Milo] feeds is one young girl," says the innkeeper as she supplies the traveler Lucius with information about his prospective host.⁶) Reliance on slaves as a source of wealth or income, however, is only one dimension of the anthropology of slavery.⁷ Paul Bohannon, who defines slavery in terms of a servile antikinship relationship in which the slave is subject to sale, notes: "The content of the master-slave relationship may vary greatly. One or the other aspect may be emphasized: economic, domestic, religious, sexual, or whatever. Any attempt to classify systems of servility in terms of the economic obligations and positions of the slave is to assume that this one point provides an index for the rest, when in fact such a situation must be shown empirically to exist or not to exist."⁸

Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon. The relationships of slavery with which Paul was acquainted would have been principally the relationships of urban slavery. Slaves in Corinth or Philippi would not have been miners or agricultural laborers but, for example, craftspeople, prostitutes, managerial agents, and domestic slaves, including those whose domestic duties included sexual obligations. How would a new identity as a Christian affect an urban slave, and how did the presence of slaves and slaveholders in the population affect the growth and practices of the churches? Ancient understandings of slaves as bodies will again inform my analysis. I situate the slaves and slaveholding households of the Pauline orbit in the context of the practices of slavery in the early Empire before I narrow my focus to a consideration of the (in)compatibility between enslaved and thus sexually vulnerable bodies and the strictures of purity demanded within the Christian body.

A Walk through the Streets of a Provincial City

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Who were the slaves that Paul encountered in the course of his travels? Where and in what contexts did he encounter them? Acts of the Apostles includes one account of a slave whom Paul met in the streets of Philippi. The unnamed female slave (*paidiskē*) was possessed by a "Pythian" spirit, who spoke through her. The slave's oracular powers were a source of income to her owners and a source of annoyance to Paul and his companions. The woman followed after them, calling out that they were "slaves of the most High God." A first-century traveler like Paul would not have been surprised to run across a fortune-teller plying her trade in the street. Fortune-telling was a common phenomenon in antiquity. Scraps of papyri record the questions that unknown persons from antiquity posed to fortune-tellers: questions about love and marriage, trade, gambling, and childbirth.⁹ Residents of Mediterranean cities would routinely have chanced on fortune-tellers. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius tells Milo of the predictions he received from an itinerant fortune-teller, and Milo replies by sharing the story of his own encounter with the same seer.¹⁰ According to Acts of the Apostles, Paul responded to the enslaved fortune-teller by performing an exorcism, which rid her of the possessing spirit and thus deprived her owners of a sure source of revenue.¹¹

The slave practiced her lucrative trade publicly, in the streets. Evidence that female slaves and other women of humble status moved freely in urban streets and squares modifies the scholarly generalization that public spaces were “male” whereas private spaces were “female.” In the Hellenistic Jewish narrative of Judith, for example, Judith's confinement to her home at the beginning and end of the story establishes her status as a respectable free woman of considerable means. It seems natural, however, for her female slave to travel through the streets, with no apparent companion, to invite the elders to a meeting in Judith's house. In an article on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jerome Neyrey argues that the woman's presence in a public space, at noon, and engaged in conversation with a stranger, marked her as “deviant.” Neyrey's assessment of the Samaritan woman as deviant because of her presence in a public place at midday can only be sustained if we label as deviant all women of lower statuses (slaves, freedwomen, poor freeborn laborers), a considerable percentage of the female population. To support his characterization of a cultural division between public/male and private/female spaces, Neyrey quotes Philo: “Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men. . . . The women are best suited to the in door life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.”¹² Neyrey fails to note that Philo's articulation of the division between male and female worlds was expressly marked by status considerations. According to Philo, the woman who confined herself to her home except when she went to temple and then chose the hours when the market would be quiet deserved the honorable name of “freeborn lady” (Greek, *eleuthera*). Other literary references that associate women with interior spaces reinforce the impression that gender segregation was a phenomenon based on status and class. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Charisius asks his wife sadly, “Why did you not have regard to your position as a *free woman* [emphasis added] and remain in your house, but go out and listen to vain words?”¹³ Indeed, Philo's commentary on the symbolic division between male and female spheres devolves into a condemnation of women who behave in unseemly ways in public spaces, specifically, women who argue and fight in the marketplace.¹⁴ Philo's censure hinges on the everyday presence of women in markets and other public places—and many of the women buying, selling, bargaining, and fighting in the marketplace would have been slaves.

p. 42 As Paul traveled from city to city, then, he would have found it impossible to avoid contact with slaves. When he went to the marketplace to find other craftspeople or to purchase food for dinner he would have mingled with both male and female slaves. A wide variety of evidence attests to the ubiquitous presence of slaves in marketplaces. In the *Life of Aesop*, for example, the slaveholder Xanthus orders his slave Aesop to cook dinner for a gathering of his pupils. Not only does Aesop serve as cook, he also goes to the marketplace to buy the provisions for the meal. The other shoppers he encounters in the marketplace would have included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, as well as freeborn folk of the lower economic strata. The merchants would have been of equally modest status. Funeral epitaphs of slaves as well as freedmen and freedwomen list such occupations as fishmonger, salt vendor, and grain merchant.¹⁵ Kathleen E. Corley has argued that the saying of Jesus comparing his generation to children in the marketplace may refer more plausibly to slaves sent by their owners to the marketplace to look for work as entertainers at a banquet.¹⁶ “They are like children [*paidiois*, which Corley proposes translating as “slaves”] sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.’”¹⁷ Paul would have encountered slaves in the homes of the men and women who offered him hospitality. Even before he entered those homes, however, he would have interacted with slaves as he made his way around urban streets throughout the Empire.

Working Bodies: Occupations of Slaves

Slaves could be found in every occupation in Greco-Roman cities.¹⁸ The men who maintained the furnaces in the baths were often slaves. The women who served beer in beer shops were often slaves and, for that matter, often prostitutes. Slaves worked in pottery factories and on farms, in mines and as shepherds. In smaller establishments a slave might have multiple jobs. Slaveholders provided official notifications of the deaths of slaves in order to avoid capitation taxes. These death notices typically referred to the slave's trade. They sometimes stated the deceased slave was not skilled in any particular trade.¹⁹ The staffs of larger households included slaves who managed the accounts and oversaw other slaves as well as slaves who carried household waste to public dump sites.

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Evidence is extensive for the involvement of slaves in the production of commodities, where they typically worked alongside free laborers. For example, during the early Empire, Arezzo was a center for the manufacture of red-glazed pottery. In workshops ranging in size from a dozen to sixty workers, slaves crafted pottery, which they marked with their own names.²⁰ Slaves were ubiquitous in all ranks of garment workers, from weavers to dyers to seamstresses. Papyri that listed the occupations of slaves often cited weaving as a trade. An early third-century guardian's account of the financial status of his wards, two minor boys, listed the wages earned by a female slave employed as a weaver. The text's modern editor notes that the slave's wages were sufficient to lift the account into the profitable range.²¹ A sheaf of apprenticeship contracts suggests that slaveholders often sent female slaves, less often male slaves, to learn the trade of weaving.²² Such contracts delineated responsibilities for feeding and clothing the enslaved apprentice and specified the holidays the slave would enjoy while working under the weaver. Benefits to the slaveholder were multiple. The slaveholder received remuneration for the slave's labor during the time ↵ of the apprenticeship. At the same time, the slave became more valuable to the slaveholder as she became more skillful in the designated craft.

Along with labor in workshops, fields, and markets, slaves advanced their owners' financial ends through serving as financial agents and managers of all kinds. Ostraca document the activities of slaves who served as financial agents, often with some autonomy. At least in Egypt, Roman families living abroad, including members of the imperial family, were most likely to rely on slaves as agents.²³ Jesus alluded in the parables to slaves who managed other slaves, some serving their owners more faithfully than others.²⁴ As overseers, slaves could exercise considerable power over other slaves within the household, but even outside the structure of the household a slave could manage a slaveholder's fortune. A well-documented example of a slave heavily involved in financial management comes from a villa in the vicinity of Pompeii. Wax tablets excavated there record the activities of a slave named Hesychus, who acted as his owner's agent in loaning 10,000 sesterces to an importer of foodstuffs named C. Novius Eunus. Hesychus also coordinated the rental of extensive food storage facilities. Moreover, this trove of tablets reveals some of the material benefits that could accrue to a slave entrusted with financial affairs. Within months of expediting his master's loan in 37 C.E., Hesychus became a creditor in his own right through a loan of 3,000 sesterces to C. Novius Eunus.²⁵ Only a minority of slaves had such lucrative opportunities. The overseer parables, for example, call attention to the (praiseworthy or culpable) activities of the slave entrusted with affairs of the household. The parables allude to a greater number of other household slaves, under the supervision of the overseer, who held less-responsible positions. The ascendancy of a Hesychus was thus neither a norm for slaves nor an anomaly. (Chapter four, which analyzes the parabolic figure of the slave, examines at greater length the evidence regarding managerial slaves.)

It is difficult to assign a single job title to capture the work obligations of a slave in a small slaveholding establishment. A second-century contract from Oxyrhynchus gives an idea of the range of duties a slave who belonged to a more humble master or mistress might have to perform. Glaukos leased his slave Tapontos, a weaver, to Achillas for a period of a year. The lease specified that Achillas would be responsible for Tapontos day and night. However, Glaukos retained the right to send for Tapontos during the night to make bread.²⁶ Clearly, Glaukos's establishment was not large enough to include a full-time baker, as one would expect to find in a wealthy household.

Our sources typically distinguish between urban and rural slaves. The opening act of Plautus's *Mostellaria*, for example, features banter between a country-bumpkin slave and a scheming city slave with a superior attitude. The distinction between urban slaves, belonging to the *familia urbana*, and rural slaves, belonging to the *familia rustica*, was predicated as much on the slaves' duties as on their place of residence.²⁷ Smaller slaveholding households would not have included sufficient staff to maintain this demarcation. The Gospel of Luke includes a parable of Jesus in which an agricultural slave doubles as a cook and domestic attendant: "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink.'"²⁸

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Jesus' parable does not evoke a vision of life on a vast estate, such as the extensive landholdings that dominated the landscape in Sicily and the Italian peninsula, but a ↵ smaller slaveholding household in which a slave's multiple and varied duties ranged from agricultural and pastoral tasks to food preparation and service. In larger slaveholding establishments, slave labor could be highly specialized. Clement of Alexandria, for example, disapproved of bloated household staffs, with some slaves "to prepare and make the pastries, others to make the honey cakes, and still others to prepare the porridges."²⁹ Josephus

mentioned that Herod the Great was especially fond of three of his eunuchs, each of whom had extremely limited duties. One eunuch did nothing but pour Herod's wine. Another served his food. A third eunuch, who shared Herod's bedchamber, helped Herod as he prepared for bed.³⁰

Domestic slaves probably outnumbered slaves engaged in productive or managerial work.³¹ The horrors of life in the mines or on the vast agricultural estates of Sicily in many ways dwarfed the indignities of life as a domestic slave. Nonetheless, Keith Hopkins has argued, "Roman literature abounds with stories of incidental cruelty to individual domestic slaves. . . . Domestic slaves stood in the front line. They were more privileged and pampered than the tens of thousands of slaves who labored without hope in the fields and mines. . . . But domestic slaves also had more contact with their owners, and were more often subjected to their despotic whimsy."³²

In smaller households the very slaves who contributed to the production of commodities would also have been involved in household tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, removing waste, and caring for children. Along with producing clothes for sale, a slave skilled in wool working could also produce clothing for members of the household. In larger households the tasks performed by domestic slaves would be highly specialized. Thus, on a continuum, the slave in the Lukan parable moved from work in the fields to waiting on the master at the table. Aesop not only shopped for food but also prepared and served it to his master and his master's guests. A wealthier household would have multiple slaves dedicated to particular cooking specialties. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius the ass eventually falls into the hands of two kitchen slaves, one specializing in sweets and the other in sauces.³³

Descriptions of banquets suggest that elaborate household staffs would enhance the self-image of some slaveholders. The more frivolous a slave's task, the clearer the evidence of the owner's wealth. In the *Satyricon*, Encolpus describes the scene as he enters Trimalchio's banquet, where Trimalchio is playing a ball game with some boys:

If the ball hit the ground, he [Trimalchio] didn't chase it, but had a slave with a bag full of balls give the players a new one. We noticed some other novelties: there were two eunuchs stationed at different points in a circle; one was holding a silver chamber pot, the other was counting the balls. . . . While we wondered at the extravagance of this, Menelaus ran up and said, "*This is the guy who's throwing the party! What you see is only the prelude to dinner.*" As Menelaus spoke, Trimalchio snapped his finger as a signal to the eunuch to hold out the chamber pot for him as he continued to play. After emptying his bladder, he called for water for his hands, sprinkled it lightly on his fingers and then wiped them dry on the head of a young slave.³⁴

Trimalchio has set up this scene as a tableau for his guests so they can witness the extent of his wealth. As Menelaus pointedly observes, "*This is the guy who's throwing the party!*"

Jesus and his followers encountered the slaves of opulent households on those occasions when their activities came to the attention of civil or religious authorities. For example, during the events surrounding the arrest of Jesus, he and his followers had dealings with slaves belonging to the grand household of the high priest. One of the high priest's male slaves had an ear severed during the arrest of Jesus; several of the high priest's female and male slaves accosted Peter to accuse him of accompanying Jesus.³⁵ The Pauline letters and Acts of the Apostles include references to a number of households that included slaves.³⁶ However, on the basis of these texts, we cannot reach firm conclusions about the size of those households nor the degree to which their slaves specialized in productive, managerial, domestic, or sexual duties. We have no evidence to suggest that Paul interacted with slaves or slaveholders in households as lavish as Trimalchio's. Still, when he accepted hospitality from a slaveholder, domestic slaves would have tended to his needs, from washing his feet upon entering the household to preparing the food for communal meals.

Our sources help us detect the shadowy ghosts of slaves proceeding through the streets of Mediterranean cities in the course of their varied duties or laboring in workshops and kitchens. The sources are less helpful when we try to reconstruct the domestic arrangements of slaves. What kind of quarters did slaves occupy? How did the layout of ancient houses facilitate or impede family ties among slaves? Moreover, how did residential layouts shape the quality of relationships among slaves who succeeded in establishing, at least for a time, stable family ties? Literary sources afford scant cues. Archaeological remains are in need of interpretation.

Sometimes slaves lived outside the households of their owners. We have a glimpse into such living arrangements in a legal petition submitted in 60 C.E., in which a slaveholder named Theon complained that thieves had twice broken into the living quarters of his slave Epicharis, who lived in an apartment of some kind in a house in another district.³⁷ More often, slaves lived with their owners. Larger houses had separate slave quarters—dark, cramped, far less ornamented than the rooms in which the head of the household received guests or conducted business. Smaller households did not have separate accommodations for slaves. Regardless of whether the slaves had their own quarters, however, no corner of the household was off limits to slaves. Attending children, preparing food, working on accounts—the slaves, who were integral to every aspect of the household's function, would have been found in every nook and cranny of a house during the hours of work.³⁸ At night, a slave might have slept in a closet that was also used for food storage or curled up in a corner of an owner's bedroom.

The information we have about ancient slave quarters is, at best, minimal. Evidence so fragile cannot sustain generalizations about the quality of domestic life among those slaves fortunate enough to establish (at least temporarily) family bonds. Michele George notes, “The development of slave families is also problematic. In large households separate suites for slaves with considerable responsibilities may have been usual. However, in houses of average size this would have been impossible, and here slave families must have evolved despite proximity to the free household, and in a cultural context with notions of intimacy and personal space which were different from our own.”³⁹ (It seems worth noting that if slaves lived with less privacy than families in modern industrialized societies, so too did slaveholders.) Envisioning the domestic configurations of a family of slaves owned by a modest slaveholding establishment is difficult. Did they enjoy common leisure time? Where did they congregate? Were they able to spend time with one another without intrusions from their owners or, for that matter, from other slaves in the household? The questions become still more complex when we try to imagine the domestic relations among a family of slaves with multiple owners or the domestic relations among a family that included freedpersons as well as slaves.

Our inability to envisage how slaves arranged their family time and space should not be construed as evidence of a failure on their part to do so. Dale Martin has reviewed funeral epitaphs from various regions in the Empire. The dedications of these epitaphs most commonly indicate that an immediate family member (spouse or child) of the deceased was responsible for the memorial. This held true for slaves and freedpersons as well as for freeborn persons. Martin encourages caution, however, in drawing conclusions based on the epitaphs. We cannot easily infer from epitaphs, which employ stereotyped formulas of affection and respect, the actual feelings that ancient family members had for one another. Most slaves from antiquity were not remembered in formal epitaphs, which suggests that the slaves so memorialized represented an atypical cross-section of ancient slaves. Nonetheless, the picture sketched by the epitaphs is remarkably consistent. At least in death and most likely in life, the slaves who dedicated epitaphs to one another valued their life partners and their offspring.⁴⁰ We do not know when slave families made time for one another or how they managed to find a place for that time together, but epigraphic evidence suggests that many did so.

Martin concludes that “these [epigraphic] studies illustrate the existence and importance of the immediate family for a significant minority of slaves.”⁴¹ Many more slaves, however, lived and labored under conditions that did not enable them to sustain stable family connections. For example, the sexual demands that slaveholders made on female and young male slaves may have strained family relationships among slaves themselves. Or perhaps not—slaves who cared about other slaves in demand as their owners' sexual playthings did not leave diaries recording their emotional reactions to the intimate violation of their loved ones. Studying architectural remains of private dwellings in Italy and the Eastern Empire tells us only that

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p. 47 Paul's encounter with the slave possessed by an oracular spirit led to conflict with her owners rather than to an opportunity to evangelize her household, although Acts of the Apostles does include four accounts of household conversions. In each case, Peter or Paul gained entry through contact with the head of the household. A dream of Cornelius led him to send two slaves and a soldier to find Peter (10:7). Peter decided to baptize the household when the holy spirit descended on the assembled members, including, presumably, those enslaved (10:44–48). When Paul encountered Lydia, the Lord opened her heart, which led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her entire household (16:14–15). A jailer's experience of God's power in opening the doors of the prison precipitated his invitation to Paul and Silas to preach to his household and then to the household's baptism (16:27–34). Brief mention of the conversion of the synagogue official Crispus notes that his entire household followed his lead (18:8).

The historical accuracy of these summaries is difficult to assess. Luke's theological emphasis is on the power of the spirit at work building the church. Luke supposed that his readers would find nothing amiss when a slaveholder determined the religious practices of the household. Indeed, even contemporary scholars evince little concern about the legitimacy of conversion and baptism of slaves in such circumstances.⁴² Scholars debate whether the household baptisms represented in Acts of the Apostles involved children, but they do not debate whether household baptisms included slaves. They assume and assert that this was the case. Moreover, they do not seem troubled by this assumption. For example, as James Dunn reviews the household conversions in Acts, he equivocates on the inclusion of children in household baptisms but not of adult slaves. Dunn writes of Lydia's situation, "Household here need not include children since the term was commonly used to include household slaves and retainers." Of the conversion of the jailer's household, Dunn writes, "It is equally unclear whether household slaves and other adults *alone* [emphasis added] are in view or also children." Finally, regarding the conversion of Crispus's household, Dunn notes, it is "not clear whether a family is in view or simply the household slaves and retainers."⁴³ Like Dunn and other commentators on Acts, ancient readers would have understood these households to include slaves. Unlike these commentators, however, I think that household baptisms masterminded by slaveholders raise uncomfortable questions about the social dynamics within the Pauline churches, as well as questions about the reception of the gospel by those who participated in the ritual of baptism.

Paul's initial contact in Philippi, according to Acts of the Apostles, was a dealer in purple goods named Lydia. She was a godfearer, that is, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not converted to Judaism. Her openness to Paul's message, we have noted, led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her household (Acts 16:13–15). Paul and his companions accepted her invitation to stay with her, so her house was large enough to accommodate visitors. Whether she was a wealthy woman or a relatively small business agent is not clear, further muddled by the difficulty of identifying social strata of ancient society in terms familiar to modern readers. She could have been a freedwoman who first entered the garment trade when she was a slave.⁴⁴ Perhaps some of those who lived in her house were slave apprentices. Perhaps she owned her workers, or perhaps they were freedmen and freedwomen.

Ivoni Richter Reimer has advanced the hypothesis that Lydia's house was a "contrast society" in a Roman colony. As a female head of household, Lydia was not a *pater familias*. The citizen *pater familias* (Latin, "father of the family," or more generally "head of household") possessed, at least according to law, near total powers over members of the household, especially his offspring (including adult offspring) and slaves. Despite an earlier mention in Acts of the Apostles of a female Christian slaveholder, Mary (12:12–14), Reimer minimizes the likelihood that Lydia was a slaveholder, seeing her instead as an "independent woman. . . who provides shelter for other people in her house." Even conceding that Lydia's home could have included slaves, Reimer claims that Lydia's home was an egalitarian retreat: "Because, for example, there is no longer a *pater familias*, there is no more patriarchal subordination, and all can be equal sisters and brothers."⁴⁵ A later papyrus from Karanis offers a glimpse into a household headed by a female garment worker, which hardly conforms to Reimer's hypothesis that a female-headed household would constitute a contrast society. An apprenticeship contract for a female slave to learn the trade of weaving

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identified Aurelia Libouke as a weaver who had the right to act without a guardian because she had raised three children. Aurelia Libouke agreed to teach the slave the craft of weaving and promised that the slave would attain proficiency suitable for a girl her age. Unlike most apprenticeship contracts, which specified regular holidays throughout the apprenticeship period, this contract stipulated that the slave would be available for labor with no days off for leisure or even illness.⁴⁶ The mere presence of a woman such as Lydia as head of household did not, therefore, transform a household from a hierarchical to an egalitarian structure.⁴⁷ Richard Saller notes, “Though the head of the household was stereotyped as male by use of *pater familias*, in reality Roman women owned property and must often, in the absence of husbands, have wielded power over households with dependents. This gendered language causes historians to lose sight of female heads of households, even when they know better.”⁴⁸

The baptism of her household was Lydia's initiative. Luke does not suggest that the motivations or reactions of other household members concerned either Lydia or Paul. Acts of the Apostles does not present the Christian message as a challenge to slaveholding authority. Through the representations of household baptisms in Acts of the Apostles, Luke reinscribes the power of the head of the household over the lives of those in the house, including resident adult slaves. Chris Frilingos has argued that, in his letter to Philemon, Paul employed the vocabulary of family in such a way as to establish himself as the affectionate and commanding *pater familias* with authority over both slave and slaveholder. In this picture of Christian origins, the new Christian community unsettled existing hierarchical modes of relating among members of Christian households, even between slaveholders and slaves.⁴⁹ In contrast, by suggesting that the spirit responded to the invitations of slaveholders, household by patriarchal household, Acts of the Apostles treats enslaved members of households as dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders.⁵⁰

An authorial propensity to identify with the viewpoint of slaveholders rather than slaves may also influence two summaries of the exodus event in Acts of the Apostles that, curiously, lack any reference to the enslavement of the Israelite people. When Paul preaches at the synagogue in Antioch, he encapsulates the events surrounding the liberation of the Israelites without even a cryptic allusion to the coercive nature of their continuing sojourn in Egypt: “The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it” (13:17). In Stephen's speech before the council, he represents the kings of Egypt as evil not because they enslaved the Israelites who had been their guests but because they promoted infanticide: A king who had not known Joseph came to power, declares Stephen, and he “dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die” (7:19). Although in the nineteenth century African-American abolitionists would celebrate the exodus story as a narrative of God's historical intervention against slavery, these first-century synopses of the exodus expunge any memory of the enslavement of the Israelites.

p. 49 Paul identifies the Christian community as the body of Christ. Descriptions of household conversions in Acts of the Apostles suggest that slaveholders played a disproportionate role in the baptisms of their households and therefore a role in the Christian body that derived not from a gift of the spirit but from their secular status. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to a message he received from “Chloe's people,” members of Chloe's household, probably her slaves.⁵¹ Since Paul expected his readers to be familiar with Chloe, he had no reason to specify whether she was herself a Christian. She may well have been. If she was a believer, Paul's reference to “Chloe's people” hints that Christian slaveholders had a higher profile within the church than enslaved members of their households who were also baptized, an impression entirely consistent with Luke's depiction of the movement of the spirit in Acts of the Apostles. According to Acts, Peter and Paul gained access to households not through humble members of the household—children or slaves—but through their heads. Slaveholders chose baptism not only for themselves but also for others who belonged to them, including, presumably, enslaved adult members of the household. What was the position of these enslaved bodies within the Christian body? Given the circumstances of a household baptism, could slaves' experiences as members of the Christian community obliterate the disadvantages of their slave status, even within the cult?⁵²

Travelers to the towns and cities of the Roman Empire customarily sought shelter with those they knew, or they carried letters of introduction from families and friends. When Lucius, the hero of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, arrives in the town of Hypata in Thessaly, he inquires at a public inn for the home of Milo. Lucius is previously unacquainted with Milo, but a friend has provided him with a letter of introduction. The old woman who directs Lucius to Milo's house notes as a sign of Milo's meanness that, although he is a wealthy man, the only inhabitants of his house are his wife and a single female slave. Lucius knocks at Milo's gate

and his knocking brings the slave, Photis, to the gate. The rudeness of the house is apparent in her interrogation of the visitor. When Lucius presents her with the letter of introduction, she again bars the gate as she brings the letter inside to Milo.¹ Acts of the Apostles presents a scene with similar details, set in another urban environment in the Eastern Empire, Jerusalem. After King Herod orders the killing of James, the brother of John, he orders the arrest of Peter. The night before Peter is scheduled to appear before Herod, an angel appears in his cell and releases his chains. The angel leads Peter past the guards. The iron gate opens for them, and they go into the city. Realizing where he is, Peter proceeds to the house of his fellow believer Mary. A prayer meeting is in progress at her house. When Peter pounds on the gate, Rhoda, a slave, arrives at the gate to see who is causing the disturbance. Like Photis, she leaves the visitor at the gate while she runs into the house to report the appearance of the visitor, although the text attributes her behavior not to rudeness but to flustered joy (12:2–14).²

The appearance of these two slaves when visitors knock at the gates of the houses in which they dwell ushers us into the world of urban slaves in the Eastern Empire. Both Photis and Rhoda live in modest slaveholding establishments. Households with a hundred or more slaves existed but were far less numerous than smaller slaveholding establishments, families that held one or two slaves or a half dozen slaves. In contrast to the miserly Milo with his single slave, the traveler Lucius is eventually joined even on his travels by two of his own slaves, who follow him on foot. Milo's hospitality to Lucius extends to these two slaves. This is only a minor act of generosity; hosting a few extra slaves causes Milo little trouble. Apuleius mentions the crude mattress shared by Lucius's slaves when its relocation to a place in the courtyard farther from Lucius's door signals that Photis has been preparing for an evening of erotic activity with the visitor. One of these slaves later arises from a heap of straw in the stable to beat a troublesome ass, whom he fails to recognize as his master, Lucius, transformed. Acts of the Apostles does not specify the extent of Mary's slaveholdings, but we may infer that she does not have an opulent household. Rhoda does not seem to be exclusively a gatekeeper: she must come to the gate when she hears the knocking.

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By contrast, a grander household would feature a slave for whom gatekeeping was an exclusive duty. For example, in the Gospel of John a woman who seems only to serve as a gatekeeper guards the entrance to the high priest's complex.³ The *Acts of Paul* includes a reference to the enslaved doorkeeper of Thecla's household because he serves as a witness to her nocturnal comings and goings.⁴ Seneca remarks on a surly doorkeeper who expects visitors to drop a small coin in his hand as he lets them cross the threshold. The wise visitor placates the doorkeeper, says Seneca, "as one quiets a dog by tossing him food."⁵

Gatekeepers, cup bearers, hairdressers, *paedagogi* accompanying young masters through the streets to school—roles played by domestic slaves in antiquity may seem at odds with images of slaves' work influenced by the paradigm of heavy slave labor on the cotton producing plantations of the American South. Domestic slaves did not always contribute to the wealth of the household, while the costs of maintaining the household increased with every slave. ("The only servant he [the miserly Milo] feeds is one young girl," says the innkeeper as she supplies the traveler Lucius with information about his prospective host.⁶) Reliance on slaves as a source of wealth or income, however, is only one dimension of the anthropology of slavery.⁷ Paul Bohannon, who defines slavery in terms of a servile antikinship relationship in which the slave is subject to sale, notes: "The content of the master-slave relationship may vary greatly. One or the other aspect may be emphasized: economic, domestic, religious, sexual, or whatever. Any attempt to classify systems of servility in terms of the economic obligations and positions of the slave is to assume that this one point provides an index for the rest, when in fact such a situation must be shown empirically to exist or not to exist."⁸

Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon. The relationships of slavery with which Paul was acquainted would have been principally the relationships of urban slavery. Slaves in Corinth or Philippi would not have been miners or agricultural laborers but, for example, craftspeople, prostitutes, managerial agents, and domestic slaves, including those whose domestic duties included sexual obligations. How would a new identity as a Christian affect an urban slave, and how did the presence of slaves and slaveholders in the population affect the growth and practices of the churches? Ancient understandings of slaves as bodies will again inform my analysis. I situate the slaves and slaveholding households of the Pauline orbit in the context of the practices of slavery in the early Empire before I narrow my focus to a consideration of the (in)compatibility between enslaved and thus sexually vulnerable bodies and the strictures of purity demanded within the Christian body.

Paul claimed that membership in the body of Christ dissolved barriers between slave and free.⁵³ Largely on this basis, scholars have inferred that slave status did not entail any special liabilities for participation in the Christian community. However, because slaves were their masters' sexual property, their obligations to their masters would at times have included actions defined as polluting or aberrant in the Christian body. Slaves whose owners were not members of the church would have been especially vulnerable, since their owners would not have been subject to the community's censure. The argument of the remainder of this chapter has two stages. The first stage analyzes evidence concerning slaves and their lack of control over sexual activity in the ancient Mediterranean world. Ancient texts record acceptance of masters' control over their slaves' sexuality and establish a strong link between slavery and prostitution. The second stage of the argument analyzes Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 5–7 in light of evidence concerning the sexual vulnerability of slaves.

No New Testament text details the sexual obligations of slaves to their masters.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, consideration of the sexual demands of first-century slavery requires that we revise, or at least qualify, our claims about the composition and practices of Pauline communities. Wayne Meeks's assessment that “a Pauline congregation generally reflected a fair cross-section of urban society” has dominated recent reconstructions of Pauline circles.⁵⁵ To assume that these congregations never encountered potential converts among the many urban slaves who numbered sexual activities among their duties would modify our picture of Pauline communities in an erratic manner. How Pauline communities responded to these slaves is another question. Either the community excluded slaves whose sexual behavior could not conform to the norms mandated within the Christian body, or the community tolerated the membership of some who did not confine their sexual activities to marriage. The first possibility challenges the assumption that slavery did not jeopardize the standing of individuals in the Christian community; the second possibility suggests that Pauline communities viewed some sexual activities as morally neutral.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul advises as an antidote to *porneia* the acquisition and control of a vessel, *skeuos*. What he means by this counsel remains notably obscure. Some commentators believe that he is urging (male) members of the Thessalonian congregation to acquire wives. Other commentators believe that he is urging the Thessalonian Christians to control their own bodies or, perhaps more specifically, their sexual organs. The Christian men of Thessalonika who first received this letter were accustomed to thinking of slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. I suggest that we revisit Paul's advice to the Christians in Thessalonika to ask how the first male recipients of this letter would have understood Paul's instruction that each man should acquire a vessel for himself.

We do not know the extent to which the Corinthian community adapted Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians. I argue, however, that his teachings on sexuality in 1 Corinthians 5–7 would have complicated and even barred the participation of many slaves in Christian life. The passage 1 Corinthians 5 establishes parameters for the discourse, raising the question of what constitutes *porneia*. Paul situates *porneia* as a problem not only for individuals engaged in such behavior but for the entire community. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul explains why a Christian community cannot include a man who frequents prostitutes. Paul's logic is predicated on the incompatibility of prostitution with the Christian life. Enslaved prostitutes who had no control over their owners' decisions to profit from their bodies would thus have been excluded from membership in the Christian body. Finally, Paul's insistence that sexual activity should be confined to marriage (1 Cor. 7) posed difficulties for slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them.

In Paul's understanding, could the Christian body accommodate the sexually available bodies of slaves? That is, would the inclusion of Christians who were legally and culturally unable to protect the boundaries of their own bodies have threatened the maintenance of clear boundaries for the Christian body? Or does the presence of urban, domestic slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?

Concerning the sexual availability of slaves, Moses I. Finley writes, “This is treated as a commonplace in Graeco-Roman literature . . . only modern writers have managed largely to ignore it, to the extent that the fundamental research remains to be done.”⁵⁶ Modern scholars usually overlook the problem of whether slaves' sexual availability affected their membership in the Christian community. The ancient church, however, explicitly considered this question by (at the latest) the third century. *The Apostolic Tradition*, usually attributed to Hippolytus, included in its discussion of baptism a list of those whose participation in the Christian community was proscribed or otherwise regulated.⁵⁷ The situation of enslaved concubines received particular attention. Men who kept concubines could only join the community if they formalized those relationships through legitimate marriages. Enslaved concubines were welcome in the community if they had been faithful to their masters and if they had raised their children. (A complicating factor ↴ unrecognized by Hippolytus is that the owner rather than the enslaved concubine would have decided whether to rear or expose any child born to her.⁵⁸) Contemporary scholars should exercise caution in asserting the relevance of a third-century document to the first-century church. What is striking is that an ancient Christian source articulated separate sexual standards for female slaves (who did not own nor control their own sexual activity) and free men (who did control their own sexual activity), thus calling attention to a moral conundrum intrinsic to the situation of enslaved Christians, which modern biblical scholarship has neglected.

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In Finley's formulation, a chief characteristic of ancient slavery was that slaves were answerable with their bodies.⁵⁹ Such answerability manifested itself in three major ways. First, corporal punishment was largely restricted to slaves, and slaves were in constant danger of corporal punishment. Although others, including sons and daughters of elite Roman families, were legally subject to beatings by the *pater familias*, corporal punishment was symbolically linked to servile status in Roman thought.⁶⁰ Indeed, the nexus between slaves and the whip is a leitmotiv of the comedies of Plautus, as in this exchange between two slaves in *Persa*:

Sagaristo: Down at the mill I've been promoted
To first sergeant in charge of flogging.

Toxilus: Oh, you're an old hand at that; you've earned your stripes.⁶¹

A second sense in which slaves were answerable with their bodies was the practice of requiring all testimony by slaves to be given under torture.

Finally, Finley observed, “The third, qualitatively different and ubiquitous, manifestation of the answerability of slaves with their bodies, [was] their unrestricted availability in sexual relations. . . . Prostitution is only one aspect. More interesting in the present context is the direct sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters and the latter's family and friends.”⁶² Finley adduced as evidence an aphorism of the elder Seneca, which referred to the moral position of the receptive partner in male homosexual encounters: “Unchastity [*impudicitia*] is a crime in the freeborn, a necessity for the slave, a duty [*officium*] for the freedman.”⁶³ While the (im)moral evaluation implicit in the saying is satirical, its presupposition of the availability of slaves for sexual service is germane. Enslaved girls, women, boys, and young men were frequently sexual targets for their masters. Moreover, as Susan Treggiari writes, “The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator.”⁶⁴

Freeborn Roman men typically married in their late twenties or early thirties.⁶⁵ Since Roman society placed little value on men's sexual abstinence, young men often satisfied their sexual desires with household slaves or prostitutes (who were typically slaves). From the man's perspective, one important benefit of such sexual encounters would be that any children conceived in those circumstances would not compete with legitimate children, conceived later, for claims to the estate. For the same reason, many Roman men chose sexual partners who were slaves or freedwomen after their wives' deaths.⁶⁶

Enslaved women were additionally vulnerable to retaliation from wives who knew or suspected their husbands' sexual involvements with household slaves. While some women may have appreciated their husbands' circumspection in seeking other sexual outlets, a ↴ variety of evidence suggests that wives often reacted negatively to slaves who attracted such attention. Sexual jealousy might prompt a wife's resentful notice. A wife might also be angry if she thought her husband had squandered household resources to purchase a sexual partner or to pay for the partner's upkeep. Annalisa Rei notes of the comedies of Plautus,

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“Characteristically, a wife takes action to avenge not a husband's infidelity, but his violation of the property which the couple shares or which even belongs to the wife entirely. The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society.”⁶⁷

The mistress of a household had a variety of means at her disposal for harassing slaves, including physical abuse. In *Genesis Rabbah*, several rabbis commented on the scriptural observation that “Sarai dealt harshly” with her slave Hagar (Gen. 16:6). Rabbi Berekiah speculated that Sarai (Sarah) attempted to humiliate Hagar by requiring her to carry towels and water buckets for bathing or that Sarai slapped Hagar's face with a shoe.⁶⁸ Galen claimed that his mother used to bite female slaves when she was angry with them; Augustine recorded an incident in which his paternal grandmother ordered the household slaves to be beaten because she perceived them to be disloyal to her daughter-in-law, Augustine's mother, Monica.⁶⁹ Given the ancient stereotype that women are less able than men to control their passions, writers may have exaggerated the violence of slaveholding women against their slaves.⁷⁰ Still, we should guard against the equally distorting assumption that a slaveholding woman and a woman she owned would have naturally presented a joint front because of their shared gender identity. Potentially faced with retaliation by their mistresses, many slaves might have preferred to avoid sex with their masters. The choice, however, was not theirs to make.

In the world constructed by the romances, noble young women who were enslaved in unfortunate circumstances were typically able to resist the sexual overtures of their owners. Still, the threat of sexual compromise was constantly present for them. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*,⁷¹ for example, the title characters consummate their marriage before being torn apart. Callirhoe finds herself the slave of Dionysius, a good man who is desperate to sleep with her. She manages to resist until she realizes that she is pregnant, whereupon she sends a message to Dionysius that she is willing to be his wife but not his concubine. Dionysius joyously accepts. Callirhoe convinces her new husband that the child she is carrying is his. What rings true about the episode is the master's desire for an attractive young slave. However, Dionysius's deference to Callirhoe's sexual reluctance is implausible, as is his acceptance of her marriage proposal. Livy's version of the story of Verginia assumes the inability of a woman with the legal status of a slave to protect the integrity of her own body. In Livy's version, Appius Claudius has Verginia legally declared a slave so that her father cannot defend her chastity. Elaine Fantham writes, “It is telling that Verginius should protest in terms of his daughter's status, ‘his daughter would have been dearer to him than life itself if she had been allowed to live free and chaste; but . . . he saw her dragged off to be raped like a slave girl.’”⁷² While the romances drew attention to the sexual vulnerability of their enslaved heroines and heroes, the genre's insistence on happy endings necessitated that those heroines and heroes should preserve their chastity through utterly implausible stratagems. Slaves did not have the legal right nor cultural power to say “no” to their owners' sexual demands.

p. 53 In her dissertation on women in Greek novels, Brigitte M. Egger notes that although the preservation of the sexual integrity of enslaved protagonists is a recurring theme, the romances do not evince concern for the sexual integrity of other enslaved characters.⁷³ Masters in the romances take for granted that their slaves are their sexual property. The excitement of the stories builds on the possibility that noble young women separated from their protective environments will be treated in a way considered appropriate for common household slaves. So too on the stage. In Plautus's *Persa*, a young woman who is caught in a scheme of her father's that involves selling her into slavery in order to reveal that the slave dealer is trafficking in freeborn “merchandise” worries that even a temporary enslavement will deter any decent man from later marrying her. No matter how brief her period of (pseudo)enslavement, for a short time she will not be in a legal or cultural position to guard her chastity.⁷⁴ In Plautus's *Curculio* the slave Palinurus responds with alarm to his master's announcement of plans to seduce a young woman until Phaedromus, his master, specifies that the object of his lust is a slave rather than a proper young woman. Palinurus proclaims, “No one bans or prohibits you from buying what's for sale from this place, if you have the cash. No one prohibits a man from using the public street, so long as you don't cut a path through an enclosed property: so long as you keep off wives, widows and virgins, young men and boys of free birth, make love to anyone you choose.”⁷⁵

The frequency of manumission inscriptions that imply that the freed slave was the master's sexual partner indicates the prevalence of such liaisons in Greco-Roman societies.⁷⁶ One manumission inscription from Delphi in the late first century B.C.E. illustrates the asymmetry in power that persisted even after a master freed his concubine. Kleomantis manumitted Eisias, the mother of his sons. However, he stipulated that she had to remain with him his entire life, “doing everything that is ordered like a slave. . . . If Eisias does not remain or does not do what is ordered, let Kleomantis have the power to punish her in whatever way he

wishes, by beating her and selling her.”⁷⁷ Far from the respect accorded the heroines of the romances, many slaves (and even former slaves) would have encountered physical abuse and the threat of being sold should they resist their masters' advances.⁷⁸

Resistance of male or female slaves to sexual overtures sanctioned by their owners was not acceptable servile behavior. A scrap of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus records a crude proposition or, more accurately, a threat from two males to a third. It reads: “Apion and Epimas proclaim to their best-loved Epaphroditus that if you allow us to bugger you it will go well for you, and we will not thrash you any longer.” Epaphroditus typically appears in the papyri as a name associated with a slave. Here, a young slave, or perhaps a freedman, seems to have two “options”: to submit to unwanted sexual activities or to allow two other men to (continue to) beat him.⁷⁹ The bluntness of the message highlights the implausibility that a slaveholder such as Chariton's Dionysius would respect a slave's privacy and sexual integrity. On the other hand, for every Epaphroditus who resisted such sexual advances and perhaps even saw them as rape, there may have been another slave who accepted sexual overtures with equanimity. For some slaves, cohabitation with a master or, very occasionally, a mistress was certainly a route to what we would recognize as upward social mobility.⁸⁰ Our sources are silent regarding the actual reactions of slaves to their sexual obligations. The silence is revealing. Ancient societies were not concerned with the reactions of slaves to sexual coercion, since the slave had no legal or cultural right to say “no.”⁸¹

A Walk through the Streets of a Provincial City

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Who were the slaves that Paul encountered in the course of his travels? Where and in what contexts did he encounter them? Acts of the Apostles includes one account of a slave whom Paul met in the streets of Philippi. The unnamed female slave (*paidiskē*) was possessed by a “Pythian” spirit, who spoke through her. The slave's oracular powers were a source of income to her owners and a source of annoyance to Paul and his companions. The woman followed after them, calling out that they were “slaves of the most High God.” A first-century traveler like Paul would not have been surprised to run across a fortune-teller plying her trade in the street. Fortune-telling was a common phenomenon in antiquity. Scraps of papyri record the questions that unknown persons from antiquity posed to fortune-tellers: questions about love and marriage, trade, gambling, and childbirth.⁹ Residents of Mediterranean cities would routinely have chanced on fortune-tellers. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius tells Milo of the predictions he received from an itinerant fortune-teller, and Milo replies by sharing the story of his own encounter with the same seer.¹⁰ According to Acts of the Apostles, Paul responded to the enslaved fortune-teller by performing an exorcism, which rid her of the possessing spirit and thus deprived her owners of a sure source of revenue.¹¹

The slave practiced her lucrative trade publicly, in the streets. Evidence that female slaves and other women of humble status moved freely in urban streets and squares modifies the scholarly generalization that public spaces were “male” whereas private spaces were “female.” In the Hellenistic Jewish narrative of Judith, for example, Judith's confinement to her home at the beginning and end of the story establishes her status as a respectable free woman of considerable means. It seems natural, however, for her female slave to travel through the streets, with no apparent companion, to invite the elders to a meeting in Judith's house. In an article on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jerome Neyrey argues that the woman's presence in a public space, at noon, and engaged in conversation with a stranger, marked her as “deviant.” Neyrey's assessment of the Samaritan woman as deviant because of her presence in a public place at midday can only be sustained if we label as deviant all women of lower statuses (slaves, freedwomen, poor freeborn laborers), a considerable percentage of the female population. To support his characterization of a cultural division between public/male and private/female spaces, Neyrey quotes Philo: “Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men. . . . The women are best suited to the in door life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.”¹² Neyrey fails to note that Philo's articulation of the division between male and female worlds was expressly marked by status considerations. According to Philo, the woman who confined herself to her home except when she went to temple and then chose the hours when the market would be quiet deserved the honorable name of “freeborn lady” (Greek, *eleuthera*). Other literary references that associate women with interior spaces reinforce the impression that gender segregation was a phenomenon based on status and class. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Charisius asks his wife sadly, “Why did you not have regard to

your position as a *free woman* [emphasis added] and remain in your house, but go out and listen to vain words?"¹³ Indeed, Philo's commentary on the symbolic division between male and female spheres devolves into a condemnation of women who behave in unseemly ways in public spaces, specifically, women who argue and fight in the marketplace.¹⁴ Philo's censure hinges on the everyday presence of women in markets and other public places—and many of the women buying, selling, bargaining, and fighting in the marketplace would have been slaves.

p. 42 As Paul traveled from city to city, then, he would have found it impossible to avoid contact with slaves. When he went to the marketplace to find other craftspeople or to purchase food for dinner he would have mingled with both male and female slaves. A wide variety of evidence attests to the ubiquitous presence of slaves in marketplaces. In the *Life of Aesop*, for example, the slaveholder Xanthus orders his slave Aesop to cook dinner for a gathering of his pupils. Not only does Aesop serve as cook, he also goes to the marketplace to buy the provisions for the meal. The other shoppers he encounters in the marketplace would have included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, as well as freeborn folk of the lower economic strata. The merchants would have been of equally modest status. Funeral epitaphs of slaves as well as freedmen and freedwomen list such occupations as fishmonger, salt vendor, and grain merchant.¹⁵ Kathleen E. Corley has argued that the saying of Jesus comparing his generation to children in the marketplace may refer more plausibly to slaves sent by their owners to the marketplace to look for work as entertainers at a banquet.¹⁶ "They are like children [*paidiois*, which Corley proposes translating as "slaves"] sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.'"¹⁷ Paul would have encountered slaves in the homes of the men and women who offered him hospitality. Even before he entered those homes, however, he would have interacted with slaves as he made his way around urban streets throughout the Empire.

Bodies for Rent: Slavery and Prostitution

p. 54 Just as the typical slave had little opportunity to resist a master's sexual advances, prostitutes who were slaves had little if anything to say about the work their owners required of them. A suggestion by Margaret Y. MacDonald that Christianity represented an economic threat to slaveholding pimps would require enslaved prostitutes to be in a position to refuse their assigned labor.⁸² This is highly improbable. By the late second century, Tertullian even complained that a persecution of Christians had extended to forcing a Christian woman into prostitution, the first known instance of a practice that lasted until the fourth century.⁸³ Aline Rousselle asks, "Can we say that slaves and prostitutes enjoyed sexual freedom in this sense when we know that the *leno*, or procurer, took them to the ports when he heard that a ship had arrived? We should not imagine that all the young girls who were abandoned and then brought up to be slaves or prostitutes or both, and later freed by a procurer, were *demi-mondaines*."⁸⁴ Roman law and custom suggested that female prostitutes enjoyed a sexual freedom parallel to that of men, but such freedom was more apparent than real. Prostitutes did not choose their sexual partners; they were chosen as sexual partners. In his work on prostitution in ancient Rome, Thomas A. J. McGinn concludes, "This is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power implicit in the exchange of sex for money, an inequality especially notable when the woman [or the male prostitute] is a slave."⁸⁵

Roman law recognized the validity of certain restrictive covenants in the sale of slaves. One of those covenants, *ne serva prostituator*, forbade the buyer (including subsequent buyers) from forcing the slave into prostitution. A buyer who violated a *ne serva prostituator* covenant faced several potential penalties. In some instances the seller would reclaim ownership of the slave. In other instances the buyer would be forced to pay a financial penalty to the seller, who presumably had taken a financial loss in selling the slave under a restrictive covenant. In still other instances the slave would be manumitted as a Junian Latin, without benefit of citizenship. Although the *ne serva prostituator* covenant benefited the slave, the law was essentially concerned with the rights of the original vendor.⁸⁶ Why would a slaveholder impose the *ne serva prostituator* covenant? Slaveholders may have had widely divergent motivations. A promise that a slave would never be prostituted could function as either an incentive or a reward for hard work. A slaveholder who sold his lover could be reluctant for that person to become a prostitute. A slaveholder who sold a son or daughter might have some qualms about the prostitution of his progeny. A slaveholder who sold a slave who had worked as an intimate attendant for his wife might feel that the slave's later work as a prostitute could taint the household. Some slaveholders may have been genuinely concerned about the well-being of slaves

with whom they had interacted on a daily basis. All of this, however, is speculation, since slaveholders did not record their reasons for imposing the covenant.

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The very existence of such covenants highlights Roman awareness both that many slaveholders compelled their slaves to work as prostitutes and that slaves were not themselves in a position to resist such work. Dio Chrysostom described newly enslaved women forced to work as prostitutes who “feel shame and revulsion.”⁸⁷ Slaves would have been aware that the decision whether or not to prostitute them belonged to the master. McGinn points to the practice of forcing Christian women into brothels as evidence that compulsion to work as a prostitute loomed as a potential punishment for slaves: “If some ↪ slave women might be rewarded for their loyal service through exemption from forced prostitution through the imposition of the covenant, others might be punished for their failings through installation in a brothel. We have a glimmer of what might be described as the [*ne serva prostituator*] covenant's ‘evil twin’: a practice perhaps more widespread as a private form of punishment than the sources allow us to see.”⁸⁸

In the Hellenistic world and later during the Roman Empire, exposed infants constituted one supply of enslaved prostitutes.⁸⁹ Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr warned against frequenting prostitutes for fear of committing incest with a daughter one had abandoned in infancy.⁹⁰ Slave dealers had a stake in promoting trade in prostitutes. Prostitutes commanded a higher sale price than other female slaves.⁹¹ Indeed, slave dealers moved easily between the role of *leno* (pimp or procurer) and auctioneer of female flesh.⁹² In the comedies of Plautus, for example, the figure of the *leno* schemes alternately to make money as a pimp and to strike it rich by selling a few prized slave prostitutes to men infatuated with them.

Although Ulpian extended the definition of pimp to include someone who maintained free prostitutes, he primarily defined a pimp as a man who dealt in the services of enslaved prostitutes. McGinn writes, “The pimp who keeps slave prostitutes is emphasized either because this type was more significant as a socio-economic phenomenon or because a special legal reason (not evident to us) required this.” However, he regards the former reason—the high proportion of slaves in the population of prostitutes—as more likely.⁹³ Although contemporary scholars do not have the data necessary to calculate what percentage of prostitutes were slaves, all available evidence suggests a strong correlation between prostitution and slavery.⁹⁴

Whether *most* prostitutes were slaves is a more difficult question. McGinn expresses agnosticism on this point but adds, “It is safe to say that most prostitutes in the provinces were peregrines or slaves before A.D. 212.”⁹⁵ Dominic Montserrat suggests that the documentary evidence is likely to downplay the percentage of slave prostitutes: “Since their ‘bodies’ were entirely at the disposal of their masters, a slave forced to work as a prostitute would need only to be recorded by social rather than professional status—the potential status as prostitute (or dancer or wet-nurse or wool-worker) was implicit in the designation as slave.”⁹⁶ In her study of female prostitution in the Roman Empire, Rebecca Fleming emphasizes the substantial intersection between slaves and prostitutes. She characterizes the institution of prostitution in the Roman world as “part of the slave economy, so though the labor is hers the profits are not.”⁹⁷ Artemidorus's dream logic provides a thoroughly nonscientific confirmation that ancient writers expected prostitutes to be slaves: “A prostitute dreamt that she had entered the holy place of Artemis. She was freed and gave up her prostitution. For she would not enter the temple unless she were to abandon her profession.”⁹⁸ And she could not abandon her profession as prostitute while she still belonged to another.

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Although I am stressing the evidence that links prostitution and slavery, I am not thereby implying that free persons who became prostitutes willingly chose the occupation with any regularity. The documentary evidence from Greco-Roman Egypt suggests that free persons who engaged in prostitution often entered the trade under duress, through dire economic necessity. An indigent woman would not typically establish herself as a prostitute. Rather, another family member, often a father, would set her up as a prostitute because of the family's destitution. Fleming writes, “Female bodies clearly ↪ counted among the economic resources, not only of slave-dealers and owners, but also of any family network.”⁹⁹ Not until the rise of Coptic Christian literature is there any intimation that women enter the ranks of prostitutes to satiate their own lusts.¹⁰⁰ This literature, we may safely surmise, reflects the preoccupations of its authors rather than the erotic appetites of prostitutes.

In 40 C.E., Caligula instituted a tax on prostitutes. This was not a “vice tax,” designed with the ulterior motive of curbing the widespread practice of prostitution. The goal of the tax was to raise revenue. The tax was collected throughout the Empire. In Egypt, the levy on prostitutes was ten times higher than other occupational taxes, suggesting that prostitutes (or their owners or brothel keepers) had sufficient income to pay a very high tax.¹⁰¹ Prostitutes and prostitution were thus common and visible throughout Greco-Roman

cities in the first century. Through collection of the tax on prostitutes, the emperor directly profited from the trade.¹⁰² Furthermore, even the tax code recognized that many prostitutes were slaves: in some locales, records specify how to collect the tax from enslaved prostitutes and their owners.

Popular literature of the ancient Mediterranean often features the character of the enslaved prostitute. Fleming observes that “with one partial exception, slaves fill all literary brothels where the status of their denizens is clear.”¹⁰³ In *An Ephesian Tale*, the heroine, Anthia, is sold as a prostitute and forced to display herself outside the brothel. She manages, improbably, to retain her virginity by pretending to have epileptic seizures.¹⁰⁴ The enslaved prostitute is a familiar figure in the Plautine corpus. The *pseudo meretrix*, a free woman of good reputation whose virtue prevails despite her temporary enslavement, is a stock character.¹⁰⁵ In several plays (*Rudens*, *Poenulus*), a freeborn female is rescued by her long-lost father just before her sale by a *leno*. In another plot line, a clever slave arranges the sale of a woman already enslaved as a prostitute to a man who cares about her (*Pseudolus*). These plots converge in *Persa*, in which a conspiracy entraps Dordalus, a *leno*, into buying a young freeborn woman. When her identity is revealed, she is freed and Dordalus ruined. Through the fraudulent sale, a slave named Toxilus acquires the money he needs to buy from Dordalus the prostitute Lemniselenis, who he desires. Although the formulas of the romances and comedies dictate happy resolutions to these stories, the vast majority of enslaved prostitutes in the Greco-Roman world could not reasonably expect to retain nor regain control over their own sexual practices.

In general, Greco-Roman societies expected that men would frequent prostitutes and did not morally condemn them for doing so. Susan Treggiari writes, “Objections to intercourse with a common prostitute were aesthetic rather than moral or prudential.”¹⁰⁶ Nor was *moral* condemnation of prostitutes themselves common, although prostitutes did occupy a position in society distinct from that of respectable matrons. In a culture whose definition of honor emphasized the preservation of a woman's sexual integrity and a man's sexual inviolability, prostitutes had no honor to preserve.

Nonetheless, many in the ancient world perceived prostitution as pivotal to the smooth operation of the honor-shame system. By diverting the sexual energies of men away from those whose honor mattered, prostitution protected the honor of respectable families.¹⁰⁷ The Greek Anthology includes an epitaph attributed to Marcus Argentarius: “Psyllus, who used to take to the pleasant banquets of the young men the venal ladies that they desired . . . who earned a disgraceful wage by dealing in human flesh, lies here. But cast not those stones. . . . Spare him, not because he was content to gain his living so, but because as keeper of common women he dissuaded young men from adultery.”¹⁰⁸ Dio Chrysostom, the orator and philosopher who synthesized Stoic and Cynic ideas, offered a rare condemnation of prostitution. In doing so, he claimed that many of his contemporaries espoused the view that prostitution was a “wonderful elixir to produce chastity in our cities, your motive to keep those open and unbarred brothels from contaminating your barred homes and inner chambers, and keep men who practice their excesses abroad and openly at little cost from turning to your free-born [*eleuthera*] and respected wives!”¹⁰⁹ Acceptance of prostitution as an inevitable support for the honor-shame rubric was not universal, but many were willing for enslaved women and men to pay with their bodies the price of the chastity of freeborn wives, daughters, and sons.

Traditional Roman religion ritualized the division between prostitutes and other women. Prostitutes claimed a number of Roman holidays as their own.¹¹⁰ April 23, the Vinalia, was the first of two wine festivals; prostitutes celebrated by sacrificing to Venus at her temple outside the Colline Gate. The Floralia (or Ludi Florae) on April 27, dedicated to Flora, the goddess of flowers and fertility, was another festival for prostitutes. More striking perhaps were the celebrations of April 1, the Veneralia, when prostitutes and respectable matrons separately worshiped the forces of love. Prostitutes (and possibly other base-born women) went to the men's baths to worship Fortuna Virilis, while respectable matrons worshiped Venus Verticordia. As Sarah Pomeroy summarizes these Roman ritual practices, “Thus the dichotomy between respectable women and whores was dramatized: the former worshipping an apotheosis of conjugal ideals, the latter worshipping sexual relationships having nothing to do with wedlock.”¹¹¹

These holidays were associated with the city of Rome and were not celebrated elsewhere in the Empire. They are therefore of limited relevance for understanding the structure of religious life in the cities of the Greek East where Paul evangelized. I mention these holidays because they dramatize social (not moral) distinctions between prostitutes and respectable matrons, which pertain throughout the Empire. Roman cultic practice offers a narrow window into the complexity of social relations in ancient Mediterranean societies. During the Matralia, from which enslaved women were generally barred, freeborn matrons ritually beat the single slave woman ushered into the assembly. Scholars of early Christianity often assume

the gospel message broke down walls between slave and free. In what follows we consider the challenge that the sexual availability of enslaved bodies poses to that assumption.

Enslaved Bodies and the Body of Christ

Paul was active in the mid-first century in cities of the Eastern Empire, although he also had contacts in the Western Empire, even in Rome itself, where he spent his final days. Those attracted to his preaching included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, and freeborn men and women, some of whom were slaveholders. Paul insisted that authority within the congregation was a gift of the spirit, given for the building up of community. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Acts of the Apostles records several stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred when he had contact with the head of the household.

p. 58 Corresponding stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred ↳ through contact with a subordinate member of the *familia* (Latin, "family," implying not only biological kin but also slaves and freedpersons attached to the family unit) do not appear in Acts. How accurately Acts of the Apostles represents the history of the early Pauline communities is difficult to ascertain.

As these communities struggled to define themselves as one body in Christ, Paul specified the limits of behavior, sexual and otherwise, compatible with membership in that body. Given the ubiquity of the sexual use of slaves, Paul would inevitably have encountered slaves whose obligations included sexual relations with their owners and those to whom their owners permitted sexual access, including enslaved prostitutes. In this section I examine Paul's advice on sexual matters in light of these wider contexts. I argue that recognition of the somatic obligations of ancient slaves leads us to revise or modify commonly held positions in Pauline studies. We do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the sexual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Christian community, or whether, like others in the first century, Paul and the churches regarded some sexual activity as morally neutral. Two interrelated questions structure the inquiry. First, how does a recognition that slaves were treated as available bodies affect our interpretation of Paul's instructions on sexual ethics? Second, in light of what we have learned about the sexual use of slaves, how does Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, affect our reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a social movement, especially among slaves?

In the late third century, Lactantius proclaimed that Christian men and women should adhere to the same sexual standards. Christian men should not have sexual partners other than their wives, not even slaves. Such an idea was not utterly unprecedented. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, for example, had argued that by engaging in sexual activities with slaves, freeborn men exhibited less self-control than women, who avoided such entanglements. He therefore thought that men should refrain from sexual relations with slaves.¹¹² However, no evidence suggests that this Stoic advice had an appreciable impact on behavior in the Roman world. In contrast, later Christian writers repeated versions of Lactantius's mandate, although they often acknowledged that the reality of people's behavior did not always conform to these scrupulous standards. Ambrose urged men to avoid sexual relations with slaves in order to avoid giving their wives grounds for divorce. Jerome contrasted Christian with pagan morals by alluding to the tolerance that the latter exhibited for liaisons between free men and their female slaves.¹¹³ Jerome wrote, "Among the Romans men's chastity goes unchecked; seduction and adultery are condemned, but free permission is given to lust to range the brothels and to have slave girls, as though it were a person's rank and not the sexual pleasure that constituted the offense. With us what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men."¹¹⁴

Does this view of sexual ethics arise over the course of several centuries' development of Christian thought? Or is this view of sexual ethics implicit in the earliest Christian moralizing on sexual matters as preserved in the letters of Paul? Modern commentators have assumed that Paul found the sexual use of slaves immoral. However, unlike Lactantius, Ambrose, and Jerome, Paul does not refer explicitly to sexual relations between slaveholders and their human property. Given the ubiquity of the assumption that slaves were sexually available to their owners with no moral consequences for the slaveholder, we cannot simply assume that Paul's audience implicitly understood that participation in the body of Christ precluded such sexual activity.

p. 59 We must return to ↳ the Pauline texts themselves. We must see what they say and, perhaps more important, what they do not say.

In several places, Paul exhorts newly formed Christians to abstain from *porneia*. To assume that this instruction includes a tacit prohibition on (consensual or nonconsensual) sexual contact between slaveholder and slave begs the question. The question precisely at hand is whether Paul understands such

relations to constitute *porneia*. Is Paul silent on the question because the sexual use of slaves is abhorrent to him and he expects other Christians to share his perspective? Or is Paul silent on this question because he does not challenge cultural norms regarding the sexual use of slaves?

Musonius Rufus, Lactantius, Ambrose and Jerome all address the moral position of the slaveholder. What of the moral position of the slave? Sensitivity to the moral position of persons who are not in a position to say “no,” who are unable to maintain their bodies as sexually inviolate, invites us to reconsider the consequences of Pauline sexual ethics for slaves who sought membership and full participation in the Christian body. If indeed Christian communities understood Paul's exhortations on sexual matters to preclude carnal contact between slaveholders and slaves, consequences would have differed for those in a position to control their own bodies and those not in a position to protect the integrity of their own bodies. Paul insisted that *porneia* was not primarily a matter of individual conscience. He argued that in order to avoid pollution the Christian community should expel any person who engaged in *porneia*. If we conclude that Paul included carnal relations between slaveholders and slaves under the umbrella of *porneia*, slaves whose owners insisted on using them sexually could be seen as a source of potential contamination in the pure Christian body. Under these circumstances, a slave owned by a non-Christian would be at greater risk than a slave owned by a Christian. A non-Christian slaveholder would have found a request that he abstain from using a slave sexually to be laughable.

Still more tenuous would be the position of an enslaved prostitute who heard the gospel preached and sought baptism and communion with a Christian community. The business of a prostitute (Greek, *pornē*) was *porneia*. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reacts with horror to the presence in the Christian community of a man who had frequented a prostitute. It seems unlikely that he would have responded more warmly to the presence of a prostitute. For at least some denizens of the Roman Empire, the conditions of their enslavement would have created barriers to participation in the life of the Christian body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

The earliest Christian document that we possess, 1 Thessalonians, offers guidance on sexual matters. In giving that advice, Paul refers explicitly to counsel on sexual ethics that he had previously delivered to the Thessalonian church in person. Introducing his advice in 4:3–8, Paul reminds his readers that “you learned from us how you ought to live. . . . you know what instructions we gave you” (4:1–2). Although twenty-first-century readers find aspects of this advice to be obscure, the Thessalonian Christians had the benefit of hearing these remarks in the context of Paul's prior exhortations.

p. 60 The NRSV translation renders the passage with artificial clarity, lending cogency to Paul's advice that is not warranted by his own phrasing: “For this is the will of God, ↳ your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication [= *porneia*]; that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you” (4:3–6; emphasis added). This translation glosses over several difficulties. First, Paul instructed the (male) Thessalonian Christians to abstain from *porneia*, or sexual immorality. Whether Paul understood *porneia* to encompass precisely the field of activities connoted by the modern concept of “fornication” is unclear and even unlikely. Second, by supplying gender-neutral language in place of Paul's gender-specific language, the NRSV translation artificially abstracts Paul's advice from the patriarchal culture in which he wrote. Paul expressed concern that some Christians might wrong their *brothers* in sexual matters, an uneasiness that derived its particular charge from its patriarchal context. The NRSV neutralizes and obscures this context by implying that Paul was concerned with injuries to men or women in the community. Third, and most problematically, in the NRSV translation Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians that it is important that “each of you know how to control your own body.” What Paul actually wrote is that each (male) Thessalonian Christian should know how to “obtain his own vessel.” While some translators and commentators understand this as an idiomatic expression for controlling one's own body or, possibly, sexual organs, other translators take “vessel” (*skeuos*) as a euphemism for wife, so that the passage would encourage the (male) Thessalonians to avoid sexual immorality by obtaining wives.¹¹⁵ I propose a third possibility. Paul's advice could be construed as instructions to the male Thessalonian Christians to find morally neutral outlets for their sexual urges. And in the first century, domestic slaves were considered to be morally neutral outlets for sexual urges—vessels, we might say.

Ernest Best notes, “The attitude of the Christian is now contrasted with that of the pagan, which had been his own only a few months before and which he could not be expected to forget completely on becoming a Christian.”¹¹⁶ Reflecting on the immediacy of that pagan context for the Thessalonian Christians, I find it surprising that Paul did not explicitly reinforce a prohibition on the sexual use of slaves, if he believed that Christianity demanded such a discipline. Commentators and critics typically insist that 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 restricts sexual activity to marriage. David Williams writes, for example, that *porneia* “regularly means to have dealings with a prostitute (*pornē*), but it was also used of any form of illicit sex—illicit from the Jewish/Christian point of view—that is, of any sexual relationship outside of marriage.”¹¹⁷ This reading, however, is a construction of what Williams believes Paul must have meant, rather than a straightforward exposition of what Paul actually said. Paul warned against *porneia*, but he did not define the parameters of *porneia*. As Williams acknowledges, a “restriction of sex to marriage struck the pagan world of that day as odd, for it tolerated and even encouraged, at least in the case of men, various forms of extramarital sexual activity.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, Paul urged the (male) Thessalonian Christians to adhere to more careful sexual standards than those tolerated by the Gentiles. Unfortunately, he did not clarify in what ways the newly formed Christians were to differentiate their behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors. The insistence of contemporary scholars that this advice required Christians to restrict their sexual activity to marriage exceeds what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

p. 61 O. Larry Yarbrough assimilates Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 to the proscription against adultery, “which was of course fundamental to Jewish paraenesis, being one of the Ten Commandments.”¹¹⁹ G. P. Carras argues more broadly that Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian Christians to distinguish their sexual behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors was an admonition to follow Jewish sexual norms. Thus, Carras suggests, Paul would expect the newly formed Christians to avoid incest, homosexual practices, prostitution (although it is unclear whether first-century Judaism univocally condemned prostitution), and adultery.¹²⁰ In the ancient world, however, adultery referred specifically to sexual activity between an honorable married woman (therefore, not a slave) and a man who was not her husband. Carras's argument addresses the behaviors that Paul's counsel would exclude but does not address those behaviors still implicitly permitted by a call to observe the Jewish sexual code, which did not call into question a man's casual sexual access to his own slaves.

The crux of this difficult passage is Paul's advice to “obtain a vessel.” Since antiquity, commentators have debated whether Paul advised the (male) Thessalonians to control their bodies/sexual organs or to acquire wives. Both possibilities present difficulties to the interpreter. What does it mean to obtain or acquire one's own body or sexual organs, for example? While the perfect tense of the verb *ktasthai* could be extended to denote “to possess,” the present tense (which Paul uses) does not have this denotation. On the other hand, referring to a wife as a *skeuos*, a vessel, does not accord her a particularly dignified position. Since neither translation is the obvious choice, Beverly Gaventa advocates translating *skeuos* neither as body/sexual organs nor as wife but literally, as vessel, to preserve the inherent ambiguity of Paul's phrasing.¹²¹ Moreover, translating *skeuos* as vessel leaves open the possibility that the Thessalonian Christians would have understood Paul's counsel to be consistent with the pursuit of other sexual options, which did not infringe on the honor of other free men in the community. (I am not insinuating that Gaventa espouses this final possibility. She writes, “Whatever Paul means in this particular text, it is certain . . . that Paul was opposed to all sexual expression outside of monogamous marriage.”¹²²)

Despite the desire of some critics to see in 1 Thessalonians a representation of “marriage in the sense of full partnership,” Paul's words do not evoke such an elevated view of sexual relations between men and women.¹²³ An appreciation for mutuality and reciprocity in marriage informs 1 Corinthians 7. However, critics should demonstrate and not simply assume continuity between the earlier letter and the later letter. *Skeuos* is a term used to refer to inanimate objects, household goods. Ernest Best rightly suggests that the “rendering wife [which he prefers] appears repulsive to modern thought, but this should not deter us if on other grounds it is the better meaning [as opposed to body], for it would not have been so abhorrent to the ancient world with its very different view of women.”¹²⁴ However, Best then assimilates the passage to the later text in 1 Corinthians: a Christian man is “not to look on her [his wife] as a tool to satisfy his lusts but to appreciate her as a being who with himself is part of God's holy people (1 Cor. 7.2–6).”¹²⁵ Best insists that Paul did not want men to consider their wives as tools. Nonetheless, Paul's advice that, in order to control his sexual urges, a man should “obtain his own vessel” does promote an instrumental attitude toward women.

Some commentators cite the concern that viewing Christian wives as vessels would diminish the significance of marriage to support the argument that the vessel to which ↵ Paul refers is the body/sexual organs.¹²⁶ My suggestion, that Paul's advice to men "to take a vessel" could encompass sexual access to slaves in one's own household, acknowledges that referring to sexual partners as vessels treats them not as ends but as means. Given the pervasive assumption in the ancient world that slaveholders had free sexual access to their human chattel, Paul's failure to iterate, or reiterate, a prohibition on such behavior is peculiar, but he may have delivered a stern warning to the Thessalonians on this matter when he was among them: "you know what instructions we gave you" (4:2a). Modern readers of 1 Thessalonians, however, did not hear those instructions, and we should be wary of assuming that we have easy access to their content. Perhaps Paul instructed the Thessalonians that participation in the body of Christ precluded sexual exploitation of slaves. Perhaps he did not deliver such a charge. However, an admonition to avoid sexual contact with one's slaves would have been sufficiently countercultural that Paul would have done well to return explicitly to the matter when he urged the Thessalonian Christians to contain their sexual urges.

Against this argument, Paul does admonish the Thessalonians that their actions should be "in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions like the Gentiles" (4:4b–5a). Would a man's sexual use of his slaves violate the holiness of the Christian body? If so, how would a newly formed Christian man come to understand that sexual use of slaves would pollute his body? Assuming for a moment that Paul had delivered such instructions in person, would later generations of Christians, who passed this letter along, have preserved and respected that mandate? I emphasize the question of pollution and holiness because a man's sexual use of his own slaves would emphatically *not* have violated first-century notions of honor. Male slaves were considered to be without honor, and female slaves without shame.

Furthermore, Paul supplies as a rationale for his sexual advice that the new Christians are to avoid infringing on each other's sexual rights: "that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter" (4:6a). Scholars sensitive to feminist concerns have resisted the tendency to neutralize the gender-specific language of the passage.¹²⁷ Gaventa writes, "Engaging in sexual intercourse outside marriage involves violating the property rights of another male. On this reading, verse 6 refers to the injustice done a male when another male engages in sexual intercourse with a woman whose sexual activity 'belongs' to him."¹²⁸ However, in the first century, a slave's body, and thus her sexual activity, 'belonged' to the slaveholder. A slaveholder was not infringing on any other male's property rights when he had sexual relations with his own slave.

New Testament critics uniformly assert that in 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male members of the community to avoid sexual immorality by restricting sexual activities to marriage. This is not, however, what Paul says. Whether his words in 1 Thessalonians built on explicit earlier instructions to the community, which specified these behavioral parameters, is a matter of speculation rather than evidence. What Paul actually says is that male members of the Christian community should avoid immorality by "obtaining a vessel." In the first century, many who heard such counsel would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. Moreover, the motivations that Paul offers for confining one's sexual urges are, to a significant degree, consistent with a slaveholder having sexual relations with his own human chattel: the preservation of honor, for example, and respect for the rights of Christian brothers. ↵ Whether a slaveholder's sexual relations with his own slaves would be consistent with the preservation of the holiness of the Christian body is less clear.

Paul expresses no concern for the feelings, experience, or moral struggles of the vessel. Does his silence betoken an indifference to the subjectivity of (free) women or of slaves? How we answer this question may depend on whether we assume that there was continuity or development between Paul's sexual ethics in 1 Thessalonians and in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks sympathetically of the wife's role in marriage, but even there, he does not address a practice that was universally tolerated in the first century: the sexual exploitation of slaves as bodies.

Chapters 5–7 of 1 Corinthians constitute Paul's most extended discussion of sexuality and Christian living. Paul cautions against *porneia*, sexual immorality, in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 and 6:12–20.¹²⁹ In chapter 7 Paul responds to questions the Corinthians had written him about marriage and life in the Christian body. Many commentators suggest that chapter 7 begins a new section in the overall structure of the letter.¹³⁰ Other commentators note that, as Paul begins his response in chapter 7 to the Corinthians' questions, he takes his cue from the previous discussions of *porneia*. A preoccupation with sexual immorality inaugurates and governs Paul's discussion of marriage. Antoinette Clark Wire argues that Paul rehearses the arguments of chapters 5–6 so that his readers will understand the urgency of his concern in chapter 7. For Paul, Wire contends, marriage is the antidote to *porneia*.¹³¹ What relevance did any of this discussion have for enslaved members of the congregation, who could neither resist their masters' sexual demands nor contract legitimate marriages?

Paul begins his discussion of the Corinthians' sexual practices by condemning the community for tolerating a man who had a sexual relationship with a woman who had been (and perhaps still was) his father's wife. Paul labels the relationship an instance of *porneia*. He furthermore claims that this kind of *porneia* is not even found among Gentiles. He expresses surprise that the church has been less scrupulous than the surrounding pagan world in delineating the boundaries of appropriate sexual conduct: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife."¹³² Paul advises, "When you are assembled . . . you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."¹³³ Drawing on the metaphor of yeast permeating an entire batch of dough, he encourages them to remove the incestuous man from their midst. In the future, he says, they should not tolerate the presence of immoral persons in their community: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy. . . . For what have I to do with judging those outside?"¹³⁴

p. 64 The phrasing of Paul's complaint implies that individuals and groups could vary in their perceptions of what constituted *porneia*. Even in the first century this was a category open to interpretation. Paul's purpose is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of *porneia*. Not surprisingly, then, he does not address a question immediately relevant to the present discussion: whether sexual relationships between slaves and their masters constitute *porneia*.¹³⁵ As I have argued, a positive answer to this question would not have been self-evident to a Christian congregation whose members had grown up in a social context that accepted the normalcy of such behavior.

The target of Paul's accusation is the Corinthian church rather than the individual man involved in the transgression.¹³⁶ In fact, Paul demonstrates less consternation about the incestuous man than about the community that accepted and perhaps applauded his actions.¹³⁷ Hans Conzelmann suggests, "Paul does not explicitly state the ground of his judgment, because the ground is self-evident: the community is the temple of God (6:19)."¹³⁸ The presence of the incestuous man in the community threatens the soundness of the whole, a threat Paul represents with the metaphor of leavening (5:6–8). Paul alludes to his instructions from an earlier letter to avoid *pornoi*, sexually immoral men, and, presumably, women and clarifies these earlier instructions. The Christian community cannot cut itself off from the world, but it should avoid the intrusion of the world into the community. The church is not a refuge for anyone who practices immorality, and he catalogs those whom he considers immoral, from the sexually immoral to greedy persons to thieves. (See also 6:9–11, in which Paul asserts that the Corinthian community includes some who had formerly numbered among such unsavory characters. Here, as well, Paul lists *pornoi* before other categories of wrongdoers.) Since *porneia* represents such a threat to the well-being of the community it would seem the entire community would have an interest in eliminating it. However, the boundaries of behavior Paul defines as *porneia* remain unclear. Would slaves who submitted sexually to their owners number among the *pornoi*? At stake, although not explicitly addressed, is the status of slaves in the community.

Although Paul is primarily concerned with the health of the community, he is also concerned with the destiny of the transgressing man (5:4–5). However, he expresses no interest in the moral status or destiny of the woman involved.¹³⁹ Commentators generally agree that Paul's lack of interest in the issue indicates that the woman was not a member of the Christian community.¹⁴⁰ Lending credence to this position is Paul's insistence in the same passage that Christians have no business judging those outside the community

(5:12–13). Extending this logic, one might ask whether Paul's silence on the sexual position of slaves indicates that he believes that slaves who are sexually involved with their owners are therefore alienated from the Christian body. Wire proposes that Paul is silent about the stepmother's complicity because she is not in a position to be responsible for her actions, either because of extreme youth or enslavement.¹⁴¹ Wire's proposal recognizes the lack of clarity that surrounds the early Christian community's treatment of slaves' sexual activity, and she may be right. Paul may have believed that the forced sexual activity of slaves was beyond moral judgment. His surviving words do not help us decide the question.

p. 65 The passage 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 offers a variety of challenges for understanding the impact of Pauline Christianity on slaves. Recognition that Greco-Roman slaveholders regarded their slaves as bodies in turn complicates our reading of the chapter. The first-century category of *porneia* does not map neatly onto modern categories of sexual impropriety. The question of whether Paul thought that sexual relations between slaves and ↵ their owners fell in the category of *porneia* (for both slaveholder and slave or for either slaveholder or slave) is especially important. Paul insists that *porneia* represents a threat to the entire community and not only to the individuals immediately involved. A focus on the sexual dimensions of slavery opens the question of why Paul remains silent concerning the woman's complicity in the case of incest he reports in 1 Corinthians 5.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

From the earlier discussion of *porneia*, broadly defined as sexual irregularity, Paul moves to a discussion of *porneia*, more narrowly defined as prostitution. In the centuries before the Roman occupation of Corinth, the city's temples legendarily enslaved a thousand prostitutes.¹⁴² The practice of sacred prostitution disappeared long before Paul arrived in the city, but in the first century Corinth was still associated with secular prostitution. Many Corinthian coins bore the image of Aphrodite, a kind of early advertising for a popular service industry in the city.¹⁴³ As a port city Corinth attracted travelers, a group well known in antiquity for their patronage of prostitutes. Perhaps it was inevitable that a member of the Corinthian church would find his way to a brothel. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul relies on the language of economics and the slave trade to condemn the buying and selling of bodies in prostitution. Given the high proportion of prostitutes who were slaves, the passage raises questions about the implications of Pauline Christianity for slaves.

Paul quotes what seems to be a slogan among some Corinthian Christians: “All things are lawful for me.” He supplies a retort: “but not all things are beneficial.”¹⁴⁴ Paul writes:

The body is meant not for *porneia* [sexual immorality/prostitution] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun *porneia*! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but *porneia* sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit among you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁴⁵ [All second-person pronouns in the passage are plural.]

p. 66 The focus of 6:12–20 is on a Christian male who visits a prostitute. Jouette Bassler writes, “The prostitute is merely a vehicle for sexual freedom; Paul shows no theological interest in her.”¹⁴⁶ Paul reminds the Corinthians that the body is made for the Lord and will ultimately share in the Lord's resurrection. His lack of interest in the prostitute suggests that, unlike the body of the believer, her body “is not destined for resurrection.”¹⁴⁷ Although commentators tend to assume that Paul's lack of interest in the stepmother in 5:1–13 indicates that she was not a member of the community, the thought that a prostitute might be a member of the Christian body seems almost absurd. Dale Martin writes that, for Paul, a prostitute “is not a person in her own right (as if such a thing were imaginable for Paul) but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The possibility that the Corinthian church might embrace women or men still working as prostitutes is not considered in the secondary ↵ literature. Wire writes: “The fact that Paul does not censure the prostitutes themselves suggests that they are not to his knowledge participants in the community. Yet most cross-class urban groups would include some prostitutes. Paul does say that many Christians practiced immorality before their freedom was purchased by Christ (6:9–11), and

among those could be prostitutes living single or married lives in the community.”¹⁴⁹ Perhaps freeborn or freed prostitutes attracted to the Christian message were able to seek other means of supporting themselves, although this is doubtful.¹⁵⁰ However, enslaved prostitutes would certainly lack such control over their occupation. The scholarly consensus that Paul understood membership in the Christian body to be incompatible with prostitution thus has unrecognized implications for understanding the difficulties that slaves would face in joining the church.

The language that Paul uses to challenge the common assumption that a sexual encounter with a prostitute has no lasting effects on the customer has broad implications for reconstructing his understanding of the nature of sexual activity.¹⁵¹ Paul claims that whoever has sex with a prostitute becomes one body with her and supports his position by quoting Genesis 2:24: “The two shall be one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16). Such a union, Paul says, is incompatible with spiritual union with the Lord (verse 17). Fee clarifies, “It is not the sexual union that is incompatible with Christ, it is such a union *with a prostitute*.”¹⁵² The believer belongs to Christ as a member, so his sexual activities affect the Lord to whom he belongs (verse 15). Martin graphically writes, “The man who has sex with a prostitute is, in Paul’s construction, Christ’s ‘member’ entering the body of the prostitute. Since her body is only part of a larger whole, the cosmos, the simple act of copulation between a man and a woman becomes for Paul copulation between Christ and the cosmos.”¹⁵³ It is hard to see how, on Paul’s view, *any* sexual relations involving a believer could be morally neutral. All sexual relations would affect the Lord and indeed the entire Christian body (6:19–20).¹⁵⁴ Again, the moral status of slaves (including, but by no means exclusively, prostitutes) whose owners insisted on using them sexually remains an urgent question.

Paul relies on the metaphor of buying and selling bodies, of slave trading, to exhort the Christian community to avoid prostitutes. Ironically, Paul configures the male Christian body and the body of the church as objects of sale. The participle that Paul uses to express the Christian’s relationship with a prostitute or with the Lord, *kollōmenos* (6:16–17), implies economic obligation or subordination.¹⁵⁵ In Paul’s view a man who patronizes a prostitute abridges his own freedom by obligating himself to her. Paul urges members of the community to obligate themselves instead as slaves to the Lord.

The image of the slave market becomes more explicit. Paul informs the Corinthian community, “You [pl.] are not your own. . . . You were bought with a price” (6:19b–20a).¹⁵⁶ The price paid is Christ’s death, yet the metaphor also positions Christ as a customer at a slave auction, purchasing the Christian body.¹⁵⁷ This use of language seems ironic in light of the economic realities implicit in the exchanges of prostitution, in which sexual access to a woman’s (or man’s) body is bought and sold. The bodies of enslaved prostitutes were of course subject to an additional kind of sale, that of slave trading. Paul expresses concern for the vulnerabilities of the Christian body (the body of the individual male and the body of the community) without expressing concern for the vulnerabilities of the (frequently enslaved, usually female) prostitute’s body.

p. 67 S. Scott Bartchy seems accurate in his assessment that “Paul did not want any Christian who was in slavery to think . . . that his slave-status was any disadvantage in his relation to God.”¹⁵⁸ Although scholars debate the extent to which “the liminal transcendence of societal oppositions that was declared in baptism” affected patterns of social interaction and hierarchy among early Christians,¹⁵⁹ the assumption that the message of the gospel extended without prejudice to slave as well as free has largely gone unchallenged. However, Paul’s insistence on the fundamental incompatibility between the body of prostitution and the body of Christ seems to leave even those prostitutes who were enslaved beyond the boundaries of Christian community. Paul draws on the metaphor of slave trading to warn the Christian community that it imperils itself when members frequent prostitutes rather than to express concern for the involuntary sexual use of the bodies of slaves, even in prostitution.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses, at some length, questions pertaining to Christians and marriage. Although Paul writes explicitly of the situation of slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24, the relevance of chapter 7 as a whole to the lives of slaves is problematic, since slaves were unable to contract legal marriages. J. Albert Harrill observes that, on the standard view, “Paul’s entire response to the Corinthian congregation on marriage, therefore, has little relevance to slaves.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, by limiting the legitimate range of sexual expression to marriage, Paul implicitly suggests that slaves who oblige their masters sexually are engaged in *porneia*. This section considers how Paul’s advice on marriage shapes our understanding of the challenges faced by enslaved Christians. It also reconsiders Paul’s ambiguous directive to slaves in 7:21 in the context of the sexual dimensions of first-century slavery.

Paul introduces his discussion of marriage by allowing that matrimony protects men and women against *porneia* (7:2). He reinforces this declaration by conceding that, although a single life is desirable, marriage is nonetheless preferable to sexual incontinence (7:9). Continence, then, encompasses both celibacy in the single life and fidelity in the married life; the alternative, it seems, is *porneia*. Although later Christian tradition has often assumed that this demarcation of sexual practice was normative, we have seen that the majority of those living in Greco-Roman cities viewed a wider range of sexual practices as acceptable and ordinary. As we have seen, the master’s right to have sexual relations with one of his slaves was not accompanied by moral judgment against the master or the slave. Christian slaveholders who heard Paul’s words could choose to redirect their sexual attention to their wives. The same is not true for enslaved Christians. According to Wire’s reconstruction, the church at Corinth included a number of powerful women ascetics. She writes, “The life-support arrangements of these women—where they live and what they do—are suggested only indirectly in the various domestic situations Paul describes. Slave women . . . probably retain traditional domestic responsibilities.”¹⁶¹ Wire does not consider the complicating factor that the “traditional domestic responsibilities” of many enslaved women included sexual obligations.

p. 68 Indeed, Paul seems to assume that those whom he addresses in 7:1–16 could freely choose to marry or not to marry.¹⁶² He offers specific advice to various categories of married and unmarried persons.¹⁶³ After addressing those who are married to believing partners and those who are not married, he addresses “the rest” (verse 12). The advice he then delivers pertains particularly to Christians whose spouses are not believers, and commentators accordingly delimit the range of “the rest” to those whose spouses do not belong to the Christian community.¹⁶⁴ Most commentaries do not consider who else *could* be included in “the rest.” They assume that Paul’s list exhaustively covers persons in all possible situations. According to this view, Paul has nothing to say about the options open to enslaved Christians, who could not contract marriages and could be used sexually by their owners. Commentators interpret Paul’s silence about the moral status of the stepmother in a case of incest (5:1–13) and the prostitute (6:1–12) as evidence that these women are not participants in the Christian body. Paul’s silence about the plight of sexually exploited slaves could be construed as evidence that he perceives their (compelled) behavior to place them outside membership in the Christian body.

Harrill has offered the intriguing suggestion that “the rest” in verse 12 includes not only those married to unbelievers but also “those not empowered to marry at all unless enfranchised (7:21–23),” that is, slaves.¹⁶⁵ He makes this proposal as he discusses 7:21, which he translates: “You were called as a *slave*. Do not worry about it. But if you can indeed become *free*, use instead [freedom].”¹⁶⁶ Because of the difficulties of this text, an overview of Harrill’s position is essential.

He begins his discussion of 7:21 with a summary of the long-standing debate over the translation of the verse.¹⁶⁷ As he says, scholars base their translations not only on the syntax of the passage and its immediate context in the letter but also on their understandings of ancient slavery. These understandings often minimize the brutality of Greco-Roman slavery. Fee, for example, who offers a careful discussion of the syntax of the passage, asserts that slavery “provided generally well for up to one-third of the population in a city like Corinth or Rome. The slave had considerable freedom and very often experienced mutual benefit along with the owner.”¹⁶⁸ Along with an analysis of the syntax of verse 21,¹⁶⁹ Harrill provides a discussion of seventeen philological parallels that support his contention that Paul urges slaves to “use instead [freedom].”¹⁷⁰

He concedes that his translation requires Paul first to establish (in verses 17 and 20) and then violate a principle: each should remain content with the state in which he or she was called. Throughout chapter 7,

however, Paul offers exceptions to the rule he has laid down. Although he says that spouses should be content to remain married, for example, he establishes guidelines for spouses seeking separation (verse 11). He encourages those who are single to be content with that status but states that they do not sin if they choose to marry (verse 28).¹⁷¹ This rhetorical pattern helps clarify Paul's logic in 7:21. He encourages slaves not to be disturbed by their bondage but then offers an exception to this principle: "If you can indeed become free, use instead [freedom]."

p. 69 I find Harrill's argument that in 7:21 Paul urges slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom to be convincing. Moreover, I find it plausible that Paul gives such advice in the midst of his discussion of marriage because he is aware that slaves, who are unable to contract marriages, are the sexual property of their owners. Harrill observes that "seizing such opportunities for liberation would have enabled a slave to escape a master's violent coercion and, as a freedman/woman, to secure more control over his or her own body and daily activities to pursue asceticism."¹⁷² (Harrill does not explicitly address the question of sexual vulnerability, although such awareness may be implicit in his formulation.) Some forms of manumission still gave a master control over the freedperson, but freedpersons were in general less vulnerable than slaves to the demands (including sexual demands) of their masters. (Note that this reading of 1 Corinthians 7:21 does not include any claim about how Paul would respond to slaves or freedpersons who were still being used sexually by their owners or former owners—whether he would believe that such activity excluded the slave or freedperson from the Christian body or whether he would perceive coerced sexual activity as morally neutral.)

However, I do not support Harrill's argument that Paul intends to include slaves among "the rest" of verse 12: "To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her." With the majority of commentators, I categorize verses 17–24 as Paul's articulation of his governing principle with two examples: circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery.¹⁷³ His governing principle, again, is that each should be content with the state in which he was called. To include slaves among "the rest" awkwardly leaves an articulation of a general principle with a single illustration (circumcision/uncircumcision) followed by advice to slaves, which only obliquely pertains to the overall topic of the chapter, marriage. I follow the generally held view that when Paul refers to "the rest" in verse 12, he is referring narrowly to the case of Christians whose spouses are not Christians. In articulating the governing principle of the chapter he provides two examples. As he sets forth the second example, however, he is aware of the problematic ramifications of slavery with respect to sexual expectations and marital status, so he also offers one of the many exceptions that he scatters throughout the chapter.

We have seen that Paul rejects the idea that sexual couplings can be a matter of moral indifference (1 Cor. 6:16), and he furthermore implies that all sexual unions involving Christians have implications for the entire community (1 Cor. 6:15–20). The passage 1 Corinthians 5–7 is marked by a concern for the integrity of the Christian body, which encompasses a desire to confine sexual activity to marriage, a standard to which many slaves would not have been able to adhere. Despite Paul's belief that servile status should not affect one's life in Christ, many slaves may well have found that sexual demands made by their masters complicated their membership in the Christian body. We simply do not know how Paul responded to the situation of slaves who were used sexually by their owners. Perhaps, however, concern over this vulnerability prompted him to advise slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom as they arose.

Body Politics

p. 70 Bartchy writes that, according to Paul's understanding, God's call in Christ "had made irrelevant every particular social and religious status."¹⁷⁴ The assumption that servile status was in no way a disadvantage with respect to one's membership in the church has been pervasive in discussions of New Testament texts pertaining to slavery. James D. G. Dunn argues, "If 'Christ is everything and in everything,' then nothing can diminish or disparage the standing of any one human in relation to another or to God."¹⁷⁵ J. N. Aletti claims that Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 indicate that there was no disparity in the "capacité éthique des croyants."¹⁷⁶ F. F. Bruce asks, "What real difference could there be for a Christian between bond and free?"¹⁷⁷ In making such statements, New Testament scholars ignore the ancient equation between slaves and bodies. Even if we assume—and it is a major assumption—that Christian masters did not force their slaves to provide them with sexual services, pagan masters would not have shared such scruples about the bodies they owned.

Although New Testament texts are silent on the sexual availability of slaves, a vast array of Greco-Roman sources assume that masters had unlimited sexual access to their slaves. In 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male Christians to avoid *porneia* by obtaining their own vessels. Accustomed to relying on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets, the newly converted Thessalonian Christians could easily have construed these words as advice to maintain the honor of respectable freeborn Christians by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations. Indeed, it is strange that Paul does not explicitly condemn the sexual use of slaves if he believes this practice to be inconsistent with the Christian ethos. New Testament scholars have uncritically assumed that later Christian rejections of the sexual use of slaves are already implicit in the earliest Christian document we possess.

A slaveholder had the right to profit from a slave's body by forcing her or him into prostitution. Paul's unequivocal separation of the body of prostitution from the body of Christ would seem to exclude all prostitutes, even enslaved prostitutes, from membership in the church. More subtle would have been the problems faced by slaves whose masters used them sexually. In 1 Corinthians Paul distinguishes sexual relationships within marriage from all other sexual relationships, and he encourages the Corinthian Christians to confine their sexual practices to marriage. Perhaps this is one reason he encourages slaves to seek a change in their status when possible, taking advantage of opportunities for freedom. We do not know precisely how Paul responded to the situation of slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them. However, attention to this dimension of ancient slavery makes it impossible to maintain both that servile status was no impediment to full involvement in the Christian body *and* that within the Christian body the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife.

Paul believes that baptism breaks down the barriers between slave and free (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). (It may be useful to differentiate between the claim that for those in Christ there are no distinctions between slave and free and the claim that slavery presents no obstacles to those who want to join the Christian body. In fact, Paul never clearly makes the latter claim, which has been repeatedly made for him by modern scholars.) Bruce notes that it would have been easier for Paul than for an enslaved person to maintain the position that slave status was irrelevant for those in the church.¹⁷⁸ John M. G. Barclay has argued that masters and slaves in the same church would have found it difficult in practice to transcend those roles. For example, a slave might have found it very hard to follow Paul's advice to admonish a member of the community who had transgressed, if that transgressor were his or her owner.¹⁷⁹ We have seen that Acts of the Apostles accords householders (who would have been slaveholders) a disproportionate role in fostering the growth of the church, a picture that raises even more questions about the dynamics between slave and free members of the Christian body. Although Paul himself minimizes the significance of servile status, we do not have the coeval words of slaves, describing their own attempts to live a new life in Christ. In a society that represented and treated slaves as bodies, ecclesial incorporation of slaves would have exposed the body of Christ to the somatic vulnerabilities of enslaved members.

Working Bodies: Occupations of Slaves

Slaves could be found in every occupation in Greco-Roman cities.¹⁸ The men who maintained the furnaces in the baths were often slaves. The women who served beer in beer shops were often slaves and, for that matter, often prostitutes. Slaves worked in pottery factories and on farms, in mines and as shepherds. In smaller establishments a slave might have multiple jobs. Slaveholders provided official notifications of the deaths of slaves in order to avoid capitation taxes. These death notices typically referred to the slave's trade. They sometimes stated the deceased slave was not skilled in any particular trade.¹⁹ The staffs of larger households included slaves who managed the accounts and oversaw other slaves as well as slaves who carried household waste to public dump sites.

Evidence is extensive for the involvement of slaves in the production of commodities, where they typically worked alongside free laborers. For example, during the early Empire, Arezzo was a center for the manufacture of red-glazed pottery. In workshops ranging in size from a dozen to sixty workers, slaves crafted pottery, which they marked with their own names.²⁰ Slaves were ubiquitous in all ranks of garment workers, from weavers to dyers to seamstresses. Papyri that listed the occupations of slaves often cited weaving as a trade. An early third-century guardian's account of the financial status of his wards, two minor boys, listed the wages earned by a female slave employed as a weaver. The text's modern editor notes that the slave's wages were sufficient to lift the account into the profitable range.²¹ A sheaf of apprenticeship

contracts suggests that slaveholders often sent female slaves, less often male slaves, to learn the trade of weaving.²² Such contracts delineated responsibilities for feeding and clothing the enslaved apprentice and specified the holidays the slave would enjoy while working under the weaver. Benefits to the slaveholder were multiple. The slaveholder received remuneration for the slave's labor during the time of the apprenticeship. At the same time, the slave became more valuable to the slaveholder as she became more skillful in the designated craft.

Along with labor in workshops, fields, and markets, slaves advanced their owners' financial ends through serving as financial agents and managers of all kinds. Ostraca document the activities of slaves who served as financial agents, often with some autonomy. At least in Egypt, Roman families living abroad, including members of the imperial family, were most likely to rely on slaves as agents.²³ Jesus alluded in the parables to slaves who managed other slaves, some serving their owners more faithfully than others.²⁴ As overseers, slaves could exercise considerable power over other slaves within the household, but even outside the structure of the household a slave could manage a slaveholder's fortune. A well-documented example of a slave heavily involved in financial management comes from a villa in the vicinity of Pompeii. Wax tablets excavated there record the activities of a slave named Hesychus, who acted as his owner's agent in loaning 10,000 sesterces to an importer of foodstuffs named C. Novius Eunus. Hesychus also coordinated the rental of extensive food storage facilities. Moreover, this trove of tablets reveals some of the material benefits that could accrue to a slave entrusted with financial affairs. Within months of expediting his master's loan in 37 C.E., Hesychus became a creditor in his own right through a loan of 3,000 sesterces to C. Novius Eunus.²⁵ Only a minority of slaves had such lucrative opportunities. The overseer parables, for example, call attention to the (praiseworthy or culpable) activities of the slave entrusted with affairs of the household. The parables allude to a greater number of other household slaves, under the supervision of the overseer, who held less-responsible positions. The ascendancy of a Hesychus was thus neither a norm for slaves nor an anomaly. (Chapter four, which analyzes the parabolic figure of the slave, examines at greater length the evidence regarding managerial slaves.)

It is difficult to assign a single job title to capture the work obligations of a slave in a small slaveholding establishment. A second-century contract from Oxyrhynchus gives an idea of the range of duties a slave who belonged to a more humble master or mistress might have to perform. Glaukos leased his slave Tapontos, a weaver, to Achilles for a period of a year. The lease specified that Achilles would be responsible for Tapontos day and night. However, Glaukos retained the right to send for Tapontos during the night to make bread.²⁶ Clearly, Glaukos's establishment was not large enough to include a full-time baker, as one would expect to find in a wealthy household.

Our sources typically distinguish between urban and rural slaves. The opening act of Plautus's *Mostellaria*, for example, features banter between a country-bumpkin slave and a scheming city slave with a superior attitude. The distinction between urban slaves, belonging to the *familia urbana*, and rural slaves, belonging to the *familia rustica*, was predicated as much on the slaves' duties as on their place of residence.²⁷ Smaller slaveholding households would not have included sufficient staff to maintain this demarcation. The Gospel of Luke includes a parable of Jesus in which an agricultural slave doubles as a cook and domestic attendant: "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink.'"²⁸

Jesus' parable does not evoke a vision of life on a vast estate, such as the extensive landholdings that dominated the landscape in Sicily and the Italian peninsula, but a smaller slaveholding household in which a slave's multiple and varied duties ranged from agricultural and pastoral tasks to food preparation and service. In larger slaveholding establishments, slave labor could be highly specialized. Clement of Alexandria, for example, disapproved of bloated household staffs, with some slaves "to prepare and make the pastries, others to make the honey cakes, and still others to prepare the porridges."²⁹ Josephus mentioned that Herod the Great was especially fond of three of his eunuchs, each of whom had extremely limited duties. One eunuch did nothing but pour Herod's wine. Another served his food. A third eunuch, who shared Herod's bedchamber, helped Herod as he prepared for bed.³⁰

Domestic slaves probably outnumbered slaves engaged in productive or managerial work.³¹ The horrors of life in the mines or on the vast agricultural estates of Sicily in many ways dwarfed the indignities of life as a domestic slave. Nonetheless, Keith Hopkins has argued, "Roman literature abounds with stories of incidental cruelty to individual domestic slaves. . . . Domestic slaves stood in the front line. They were more

privileged and pampered than the tens of thousands of slaves who labored without hope in the fields and mines. . . . But domestic slaves also had more contact with their owners, and were more often subjected to their despotic whimsy.”³²

In smaller households the very slaves who contributed to the production of commodities would also have been involved in household tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, removing waste, and caring for children. Along with producing clothes for sale, a slave skilled in wool working could also produce clothing for members of the household. In larger households the tasks performed by domestic slaves would be highly specialized. Thus, on a continuum, the slave in the Lukan parable moved from work in the fields to waiting on the master at the table. Aesop not only shopped for food but also prepared and served it to his master and his master's guests. A wealthier household would have multiple slaves dedicated to particular cooking specialties. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius the ass eventually falls into the hands of two kitchen slaves, one specializing in sweets and the other in sauces.³³

Descriptions of banquets suggest that elaborate household staffs would enhance the self-image of some slaveholders. The more frivolous a slave's task, the clearer the evidence of the owner's wealth. In the *Satyricon*, Encolpus describes the scene as he enters Trimalchio's banquet, where Trimalchio is playing a ball game with some boys:

If the ball hit the ground, he [Trimalchio] didn't chase it, but had a slave with a bag full of balls give the players a new one. We noticed some other novelties: there were two eunuchs stationed at different points in a circle; one was holding a silver chamber pot, the other was counting the balls. . . . While we wondered at the extravagance of this, Menelaus ran up and said, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party! What you see is only the prelude to dinner.” As Menelaus spoke, Trimalchio snapped his finger as a signal to the eunuch to hold out the chamber pot for him as he continued to play. After emptying his bladder, he called for water for his hands, sprinkled it lightly on his fingers and then wiped them dry on the head of a young slave.³⁴

Trimalchio has set up this scene as a tableau for his guests so they can witness the extent of his wealth. As Menelaus pointedly observes, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party!”

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Jesus and his followers encountered the slaves of opulent households on those occasions when their activities came to the attention of civil or religious authorities. For example, during the events surrounding the arrest of Jesus, he and his followers had dealings with slaves belonging to the grand household of the high priest. One of the high priest's male slaves had an ear severed during the arrest of Jesus; several of the high priest's female and male slaves accosted Peter to accuse him of accompanying Jesus.³⁵ The Pauline letters and Acts of the Apostles include references to a number of households that included slaves.³⁶ However, on the basis of these texts, we cannot reach firm conclusions about the size of those households nor the degree to which their slaves specialized in productive, managerial, domestic, or sexual duties. We have no evidence to suggest that Paul interacted with slaves or slaveholders in households as lavish as Trimalchio's. Still, when he accepted hospitality from a slaveholder, domestic slaves would have tended to his needs, from washing his feet upon entering the household to preparing the food for communal meals.

Domestic Bodies: Family Life Among Slaves

Our sources help us detect the shadowy ghosts of slaves proceeding through the streets of Mediterranean cities in the course of their varied duties or laboring in workshops and kitchens. The sources are less helpful when we try to reconstruct the domestic arrangements of slaves. What kind of quarters did slaves occupy? How did the layout of ancient houses facilitate or impede family ties among slaves? Moreover, how did residential layouts shape the quality of relationships among slaves who succeeded in establishing, at least for a time, stable family ties? Literary sources afford scant clues. Archaeological remains are in need of interpretation.

Sometimes slaves lived outside the households of their owners. We have a glimpse into such living arrangements in a legal petition submitted in 60 C.E., in which a slaveholder named Theon complained that thieves had twice broken into the living quarters of his slave Epicharis, who lived in an apartment of some kind in a house in another district.³⁷ More often, slaves lived with their owners. Larger houses had separate

slave quarters—dark, cramped, far less ornamented than the rooms in which the head of the household received guests or conducted business. Smaller households did not have separate accommodations for slaves. Regardless of whether the slaves had their own quarters, however, no corner of the household was off limits to slaves. Attending children, preparing food, working on accounts—the slaves, who were integral to every aspect of the household's function, would have been found in every nook and cranny of a house during the hours of work.³⁸ At night, a slave might have slept in a closet that was also used for food storage or curled up in a corner of an owner's bedroom.

The information we have about ancient slave quarters is, at best, minimal. Evidence so fragile cannot sustain generalizations about the quality of domestic life among those slaves fortunate enough to establish (at least temporarily) family bonds. Michele George notes, “The development of slave families is also problematic. In large households separate suites for slaves with considerable responsibilities may have been usual. However, in houses of average size this would have been impossible, and here slave families must have evolved despite proximity to the free household, and in a cultural context with notions of intimacy and personal space which were different from our own.”³⁹ (It seems worth noting that if slaves lived with less privacy than families in modern industrialized societies, so too did slaveholders.) Envisioning the domestic configurations of a family of slaves owned by a modest slaveholding establishment is difficult. Did they enjoy common leisure time? Where did they congregate? Were they able to spend time with one another without intrusions from their owners or, for that matter, from other slaves in the household? The questions become still more complex when we try to imagine the domestic relations among a family of slaves with multiple owners or the domestic relations among a family that included freedpersons as well as slaves.

Our inability to envisage how slaves arranged their family time and space should not be construed as evidence of a failure on their part to do so. Dale Martin has reviewed funeral epitaphs from various regions in the Empire. The dedications of these epitaphs most commonly indicate that an immediate family member (spouse or child) of the deceased was responsible for the memorial. This held true for slaves and freedpersons as well as for freeborn persons. Martin encourages caution, however, in drawing conclusions based on the epitaphs. We cannot easily infer from epitaphs, which employ stereotyped formulas of affection and respect, the actual feelings that ancient family members had for one another. Most slaves from antiquity were not remembered in formal epitaphs, which suggests that the slaves so memorialized represented an atypical cross-section of ancient slaves. Nonetheless, the picture sketched by the epitaphs is remarkably consistent. At least in death and most likely in life, the slaves who dedicated epitaphs to one another valued their life partners and their offspring.⁴⁰ We do not know when slave families made time for one another or how they managed to find a place for that time together, but epigraphic evidence suggests that many did so.

Martin concludes that “these [epigraphic] studies illustrate the existence and importance of the immediate family for a significant minority of slaves.”⁴¹ Many more slaves, however, lived and labored under conditions that did not enable them to sustain stable family connections. For example, the sexual demands that slaveholders made on female and young male slaves may have strained family relationships among slaves themselves. Or perhaps not—slaves who cared about other slaves in demand as their owners' sexual playthings did not leave diaries recording their emotional reactions to the intimate violation of their loved ones. Studying architectural remains of private dwellings in Italy and the Eastern Empire tells us only that slaves and slaveholders often shared remarkably close quarters. It does not tell us how the resultant lack of privacy impinged on the ability of slaves to construct their own lives and worlds of meaning.

p. 47 Paul's encounter with the slave possessed by an oracular spirit led to conflict with her owners rather than to an opportunity to evangelize her household, although Acts of the Apostles does include four accounts of household conversions. In each case, Peter or Paul gained entry through contact with the head of the household. A dream of Cornelius led him to send two slaves and a soldier to find Peter (10:7). Peter decided to baptize the household when the holy spirit descended on the assembled members, including, presumably, those enslaved (10:44–48). When Paul encountered Lydia, the Lord opened her heart, which led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her entire household (16:14–15). A jailer's experience of God's power in opening the doors of the prison precipitated his invitation to Paul and Silas to preach to his household and then to the household's baptism (16:27–34). Brief mention of the conversion of the synagogue official Crispus notes that his entire household followed his lead (18:8).

The historical accuracy of these summaries is difficult to assess. Luke's theological emphasis is on the power of the spirit at work building the church. Luke supposed that his readers would find nothing amiss when a slaveholder determined the religious practices of the household. Indeed, even contemporary scholars evince little concern about the legitimacy of conversion and baptism of slaves in such circumstances.⁴² Scholars debate whether the household baptisms represented in Acts of the Apostles involved children, but they do not debate whether household baptisms included slaves. They assume and assert that this was the case. Moreover, they do not seem troubled by this assumption. For example, as James Dunn reviews the household conversions in Acts, he equivocates on the inclusion of children in household baptisms but not of adult slaves. Dunn writes of Lydia's situation, "Household here need not include children since the term was commonly used to include household slaves and retainers." Of the conversion of the jailer's household, Dunn writes, "It is equally unclear whether household slaves and other adults *alone* [emphasis added] are in view or also children." Finally, regarding the conversion of Crispus's household, Dunn notes, it is "not clear whether a family is in view or simply the household slaves and retainers."⁴³ Like Dunn and other commentators on Acts, ancient readers would have understood these households to include slaves. Unlike these commentators, however, I think that household baptisms masterminded by slaveholders raise uncomfortable questions about the social dynamics within the Pauline churches, as well as questions about the reception of the gospel by those who participated in the ritual of baptism.

Paul's initial contact in Philippi, according to Acts of the Apostles, was a dealer in purple goods named Lydia. She was a godfearer, that is, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not converted to Judaism. Her openness to Paul's message, we have noted, led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her household (Acts 16:13–15). Paul and his companions accepted her invitation to stay with her, so her house was large enough to accommodate visitors. Whether she was a wealthy woman or a relatively small business agent is not clear, further muddled by the difficulty of identifying social strata of ancient society in terms familiar to modern readers. She could have been a freedwoman who first entered the garment trade when she was a slave.⁴⁴ Perhaps some of those who lived in her house were slave apprentices. Perhaps she owned her workers, or perhaps they were freedmen and freedwomen.

p. 48 Ivoni Richter Reimer has advanced the hypothesis that Lydia's house was a "contrast society" in a Roman colony. As a female head of household, Lydia was not a *pater familias*. The citizen *pater familias* (Latin, "father of the family," or more generally "head of household") possessed, at least according to law, near total powers over members of the household, especially his offspring (including adult offspring) and slaves. Despite an earlier mention in Acts of the Apostles of a female Christian slaveholder, Mary (12:12–14), Reimer minimizes the likelihood that Lydia was a slaveholder, seeing her instead as an "independent woman. . . who provides shelter for other people in her house." Even conceding that Lydia's home could have included slaves, Reimer claims that Lydia's home was an egalitarian retreat: "Because, for example, there is no longer a *pater familias*, there is no more patriarchal subordination, and all can be equal sisters and brothers."⁴⁵ A later papyrus from Karanis offers a glimpse into a household headed by a female garment worker, which hardly conforms to Reimer's hypothesis that a female-headed household would constitute a contrast society. An apprenticeship contract for a female slave to learn the trade of weaving identified Aurelia Libouke as a weaver who had the right to act without a guardian because she had raised three children. Aurelia Libouke agreed to teach the slave the craft of weaving and promised that the slave would attain proficiency suitable for a girl her age. Unlike most apprenticeship contracts, which specified regular holidays throughout the apprenticeship period, this contract stipulated that the slave would be

available for labor with no days off for leisure or even illness.⁴⁶ The mere presence of a woman such as Lydia as head of household did not, therefore, transform a household from a hierarchical to an egalitarian structure.⁴⁷ Richard Saller notes, "Though the head of the household was stereotyped as male by use of *pater familias*, in reality Roman women owned property and must often, in the absence of husbands, have wielded power over households with dependents. This gendered language causes historians to lose sight of female heads of households, even when they know better."⁴⁸

The baptism of her household was Lydia's initiative. Luke does not suggest that the motivations or reactions of other household members concerned either Lydia or Paul. Acts of the Apostles does not present the Christian message as a challenge to slaveholding authority. Through the representations of household baptisms in Acts of the Apostles, Luke reinscribes the power of the head of the household over the lives of those in the house, including resident adult slaves. Chris Frilingos has argued that, in his letter to Philemon, Paul employed the vocabulary of family in such a way as to establish himself as the affectionate and commanding *pater familias* with authority over both slave and slaveholder. In this picture of Christian origins, the new Christian community unsettled existing hierarchical modes of relating among members of Christian households, even between slaveholders and slaves.⁴⁹ In contrast, by suggesting that the spirit responded to the invitations of slaveholders, household by patriarchal household, Acts of the Apostles treats enslaved members of households as dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders.⁵⁰

An authorial propensity to identify with the viewpoint of slaveholders rather than slaves may also influence two summaries of the exodus event in Acts of the Apostles that, curiously, lack any reference to the enslavement of the Israelite people. When Paul preaches at the synagogue in Antioch, he encapsulates the events surrounding the liberation of the Israelites without even a cryptic allusion to the coercive nature of their continuing sojourn in Egypt: "The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it" (13:17). In Stephen's speech before the council, he represents the kings of Egypt as evil not because they enslaved the Israelites who had been their guests but because they promoted infanticide: A king who had not known Joseph came to power, declares Stephen, and he "dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die" (7:19). Although in the nineteenth century African-American abolitionists would celebrate the exodus story as a narrative of God's historical intervention against slavery, these first-century synopses of the exodus expunge any memory of the enslavement of the Israelites.

p. 49 Paul identifies the Christian community as the body of Christ. Descriptions of household conversions in Acts of the Apostles suggest that slaveholders played a disproportionate role in the baptisms of their households and therefore a role in the Christian body that derived not from a gift of the spirit but from their secular status. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to a message he received from "Chloe's people," members of Chloe's household, probably her slaves.⁵¹ Since Paul expected his readers to be familiar with Chloe, he had no reason to specify whether she was herself a Christian. She may well have been. If she was a believer, Paul's reference to "Chloe's people" hints that Christian slaveholders had a higher profile within the church than enslaved members of their households who were also baptized, an impression entirely consistent with Luke's depiction of the movement of the spirit in Acts of the Apostles. According to Acts, Peter and Paul gained access to households not through humble members of the household—children or slaves—but through their heads. Slaveholders chose baptism not only for themselves but also for others who belonged to them, including, presumably, enslaved adult members of the household. What was the position of these enslaved bodies within the Christian body? Given the circumstances of a household baptism, could slaves' experiences as members of the Christian community obliterate the disadvantages of their slave status, even within the cult?⁵²

Travelers to the towns and cities of the Roman Empire customarily sought shelter with those they knew, or they carried letters of introduction from families and friends. When Lucius, the hero of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, arrives in the town of Hypata in Thessaly, he inquires at a public inn for the home of Milo. Lucius is previously unacquainted with Milo, but a friend has provided him with a letter of introduction. The old woman who directs Lucius to Milo's house notes as a sign of Milo's meanness that, although he is a wealthy man, the only inhabitants of his house are his wife and a single female slave. Lucius knocks at Milo's gate and his knocking brings the slave, Photis, to the gate. The rudeness of the house is apparent in her interrogation of the visitor. When Lucius presents her with the letter of introduction, she again bars the gate as she brings the letter inside to Milo.¹ Acts of the Apostles presents a scene with similar details, set in another urban environment in the Eastern Empire, Jerusalem. After King Herod orders the killing of James,

the brother of John, he orders the arrest of Peter. The night before Peter is scheduled to appear before Herod, an angel appears in his cell and releases his chains. The angel leads Peter past the guards. The iron gate opens for them, and they go into the city. Realizing where he is, Peter proceeds to the house of his fellow believer Mary. A prayer meeting is in progress at her house. When Peter pounds on the gate, Rhoda, a slave, arrives at the gate to see who is causing the disturbance. Like Photis, she leaves the visitor at the gate while she runs into the house to report the appearance of the visitor, although the text attributes her behavior not to rudeness but to flustered joy (12:2–14).²

The appearance of these two slaves when visitors knock at the gates of the houses in which they dwell ushers us into the world of urban slaves in the Eastern Empire. Both Photis and Rhoda live in modest slaveholding establishments. Households with a hundred or more slaves existed but were far less numerous than smaller slaveholding establishments, families that held one or two slaves or a half dozen slaves. In contrast to the miserly Milo with his single slave, the traveler Lucius is eventually joined even on his travels by two of his own slaves, who follow him on foot. Milo's hospitality to Lucius extends to these two slaves. This is only a minor act of generosity; hosting a few extra slaves causes Milo little trouble. Apuleius mentions the crude mattress shared by Lucius's slaves when its relocation to a place in the courtyard farther from Lucius's door signals that Photis has been preparing for an evening of erotic activity with the visitor. One of these slaves later arises from a heap of straw in the stable to beat a troublesome ass, whom he fails to recognize as his master, Lucius, transformed. Acts of the Apostles does not specify the extent of Mary's slaveholdings, but we may infer that she does not have an opulent household. Rhoda does not seem to be exclusively a gatekeeper: she must come to the gate when she hears the knocking.

By contrast, a grander household would feature a slave for whom gatekeeping was an exclusive duty. For example, in the Gospel of John a woman who seems only to serve as a gatekeeper guards the entrance to the high priest's complex.³ The *Acts of Paul* includes a reference to the enslaved doorkeeper of Thecla's household because he serves as a witness to her nocturnal comings and goings.⁴ Seneca remarks on a surly doorkeeper who expects visitors to drop a small coin in his hand as he lets them cross the threshold. The wise visitor placates the doorkeeper, says Seneca, "as one quiets a dog by tossing him food."⁵

Gatekeepers, cup bearers, hairdressers, *paedagōgi* accompanying young masters through the streets to school—roles played by domestic slaves in antiquity may seem at odds with images of slaves' work influenced by the paradigm of heavy slave labor on the cotton producing plantations of the American South. Domestic slaves did not always contribute to the wealth of the household, while the costs of maintaining the household increased with every slave. ("The only servant he [the miserly Milo] feeds is one young girl," says the innkeeper as she supplies the traveler Lucius with information about his prospective host.⁶) Reliance on slaves as a source of wealth or income, however, is only one dimension of the anthropology of slavery.⁷ Paul Bohannon, who defines slavery in terms of a servile antikinship relationship in which the slave is subject to sale, notes: "The content of the master-slave relationship may vary greatly. One or the other aspect may be emphasized: economic, domestic, religious, sexual, or whatever. Any attempt to classify systems of servility in terms of the economic obligations and positions of the slave is to assume that this one point provides an index for the rest, when in fact such a situation must be shown empirically to exist or not to exist."⁸

Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon. The relationships of slavery with which Paul was acquainted would have been principally the relationships of urban slavery. Slaves in Corinth or Philippi would not have been miners or agricultural laborers but, for example, craftspeople, prostitutes, managerial agents, and domestic slaves, including those whose domestic duties included sexual obligations. How would a new identity as a Christian affect an urban slave, and how did the presence of slaves and slaveholders in the population affect the growth and practices of the churches? Ancient understandings of slaves as bodies will again inform my analysis. I situate the slaves and slaveholding households of the Pauline orbit in the context of the practices of slavery in the early Empire before I narrow my focus to a consideration of the (in)compatibility between enslaved and thus sexually vulnerable bodies and the strictures of purity demanded within the Christian body.

Paul claimed that membership in the body of Christ dissolved barriers between slave and free.⁵³ Largely on this basis, scholars have inferred that slave status did not entail any special liabilities for participation in the Christian community. However, because slaves were their masters' sexual property, their obligations to their masters would at times have included actions defined as polluting or aberrant in the Christian body. Slaves whose owners were not members of the church would have been especially vulnerable, since their owners would not have been subject to the community's censure. The argument of the remainder of this chapter has two stages. The first stage analyzes evidence concerning slaves and their lack of control over sexual activity in the ancient Mediterranean world. Ancient texts record acceptance of masters' control over their slaves' sexuality and establish a strong link between slavery and prostitution. The second stage of the argument analyzes Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 5–7 in light of evidence concerning the sexual vulnerability of slaves.

No New Testament text details the sexual obligations of slaves to their masters.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, consideration of the sexual demands of first-century slavery requires that we revise, or at least qualify, our claims about the composition and practices of Pauline communities. Wayne Meeks's assessment that “a Pauline congregation generally reflected a fair cross-section of urban society” has dominated recent reconstructions of Pauline circles.⁵⁵ To assume that these congregations never encountered potential converts among the many urban slaves who numbered sexual activities among their duties would modify our picture of Pauline communities in an erratic manner. How Pauline communities responded to these slaves is another question. Either the community excluded slaves whose sexual behavior could not conform to the norms mandated within the Christian body, or the community tolerated the membership of some who did not confine their sexual activities to marriage. The first possibility challenges the assumption that slavery did not jeopardize the standing of individuals in the Christian community; the second possibility suggests that Pauline communities viewed some sexual activities as morally neutral.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul advises as an antidote to *porneia* the acquisition and control of a vessel, *skeuos*. What he means by this counsel remains notably obscure. Some commentators believe that he is urging (male) members of the Thessalonian congregation to acquire wives. Other commentators believe that he is urging the Thessalonian Christians to control their own bodies or, perhaps more specifically, their sexual organs. The Christian men of Thessalonika who first received this letter were accustomed to thinking of slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. I suggest that we revisit Paul's advice to the Christians in Thessalonika to ask how the first male recipients of this letter would have understood Paul's instruction that each man should acquire a vessel for himself.

We do not know the extent to which the Corinthian community adapted Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians. I argue, however, that his teachings on sexuality in 1 Corinthians 5–7 would have complicated and even barred the participation of many slaves in Christian life. The passage 1 Corinthians 5 establishes parameters for the discourse, raising the question of what constitutes *porneia*. Paul situates *porneia* as a problem not only for individuals engaged in such behavior but for the entire community. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul explains why a Christian community cannot include a man who frequents prostitutes. Paul's logic is predicated on the incompatibility of prostitution with the Christian life. Enslaved prostitutes who had no control over their owners' decisions to profit from their bodies would thus have been excluded from membership in the Christian body. Finally, Paul's insistence that sexual activity should be confined to marriage (1 Cor. 7) posed difficulties for slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them.

In Paul's understanding, could the Christian body accommodate the sexually available bodies of slaves? That is, would the inclusion of Christians who were legally and culturally unable to protect the boundaries of their own bodies have threatened the maintenance of clear boundaries for the Christian body? Or does the presence of urban, domestic slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?

Concerning the sexual availability of slaves, Moses I. Finley writes, "This is treated as a commonplace in Graeco-Roman literature . . . only modern writers have managed largely to ignore it, to the extent that the fundamental research remains to be done."⁵⁶ Modern scholars usually overlook the problem of whether slaves' sexual availability affected their membership in the Christian community. The ancient church, however, explicitly considered this question by (at the latest) the third century. *The Apostolic Tradition*, usually attributed to Hippolytus, included in its discussion of baptism a list of those whose participation in the Christian community was proscribed or otherwise regulated.⁵⁷ The situation of enslaved concubines received particular attention. Men who kept concubines could only join the community if they formalized those relationships through legitimate marriages. Enslaved concubines were welcome in the community if they had been faithful to their masters and if they had raised their children. (A complicating factor ↵ p. 51 unrecognized by Hippolytus is that the owner rather than the enslaved concubine would have decided whether to rear or expose any child born to her.⁵⁸) Contemporary scholars should exercise caution in asserting the relevance of a third-century document to the first-century church. What is striking is that an ancient Christian source articulated separate sexual standards for female slaves (who did not own nor control their own sexual activity) and free men (who did control their own sexual activity), thus calling attention to a moral conundrum intrinsic to the situation of enslaved Christians, which modern biblical scholarship has neglected.

In Finley's formulation, a chief characteristic of ancient slavery was that slaves were answerable with their bodies.⁵⁹ Such answerability manifested itself in three major ways. First, corporal punishment was largely restricted to slaves, and slaves were in constant danger of corporal punishment. Although others, including sons and daughters of elite Roman families, were legally subject to beatings by the *pater familias*, corporal punishment was symbolically linked to servile status in Roman thought.⁶⁰ Indeed, the nexus between slaves and the whip is a leitmotiv of the comedies of Plautus, as in this exchange between two slaves in *Persa*:

Sagaristo: Down at the mill I've been promoted
To first sergeant in charge of flogging.

Toxilus: Oh, you're an old hand at that; you've earned your stripes.⁶¹

A second sense in which slaves were answerable with their bodies was the practice of requiring all testimony by slaves to be given under torture.

Finally, Finley observed, "The third, qualitatively different and ubiquitous, manifestation of the answerability of slaves with their bodies, [was] their unrestricted availability in sexual relations. . . . Prostitution is only one aspect. More interesting in the present context is the direct sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters and the latter's family and friends."⁶² Finley adduced as evidence an aphorism of the elder Seneca, which referred to the moral position of the receptive partner in male homosexual encounters: "Unchastity [*impudicitia*] is a crime in the freeborn, a necessity for the slave, a duty [*officium*] for the freedman."⁶³ While the (im)moral evaluation implicit in the saying is satirical, its presupposition of the availability of slaves for sexual service is germane. Enslaved girls, women, boys, and young men were frequently sexual targets for their masters. Moreover, as Susan Treggiari writes, "The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator."⁶⁴

Freeborn Roman men typically married in their late twenties or early thirties.⁶⁵ Since Roman society placed little value on men's sexual abstinence, young men often satisfied their sexual desires with household slaves or prostitutes (who were typically slaves). From the man's perspective, one important benefit of such sexual encounters would be that any children conceived in those circumstances would not compete with legitimate children, conceived later, for claims to the estate. For the same reason, many Roman men chose sexual partners who were slaves or freedwomen after their wives' deaths.⁶⁶

Enslaved women were additionally vulnerable to retaliation from wives who knew or suspected their husbands' sexual involvements with household slaves. While some women may have appreciated their husbands' circumspection in seeking other sexual outlets, a ↵ p. 52 variety of evidence suggests that wives often reacted negatively to slaves who attracted such attention. Sexual jealousy might prompt a wife's resentful notice. A wife might also be angry if she thought her husband had squandered household resources to purchase a sexual partner or to pay for the partner's upkeep. Annalisa Rei notes of the comedies of Plautus,

“Characteristically, a wife takes action to avenge not a husband's infidelity, but his violation of the property which the couple shares or which even belongs to the wife entirely. The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society.”⁶⁷

The mistress of a household had a variety of means at her disposal for harassing slaves, including physical abuse. In *Genesis Rabbah*, several rabbis commented on the scriptural observation that “Sarai dealt harshly” with her slave Hagar (Gen. 16:6). Rabbi Berekiah speculated that Sarai (Sarah) attempted to humiliate Hagar by requiring her to carry towels and water buckets for bathing or that Sarai slapped Hagar's face with a shoe.⁶⁸ Galen claimed that his mother used to bite female slaves when she was angry with them; Augustine recorded an incident in which his paternal grandmother ordered the household slaves to be beaten because she perceived them to be disloyal to her daughter-in-law, Augustine's mother, Monica.⁶⁹ Given the ancient stereotype that women are less able than men to control their passions, writers may have exaggerated the violence of slaveholding women against their slaves.⁷⁰ Still, we should guard against the equally distorting assumption that a slaveholding woman and a woman she owned would have naturally presented a joint front because of their shared gender identity. Potentially faced with retaliation by their mistresses, many slaves might have preferred to avoid sex with their masters. The choice, however, was not theirs to make.

In the world constructed by the romances, noble young women who were enslaved in unfortunate circumstances were typically able to resist the sexual overtures of their owners. Still, the threat of sexual compromise was constantly present for them. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*,⁷¹ for example, the title characters consummate their marriage before being torn apart. Callirhoe finds herself the slave of Dionysius, a good man who is desperate to sleep with her. She manages to resist until she realizes that she is pregnant, whereupon she sends a message to Dionysius that she is willing to be his wife but not his concubine. Dionysius joyously accepts. Callirhoe convinces her new husband that the child she is carrying is his. What rings true about the episode is the master's desire for an attractive young slave. However, Dionysius's deference to Callirhoe's sexual reluctance is implausible, as is his acceptance of her marriage proposal. Livy's version of the story of Verginia assumes the inability of a woman with the legal status of a slave to protect the integrity of her own body. In Livy's version, Appius Claudius has Verginia legally declared a slave so that her father cannot defend her chastity. Elaine Fantham writes, “It is telling that Verginius should protest in terms of his daughter's status, ‘his daughter would have been dearer to him than life itself if she had been allowed to live free and chaste; but . . . he saw her dragged off to be raped like a slave girl.’”⁷² While the romances drew attention to the sexual vulnerability of their enslaved heroines and heroes, the genre's insistence on happy endings necessitated that those heroines and heroes should preserve their chastity through utterly implausible stratagems. Slaves did not have the legal right nor cultural power to say “no” to their owners' sexual demands.

p. 53 In her dissertation on women in Greek novels, Brigitte M. Egger notes that although the preservation of the sexual integrity of enslaved protagonists is a recurring theme, the romances do not evince concern for the sexual integrity of other enslaved characters.⁷³ Masters in the romances take for granted that their slaves are their sexual property. The excitement of the stories builds on the possibility that noble young women separated from their protective environments will be treated in a way considered appropriate for common household slaves. So too on the stage. In Plautus's *Persa*, a young woman who is caught in a scheme of her father's that involves selling her into slavery in order to reveal that the slave dealer is trafficking in freeborn “merchandise” worries that even a temporary enslavement will deter any decent man from later marrying her. No matter how brief her period of (pseudo)enslavement, for a short time she will not be in a legal or cultural position to guard her chastity.⁷⁴ In Plautus's *Curculio* the slave Palinurus responds with alarm to his master's announcement of plans to seduce a young woman until Phaedromus, his master, specifies that the object of his lust is a slave rather than a proper young woman. Palinurus proclaims, “No one bans or prohibits you from buying what's for sale from this place, if you have the cash. No one prohibits a man from using the public street, so long as you don't cut a path through an enclosed property: so long as you keep off wives, widows and virgins, young men and boys of free birth, make love to anyone you choose.”⁷⁵

The frequency of manumission inscriptions that imply that the freed slave was the master's sexual partner indicates the prevalence of such liaisons in Greco-Roman societies.⁷⁶ One manumission inscription from Delphi in the late first century B.C.E. illustrates the asymmetry in power that persisted even after a master freed his concubine. Kleomantis manumitted Eisias, the mother of his sons. However, he stipulated that she had to remain with him his entire life, “doing everything that is ordered like a slave. . . . If Eisias does not remain or does not do what is ordered, let Kleomantis have the power to punish her in whatever way he

wishes, by beating her and selling her.”⁷⁷ Far from the respect accorded the heroines of the romances, many slaves (and even former slaves) would have encountered physical abuse and the threat of being sold should they resist their masters' advances.⁷⁸

Resistance of male or female slaves to sexual overtures sanctioned by their owners was not acceptable servile behavior. A scrap of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus records a crude proposition or, more accurately, a threat from two males to a third. It reads: “Apion and Epimas proclaim to their best-loved Epaphroditus that if you allow us to bugger you it will go well for you, and we will not thrash you any longer.” Epaphroditus typically appears in the papyri as a name associated with a slave. Here, a young slave, or perhaps a freedman, seems to have two “options”: to submit to unwanted sexual activities or to allow two other men to (continue to) beat him.⁷⁹ The bluntness of the message highlights the implausibility that a slaveholder such as Chariton's Dionysius would respect a slave's privacy and sexual integrity. On the other hand, for every Epaphroditus who resisted such sexual advances and perhaps even saw them as rape, there may have been another slave who accepted sexual overtures with equanimity. For some slaves, cohabitation with a master or, very occasionally, a mistress was certainly a route to what we would recognize as upward social mobility.⁸⁰ Our sources are silent regarding the actual reactions of slaves to their sexual obligations. The silence is revealing. Ancient societies were not concerned with the reactions of slaves to sexual coercion, since the slave had no legal or cultural right to say “no.”⁸¹

A Walk through the Streets of a Provincial City

p. 41

Who were the slaves that Paul encountered in the course of his travels? Where and in what contexts did he encounter them? Acts of the Apostles includes one account of a slave whom Paul met in the streets of Philippi. The unnamed female slave (*paidiskē*) was possessed by a “Pythian” spirit, who spoke through her. The slave's oracular powers were a source of income to her owners and a source of annoyance to Paul and his companions. The woman followed after them, calling out that they were “slaves of the most High God.” A first-century traveler like Paul would not have been surprised to run across a fortune-teller plying her trade in the street. Fortune-telling was a common phenomenon in antiquity. Scraps of papyri record the questions that unknown persons from antiquity posed to fortune-tellers: questions about love and marriage, trade, gambling, and childbirth.⁹ Residents of Mediterranean cities would routinely have chanced on fortune-tellers. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius tells Milo of the predictions he received from an itinerant fortune-teller, and Milo replies by sharing the story of his own encounter with the same seer.¹⁰ According to Acts of the Apostles, Paul responded to the enslaved fortune-teller by performing an exorcism, which rid her of the possessing spirit and thus deprived her owners of a sure source of revenue.¹¹

The slave practiced her lucrative trade publicly, in the streets. Evidence that female slaves and other women of humble status moved freely in urban streets and squares modifies the scholarly generalization that public spaces were “male” whereas private spaces were “female.” In the Hellenistic Jewish narrative of Judith, for example, Judith's confinement to her home at the beginning and end of the story establishes her status as a respectable free woman of considerable means. It seems natural, however, for her female slave to travel through the streets, with no apparent companion, to invite the elders to a meeting in Judith's house. In an article on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jerome Neyrey argues that the woman's presence in a public space, at noon, and engaged in conversation with a stranger, marked her as “deviant.” Neyrey's assessment of the Samaritan woman as deviant because of her presence in a public place at midday can only be sustained if we label as deviant all women of lower statuses (slaves, freedwomen, poor freeborn laborers), a considerable percentage of the female population. To support his characterization of a cultural division between public/male and private/female spaces, Neyrey quotes Philo: “Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men. . . . The women are best suited to the in door life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.”¹² Neyrey fails to note that Philo's articulation of the division between male and female worlds was expressly marked by status considerations. According to Philo, the woman who confined herself to her home except when she went to temple and then chose the hours when the market would be quiet deserved the honorable name of “freeborn lady” (Greek, *eleuthera*). Other literary references that associate women with interior spaces reinforce the impression that gender segregation was a phenomenon based on status and class. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Charisius asks his wife sadly, “Why did you not have regard to

your position as a *free woman* [emphasis added] and remain in your house, but go out and listen to vain words?"¹³ Indeed, Philo's commentary on the symbolic division between male and female spheres devolves into a condemnation of women who behave in unseemly ways in public spaces, specifically, women who argue and fight in the marketplace.¹⁴ Philo's censure hinges on the everyday presence of women in markets and other public places—and many of the women buying, selling, bargaining, and fighting in the marketplace would have been slaves.

p. 42 As Paul traveled from city to city, then, he would have found it impossible to avoid contact with slaves. When he went to the marketplace to find other craftspeople or to purchase food for dinner he would have mingled with both male and female slaves. A wide variety of evidence attests to the ubiquitous presence of slaves in marketplaces. In the *Life of Aesop*, for example, the slaveholder Xanthus orders his slave Aesop to cook dinner for a gathering of his pupils. Not only does Aesop serve as cook, he also goes to the marketplace to buy the provisions for the meal. The other shoppers he encounters in the marketplace would have included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, as well as freeborn folk of the lower economic strata. The merchants would have been of equally modest status. Funeral epitaphs of slaves as well as freedmen and freedwomen list such occupations as fishmonger, salt vendor, and grain merchant.¹⁵ Kathleen E. Corley has argued that the saying of Jesus comparing his generation to children in the marketplace may refer more plausibly to slaves sent by their owners to the marketplace to look for work as entertainers at a banquet.¹⁶ "They are like children [*paidiois*, which Corley proposes translating as "slaves"] sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.'"¹⁷ Paul would have encountered slaves in the homes of the men and women who offered him hospitality. Even before he entered those homes, however, he would have interacted with slaves as he made his way around urban streets throughout the Empire.

Bodies for Rent: Slavery and Prostitution

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Just as the typical slave had little opportunity to resist a master's sexual advances, prostitutes who were slaves had little if anything to say about the work their owners required of them. A suggestion by Margaret Y. MacDonald that Christianity represented an economic threat to slaveholding pimps would require enslaved prostitutes to be in a position to refuse their assigned labor.⁸² This is highly improbable. By the late second century, Tertullian even complained that a persecution of Christians had extended to forcing a Christian woman into prostitution, the first known instance of a practice that lasted until the fourth century.⁸³ Aline Rousselle asks, "Can we say that slaves and prostitutes enjoyed sexual freedom in this sense when we know that the *leno*, or procurer, took them to the ports when he heard that a ship had arrived? We should not imagine that all the young girls who were abandoned and then brought up to be slaves or prostitutes or both, and later freed by a procurer, were *demi-mondaines*."⁸⁴ Roman law and custom suggested that female prostitutes enjoyed a sexual freedom parallel to that of men, but such freedom was more apparent than real. Prostitutes did not choose their sexual partners; they were chosen as sexual partners. In his work on prostitution in ancient Rome, Thomas A. J. McGinn concludes, "This is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power implicit in the exchange of sex for money, an inequality especially notable when the woman [or the male prostitute] is a slave."⁸⁵

Roman law recognized the validity of certain restrictive covenants in the sale of slaves. One of those covenants, *ne serva prostituator*, forbade the buyer (including subsequent buyers) from forcing the slave into prostitution. A buyer who violated a *ne serva prostituator* covenant faced several potential penalties. In some instances the seller would reclaim ownership of the slave. In other instances the buyer would be forced to pay a financial penalty to the seller, who presumably had taken a financial loss in selling the slave under a restrictive covenant. In still other instances the slave would be manumitted as a Junian Latin, without benefit of citizenship. Although the *ne serva prostituator* covenant benefited the slave, the law was essentially concerned with the rights of the original vendor.⁸⁶ Why would a slaveholder impose the *ne serva prostituator* covenant? Slaveholders may have had widely divergent motivations. A promise that a slave would never be prostituted could function as either an incentive or a reward for hard work. A slaveholder who sold his lover could be reluctant for that person to become a prostitute. A slaveholder who sold a son or daughter might have some qualms about the prostitution of his progeny. A slaveholder who sold a slave who had worked as an intimate attendant for his wife might feel that the slave's later work as a prostitute could taint the household. Some slaveholders may have been genuinely concerned about the well-being of slaves

with whom they had interacted on a daily basis. All of this, however, is speculation, since slaveholders did not record their reasons for imposing the covenant.

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The very existence of such covenants highlights Roman awareness both that many slaveholders compelled their slaves to work as prostitutes and that slaves were not themselves in a position to resist such work. Dio Chrysostom described newly enslaved women forced to work as prostitutes who “feel shame and revulsion.”⁸⁷ Slaves would have been aware that the decision whether or not to prostitute them belonged to the master. McGinn points to the practice of forcing Christian women into brothels as evidence that compulsion to work as a prostitute loomed as a potential punishment for slaves: “If some ↪ slave women might be rewarded for their loyal service through exemption from forced prostitution through the imposition of the covenant, others might be punished for their failings through installation in a brothel. We have a glimmer of what might be described as the [*ne serva prostituator*] covenant's ‘evil twin’: a practice perhaps more widespread as a private form of punishment than the sources allow us to see.”⁸⁸

In the Hellenistic world and later during the Roman Empire, exposed infants constituted one supply of enslaved prostitutes.⁸⁹ Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr warned against frequenting prostitutes for fear of committing incest with a daughter one had abandoned in infancy.⁹⁰ Slave dealers had a stake in promoting trade in prostitutes. Prostitutes commanded a higher sale price than other female slaves.⁹¹ Indeed, slave dealers moved easily between the role of *leno* (pimp or procurer) and auctioneer of female flesh.⁹² In the comedies of Plautus, for example, the figure of the *leno* schemes alternately to make money as a pimp and to strike it rich by selling a few prized slave prostitutes to men infatuated with them.

Although Ulpian extended the definition of pimp to include someone who maintained free prostitutes, he primarily defined a pimp as a man who dealt in the services of enslaved prostitutes. McGinn writes, “The pimp who keeps slave prostitutes is emphasized either because this type was more significant as a socio-economic phenomenon or because a special legal reason (not evident to us) required this.” However, he regards the former reason—the high proportion of slaves in the population of prostitutes—as more likely.⁹³ Although contemporary scholars do not have the data necessary to calculate what percentage of prostitutes were slaves, all available evidence suggests a strong correlation between prostitution and slavery.⁹⁴

Whether *most* prostitutes were slaves is a more difficult question. McGinn expresses agnosticism on this point but adds, “It is safe to say that most prostitutes in the provinces were peregrines or slaves before A.D. 212.”⁹⁵ Dominic Montserrat suggests that the documentary evidence is likely to downplay the percentage of slave prostitutes: “Since their ‘bodies’ were entirely at the disposal of their masters, a slave forced to work as a prostitute would need only to be recorded by social rather than professional status—the potential status as prostitute (or dancer or wet-nurse or wool-worker) was implicit in the designation as slave.”⁹⁶ In her study of female prostitution in the Roman Empire, Rebecca Fleming emphasizes the substantial intersection between slaves and prostitutes. She characterizes the institution of prostitution in the Roman world as “part of the slave economy, so though the labor is hers the profits are not.”⁹⁷ Artemidorus's dream logic provides a thoroughly nonscientific confirmation that ancient writers expected prostitutes to be slaves: “A prostitute dreamt that she had entered the holy place of Artemis. She was freed and gave up her prostitution. For she would not enter the temple unless she were to abandon her profession.”⁹⁸ And she could not abandon her profession as prostitute while she still belonged to another.

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Although I am stressing the evidence that links prostitution and slavery, I am not thereby implying that free persons who became prostitutes willingly chose the occupation with any regularity. The documentary evidence from Greco-Roman Egypt suggests that free persons who engaged in prostitution often entered the trade under duress, through dire economic necessity. An indigent woman would not typically establish herself as a prostitute. Rather, another family member, often a father, would set her up as a prostitute because of the family's destitution. Fleming writes, “Female bodies clearly ↪ counted among the economic resources, not only of slave-dealers and owners, but also of any family network.”⁹⁹ Not until the rise of Coptic Christian literature is there any intimation that women enter the ranks of prostitutes to satiate their own lusts.¹⁰⁰ This literature, we may safely surmise, reflects the preoccupations of its authors rather than the erotic appetites of prostitutes.

In 40 C.E., Caligula instituted a tax on prostitutes. This was not a “vice tax,” designed with the ulterior motive of curbing the widespread practice of prostitution. The goal of the tax was to raise revenue. The tax was collected throughout the Empire. In Egypt, the levy on prostitutes was ten times higher than other occupational taxes, suggesting that prostitutes (or their owners or brothel keepers) had sufficient income to pay a very high tax.¹⁰¹ Prostitutes and prostitution were thus common and visible throughout Greco-Roman

cities in the first century. Through collection of the tax on prostitutes, the emperor directly profited from the trade.¹⁰² Furthermore, even the tax code recognized that many prostitutes were slaves: in some locales, records specify how to collect the tax from enslaved prostitutes and their owners.

Popular literature of the ancient Mediterranean often features the character of the enslaved prostitute. Fleming observes that “with one partial exception, slaves fill all literary brothels where the status of their denizens is clear.”¹⁰³ In *An Ephesian Tale*, the heroine, Anthia, is sold as a prostitute and forced to display herself outside the brothel. She manages, improbably, to retain her virginity by pretending to have epileptic seizures.¹⁰⁴ The enslaved prostitute is a familiar figure in the Plautine corpus. The *pseudo meretrix*, a free woman of good reputation whose virtue prevails despite her temporary enslavement, is a stock character.¹⁰⁵ In several plays (*Rudens*, *Poenulus*), a freeborn female is rescued by her long-lost father just before her sale by a *leno*. In another plot line, a clever slave arranges the sale of a woman already enslaved as a prostitute to a man who cares about her (*Pseudolus*). These plots converge in *Persa*, in which a conspiracy entraps Dordalus, a *leno*, into buying a young freeborn woman. When her identity is revealed, she is freed and Dordalus ruined. Through the fraudulent sale, a slave named Toxilus acquires the money he needs to buy from Dordalus the prostitute Lemniselenis, who he desires. Although the formulas of the romances and comedies dictate happy resolutions to these stories, the vast majority of enslaved prostitutes in the Greco-Roman world could not reasonably expect to retain nor regain control over their own sexual practices.

In general, Greco-Roman societies expected that men would frequent prostitutes and did not morally condemn them for doing so. Susan Treggiari writes, “Objections to intercourse with a common prostitute were aesthetic rather than moral or prudential.”¹⁰⁶ Nor was *moral* condemnation of prostitutes themselves common, although prostitutes did occupy a position in society distinct from that of respectable matrons. In a culture whose definition of honor emphasized the preservation of a woman's sexual integrity and a man's sexual inviolability, prostitutes had no honor to preserve.

Nonetheless, many in the ancient world perceived prostitution as pivotal to the smooth operation of the honor-shame system. By diverting the sexual energies of men away from those whose honor mattered, prostitution protected the honor of respectable families.¹⁰⁷ The Greek Anthology includes an epitaph attributed to Marcus Argentarius: “Psyllus, who used to take to the pleasant banquets of the young men the venal ladies that they desired . . . who earned a disgraceful wage by dealing in human flesh, lies here. But cast not those stones. . . . Spare him, not because he was content to gain his living so, but because as keeper of common women he dissuaded young men from adultery.”¹⁰⁸ Dio Chrysostom, the orator and philosopher who synthesized Stoic and Cynic ideas, offered a rare condemnation of prostitution. In doing so, he claimed that many of his contemporaries espoused the view that prostitution was a “wonderful elixir to produce chastity in our cities, your motive to keep those open and unbarred brothels from contaminating your barred homes and inner chambers, and keep men who practice their excesses abroad and openly at little cost from turning to your free-born [*eleuthera*] and respected wives!”¹⁰⁹ Acceptance of prostitution as an inevitable support for the honor-shame rubric was not universal, but many were willing for enslaved women and men to pay with their bodies the price of the chastity of freeborn wives, daughters, and sons.

Traditional Roman religion ritualized the division between prostitutes and other women. Prostitutes claimed a number of Roman holidays as their own.¹¹⁰ April 23, the Vinalia, was the first of two wine festivals; prostitutes celebrated by sacrificing to Venus at her temple outside the Colline Gate. The Floralia (or Ludi Florae) on April 27, dedicated to Flora, the goddess of flowers and fertility, was another festival for prostitutes. More striking perhaps were the celebrations of April 1, the Veneralia, when prostitutes and respectable matrons separately worshiped the forces of love. Prostitutes (and possibly other base-born women) went to the men's baths to worship Fortuna Virilis, while respectable matrons worshiped Venus Verticordia. As Sarah Pomeroy summarizes these Roman ritual practices, “Thus the dichotomy between respectable women and whores was dramatized: the former worshipping an apotheosis of conjugal ideals, the latter worshipping sexual relationships having nothing to do with wedlock.”¹¹¹

These holidays were associated with the city of Rome and were not celebrated elsewhere in the Empire. They are therefore of limited relevance for understanding the structure of religious life in the cities of the Greek East where Paul evangelized. I mention these holidays because they dramatize social (not moral) distinctions between prostitutes and respectable matrons, which pertain throughout the Empire. Roman cultic practice offers a narrow window into the complexity of social relations in ancient Mediterranean societies. During the Matralia, from which enslaved women were generally barred, freeborn matrons ritually beat the single slave woman ushered into the assembly. Scholars of early Christianity often assume

the gospel message broke down walls between slave and free. In what follows we consider the challenge that the sexual availability of enslaved bodies poses to that assumption.

Enslaved Bodies and the Body of Christ

Paul was active in the mid-first century in cities of the Eastern Empire, although he also had contacts in the Western Empire, even in Rome itself, where he spent his final days. Those attracted to his preaching included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, and freeborn men and women, some of whom were slaveholders. Paul insisted that authority within the congregation was a gift of the spirit, given for the building up of community. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Acts of the Apostles records several stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred when he had contact with the head of the household.

p. 58 Corresponding stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred ↳ through contact with a subordinate member of the *familia* (Latin, "family," implying not only biological kin but also slaves and freedpersons attached to the family unit) do not appear in Acts. How accurately Acts of the Apostles represents the history of the early Pauline communities is difficult to ascertain.

As these communities struggled to define themselves as one body in Christ, Paul specified the limits of behavior, sexual and otherwise, compatible with membership in that body. Given the ubiquity of the sexual use of slaves, Paul would inevitably have encountered slaves whose obligations included sexual relations with their owners and those to whom their owners permitted sexual access, including enslaved prostitutes. In this section I examine Paul's advice on sexual matters in light of these wider contexts. I argue that recognition of the somatic obligations of ancient slaves leads us to revise or modify commonly held positions in Pauline studies. We do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the sexual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Christian community, or whether, like others in the first century, Paul and the churches regarded some sexual activity as morally neutral. Two interrelated questions structure the inquiry. First, how does a recognition that slaves were treated as available bodies affect our interpretation of Paul's instructions on sexual ethics? Second, in light of what we have learned about the sexual use of slaves, how does Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, affect our reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a social movement, especially among slaves?

In the late third century, Lactantius proclaimed that Christian men and women should adhere to the same sexual standards. Christian men should not have sexual partners other than their wives, not even slaves. Such an idea was not utterly unprecedented. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, for example, had argued that by engaging in sexual activities with slaves, freeborn men exhibited less self-control than women, who avoided such entanglements. He therefore thought that men should refrain from sexual relations with slaves.¹¹² However, no evidence suggests that this Stoic advice had an appreciable impact on behavior in the Roman world. In contrast, later Christian writers repeated versions of Lactantius's mandate, although they often acknowledged that the reality of people's behavior did not always conform to these scrupulous standards. Ambrose urged men to avoid sexual relations with slaves in order to avoid giving their wives grounds for divorce. Jerome contrasted Christian with pagan morals by alluding to the tolerance that the latter exhibited for liaisons between free men and their female slaves.¹¹³ Jerome wrote, "Among the Romans men's chastity goes unchecked; seduction and adultery are condemned, but free permission is given to lust to range the brothels and to have slave girls, as though it were a person's rank and not the sexual pleasure that constituted the offense. With us what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men."¹¹⁴

Does this view of sexual ethics arise over the course of several centuries' development of Christian thought? Or is this view of sexual ethics implicit in the earliest Christian moralizing on sexual matters as preserved in the letters of Paul? Modern commentators have assumed that Paul found the sexual use of slaves immoral. However, unlike Lactantius, Ambrose, and Jerome, Paul does not refer explicitly to sexual relations between slaveholders and their human property. Given the ubiquity of the assumption that slaves were sexually available to their owners with no moral consequences for the slaveholder, we cannot simply assume that Paul's audience implicitly understood that participation in the body of Christ precluded such sexual activity.

p. 59 We must return to ↳ the Pauline texts themselves. We must see what they say and, perhaps more important, what they do not say.

In several places, Paul exhorts newly formed Christians to abstain from *porneia*. To assume that this instruction includes a tacit prohibition on (consensual or nonconsensual) sexual contact between slaveholder and slave begs the question. The question precisely at hand is whether Paul understands such

relations to constitute *porneia*. Is Paul silent on the question because the sexual use of slaves is abhorrent to him and he expects other Christians to share his perspective? Or is Paul silent on this question because he does not challenge cultural norms regarding the sexual use of slaves?

Musonius Rufus, Lactantius, Ambrose and Jerome all address the moral position of the slaveholder. What of the moral position of the slave? Sensitivity to the moral position of persons who are not in a position to say “no,” who are unable to maintain their bodies as sexually inviolate, invites us to reconsider the consequences of Pauline sexual ethics for slaves who sought membership and full participation in the Christian body. If indeed Christian communities understood Paul's exhortations on sexual matters to preclude carnal contact between slaveholders and slaves, consequences would have differed for those in a position to control their own bodies and those not in a position to protect the integrity of their own bodies. Paul insisted that *porneia* was not primarily a matter of individual conscience. He argued that in order to avoid pollution the Christian community should expel any person who engaged in *porneia*. If we conclude that Paul included carnal relations between slaveholders and slaves under the umbrella of *porneia*, slaves whose owners insisted on using them sexually could be seen as a source of potential contamination in the pure Christian body. Under these circumstances, a slave owned by a non-Christian would be at greater risk than a slave owned by a Christian. A non-Christian slaveholder would have found a request that he abstain from using a slave sexually to be laughable.

Still more tenuous would be the position of an enslaved prostitute who heard the gospel preached and sought baptism and communion with a Christian community. The business of a prostitute (Greek, *pornē*) was *porneia*. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reacts with horror to the presence in the Christian community of a man who had frequented a prostitute. It seems unlikely that he would have responded more warmly to the presence of a prostitute. For at least some denizens of the Roman Empire, the conditions of their enslavement would have created barriers to participation in the life of the Christian body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

The earliest Christian document that we possess, 1 Thessalonians, offers guidance on sexual matters. In giving that advice, Paul refers explicitly to counsel on sexual ethics that he had previously delivered to the Thessalonian church in person. Introducing his advice in 4:3–8, Paul reminds his readers that “you learned from us how you ought to live. . . . you know what instructions we gave you” (4:1–2). Although twenty-first-century readers find aspects of this advice to be obscure, the Thessalonian Christians had the benefit of hearing these remarks in the context of Paul's prior exhortations.

p. 60 The NRSV translation renders the passage with artificial clarity, lending cogency to Paul's advice that is not warranted by his own phrasing: “For this is the will of God, ↳ your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication [= *porneia*]; that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you” (4:3–6; emphasis added). This translation glosses over several difficulties. First, Paul instructed the (male) Thessalonian Christians to abstain from *porneia*, or sexual immorality. Whether Paul understood *porneia* to encompass precisely the field of activities connoted by the modern concept of “fornication” is unclear and even unlikely. Second, by supplying gender-neutral language in place of Paul's gender-specific language, the NRSV translation artificially abstracts Paul's advice from the patriarchal culture in which he wrote. Paul expressed concern that some Christians might wrong their *brothers* in sexual matters, an uneasiness that derived its particular charge from its patriarchal context. The NRSV neutralizes and obscures this context by implying that Paul was concerned with injuries to men or women in the community. Third, and most problematically, in the NRSV translation Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians that it is important that “each of you know how to control your own body.” What Paul actually wrote is that each (male) Thessalonian Christian should know how to “obtain his own vessel.” While some translators and commentators understand this as an idiomatic expression for controlling one's own body or, possibly, sexual organs, other translators take “vessel” (*skeuos*) as a euphemism for wife, so that the passage would encourage the (male) Thessalonians to avoid sexual immorality by obtaining wives.¹¹⁵ I propose a third possibility. Paul's advice could be construed as instructions to the male Thessalonian Christians to find morally neutral outlets for their sexual urges. And in the first century, domestic slaves were considered to be morally neutral outlets for sexual urges—vessels, we might say.

Ernest Best notes, “The attitude of the Christian is now contrasted with that of the pagan, which had been his own only a few months before and which he could not be expected to forget completely on becoming a Christian.”¹¹⁶ Reflecting on the immediacy of that pagan context for the Thessalonian Christians, I find it surprising that Paul did not explicitly reinforce a prohibition on the sexual use of slaves, if he believed that Christianity demanded such a discipline. Commentators and critics typically insist that 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 restricts sexual activity to marriage. David Williams writes, for example, that *porneia* “regularly means to have dealings with a prostitute (*pornē*), but it was also used of any form of illicit sex—illicit from the Jewish/Christian point of view—that is, of any sexual relationship outside of marriage.”¹¹⁷ This reading, however, is a construction of what Williams believes Paul must have meant, rather than a straightforward exposition of what Paul actually said. Paul warned against *porneia*, but he did not define the parameters of *porneia*. As Williams acknowledges, a “restriction of sex to marriage struck the pagan world of that day as odd, for it tolerated and even encouraged, at least in the case of men, various forms of extramarital sexual activity.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, Paul urged the (male) Thessalonian Christians to adhere to more careful sexual standards than those tolerated by the Gentiles. Unfortunately, he did not clarify in what ways the newly formed Christians were to differentiate their behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors. The insistence of contemporary scholars that this advice required Christians to restrict their sexual activity to marriage exceeds what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

p. 61 O. Larry Yarbrough assimilates Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 to the proscription against adultery, “which was of course fundamental to Jewish paraenesis, being one of the Ten Commandments.”¹¹⁹ G. P. Carras argues more broadly that Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian Christians to distinguish their sexual behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors was an admonition to follow Jewish sexual norms. Thus, Carras suggests, Paul would expect the newly formed Christians to avoid incest, homosexual practices, prostitution (although it is unclear whether first-century Judaism univocally condemned prostitution), and adultery.¹²⁰ In the ancient world, however, adultery referred specifically to sexual activity between an honorable married woman (therefore, not a slave) and a man who was not her husband. Carras's argument addresses the behaviors that Paul's counsel would exclude but does not address those behaviors still implicitly permitted by a call to observe the Jewish sexual code, which did not call into question a man's casual sexual access to his own slaves.

The crux of this difficult passage is Paul's advice to “obtain a vessel.” Since antiquity, commentators have debated whether Paul advised the (male) Thessalonians to control their bodies/sexual organs or to acquire wives. Both possibilities present difficulties to the interpreter. What does it mean to obtain or acquire one's own body or sexual organs, for example? While the perfect tense of the verb *ktasthai* could be extended to denote “to possess,” the present tense (which Paul uses) does not have this denotation. On the other hand, referring to a wife as a *skeuos*, a vessel, does not accord her a particularly dignified position. Since neither translation is the obvious choice, Beverly Gaventa advocates translating *skeuos* neither as body/sexual organs nor as wife but literally, as vessel, to preserve the inherent ambiguity of Paul's phrasing.¹²¹ Moreover, translating *skeuos* as vessel leaves open the possibility that the Thessalonian Christians would have understood Paul's counsel to be consistent with the pursuit of other sexual options, which did not infringe on the honor of other free men in the community. (I am not insinuating that Gaventa espouses this final possibility. She writes, “Whatever Paul means in this particular text, it is certain . . . that Paul was opposed to all sexual expression outside of monogamous marriage.”¹²²)

Despite the desire of some critics to see in 1 Thessalonians a representation of “marriage in the sense of full partnership,” Paul's words do not evoke such an elevated view of sexual relations between men and women.¹²³ An appreciation for mutuality and reciprocity in marriage informs 1 Corinthians 7. However, critics should demonstrate and not simply assume continuity between the earlier letter and the later letter. *Skeuos* is a term used to refer to inanimate objects, household goods. Ernest Best rightly suggests that the “rendering wife [which he prefers] appears repulsive to modern thought, but this should not deter us if on other grounds it is the better meaning [as opposed to body], for it would not have been so abhorrent to the ancient world with its very different view of women.”¹²⁴ However, Best then assimilates the passage to the later text in 1 Corinthians: a Christian man is “not to look on her [his wife] as a tool to satisfy his lusts but to appreciate her as a being who with himself is part of God's holy people (1 Cor. 7.2–6).”¹²⁵ Best insists that Paul did not want men to consider their wives as tools. Nonetheless, Paul's advice that, in order to control his sexual urges, a man should “obtain his own vessel” does promote an instrumental attitude toward women.

Some commentators cite the concern that viewing Christian wives as vessels would diminish the significance of marriage to support the argument that the vessel to which ↵ Paul refers is the body/sexual organs.¹²⁶ My suggestion, that Paul's advice to men "to take a vessel" could encompass sexual access to slaves in one's own household, acknowledges that referring to sexual partners as vessels treats them not as ends but as means. Given the pervasive assumption in the ancient world that slaveholders had free sexual access to their human chattel, Paul's failure to iterate, or reiterate, a prohibition on such behavior is peculiar, but he may have delivered a stern warning to the Thessalonians on this matter when he was among them: "you know what instructions we gave you" (4:2a). Modern readers of 1 Thessalonians, however, did not hear those instructions, and we should be wary of assuming that we have easy access to their content. Perhaps Paul instructed the Thessalonians that participation in the body of Christ precluded sexual exploitation of slaves. Perhaps he did not deliver such a charge. However, an admonition to avoid sexual contact with one's slaves would have been sufficiently countercultural that Paul would have done well to return explicitly to the matter when he urged the Thessalonian Christians to contain their sexual urges.

Against this argument, Paul does admonish the Thessalonians that their actions should be "in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions like the Gentiles" (4:4b–5a). Would a man's sexual use of his slaves violate the holiness of the Christian body? If so, how would a newly formed Christian man come to understand that sexual use of slaves would pollute his body? Assuming for a moment that Paul had delivered such instructions in person, would later generations of Christians, who passed this letter along, have preserved and respected that mandate? I emphasize the question of pollution and holiness because a man's sexual use of his own slaves would emphatically *not* have violated first-century notions of honor. Male slaves were considered to be without honor, and female slaves without shame.

Furthermore, Paul supplies as a rationale for his sexual advice that the new Christians are to avoid infringing on each other's sexual rights: "that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter" (4:6a). Scholars sensitive to feminist concerns have resisted the tendency to neutralize the gender-specific language of the passage.¹²⁷ Gaventa writes, "Engaging in sexual intercourse outside marriage involves violating the property rights of another male. On this reading, verse 6 refers to the injustice done a male when another male engages in sexual intercourse with a woman whose sexual activity 'belongs' to him."¹²⁸ However, in the first century, a slave's body, and thus her sexual activity, 'belonged' to the slaveholder. A slaveholder was not infringing on any other male's property rights when he had sexual relations with his own slave.

New Testament critics uniformly assert that in 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male members of the community to avoid sexual immorality by restricting sexual activities to marriage. This is not, however, what Paul says. Whether his words in 1 Thessalonians built on explicit earlier instructions to the community, which specified these behavioral parameters, is a matter of speculation rather than evidence. What Paul actually says is that male members of the Christian community should avoid immorality by "obtaining a vessel." In the first century, many who heard such counsel would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. Moreover, the motivations that Paul offers for confining one's sexual urges are, to a significant degree, consistent with a slaveholder having sexual relations with his own human chattel: the preservation of honor, for example, and respect for the rights of Christian brothers. ↵ Whether a slaveholder's sexual relations with his own slaves would be consistent with the preservation of the holiness of the Christian body is less clear.

Paul expresses no concern for the feelings, experience, or moral struggles of the vessel. Does his silence betoken an indifference to the subjectivity of (free) women or of slaves? How we answer this question may depend on whether we assume that there was continuity or development between Paul's sexual ethics in 1 Thessalonians and in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks sympathetically of the wife's role in marriage, but even there, he does not address a practice that was universally tolerated in the first century: the sexual exploitation of slaves as bodies.

Chapters 5–7 of 1 Corinthians constitute Paul's most extended discussion of sexuality and Christian living. Paul cautions against *porneia*, sexual immorality, in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 and 6:12–20.¹²⁹ In chapter 7 Paul responds to questions the Corinthians had written him about marriage and life in the Christian body. Many commentators suggest that chapter 7 begins a new section in the overall structure of the letter.¹³⁰ Other commentators note that, as Paul begins his response in chapter 7 to the Corinthians' questions, he takes his cue from the previous discussions of *porneia*. A preoccupation with sexual immorality inaugurates and governs Paul's discussion of marriage. Antoinette Clark Wire argues that Paul rehearses the arguments of chapters 5–6 so that his readers will understand the urgency of his concern in chapter 7. For Paul, Wire contends, marriage is the antidote to *porneia*.¹³¹ What relevance did any of this discussion have for enslaved members of the congregation, who could neither resist their masters' sexual demands nor contract legitimate marriages?

Paul begins his discussion of the Corinthians' sexual practices by condemning the community for tolerating a man who had a sexual relationship with a woman who had been (and perhaps still was) his father's wife. Paul labels the relationship an instance of *porneia*. He furthermore claims that this kind of *porneia* is not even found among Gentiles. He expresses surprise that the church has been less scrupulous than the surrounding pagan world in delineating the boundaries of appropriate sexual conduct: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife."¹³² Paul advises, "When you are assembled . . . you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."¹³³ Drawing on the metaphor of yeast permeating an entire batch of dough, he encourages them to remove the incestuous man from their midst. In the future, he says, they should not tolerate the presence of immoral persons in their community: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy. . . . For what have I to do with judging those outside?"¹³⁴

p. 64 The phrasing of Paul's complaint implies that individuals and groups could vary in their perceptions of what constituted *porneia*. Even in the first century this was a category open to interpretation. Paul's purpose is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of *porneia*. Not surprisingly, then, he does not address a question immediately relevant to the present discussion: whether sexual relationships between slaves and their masters constitute *porneia*.¹³⁵ As I have argued, a positive answer to this question would not have been self-evident to a Christian congregation whose members had grown up in a social context that accepted the normalcy of such behavior.

The target of Paul's accusation is the Corinthian church rather than the individual man involved in the transgression.¹³⁶ In fact, Paul demonstrates less consternation about the incestuous man than about the community that accepted and perhaps applauded his actions.¹³⁷ Hans Conzelmann suggests, "Paul does not explicitly state the ground of his judgment, because the ground is self-evident: the community is the temple of God (6:19)."¹³⁸ The presence of the incestuous man in the community threatens the soundness of the whole, a threat Paul represents with the metaphor of leavening (5:6–8). Paul alludes to his instructions from an earlier letter to avoid *pornoi*, sexually immoral men, and, presumably, women and clarifies these earlier instructions. The Christian community cannot cut itself off from the world, but it should avoid the intrusion of the world into the community. The church is not a refuge for anyone who practices immorality, and he catalogs those whom he considers immoral, from the sexually immoral to greedy persons to thieves. (See also 6:9–11, in which Paul asserts that the Corinthian community includes some who had formerly numbered among such unsavory characters. Here, as well, Paul lists *pornoi* before other categories of wrongdoers.) Since *porneia* represents such a threat to the well-being of the community it would seem the entire community would have an interest in eliminating it. However, the boundaries of behavior Paul defines as *porneia* remain unclear. Would slaves who submitted sexually to their owners number among the *pornoi*? At stake, although not explicitly addressed, is the status of slaves in the community.

Although Paul is primarily concerned with the health of the community, he is also concerned with the destiny of the transgressing man (5:4–5). However, he expresses no interest in the moral status or destiny of the woman involved.¹³⁹ Commentators generally agree that Paul's lack of interest in the issue indicates that the woman was not a member of the Christian community.¹⁴⁰ Lending credence to this position is Paul's insistence in the same passage that Christians have no business judging those outside the community

(5:12–13). Extending this logic, one might ask whether Paul's silence on the sexual position of slaves indicates that he believes that slaves who are sexually involved with their owners are therefore alienated from the Christian body. Wire proposes that Paul is silent about the stepmother's complicity because she is not in a position to be responsible for her actions, either because of extreme youth or enslavement.¹⁴¹ Wire's proposal recognizes the lack of clarity that surrounds the early Christian community's treatment of slaves' sexual activity, and she may be right. Paul may have believed that the forced sexual activity of slaves was beyond moral judgment. His surviving words do not help us decide the question.

p. 65 The passage 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 offers a variety of challenges for understanding the impact of Pauline Christianity on slaves. Recognition that Greco-Roman slaveholders regarded their slaves as bodies in turn complicates our reading of the chapter. The first-century category of *porneia* does not map neatly onto modern categories of sexual impropriety. The question of whether Paul thought that sexual relations between slaves and ↵ their owners fell in the category of *porneia* (for both slaveholder and slave or for either slaveholder or slave) is especially important. Paul insists that *porneia* represents a threat to the entire community and not only to the individuals immediately involved. A focus on the sexual dimensions of slavery opens the question of why Paul remains silent concerning the woman's complicity in the case of incest he reports in 1 Corinthians 5.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

From the earlier discussion of *porneia*, broadly defined as sexual irregularity, Paul moves to a discussion of *porneia*, more narrowly defined as prostitution. In the centuries before the Roman occupation of Corinth, the city's temples legendarily enslaved a thousand prostitutes.¹⁴² The practice of sacred prostitution disappeared long before Paul arrived in the city, but in the first century Corinth was still associated with secular prostitution. Many Corinthian coins bore the image of Aphrodite, a kind of early advertising for a popular service industry in the city.¹⁴³ As a port city Corinth attracted travelers, a group well known in antiquity for their patronage of prostitutes. Perhaps it was inevitable that a member of the Corinthian church would find his way to a brothel. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul relies on the language of economics and the slave trade to condemn the buying and selling of bodies in prostitution. Given the high proportion of prostitutes who were slaves, the passage raises questions about the implications of Pauline Christianity for slaves.

Paul quotes what seems to be a slogan among some Corinthian Christians: “All things are lawful for me.” He supplies a retort: “but not all things are beneficial.”¹⁴⁴ Paul writes:

The body is meant not for *porneia* [sexual immorality/prostitution] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun *porneia*! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but *porneia* sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit among you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁴⁵ [All second-person pronouns in the passage are plural.]

p. 66 The focus of 6:12–20 is on a Christian male who visits a prostitute. Jouette Bassler writes, “The prostitute is merely a vehicle for sexual freedom; Paul shows no theological interest in her.”¹⁴⁶ Paul reminds the Corinthians that the body is made for the Lord and will ultimately share in the Lord's resurrection. His lack of interest in the prostitute suggests that, unlike the body of the believer, her body “is not destined for resurrection.”¹⁴⁷ Although commentators tend to assume that Paul's lack of interest in the stepmother in 5:1–13 indicates that she was not a member of the community, the thought that a prostitute might be a member of the Christian body seems almost absurd. Dale Martin writes that, for Paul, a prostitute “is not a person in her own right (as if such a thing were imaginable for Paul) but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The possibility that the Corinthian church might embrace women or men still working as prostitutes is not considered in the secondary ↵ literature. Wire writes: “The fact that Paul does not censure the prostitutes themselves suggests that they are not to his knowledge participants in the community. Yet most cross-class urban groups would include some prostitutes. Paul does say that many Christians practiced immorality before their freedom was purchased by Christ (6:9–11), and

among those could be prostitutes living single or married lives in the community.”¹⁴⁹ Perhaps freeborn or freed prostitutes attracted to the Christian message were able to seek other means of supporting themselves, although this is doubtful.¹⁵⁰ However, enslaved prostitutes would certainly lack such control over their occupation. The scholarly consensus that Paul understood membership in the Christian body to be incompatible with prostitution thus has unrecognized implications for understanding the difficulties that slaves would face in joining the church.

The language that Paul uses to challenge the common assumption that a sexual encounter with a prostitute has no lasting effects on the customer has broad implications for reconstructing his understanding of the nature of sexual activity.¹⁵¹ Paul claims that whoever has sex with a prostitute becomes one body with her and supports his position by quoting Genesis 2:24: “The two shall be one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16). Such a union, Paul says, is incompatible with spiritual union with the Lord (verse 17). Fee clarifies, “It is not the sexual union that is incompatible with Christ, it is such a union *with a prostitute*.”¹⁵² The believer belongs to Christ as a member, so his sexual activities affect the Lord to whom he belongs (verse 15). Martin graphically writes, “The man who has sex with a prostitute is, in Paul’s construction, Christ’s ‘member’ entering the body of the prostitute. Since her body is only part of a larger whole, the cosmos, the simple act of copulation between a man and a woman becomes for Paul copulation between Christ and the cosmos.”¹⁵³ It is hard to see how, on Paul’s view, *any* sexual relations involving a believer could be morally neutral. All sexual relations would affect the Lord and indeed the entire Christian body (6:19–20).¹⁵⁴ Again, the moral status of slaves (including, but by no means exclusively, prostitutes) whose owners insisted on using them sexually remains an urgent question.

Paul relies on the metaphor of buying and selling bodies, of slave trading, to exhort the Christian community to avoid prostitutes. Ironically, Paul configures the male Christian body and the body of the church as objects of sale. The participle that Paul uses to express the Christian’s relationship with a prostitute or with the Lord, *kollōmenos* (6:16–17), implies economic obligation or subordination.¹⁵⁵ In Paul’s view a man who patronizes a prostitute abridges his own freedom by obligating himself to her. Paul urges members of the community to obligate themselves instead as slaves to the Lord.

The image of the slave market becomes more explicit. Paul informs the Corinthian community, “You [pl.] are not your own. . . . You were bought with a price” (6:19b–20a).¹⁵⁶ The price paid is Christ’s death, yet the metaphor also positions Christ as a customer at a slave auction, purchasing the Christian body.¹⁵⁷ This use of language seems ironic in light of the economic realities implicit in the exchanges of prostitution, in which sexual access to a woman’s (or man’s) body is bought and sold. The bodies of enslaved prostitutes were of course subject to an additional kind of sale, that of slave trading. Paul expresses concern for the vulnerabilities of the Christian body (the body of the individual male and the body of the community) without expressing concern for the vulnerabilities of the (frequently enslaved, usually female) prostitute’s body.

p. 67 S. Scott Bartchy seems accurate in his assessment that “Paul did not want any Christian who was in slavery to think . . . that his slave-status was any disadvantage in his relation to God.”¹⁵⁸ Although scholars debate the extent to which “the liminal transcendence of societal oppositions that was declared in baptism” affected patterns of social interaction and hierarchy among early Christians,¹⁵⁹ the assumption that the message of the gospel extended without prejudice to slave as well as free has largely gone unchallenged. However, Paul’s insistence on the fundamental incompatibility between the body of prostitution and the body of Christ seems to leave even those prostitutes who were enslaved beyond the boundaries of Christian community. Paul draws on the metaphor of slave trading to warn the Christian community that it imperils itself when members frequent prostitutes rather than to express concern for the involuntary sexual use of the bodies of slaves, even in prostitution.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses, at some length, questions pertaining to Christians and marriage. Although Paul writes explicitly of the situation of slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24, the relevance of chapter 7 as a whole to the lives of slaves is problematic, since slaves were unable to contract legal marriages. J. Albert Harrill observes that, on the standard view, “Paul’s entire response to the Corinthian congregation on marriage, therefore, has little relevance to slaves.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, by limiting the legitimate range of sexual expression to marriage, Paul implicitly suggests that slaves who oblige their masters sexually are engaged in *porneia*. This section considers how Paul’s advice on marriage shapes our understanding of the challenges faced by enslaved Christians. It also reconsiders Paul’s ambiguous directive to slaves in 7:21 in the context of the sexual dimensions of first-century slavery.

Paul introduces his discussion of marriage by allowing that matrimony protects men and women against *porneia* (7:2). He reinforces this declaration by conceding that, although a single life is desirable, marriage is nonetheless preferable to sexual incontinence (7:9). Continence, then, encompasses both celibacy in the single life and fidelity in the married life; the alternative, it seems, is *porneia*. Although later Christian tradition has often assumed that this demarcation of sexual practice was normative, we have seen that the majority of those living in Greco-Roman cities viewed a wider range of sexual practices as acceptable and ordinary. As we have seen, the master’s right to have sexual relations with one of his slaves was not accompanied by moral judgment against the master or the slave. Christian slaveholders who heard Paul’s words could choose to redirect their sexual attention to their wives. The same is not true for enslaved Christians. According to Wire’s reconstruction, the church at Corinth included a number of powerful women ascetics. She writes, “The life-support arrangements of these women—where they live and what they do—are suggested only indirectly in the various domestic situations Paul describes. Slave women . . . probably retain traditional domestic responsibilities.”¹⁶¹ Wire does not consider the complicating factor that the “traditional domestic responsibilities” of many enslaved women included sexual obligations.

p. 68 Indeed, Paul seems to assume that those whom he addresses in 7:1–16 could freely choose to marry or not to marry.¹⁶² He offers specific advice to various categories of married and unmarried persons.¹⁶³ After addressing those who are married to believing partners and those who are not married, he addresses “the rest” (verse 12). The advice he then delivers pertains particularly to Christians whose spouses are not believers, and commentators accordingly delimit the range of “the rest” to those whose spouses do not belong to the Christian community.¹⁶⁴ Most commentaries do not consider who else *could* be included in “the rest.” They assume that Paul’s list exhaustively covers persons in all possible situations. According to this view, Paul has nothing to say about the options open to enslaved Christians, who could not contract marriages and could be used sexually by their owners. Commentators interpret Paul’s silence about the moral status of the stepmother in a case of incest (5:1–13) and the prostitute (6:1–12) as evidence that these women are not participants in the Christian body. Paul’s silence about the plight of sexually exploited slaves could be construed as evidence that he perceives their (compelled) behavior to place them outside membership in the Christian body.

Harrill has offered the intriguing suggestion that “the rest” in verse 12 includes not only those married to unbelievers but also “those not empowered to marry at all unless enfranchised (7:21–23),” that is, slaves.¹⁶⁵ He makes this proposal as he discusses 7:21, which he translates: “You were called as a *slave*. Do not worry about it. But if you can indeed become *free*, use instead [freedom].”¹⁶⁶ Because of the difficulties of this text, an overview of Harrill’s position is essential.

He begins his discussion of 7:21 with a summary of the long-standing debate over the translation of the verse.¹⁶⁷ As he says, scholars base their translations not only on the syntax of the passage and its immediate context in the letter but also on their understandings of ancient slavery. These understandings often minimize the brutality of Greco-Roman slavery. Fee, for example, who offers a careful discussion of the syntax of the passage, asserts that slavery “provided generally well for up to one-third of the population in a city like Corinth or Rome. The slave had considerable freedom and very often experienced mutual benefit along with the owner.”¹⁶⁸ Along with an analysis of the syntax of verse 21,¹⁶⁹ Harrill provides a discussion of seventeen philological parallels that support his contention that Paul urges slaves to “use instead [freedom].”¹⁷⁰

He concedes that his translation requires Paul first to establish (in verses 17 and 20) and then violate a principle: each should remain content with the state in which he or she was called. Throughout chapter 7,

however, Paul offers exceptions to the rule he has laid down. Although he says that spouses should be content to remain married, for example, he establishes guidelines for spouses seeking separation (verse 11). He encourages those who are single to be content with that status but states that they do not sin if they choose to marry (verse 28).¹⁷¹ This rhetorical pattern helps clarify Paul's logic in 7:21. He encourages slaves not to be disturbed by their bondage but then offers an exception to this principle: "If you can indeed become free, use instead [freedom]."

p. 69 I find Harrill's argument that in 7:21 Paul urges slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom to be convincing. Moreover, I find it plausible that Paul gives such advice in the midst of his discussion of marriage because he is aware that slaves, who are unable to contract marriages, are the sexual property of their owners. Harrill observes that "seizing such opportunities for liberation would have enabled a slave to escape a master's violent coercion and, as a freedman/woman, to secure more control over his or her own body and daily activities to pursue asceticism."¹⁷² (Harrill does not explicitly address the question of sexual vulnerability, although such awareness may be implicit in his formulation.) Some forms of manumission still gave a master control over the freedperson, but freedpersons were in general less vulnerable than slaves to the demands (including sexual demands) of their masters. (Note that this reading of 1 Corinthians 7:21 does not include any claim about how Paul would respond to slaves or freedpersons who were still being used sexually by their owners or former owners—whether he would believe that such activity excluded the slave or freedperson from the Christian body or whether he would perceive coerced sexual activity as morally neutral.)

However, I do not support Harrill's argument that Paul intends to include slaves among "the rest" of verse 12: "To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her." With the majority of commentators, I categorize verses 17–24 as Paul's articulation of his governing principle with two examples: circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery.¹⁷³ His governing principle, again, is that each should be content with the state in which he was called. To include slaves among "the rest" awkwardly leaves an articulation of a general principle with a single illustration (circumcision/uncircumcision) followed by advice to slaves, which only obliquely pertains to the overall topic of the chapter, marriage. I follow the generally held view that when Paul refers to "the rest" in verse 12, he is referring narrowly to the case of Christians whose spouses are not Christians. In articulating the governing principle of the chapter he provides two examples. As he sets forth the second example, however, he is aware of the problematic ramifications of slavery with respect to sexual expectations and marital status, so he also offers one of the many exceptions that he scatters throughout the chapter.

We have seen that Paul rejects the idea that sexual couplings can be a matter of moral indifference (1 Cor. 6:16), and he furthermore implies that all sexual unions involving Christians have implications for the entire community (1 Cor. 6:15–20). The passage 1 Corinthians 5–7 is marked by a concern for the integrity of the Christian body, which encompasses a desire to confine sexual activity to marriage, a standard to which many slaves would not have been able to adhere. Despite Paul's belief that servile status should not affect one's life in Christ, many slaves may well have found that sexual demands made by their masters complicated their membership in the Christian body. We simply do not know how Paul responded to the situation of slaves who were used sexually by their owners. Perhaps, however, concern over this vulnerability prompted him to advise slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom as they arose.

Body Politics

p. 70 Bartchy writes that, according to Paul's understanding, God's call in Christ "had made irrelevant every particular social and religious status."¹⁷⁴ The assumption that servile status was in no way a disadvantage with respect to one's membership in the church has been pervasive in discussions of New Testament texts pertaining to slavery. James D. G. Dunn argues, "If 'Christ is everything and in everything,' then nothing can diminish or disparage the standing of any one human in relation to another or to God."¹⁷⁵ J. N. Aletti claims that Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 indicate that there was no disparity in the "capacité éthique des croyants."¹⁷⁶ F. F. Bruce asks, "What real difference could there be for a Christian between bond and free?"¹⁷⁷ In making such statements, New Testament scholars ignore the ancient equation between slaves and bodies. Even if we assume—and it is a major assumption—that Christian masters did not force their slaves to provide them with sexual services, pagan masters would not have shared such scruples about the bodies they owned.

Although New Testament texts are silent on the sexual availability of slaves, a vast array of Greco-Roman sources assume that masters had unlimited sexual access to their slaves. In 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male Christians to avoid *porneia* by obtaining their own vessels. Accustomed to relying on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets, the newly converted Thessalonian Christians could easily have construed these words as advice to maintain the honor of respectable freeborn Christians by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations. Indeed, it is strange that Paul does not explicitly condemn the sexual use of slaves if he believes this practice to be inconsistent with the Christian ethos. New Testament scholars have uncritically assumed that later Christian rejections of the sexual use of slaves are already implicit in the earliest Christian document we possess.

A slaveholder had the right to profit from a slave's body by forcing her or him into prostitution. Paul's unequivocal separation of the body of prostitution from the body of Christ would seem to exclude all prostitutes, even enslaved prostitutes, from membership in the church. More subtle would have been the problems faced by slaves whose masters used them sexually. In 1 Corinthians Paul distinguishes sexual relationships within marriage from all other sexual relationships, and he encourages the Corinthian Christians to confine their sexual practices to marriage. Perhaps this is one reason he encourages slaves to seek a change in their status when possible, taking advantage of opportunities for freedom. We do not know precisely how Paul responded to the situation of slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them. However, attention to this dimension of ancient slavery makes it impossible to maintain both that servile status was no impediment to full involvement in the Christian body *and* that within the Christian body the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife.

Paul believes that baptism breaks down the barriers between slave and free (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). (It may be useful to differentiate between the claim that for those in Christ there are no distinctions between slave and free and the claim that slavery presents no obstacles to those who want to join the Christian body. In fact, Paul never clearly makes the latter claim, which has been repeatedly made for him by modern scholars.) Bruce notes that it would have been easier for Paul than for an enslaved person to maintain the position that slave status was irrelevant for those in the church.¹⁷⁸ John M. G. Barclay has argued that masters and slaves in the same church would have found it difficult in practice to transcend those roles. For example, a slave might have found it very hard to follow Paul's advice to admonish a member of the community who had transgressed, if that transgressor were his or her owner.¹⁷⁹ We have seen that Acts of the Apostles accords householders (who would have been slaveholders) a disproportionate role in fostering the growth of the church, a picture that raises even more questions about the dynamics between slave and free members of the Christian body. Although Paul himself minimizes the significance of servile status, we do not have the coeval words of slaves, describing their own attempts to live a new life in Christ. In a society that represented and treated slaves as bodies, ecclesial incorporation of slaves would have exposed the body of Christ to the somatic vulnerabilities of enslaved members.

Working Bodies: Occupations of Slaves

Slaves could be found in every occupation in Greco-Roman cities.¹⁸ The men who maintained the furnaces in the baths were often slaves. The women who served beer in beer shops were often slaves and, for that matter, often prostitutes. Slaves worked in pottery factories and on farms, in mines and as shepherds. In smaller establishments a slave might have multiple jobs. Slaveholders provided official notifications of the deaths of slaves in order to avoid capitation taxes. These death notices typically referred to the slave's trade. They sometimes stated the deceased slave was not skilled in any particular trade.¹⁹ The staffs of larger households included slaves who managed the accounts and oversaw other slaves as well as slaves who carried household waste to public dump sites.

Evidence is extensive for the involvement of slaves in the production of commodities, where they typically worked alongside free laborers. For example, during the early Empire, Arezzo was a center for the manufacture of red-glazed pottery. In workshops ranging in size from a dozen to sixty workers, slaves crafted pottery, which they marked with their own names.²⁰ Slaves were ubiquitous in all ranks of garment workers, from weavers to dyers to seamstresses. Papyri that listed the occupations of slaves often cited weaving as a trade. An early third-century guardian's account of the financial status of his wards, two minor boys, listed the wages earned by a female slave employed as a weaver. The text's modern editor notes that the slave's wages were sufficient to lift the account into the profitable range.²¹ A sheaf of apprenticeship

contracts suggests that slaveholders often sent female slaves, less often male slaves, to learn the trade of weaving.²² Such contracts delineated responsibilities for feeding and clothing the enslaved apprentice and specified the holidays the slave would enjoy while working under the weaver. Benefits to the slaveholder were multiple. The slaveholder received remuneration for the slave's labor during the time of the apprenticeship. At the same time, the slave became more valuable to the slaveholder as she became more skillful in the designated craft.

Along with labor in workshops, fields, and markets, slaves advanced their owners' financial ends through serving as financial agents and managers of all kinds. Ostraca document the activities of slaves who served as financial agents, often with some autonomy. At least in Egypt, Roman families living abroad, including members of the imperial family, were most likely to rely on slaves as agents.²³ Jesus alluded in the parables to slaves who managed other slaves, some serving their owners more faithfully than others.²⁴ As overseers, slaves could exercise considerable power over other slaves within the household, but even outside the structure of the household a slave could manage a slaveholder's fortune. A well-documented example of a slave heavily involved in financial management comes from a villa in the vicinity of Pompeii. Wax tablets excavated there record the activities of a slave named Hesychus, who acted as his owner's agent in loaning 10,000 sesterces to an importer of foodstuffs named C. Novius Eunus. Hesychus also coordinated the rental of extensive food storage facilities. Moreover, this trove of tablets reveals some of the material benefits that could accrue to a slave entrusted with financial affairs. Within months of expediting his master's loan in 37 C.E., Hesychus became a creditor in his own right through a loan of 3,000 sesterces to C. Novius Eunus.²⁵ Only a minority of slaves had such lucrative opportunities. The overseer parables, for example, call attention to the (praiseworthy or culpable) activities of the slave entrusted with affairs of the household. The parables allude to a greater number of other household slaves, under the supervision of the overseer, who held less-responsible positions. The ascendancy of a Hesychus was thus neither a norm for slaves nor an anomaly. (Chapter four, which analyzes the parabolic figure of the slave, examines at greater length the evidence regarding managerial slaves.)

It is difficult to assign a single job title to capture the work obligations of a slave in a small slaveholding establishment. A second-century contract from Oxyrhynchus gives an idea of the range of duties a slave who belonged to a more humble master or mistress might have to perform. Glaukos leased his slave Tapontos, a weaver, to Achilles for a period of a year. The lease specified that Achilles would be responsible for Tapontos day and night. However, Glaukos retained the right to send for Tapontos during the night to make bread.²⁶ Clearly, Glaukos's establishment was not large enough to include a full-time baker, as one would expect to find in a wealthy household.

Our sources typically distinguish between urban and rural slaves. The opening act of Plautus's *Mostellaria*, for example, features banter between a country-bumpkin slave and a scheming city slave with a superior attitude. The distinction between urban slaves, belonging to the *familia urbana*, and rural slaves, belonging to the *familia rustica*, was predicated as much on the slaves' duties as on their place of residence.²⁷ Smaller slaveholding households would not have included sufficient staff to maintain this demarcation. The Gospel of Luke includes a parable of Jesus in which an agricultural slave doubles as a cook and domestic attendant: "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink.'"²⁸

Jesus' parable does not evoke a vision of life on a vast estate, such as the extensive landholdings that dominated the landscape in Sicily and the Italian peninsula, but a smaller slaveholding household in which a slave's multiple and varied duties ranged from agricultural and pastoral tasks to food preparation and service. In larger slaveholding establishments, slave labor could be highly specialized. Clement of Alexandria, for example, disapproved of bloated household staffs, with some slaves "to prepare and make the pastries, others to make the honey cakes, and still others to prepare the porridges."²⁹ Josephus mentioned that Herod the Great was especially fond of three of his eunuchs, each of whom had extremely limited duties. One eunuch did nothing but pour Herod's wine. Another served his food. A third eunuch, who shared Herod's bedchamber, helped Herod as he prepared for bed.³⁰

Domestic slaves probably outnumbered slaves engaged in productive or managerial work.³¹ The horrors of life in the mines or on the vast agricultural estates of Sicily in many ways dwarfed the indignities of life as a domestic slave. Nonetheless, Keith Hopkins has argued, "Roman literature abounds with stories of incidental cruelty to individual domestic slaves. . . . Domestic slaves stood in the front line. They were more

privileged and pampered than the tens of thousands of slaves who labored without hope in the fields and mines. . . . But domestic slaves also had more contact with their owners, and were more often subjected to their despotic whimsy.”³²

In smaller households the very slaves who contributed to the production of commodities would also have been involved in household tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, removing waste, and caring for children. Along with producing clothes for sale, a slave skilled in wool working could also produce clothing for members of the household. In larger households the tasks performed by domestic slaves would be highly specialized. Thus, on a continuum, the slave in the Lukan parable moved from work in the fields to waiting on the master at the table. Aesop not only shopped for food but also prepared and served it to his master and his master's guests. A wealthier household would have multiple slaves dedicated to particular cooking specialties. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius the ass eventually falls into the hands of two kitchen slaves, one specializing in sweets and the other in sauces.³³

Descriptions of banquets suggest that elaborate household staffs would enhance the self-image of some slaveholders. The more frivolous a slave's task, the clearer the evidence of the owner's wealth. In the *Satyricon*, Encolpus describes the scene as he enters Trimalchio's banquet, where Trimalchio is playing a ball game with some boys:

If the ball hit the ground, he [Trimalchio] didn't chase it, but had a slave with a bag full of balls give the players a new one. We noticed some other novelties: there were two eunuchs stationed at different points in a circle; one was holding a silver chamber pot, the other was counting the balls. . . . While we wondered at the extravagance of this, Menelaus ran up and said, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party! What you see is only the prelude to dinner.” As Menelaus spoke, Trimalchio snapped his finger as a signal to the eunuch to hold out the chamber pot for him as he continued to play. After emptying his bladder, he called for water for his hands, sprinkled it lightly on his fingers and then wiped them dry on the head of a young slave.³⁴

Trimalchio has set up this scene as a tableau for his guests so they can witness the extent of his wealth. As Menelaus pointedly observes, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party!”

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Jesus and his followers encountered the slaves of opulent households on those occasions when their activities came to the attention of civil or religious authorities. For example, during the events surrounding the arrest of Jesus, he and his followers had dealings with slaves belonging to the grand household of the high priest. One of the high priest's male slaves had an ear severed during the arrest of Jesus; several of the high priest's female and male slaves accosted Peter to accuse him of accompanying Jesus.³⁵ The Pauline letters and Acts of the Apostles include references to a number of households that included slaves.³⁶ However, on the basis of these texts, we cannot reach firm conclusions about the size of those households nor the degree to which their slaves specialized in productive, managerial, domestic, or sexual duties. We have no evidence to suggest that Paul interacted with slaves or slaveholders in households as lavish as Trimalchio's. Still, when he accepted hospitality from a slaveholder, domestic slaves would have tended to his needs, from washing his feet upon entering the household to preparing the food for communal meals.

Domestic Bodies: Family Life Among Slaves

Our sources help us detect the shadowy ghosts of slaves proceeding through the streets of Mediterranean cities in the course of their varied duties or laboring in workshops and kitchens. The sources are less helpful when we try to reconstruct the domestic arrangements of slaves. What kind of quarters did slaves occupy? How did the layout of ancient houses facilitate or impede family ties among slaves? Moreover, how did residential layouts shape the quality of relationships among slaves who succeeded in establishing, at least for a time, stable family ties? Literary sources afford scant clues. Archaeological remains are in need of interpretation.

Sometimes slaves lived outside the households of their owners. We have a glimpse into such living arrangements in a legal petition submitted in 60 C.E., in which a slaveholder named Theon complained that thieves had twice broken into the living quarters of his slave Epicharis, who lived in an apartment of some kind in a house in another district.³⁷ More often, slaves lived with their owners. Larger houses had separate

slave quarters—dark, cramped, far less ornamented than the rooms in which the head of the household received guests or conducted business. Smaller households did not have separate accommodations for slaves. Regardless of whether the slaves had their own quarters, however, no corner of the household was off limits to slaves. Attending children, preparing food, working on accounts—the slaves, who were integral to every aspect of the household's function, would have been found in every nook and cranny of a house during the hours of work.³⁸ At night, a slave might have slept in a closet that was also used for food storage or curled up in a corner of an owner's bedroom.

The information we have about ancient slave quarters is, at best, minimal. Evidence so fragile cannot sustain generalizations about the quality of domestic life among those slaves fortunate enough to establish (at least temporarily) family bonds. Michele George notes, “The development of slave families is also problematic. In large households separate suites for slaves with considerable responsibilities may have been usual. However, in houses of average size this would have been impossible, and here slave families must have evolved despite proximity to the free household, and in a cultural context with notions of intimacy and personal space which were different from our own.”³⁹ (It seems worth noting that if slaves lived with less privacy than families in modern industrialized societies, so too did slaveholders.) Envisioning the domestic configurations of a family of slaves owned by a modest slaveholding establishment is difficult. Did they enjoy common leisure time? Where did they congregate? Were they able to spend time with one another without intrusions from their owners or, for that matter, from other slaves in the household? The questions become still more complex when we try to imagine the domestic relations among a family of slaves with multiple owners or the domestic relations among a family that included freedpersons as well as slaves.

Our inability to envisage how slaves arranged their family time and space should not be construed as evidence of a failure on their part to do so. Dale Martin has reviewed funeral epitaphs from various regions in the Empire. The dedications of these epitaphs most commonly indicate that an immediate family member (spouse or child) of the deceased was responsible for the memorial. This held true for slaves and freedpersons as well as for freeborn persons. Martin encourages caution, however, in drawing conclusions based on the epitaphs. We cannot easily infer from epitaphs, which employ stereotyped formulas of affection and respect, the actual feelings that ancient family members had for one another. Most slaves from antiquity were not remembered in formal epitaphs, which suggests that the slaves so memorialized represented an atypical cross-section of ancient slaves. Nonetheless, the picture sketched by the epitaphs is remarkably consistent. At least in death and most likely in life, the slaves who dedicated epitaphs to one another valued their life partners and their offspring.⁴⁰ We do not know when slave families made time for one another or how they managed to find a place for that time together, but epigraphic evidence suggests that many did so.

Martin concludes that “these [epigraphic] studies illustrate the existence and importance of the immediate family for a significant minority of slaves.”⁴¹ Many more slaves, however, lived and labored under conditions that did not enable them to sustain stable family connections. For example, the sexual demands that slaveholders made on female and young male slaves may have strained family relationships among slaves themselves. Or perhaps not—slaves who cared about other slaves in demand as their owners' sexual playthings did not leave diaries recording their emotional reactions to the intimate violation of their loved ones. Studying architectural remains of private dwellings in Italy and the Eastern Empire tells us only that slaves and slaveholders often shared remarkably close quarters. It does not tell us how the resultant lack of privacy impinged on the ability of slaves to construct their own lives and worlds of meaning.

p. 47 Paul's encounter with the slave possessed by an oracular spirit led to conflict with her owners rather than to an opportunity to evangelize her household, although Acts of the Apostles does include four accounts of household conversions. In each case, Peter or Paul gained entry through contact with the head of the household. A dream of Cornelius led him to send two slaves and a soldier to find Peter (10:7). Peter decided to baptize the household when the holy spirit descended on the assembled members, including, presumably, those enslaved (10:44–48). When Paul encountered Lydia, the Lord opened her heart, which led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her entire household (16:14–15). A jailer's experience of God's power in opening the doors of the prison precipitated his invitation to Paul and Silas to preach to his household and then to the household's baptism (16:27–34). Brief mention of the conversion of the synagogue official Crispus notes that his entire household followed his lead (18:8).

The historical accuracy of these summaries is difficult to assess. Luke's theological emphasis is on the power of the spirit at work building the church. Luke supposed that his readers would find nothing amiss when a slaveholder determined the religious practices of the household. Indeed, even contemporary scholars evince little concern about the legitimacy of conversion and baptism of slaves in such circumstances.⁴² Scholars debate whether the household baptisms represented in Acts of the Apostles involved children, but they do not debate whether household baptisms included slaves. They assume and assert that this was the case. Moreover, they do not seem troubled by this assumption. For example, as James Dunn reviews the household conversions in Acts, he equivocates on the inclusion of children in household baptisms but not of adult slaves. Dunn writes of Lydia's situation, "Household here need not include children since the term was commonly used to include household slaves and retainers." Of the conversion of the jailer's household, Dunn writes, "It is equally unclear whether household slaves and other adults *alone* [emphasis added] are in view or also children." Finally, regarding the conversion of Crispus's household, Dunn notes, it is "not clear whether a family is in view or simply the household slaves and retainers."⁴³ Like Dunn and other commentators on Acts, ancient readers would have understood these households to include slaves. Unlike these commentators, however, I think that household baptisms masterminded by slaveholders raise uncomfortable questions about the social dynamics within the Pauline churches, as well as questions about the reception of the gospel by those who participated in the ritual of baptism.

Paul's initial contact in Philippi, according to Acts of the Apostles, was a dealer in purple goods named Lydia. She was a godfearer, that is, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not converted to Judaism. Her openness to Paul's message, we have noted, led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her household (Acts 16:13–15). Paul and his companions accepted her invitation to stay with her, so her house was large enough to accommodate visitors. Whether she was a wealthy woman or a relatively small business agent is not clear, further muddled by the difficulty of identifying social strata of ancient society in terms familiar to modern readers. She could have been a freedwoman who first entered the garment trade when she was a slave.⁴⁴ Perhaps some of those who lived in her house were slave apprentices. Perhaps she owned her workers, or perhaps they were freedmen and freedwomen.

p. 48 Ivoni Richter Reimer has advanced the hypothesis that Lydia's house was a "contrast society" in a Roman colony. As a female head of household, Lydia was not a *pater familias*. The citizen *pater familias* (Latin, "father of the family," or more generally "head of household") possessed, at least according to law, near total powers over members of the household, especially his offspring (including adult offspring) and slaves. Despite an earlier mention in Acts of the Apostles of a female Christian slaveholder, Mary (12:12–14), Reimer minimizes the likelihood that Lydia was a slaveholder, seeing her instead as an "independent woman. . . who provides shelter for other people in her house." Even conceding that Lydia's home could have included slaves, Reimer claims that Lydia's home was an egalitarian retreat: "Because, for example, there is no longer a *pater familias*, there is no more patriarchal subordination, and all can be equal sisters and brothers."⁴⁵ A later papyrus from Karanis offers a glimpse into a household headed by a female garment worker, which hardly conforms to Reimer's hypothesis that a female-headed household would constitute a contrast society. An apprenticeship contract for a female slave to learn the trade of weaving identified Aurelia Libouke as a weaver who had the right to act without a guardian because she had raised three children. Aurelia Libouke agreed to teach the slave the craft of weaving and promised that the slave would attain proficiency suitable for a girl her age. Unlike most apprenticeship contracts, which specified regular holidays throughout the apprenticeship period, this contract stipulated that the slave would be

available for labor with no days off for leisure or even illness.⁴⁶ The mere presence of a woman such as Lydia as head of household did not, therefore, transform a household from a hierarchical to an egalitarian structure.⁴⁷ Richard Saller notes, "Though the head of the household was stereotyped as male by use of *pater familias*, in reality Roman women owned property and must often, in the absence of husbands, have wielded power over households with dependents. This gendered language causes historians to lose sight of female heads of households, even when they know better."⁴⁸

The baptism of her household was Lydia's initiative. Luke does not suggest that the motivations or reactions of other household members concerned either Lydia or Paul. Acts of the Apostles does not present the Christian message as a challenge to slaveholding authority. Through the representations of household baptisms in Acts of the Apostles, Luke reinscribes the power of the head of the household over the lives of those in the house, including resident adult slaves. Chris Frilingos has argued that, in his letter to Philemon, Paul employed the vocabulary of family in such a way as to establish himself as the affectionate and commanding *pater familias* with authority over both slave and slaveholder. In this picture of Christian origins, the new Christian community unsettled existing hierarchical modes of relating among members of Christian households, even between slaveholders and slaves.⁴⁹ In contrast, by suggesting that the spirit responded to the invitations of slaveholders, household by patriarchal household, Acts of the Apostles treats enslaved members of households as dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders.⁵⁰

An authorial propensity to identify with the viewpoint of slaveholders rather than slaves may also influence two summaries of the exodus event in Acts of the Apostles that, curiously, lack any reference to the enslavement of the Israelite people. When Paul preaches at the synagogue in Antioch, he encapsulates the events surrounding the liberation of the Israelites without even a cryptic allusion to the coercive nature of their continuing sojourn in Egypt: "The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it" (13:17). In Stephen's speech before the council, he represents the kings of Egypt as evil not because they enslaved the Israelites who had been their guests but because they promoted infanticide: A king who had not known Joseph came to power, declares Stephen, and he "dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die" (7:19). Although in the nineteenth century African-American abolitionists would celebrate the exodus story as a narrative of God's historical intervention against slavery, these first-century synopses of the exodus expunge any memory of the enslavement of the Israelites.

p. 49 Paul identifies the Christian community as the body of Christ. Descriptions of household conversions in Acts of the Apostles suggest that slaveholders played a disproportionate role in the baptisms of their households and therefore a role in the Christian body that derived not from a gift of the spirit but from their secular status. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to a message he received from "Chloe's people," members of Chloe's household, probably her slaves.⁵¹ Since Paul expected his readers to be familiar with Chloe, he had no reason to specify whether she was herself a Christian. She may well have been. If she was a believer, Paul's reference to "Chloe's people" hints that Christian slaveholders had a higher profile within the church than enslaved members of their households who were also baptized, an impression entirely consistent with Luke's depiction of the movement of the spirit in Acts of the Apostles. According to Acts, Peter and Paul gained access to households not through humble members of the household—children or slaves—but through their heads. Slaveholders chose baptism not only for themselves but also for others who belonged to them, including, presumably, enslaved adult members of the household. What was the position of these enslaved bodies within the Christian body? Given the circumstances of a household baptism, could slaves' experiences as members of the Christian community obliterate the disadvantages of their slave status, even within the cult?⁵²

Paul claimed that membership in the body of Christ dissolved barriers between slave and free.⁵³ Largely on this basis, scholars have inferred that slave status did not entail any special liabilities for participation in the Christian community. However, because slaves were their masters' sexual property, their obligations to their masters would at times have included actions defined as polluting or aberrant in the Christian body. Slaves whose owners were not members of the church would have been especially vulnerable, since their owners would not have been subject to the community's censure. The argument of the remainder of this chapter has two stages. The first stage analyzes evidence concerning slaves and their lack of control over sexual activity in the ancient Mediterranean world. Ancient texts record acceptance of masters' control over their slaves' sexuality and establish a strong link between slavery and prostitution. The second stage of the argument analyzes Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 5–7 in light of evidence concerning the sexual vulnerability of slaves.

No New Testament text details the sexual obligations of slaves to their masters.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, consideration of the sexual demands of first-century slavery requires that we revise, or at least qualify, our claims about the composition and practices of Pauline communities. Wayne Meeks's assessment that “a Pauline congregation generally reflected a fair cross-section of urban society” has dominated recent reconstructions of Pauline circles.⁵⁵ To assume that these congregations never encountered potential converts among the many urban slaves who numbered sexual activities among their duties would modify our picture of Pauline communities in an erratic manner. How Pauline communities responded to these slaves is another question. Either the community excluded slaves whose sexual behavior could not conform to the norms mandated within the Christian body, or the community tolerated the membership of some who did not confine their sexual activities to marriage. The first possibility challenges the assumption that slavery did not jeopardize the standing of individuals in the Christian community; the second possibility suggests that Pauline communities viewed some sexual activities as morally neutral.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul advises as an antidote to *porneia* the acquisition and control of a vessel, *skeuos*. What he means by this counsel remains notably obscure. Some commentators believe that he is urging (male) members of the Thessalonian congregation to acquire wives. Other commentators believe that he is urging the Thessalonian Christians to control their own bodies or, perhaps more specifically, their sexual organs. The Christian men of Thessalonika who first received this letter were accustomed to thinking of slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. I suggest that we revisit Paul's advice to the Christians in Thessalonika to ask how the first male recipients of this letter would have understood Paul's instruction that each man should acquire a vessel for himself.

We do not know the extent to which the Corinthian community adapted Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians. I argue, however, that his teachings on sexuality in 1 Corinthians 5–7 would have complicated and even barred the participation of many slaves in Christian life. The passage 1 Corinthians 5 establishes parameters for the discourse, raising the question of what constitutes *porneia*. Paul situates *porneia* as a problem not only for individuals engaged in such behavior but for the entire community. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul explains why a Christian community cannot include a man who frequents prostitutes. Paul's logic is predicated on the incompatibility of prostitution with the Christian life. Enslaved prostitutes who had no control over their owners' decisions to profit from their bodies would thus have been excluded from membership in the Christian body. Finally, Paul's insistence that sexual activity should be confined to marriage (1 Cor. 7) posed difficulties for slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them.

In Paul's understanding, could the Christian body accommodate the sexually available bodies of slaves? That is, would the inclusion of Christians who were legally and culturally unable to protect the boundaries of their own bodies have threatened the maintenance of clear boundaries for the Christian body? Or does the presence of urban, domestic slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?

Travelers to the towns and cities of the Roman Empire customarily sought shelter with those they knew, or they carried letters of introduction from families and friends. When Lucius, the hero of Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, arrives in the town of Hypata in Thessaly, he inquires at a public inn for the home of Milo. Lucius is previously unacquainted with Milo, but a friend has provided him with a letter of introduction. The old woman who directs Lucius to Milo's house notes as a sign of Milo's meanness that, although he is a wealthy man, the only inhabitants of his house are his wife and a single female slave. Lucius knocks at Milo's gate

and his knocking brings the slave, Photis, to the gate. The rudeness of the house is apparent in her interrogation of the visitor. When Lucius presents her with the letter of introduction, she again bars the gate as she brings the letter inside to Milo.¹ Acts of the Apostles presents a scene with similar details, set in another urban environment in the Eastern Empire, Jerusalem. After King Herod orders the killing of James, the brother of John, he orders the arrest of Peter. The night before Peter is scheduled to appear before Herod, an angel appears in his cell and releases his chains. The angel leads Peter past the guards. The iron gate opens for them, and they go into the city. Realizing where he is, Peter proceeds to the house of his fellow believer Mary. A prayer meeting is in progress at her house. When Peter pounds on the gate, Rhoda, a slave, arrives at the gate to see who is causing the disturbance. Like Photis, she leaves the visitor at the gate while she runs into the house to report the appearance of the visitor, although the text attributes her behavior not to rudeness but to flustered joy (12:2–14).²

The appearance of these two slaves when visitors knock at the gates of the houses in which they dwell ushers us into the world of urban slaves in the Eastern Empire. Both Photis and Rhoda live in modest slaveholding establishments. Households with a hundred or more slaves existed but were far less numerous than smaller slaveholding establishments, families that held one or two slaves or a half dozen slaves. In contrast to the miserly Milo with his single slave, the traveler Lucius is eventually joined even on his travels by two of his own slaves, who follow him on foot. Milo's hospitality to Lucius extends to these two slaves. This is only a minor act of generosity; hosting a few extra slaves causes Milo little trouble. Apuleius mentions the crude mattress shared by Lucius's slaves when its relocation to a place in the courtyard farther from Lucius's door signals that Photis has been preparing for an evening of erotic activity with the visitor. One of these slaves later arises from a heap of straw in the stable to beat a troublesome ass, whom he fails to recognize as his master, Lucius, transformed. Acts of the Apostles does not specify the extent of Mary's slaveholdings, but we may infer that she does not have an opulent household. Rhoda does not seem to be exclusively a gatekeeper: she must come to the gate when she hears the knocking.

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By contrast, a grander household would feature a slave for whom gatekeeping was an exclusive duty. For example, in the Gospel of John a woman who seems only to serve as a gatekeeper guards the entrance to the high priest's complex.³ The *Acts of Paul* includes a reference to the enslaved doorkeeper of Thecla's household because he serves as a witness to her nocturnal comings and goings.⁴ Seneca remarks on a surly doorkeeper who expects visitors to drop a small coin in his hand as he lets them cross the threshold. The wise visitor placates the doorkeeper, says Seneca, "as one quiets a dog by tossing him food."⁵

Gatekeepers, cup bearers, hairdressers, *paedagogi* accompanying young masters through the streets to school—roles played by domestic slaves in antiquity may seem at odds with images of slaves' work influenced by the paradigm of heavy slave labor on the cotton producing plantations of the American South. Domestic slaves did not always contribute to the wealth of the household, while the costs of maintaining the household increased with every slave. ("The only servant he [the miserly Milo] feeds is one young girl," says the innkeeper as she supplies the traveler Lucius with information about his prospective host.⁶) Reliance on slaves as a source of wealth or income, however, is only one dimension of the anthropology of slavery.⁷ Paul Bohannon, who defines slavery in terms of a servile antikinship relationship in which the slave is subject to sale, notes: "The content of the master-slave relationship may vary greatly. One or the other aspect may be emphasized: economic, domestic, religious, sexual, or whatever. Any attempt to classify systems of servility in terms of the economic obligations and positions of the slave is to assume that this one point provides an index for the rest, when in fact such a situation must be shown empirically to exist or not to exist."⁸

Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon. The relationships of slavery with which Paul was acquainted would have been principally the relationships of urban slavery. Slaves in Corinth or Philippi would not have been miners or agricultural laborers but, for example, craftspeople, prostitutes, managerial agents, and domestic slaves, including those whose domestic duties included sexual obligations. How would a new identity as a Christian affect an urban slave, and how did the presence of slaves and slaveholders in the population affect the growth and practices of the churches? Ancient understandings of slaves as bodies will again inform my analysis. I situate the slaves and slaveholding households of the Pauline orbit in the context of the practices of slavery in the early Empire before I narrow my focus to a consideration of the (in)compatibility between enslaved and thus sexually vulnerable bodies and the strictures of purity demanded within the Christian body.

Concerning the sexual availability of slaves, Moses I. Finley writes, “This is treated as a commonplace in Graeco-Roman literature . . . only modern writers have managed largely to ignore it, to the extent that the fundamental research remains to be done.”⁵⁶ Modern scholars usually overlook the problem of whether slaves' sexual availability affected their membership in the Christian community. The ancient church, however, explicitly considered this question by (at the latest) the third century. *The Apostolic Tradition*, usually attributed to Hippolytus, included in its discussion of baptism a list of those whose participation in the Christian community was proscribed or otherwise regulated.⁵⁷ The situation of enslaved concubines received particular attention. Men who kept concubines could only join the community if they formalized those relationships through legitimate marriages. Enslaved concubines were welcome in the community if they had been faithful to their masters and if they had raised their children. (A complicating factor unrecognized by Hippolytus is that the owner rather than the enslaved concubine would have decided whether to rear or expose any child born to her.⁵⁸) Contemporary scholars should exercise caution in asserting the relevance of a third-century document to the first-century church. What is striking is that an ancient Christian source articulated separate sexual standards for female slaves (who did not own nor control their own sexual activity) and free men (who did control their own sexual activity), thus calling attention to a moral conundrum intrinsic to the situation of enslaved Christians, which modern biblical scholarship has neglected.

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In Finley's formulation, a chief characteristic of ancient slavery was that slaves were answerable with their bodies.⁵⁹ Such answerability manifested itself in three major ways. First, corporal punishment was largely restricted to slaves, and slaves were in constant danger of corporal punishment. Although others, including sons and daughters of elite Roman families, were legally subject to beatings by the *pater familias*, corporal punishment was symbolically linked to servile status in Roman thought.⁶⁰ Indeed, the nexus between slaves and the whip is a leitmotiv of the comedies of Plautus, as in this exchange between two slaves in *Persa*:

Sagaristo: Down at the mill I've been promoted
To first sergeant in charge of flogging.

Toxilus: Oh, you're an old hand at that; you've earned your stripes.⁶¹

A second sense in which slaves were answerable with their bodies was the practice of requiring all testimony by slaves to be given under torture.

Finally, Finley observed, “The third, qualitatively different and ubiquitous, manifestation of the answerability of slaves with their bodies, [was] their unrestricted availability in sexual relations. . . . Prostitution is only one aspect. More interesting in the present context is the direct sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters and the latter's family and friends.”⁶² Finley adduced as evidence an aphorism of the elder Seneca, which referred to the moral position of the receptive partner in male homosexual encounters: “Unchastity [*impudicitia*] is a crime in the freeborn, a necessity for the slave, a duty [*officium*] for the freedman.”⁶³ While the (im)moral evaluation implicit in the saying is satirical, its presupposition of the availability of slaves for sexual service is germane. Enslaved girls, women, boys, and young men were frequently sexual targets for their masters. Moreover, as Susan Treggiari writes, “The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator.”⁶⁴

Freeborn Roman men typically married in their late twenties or early thirties.⁶⁵ Since Roman society placed little value on men's sexual abstinence, young men often satisfied their sexual desires with household slaves or prostitutes (who were typically slaves). From the man's perspective, one important benefit of such sexual encounters would be that any children conceived in those circumstances would not compete with legitimate children, conceived later, for claims to the estate. For the same reason, many Roman men chose sexual partners who were slaves or freedwomen after their wives' deaths.⁶⁶

Enslaved women were additionally vulnerable to retaliation from wives who knew or suspected their husbands' sexual involvements with household slaves. While some women may have appreciated their husbands' circumspection in seeking other sexual outlets, a variety of evidence suggests that wives often reacted negatively to slaves who attracted such attention. Sexual jealousy might prompt a wife's resentful notice. A wife might also be angry if she thought her husband had squandered household resources to purchase a sexual partner or to pay for the partner's upkeep. Annalisa Rei notes of the comedies of Plautus,

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“Characteristically, a wife takes action to avenge not a husband's infidelity, but his violation of the property which the couple shares or which even belongs to the wife entirely. The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society.”⁶⁷

The mistress of a household had a variety of means at her disposal for harassing slaves, including physical abuse. In *Genesis Rabbah*, several rabbis commented on the scriptural observation that “Sarai dealt harshly” with her slave Hagar (Gen. 16:6). Rabbi Berekiah speculated that Sarai (Sarah) attempted to humiliate Hagar by requiring her to carry towels and water buckets for bathing or that Sarai slapped Hagar's face with a shoe.⁶⁸ Galen claimed that his mother used to bite female slaves when she was angry with them; Augustine recorded an incident in which his paternal grandmother ordered the household slaves to be beaten because she perceived them to be disloyal to her daughter-in-law, Augustine's mother, Monica.⁶⁹ Given the ancient stereotype that women are less able than men to control their passions, writers may have exaggerated the violence of slaveholding women against their slaves.⁷⁰ Still, we should guard against the equally distorting assumption that a slaveholding woman and a woman she owned would have naturally presented a joint front because of their shared gender identity. Potentially faced with retaliation by their mistresses, many slaves might have preferred to avoid sex with their masters. The choice, however, was not theirs to make.

In the world constructed by the romances, noble young women who were enslaved in unfortunate circumstances were typically able to resist the sexual overtures of their owners. Still, the threat of sexual compromise was constantly present for them. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*,⁷¹ for example, the title characters consummate their marriage before being torn apart. Callirhoe finds herself the slave of Dionysius, a good man who is desperate to sleep with her. She manages to resist until she realizes that she is pregnant, whereupon she sends a message to Dionysius that she is willing to be his wife but not his concubine. Dionysius joyously accepts. Callirhoe convinces her new husband that the child she is carrying is his. What rings true about the episode is the master's desire for an attractive young slave. However, Dionysius's deference to Callirhoe's sexual reluctance is implausible, as is his acceptance of her marriage proposal. Livy's version of the story of Verginia assumes the inability of a woman with the legal status of a slave to protect the integrity of her own body. In Livy's version, Appius Claudius has Verginia legally declared a slave so that her father cannot defend her chastity. Elaine Fantham writes, “It is telling that Verginius should protest in terms of his daughter's status, ‘his daughter would have been dearer to him than life itself if she had been allowed to live free and chaste; but . . . he saw her dragged off to be raped like a slave girl.’”⁷² While the romances drew attention to the sexual vulnerability of their enslaved heroines and heroes, the genre's insistence on happy endings necessitated that those heroines and heroes should preserve their chastity through utterly implausible stratagems. Slaves did not have the legal right nor cultural power to say “no” to their owners' sexual demands.

p. 53 In her dissertation on women in Greek novels, Brigitte M. Egger notes that although the preservation of the sexual integrity of enslaved protagonists is a recurring theme, the romances do not evince concern for the sexual integrity of other enslaved characters.⁷³ Masters in the romances take for granted that their slaves are their sexual property. The excitement of the stories builds on the possibility that noble young women separated from their protective environments will be treated in a way considered appropriate for common household slaves. So too on the stage. In Plautus's *Persa*, a young woman who is caught in a scheme of her father's that involves selling her into slavery in order to reveal that the slave dealer is trafficking in freeborn “merchandise” worries that even a temporary enslavement will deter any decent man from later marrying her. No matter how brief her period of (pseudo)enslavement, for a short time she will not be in a legal or cultural position to guard her chastity.⁷⁴ In Plautus's *Curculio* the slave Palinurus responds with alarm to his master's announcement of plans to seduce a young woman until Phaedromus, his master, specifies that the object of his lust is a slave rather than a proper young woman. Palinurus proclaims, “No one bans or prohibits you from buying what's for sale from this place, if you have the cash. No one prohibits a man from using the public street, so long as you don't cut a path through an enclosed property: so long as you keep off wives, widows and virgins, young men and boys of free birth, make love to anyone you choose.”⁷⁵

The frequency of manumission inscriptions that imply that the freed slave was the master's sexual partner indicates the prevalence of such liaisons in Greco-Roman societies.⁷⁶ One manumission inscription from Delphi in the late first century B.C.E. illustrates the asymmetry in power that persisted even after a master freed his concubine. Kleomantis manumitted Eisias, the mother of his sons. However, he stipulated that she had to remain with him his entire life, “doing everything that is ordered like a slave. . . . If Eisias does not remain or does not do what is ordered, let Kleomantis have the power to punish her in whatever way he

wishes, by beating her and selling her.”⁷⁷ Far from the respect accorded the heroines of the romances, many slaves (and even former slaves) would have encountered physical abuse and the threat of being sold should they resist their masters' advances.⁷⁸

Resistance of male or female slaves to sexual overtures sanctioned by their owners was not acceptable servile behavior. A scrap of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus records a crude proposition or, more accurately, a threat from two males to a third. It reads: “Apion and Epimas proclaim to their best-loved Epaphroditus that if you allow us to bugger you it will go well for you, and we will not thrash you any longer.” Epaphroditus typically appears in the papyri as a name associated with a slave. Here, a young slave, or perhaps a freedman, seems to have two “options”: to submit to unwanted sexual activities or to allow two other men to (continue to) beat him.⁷⁹ The bluntness of the message highlights the implausibility that a slaveholder such as Chariton's Dionysius would respect a slave's privacy and sexual integrity. On the other hand, for every Epaphroditus who resisted such sexual advances and perhaps even saw them as rape, there may have been another slave who accepted sexual overtures with equanimity. For some slaves, cohabitation with a master or, very occasionally, a mistress was certainly a route to what we would recognize as upward social mobility.⁸⁰ Our sources are silent regarding the actual reactions of slaves to their sexual obligations. The silence is revealing. Ancient societies were not concerned with the reactions of slaves to sexual coercion, since the slave had no legal or cultural right to say “no.”⁸¹

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Bodies for Rent: Slavery and Prostitution

Just as the typical slave had little opportunity to resist a master's sexual advances, prostitutes who were slaves had little if anything to say about the work their owners required of them. A suggestion by Margaret Y. MacDonald that Christianity represented an economic threat to slaveholding pimps would require enslaved prostitutes to be in a position to refuse their assigned labor.⁸² This is highly improbable. By the late second century, Tertullian even complained that a persecution of Christians had extended to forcing a Christian woman into prostitution, the first known instance of a practice that lasted until the fourth century.⁸³ Aline Rousselle asks, “Can we say that slaves and prostitutes enjoyed sexual freedom in this sense when we know that the *leno*, or procurer, took them to the ports when he heard that a ship had arrived? We should not imagine that all the young girls who were abandoned and then brought up to be slaves or prostitutes or both, and later freed by a procurer, were *demi-mondaines*.”⁸⁴ Roman law and custom suggested that female prostitutes enjoyed a sexual freedom parallel to that of men, but such freedom was more apparent than real. Prostitutes did not choose their sexual partners; they were chosen as sexual partners. In his work on prostitution in ancient Rome, Thomas A. J. McGinn concludes, “This is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power implicit in the exchange of sex for money, an inequality especially notable when the woman [or the male prostitute] is a slave.”⁸⁵

Roman law recognized the validity of certain restrictive covenants in the sale of slaves. One of those covenants, *ne serva prostituator*, forbade the buyer (including subsequent buyers) from forcing the slave into prostitution. A buyer who violated a *ne serva prostituator* covenant faced several potential penalties. In some instances the seller would reclaim ownership of the slave. In other instances the buyer would be forced to pay a financial penalty to the seller, who presumably had taken a financial loss in selling the slave under a restrictive covenant. In still other instances the slave would be manumitted as a Junian Latin, without benefit of citizenship. Although the *ne serva prostituator* covenant benefited the slave, the law was essentially concerned with the rights of the original vendor.⁸⁶ Why would a slaveholder impose the *ne serva prostituator* covenant? Slaveholders may have had widely divergent motivations. A promise that a slave would never be prostituted could function as either an incentive or a reward for hard work. A slaveholder who sold his lover could be reluctant for that person to become a prostitute. A slaveholder who sold a son or daughter might have some qualms about the prostitution of his progeny. A slaveholder who sold a slave who had worked as an intimate attendant for his wife might feel that the slave's later work as a prostitute could taint the household. Some slaveholders may have been genuinely concerned about the well-being of slaves with whom they had interacted on a daily basis. All of this, however, is speculation, since slaveholders did not record their reasons for imposing the covenant.

The very existence of such covenants highlights Roman awareness both that many slaveholders compelled their slaves to work as prostitutes and that slaves were not themselves in a position to resist such work. Dio Chrysostom described newly enslaved women forced to work as prostitutes who “feel shame and

revulsion.”⁸⁷ Slaves would have been aware that the decision whether or not to prostitute them belonged to the master. McGinn points to the practice of forcing Christian women into brothels as evidence that compulsion to work as a prostitute loomed as a potential punishment for slaves: “If some ↵ slave women might be rewarded for their loyal service through exemption from forced prostitution through the imposition of the covenant, others might be punished for their failings through installation in a brothel. We have a glimmer of what might be described as the [*ne serva prostituator*] covenant's ‘evil twin’: a practice perhaps more widespread as a private form of punishment than the sources allow us to see.”⁸⁸

In the Hellenistic world and later during the Roman Empire, exposed infants constituted one supply of enslaved prostitutes.⁸⁹ Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr warned against frequenting prostitutes for fear of committing incest with a daughter one had abandoned in infancy.⁹⁰ Slave dealers had a stake in promoting trade in prostitutes. Prostitutes commanded a higher sale price than other female slaves.⁹¹ Indeed, slave dealers moved easily between the role of *leno* (pimp or procurer) and auctioneer of female flesh.⁹² In the comedies of Plautus, for example, the figure of the *leno* schemes alternately to make money as a pimp and to strike it rich by selling a few prized slave prostitutes to men infatuated with them.

Although Ulpian extended the definition of pimp to include someone who maintained free prostitutes, he primarily defined a pimp as a man who dealt in the services of enslaved prostitutes. McGinn writes, “The pimp who keeps slave prostitutes is emphasized either because this type was more significant as a socio-economic phenomenon or because a special legal reason (not evident to us) required this.” However, he regards the former reason—the high proportion of slaves in the population of prostitutes—as more likely.⁹³ Although contemporary scholars do not have the data necessary to calculate what percentage of prostitutes were slaves, all available evidence suggests a strong correlation between prostitution and slavery.⁹⁴

Whether *most* prostitutes were slaves is a more difficult question. McGinn expresses agnosticism on this point but adds, “It is safe to say that most prostitutes in the provinces were peregrines or slaves before A.D. 212.”⁹⁵ Dominic Montserrat suggests that the documentary evidence is likely to downplay the percentage of slave prostitutes: “Since their ‘bodies’ were entirely at the disposal of their masters, a slave forced to work as a prostitute would need only to be recorded by social rather than professional status—the potential status as prostitute (or dancer or wet-nurse or wool-worker) was implicit in the designation as slave.”⁹⁶ In her study of female prostitution in the Roman Empire, Rebecca Fleming emphasizes the substantial intersection between slaves and prostitutes. She characterizes the institution of prostitution in the Roman world as “part of the slave economy, so though the labor is hers the profits are not.”⁹⁷ Artemidorus's dream logic provides a thoroughly nonscientific confirmation that ancient writers expected prostitutes to be slaves: “A prostitute dreamt that she had entered the holy place of Artemis. She was freed and gave up her prostitution. For she would not enter the temple unless she were to abandon her profession.”⁹⁸ And she could not abandon her profession as prostitute while she still belonged to another.

Although I am stressing the evidence that links prostitution and slavery, I am not thereby implying that free persons who became prostitutes willingly chose the occupation with any regularity. The documentary evidence from Greco-Roman Egypt suggests that free persons who engaged in prostitution often entered the trade under duress, through dire economic necessity. An indigent woman would not typically establish herself as a prostitute. Rather, another family member, often a father, would set her up as a prostitute because of the family's destitution. Fleming writes, “Female bodies clearly ↵ counted among the economic resources, not only of slave-dealers and owners, but also of any family network.”⁹⁹ Not until the rise of Coptic Christian literature is there any intimation that women enter the ranks of prostitutes to satiate their own lusts.¹⁰⁰ This literature, we may safely surmise, reflects the preoccupations of its authors rather than the erotic appetites of prostitutes.

In 40 C.E., Caligula instituted a tax on prostitutes. This was not a “vice tax,” designed with the ulterior motive of curbing the widespread practice of prostitution. The goal of the tax was to raise revenue. The tax was collected throughout the Empire. In Egypt, the levy on prostitutes was ten times higher than other occupational taxes, suggesting that prostitutes (or their owners or brothel keepers) had sufficient income to pay a very high tax.¹⁰¹ Prostitutes and prostitution were thus common and visible throughout Greco-Roman cities in the first century. Through collection of the tax on prostitutes, the emperor directly profited from the trade.¹⁰² Furthermore, even the tax code recognized that many prostitutes were slaves: in some locales, records specify how to collect the tax from enslaved prostitutes and their owners.

Popular literature of the ancient Mediterranean often features the character of the enslaved prostitute. Fleming observes that “with one partial exception, slaves fill all literary brothels where the status of their

denizens is clear.”¹⁰³ In *An Ephesian Tale*, the heroine, Anthia, is sold as a prostitute and forced to display herself outside the brothel. She manages, improbably, to retain her virginity by pretending to have epileptic seizures.¹⁰⁴ The enslaved prostitute is a familiar figure in the Plautine corpus. The *pseudo meretrix*, a free woman of good reputation whose virtue prevails despite her temporary enslavement, is a stock character.¹⁰⁵ In several plays (*Rudens*, *Poenulus*), a freeborn female is rescued by her long-lost father just before her sale by a *leno*. In another plot line, a clever slave arranges the sale of a woman already enslaved as a prostitute to a man who cares about her (*Pseudolus*). These plots converge in *Persa*, in which a conspiracy entraps Dordalus, a *leno*, into buying a young freeborn woman. When her identity is revealed, she is freed and Dordalus ruined. Through the fraudulent sale, a slave named Toxilus acquires the money he needs to buy from Dordalus the prostitute Lemniselenis, who he desires. Although the formulas of the romances and comedies dictate happy resolutions to these stories, the vast majority of enslaved prostitutes in the Greco-Roman world could not reasonably expect to retain nor regain control over their own sexual practices.

In general, Greco-Roman societies expected that men would frequent prostitutes and did not morally condemn them for doing so. Susan Treggiari writes, “Objections to intercourse with a common prostitute were aesthetic rather than moral or prudential.”¹⁰⁶ Nor was *moral* condemnation of prostitutes themselves common, although prostitutes did occupy a position in society distinct from that of respectable matrons. In a culture whose definition of honor emphasized the preservation of a woman's sexual integrity and a man's sexual inviolability, prostitutes had no honor to preserve.

Nonetheless, many in the ancient world perceived prostitution as pivotal to the smooth operation of the honor-shame system. By diverting the sexual energies of men away from those whose honor mattered, prostitution protected the honor of respectable families.¹⁰⁷ The Greek Anthology includes an epitaph attributed to Marcus Argentarius: “Psyllus, who used to take to the pleasant banquets of the young men the venal ladies that they desired . . . who earned a disgraceful wage by dealing in human flesh, lies here. But cast not those stones. . . Spare him, not because he was content to gain his living so, but because as keeper of common women he dissuaded young men from adultery.”¹⁰⁸ Dio Chrysostom, the orator and philosopher who synthesized Stoic and Cynic ideas, offered a rare condemnation of prostitution. In doing so, he claimed that many of his contemporaries espoused the view that prostitution was a “wonderful elixir to produce chastity in our cities, your motive to keep those open and unbarred brothels from contaminating your barred homes and inner chambers, and keep men who practice their excesses abroad and openly at little cost from turning to your free-born [*eleuthera*] and respected wives!”¹⁰⁹ Acceptance of prostitution as an inevitable support for the honor-shame rubric was not universal, but many were willing for enslaved women and men to pay with their bodies the price of the chastity of freeborn wives, daughters, and sons.

Traditional Roman religion ritualized the division between prostitutes and other women. Prostitutes claimed a number of Roman holidays as their own.¹¹⁰ April 23, the Vinalia, was the first of two wine festivals; prostitutes celebrated by sacrificing to Venus at her temple outside the Colline Gate. The Floralia (or Ludi Florae) on April 27, dedicated to Flora, the goddess of flowers and fertility, was another festival for prostitutes. More striking perhaps were the celebrations of April 1, the Veneralia, when prostitutes and respectable matrons separately worshiped the forces of love. Prostitutes (and possibly other base-born women) went to the men's baths to worship Fortuna Virilis, while respectable matrons worshiped Venus Verticordia. As Sarah Pomeroy summarizes these Roman ritual practices, “Thus the dichotomy between respectable women and whores was dramatized: the former worshipping an apotheosis of conjugal ideals, the latter worshipping sexual relationships having nothing to do with wedlock.”¹¹¹

These holidays were associated with the city of Rome and were not celebrated elsewhere in the Empire. They are therefore of limited relevance for understanding the structure of religious life in the cities of the Greek East where Paul evangelized. I mention these holidays because they dramatize social (not moral) distinctions between prostitutes and respectable matrons, which pertain throughout the Empire. Roman cultic practice offers a narrow window into the complexity of social relations in ancient Mediterranean societies. During the Matralia, from which enslaved women were generally barred, freeborn matrons ritually beat the single slave woman ushered into the assembly. Scholars of early Christianity often assume the gospel message broke down walls between slave and free. In what follows we consider the challenge that the sexual availability of enslaved bodies poses to that assumption.

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Who were the slaves that Paul encountered in the course of his travels? Where and in what contexts did he encounter them? Acts of the Apostles includes one account of a slave whom Paul met in the streets of Philippi. The unnamed female slave (*paidiskē*) was possessed by a “Pythian” spirit, who spoke through her. The slave's oracular powers were a source of income to her owners and a source of annoyance to Paul and his companions. The woman followed after them, calling out that they were “slaves of the most High God.” A first-century traveler like Paul would not have been surprised to run across a fortune-teller plying her trade in the street. Fortune-telling was a common phenomenon in antiquity. Scraps of papyri record the questions that unknown persons from antiquity posed to fortune-tellers: questions about love and marriage, trade, gambling, and childbirth.⁹ Residents of Mediterranean cities would routinely have chanced on fortune-tellers. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius tells Milo of the predictions he received from an itinerant fortune-teller, and Milo replies by sharing the story of his own encounter with the same seer.¹⁰ According to Acts of the Apostles, Paul responded to the enslaved fortune-teller by performing an exorcism, which rid her of the possessing spirit and thus deprived her owners of a sure source of revenue.¹¹

The slave practiced her lucrative trade publicly, in the streets. Evidence that female slaves and other women of humble status moved freely in urban streets and squares modifies the scholarly generalization that public spaces were “male” whereas private spaces were “female.” In the Hellenistic Jewish narrative of Judith, for example, Judith's confinement to her home at the beginning and end of the story establishes her status as a respectable free woman of considerable means. It seems natural, however, for her female slave to travel through the streets, with no apparent companion, to invite the elders to a meeting in Judith's house. In an article on Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jerome Neyrey argues that the woman's presence in a public space, at noon, and engaged in conversation with a stranger, marked her as “deviant.” Neyrey's assessment of the Samaritan woman as deviant because of her presence in a public place at midday can only be sustained if we label as deviant all women of lower statuses (slaves, freedwomen, poor freeborn laborers), a considerable percentage of the female population. To support his characterization of a cultural division between public/male and private/female spaces, Neyrey quotes Philo: “Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men. . . . The women are best suited to the in door life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood.”¹² Neyrey fails to note that Philo's articulation of the division between male and female worlds was expressly marked by status considerations. According to Philo, the woman who confined herself to her home except when she went to temple and then chose the hours when the market would be quiet deserved the honorable name of “freeborn lady” (Greek, *eleuthera*). Other literary references that associate women with interior spaces reinforce the impression that gender segregation was a phenomenon based on status and class. In the *Acts of Thomas*, for example, Charisius asks his wife sadly, “Why did you not have regard to your position as a *free woman* [emphasis added] and remain in your house, but go out and listen to vain words?”¹³ Indeed, Philo's commentary on the symbolic division between male and female spheres devolves into a condemnation of women who behave in unseemly ways in public spaces, specifically, women who argue and fight in the marketplace.¹⁴ Philo's censure hinges on the everyday presence of women in markets and other public places—and many of the women buying, selling, bargaining, and fighting in the marketplace would have been slaves.

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As Paul traveled from city to city, then, he would have found it impossible to avoid contact with slaves. When he went to the marketplace to find other craftspeople or to purchase food for dinner he would have mingled with both male and female slaves. A wide variety of evidence attests to the ubiquitous presence of slaves in marketplaces. In the *Life of Aesop*, for example, the slaveholder Xanthus orders his slave Aesop to cook dinner for a gathering of his pupils. Not only does Aesop serve as cook, he also goes to the marketplace to buy the provisions for the meal. The other shoppers he encounters in the marketplace would have included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, as well as freeborn folk of the lower economic strata. The merchants would have been of equally modest status. Funeral epitaphs of slaves as well as freedmen and freedwomen list such occupations as fishmonger, salt vendor, and grain merchant.¹⁵ Kathleen E. Corley has argued that the saying of Jesus comparing his generation to children in the marketplace may refer more plausibly to slaves sent by their owners to the marketplace to look for work as entertainers at a banquet.¹⁶ “They are like children [*paidiois*, which Corley proposes translating as “slaves”] sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance.’”¹⁷ Paul would

have encountered slaves in the homes of the men and women who offered him hospitality. Even before he entered those homes, however, he would have interacted with slaves as he made his way around urban streets throughout the Empire.

Enslaved Bodies and the Body of Christ

Paul was active in the mid-first century in cities of the Eastern Empire, although he also had contacts in the Western Empire, even in Rome itself, where he spent his final days. Those attracted to his preaching included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, and freeborn men and women, some of whom were slaveholders. Paul insisted that authority within the congregation was a gift of the spirit, given for the building up of community. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Acts of the Apostles records several stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred when he had contact with the head of the household.

p. 58 Corresponding stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred ↳ through contact with a subordinate member of the *familia* (Latin, "family," implying not only biological kin but also slaves and freedpersons attached to the family unit) do not appear in Acts. How accurately Acts of the Apostles represents the history of the early Pauline communities is difficult to ascertain.

As these communities struggled to define themselves as one body in Christ, Paul specified the limits of behavior, sexual and otherwise, compatible with membership in that body. Given the ubiquity of the sexual use of slaves, Paul would inevitably have encountered slaves whose obligations included sexual relations with their owners and those to whom their owners permitted sexual access, including enslaved prostitutes. In this section I examine Paul's advice on sexual matters in light of these wider contexts. I argue that recognition of the somatic obligations of ancient slaves leads us to revise or modify commonly held positions in Pauline studies. We do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the sexual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Christian community, or whether, like others in the first century, Paul and the churches regarded some sexual activity as morally neutral. Two interrelated questions structure the inquiry. First, how does a recognition that slaves were treated as available bodies affect our interpretation of Paul's instructions on sexual ethics? Second, in light of what we have learned about the sexual use of slaves, how does Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, affect our reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a social movement, especially among slaves?

In the late third century, Lactantius proclaimed that Christian men and women should adhere to the same sexual standards. Christian men should not have sexual partners other than their wives, not even slaves. Such an idea was not utterly unprecedented. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, for example, had argued that by engaging in sexual activities with slaves, freeborn men exhibited less self-control than women, who avoided such entanglements. He therefore thought that men should refrain from sexual relations with slaves.¹¹² However, no evidence suggests that this Stoic advice had an appreciable impact on behavior in the Roman world. In contrast, later Christian writers repeated versions of Lactantius's mandate, although they often acknowledged that the reality of people's behavior did not always conform to these scrupulous standards. Ambrose urged men to avoid sexual relations with slaves in order to avoid giving their wives grounds for divorce. Jerome contrasted Christian with pagan morals by alluding to the tolerance that the latter exhibited for liaisons between free men and their female slaves.¹¹³ Jerome wrote, "Among the Romans men's chastity goes unchecked; seduction and adultery are condemned, but free permission is given to lust to range the brothels and to have slave girls, as though it were a person's rank and not the sexual pleasure that constituted the offense. With us what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men."¹¹⁴

Does this view of sexual ethics arise over the course of several centuries' development of Christian thought? Or is this view of sexual ethics implicit in the earliest Christian moralizing on sexual matters as preserved in the letters of Paul? Modern commentators have assumed that Paul found the sexual use of slaves immoral. However, unlike Lactantius, Ambrose, and Jerome, Paul does not refer explicitly to sexual relations between slaveholders and their human property. Given the ubiquity of the assumption that slaves were sexually available to their owners with no moral consequences for the slaveholder, we cannot simply assume that Paul's audience implicitly understood that participation in the body of Christ precluded such sexual activity.

p. 59 We must return to ↳ the Pauline texts themselves. We must see what they say and, perhaps more important, what they do not say.

In several places, Paul exhorts newly formed Christians to abstain from *porneia*. To assume that this instruction includes a tacit prohibition on (consensual or nonconsensual) sexual contact between

slaveholder and slave begs the question. The question precisely at hand is whether Paul understands such relations to constitute *porneia*. Is Paul silent on the question because the sexual use of slaves is abhorrent to him and he expects other Christians to share his perspective? Or is Paul silent on this question because he does not challenge cultural norms regarding the sexual use of slaves?

Musonius Rufus, Lactantius, Ambrose and Jerome all address the moral position of the slaveholder. What of the moral position of the slave? Sensitivity to the moral position of persons who are not in a position to say “no,” who are unable to maintain their bodies as sexually inviolate, invites us to reconsider the consequences of Pauline sexual ethics for slaves who sought membership and full participation in the Christian body. If indeed Christian communities understood Paul's exhortations on sexual matters to preclude carnal contact between slaveholders and slaves, consequences would have differed for those in a position to control their own bodies and those not in a position to protect the integrity of their own bodies. Paul insisted that *porneia* was not primarily a matter of individual conscience. He argued that in order to avoid pollution the Christian community should expel any person who engaged in *porneia*. If we conclude that Paul included carnal relations between slaveholders and slaves under the umbrella of *porneia*, slaves whose owners insisted on using them sexually could be seen as a source of potential contamination in the pure Christian body. Under these circumstances, a slave owned by a non-Christian would be at greater risk than a slave owned by a Christian. A non-Christian slaveholder would have found a request that he abstain from using a slave sexually to be laughable.

Still more tenuous would be the position of an enslaved prostitute who heard the gospel preached and sought baptism and communion with a Christian community. The business of a prostitute (Greek, *pornē*) was *porneia*. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reacts with horror to the presence in the Christian community of a man who had frequented a prostitute. It seems unlikely that he would have responded more warmly to the presence of a prostitute. For at least some denizens of the Roman Empire, the conditions of their enslavement would have created barriers to participation in the life of the Christian body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

The earliest Christian document that we possess, 1 Thessalonians, offers guidance on sexual matters. In giving that advice, Paul refers explicitly to counsel on sexual ethics that he had previously delivered to the Thessalonian church in person. Introducing his advice in 4:3–8, Paul reminds his readers that “you learned from us how you ought to live. . . . you know what instructions we gave you” (4:1–2). Although twenty-first-century readers find aspects of this advice to be obscure, the Thessalonian Christians had the benefit of hearing these remarks in the context of Paul's prior exhortations.

p. 60 The NRSV translation renders the passage with artificial clarity, lending cogency to Paul's advice that is not warranted by his own phrasing: “For this is the will of God, [↳] your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication [= *porneia*]; that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you” (4:3–6; emphasis added). This translation glosses over several difficulties. First, Paul instructed the (male) Thessalonian Christians to abstain from *porneia*, or sexual immorality. Whether Paul understood *porneia* to encompass precisely the field of activities connoted by the modern concept of “fornication” is unclear and even unlikely. Second, by supplying gender-neutral language in place of Paul's gender-specific language, the NRSV translation artificially abstracts Paul's advice from the patriarchal culture in which he wrote. Paul expressed concern that some Christians might wrong their *brothers* in sexual matters, an uneasiness that derived its particular charge from its patriarchal context. The NRSV neutralizes and obscures this context by implying that Paul was concerned with injuries to men *or women* in the community. Third, and most problematically, in the NRSV translation Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians that it is important that “each of you know how to control your own body.” What Paul actually wrote is that each (male) Thessalonian Christian should know how to “obtain his own vessel.” While some translators and commentators understand this as an idiomatic expression for controlling one's own body or, possibly, sexual organs, other translators take “vessel” (*skeuos*) as a euphemism for wife, so that the passage would encourage the (male) Thessalonians to avoid sexual immorality by obtaining wives.¹¹⁵ I propose a third possibility. Paul's advice could be construed as instructions to the male Thessalonian Christians to find morally neutral outlets for their sexual urges. And in the first century, domestic slaves were considered to be morally neutral outlets for sexual urges—vessels, we might say.

Ernest Best notes, “The attitude of the Christian is now contrasted with that of the pagan, which had been his own only a few months before and which he could not be expected to forget completely on becoming a Christian.”¹¹⁶ Reflecting on the immediacy of that pagan context for the Thessalonian Christians, I find it surprising that Paul did not explicitly reinforce a prohibition on the sexual use of slaves, if he believed that Christianity demanded such a discipline. Commentators and critics typically insist that 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 restricts sexual activity to marriage. David Williams writes, for example, that *porneia* “regularly means to have dealings with a prostitute (*pornē*), but it was also used of any form of illicit sex—illicit from the Jewish/Christian point of view—that is, of any sexual relationship outside of marriage.”¹¹⁷ This reading, however, is a construction of what Williams believes Paul must have meant, rather than a straightforward exposition of what Paul actually said. Paul warned against *porneia*, but he did not define the parameters of *porneia*. As Williams acknowledges, a “restriction of sex to marriage struck the pagan world of that day as odd, for it tolerated and even encouraged, at least in the case of men, various forms of extramarital sexual activity.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, Paul urged the (male) Thessalonian Christians to adhere to more careful sexual standards than those tolerated by the Gentiles. Unfortunately, he did not clarify in what ways the newly formed Christians were to differentiate their behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors. The insistence of contemporary scholars that this advice required Christians to restrict their sexual activity to marriage exceeds what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

p. 61 O. Larry Yarbrough assimilates Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 to the proscription against adultery, “which was of course fundamental to Jewish paraenesis, being one of the Ten Commandments.”¹¹⁹ G. P. Carras argues more broadly that Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian Christians to distinguish their sexual behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors was an admonition to follow Jewish sexual norms. Thus, Carras suggests, Paul would expect the newly formed Christians to avoid incest, homosexual practices, prostitution (although it is unclear whether first-century Judaism univocally condemned prostitution), and adultery.¹²⁰ In the ancient world, however, adultery referred specifically to sexual activity between an honorable married woman (therefore, not a slave) and a man who was not her husband. Carras's argument addresses the behaviors that Paul's counsel would exclude but does not address those behaviors still implicitly permitted by a call to observe the Jewish sexual code, which did not call into question a man's casual sexual access to his own slaves.

The crux of this difficult passage is Paul's advice to “obtain a vessel.” Since antiquity, commentators have debated whether Paul advised the (male) Thessalonians to control their bodies/sexual organs or to acquire wives. Both possibilities present difficulties to the interpreter. What does it mean to obtain or acquire one's own body or sexual organs, for example? While the perfect tense of the verb *ktasthai* could be extended to denote “to possess,” the present tense (which Paul uses) does not have this denotation. On the other hand, referring to a wife as a *skeuos*, a vessel, does not accord her a particularly dignified position. Since neither translation is the obvious choice, Beverly Gaventa advocates translating *skeuos* neither as body/sexual organs nor as wife but literally, as vessel, to preserve the inherent ambiguity of Paul's phrasing.¹²¹ Moreover, translating *skeuos* as vessel leaves open the possibility that the Thessalonian Christians would have understood Paul's counsel to be consistent with the pursuit of other sexual options, which did not infringe on the honor of other free men in the community. (I am not insinuating that Gaventa espouses this final possibility. She writes, “Whatever Paul means in this particular text, it is certain . . . that Paul was opposed to all sexual expression outside of monogamous marriage.”¹²²)

Despite the desire of some critics to see in 1 Thessalonians a representation of “marriage in the sense of full partnership,” Paul's words do not evoke such an elevated view of sexual relations between men and women.¹²³ An appreciation for mutuality and reciprocity in marriage informs 1 Corinthians 7. However, critics should demonstrate and not simply assume continuity between the earlier letter and the later letter. *Skeuos* is a term used to refer to inanimate objects, household goods. Ernest Best rightly suggests that the “rendering wife [which he prefers] appears repulsive to modern thought, but this should not deter us if on other grounds it is the better meaning [as opposed to body], for it would not have been so abhorrent to the ancient world with its very different view of women.”¹²⁴ However, Best then assimilates the passage to the later text in 1 Corinthians: a Christian man is “not to look on her [his wife] as a tool to satisfy his lusts but to appreciate her as a being who with himself is part of God's holy people (1 Cor. 7.2–6).”¹²⁵ Best insists that Paul did not want men to consider their wives as tools. Nonetheless, Paul's advice that, in order to control his sexual urges, a man should “obtain his own vessel” does promote an instrumental attitude toward women.

Some commentators cite the concern that viewing Christian wives as vessels would diminish the significance of marriage to support the argument that the vessel to which ↵ Paul refers is the body/sexual organs.¹²⁶ My suggestion, that Paul's advice to men "to take a vessel" could encompass sexual access to slaves in one's own household, acknowledges that referring to sexual partners as vessels treats them not as ends but as means. Given the pervasive assumption in the ancient world that slaveholders had free sexual access to their human chattel, Paul's failure to iterate, or reiterate, a prohibition on such behavior is peculiar, but he may have delivered a stern warning to the Thessalonians on this matter when he was among them: "you know what instructions we gave you" (4:2a). Modern readers of 1 Thessalonians, however, did not hear those instructions, and we should be wary of assuming that we have easy access to their content. Perhaps Paul instructed the Thessalonians that participation in the body of Christ precluded sexual exploitation of slaves. Perhaps he did not deliver such a charge. However, an admonition to avoid sexual contact with one's slaves would have been sufficiently countercultural that Paul would have done well to return explicitly to the matter when he urged the Thessalonian Christians to contain their sexual urges.

Against this argument, Paul does admonish the Thessalonians that their actions should be "in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions like the Gentiles" (4:4b–5a). Would a man's sexual use of his slaves violate the holiness of the Christian body? If so, how would a newly formed Christian man come to understand that sexual use of slaves would pollute his body? Assuming for a moment that Paul had delivered such instructions in person, would later generations of Christians, who passed this letter along, have preserved and respected that mandate? I emphasize the question of pollution and holiness because a man's sexual use of his own slaves would emphatically *not* have violated first-century notions of honor. Male slaves were considered to be without honor, and female slaves without shame.

Furthermore, Paul supplies as a rationale for his sexual advice that the new Christians are to avoid infringing on each other's sexual rights: "that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter" (4:6a). Scholars sensitive to feminist concerns have resisted the tendency to neutralize the gender-specific language of the passage.¹²⁷ Gaventa writes, "Engaging in sexual intercourse outside marriage involves violating the property rights of another male. On this reading, verse 6 refers to the injustice done a male when another male engages in sexual intercourse with a woman whose sexual activity 'belongs' to him."¹²⁸ However, in the first century, a slave's body, and thus her sexual activity, 'belonged' to the slaveholder. A slaveholder was not infringing on any other male's property rights when he had sexual relations with his own slave.

New Testament critics uniformly assert that in 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male members of the community to avoid sexual immorality by restricting sexual activities to marriage. This is not, however, what Paul says. Whether his words in 1 Thessalonians built on explicit earlier instructions to the community, which specified these behavioral parameters, is a matter of speculation rather than evidence. What Paul actually says is that male members of the Christian community should avoid immorality by "obtaining a vessel." In the first century, many who heard such counsel would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. Moreover, the motivations that Paul offers for confining one's sexual urges are, to a significant degree, consistent with a slaveholder having sexual relations with his own human chattel: the preservation of honor, for example, and respect for the rights of Christian brothers. ↵ Whether a slaveholder's sexual relations with his own slaves would be consistent with the preservation of the holiness of the Christian body is less clear.

Paul expresses no concern for the feelings, experience, or moral struggles of the vessel. Does his silence betoken an indifference to the subjectivity of (free) women or of slaves? How we answer this question may depend on whether we assume that there was continuity or development between Paul's sexual ethics in 1 Thessalonians and in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks sympathetically of the wife's role in marriage, but even there, he does not address a practice that was universally tolerated in the first century: the sexual exploitation of slaves as bodies.

Chapters 5–7 of 1 Corinthians constitute Paul's most extended discussion of sexuality and Christian living. Paul cautions against *porneia*, sexual immorality, in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 and 6:12–20.¹²⁹ In chapter 7 Paul responds to questions the Corinthians had written him about marriage and life in the Christian body. Many commentators suggest that chapter 7 begins a new section in the overall structure of the letter.¹³⁰ Other commentators note that, as Paul begins his response in chapter 7 to the Corinthians' questions, he takes his cue from the previous discussions of *porneia*. A preoccupation with sexual immorality inaugurates and governs Paul's discussion of marriage. Antoinette Clark Wire argues that Paul rehearses the arguments of chapters 5–6 so that his readers will understand the urgency of his concern in chapter 7. For Paul, Wire contends, marriage is the antidote to *porneia*.¹³¹ What relevance did any of this discussion have for enslaved members of the congregation, who could neither resist their masters' sexual demands nor contract legitimate marriages?

Paul begins his discussion of the Corinthians' sexual practices by condemning the community for tolerating a man who had a sexual relationship with a woman who had been (and perhaps still was) his father's wife. Paul labels the relationship an instance of *porneia*. He furthermore claims that this kind of *porneia* is not even found among Gentiles. He expresses surprise that the church has been less scrupulous than the surrounding pagan world in delineating the boundaries of appropriate sexual conduct: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife."¹³² Paul advises, "When you are assembled . . . you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."¹³³ Drawing on the metaphor of yeast permeating an entire batch of dough, he encourages them to remove the incestuous man from their midst. In the future, he says, they should not tolerate the presence of immoral persons in their community: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy. . . . For what have I to do with judging those outside?"¹³⁴

p. 64 The phrasing of Paul's complaint implies that individuals and groups could vary in their perceptions of what constituted *porneia*. Even in the first century this was a category open to interpretation. Paul's purpose is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of *porneia*. Not surprisingly, then, he does not address a question immediately relevant to the present discussion: whether sexual relationships between slaves and their masters constitute *porneia*.¹³⁵ As I have argued, a positive answer to this question would not have been self-evident to a Christian congregation whose members had grown up in a social context that accepted the normalcy of such behavior.

The target of Paul's accusation is the Corinthian church rather than the individual man involved in the transgression.¹³⁶ In fact, Paul demonstrates less consternation about the incestuous man than about the community that accepted and perhaps applauded his actions.¹³⁷ Hans Conzelmann suggests, "Paul does not explicitly state the ground of his judgment, because the ground is self-evident: the community is the temple of God (6:19)."¹³⁸ The presence of the incestuous man in the community threatens the soundness of the whole, a threat Paul represents with the metaphor of leavening (5:6–8). Paul alludes to his instructions from an earlier letter to avoid *pornoi*, sexually immoral men, and, presumably, women and clarifies these earlier instructions. The Christian community cannot cut itself off from the world, but it should avoid the intrusion of the world into the community. The church is not a refuge for anyone who practices immorality, and he catalogs those whom he considers immoral, from the sexually immoral to greedy persons to thieves. (See also 6:9–11, in which Paul asserts that the Corinthian community includes some who had formerly numbered among such unsavory characters. Here, as well, Paul lists *pornoi* before other categories of wrongdoers.) Since *porneia* represents such a threat to the well-being of the community it would seem the entire community would have an interest in eliminating it. However, the boundaries of behavior Paul defines as *porneia* remain unclear. Would slaves who submitted sexually to their owners number among the *pornoi*? At stake, although not explicitly addressed, is the status of slaves in the community.

Although Paul is primarily concerned with the health of the community, he is also concerned with the destiny of the transgressing man (5:4–5). However, he expresses no interest in the moral status or destiny of the woman involved.¹³⁹ Commentators generally agree that Paul's lack of interest in the issue indicates that the woman was not a member of the Christian community.¹⁴⁰ Lending credence to this position is Paul's insistence in the same passage that Christians have no business judging those outside the community

(5:12–13). Extending this logic, one might ask whether Paul's silence on the sexual position of slaves indicates that he believes that slaves who are sexually involved with their owners are therefore alienated from the Christian body. Wire proposes that Paul is silent about the stepmother's complicity because she is not in a position to be responsible for her actions, either because of extreme youth or enslavement.¹⁴¹ Wire's proposal recognizes the lack of clarity that surrounds the early Christian community's treatment of slaves' sexual activity, and she may be right. Paul may have believed that the forced sexual activity of slaves was beyond moral judgment. His surviving words do not help us decide the question.

p. 65 The passage 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 offers a variety of challenges for understanding the impact of Pauline Christianity on slaves. Recognition that Greco-Roman slaveholders regarded their slaves as bodies in turn complicates our reading of the chapter. The first-century category of *porneia* does not map neatly onto modern categories of sexual impropriety. The question of whether Paul thought that sexual relations between slaves and ↵ their owners fell in the category of *porneia* (for both slaveholder and slave or for either slaveholder or slave) is especially important. Paul insists that *porneia* represents a threat to the entire community and not only to the individuals immediately involved. A focus on the sexual dimensions of slavery opens the question of why Paul remains silent concerning the woman's complicity in the case of incest he reports in 1 Corinthians 5.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

From the earlier discussion of *porneia*, broadly defined as sexual irregularity, Paul moves to a discussion of *porneia*, more narrowly defined as prostitution. In the centuries before the Roman occupation of Corinth, the city's temples legendarily enslaved a thousand prostitutes.¹⁴² The practice of sacred prostitution disappeared long before Paul arrived in the city, but in the first century Corinth was still associated with secular prostitution. Many Corinthian coins bore the image of Aphrodite, a kind of early advertising for a popular service industry in the city.¹⁴³ As a port city Corinth attracted travelers, a group well known in antiquity for their patronage of prostitutes. Perhaps it was inevitable that a member of the Corinthian church would find his way to a brothel. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul relies on the language of economics and the slave trade to condemn the buying and selling of bodies in prostitution. Given the high proportion of prostitutes who were slaves, the passage raises questions about the implications of Pauline Christianity for slaves.

Paul quotes what seems to be a slogan among some Corinthian Christians: “All things are lawful for me.” He supplies a retort: “but not all things are beneficial.”¹⁴⁴ Paul writes:

The body is meant not for *porneia* [sexual immorality/prostitution] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun *porneia*! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but *porneia* sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit among you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁴⁵ [All second-person pronouns in the passage are plural.]

p. 66 The focus of 6:12–20 is on a Christian male who visits a prostitute. Jouette Bassler writes, “The prostitute is merely a vehicle for sexual freedom; Paul shows no theological interest in her.”¹⁴⁶ Paul reminds the Corinthians that the body is made for the Lord and will ultimately share in the Lord's resurrection. His lack of interest in the prostitute suggests that, unlike the body of the believer, her body “is not destined for resurrection.”¹⁴⁷ Although commentators tend to assume that Paul's lack of interest in the stepmother in 5:1–13 indicates that she was not a member of the community, the thought that a prostitute might be a member of the Christian body seems almost absurd. Dale Martin writes that, for Paul, a prostitute “is not a person in her own right (as if such a thing were imaginable for Paul) but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The possibility that the Corinthian church might embrace women or men still working as prostitutes is not considered in the secondary ↵ literature. Wire writes: “The fact that Paul does not censure the prostitutes themselves suggests that they are not to his knowledge participants in the community. Yet most cross-class urban groups would include some prostitutes. Paul does say that many Christians practiced immorality before their freedom was purchased by Christ (6:9–11), and

among those could be prostitutes living single or married lives in the community.”¹⁴⁹ Perhaps freeborn or freed prostitutes attracted to the Christian message were able to seek other means of supporting themselves, although this is doubtful.¹⁵⁰ However, enslaved prostitutes would certainly lack such control over their occupation. The scholarly consensus that Paul understood membership in the Christian body to be incompatible with prostitution thus has unrecognized implications for understanding the difficulties that slaves would face in joining the church.

The language that Paul uses to challenge the common assumption that a sexual encounter with a prostitute has no lasting effects on the customer has broad implications for reconstructing his understanding of the nature of sexual activity.¹⁵¹ Paul claims that whoever has sex with a prostitute becomes one body with her and supports his position by quoting Genesis 2:24: “The two shall be one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16). Such a union, Paul says, is incompatible with spiritual union with the Lord (verse 17). Fee clarifies, “It is not the sexual union that is incompatible with Christ, it is such a union *with a prostitute*.”¹⁵² The believer belongs to Christ as a member, so his sexual activities affect the Lord to whom he belongs (verse 15). Martin graphically writes, “The man who has sex with a prostitute is, in Paul’s construction, Christ’s ‘member’ entering the body of the prostitute. Since her body is only part of a larger whole, the cosmos, the simple act of copulation between a man and a woman becomes for Paul copulation between Christ and the cosmos.”¹⁵³ It is hard to see how, on Paul’s view, *any* sexual relations involving a believer could be morally neutral. All sexual relations would affect the Lord and indeed the entire Christian body (6:19–20).¹⁵⁴ Again, the moral status of slaves (including, but by no means exclusively, prostitutes) whose owners insisted on using them sexually remains an urgent question.

Paul relies on the metaphor of buying and selling bodies, of slave trading, to exhort the Christian community to avoid prostitutes. Ironically, Paul configures the male Christian body and the body of the church as objects of sale. The participle that Paul uses to express the Christian’s relationship with a prostitute or with the Lord, *kollōmenos* (6:16–17), implies economic obligation or subordination.¹⁵⁵ In Paul’s view a man who patronizes a prostitute abridges his own freedom by obligating himself to her. Paul urges members of the community to obligate themselves instead as slaves to the Lord.

The image of the slave market becomes more explicit. Paul informs the Corinthian community, “You [pl.] are not your own. . . . You were bought with a price” (6:19b–20a).¹⁵⁶ The price paid is Christ’s death, yet the metaphor also positions Christ as a customer at a slave auction, purchasing the Christian body.¹⁵⁷ This use of language seems ironic in light of the economic realities implicit in the exchanges of prostitution, in which sexual access to a woman’s (or man’s) body is bought and sold. The bodies of enslaved prostitutes were of course subject to an additional kind of sale, that of slave trading. Paul expresses concern for the vulnerabilities of the Christian body (the body of the individual male and the body of the community) without expressing concern for the vulnerabilities of the (frequently enslaved, usually female) prostitute’s body.

p. 67 S. Scott Bartchy seems accurate in his assessment that “Paul did not want any Christian who was in slavery to think . . . that his slave-status was any disadvantage in his relation to God.”¹⁵⁸ Although scholars debate the extent to which “the liminal transcendence of societal oppositions that was declared in baptism” affected patterns of social interaction and hierarchy among early Christians,¹⁵⁹ the assumption that the message of the gospel extended without prejudice to slave as well as free has largely gone unchallenged. However, Paul’s insistence on the fundamental incompatibility between the body of prostitution and the body of Christ seems to leave even those prostitutes who were enslaved beyond the boundaries of Christian community. Paul draws on the metaphor of slave trading to warn the Christian community that it imperils itself when members frequent prostitutes rather than to express concern for the involuntary sexual use of the bodies of slaves, even in prostitution.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses, at some length, questions pertaining to Christians and marriage. Although Paul writes explicitly of the situation of slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24, the relevance of chapter 7 as a whole to the lives of slaves is problematic, since slaves were unable to contract legal marriages. J. Albert Harrill observes that, on the standard view, “Paul’s entire response to the Corinthian congregation on marriage, therefore, has little relevance to slaves.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, by limiting the legitimate range of sexual expression to marriage, Paul implicitly suggests that slaves who oblige their masters sexually are engaged in *porneia*. This section considers how Paul’s advice on marriage shapes our understanding of the challenges faced by enslaved Christians. It also reconsiders Paul’s ambiguous directive to slaves in 7:21 in the context of the sexual dimensions of first-century slavery.

Paul introduces his discussion of marriage by allowing that matrimony protects men and women against *porneia* (7:2). He reinforces this declaration by conceding that, although a single life is desirable, marriage is nonetheless preferable to sexual incontinence (7:9). Continence, then, encompasses both celibacy in the single life and fidelity in the married life; the alternative, it seems, is *porneia*. Although later Christian tradition has often assumed that this demarcation of sexual practice was normative, we have seen that the majority of those living in Greco-Roman cities viewed a wider range of sexual practices as acceptable and ordinary. As we have seen, the master’s right to have sexual relations with one of his slaves was not accompanied by moral judgment against the master or the slave. Christian slaveholders who heard Paul’s words could choose to redirect their sexual attention to their wives. The same is not true for enslaved Christians. According to Wire’s reconstruction, the church at Corinth included a number of powerful women ascetics. She writes, “The life-support arrangements of these women—where they live and what they do—are suggested only indirectly in the various domestic situations Paul describes. Slave women . . . probably retain traditional domestic responsibilities.”¹⁶¹ Wire does not consider the complicating factor that the “traditional domestic responsibilities” of many enslaved women included sexual obligations.

p. 68 Indeed, Paul seems to assume that those whom he addresses in 7:1–16 could freely choose to marry or not to marry.¹⁶² He offers specific advice to various categories of married and unmarried persons.¹⁶³ After addressing those who are married to believing partners and those who are not married, he addresses “the rest” (verse 12). The advice he then delivers pertains particularly to Christians whose spouses are not believers, and commentators accordingly delimit the range of “the rest” to those whose spouses do not belong to the Christian community.¹⁶⁴ Most commentaries do not consider who else *could* be included in “the rest.” They assume that Paul’s list exhaustively covers persons in all possible situations. According to this view, Paul has nothing to say about the options open to enslaved Christians, who could not contract marriages and could be used sexually by their owners. Commentators interpret Paul’s silence about the moral status of the stepmother in a case of incest (5:1–13) and the prostitute (6:1–12) as evidence that these women are not participants in the Christian body. Paul’s silence about the plight of sexually exploited slaves could be construed as evidence that he perceives their (compelled) behavior to place them outside membership in the Christian body.

Harrill has offered the intriguing suggestion that “the rest” in verse 12 includes not only those married to unbelievers but also “those not empowered to marry at all unless enfranchised (7:21–23),” that is, slaves.¹⁶⁵ He makes this proposal as he discusses 7:21, which he translates: “You were called as a *slave*. Do not worry about it. But if you can indeed become *free*, use instead [freedom].”¹⁶⁶ Because of the difficulties of this text, an overview of Harrill’s position is essential.

He begins his discussion of 7:21 with a summary of the long-standing debate over the translation of the verse.¹⁶⁷ As he says, scholars base their translations not only on the syntax of the passage and its immediate context in the letter but also on their understandings of ancient slavery. These understandings often minimize the brutality of Greco-Roman slavery. Fee, for example, who offers a careful discussion of the syntax of the passage, asserts that slavery “provided generally well for up to one-third of the population in a city like Corinth or Rome. The slave had considerable freedom and very often experienced mutual benefit along with the owner.”¹⁶⁸ Along with an analysis of the syntax of verse 21,¹⁶⁹ Harrill provides a discussion of seventeen philological parallels that support his contention that Paul urges slaves to “use instead [freedom].”¹⁷⁰

He concedes that his translation requires Paul first to establish (in verses 17 and 20) and then violate a principle: each should remain content with the state in which he or she was called. Throughout chapter 7,

however, Paul offers exceptions to the rule he has laid down. Although he says that spouses should be content to remain married, for example, he establishes guidelines for spouses seeking separation (verse 11). He encourages those who are single to be content with that status but states that they do not sin if they choose to marry (verse 28).¹⁷¹ This rhetorical pattern helps clarify Paul's logic in 7:21. He encourages slaves not to be disturbed by their bondage but then offers an exception to this principle: "If you can indeed become free, use instead [freedom]."

p. 69 I find Harrill's argument that in 7:21 Paul urges slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom to be convincing. Moreover, I find it plausible that Paul gives such advice in the midst of his discussion of marriage because he is aware that slaves, who are unable to contract marriages, are the sexual property of their owners. Harrill observes that "seizing such opportunities for liberation would have enabled a slave to escape a master's violent coercion and, as a freedman/woman, to secure more control over his or her own body and daily activities to pursue asceticism."¹⁷² (Harrill does not explicitly address the question of sexual vulnerability, although such awareness may be implicit in his formulation.) Some forms of manumission still gave a master control over the freedperson, but freedpersons were in general less vulnerable than slaves to the demands (including sexual demands) of their masters. (Note that this reading of 1 Corinthians 7:21 does not include any claim about how Paul would respond to slaves or freedpersons who were still being used sexually by their owners or former owners—whether he would believe that such activity excluded the slave or freedperson from the Christian body or whether he would perceive coerced sexual activity as morally neutral.)

However, I do not support Harrill's argument that Paul intends to include slaves among "the rest" of verse 12: "To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her." With the majority of commentators, I categorize verses 17–24 as Paul's articulation of his governing principle with two examples: circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery.¹⁷³ His governing principle, again, is that each should be content with the state in which he was called. To include slaves among "the rest" awkwardly leaves an articulation of a general principle with a single illustration (circumcision/uncircumcision) followed by advice to slaves, which only obliquely pertains to the overall topic of the chapter, marriage. I follow the generally held view that when Paul refers to "the rest" in verse 12, he is referring narrowly to the case of Christians whose spouses are not Christians. In articulating the governing principle of the chapter he provides two examples. As he sets forth the second example, however, he is aware of the problematic ramifications of slavery with respect to sexual expectations and marital status, so he also offers one of the many exceptions that he scatters throughout the chapter.

We have seen that Paul rejects the idea that sexual couplings can be a matter of moral indifference (1 Cor. 6:16), and he furthermore implies that all sexual unions involving Christians have implications for the entire community (1 Cor. 6:15–20). The passage 1 Corinthians 5–7 is marked by a concern for the integrity of the Christian body, which encompasses a desire to confine sexual activity to marriage, a standard to which many slaves would not have been able to adhere. Despite Paul's belief that servile status should not affect one's life in Christ, many slaves may well have found that sexual demands made by their masters complicated their membership in the Christian body. We simply do not know how Paul responded to the situation of slaves who were used sexually by their owners. Perhaps, however, concern over this vulnerability prompted him to advise slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom as they arose.

Body Politics

p. 70 Bartchy writes that, according to Paul's understanding, God's call in Christ "had made irrelevant every particular social and religious status."¹⁷⁴ The assumption that servile status was in no way a disadvantage with respect to one's membership in the church has been pervasive in discussions of New Testament texts pertaining to slavery. James D. G. Dunn argues, "If 'Christ is everything and in everything,' then nothing can diminish or disparage the standing of any one human in relation to another or to God."¹⁷⁵ J. N. Aletti claims that Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 indicate that there was no disparity in the "capacité éthique des croyants."¹⁷⁶ F. F. Bruce asks, "What real difference could there be for a Christian between bond and free?"¹⁷⁷ In making such statements, New Testament scholars ignore the ancient equation between slaves and bodies. Even if we assume—and it is a major assumption—that Christian masters did not force their slaves to provide them with sexual services, pagan masters would not have shared such scruples about the bodies they owned.

Although New Testament texts are silent on the sexual availability of slaves, a vast array of Greco-Roman sources assume that masters had unlimited sexual access to their slaves. In 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male Christians to avoid *porneia* by obtaining their own vessels. Accustomed to relying on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets, the newly converted Thessalonian Christians could easily have construed these words as advice to maintain the honor of respectable freeborn Christians by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations. Indeed, it is strange that Paul does not explicitly condemn the sexual use of slaves if he believes this practice to be inconsistent with the Christian ethos. New Testament scholars have uncritically assumed that later Christian rejections of the sexual use of slaves are already implicit in the earliest Christian document we possess.

A slaveholder had the right to profit from a slave's body by forcing her or him into prostitution. Paul's unequivocal separation of the body of prostitution from the body of Christ would seem to exclude all prostitutes, even enslaved prostitutes, from membership in the church. More subtle would have been the problems faced by slaves whose masters used them sexually. In 1 Corinthians Paul distinguishes sexual relationships within marriage from all other sexual relationships, and he encourages the Corinthian Christians to confine their sexual practices to marriage. Perhaps this is one reason he encourages slaves to seek a change in their status when possible, taking advantage of opportunities for freedom. We do not know precisely how Paul responded to the situation of slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them. However, attention to this dimension of ancient slavery makes it impossible to maintain both that servile status was no impediment to full involvement in the Christian body *and* that within the Christian body the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife.

Paul believes that baptism breaks down the barriers between slave and free (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). (It may be useful to differentiate between the claim that for those in Christ there are no distinctions between slave and free and the claim that slavery presents no obstacles to those who want to join the Christian body. In fact, Paul never clearly makes the latter claim, which has been repeatedly made for him by modern scholars.) Bruce notes that it would have been easier for Paul than for an enslaved person to maintain the position that slave status was irrelevant for those in the church.¹⁷⁸ John M. G. Barclay has argued that masters and slaves in the same church would have found it difficult in practice to transcend those roles. For example, a slave might have found it very hard to follow Paul's advice to admonish a member of the community who had transgressed, if that transgressor were his or her owner.¹⁷⁹ We have seen that Acts of the Apostles accords householders (who would have been slaveholders) a disproportionate role in fostering the growth of the church, a picture that raises even more questions about the dynamics between slave and free members of the Christian body. Although Paul himself minimizes the significance of servile status, we do not have the coeval words of slaves, describing their own attempts to live a new life in Christ. In a society that represented and treated slaves as bodies, ecclesial incorporation of slaves would have exposed the body of Christ to the somatic vulnerabilities of enslaved members.

Working Bodies: Occupations of Slaves

Slaves could be found in every occupation in Greco-Roman cities.¹⁸ The men who maintained the furnaces in the baths were often slaves. The women who served beer in beer shops were often slaves and, for that matter, often prostitutes. Slaves worked in pottery factories and on farms, in mines and as shepherds. In smaller establishments a slave might have multiple jobs. Slaveholders provided official notifications of the deaths of slaves in order to avoid capitation taxes. These death notices typically referred to the slave's trade. They sometimes stated the deceased slave was not skilled in any particular trade.¹⁹ The staffs of larger households included slaves who managed the accounts and oversaw other slaves as well as slaves who carried household waste to public dump sites.

Evidence is extensive for the involvement of slaves in the production of commodities, where they typically worked alongside free laborers. For example, during the early Empire, Arezzo was a center for the manufacture of red-glazed pottery. In workshops ranging in size from a dozen to sixty workers, slaves crafted pottery, which they marked with their own names.²⁰ Slaves were ubiquitous in all ranks of garment workers, from weavers to dyers to seamstresses. Papyri that listed the occupations of slaves often cited weaving as a trade. An early third-century guardian's account of the financial status of his wards, two minor boys, listed the wages earned by a female slave employed as a weaver. The text's modern editor notes that the slave's wages were sufficient to lift the account into the profitable range.²¹ A sheaf of apprenticeship

contracts suggests that slaveholders often sent female slaves, less often male slaves, to learn the trade of weaving.²² Such contracts delineated responsibilities for feeding and clothing the enslaved apprentice and specified the holidays the slave would enjoy while working under the weaver. Benefits to the slaveholder were multiple. The slaveholder received remuneration for the slave's labor during the time of the apprenticeship. At the same time, the slave became more valuable to the slaveholder as she became more skillful in the designated craft.

Along with labor in workshops, fields, and markets, slaves advanced their owners' financial ends through serving as financial agents and managers of all kinds. Ostraca document the activities of slaves who served as financial agents, often with some autonomy. At least in Egypt, Roman families living abroad, including members of the imperial family, were most likely to rely on slaves as agents.²³ Jesus alluded in the parables to slaves who managed other slaves, some serving their owners more faithfully than others.²⁴ As overseers, slaves could exercise considerable power over other slaves within the household, but even outside the structure of the household a slave could manage a slaveholder's fortune. A well-documented example of a slave heavily involved in financial management comes from a villa in the vicinity of Pompeii. Wax tablets excavated there record the activities of a slave named Hesychus, who acted as his owner's agent in loaning 10,000 sesterces to an importer of foodstuffs named C. Novius Eunus. Hesychus also coordinated the rental of extensive food storage facilities. Moreover, this trove of tablets reveals some of the material benefits that could accrue to a slave entrusted with financial affairs. Within months of expediting his master's loan in 37 C.E., Hesychus became a creditor in his own right through a loan of 3,000 sesterces to C. Novius Eunus.²⁵ Only a minority of slaves had such lucrative opportunities. The overseer parables, for example, call attention to the (praiseworthy or culpable) activities of the slave entrusted with affairs of the household. The parables allude to a greater number of other household slaves, under the supervision of the overseer, who held less-responsible positions. The ascendancy of a Hesychus was thus neither a norm for slaves nor an anomaly. (Chapter four, which analyzes the parabolic figure of the slave, examines at greater length the evidence regarding managerial slaves.)

It is difficult to assign a single job title to capture the work obligations of a slave in a small slaveholding establishment. A second-century contract from Oxyrhynchus gives an idea of the range of duties a slave who belonged to a more humble master or mistress might have to perform. Glaukos leased his slave Tapontos, a weaver, to Achilles for a period of a year. The lease specified that Achilles would be responsible for Tapontos day and night. However, Glaukos retained the right to send for Tapontos during the night to make bread.²⁶ Clearly, Glaukos's establishment was not large enough to include a full-time baker, as one would expect to find in a wealthy household.

Our sources typically distinguish between urban and rural slaves. The opening act of Plautus's *Mostellaria*, for example, features banter between a country-bumpkin slave and a scheming city slave with a superior attitude. The distinction between urban slaves, belonging to the *familia urbana*, and rural slaves, belonging to the *familia rustica*, was predicated as much on the slaves' duties as on their place of residence.²⁷ Smaller slaveholding households would not have included sufficient staff to maintain this demarcation. The Gospel of Luke includes a parable of Jesus in which an agricultural slave doubles as a cook and domestic attendant: "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink.'"²⁸

Jesus' parable does not evoke a vision of life on a vast estate, such as the extensive landholdings that dominated the landscape in Sicily and the Italian peninsula, but a smaller slaveholding household in which a slave's multiple and varied duties ranged from agricultural and pastoral tasks to food preparation and service. In larger slaveholding establishments, slave labor could be highly specialized. Clement of Alexandria, for example, disapproved of bloated household staffs, with some slaves "to prepare and make the pastries, others to make the honey cakes, and still others to prepare the porridges."²⁹ Josephus mentioned that Herod the Great was especially fond of three of his eunuchs, each of whom had extremely limited duties. One eunuch did nothing but pour Herod's wine. Another served his food. A third eunuch, who shared Herod's bedchamber, helped Herod as he prepared for bed.³⁰

Domestic slaves probably outnumbered slaves engaged in productive or managerial work.³¹ The horrors of life in the mines or on the vast agricultural estates of Sicily in many ways dwarfed the indignities of life as a domestic slave. Nonetheless, Keith Hopkins has argued, "Roman literature abounds with stories of incidental cruelty to individual domestic slaves. . . . Domestic slaves stood in the front line. They were more

privileged and pampered than the tens of thousands of slaves who labored without hope in the fields and mines. . . . But domestic slaves also had more contact with their owners, and were more often subjected to their despotic whimsy.”³²

In smaller households the very slaves who contributed to the production of commodities would also have been involved in household tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, removing waste, and caring for children. Along with producing clothes for sale, a slave skilled in wool working could also produce clothing for members of the household. In larger households the tasks performed by domestic slaves would be highly specialized. Thus, on a continuum, the slave in the Lukan parable moved from work in the fields to waiting on the master at the table. Aesop not only shopped for food but also prepared and served it to his master and his master's guests. A wealthier household would have multiple slaves dedicated to particular cooking specialties. In *The Golden Ass*, for example, Lucius the ass eventually falls into the hands of two kitchen slaves, one specializing in sweets and the other in sauces.³³

Descriptions of banquets suggest that elaborate household staffs would enhance the self-image of some slaveholders. The more frivolous a slave's task, the clearer the evidence of the owner's wealth. In the *Satyricon*, Encolpus describes the scene as he enters Trimalchio's banquet, where Trimalchio is playing a ball game with some boys:

If the ball hit the ground, he [Trimalchio] didn't chase it, but had a slave with a bag full of balls give the players a new one. We noticed some other novelties: there were two eunuchs stationed at different points in a circle; one was holding a silver chamber pot, the other was counting the balls. . . . While we wondered at the extravagance of this, Menelaus ran up and said, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party! What you see is only the prelude to dinner.” As Menelaus spoke, Trimalchio snapped his finger as a signal to the eunuch to hold out the chamber pot for him as he continued to play. After emptying his bladder, he called for water for his hands, sprinkled it lightly on his fingers and then wiped them dry on the head of a young slave.³⁴

Trimalchio has set up this scene as a tableau for his guests so they can witness the extent of his wealth. As Menelaus pointedly observes, “*This* is the guy who's throwing the party!”

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Jesus and his followers encountered the slaves of opulent households on those occasions when their activities came to the attention of civil or religious authorities. For example, during the events surrounding the arrest of Jesus, he and his followers had dealings with slaves belonging to the grand household of the high priest. One of the high priest's male slaves had an ear severed during the arrest of Jesus; several of the high priest's female and male slaves accosted Peter to accuse him of accompanying Jesus.³⁵ The Pauline letters and Acts of the Apostles include references to a number of households that included slaves.³⁶ However, on the basis of these texts, we cannot reach firm conclusions about the size of those households nor the degree to which their slaves specialized in productive, managerial, domestic, or sexual duties. We have no evidence to suggest that Paul interacted with slaves or slaveholders in households as lavish as Trimalchio's. Still, when he accepted hospitality from a slaveholder, domestic slaves would have tended to his needs, from washing his feet upon entering the household to preparing the food for communal meals.

Domestic Bodies: Family Life Among Slaves

Our sources help us detect the shadowy ghosts of slaves proceeding through the streets of Mediterranean cities in the course of their varied duties or laboring in workshops and kitchens. The sources are less helpful when we try to reconstruct the domestic arrangements of slaves. What kind of quarters did slaves occupy? How did the layout of ancient houses facilitate or impede family ties among slaves? Moreover, how did residential layouts shape the quality of relationships among slaves who succeeded in establishing, at least for a time, stable family ties? Literary sources afford scant clues. Archaeological remains are in need of interpretation.

Sometimes slaves lived outside the households of their owners. We have a glimpse into such living arrangements in a legal petition submitted in 60 C.E., in which a slaveholder named Theon complained that thieves had twice broken into the living quarters of his slave Epicharis, who lived in an apartment of some kind in a house in another district.³⁷ More often, slaves lived with their owners. Larger houses had separate

slave quarters—dark, cramped, far less ornamented than the rooms in which the head of the household received guests or conducted business. Smaller households did not have separate accommodations for slaves. Regardless of whether the slaves had their own quarters, however, no corner of the household was off limits to slaves. Attending children, preparing food, working on accounts—the slaves, who were integral to every aspect of the household's function, would have been found in every nook and cranny of a house during the hours of work.³⁸ At night, a slave might have slept in a closet that was also used for food storage or curled up in a corner of an owner's bedroom.

The information we have about ancient slave quarters is, at best, minimal. Evidence so fragile cannot sustain generalizations about the quality of domestic life among those slaves fortunate enough to establish (at least temporarily) family bonds. Michele George notes, “The development of slave families is also problematic. In large households separate suites for slaves with considerable responsibilities may have been usual. However, in houses of average size this would have been impossible, and here slave families must have evolved despite proximity to the free household, and in a cultural context with notions of intimacy and personal space which were different from our own.”³⁹ (It seems worth noting that if slaves lived with less privacy than families in modern industrialized societies, so too did slaveholders.) Envisioning the domestic configurations of a family of slaves owned by a modest slaveholding establishment is difficult. Did they enjoy common leisure time? Where did they congregate? Were they able to spend time with one another without intrusions from their owners or, for that matter, from other slaves in the household? The questions become still more complex when we try to imagine the domestic relations among a family of slaves with multiple owners or the domestic relations among a family that included freedpersons as well as slaves.

Our inability to envisage how slaves arranged their family time and space should not be construed as evidence of a failure on their part to do so. Dale Martin has reviewed funeral epitaphs from various regions in the Empire. The dedications of these epitaphs most commonly indicate that an immediate family member (spouse or child) of the deceased was responsible for the memorial. This held true for slaves and freedpersons as well as for freeborn persons. Martin encourages caution, however, in drawing conclusions based on the epitaphs. We cannot easily infer from epitaphs, which employ stereotyped formulas of affection and respect, the actual feelings that ancient family members had for one another. Most slaves from antiquity were not remembered in formal epitaphs, which suggests that the slaves so memorialized represented an atypical cross-section of ancient slaves. Nonetheless, the picture sketched by the epitaphs is remarkably consistent. At least in death and most likely in life, the slaves who dedicated epitaphs to one another valued their life partners and their offspring.⁴⁰ We do not know when slave families made time for one another or how they managed to find a place for that time together, but epigraphic evidence suggests that many did so.

Martin concludes that “these [epigraphic] studies illustrate the existence and importance of the immediate family for a significant minority of slaves.”⁴¹ Many more slaves, however, lived and labored under conditions that did not enable them to sustain stable family connections. For example, the sexual demands that slaveholders made on female and young male slaves may have strained family relationships among slaves themselves. Or perhaps not—slaves who cared about other slaves in demand as their owners' sexual playthings did not leave diaries recording their emotional reactions to the intimate violation of their loved ones. Studying architectural remains of private dwellings in Italy and the Eastern Empire tells us only that slaves and slaveholders often shared remarkably close quarters. It does not tell us how the resultant lack of privacy impinged on the ability of slaves to construct their own lives and worlds of meaning.

p. 47 Paul's encounter with the slave possessed by an oracular spirit led to conflict with her owners rather than to an opportunity to evangelize her household, although Acts of the Apostles does include four accounts of household conversions. In each case, Peter or Paul gained entry through contact with the head of the household. A dream of Cornelius led him to send two slaves and a soldier to find Peter (10:7). Peter decided to baptize the household when the holy spirit descended on the assembled members, including, presumably, those enslaved (10:44–48). When Paul encountered Lydia, the Lord opened her heart, which led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her entire household (16:14–15). A jailer's experience of God's power in opening the doors of the prison precipitated his invitation to Paul and Silas to preach to his household and then to the household's baptism (16:27–34). Brief mention of the conversion of the synagogue official Crispus notes that his entire household followed his lead (18:8).

The historical accuracy of these summaries is difficult to assess. Luke's theological emphasis is on the power of the spirit at work building the church. Luke supposed that his readers would find nothing amiss when a slaveholder determined the religious practices of the household. Indeed, even contemporary scholars evince little concern about the legitimacy of conversion and baptism of slaves in such circumstances.⁴² Scholars debate whether the household baptisms represented in Acts of the Apostles involved children, but they do not debate whether household baptisms included slaves. They assume and assert that this was the case. Moreover, they do not seem troubled by this assumption. For example, as James Dunn reviews the household conversions in Acts, he equivocates on the inclusion of children in household baptisms but not of adult slaves. Dunn writes of Lydia's situation, "Household here need not include children since the term was commonly used to include household slaves and retainers." Of the conversion of the jailer's household, Dunn writes, "It is equally unclear whether household slaves and other adults *alone* [emphasis added] are in view or also children." Finally, regarding the conversion of Crispus's household, Dunn notes, it is "not clear whether a family is in view or simply the household slaves and retainers."⁴³ Like Dunn and other commentators on Acts, ancient readers would have understood these households to include slaves. Unlike these commentators, however, I think that household baptisms masterminded by slaveholders raise uncomfortable questions about the social dynamics within the Pauline churches, as well as questions about the reception of the gospel by those who participated in the ritual of baptism.

Paul's initial contact in Philippi, according to Acts of the Apostles, was a dealer in purple goods named Lydia. She was a godfearer, that is, a Gentile who worshiped the God of Israel but had not converted to Judaism. Her openness to Paul's message, we have noted, led not only to her own baptism but also to the baptism of her household (Acts 16:13–15). Paul and his companions accepted her invitation to stay with her, so her house was large enough to accommodate visitors. Whether she was a wealthy woman or a relatively small business agent is not clear, further muddled by the difficulty of identifying social strata of ancient society in terms familiar to modern readers. She could have been a freedwoman who first entered the garment trade when she was a slave.⁴⁴ Perhaps some of those who lived in her house were slave apprentices. Perhaps she owned her workers, or perhaps they were freedmen and freedwomen.

p. 48 Ivoni Richter Reimer has advanced the hypothesis that Lydia's house was a "contrast society" in a Roman colony. As a female head of household, Lydia was not a *pater familias*. The citizen *pater familias* (Latin, "father of the family," or more generally "head of household") possessed, at least according to law, near total powers over members of the household, especially his offspring (including adult offspring) and slaves. Despite an earlier mention in Acts of the Apostles of a female Christian slaveholder, Mary (12:12–14), Reimer minimizes the likelihood that Lydia was a slaveholder, seeing her instead as an "independent woman. . . who provides shelter for other people in her house." Even conceding that Lydia's home could have included slaves, Reimer claims that Lydia's home was an egalitarian retreat: "Because, for example, there is no longer a *pater familias*, there is no more patriarchal subordination, and all can be equal sisters and brothers."⁴⁵ A later papyrus from Karanis offers a glimpse into a household headed by a female garment worker, which hardly conforms to Reimer's hypothesis that a female-headed household would constitute a contrast society. An apprenticeship contract for a female slave to learn the trade of weaving identified Aurelia Libouke as a weaver who had the right to act without a guardian because she had raised three children. Aurelia Libouke agreed to teach the slave the craft of weaving and promised that the slave would attain proficiency suitable for a girl her age. Unlike most apprenticeship contracts, which specified regular holidays throughout the apprenticeship period, this contract stipulated that the slave would be

available for labor with no days off for leisure or even illness.⁴⁶ The mere presence of a woman such as Lydia as head of household did not, therefore, transform a household from a hierarchical to an egalitarian structure.⁴⁷ Richard Saller notes, "Though the head of the household was stereotyped as male by use of *pater familias*, in reality Roman women owned property and must often, in the absence of husbands, have wielded power over households with dependents. This gendered language causes historians to lose sight of female heads of households, even when they know better."⁴⁸

The baptism of her household was Lydia's initiative. Luke does not suggest that the motivations or reactions of other household members concerned either Lydia or Paul. Acts of the Apostles does not present the Christian message as a challenge to slaveholding authority. Through the representations of household baptisms in Acts of the Apostles, Luke reinscribes the power of the head of the household over the lives of those in the house, including resident adult slaves. Chris Frilingos has argued that, in his letter to Philemon, Paul employed the vocabulary of family in such a way as to establish himself as the affectionate and commanding *pater familias* with authority over both slave and slaveholder. In this picture of Christian origins, the new Christian community unsettled existing hierarchical modes of relating among members of Christian households, even between slaveholders and slaves.⁴⁹ In contrast, by suggesting that the spirit responded to the invitations of slaveholders, household by patriarchal household, Acts of the Apostles treats enslaved members of households as dependent bodies subject to the intellectual and spiritual authority of slaveholders.⁵⁰

An authorial propensity to identify with the viewpoint of slaveholders rather than slaves may also influence two summaries of the exodus event in Acts of the Apostles that, curiously, lack any reference to the enslavement of the Israelite people. When Paul preaches at the synagogue in Antioch, he encapsulates the events surrounding the liberation of the Israelites without even a cryptic allusion to the coercive nature of their continuing sojourn in Egypt: "The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it" (13:17). In Stephen's speech before the council, he represents the kings of Egypt as evil not because they enslaved the Israelites who had been their guests but because they promoted infanticide: A king who had not known Joseph came to power, declares Stephen, and he "dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die" (7:19). Although in the nineteenth century African-American abolitionists would celebrate the exodus story as a narrative of God's historical intervention against slavery, these first-century synopses of the exodus expunge any memory of the enslavement of the Israelites.

p. 49 Paul identifies the Christian community as the body of Christ. Descriptions of household conversions in Acts of the Apostles suggest that slaveholders played a disproportionate role in the baptisms of their households and therefore a role in the Christian body that derived not from a gift of the spirit but from their secular status. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers to a message he received from "Chloe's people," members of Chloe's household, probably her slaves.⁵¹ Since Paul expected his readers to be familiar with Chloe, he had no reason to specify whether she was herself a Christian. She may well have been. If she was a believer, Paul's reference to "Chloe's people" hints that Christian slaveholders had a higher profile within the church than enslaved members of their households who were also baptized, an impression entirely consistent with Luke's depiction of the movement of the spirit in Acts of the Apostles. According to Acts, Peter and Paul gained access to households not through humble members of the household—children or slaves—but through their heads. Slaveholders chose baptism not only for themselves but also for others who belonged to them, including, presumably, enslaved adult members of the household. What was the position of these enslaved bodies within the Christian body? Given the circumstances of a household baptism, could slaves' experiences as members of the Christian community obliterate the disadvantages of their slave status, even within the cult?⁵²

Paul claimed that membership in the body of Christ dissolved barriers between slave and free.⁵³ Largely on this basis, scholars have inferred that slave status did not entail any special liabilities for participation in the Christian community. However, because slaves were their masters' sexual property, their obligations to their masters would at times have included actions defined as polluting or aberrant in the Christian body. Slaves whose owners were not members of the church would have been especially vulnerable, since their owners would not have been subject to the community's censure. The argument of the remainder of this chapter has two stages. The first stage analyzes evidence concerning slaves and their lack of control over sexual activity in the ancient Mediterranean world. Ancient texts record acceptance of masters' control over their slaves' sexuality and establish a strong link between slavery and prostitution. The second stage of the argument analyzes Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 and 1 Corinthians 5–7 in light of evidence concerning the sexual vulnerability of slaves.

No New Testament text details the sexual obligations of slaves to their masters.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, consideration of the sexual demands of first-century slavery requires that we revise, or at least qualify, our claims about the composition and practices of Pauline communities. Wayne Meeks's assessment that “a Pauline congregation generally reflected a fair cross-section of urban society” has dominated recent reconstructions of Pauline circles.⁵⁵ To assume that these congregations never encountered potential converts among the many urban slaves who numbered sexual activities among their duties would modify our picture of Pauline communities in an erratic manner. How Pauline communities responded to these slaves is another question. Either the community excluded slaves whose sexual behavior could not conform to the norms mandated within the Christian body, or the community tolerated the membership of some who did not confine their sexual activities to marriage. The first possibility challenges the assumption that slavery did not jeopardize the standing of individuals in the Christian community; the second possibility suggests that Pauline communities viewed some sexual activities as morally neutral.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul advises as an antidote to *porneia* the acquisition and control of a vessel, *skeuos*. What he means by this counsel remains notably obscure. Some commentators believe that he is urging (male) members of the Thessalonian congregation to acquire wives. Other commentators believe that he is urging the Thessalonian Christians to control their own bodies or, perhaps more specifically, their sexual organs. The Christian men of Thessalonika who first received this letter were accustomed to thinking of slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. I suggest that we revisit Paul's advice to the Christians in Thessalonika to ask how the first male recipients of this letter would have understood Paul's instruction that each man should acquire a vessel for himself.

We do not know the extent to which the Corinthian community adapted Paul's teachings in 1 Corinthians. I argue, however, that his teachings on sexuality in 1 Corinthians 5–7 would have complicated and even barred the participation of many slaves in Christian life. The passage 1 Corinthians 5 establishes parameters for the discourse, raising the question of what constitutes *porneia*. Paul situates *porneia* as a problem not only for individuals engaged in such behavior but for the entire community. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul explains why a Christian community cannot include a man who frequents prostitutes. Paul's logic is predicated on the incompatibility of prostitution with the Christian life. Enslaved prostitutes who had no control over their owners' decisions to profit from their bodies would thus have been excluded from membership in the Christian body. Finally, Paul's insistence that sexual activity should be confined to marriage (1 Cor. 7) posed difficulties for slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them.

In Paul's understanding, could the Christian body accommodate the sexually available bodies of slaves? That is, would the inclusion of Christians who were legally and culturally unable to protect the boundaries of their own bodies have threatened the maintenance of clear boundaries for the Christian body? Or does the presence of urban, domestic slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?

Concerning the sexual availability of slaves, Moses I. Finley writes, "This is treated as a commonplace in Graeco-Roman literature . . . only modern writers have managed largely to ignore it, to the extent that the fundamental research remains to be done."⁵⁶ Modern scholars usually overlook the problem of whether slaves' sexual availability affected their membership in the Christian community. The ancient church, however, explicitly considered this question by (at the latest) the third century. *The Apostolic Tradition*, usually attributed to Hippolytus, included in its discussion of baptism a list of those whose participation in the Christian community was proscribed or otherwise regulated.⁵⁷ The situation of enslaved concubines received particular attention. Men who kept concubines could only join the community if they formalized those relationships through legitimate marriages. Enslaved concubines were welcome in the community if they had been faithful to their masters and if they had raised their children. (A complicating factor ↵ p. 51 unrecognized by Hippolytus is that the owner rather than the enslaved concubine would have decided whether to rear or expose any child born to her.⁵⁸) Contemporary scholars should exercise caution in asserting the relevance of a third-century document to the first-century church. What is striking is that an ancient Christian source articulated separate sexual standards for female slaves (who did not own nor control their own sexual activity) and free men (who did control their own sexual activity), thus calling attention to a moral conundrum intrinsic to the situation of enslaved Christians, which modern biblical scholarship has neglected.

In Finley's formulation, a chief characteristic of ancient slavery was that slaves were answerable with their bodies.⁵⁹ Such answerability manifested itself in three major ways. First, corporal punishment was largely restricted to slaves, and slaves were in constant danger of corporal punishment. Although others, including sons and daughters of elite Roman families, were legally subject to beatings by the *pater familias*, corporal punishment was symbolically linked to servile status in Roman thought.⁶⁰ Indeed, the nexus between slaves and the whip is a leitmotiv of the comedies of Plautus, as in this exchange between two slaves in *Persa*:

Sagaristo: Down at the mill I've been promoted
To first sergeant in charge of flogging.

Toxilus: Oh, you're an old hand at that; you've earned your stripes.⁶¹

A second sense in which slaves were answerable with their bodies was the practice of requiring all testimony by slaves to be given under torture.

Finally, Finley observed, "The third, qualitatively different and ubiquitous, manifestation of the answerability of slaves with their bodies, [was] their unrestricted availability in sexual relations. . . . Prostitution is only one aspect. More interesting in the present context is the direct sexual exploitation of slaves by their masters and the latter's family and friends."⁶² Finley adduced as evidence an aphorism of the elder Seneca, which referred to the moral position of the receptive partner in male homosexual encounters: "Unchastity [*impudicitia*] is a crime in the freeborn, a necessity for the slave, a duty [*officium*] for the freedman."⁶³ While the (im)moral evaluation implicit in the saying is satirical, its presupposition of the availability of slaves for sexual service is germane. Enslaved girls, women, boys, and young men were frequently sexual targets for their masters. Moreover, as Susan Treggiari writes, "The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator."⁶⁴

Freeborn Roman men typically married in their late twenties or early thirties.⁶⁵ Since Roman society placed little value on men's sexual abstinence, young men often satisfied their sexual desires with household slaves or prostitutes (who were typically slaves). From the man's perspective, one important benefit of such sexual encounters would be that any children conceived in those circumstances would not compete with legitimate children, conceived later, for claims to the estate. For the same reason, many Roman men chose sexual partners who were slaves or freedwomen after their wives' deaths.⁶⁶

Enslaved women were additionally vulnerable to retaliation from wives who knew or suspected their husbands' sexual involvements with household slaves. While some women may have appreciated their husbands' circumspection in seeking other sexual outlets, a ↵ p. 52 variety of evidence suggests that wives often reacted negatively to slaves who attracted such attention. Sexual jealousy might prompt a wife's resentful notice. A wife might also be angry if she thought her husband had squandered household resources to purchase a sexual partner or to pay for the partner's upkeep. Annalisa Rei notes of the comedies of Plautus,

“Characteristically, a wife takes action to avenge not a husband's infidelity, but his violation of the property which the couple shares or which even belongs to the wife entirely. The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society.”⁶⁷

The mistress of a household had a variety of means at her disposal for harassing slaves, including physical abuse. In *Genesis Rabbah*, several rabbis commented on the scriptural observation that “Sarai dealt harshly” with her slave Hagar (Gen. 16:6). Rabbi Berekiah speculated that Sarai (Sarah) attempted to humiliate Hagar by requiring her to carry towels and water buckets for bathing or that Sarai slapped Hagar's face with a shoe.⁶⁸ Galen claimed that his mother used to bite female slaves when she was angry with them; Augustine recorded an incident in which his paternal grandmother ordered the household slaves to be beaten because she perceived them to be disloyal to her daughter-in-law, Augustine's mother, Monica.⁶⁹ Given the ancient stereotype that women are less able than men to control their passions, writers may have exaggerated the violence of slaveholding women against their slaves.⁷⁰ Still, we should guard against the equally distorting assumption that a slaveholding woman and a woman she owned would have naturally presented a joint front because of their shared gender identity. Potentially faced with retaliation by their mistresses, many slaves might have preferred to avoid sex with their masters. The choice, however, was not theirs to make.

In the world constructed by the romances, noble young women who were enslaved in unfortunate circumstances were typically able to resist the sexual overtures of their owners. Still, the threat of sexual compromise was constantly present for them. In Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*,⁷¹ for example, the title characters consummate their marriage before being torn apart. Callirhoe finds herself the slave of Dionysius, a good man who is desperate to sleep with her. She manages to resist until she realizes that she is pregnant, whereupon she sends a message to Dionysius that she is willing to be his wife but not his concubine. Dionysius joyously accepts. Callirhoe convinces her new husband that the child she is carrying is his. What rings true about the episode is the master's desire for an attractive young slave. However, Dionysius's deference to Callirhoe's sexual reluctance is implausible, as is his acceptance of her marriage proposal. Livy's version of the story of Verginia assumes the inability of a woman with the legal status of a slave to protect the integrity of her own body. In Livy's version, Appius Claudius has Verginia legally declared a slave so that her father cannot defend her chastity. Elaine Fantham writes, “It is telling that Verginius should protest in terms of his daughter's status, ‘his daughter would have been dearer to him than life itself if she had been allowed to live free and chaste; but . . . he saw her dragged off to be raped like a slave girl.’”⁷² While the romances drew attention to the sexual vulnerability of their enslaved heroines and heroes, the genre's insistence on happy endings necessitated that those heroines and heroes should preserve their chastity through utterly implausible stratagems. Slaves did not have the legal right nor cultural power to say “no” to their owners' sexual demands.

p. 53 In her dissertation on women in Greek novels, Brigitte M. Egger notes that although the preservation of the sexual integrity of enslaved protagonists is a recurring theme, the romances do not evince concern for the sexual integrity of other enslaved characters.⁷³ Masters in the romances take for granted that their slaves are their sexual property. The excitement of the stories builds on the possibility that noble young women separated from their protective environments will be treated in a way considered appropriate for common household slaves. So too on the stage. In Plautus's *Persa*, a young woman who is caught in a scheme of her father's that involves selling her into slavery in order to reveal that the slave dealer is trafficking in freeborn “merchandise” worries that even a temporary enslavement will deter any decent man from later marrying her. No matter how brief her period of (pseudo)enslavement, for a short time she will not be in a legal or cultural position to guard her chastity.⁷⁴ In Plautus's *Curculio* the slave Palinurus responds with alarm to his master's announcement of plans to seduce a young woman until Phaedromus, his master, specifies that the object of his lust is a slave rather than a proper young woman. Palinurus proclaims, “No one bans or prohibits you from buying what's for sale from this place, if you have the cash. No one prohibits a man from using the public street, so long as you don't cut a path through an enclosed property: so long as you keep off wives, widows and virgins, young men and boys of free birth, make love to anyone you choose.”⁷⁵

The frequency of manumission inscriptions that imply that the freed slave was the master's sexual partner indicates the prevalence of such liaisons in Greco-Roman societies.⁷⁶ One manumission inscription from Delphi in the late first century B.C.E. illustrates the asymmetry in power that persisted even after a master freed his concubine. Kleomantis manumitted Eisias, the mother of his sons. However, he stipulated that she had to remain with him his entire life, “doing everything that is ordered like a slave. . . . If Eisias does not remain or does not do what is ordered, let Kleomantis have the power to punish her in whatever way he

wishes, by beating her and selling her.”⁷⁷ Far from the respect accorded the heroines of the romances, many slaves (and even former slaves) would have encountered physical abuse and the threat of being sold should they resist their masters' advances.⁷⁸

Resistance of male or female slaves to sexual overtures sanctioned by their owners was not acceptable servile behavior. A scrap of papyrus from Oxyrhynchus records a crude proposition or, more accurately, a threat from two males to a third. It reads: “Apion and Epimas proclaim to their best-loved Epaphroditus that if you allow us to bugger you it will go well for you, and we will not thrash you any longer.” Epaphroditus typically appears in the papyri as a name associated with a slave. Here, a young slave, or perhaps a freedman, seems to have two “options”: to submit to unwanted sexual activities or to allow two other men to (continue to) beat him.⁷⁹ The bluntness of the message highlights the implausibility that a slaveholder such as Chariton's Dionysius would respect a slave's privacy and sexual integrity. On the other hand, for every Epaphroditus who resisted such sexual advances and perhaps even saw them as rape, there may have been another slave who accepted sexual overtures with equanimity. For some slaves, cohabitation with a master or, very occasionally, a mistress was certainly a route to what we would recognize as upward social mobility.⁸⁰ Our sources are silent regarding the actual reactions of slaves to their sexual obligations. The silence is revealing. Ancient societies were not concerned with the reactions of slaves to sexual coercion, since the slave had no legal or cultural right to say “no.”⁸¹

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Bodies for Rent: Slavery and Prostitution

Just as the typical slave had little opportunity to resist a master's sexual advances, prostitutes who were slaves had little if anything to say about the work their owners required of them. A suggestion by Margaret Y. MacDonald that Christianity represented an economic threat to slaveholding pimps would require enslaved prostitutes to be in a position to refuse their assigned labor.⁸² This is highly improbable. By the late second century, Tertullian even complained that a persecution of Christians had extended to forcing a Christian woman into prostitution, the first known instance of a practice that lasted until the fourth century.⁸³ Aline Rousselle asks, “Can we say that slaves and prostitutes enjoyed sexual freedom in this sense when we know that the *leno*, or procurer, took them to the ports when he heard that a ship had arrived? We should not imagine that all the young girls who were abandoned and then brought up to be slaves or prostitutes or both, and later freed by a procurer, were *demi-mondaines*.”⁸⁴ Roman law and custom suggested that female prostitutes enjoyed a sexual freedom parallel to that of men, but such freedom was more apparent than real. Prostitutes did not choose their sexual partners; they were chosen as sexual partners. In his work on prostitution in ancient Rome, Thomas A. J. McGinn concludes, “This is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power implicit in the exchange of sex for money, an inequality especially notable when the woman [or the male prostitute] is a slave.”⁸⁵

Roman law recognized the validity of certain restrictive covenants in the sale of slaves. One of those covenants, *ne serva prostituator*, forbade the buyer (including subsequent buyers) from forcing the slave into prostitution. A buyer who violated a *ne serva prostituator* covenant faced several potential penalties. In some instances the seller would reclaim ownership of the slave. In other instances the buyer would be forced to pay a financial penalty to the seller, who presumably had taken a financial loss in selling the slave under a restrictive covenant. In still other instances the slave would be manumitted as a Junian Latin, without benefit of citizenship. Although the *ne serva prostituator* covenant benefited the slave, the law was essentially concerned with the rights of the original vendor.⁸⁶ Why would a slaveholder impose the *ne serva prostituator* covenant? Slaveholders may have had widely divergent motivations. A promise that a slave would never be prostituted could function as either an incentive or a reward for hard work. A slaveholder who sold his lover could be reluctant for that person to become a prostitute. A slaveholder who sold a son or daughter might have some qualms about the prostitution of his progeny. A slaveholder who sold a slave who had worked as an intimate attendant for his wife might feel that the slave's later work as a prostitute could taint the household. Some slaveholders may have been genuinely concerned about the well-being of slaves with whom they had interacted on a daily basis. All of this, however, is speculation, since slaveholders did not record their reasons for imposing the covenant.

The very existence of such covenants highlights Roman awareness both that many slaveholders compelled their slaves to work as prostitutes and that slaves were not themselves in a position to resist such work. Dio Chrysostom described newly enslaved women forced to work as prostitutes who “feel shame and

revulsion.”⁸⁷ Slaves would have been aware that the decision whether or not to prostitute them belonged to the master. McGinn points to the practice of forcing Christian women into brothels as evidence that compulsion to work as a prostitute loomed as a potential punishment for slaves: “If some ↵ slave women might be rewarded for their loyal service through exemption from forced prostitution through the imposition of the covenant, others might be punished for their failings through installation in a brothel. We have a glimmer of what might be described as the [*ne serva prostituator*] covenant's ‘evil twin’: a practice perhaps more widespread as a private form of punishment than the sources allow us to see.”⁸⁸

In the Hellenistic world and later during the Roman Empire, exposed infants constituted one supply of enslaved prostitutes.⁸⁹ Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr warned against frequenting prostitutes for fear of committing incest with a daughter one had abandoned in infancy.⁹⁰ Slave dealers had a stake in promoting trade in prostitutes. Prostitutes commanded a higher sale price than other female slaves.⁹¹ Indeed, slave dealers moved easily between the role of *leno* (pimp or procurer) and auctioneer of female flesh.⁹² In the comedies of Plautus, for example, the figure of the *leno* schemes alternately to make money as a pimp and to strike it rich by selling a few prized slave prostitutes to men infatuated with them.

Although Ulpian extended the definition of pimp to include someone who maintained free prostitutes, he primarily defined a pimp as a man who dealt in the services of enslaved prostitutes. McGinn writes, “The pimp who keeps slave prostitutes is emphasized either because this type was more significant as a socio-economic phenomenon or because a special legal reason (not evident to us) required this.” However, he regards the former reason—the high proportion of slaves in the population of prostitutes—as more likely.⁹³ Although contemporary scholars do not have the data necessary to calculate what percentage of prostitutes were slaves, all available evidence suggests a strong correlation between prostitution and slavery.⁹⁴

Whether *most* prostitutes were slaves is a more difficult question. McGinn expresses agnosticism on this point but adds, “It is safe to say that most prostitutes in the provinces were peregrines or slaves before A.D. 212.”⁹⁵ Dominic Montserrat suggests that the documentary evidence is likely to downplay the percentage of slave prostitutes: “Since their ‘bodies’ were entirely at the disposal of their masters, a slave forced to work as a prostitute would need only to be recorded by social rather than professional status—the potential status as prostitute (or dancer or wet-nurse or wool-worker) was implicit in the designation as slave.”⁹⁶ In her study of female prostitution in the Roman Empire, Rebecca Fleming emphasizes the substantial intersection between slaves and prostitutes. She characterizes the institution of prostitution in the Roman world as “part of the slave economy, so though the labor is hers the profits are not.”⁹⁷ Artemidorus's dream logic provides a thoroughly nonscientific confirmation that ancient writers expected prostitutes to be slaves: “A prostitute dreamt that she had entered the holy place of Artemis. She was freed and gave up her prostitution. For she would not enter the temple unless she were to abandon her profession.”⁹⁸ And she could not abandon her profession as prostitute while she still belonged to another.

Although I am stressing the evidence that links prostitution and slavery, I am not thereby implying that free persons who became prostitutes willingly chose the occupation with any regularity. The documentary evidence from Greco-Roman Egypt suggests that free persons who engaged in prostitution often entered the trade under duress, through dire economic necessity. An indigent woman would not typically establish herself as a prostitute. Rather, another family member, often a father, would set her up as a prostitute because of the family's destitution. Fleming writes, “Female bodies clearly ↵ counted among the economic resources, not only of slave-dealers and owners, but also of any family network.”⁹⁹ Not until the rise of Coptic Christian literature is there any intimation that women enter the ranks of prostitutes to satiate their own lusts.¹⁰⁰ This literature, we may safely surmise, reflects the preoccupations of its authors rather than the erotic appetites of prostitutes.

In 40 C.E., Caligula instituted a tax on prostitutes. This was not a “vice tax,” designed with the ulterior motive of curbing the widespread practice of prostitution. The goal of the tax was to raise revenue. The tax was collected throughout the Empire. In Egypt, the levy on prostitutes was ten times higher than other occupational taxes, suggesting that prostitutes (or their owners or brothel keepers) had sufficient income to pay a very high tax.¹⁰¹ Prostitutes and prostitution were thus common and visible throughout Greco-Roman cities in the first century. Through collection of the tax on prostitutes, the emperor directly profited from the trade.¹⁰² Furthermore, even the tax code recognized that many prostitutes were slaves: in some locales, records specify how to collect the tax from enslaved prostitutes and their owners.

Popular literature of the ancient Mediterranean often features the character of the enslaved prostitute. Fleming observes that “with one partial exception, slaves fill all literary brothels where the status of their

denizens is clear.”¹⁰³ In *An Ephesian Tale*, the heroine, Anthia, is sold as a prostitute and forced to display herself outside the brothel. She manages, improbably, to retain her virginity by pretending to have epileptic seizures.¹⁰⁴ The enslaved prostitute is a familiar figure in the Plautine corpus. The *pseudo meretrix*, a free woman of good reputation whose virtue prevails despite her temporary enslavement, is a stock character.¹⁰⁵ In several plays (*Rudens*, *Poenulus*), a freeborn female is rescued by her long-lost father just before her sale by a *leno*. In another plot line, a clever slave arranges the sale of a woman already enslaved as a prostitute to a man who cares about her (*Pseudolus*). These plots converge in *Persa*, in which a conspiracy entraps Dordalus, a *leno*, into buying a young freeborn woman. When her identity is revealed, she is freed and Dordalus ruined. Through the fraudulent sale, a slave named Toxilus acquires the money he needs to buy from Dordalus the prostitute Lemniselenis, who he desires. Although the formulas of the romances and comedies dictate happy resolutions to these stories, the vast majority of enslaved prostitutes in the Greco-Roman world could not reasonably expect to retain nor regain control over their own sexual practices.

In general, Greco-Roman societies expected that men would frequent prostitutes and did not morally condemn them for doing so. Susan Treggiari writes, “Objections to intercourse with a common prostitute were aesthetic rather than moral or prudential.”¹⁰⁶ Nor was *moral* condemnation of prostitutes themselves common, although prostitutes did occupy a position in society distinct from that of respectable matrons. In a culture whose definition of honor emphasized the preservation of a woman's sexual integrity and a man's sexual inviolability, prostitutes had no honor to preserve.

Nonetheless, many in the ancient world perceived prostitution as pivotal to the smooth operation of the honor-shame system. By diverting the sexual energies of men away from those whose honor mattered, prostitution protected the honor of respectable families.¹⁰⁷ The Greek Anthology includes an epitaph attributed to Marcus Argentarius: “Psyllus, who used to take to the pleasant banquets of the young men the venal ladies that they desired . . . who earned a disgraceful wage by dealing in human flesh, lies here. But cast not those stones. . . Spare him, not because he was content to gain his living so, but because as keeper of common women he dissuaded young men from adultery.”¹⁰⁸ Dio Chrysostom, the orator and philosopher who synthesized Stoic and Cynic ideas, offered a rare condemnation of prostitution. In doing so, he claimed that many of his contemporaries espoused the view that prostitution was a “wonderful elixir to produce chastity in our cities, your motive to keep those open and unbarred brothels from contaminating your barred homes and inner chambers, and keep men who practice their excesses abroad and openly at little cost from turning to your free-born [*eleuthera*] and respected wives!”¹⁰⁹ Acceptance of prostitution as an inevitable support for the honor-shame rubric was not universal, but many were willing for enslaved women and men to pay with their bodies the price of the chastity of freeborn wives, daughters, and sons.

Traditional Roman religion ritualized the division between prostitutes and other women. Prostitutes claimed a number of Roman holidays as their own.¹¹⁰ April 23, the Vinalia, was the first of two wine festivals; prostitutes celebrated by sacrificing to Venus at her temple outside the Colline Gate. The Floralia (or Ludi Florae) on April 27, dedicated to Flora, the goddess of flowers and fertility, was another festival for prostitutes. More striking perhaps were the celebrations of April 1, the Veneralia, when prostitutes and respectable matrons separately worshiped the forces of love. Prostitutes (and possibly other base-born women) went to the men's baths to worship Fortuna Virilis, while respectable matrons worshiped Venus Verticordia. As Sarah Pomeroy summarizes these Roman ritual practices, “Thus the dichotomy between respectable women and whores was dramatized: the former worshipping an apotheosis of conjugal ideals, the latter worshipping sexual relationships having nothing to do with wedlock.”¹¹¹

These holidays were associated with the city of Rome and were not celebrated elsewhere in the Empire. They are therefore of limited relevance for understanding the structure of religious life in the cities of the Greek East where Paul evangelized. I mention these holidays because they dramatize social (not moral) distinctions between prostitutes and respectable matrons, which pertain throughout the Empire. Roman cultic practice offers a narrow window into the complexity of social relations in ancient Mediterranean societies. During the Matralia, from which enslaved women were generally barred, freeborn matrons ritually beat the single slave woman ushered into the assembly. Scholars of early Christianity often assume the gospel message broke down walls between slave and free. In what follows we consider the challenge that the sexual availability of enslaved bodies poses to that assumption.

Paul was active in the mid-first century in cities of the Eastern Empire, although he also had contacts in the Western Empire, even in Rome itself, where he spent his final days. Those attracted to his preaching included male and female slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, and freeborn men and women, some of whom were slaveholders. Paul insisted that authority within the congregation was a gift of the spirit, given for the building up of community. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Acts of the Apostles records several stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred when he had contact with the head of the household.

p. 58 Corresponding stories in which Paul's entry into a household occurred ↪ through contact with a subordinate member of the *familia* (Latin, "family," implying not only biological kin but also slaves and freedpersons attached to the family unit) do not appear in Acts. How accurately Acts of the Apostles represents the history of the early Pauline communities is difficult to ascertain.

As these communities struggled to define themselves as one body in Christ, Paul specified the limits of behavior, sexual and otherwise, compatible with membership in that body. Given the ubiquity of the sexual use of slaves, Paul would inevitably have encountered slaves whose obligations included sexual relations with their owners and those to whom their owners permitted sexual access, including enslaved prostitutes. In this section I examine Paul's advice on sexual matters in light of these wider contexts. I argue that recognition of the somatic obligations of ancient slaves leads us to revise or modify commonly held positions in Pauline studies. We do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the sexual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Christian community, or whether, like others in the first century, Paul and the churches regarded some sexual activity as morally neutral. Two interrelated questions structure the inquiry. First, how does a recognition that slaves were treated as available bodies affect our interpretation of Paul's instructions on sexual ethics? Second, in light of what we have learned about the sexual use of slaves, how does Paul's discourse on *porneia*, or sexual immorality, affect our reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a social movement, especially among slaves?

In the late third century, Lactantius proclaimed that Christian men and women should adhere to the same sexual standards. Christian men should not have sexual partners other than their wives, not even slaves. Such an idea was not utterly unprecedented. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, for example, had argued that by engaging in sexual activities with slaves, freeborn men exhibited less self-control than women, who avoided such entanglements. He therefore thought that men should refrain from sexual relations with slaves.¹¹² However, no evidence suggests that this Stoic advice had an appreciable impact on behavior in the Roman world. In contrast, later Christian writers repeated versions of Lactantius's mandate, although they often acknowledged that the reality of people's behavior did not always conform to these scrupulous standards. Ambrose urged men to avoid sexual relations with slaves in order to avoid giving their wives grounds for divorce. Jerome contrasted Christian with pagan morals by alluding to the tolerance that the latter exhibited for liaisons between free men and their female slaves.¹¹³ Jerome wrote, "Among the Romans men's chastity goes unchecked; seduction and adultery are condemned, but free permission is given to lust to range the brothels and to have slave girls, as though it were a person's rank and not the sexual pleasure that constituted the offense. With us what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men."¹¹⁴

Does this view of sexual ethics arise over the course of several centuries' development of Christian thought? Or is this view of sexual ethics implicit in the earliest Christian moralizing on sexual matters as preserved in the letters of Paul? Modern commentators have assumed that Paul found the sexual use of slaves immoral. However, unlike Lactantius, Ambrose, and Jerome, Paul does not refer explicitly to sexual relations between slaveholders and their human property. Given the ubiquity of the assumption that slaves were sexually available to their owners with no moral consequences for the slaveholder, we cannot simply assume that Paul's audience implicitly understood that participation in the body of Christ precluded such sexual activity.

p. 59 We must return to ↪ the Pauline texts themselves. We must see what they say and, perhaps more important, what they do not say.

In several places, Paul exhorts newly formed Christians to abstain from *porneia*. To assume that this instruction includes a tacit prohibition on (consensual or nonconsensual) sexual contact between slaveholder and slave begs the question. The question precisely at hand is whether Paul understands such relations to constitute *porneia*. Is Paul silent on the question because the sexual use of slaves is abhorrent to him and he expects other Christians to share his perspective? Or is Paul silent on this question because he does not challenge cultural norms regarding the sexual use of slaves?

Musonius Rufus, Lactantius, Ambrose and Jerome all address the moral position of the slaveholder. What of the moral position of the slave? Sensitivity to the moral position of persons who are not in a position to say “no,” who are unable to maintain their bodies as sexually inviolate, invites us to reconsider the consequences of Pauline sexual ethics for slaves who sought membership and full participation in the Christian body. If indeed Christian communities understood Paul's exhortations on sexual matters to preclude carnal contact between slaveholders and slaves, consequences would have differed for those in a position to control their own bodies and those not in a position to protect the integrity of their own bodies. Paul insisted that *porneia* was not primarily a matter of individual conscience. He argued that in order to avoid pollution the Christian community should expel any person who engaged in *porneia*. If we conclude that Paul included carnal relations between slaveholders and slaves under the umbrella of *porneia*, slaves whose owners insisted on using them sexually could be seen as a source of potential contamination in the pure Christian body. Under these circumstances, a slave owned by a non-Christian would be at greater risk than a slave owned by a Christian. A non-Christian slaveholder would have found a request that he abstain from using a slave sexually to be laughable.

Still more tenuous would be the position of an enslaved prostitute who heard the gospel preached and sought baptism and communion with a Christian community. The business of a prostitute (Greek, *pornē*) was *porneia*. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reacts with horror to the presence in the Christian community of a man who had frequented a prostitute. It seems unlikely that he would have responded more warmly to the presence of a prostitute. For at least some denizens of the Roman Empire, the conditions of their enslavement would have created barriers to participation in the life of the Christian body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–8

The earliest Christian document that we possess, 1 Thessalonians, offers guidance on sexual matters. In giving that advice, Paul refers explicitly to counsel on sexual ethics that he had previously delivered to the Thessalonian church in person. Introducing his advice in 4:3–8, Paul reminds his readers that “you learned from us how you ought to live. . . . you know what instructions we gave you” (4:1–2). Although twenty-first-century readers find aspects of this advice to be obscure, the Thessalonian Christians had the benefit of hearing these remarks in the context of Paul's prior exhortations.

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The NRSV translation renders the passage with artificial clarity, lending cogency to Paul's advice that is not warranted by his own phrasing: “For this is the will of God, [↳] your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication [= *porneia*]; that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you” (4:3–6; emphasis added). This translation glosses over several difficulties. First, Paul instructed the (male) Thessalonian Christians to abstain from *porneia*, or sexual immorality. Whether Paul understood *porneia* to encompass precisely the field of activities connoted by the modern concept of “fornication” is unclear and even unlikely. Second, by supplying gender-neutral language in place of Paul's gender-specific language, the NRSV translation artificially abstracts Paul's advice from the patriarchal culture in which he wrote. Paul expressed concern that some Christians might wrong their *brothers* in sexual matters, an uneasiness that derived its particular charge from its patriarchal context. The NRSV neutralizes and obscures this context by implying that Paul was concerned with injuries to men or women in the community. Third, and most problematically, in the NRSV translation Paul tells the Thessalonian Christians that it is important that “each of you know how to control your own body.” What Paul actually wrote is that each (male) Thessalonian Christian should know how to “obtain his own vessel.” While some translators and commentators understand this as an idiomatic expression for controlling one's own body or, possibly, sexual organs, other translators take “vessel” (*skeuos*) as a euphemism for wife, so that the passage would encourage the (male) Thessalonians to avoid sexual immorality by obtaining wives.¹¹⁵ I propose a third possibility. Paul's advice could be construed as instructions to the male Thessalonian Christians to find morally neutral outlets for their sexual urges. And in the first century, domestic slaves were considered to be morally neutral outlets for sexual urges—vessels, we might say.

Ernest Best notes, “The attitude of the Christian is now contrasted with that of the pagan, which had been his own only a few months before and which he could not be expected to forget completely on becoming a Christian.”¹¹⁶ Reflecting on the immediacy of that pagan context for the Thessalonian Christians, I find it surprising that Paul did not explicitly reinforce a prohibition on the sexual use of slaves, if he believed that

Christianity demanded such a discipline. Commentators and critics typically insist that 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 restricts sexual activity to marriage. David Williams writes, for example, that *porneia* “regularly means to have dealings with a prostitute (*pornē*), but it was also used of any form of illicit sex—illicit from the Jewish/Christian point of view—that is, of any sexual relationship outside of marriage.”¹¹⁷ This reading, however, is a construction of what Williams believes Paul must have meant, rather than a straightforward exposition of what Paul actually said. Paul warned against *porneia*, but he did not define the parameters of *porneia*. As Williams acknowledges, a “restriction of sex to marriage struck the pagan world of that day as odd, for it tolerated and even encouraged, at least in the case of men, various forms of extramarital sexual activity.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, Paul urged the (male) Thessalonian Christians to adhere to more careful sexual standards than those tolerated by the Gentiles. Unfortunately, he did not clarify in what ways the newly formed Christians were to differentiate their behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors. The insistence of contemporary scholars that this advice required Christians to restrict their sexual activity to marriage exceeds what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.

p. 61 O. Larry Yarbrough assimilates Paul's advice in 1 Thessalonians 4:3–8 to the proscription against adultery, “which was of course fundamental to Jewish paraenesis, being one of the Ten Commandments.”¹¹⁹ G. P. Carras argues more broadly that Paul's instruction to the Thessalonian Christians to distinguish their sexual behavior from that of their Gentile neighbors was an admonition to follow Jewish sexual norms. Thus, Carras suggests, Paul would expect the newly formed Christians to avoid incest, homosexual practices, prostitution (although it is unclear whether first-century Judaism univocally condemned prostitution), and adultery.¹²⁰ In the ancient world, however, adultery referred specifically to sexual activity between an honorable married woman (therefore, not a slave) and a man who was not her husband. Carras's argument addresses the behaviors that Paul's counsel would exclude but does not address those behaviors still implicitly permitted by a call to observe the Jewish sexual code, which did not call into question a man's casual sexual access to his own slaves.

The crux of this difficult passage is Paul's advice to “obtain a vessel.” Since antiquity, commentators have debated whether Paul advised the (male) Thessalonians to control their bodies/sexual organs or to acquire wives. Both possibilities present difficulties to the interpreter. What does it mean to obtain or acquire one's own body or sexual organs, for example? While the perfect tense of the verb *ktasthai* could be extended to denote “to possess,” the present tense (which Paul uses) does not have this denotation. On the other hand, referring to a wife as a *skeuos*, a vessel, does not accord her a particularly dignified position. Since neither translation is the obvious choice, Beverly Gaventa advocates translating *skeuos* neither as body/sexual organs nor as wife but literally, as vessel, to preserve the inherent ambiguity of Paul's phrasing.¹²¹ Moreover, translating *skeuos* as vessel leaves open the possibility that the Thessalonian Christians would have understood Paul's counsel to be consistent with the pursuit of other sexual options, which did not infringe on the honor of other free men in the community. (I am not insinuating that Gaventa espouses this final possibility. She writes, “Whatever Paul means in this particular text, it is certain . . . that Paul was opposed to all sexual expression outside of monogamous marriage.”¹²²)

Despite the desire of some critics to see in 1 Thessalonians a representation of “marriage in the sense of full partnership,” Paul's words do not evoke such an elevated view of sexual relations between men and women.¹²³ An appreciation for mutuality and reciprocity in marriage informs 1 Corinthians 7. However, critics should demonstrate and not simply assume continuity between the earlier letter and the later letter. *Skeuos* is a term used to refer to inanimate objects, household goods. Ernest Best rightly suggests that the “rendering wife [which he prefers] appears repulsive to modern thought, but this should not deter us if on other grounds it is the better meaning [as opposed to body], for it would not have been so abhorrent to the ancient world with its very different view of women.”¹²⁴ However, Best then assimilates the passage to the later text in 1 Corinthians: a Christian man is “not to look on her [his wife] as a tool to satisfy his lusts but to appreciate her as a being who with himself is part of God's holy people (1 Cor. 7.2–6).”¹²⁵ Best insists that Paul did not want men to consider their wives as tools. Nonetheless, Paul's advice that, in order to control his sexual urges, a man should “obtain his own vessel” does promote an instrumental attitude toward women.

p. 62 Some commentators cite the concern that viewing Christian wives as vessels would diminish the significance of marriage to support the argument that the vessel to which ↵ Paul refers is the body/sexual organs.¹²⁶ My suggestion, that Paul's advice to men “to take a vessel” could encompass sexual access to slaves in one's own household, acknowledges that referring to sexual partners as vessels treats them not as ends but as means. Given the pervasive assumption in the ancient world that slaveholders had free sexual

access to their human chattel, Paul's failure to iterate, or reiterate, a prohibition on such behavior is peculiar, but he may have delivered a stern warning to the Thessalonians on this matter when he was among them: "you know what instructions we gave you" (4:2a). Modern readers of 1 Thessalonians, however, did not hear those instructions, and we should be wary of assuming that we have easy access to their content. Perhaps Paul instructed the Thessalonians that participation in the body of Christ precluded sexual exploitation of slaves. Perhaps he did not deliver such a charge. However, an admonition to avoid sexual contact with one's slaves would have been sufficiently countercultural that Paul would have done well to return explicitly to the matter when he urged the Thessalonian Christians to contain their sexual urges.

Against this argument, Paul does admonish the Thessalonians that their actions should be "in holiness and honor, not with lustful passions like the Gentiles" (4:4b–5a). Would a man's sexual use of his slaves violate the holiness of the Christian body? If so, how would a newly formed Christian man come to understand that sexual use of slaves would pollute his body? Assuming for a moment that Paul had delivered such instructions in person, would later generations of Christians, who passed this letter along, have preserved and respected that mandate? I emphasize the question of pollution and holiness because a man's sexual use of his own slaves would emphatically *not* have violated first-century notions of honor. Male slaves were considered to be without honor, and female slaves without shame.

Furthermore, Paul supplies as a rationale for his sexual advice that the new Christians are to avoid infringing on each other's sexual rights: "that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter" (4:6a). Scholars sensitive to feminist concerns have resisted the tendency to neutralize the gender-specific language of the passage.¹²⁷ Gaventa writes, "Engaging in sexual intercourse outside marriage involves violating the property rights of another male. On this reading, verse 6 refers to the injustice done a male when another male engages in sexual intercourse with a woman whose sexual activity 'belongs' to him."¹²⁸ However, in the first century, a slave's body, and thus her sexual activity, 'belonged' to the slaveholder. A slaveholder was not infringing on any other male's property rights when he had sexual relations with his own slave.

New Testament critics uniformly assert that in 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male members of the community to avoid sexual immorality by restricting sexual activities to marriage. This is not, however, what Paul says. Whether his words in 1 Thessalonians built on explicit earlier instructions to the community, which specified these behavioral parameters, is a matter of speculation rather than evidence. What Paul actually says is that male members of the Christian community should avoid immorality by "obtaining a vessel." In the first century, many who heard such counsel would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets. Moreover, the motivations that Paul offers for confining one's sexual urges are, to a significant degree, consistent with a slaveholder having sexual relations with his own human chattel: the preservation of honor, for example, and respect for the rights of Christian brothers. ↵ Whether a slaveholder's sexual relations with his own slaves would be consistent with the preservation of the holiness of the Christian body is less clear.

Paul expresses no concern for the feelings, experience, or moral struggles of the vessel. Does his silence betoken an indifference to the subjectivity of (free) women or of slaves? How we answer this question may depend on whether we assume that there was continuity or development between Paul's sexual ethics in 1 Thessalonians and in 1 Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians Paul speaks sympathetically of the wife's role in marriage, but even there, he does not address a practice that was universally tolerated in the first century: the sexual exploitation of slaves as bodies.

Chapters 5–7 of 1 Corinthians constitute Paul's most extended discussion of sexuality and Christian living. Paul cautions against *porneia*, sexual immorality, in 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 and 6:12–20.¹²⁹ In chapter 7 Paul responds to questions the Corinthians had written him about marriage and life in the Christian body. Many commentators suggest that chapter 7 begins a new section in the overall structure of the letter.¹³⁰ Other commentators note that, as Paul begins his response in chapter 7 to the Corinthians' questions, he takes his cue from the previous discussions of *porneia*. A preoccupation with sexual immorality inaugurates and governs Paul's discussion of marriage. Antoinette Clark Wire argues that Paul rehearses the arguments of chapters 5–6 so that his readers will understand the urgency of his concern in chapter 7. For Paul, Wire contends, marriage is the antidote to *porneia*.¹³¹ What relevance did any of this discussion have for enslaved members of the congregation, who could neither resist their masters' sexual demands nor contract legitimate marriages?

Paul begins his discussion of the Corinthians' sexual practices by condemning the community for tolerating a man who had a sexual relationship with a woman who had been (and perhaps still was) his father's wife. Paul labels the relationship an instance of *porneia*. He furthermore claims that this kind of *porneia* is not even found among Gentiles. He expresses surprise that the church has been less scrupulous than the surrounding pagan world in delineating the boundaries of appropriate sexual conduct: "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife."¹³² Paul advises, "When you are assembled . . . you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord."¹³³ Drawing on the metaphor of yeast permeating an entire batch of dough, he encourages them to remove the incestuous man from their midst. In the future, he says, they should not tolerate the presence of immoral persons in their community: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons—not at all meaning the immoral of this world, or the greedy and robbers, or idolaters, since you would then need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother who is sexually immoral or greedy. . . . For what have I to do with judging those outside?"¹³⁴

p. 64 The phrasing of Paul's complaint implies that individuals and groups could vary in their perceptions of what constituted *porneia*. Even in the first century this was a category open to interpretation. Paul's purpose is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of *porneia*. Not surprisingly, then, he does not address a question immediately relevant to the present discussion: whether sexual relationships between slaves and their masters constitute *porneia*.¹³⁵ As I have argued, a positive answer to this question would not have been self-evident to a Christian congregation whose members had grown up in a social context that accepted the normalcy of such behavior.

The target of Paul's accusation is the Corinthian church rather than the individual man involved in the transgression.¹³⁶ In fact, Paul demonstrates less consternation about the incestuous man than about the community that accepted and perhaps applauded his actions.¹³⁷ Hans Conzelmann suggests, "Paul does not explicitly state the ground of his judgment, because the ground is self-evident: the community is the temple of God (6:19)."¹³⁸ The presence of the incestuous man in the community threatens the soundness of the whole, a threat Paul represents with the metaphor of leavening (5:6–8). Paul alludes to his instructions from an earlier letter to avoid *pornoi*, sexually immoral men, and, presumably, women and clarifies these earlier instructions. The Christian community cannot cut itself off from the world, but it should avoid the intrusion of the world into the community. The church is not a refuge for anyone who practices immorality, and he catalogs those whom he considers immoral, from the sexually immoral to greedy persons to thieves. (See also 6:9–11, in which Paul asserts that the Corinthian community includes some who had formerly numbered among such unsavory characters. Here, as well, Paul lists *pornoi* before other categories of wrongdoers.) Since *porneia* represents such a threat to the well-being of the community it would seem the entire community would have an interest in eliminating it. However, the boundaries of behavior Paul defines as *porneia* remain unclear. Would slaves who submitted sexually to their owners number among the *pornoi*? At stake, although not explicitly addressed, is the status of slaves in the community.

Although Paul is primarily concerned with the health of the community, he is also concerned with the destiny of the transgressing man (5:4–5). However, he expresses no interest in the moral status or destiny of the woman involved.¹³⁹ Commentators generally agree that Paul's lack of interest in the issue indicates that the woman was not a member of the Christian community.¹⁴⁰ Lending credence to this position is Paul's insistence in the same passage that Christians have no business judging those outside the community

(5:12–13). Extending this logic, one might ask whether Paul's silence on the sexual position of slaves indicates that he believes that slaves who are sexually involved with their owners are therefore alienated from the Christian body. Wire proposes that Paul is silent about the stepmother's complicity because she is not in a position to be responsible for her actions, either because of extreme youth or enslavement.¹⁴¹ Wire's proposal recognizes the lack of clarity that surrounds the early Christian community's treatment of slaves' sexual activity, and she may be right. Paul may have believed that the forced sexual activity of slaves was beyond moral judgment. His surviving words do not help us decide the question.

p. 65 The passage 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 offers a variety of challenges for understanding the impact of Pauline Christianity on slaves. Recognition that Greco-Roman slaveholders regarded their slaves as bodies in turn complicates our reading of the chapter. The first-century category of *porneia* does not map neatly onto modern categories of sexual impropriety. The question of whether Paul thought that sexual relations between slaves and ↵ their owners fell in the category of *porneia* (for both slaveholder and slave or for either slaveholder or slave) is especially important. Paul insists that *porneia* represents a threat to the entire community and not only to the individuals immediately involved. A focus on the sexual dimensions of slavery opens the question of why Paul remains silent concerning the woman's complicity in the case of incest he reports in 1 Corinthians 5.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

From the earlier discussion of *porneia*, broadly defined as sexual irregularity, Paul moves to a discussion of *porneia*, more narrowly defined as prostitution. In the centuries before the Roman occupation of Corinth, the city's temples legendarily enslaved a thousand prostitutes.¹⁴² The practice of sacred prostitution disappeared long before Paul arrived in the city, but in the first century Corinth was still associated with secular prostitution. Many Corinthian coins bore the image of Aphrodite, a kind of early advertising for a popular service industry in the city.¹⁴³ As a port city Corinth attracted travelers, a group well known in antiquity for their patronage of prostitutes. Perhaps it was inevitable that a member of the Corinthian church would find his way to a brothel. In 1 Corinthians 6:12–20, Paul relies on the language of economics and the slave trade to condemn the buying and selling of bodies in prostitution. Given the high proportion of prostitutes who were slaves, the passage raises questions about the implications of Pauline Christianity for slaves.

Paul quotes what seems to be a slogan among some Corinthian Christians: “All things are lawful for me.” He supplies a retort: “but not all things are beneficial.”¹⁴⁴ Paul writes:

The body is meant not for *porneia* [sexual immorality/prostitution] but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. . . . Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two shall be one flesh.” But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun *porneia*! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but *porneia* sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit among you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.¹⁴⁵ [All second-person pronouns in the passage are plural.]

p. 66 The focus of 6:12–20 is on a Christian male who visits a prostitute. Jouette Bassler writes, “The prostitute is merely a vehicle for sexual freedom; Paul shows no theological interest in her.”¹⁴⁶ Paul reminds the Corinthians that the body is made for the Lord and will ultimately share in the Lord's resurrection. His lack of interest in the prostitute suggests that, unlike the body of the believer, her body “is not destined for resurrection.”¹⁴⁷ Although commentators tend to assume that Paul's lack of interest in the stepmother in 5:1–13 indicates that she was not a member of the community, the thought that a prostitute might be a member of the Christian body seems almost absurd. Dale Martin writes that, for Paul, a prostitute “is not a person in her own right (as if such a thing were imaginable for Paul) but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ.”¹⁴⁸ The possibility that the Corinthian church might embrace women or men still working as prostitutes is not considered in the secondary ↵ literature. Wire writes: “The fact that Paul does not censure the prostitutes themselves suggests that they are not to his knowledge participants in the community. Yet most cross-class urban groups would include some prostitutes. Paul does say that many Christians practiced immorality before their freedom was purchased by Christ (6:9–11), and

among those could be prostitutes living single or married lives in the community.”¹⁴⁹ Perhaps freeborn or freed prostitutes attracted to the Christian message were able to seek other means of supporting themselves, although this is doubtful.¹⁵⁰ However, enslaved prostitutes would certainly lack such control over their occupation. The scholarly consensus that Paul understood membership in the Christian body to be incompatible with prostitution thus has unrecognized implications for understanding the difficulties that slaves would face in joining the church.

The language that Paul uses to challenge the common assumption that a sexual encounter with a prostitute has no lasting effects on the customer has broad implications for reconstructing his understanding of the nature of sexual activity.¹⁵¹ Paul claims that whoever has sex with a prostitute becomes one body with her and supports his position by quoting Genesis 2:24: “The two shall be one flesh” (1 Cor. 6:16). Such a union, Paul says, is incompatible with spiritual union with the Lord (verse 17). Fee clarifies, “It is not the sexual union that is incompatible with Christ, it is such a union *with a prostitute*.”¹⁵² The believer belongs to Christ as a member, so his sexual activities affect the Lord to whom he belongs (verse 15). Martin graphically writes, “The man who has sex with a prostitute is, in Paul’s construction, Christ’s ‘member’ entering the body of the prostitute. Since her body is only part of a larger whole, the cosmos, the simple act of copulation between a man and a woman becomes for Paul copulation between Christ and the cosmos.”¹⁵³ It is hard to see how, on Paul’s view, *any* sexual relations involving a believer could be morally neutral. All sexual relations would affect the Lord and indeed the entire Christian body (6:19–20).¹⁵⁴ Again, the moral status of slaves (including, but by no means exclusively, prostitutes) whose owners insisted on using them sexually remains an urgent question.

Paul relies on the metaphor of buying and selling bodies, of slave trading, to exhort the Christian community to avoid prostitutes. Ironically, Paul configures the male Christian body and the body of the church as objects of sale. The participle that Paul uses to express the Christian’s relationship with a prostitute or with the Lord, *kollōmenos* (6:16–17), implies economic obligation or subordination.¹⁵⁵ In Paul’s view a man who patronizes a prostitute abridges his own freedom by obligating himself to her. Paul urges members of the community to obligate themselves instead as slaves to the Lord.

The image of the slave market becomes more explicit. Paul informs the Corinthian community, “You [pl.] are not your own. . . . You were bought with a price” (6:19b–20a).¹⁵⁶ The price paid is Christ’s death, yet the metaphor also positions Christ as a customer at a slave auction, purchasing the Christian body.¹⁵⁷ This use of language seems ironic in light of the economic realities implicit in the exchanges of prostitution, in which sexual access to a woman’s (or man’s) body is bought and sold. The bodies of enslaved prostitutes were of course subject to an additional kind of sale, that of slave trading. Paul expresses concern for the vulnerabilities of the Christian body (the body of the individual male and the body of the community) without expressing concern for the vulnerabilities of the (frequently enslaved, usually female) prostitute’s body.

p. 67 S. Scott Bartchy seems accurate in his assessment that “Paul did not want any Christian who was in slavery to think . . . that his slave-status was any disadvantage in his relation to God.”¹⁵⁸ Although scholars debate the extent to which “the liminal transcendence of societal oppositions that was declared in baptism” affected patterns of social interaction and hierarchy among early Christians,¹⁵⁹ the assumption that the message of the gospel extended without prejudice to slave as well as free has largely gone unchallenged. However, Paul’s insistence on the fundamental incompatibility between the body of prostitution and the body of Christ seems to leave even those prostitutes who were enslaved beyond the boundaries of Christian community. Paul draws on the metaphor of slave trading to warn the Christian community that it imperils itself when members frequent prostitutes rather than to express concern for the involuntary sexual use of the bodies of slaves, even in prostitution.

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul addresses, at some length, questions pertaining to Christians and marriage. Although Paul writes explicitly of the situation of slaves in 1 Corinthians 7:21–24, the relevance of chapter 7 as a whole to the lives of slaves is problematic, since slaves were unable to contract legal marriages. J. Albert Harrill observes that, on the standard view, “Paul’s entire response to the Corinthian congregation on marriage, therefore, has little relevance to slaves.”¹⁶⁰ At the same time, by limiting the legitimate range of sexual expression to marriage, Paul implicitly suggests that slaves who oblige their masters sexually are engaged in *porneia*. This section considers how Paul’s advice on marriage shapes our understanding of the challenges faced by enslaved Christians. It also reconsiders Paul’s ambiguous directive to slaves in 7:21 in the context of the sexual dimensions of first-century slavery.

Paul introduces his discussion of marriage by allowing that matrimony protects men and women against *porneia* (7:2). He reinforces this declaration by conceding that, although a single life is desirable, marriage is nonetheless preferable to sexual incontinence (7:9). Continence, then, encompasses both celibacy in the single life and fidelity in the married life; the alternative, it seems, is *porneia*. Although later Christian tradition has often assumed that this demarcation of sexual practice was normative, we have seen that the majority of those living in Greco-Roman cities viewed a wider range of sexual practices as acceptable and ordinary. As we have seen, the master’s right to have sexual relations with one of his slaves was not accompanied by moral judgment against the master or the slave. Christian slaveholders who heard Paul’s words could choose to redirect their sexual attention to their wives. The same is not true for enslaved Christians. According to Wire’s reconstruction, the church at Corinth included a number of powerful women ascetics. She writes, “The life-support arrangements of these women—where they live and what they do—are suggested only indirectly in the various domestic situations Paul describes. Slave women . . . probably retain traditional domestic responsibilities.”¹⁶¹ Wire does not consider the complicating factor that the “traditional domestic responsibilities” of many enslaved women included sexual obligations.

p. 68 Indeed, Paul seems to assume that those whom he addresses in 7:1–16 could freely choose to marry or not to marry.¹⁶² He offers specific advice to various categories of married and unmarried persons.¹⁶³ After addressing those who are married to believing partners and those who are not married, he addresses “the rest” (verse 12). The advice he then delivers pertains particularly to Christians whose spouses are not believers, and commentators accordingly delimit the range of “the rest” to those whose spouses do not belong to the Christian community.¹⁶⁴ Most commentaries do not consider who else *could* be included in “the rest.” They assume that Paul’s list exhaustively covers persons in all possible situations. According to this view, Paul has nothing to say about the options open to enslaved Christians, who could not contract marriages and could be used sexually by their owners. Commentators interpret Paul’s silence about the moral status of the stepmother in a case of incest (5:1–13) and the prostitute (6:1–12) as evidence that these women are not participants in the Christian body. Paul’s silence about the plight of sexually exploited slaves could be construed as evidence that he perceives their (compelled) behavior to place them outside membership in the Christian body.

Harrill has offered the intriguing suggestion that “the rest” in verse 12 includes not only those married to unbelievers but also “those not empowered to marry at all unless enfranchised (7:21–23),” that is, slaves.¹⁶⁵ He makes this proposal as he discusses 7:21, which he translates: “You were called as a *slave*. Do not worry about it. But if you can indeed become *free*, use instead [freedom].”¹⁶⁶ Because of the difficulties of this text, an overview of Harrill’s position is essential.

He begins his discussion of 7:21 with a summary of the long-standing debate over the translation of the verse.¹⁶⁷ As he says, scholars base their translations not only on the syntax of the passage and its immediate context in the letter but also on their understandings of ancient slavery. These understandings often minimize the brutality of Greco-Roman slavery. Fee, for example, who offers a careful discussion of the syntax of the passage, asserts that slavery “provided generally well for up to one-third of the population in a city like Corinth or Rome. The slave had considerable freedom and very often experienced mutual benefit along with the owner.”¹⁶⁸ Along with an analysis of the syntax of verse 21,¹⁶⁹ Harrill provides a discussion of seventeen philological parallels that support his contention that Paul urges slaves to “use instead [freedom].”¹⁷⁰

He concedes that his translation requires Paul first to establish (in verses 17 and 20) and then violate a principle: each should remain content with the state in which he or she was called. Throughout chapter 7,

however, Paul offers exceptions to the rule he has laid down. Although he says that spouses should be content to remain married, for example, he establishes guidelines for spouses seeking separation (verse 11). He encourages those who are single to be content with that status but states that they do not sin if they choose to marry (verse 28).¹⁷¹ This rhetorical pattern helps clarify Paul's logic in 7:21. He encourages slaves not to be disturbed by their bondage but then offers an exception to this principle: "If you can indeed become free, use instead [freedom]."

p. 69 I find Harrill's argument that in 7:21 Paul urges slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom to be convincing. Moreover, I find it plausible that Paul gives such advice in the midst of his discussion of marriage because he is aware that slaves, who are unable to contract marriages, are the sexual property of their owners. Harrill observes that "seizing such opportunities for liberation would have enabled a slave to escape a master's violent coercion and, as a freedman/woman, to secure more control over his or her own body and daily activities to pursue asceticism."¹⁷² (Harrill does not explicitly address the question of sexual vulnerability, although such awareness may be implicit in his formulation.) Some forms of manumission still gave a master control over the freedperson, but freedpersons were in general less vulnerable than slaves to the demands (including sexual demands) of their masters. (Note that this reading of 1 Corinthians 7:21 does not include any claim about how Paul would respond to slaves or freedpersons who were still being used sexually by their owners or former owners—whether he would believe that such activity excluded the slave or freedperson from the Christian body or whether he would perceive coerced sexual activity as morally neutral.)

However, I do not support Harrill's argument that Paul intends to include slaves among "the rest" of verse 12: "To the rest I say—I and not the Lord—that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her." With the majority of commentators, I categorize verses 17–24 as Paul's articulation of his governing principle with two examples: circumcision/uncircumcision and slavery.¹⁷³ His governing principle, again, is that each should be content with the state in which he was called. To include slaves among "the rest" awkwardly leaves an articulation of a general principle with a single illustration (circumcision/uncircumcision) followed by advice to slaves, which only obliquely pertains to the overall topic of the chapter, marriage. I follow the generally held view that when Paul refers to "the rest" in verse 12, he is referring narrowly to the case of Christians whose spouses are not Christians. In articulating the governing principle of the chapter he provides two examples. As he sets forth the second example, however, he is aware of the problematic ramifications of slavery with respect to sexual expectations and marital status, so he also offers one of the many exceptions that he scatters throughout the chapter.

We have seen that Paul rejects the idea that sexual couplings can be a matter of moral indifference (1 Cor. 6:16), and he furthermore implies that all sexual unions involving Christians have implications for the entire community (1 Cor. 6:15–20). The passage 1 Corinthians 5–7 is marked by a concern for the integrity of the Christian body, which encompasses a desire to confine sexual activity to marriage, a standard to which many slaves would not have been able to adhere. Despite Paul's belief that servile status should not affect one's life in Christ, many slaves may well have found that sexual demands made by their masters complicated their membership in the Christian body. We simply do not know how Paul responded to the situation of slaves who were used sexually by their owners. Perhaps, however, concern over this vulnerability prompted him to advise slaves to take advantage of opportunities for freedom as they arose.

Body Politics

Bartchy writes that, according to Paul's understanding, God's call in Christ "had made irrelevant every particular social and religious status."¹⁷⁴ The assumption that servile status was in no way a disadvantage with respect to one's membership in the church has been pervasive in discussions of New Testament texts pertaining to slavery. James D. G. Dunn argues, "If 'Christ is everything and in everything,' then nothing can diminish or disparage the standing of any one human in relation to another or to God."¹⁷⁵ J. N. Aletti claims that Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 indicate that there was no disparity in the "capacité éthique des croyants."¹⁷⁶ F. F. Bruce asks, "What real difference could there be for a Christian between bond and free?"¹⁷⁷ In making such statements, New Testament scholars ignore the ancient equation between slaves and bodies. Even if we assume—and it is a major assumption—that Christian masters did not force their slaves to provide them with sexual services, pagan masters would not have shared such scruples about the bodies they owned.

Although New Testament texts are silent on the sexual availability of slaves, a vast array of Greco-Roman sources assume that masters had unlimited sexual access to their slaves. In 1 Thessalonians Paul urges male Christians to avoid *porneia* by obtaining their own vessels. Accustomed to relying on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets, the newly converted Thessalonian Christians could easily have construed these words as advice to maintain the honor of respectable freeborn Christians by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations. Indeed, it is strange that Paul does not explicitly condemn the sexual use of slaves if he believes this practice to be inconsistent with the Christian ethos. New Testament scholars have uncritically assumed that later Christian rejections of the sexual use of slaves are already implicit in the earliest Christian document we possess.

A slaveholder had the right to profit from a slave's body by forcing her or him into prostitution. Paul's unequivocal separation of the body of prostitution from the body of Christ would seem to exclude all prostitutes, even enslaved prostitutes, from membership in the church. More subtle would have been the problems faced by slaves whose masters used them sexually. In 1 Corinthians Paul distinguishes sexual relationships within marriage from all other sexual relationships, and he encourages the Corinthian Christians to confine their sexual practices to marriage. Perhaps this is one reason he encourages slaves to seek a change in their status when possible, taking advantage of opportunities for freedom. We do not know precisely how Paul responded to the situation of slaves whose masters insisted on sexual relations with them. However, attention to this dimension of ancient slavery makes it impossible to maintain both that servile status was no impediment to full involvement in the Christian body *and* that within the Christian body the only sexual relations tolerated were those between husband and wife.

Paul believes that baptism breaks down the barriers between slave and free (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 12:13). (It may be useful to differentiate between the claim that for those in Christ there are no distinctions between slave and free and the claim that slavery presents no obstacles to those who want to join the Christian body. In fact, Paul never clearly makes the latter claim, which has been repeatedly made for him by modern scholars.) Bruce notes that it would have been easier for Paul than for an enslaved person to maintain the position that slave status was irrelevant for those in the church.¹⁷⁸ John M. G. Barclay has argued that masters and slaves in the same church would have found it difficult in practice to transcend those roles. For example, a slave might have found it very hard to follow Paul's advice to admonish a member of the community who had transgressed, if that transgressor were his or her owner.¹⁷⁹ We have seen that Acts of the Apostles accords householders (who would have been slaveholders) a disproportionate role in fostering the growth of the church, a picture that raises even more questions about the dynamics between slave and free members of the Christian body. Although Paul himself minimizes the significance of servile status, we do not have the coeval words of slaves, describing their own attempts to live a new life in Christ. In a society that represented and treated slaves as bodies, ecclesial incorporation of slaves would have exposed the body of Christ to the somatic vulnerabilities of enslaved members.

Notes

1. Apul., *Met.* 1.21–22.
2. Harrill argues that Rhoda exemplifies the *servus currens*, or running slave, a stock character in New Comedy (“Dramatic Function of the Running Slave Rhoda”).
3. John 18:16.
4. *Acts of Paul* 18–19.
5. Sen., *Con.* 14.12.
6. Apul., *Met.* 1.21.
7. For an overview of comparative anthropological perspectives on slavery, see Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery*, pp. 1–18.
8. Bohannon, *Social Anthropology*, p. 181.
9. When Paul exorcises the Pythian spirit from the slave, her owners lose a ready source of income. Luke's treatment of the slave's oracular powers is ultimately more respectful than that of some other ancient authors, since he implies that the slave really had been possessed by a spirit of divination, albeit a spirit less powerful than the name of Jesus. In contrast, for example, Apuleius expresses cynicism toward the activities of oracles. When Lucius expresses confidence in the predictions of a Chaldean astrologer, who he encountered in Corinth, his host, Milo, debunks the tale by revealing how the same man had been revealed a fraud in Hypata. A mark of Apuleius's genius is that he leaves his ultimate attitude toward the oracle an open question; the astrologer's prediction that Apuleius will write a book about his journey ultimately proves true, as does his prediction that the book will not be taken as a serious work. Regarding the ambivalence of *The Golden Ass* toward all things supernatural, from fortune-telling and magic to the worship of Isis, see Winkler, *Auctor and Actor*.
10. Apul., *Met.* 2.12–14.

11. Acts of the Apostles 16:16–18.
12. Philo, *Leg. Spec.* 3.169. Quoted in Neyrey, “What’s Wrong with This Picture?”
13. *Acts of Thomas* 89.
14. Corley also notes that the relegation of women to the private sphere is a phenomenon of the elite. Whether lower-status women considered their “freer” access to public spaces an advantage, as Corley implies, or whether they construed it as a lack of protection is a question that our sources do not permit us to answer (*Private Women, Public Meals*, pp. 15–16). Saller views the question from both perspectives: “The slave woman’s lack of honor removed moral inhibitions to give her space for independent action, at the same time it denied her certain protections” (“Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household,” p. 89). For more sustained treatment of women in private and public spheres see Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests*.
15. *CIL* 6.9801, 9683; *IG* 11244.
16. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals*, p. 128.
17. Luke 7:31–32a.
18. Joshel discusses the relation of work to identity among slaves, freedmen and freedwomen, and the freeborn poor (*Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome*).
19. E.g., *P.Oxy.* 7.1030, 41.2957; 49.3510.
20. Dyson, *Community and Society in Roman Italy*, pp. 115–116.
21. *P.Oxy.* 58.3921.
22. A bibliography accompanies a translation of an apprenticeship contract (*P.Mich.* inv. 5191a) in Pearl, “Apprentice Contract.”
23. Biezunska-Malowist, *L’Esclavage dans l’Égypte Gréco-Romaine Seconde Partie*, pp. 99–101.
24. Matt. 24:45–51; Luke 12:41–48.
25. S. Casson, *Ancient Trade and Society*, pp. 104–110.
26. *P.Wisc.* 5 (186 C.E.).
27. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, p. 58.
28. Luke 17:7–8b.
29. Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogues* 4.26.
30. Joseph., *BJ* 1.488–489.
31. One basis for this assertion is the census returns preserved in Egypt: “Slaves in the returns are evidently for the most part domestic servants (only one slave has a declared occupation . . .)” (Bagnall and Frier, *Demography of Roman Egypt*, p. 49).
32. Hopkins, “Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery,” p. 7.
33. Apul., *Met.* 10.13.
34. Petr., *Sat.* 27.
35. Matt. 26:51, 69, 71; Mark 14:47, 66, 69; Luke 22:50, 56; John 18:10, 16–18.
36. E.g., 1 Cor. 1:11, 16:15; Philem.; Acts of the Apostles 10, 16:13–14, 16:27–34, 18:8.
37. *P.Oxy.* 58.3916.
38. George, “Repopulating the Roman House.”
39. George, “Repopulating the Roman House,” p. 317.
40. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, pp. 2–7.
41. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, p. 7.
42. For example: “Incorporation into the Christian community as a consequence of social relationships rather than personal conviction is known to have been widespread in the early church. Household baptisms after the conversion of the *oikodespotēs* are reported in Acts . . . and alluded to by Paul” (Taylor, “Social Nature of Conversion in the Early Christian World,” p. 132).
43. Dunn, *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 220, 223, and 243.
44. The possibility is mentioned by Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 108, and Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 491.
45. Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 125–126. For discussion of the slaveholder Mary and the enslaved Rhoda, see Martin, “Acts of the Apostles,” pp. 783–784.
46. *P.Mich.* inv. 5191a (271 C.E.), translated in Pearl, “Apprentice Contract.”
47. I have argued elsewhere for the necessity of a hermeneutics of suspicion in interpreting ancient representations of relations between slaveholding and enslaved women. See Glancy, “The Mistress-Slave Dialectic” and “Family Plots.”
48. Saller notes that the “institution of slavery may have increased the independence of elite women” (“*Pater Familias, Mater Familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,” p. 197). A female head of household would be known in Latin as a *domina* rather than as a *mater familias*, which connoted a chaste and respectable wife (Saller, “*Pater Familias, Mater Familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,” esp. p. 196).
49. Frilingos, “‘For My Child, Onesimus.’”
50. Drawing on postcolonial theory, Jill Gorman has begun an investigation of such “household coercions” (private correspondence).
51. 1 Cor. 1:11.
52. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon, and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership.”
53. 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3:11.
54. Bartchy notes that “neither the sexual risks for slaves nor the related temptations for their owners are mentioned specifically in NT documents” (“Slavery, Greco-Roman,” p. 69).
55. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 73.

56. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, pp. 95–96.
57. For attempts at reconstruction of *The Apostolic Tradition*, see Chadwick, *Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*; Botte, *La Tradition Apostolique de Saint Hippolyte*; and Hanssens, *La Liturgie D'Hippolyte*. Controversy surrounds the attribution of this text to Hippolytus in Rome in the early third century, especially since the document seems to have been more influential in the East than in the West. However, since I am only concerned to show that early Christians were more attuned to the complications of slavery than are modern scholars, the document's exact provenance is irrelevant to the present discussion.
58. Rousselle, *Porneia*, p. 104.
59. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, pp. 94–96.
60. Saller, "Corporal Punishment, Authority, and Obedience in the Roman Household."
61. Plaut., *Persa* 1.1.42–43.
62. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, pp. 95–96.
63. Sen., *Controv.* 4 praef. 10.
64. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, p. 301.
65. Saller, "Men's Age at Marriage and Its Consequences in the Roman Family."
66. Saller, "Slavery and the Roman Family," pp. 68–72.
67. Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," p. 104.
68. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah*, vol. 2, p. 152.
69. Galen cited in Hopkins, "Novel Evidence for Roman Slavery," p. 9; August., *Confessions* 9.9.20. See my discussion of Augustine's grandmother and her slaves (Glancy, "The Mistress-Slave Dialectic," pp. 1–2).
70. Clark, "Women, Slaves, and the Hierarchies of Domestic Violence."
71. Hock describes *Chaereas and Callirhoe* as "the most contemporary document we have for Paul's world in the Greek East of the first century" ("Support for His Old Age," p. 68).
72. Fantham, "*Stuprum*," p. 276.
73. Egger, "Women in the Greek Novel," p. 167.
74. See discussion in Saller, "Social Dynamics of Consent to Marriage and Sexual Relations."
75. Plaut., *Curc.* 32–37. Translation by Fantham in "*Stuprum*," p. 274.
76. Tucker, "Women in the Manumission Inscriptions at Delphi," p. 231.
77. Tucker, "Women in the Manumission Inscriptions at Delphi," p. 230.
78. Degradation and alienation typified the ancient Mediterranean slave trade. See Bradley, "The Regular, Daily Traffic in Slaves."
79. *P.Oxy.* 42.3070, discussed in Montserrat, *Sex and Society in Greco-Roman Egypt*, pp. 136–138.
80. Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, p. 28 and chap. 6.
81. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, p. 118.
82. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion*, p. 55.
83. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 310.
84. Rousselle, *Porneia*, p. 94.
85. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 210.
86. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, chap. 8.
87. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 7.134.
88. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 310.
89. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, pp. 140, 192.
90. Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 27; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogues* 3.3.21.
91. Based on records from Egypt in the third century B.C.E. See Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt from Alexander to Cleopatra*, p. 130.
92. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt from Alexander to Cleopatra*, p. 130.
93. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 254, n. 284.
94. Furthermore, "while the question of the extent to which Roman prostitutes found themselves in a condition of slavery or subservience cannot be addressed here, it is certainly true that many prostitutes, whether slave or free, would not have been able to decide how much to charge, how hard to work, or whether to remain a prostitute" (McGinn, "Taxation of Roman Prostitutes," p. 91).
95. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 16, n. 80.
96. Montserrat, *Sex and Society in Greco-Roman Egypt*, p. 107.
97. Fleming, "*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*," p. 50.
98. Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* 4.4.
99. Fleming, "*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*," p. 42.
100. Montserrat, *Sex and Society in Greco-Roman Egypt*, pp. 107–109.
101. McGinn, "Taxation of Roman Prostitutes." For qualifications to McGinn's argument, see Bagnall, "A Trick a Day to Keep the Tax Man at Bay?"
102. Fleming, "*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*," p. 56.
103. Fleming, "*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*," p. 43, n. 19.
104. Xenophon of Ephesus, *An Ephesian Tale* 5.7.
105. Rei, "Villains, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," p. 95.
106. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, p. 224.
107. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome*, p. 17.

108. *Anth. Graec.* 7.403.
109. Dio Chrys., *Or.* 7.140.
110. For a survey of traditional Roman festivals, see Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic*.
111. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, pp. 208–209.
112. Musonius Rufus, frag. 12. See discussion in Geytenbeck, *Musonius Rufus and Greek Diatribe*, pp. 71–77.
113. Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity*, pp. 90–91, 233–249.
114. Jerome, *Ep.* 77.3.
115. For a review of scholarship, coupled with an argument for reading “vessel” as “sexual organ,” see Elgvin, “‘To Master His Own Vessel.’”
116. Best, *Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 165.
117. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, p. 71.
118. Williams, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, p. 71.
119. Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles*, p. 77.
120. Carras, “Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts.”
121. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, p. 53.
122. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, p. 53.
123. Schrage, *Ethics of the New Testament*, p. 227.
124. Best, *Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 161.
125. Best, *Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 164.
126. Morris, *First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, p. 121; Richard, *First and Second Thessalonians*, p. 198.
127. Fatum, “1 Thessalonians,” p. 259; Perkins, “1 Thessalonians,” p. 441; Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, p. 52.
128. Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians*, p. 52.
129. Weiss, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*; Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*.
130. Allo, *Première Epître aux Corinthiens*; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*. Deming argues on other grounds for the structural unity of 1 Cor. 5–6, which would also suggest a break between chaps. 5 and 6 (“Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6”).
131. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, pp. 73–79.
132. 1 Cor. 5:1.
133. 1 Cor. 5:5.
134. 1 Cor. 5:9–12.
135. In his discussion of 5:1–13, Fee notes the divergence between first-century sexual mores and later Christian teaching, although he does not focus on the sexual vulnerability of slaves. He states that “the Judeo-Christian moral restrictions on human sexuality were not easily absorbed by pagan converts” (*First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 196–197).
136. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 95; Senft, *Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, p. 73.
137. This view is almost universally held in the commentaries and other secondary literature; see, for example, Robertson and Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, p. 95; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 195; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 130; Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, pp. 112–116; Campbell, “Flesh and Spirit in 1 Cor. 5:5”; and Hays, “Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians.” An exception is Barrett, who holds that Paul’s “first concern” is for the transgressor (*Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 127).
138. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 96.
139. Paul does not specify whether the man’s father is alive or dead, whether the father has divorced the wife, or whether the man is living with his stepmother as wife or concubine. Most commentators think it unlikely that the father, if living, is still married to the woman in question because Paul does not refer to an adulterous relationship, but even this is unclear. For a discussion of relevant issues see Allo, *Première Epître aux Corinthiens*, pp. 117–120. Deming has suggested the possibility that the son might have an ongoing relationship with his stepmother as prostitute (“Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6,” p. 295). Paul had no reason to be more specific about these questions because the Corinthian congregation was already familiar with the details of the situation.
140. Robertson and Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. 96; Allo, *Première Epître aux Corinthiens*, p. 118; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 96, n. 24; Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 121; and Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 197. Weiss seems alone in his impression that Paul’s silence on the woman stems from a belief that the responsibility for sexual transgression rests with the man (*Erste Korintherbrief*, p. 125).
141. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 74. Deming refers to Wire’s suggestion as “unlikely” without giving reasons for dismissing it (“Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6,” p. 298, n. 35).
142. Strab., *Geography* 8.6.20.
143. Engels, *Roman Corinth*, p. 52.
144. 1 Cor. 6:12.
145. 1 Cor. 6:13–20.
146. Bassler, “1 Corinthians,” p. 332; also Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 112; and Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, p. 120.
147. Fee, *First Epistle*, p. 260.
148. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 176.
149. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 76.
150. Fleming, “*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*.”
151. For a clear discussion of Paul’s position on the theological ramifications of patronizing a prostitute, see Fisk, “ΠΟΡΝΕΥΕΙΝ as Body Violation,” pp. 540–558.

152. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 259–260.
153. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 176.
154. In verse 19 Paul refers to “your” (plural) body as a temple, and in verse 20 he urges the Corinthians to glorify God in “your” (plural) body. I take the reference to be primarily to the body of the community, the collective body; the entire community should be vigilant about its purity, as in the discussion of 5:1–13. Others who interpret “your body” in 6:19–20 as an allusion to the community include Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (see index for references to 6:19–20), and Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 77. Most commentators, however, interpret “your body” primarily as an allusion to the individual Christian’s body, despite the parallelism to 3:16. See, for example, Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 151; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 249, n. 5, and p. 260; and Senft, *Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, p. 85. Conzelmann also takes this position in his discussion of verse 19, although elsewhere he seems to assume that verses 19–20 refer to the Christian community (*1 Corinthians*, p. 96, cf. p. 112).
155. Porter, “How Should κολλωμενος in 1 Cor. 6:16.17 Be Translated?” See also Harrill, “Indentured Labor of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:15).”
156. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 264. Conzelmann suggests that the idea of redemption as “ransom” is traditional and says, “The metaphor is not developed. The point is merely that you belong to a new master. Beyond this the metaphor should not be pressed. There is, for example, no reflection as to who received the payment” (*1 Corinthians*, p. 113).
157. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, p. 178.
158. Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, p. 175.
159. Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, p. 161. See also Gnllka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, p. 190.
160. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, p. 123.
161. Wire, *Corinthian Women Prophets*, p. 91.
162. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*. The virgins of 7:25–28, 36–38 are a different case; Paul does not seem concerned about their willingness to marry.
163. Although commentators offer various divisions of the chapter, they agree that the advice to various groups provides structure to the discussion. For example, Conzelmann and Senft categorize verses 1–7 as general directions and verses 8–16 as advice to particular groups (Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 114; Senft, *Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, pp. 87–90), while Fee’s taxonomy includes verses 1–7 in advice to the married, verses 8–9 in advice to the “unmarried” (who Fee posits are widowers) and widows, verses 10–11 in advice to believing couples, verses 12–16 in advice to couples with only one believing spouse, verses 25–38 in advice about virgins, and verses 39–40 in advice to married women and widows (Fee, *First Epistle*, pp. 268, 287–288).
164. Robertson and Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. 141; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 121; Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 163; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 298; and Senft, *Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, p. 165.
165. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, p. 123.
166. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, p. 122.
167. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, pp. 77–108.
168. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 319.
169. See also the discussion of syntax in Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 316–317.
170. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, pp. 108–121.
171. See also 7:15, 36, 39, and Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, pp. 123–126; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. 268, 318; and Deming, “Diatribic Pattern in 1 Cor. 7:21–22.”
172. Harrill, *Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, p. 122. Robertson and Plummer write: “He [Paul] regarded marriage as a hindrance to the perfection of the Christian life (verses 32–35). Was not slavery, with its hideous temptations, a far greater hindrance?” (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. 148).
173. Robertson and Plummer, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, p. 144; Barrett, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 167; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, p. 114; Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, p. 306; and Senft, *Première Epître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens*, p. 95.
174. Bartchy, *First-Century Slavery*, p. 173. (Bartchy is referring specifically to 1 Cor. 7:17–24.)
175. Dunn, *Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, p. 227.
176. Aletti, *Saint Paul Epître aux Colossiens*, p. 235.
177. Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, p. 151.
178. Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, p. 168.
179. Barclay, “Paul, Philemon, and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership.”