

# 1 Corinthians: How Freedom Comes to Be

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## The Church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

In the first three verses of chapter 1, the congregation in Corinth is addressed and assessed theologically. The androcentric language conceals that there are more women than men in that Corinthian congregation (cf. in particular 7:1-39).

One may conclude from 1:26-31 that the majority of Christians in the congregation in Corinth are drawn from that city's lower class. Corinth was a significant port and trading center. In addition, commercial and industrial production played a notable role. Earthenware (vessels, roofing tiles), metal products (containers, mirrors, weapons), rugs, and other merchandise were manufactured and exported. In the two ports of Lechaion and Cenchreae (cf. Rom 16:1) there was a significant turnover of goods, especially those from the east en route to the west and to Rome. In spite of this, the majority of the population had no part of the city's prosperity, an indication of how low wages were. Since as a rule women's wages did not allow them to survive independently, single women in the congregation were dependent on additional means of support, such as prostitution or the organization of women's groups in the congregation. Such groups have been shown to exist in other Christian and Jewish congregations. Their care for one another included economic support (cf. 1 Tim 5:16; Acts 6:1; 9:36-43; Mark 15:40-41; reference is made in Acts 20:34 to a corresponding group, presumably of men for whom Paul counts himself responsible).

In Corinth at that time there were a significant number of Jews and several synagogues. The Christian congregation consisted of Jewish Christians and Christians from the Gentile nations.

In 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, the thanksgiving, Paul names the common foundation on which he sees himself and the congregation resting. On this theologically crucial foundation it is both possible and necessary to debate matters of detail. In verses 4-7 Paul speaks of the richness of spiritual gifts present in the congregation, and in verses 7-8 he proclaims the eschatological hope in the day of divine judg-

ment. That hope brings about in the present time a life-praxis oriented by the Torah (v. 8) and an intimate relationship (*koinōnia*) with Jesus (v. 9).

### The Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21)

#### *The Aim of Paul's Exhortation (1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21)*

Paul understood this part of the epistle to be a fatherly exhortation (4:14-16; 1:10). What did he seek to achieve with this exhortation, and how did he perceive his "exhorting"? His own understanding of his relation to the congregation in Corinth is decisive for answering these two questions.

In 3:10 Paul says that "like a skilled master builder I laid the foundation" of the congregation. In contrast, exegetical tradition ascribes a lesser significance to the one who carried on with building it up further. Many hold this person to be Apollos. The following verse makes a highly authoritative statement: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." This verse has been read as the assertion of Paul's absolute authority. Yet, it has always been noted that Paul does not say in 3:11 "the foundation that I laid" but the foundation "that has been laid" already. This relativization of his own founding labors can be explained in terms of the context. Paul understands himself and other preachers of the gospel to be "servants" (*diakonoi*, 3:5; cf. other corresponding images in 3:6, 8; 4:1-2). They have been commissioned by God, equal in rank (3:5-9) and subordinate to the congregation (3:21-23). The congregation is seen to be the temple of God (3:16-17; see 3:9, "God's building"). "Temple" of God is a metaphor rooted in Jewish tradition (Kirchhoff 1994, 183-85) and not a new anti-Judaistic interpretation of the temple in Jerusalem where the Christian congregation as the temple of God replaces the Jerusalem temple. Through God's calling humans have been collectively transformed. Together they are God's residence, the place of God's holiness and presence. The "servants" of God, too, are part of the community. All have the same divine spirit (12:4-11). The actions of the individual members, including the preachers like Paul, are subject to the same criterion: the judgment of God on "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8). This eschatological judgment of God is the decisive authority, the court where all shall have to render account, including Paul himself. All relations between human beings and between them and God are seen here and lived out eschatologically. God calls the human being and grants the Spirit; in this way every member of the community receives divine dignity. But the Spirit may also be lost, namely, through false action. "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person" (3:17).

The foundation has been laid by Paul inasmuch as he understands himself to have been one of the first to proclaim Christ in Corinth; others continue to build. But the actual foundation has been laid by God, and it is not this or that *proclama-*

tion of Christ, such as Paul's, but Christ himself. For Paul the formulation "that which has been laid" derives from the holiness of the congregation that Christ's and God's presence bestows and not from an authoritarian self-assessment on Paul's part.

The aim of Paul's "fatherly" admonition is to create the awareness that to destroy the holy temple is a grave danger. The congregation is to recognize the structures of competition within its own ranks as something dangerous (e.g., 3:18 next to 3:17). What Paul wants is to promote both recognition of and resistance against structures of competition rather than competitors and rivals themselves. Nowhere does Paul deny that Apollos, who is often said to be his rival, has the same authority as one who, like Paul, is commissioned by God. Rather, it is precisely the egalitarian relation between them that he wants to promote as a model (4:6). The competitive struggles in the congregation had made it necessary for Paul to address them in harsh language and feed them milk like infants rather than adult food (3:1-4). Within that qualification, such language continues to mark his relation to the congregation. Paul employs sharp criticism, but in doing so he does not claim special authority for himself. The Holy Spirit endows everyone with the power of critique (2:15) and with the power to refute critique (4:3) in order to submit to what alone is decisive: *God's* judgment.

If God alone is judge, then those who have faith in God are unburdened of the need to assert themselves, to achieve success, and to earn praise: "then each one will receive commendation from God" (4:5).

### *Paul's Perception of the Competitive Struggles in Corinth*

What Paul knew of the competitive struggles was not the result of his own experience. Chloe's people — that is, her followers (1:11) — had informed him, and in this admonishing letter he takes sides based on that information (Wire 1990, 41). The presence of such women's groups within the congregation would substantiate the assumption that Chloe's people are a women's group in the Corinthian congregation and that they had asked Paul's support against having hierarchical structures imposed by some of the congregation. It is probably no coincidence that, in this instance, the woman's name stands in juxtaposition to the names of the men around whom the "parties" had formed.

Astonishingly, the name of Priscilla does not appear in 1:10-17, where people are named who were significant for the Corinthian congregation's history. But those seven verses are to be read together with Acts 18:1-3 and 18:24-19:7. Paul says he founded the congregation (1 Cor 3:6; 4:15), presumably in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-3). As may be concluded from Acts 18:25-26, and the right of all believers to baptize, Priscilla had baptized people in Corinth in the name of Jesus. The baptizers must have played a role in the competition among Corinthian

groups to be more important than the others. In Tertullian's *De baptismo* 17, one still sees the conflict between the right of all Christian women and men to baptize and an ecclesiastical hierarchy that concedes baptizing solely to the bishop and those he authorizes. The so-called parties in the Corinthian congregations had granted individual baptizers *special* authority to baptize, as baptizers, but obviously they had not granted that authority to all who baptized. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, the absence of Priscilla as someone who baptized and had founded a congregation indicates that the understanding of baptism played a role in the Corinthian conflict. Like Tertullian, some Christians in Corinth assigned a particular authority to baptizers in spite of the awareness that baptizing in the name of Jesus actually is the task of *all* believers. On the contrary, Paul, Priscilla, Chloe, Chloe's group, and many others insist on the egalitarian structure of the congregation, where all have one spirit and the baptizers do not enjoy any privileges over other baptized persons.

### *The Pauline Wisdom Theology*

As he often does, Paul makes use of antitheses in this text. Positive is set against negative: the wisdom of God (1:21, 24; 2:7; cf. also 1:30 and 2:5) stands over and against the wisdom of the world (1:20; 3:19) and the wisdom of the word (1:17; 2:1, 4, 13). In paradoxes he plays with the word "foolishness": for those who are to perish (1:18) the crucified Christ is "foolishness," while on the positive side "foolishness" is God's action in Christ (1:25), in proclamation (1:21), and in the election of the believers (1:26-31). Paul's antitheses tempt one to link what he regards as the negative side with the people of the Corinthian congregation against whom he argues. And thus the picture is developed of a Pauline theology of the cross that is set against a Corinthian theology of wisdom that combines rhetorical competence with an unbroken revelation of God's wisdom in the believers. But such a religion-historical classification of the negative side of the Pauline antitheses is based on a misinterpretation. Those antitheses are a stylistic device and not descriptive of how he sees the theology of the "opponents." The significance of the cross was much debated in early Christianity; 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21 is part of that debate. The issue of Paul's intensification of his wisdom theology is differences within Christianity, verse 1:23b notwithstanding. In terms of social history, this text is part of the ever recurring discussion within early Christianity as to whether believers should seek or avoid martyrdom. "[T]he unsophisticated souls know not what is written, and what meaning it bears, where and when and before whom we must confess, or *ought*, save that this, to die for God, is, since He preserves me, not even artlessness, but folly, nay madness." Tertullian, 150 years later, put these words on the lips of Christians who refused martyrdom and provided a theological rationale for doing so (*Scorpiace* 1; cf. Pagels 1979, 70-101 for additional material on

Christians refusing martyrdom). In early Christianity discussion about the cross of Christ was always related to people's own reality of life. Even at this early time, when 1 Corinthians was composed, agents of Rome viewed Christian congregations with suspicion. "The rulers of this world" crucified Jesus (2:8). To venerate the crucified as God's revelation was, as such, tantamount to political resistance and resulted in dangerous persecutions. Even if Tertullian's words are not an exact repetition of what people refusing martyrdom said of themselves, the basic theological idea is apparent: Why should I risk my life in resisting Rome for the sake of God when it is my salvation that God desires? That is why resisting Rome and the danger of martyrdom is "folly to [non-Jewish people]" (1:23). The critique of the cross that Jews present (1:23) has a completely different basis, presumably the refusal to look upon Jesus as the Messiah. That Christ is the wisdom of God (1:24, 30) is not at issue for Paul. His issue is that resistance against Rome is a genuine task of the followers of Christ, the crucified and resurrected wisdom of God. The debate is about the necessity of holding cross and wisdom together.

In the Corinthian congregation, the discussion about what Christ's crucifixion means existentially for believers merges with the conflict around how that congregation is to organize itself. 1 Corinthians 1:17 and 1:18 are not an opening to an excursus on the matter of competition, as is often proposed, but show how those two issues are related in substance. God's election of the degraded, which is apparent in the crucifixion and in the social composition of the congregation, has consequences for how it organizes itself. As far as Paul is concerned, no one ought to claim from the bestowal of God's Spirit and wisdom particular qualities that other baptized people do not have and that result in social privilege. The election of the degraded is also the theological measure by which Paul interprets his own existence as a Christian itinerant preacher (2:1-5; 4:6-13). The so-called *peristasis* catalogue of 4:11-13 depicts the real threat that hangs over the itinerant preacher but does so in the certainty that God does not forsake but is present to those society degrades.

Paul's mythical dualism, wherein God and world are in hostile confrontation, is integrated into his understanding of God's eschatological judgment that exalts the degraded. The way Paul deals with the dualism of world and God is in tension with many texts of Christian gnosticism. Salvation in those texts means to be distanced from the body, from matter, and from the cosmos — the location of powers hostile to God. The realized eschatology that, in Paul's opinion, has in some Corinthian groups become combined with hierarchy in the congregation, and the refusal to offer resistance against Rome, is not to be read as some superficial "wanting it all." "Already you have become rich! Quite apart from us you have become kings!" (4:8). That verse and its context point rather to a Christian-gnostic conception of redemption that distances the divine and the worldly spheres, salvation and perdition, in terms of both practical life and theology (Schottroff 1970, 180-83).

This Christian soteriology should not automatically be labeled heretical.

Christian gnosticism is a variety of early Christian religion that shares much with Paul and the Gospel of John.

### *The Election of the Degraded (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 interprets God's election of the uneducated poor as a "shaming" (1:27) and a "bringing to nothing" (1:28) of the wise, as the end of their boasting. Being shamed and brought to nothing is what takes place in the last judgment of God. For congregations here and now this means that boasting and insistence on dominating others and on privileges are now already over and done with. God's judgment on individual human beings is not anticipated but does have structural consequences for the congregation. In addition, the eschatological exaltation of the degraded signals even now a new structure of relationship: women and men slaves, free women, the poor, and manual laborers are partakers in the divine spirit and power. Women are prophets of the judgment of God that will elevate what the world puts down low.

Antoinette Wire interprets Paul's statement, especially in 1:26-29, as an attempt to persuade the Corinthians to *remain* foolish and weak, not to translate any changes in their lives into practice (Wire 1994, 162; cf. also Wire 1990, 61, and Schüssler Fiorenza 1987 and 1994, 150). Wire sees Paul as a representative of the affluent few, of the men of privilege, who, having embraced the Christian faith, voluntarily renounce their privileges. The basic hermeneutical decision behind Wire's interpretation is her reading of *klēsis* in 7:17-24 as "state, condition" ("In whatever condition you were called . . . there remain . . .") and of Paul's position as seeking to solidify social hierarchies (Wire 1994, 170; on this issue, cf. Schottroff 1994a, 203 n. 78; 1995, 258 n. 78). I read 1:26-29 differently. God takes sides with the degraded. As the foolish, the foolish have become God's daughters and sons through God's calling. Their election by God is for them not a solidification of the social status quo. Their whole life becomes transformed in the common shaping of the new "way of living" in the congregation. This means indeed a gain for women and slaves and a loss of privileges for free men. But in no way is it a social advance in the sense of the very rare social careers in Roman-Hellenistic society. Rather, the overall special perspective is that of God's reign, of the new earth and the new heaven. In 7:17-24 as well, *klēsis* means God's calling and does not suggest that Paul seeks to solidify the status quo. Instead, it means shaping life in accordance with the Torah (7:19) and in peace (7:15).

### *Holiness and Sexuality (1 Corinthians 5-7)*

In chapters 5 to 7, Paul addresses questions of *porneia* and marriage or marriage liberated from patriarchal structures of domination. *Porneia* refers to unlawful sexual

relationships. The legitimacy or illegitimacy of such relationships is determined by the Torah and its halakhic interpretation. In these chapters Paul moves within the framework of Jewish halakha (Tomson 1990). Before interpreting this text, I need to address two hermeneutical considerations. (1) Paul does not orient himself by just any code of morality or customs but by the Torah as the will of God. Unlawful sexual relationships can endanger the holiness of the people of God and, hence, also that of the congregation. Paul conceives of holiness in the cultic sense: the relationship with God presupposes purity and creates holiness. This thinking must not be confused with moral judgment of just any sort (cf. Brooten 1996, 291). (2) It is obvious in this text that it is the relationship with Christ that renders the bodies (*sōmata*) holy, making them and their sexual ability important and of value. *Enkrateia* — most often translated as “abstinence” or “continence” — is understood in patriarchal hermeneutics as renunciation of genital sexuality. A feminist hermeneutic, on the other hand, understands *enkrateia* first of all as liberation from the structures of domination of patriarchal marriage, as being “marriage-free” (Sutter Rehmann 1994).<sup>1</sup> It is another matter how those living freely, exempt from such structural obligations, deal with their sexuality. *Enkrateia* encompasses the liberation of one’s entire life, not only the renunciation of sexuality. It means to leave the world (*kosmos*) behind, that is, to turn away from social structures that do not correspond to God’s will (5:10; 6:10-11; 7:29-35; Acts of Thecla 23; see also below). *Enkrateia*, freedom from the structures of patriarchal marriage, can be lived even in an existing marriage as a departure from worldly structures.

### *The Woman Who Lives Together with Her Stepson (1 Corinthians 5:1-13)*

A man, a member of the Christian congregation, lives together permanently with the wife of his father; she is not his birth mother. For Paul this is a particularly difficult case of *porneia* (cf. Lev 18:8; 20:11; Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 7:4; and the extensive

1. Luzia Sutter Rehmann coined the German noun *Ehefreiheit* and its adjective *ehefrei*. No unambiguous single term is at hand in English. What the words intend to communicate is the following. “Marriage-freedom” does not imply the abolition of marriage. But it does take up the intense critique to which marriage was subjected in early Christianity. The “freedom” sought and lived was part of the understanding of being a follower of Jesus. To be “in Christ” meant that, having been given the Spirit of God, the human body was holy, was the temple of God. This was true for women and men, irrespective of their “marital status.” Jesus has liberated human beings, so the argument went, from the structures of death that seek to subject humans to their yoke and in so doing separate people from God as well as from their God-given, creaturely identity. “Marriage freedom” is, therefore, freedom from the ideological and other social structures that patriarchy imposes on (heterosexual) marriage. It is freedom *from* the structures of the powers of death and freedom *for* the holiness of the body and the life promised in relation to that by being a follower of Jesus. In the following, quotation marks before and after “marriage-freedom” and “marriage-free” indicate that the meaning as just described is intended. [Translators’ note.]

collection of material in Billerbeck; on Billerbeck's anti-Judaistic tendencies, see Tomson 1990). For Paul, this man is subject to Jewish law. According to Roman law, marriage with one's stepmother is not permitted (Kaser 1962, sec. 58 IIIc). But it appears that no sanctions were to be expected when a man lived together with his stepmother. Jewish law, however, originally called for the death penalty for both (Lev 20:11). In postbiblical times, excommunication replaced execution; it is also what Paul calls for. One may assume that Paul thinks in terms of the Jewish practice of his day in relation to the sanctions he considers to be important (Tomson 1990). Excommunication is seen to be a social death that, under certain circumstances, is actually followed by physical death. We have to assume that this man is not Jewish by birth and therefore thinks it possible to live with his stepmother "in marriage." That the Christian congregation in Corinth tolerates this relationship also indicates that such an unlawful relationship was socially acceptable. But here Paul wants a full application of Jewish law. In his eyes, the man is wholly subject to the prohibitions of Leviticus 18. In this Paul shows that he is concerned not with a law-free Christianity but with a Christianity that is faithful to the law also for people of non-Jewish origin. He mentions the woman only once (5:1). According to Leviticus 20:11 and many postbiblical texts, she would have to be punished like the man. Presumably she is a widow or a divorcée and now lives without financial rights or the opportunity of having any possible children with her stepson legitimized. There is nothing unusual about Paul's androcentric depiction of this case (cf. only Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 7:4), and it should not be understood to indicate that the woman was not Christian. At that time the discussion about rights centered on the man. Should the woman be Christian, then the question is whether she will be excommunicated together with the man (cf. Sapphira in Acts 5:7-11). If she is not Christian, she may possibly lose her (unlawful) husband and presumably with him part of her economic means of existence. Whatever the case, she is the one to bear the major burden of suffering from this unlawful marriage because she must forgo significant rights as long as they live together. She faces the threat of death both for herself and for her husband as a result of the congregation's decision to tolerate this relationship. I believe it probable that she was a Christian. Paul regards her as an accomplice who is also to be excommunicated, but she is so unimportant to him that he does not once mention this aspect of his faithfulness to the Torah.

*The Holiness of the Body Has Implications for Men*  
(1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

Many men (including husbands) of non-Jewish origin belonging to the Corinthian Christian congregation are having sexual intercourse with women sex-trade workers. As is usual, they do not consider this to be a moral or religious problem; it is simply taken for granted. In the everyday life of the city, sex-trade workers are

omnipresent and integrated into society. They frequently work in jobs that involve public contact: hostessing, waitressing, or selling (Kirchhoff 1994). Paul considers relationships with sex-trade workers to be *porneia* and not adultery since a man cannot break his own marriage, only that of another man. Here Paul functions within the framework of Jewish sexual ethics (cf. Sir 26:12 = 26:9 in LXX). In his view, intercourse with a sex-trade worker does injury to the holiness of the baptized and, concomitantly, the holiness of Christ with which they are connected.

### *The Variety of Ways of Living (1 Corinthians 7:1-40)*

The issue here is *porneia* of men and marriage and both women and men's "marriage-freedom." The text is not conceived as a normative sexual ethic or as comprehensively descriptive of Christian ways of living. Rather, the ways of living and the decisions mentioned here are actual cases chosen selectively. Paul says nothing about Christian marriages like that of Priscilla and Aquila. Such Christian marriages are quietly presupposed. 1 Corinthians 16:19 and Acts 18:1-3 show that in those Christian marriages the home is made open for the congregation and that the patriarchal structures of the family change fundamentally. To clarify the reality of Christian marriages like Priscilla and Aquila's, I refer to the Acts of Thecla. There Paul, "marriage-free," is guest of Onesiphoros and Lectra and their children, Simmias and Zeno (2-5). After having been driven out of town, Paul lives with this family in a cemetery outside the city. As a family, they have "left the world" (23), thus actualizing a bond to Christ that the historical Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 7:29-35 for those living free of the structures of patriarchal marriage. They celebrate the Christian meal in love and gladness (Acts of Thecla 25; cf. Acts 2:46-47). In the Acts of Thecla, this Christian couple is an unmistakable, Christian counterdesign to the patriarchal marriage into which the pagan men Thamyris and Alexander want to force Thecla. Thamyris's house is depicted as a place of excessive carousing (13).

On the one hand, Paul's description of ways of living is highly androcentric, yet, on the other, women are mentioned conspicuously often. The rhetoric of equality in 1 Corinthians 7 is not the result of Paul regarding women and men as equal, nor does such rhetoric signify a breach of androcentric perspective. Rather, Paul refers to the many married women who want to live free of the oppression that is part of patriarchal marriage and demands of these married women that they not seek "marriage-freedom" for themselves (cf. Wire 1994, who makes this case persuasively). The following ways of living by women are addressed:

- Christian women live as if free from marital obligation while married to a Christian husband for whom intercourse with a sex-trade worker is no religious problem (7:1-7).
- Christian women want to be divorced (from a Christian husband?) (7:10-11).

- Christian women want to be divorced from non-Christian husbands (7:13-15). They become Christians after marrying, but independently of their husbands. They now want to actualize the implications of the difference between their Christian way of living and that of their non-Christian husbands. Paul's decision to make divorce dependent on whether or not the non-Christian partner wants the divorce is not in line with what the women concerned have in mind. They obviously seek divorce even against the non-Christian partner's will. (Such a case is also described in the *Apology* of Justin Martyr, 2.2.)
- 1 Corinthians 7:15 presupposes that in the Christian congregation pressure is exerted on Christian women to preserve a marriage that the non-Christian partner wants to end. In this case Paul supports the woman's desire for a divorce. Tertullian vividly describes the conflicts between a Christian woman and a non-Christian husband in the everyday life of marriage (*Ad uxorem* 2.4).
- A virgin engaged to a Christian man is not asked for her consent when the man wants to marry her even though originally both may have decided in favor of "marriage-freedom." In such a case, it is to be assumed that virgins fear that they will sin if they consent to marriage (1 Cor 7:28b). It would appear that virgins (*parthenos*) decline marriage more often than their fiancés. That is why marriage demanded by a man (with Paul's approval) is tantamount to sexual assault, legitimized within marriage. It means the destruction of the relationship with Christ of the virgin who chose "marriage-freedom" (7:25-28, 36-37). The following situation is depicted in verses 36-37: the fiancé claims that he cannot control his sex drive. In order not to coerce his fiancée sexually (*aschēmonein*) while they are engaged, he wants to get married. Paul and the man (or men) concerned consider sexual coercion during that time unlawful. That is why the men want to marry.
- Widows want to decide whether or not to enter into a second marriage (7:39-40; 7:8). The young widows in 1 Timothy 5:11-12 also wanted both options open to them.
- Virgins and mature unmarried women, living "marriage-free," are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7:34. As the placement of "virgins" next to "unmarried women" shows, "virgin" refers, in the sense of the Hebrew word *bētûlâ*, to marriageable girls who still live in their parents' home. They have decided on "marriage-freedom." The word "virgin" as such does not yet have the meaning of "a woman not living in marriage": that came about in later Christianity when all unmarried women came to be called "virgins."

### *Summation: Sexuality and Holiness*

An understanding of *sexuality* similar to that on which 1 Corinthians 5-7 is based is to be found in Ecclesiasticus or in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

There, as in Paul, the distinction is made between lawful and unlawful sexuality. Paul does not describe but simply presupposes lawful sexuality. When compared to the other texts referred to, what is new in his text is a critical perspective on patriarchal marriage.

Sexual relations that, measured against the Torah, are unlawful (*porneia*) compromise Christian men (1 Cor 7:9, 36-37) who have actually decided in favor of *enkrateia*. They lose control of their drive (v. 37; cf. v. 5); they are aflame (v. 9) and “too strong” in their passions (*hyperakmos*, v. 36). The imagery of fire applied to sexuality is imbued with negative connotations in both Paul and the texts in Ecclesiasticus and the Testaments. The beautiful female stranger and sex-trade workers set a man aflame (Ecclus 9:8; Testament of Joseph 2). Masturbation (Ecclus 23:16) and homosexuality (Rom 1:27) also inflame men. The alternative to the flame of unlawful desire is the sexual relationship legitimized within marriage, according to the extrabiblical texts cited. Paul discusses the connection between sexuality and holiness primarily in terms of negative aspects. Unlawful sexual relations contaminate or destroy the holiness of the body (1 Cor 6:16 and its context) and the holiness of the congregation (5:1-13). Chapter 7, too, is governed chiefly by the problems that arise from the sexuality of men that had chosen *enkrateia* but could not persist in it (7:1-7, 25-38). Yet these three chapters may also be read against this negative grain and be explored for what they may have to say positively about the *connection of sexuality and holiness*.

The congregation is a community of saints in the cultic sense (6:2, 11; 5:6-8). “Purity” is a key term that occurs twice (5:7; 7:14). A cultic argument is presented in 5:9, 11: do not mingle with the impure and do not eat together with them. Cultic purity, discussed in detail in the halakha, serves the preservation of holiness and of God’s presence. The bodies of the saints are united with Christ (6:17); they are even now the site of the experience of resurrection (6:14). This bodily holiness may be connected with the renunciation of genital sexual relations (7:34) but is not tied to it. The holiness of the body may be lived even in marriage with genital sexual relations (6:12-7:7 shows this). And this holiness can include even a non-Christian marriage partner and the children of a “mixed” marriage (7:14). In all ways of life, bodies are sanctified through the presence of the Holy Spirit. They are part of the holiness of the congregation, irrespective of whether a Christian woman lives in a marriage with sexual relations, is married but lives in “marriage-freedom,” or is “marriage-free” without relation to a man. The sanctified body (*sōma*; see in particular Kirchhoff 1994 on this subject) is the site of the experience of God *also* in its (genital) sexual relations (6:16 implicitly presupposes this for lawful sexuality). In a variety of ways Paul endeavors not to make holiness depend on a specific way of living. Marriage and “marriage-freedom” are possible ways of living, and under specific circumstances divorce is a right decision to take (7:16). What matter are God’s calling and keeping the commandments (7:17-24). Remaining in one’s state (circumcised or uncircumcised; slave or free) — like the changing of one’s status

through divorce (7:10-16) or through release from slavery (7:21) or marriage (7:25-39) — is a relative matter. The main thing is to live in accordance with God's calling as holy bodies. (On the misreading of *klēsis* as "remain in the state in which you are called" in 7:17-24, see above in relation to 1:26 and Schottroff 1995.) What becomes plain in 7:34 is that the praxis of women living "marriage-free" in the congregation is the decisive motivating force to express and give form to the holiness of the body and of the congregation. Even though Paul regards women as second-class citizens (11:7), it becomes clear even in him that the Christian women in Corinth are creating many new and diverse ways of living that make it possible to live as "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (6:19). The situations of conflict he addresses in 1 Corinthians 7 were brought about chiefly by women giving new shape to their lives. Many Christian men responded to this with sexual demands. The way of living "marriage-freedom" has antecedents in isolated Jewish groups such as the Therapeutics. "The women, too, take part in the feast; most of them are aged virgins who have maintained their purity . . . voluntarily through their zealous desire for wisdom" (Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 63; cf. Wis 3:13). Here an alternative to patriarchal marriage and family with its hierarchies is intentionally developed. The extent to which those in early Christianity lived free of structured marital obligations requires a social-historical explanation that the parallel in Philo does not supply. The majority of Christian women in Corinth were not of the educated upper class like the Therapeutics. The possibility of the Christian *enkrateia* way of living, of departure from the "world" and patriarchal marriage, seemed particularly attractive to women. This picture has been made known especially by the so-called Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles and is confirmed here in 1 Corinthians 7. The economic basis for freedom from the patriarchal structures of marriage is to be found in the communal responsibility the Christian congregation assumed for its members. In addition, as I see it, "marriage-freedom" appears to be based also in what Jewish women had already evolved in a tradition for "marriage-free" life or phases in their marriages free from patriarchal norms by taking a vow (cf. Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 81b and 15b; Tertullian, *De oratione* 22 on "virgins devoted to God" and their pledges; Mishnah *Nedarim* 10 on the cancellation of the pledges of young women engaged to be married would seem to fit into this context).

### Idolatry and Liberation from the Powers of Alien Gods (1 Corinthians 8-10)

Peter Tomson's (1990) persuasive interpretation of chapters 8-10 based in Jewish halakha opens up a new understanding of the text. There are several versions of how the Corinthian congregation addresses the question about meat offered to idols. The majority of Christians regard themselves as enlightened; the alien gods are nothings: they have no more power over the members of the Christian congre-

gation. Hence, Christians of non-Jewish origin are free to eat what is or could be regarded as sacrificial food. Paul shares this position only to a certain degree. One fundamental tenet of rabbinic discussion pervades the whole of his argumentation. The power of the alien gods is not associated with food but with people's consciousness (*syneidesis*) (cf. Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* 4:1-2). The consciousness of fellow humans from the non-Jewish nations, including those who do not follow Jesus Christ, limits freedom. What is contentious between Paul and the Gentile Christian majority of the congregation is not the renunciation of idolatry. Rather, it is whether one's own consciousness and its conviction that other gods are nothing suffice to invalidate the assurance that eating food offered in sacrifice to the gods is not idolatry. Paul's argument begins with the consciousness of other people for whom such eating represents participation in the powers of those gods. In Jewish perspective it was simply outrageous that anyone worshiping the God of Israel (1 Cor 8:4-6) would eat food offered in sacrifice to idols or even take part in a cultic meal in a temple. But this is not so astonishing when one considers that such practice was quite thinkable in the stages of becoming Jewish (Cohen 1989). In 10:1-22 Paul basically impresses upon the congregation the necessity for those who worship the God of Israel to renounce idolatry. In chapter 9 he uses himself as an example of how voluntary renunciation of freedom can be a necessity.

In the context of the Pauline excursus on voluntary renunciation (chapter 9), a comment is relevant for the history of women in early Christianity (9:4-5). Paul describes his right as an apostle to food and drink at the congregation's expense and to claim that right also for a "sister" or "wife" traveling with him, just like "the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas." What is at issue for him is obviously not that a missionary's wife traveling along has that same right. The issue for Paul is that she is a "sister." Couples traveling about as missionaries (two men, Acts 16:1-2; two women, Rom 16:12; see D'Angelo 1990; a married couple, 1 Cor 16:19 and elsewhere) play a conspicuous role. It is difficult to determine whether Paul is thinking here only of married women as "sisters." In the Thecla legend, Paul travels with Thecla through cities of Asia Minor (Acts of Thecla 25:26). Both live "marriage-free." Paul's androcentric perspective in 1 Corinthians 9:4-5 is in tension with the designation "sister." On the one hand, this creates the idea of a married woman who is taken along as an appendage to the apostle. On the other, such missionary couples are shown to be acting as equals (see Luke 10:2). The word "sister" signals just such equality, the same as the early Christian concept of sisterly-brotherliness in general (Leutzsch 1994; Ehrensperger 2007). Married women or not, 1 Corinthians 9:5 opens the view to how very significant women were as itinerant apostles and prophets in the mission of early Christianity.

## The Community and Differences (1 Corinthians 11–14)

In chapters 11 to 14, Paul addresses different aspects of what happens when the Corinthian congregation gathers. In those gatherings women offer prayer and prophesy with their heads uncovered (11:5). Some people come to the gathering place and eat a private meal that is more lavish than the common meal shared by the majority of the congregation (11:21). This is done by people who want to flaunt their status and affluence (11:19, 22). The presence of hierarchy within the congregation also affects how people's individual gifts or charisms are viewed (chapters 12–14). Glossolalia or spirit-induced but incomprehensible speaking to God is seen by some Christians as the preeminent charism.

In this context, 14:34–35 indicates that in Paul's opinion women are excluded from any charism that is related to speaking publicly in the congregation's gatherings. Such a demand contradicts 11:5 and the tenor of chapters 12 to 14. However androcentric this text is, nowhere does it show that women are not touched by the gift of speaking in tongues. For this reason I leave 14:34–35 aside in my interpretation of 11–14:33.

In terms of egalitarian notions, Paul always critiques the attempts to establish hierarchies in the congregation. Those who possess less ought not to be made to feel embarrassed by those who have more (11:22). All have the same spirit (11:4–11). The parable of the body and its members is also used in this sense. An absurdity has to be noticed here: in 11:2–6 Paul attacks a practice of women that is oriented toward the equality of the sexes within a context where he decidedly argues for the preservation of equality within the congregation. For him the ranking of the female gender as second-class humanity (11:7) is not an order of domination made by humans and hence changeable, even though women (and possibly men, too) in Corinth could have sensitized Paul to gender asymmetry by their very praxis. However, he responds to the egalitarian praxis of the women (11:5) in the same way he does to the lack of solidarity shown by the affluent (11:22). The absurdity of Paul's conduct in relation to differences is not to be mitigated by apologetic arguments such as that in his time this injustice was not recognizable. There were women in Corinth that openly fought against it; there were also other traditions to interpret the story of creation, traditions that differed from Paul's.

### *Theological Constructions of Femeness as a Weapon against the Liberation of Women (1 Corinthians 11:2–16)*

In 11:2–16 Paul draws upon every argument he can find against the public practice of women's liberation in the congregation; he does so rigorously and in a noticeably biased manner. His argumentation suggests that praying and prophesying by women with their heads uncovered is an act of liberation. So it is not just that

women carry out a religious custom of acting in worship with their hair loose, or that they simply exercise an ordinary everyday practice. Their action in the worship of God is directed rather at the eradication of the gender hierarchy that Paul defends against them with all possible means. What he is about *basically* is the second-class order of women. He quite obviously understands Galatians 3:28 differently than many women and men in Corinth and elsewhere. It is no coincidence that in 1 Corinthians 12:13, his allusion to that verse in Galatians, he makes no mention of gender difference.

His arguments for the subordination of women are intended to get women (not only married women [Fatum 1989] but all women, including those who live “marriage-free”) to cover their heads while praying and prophesying as a way of demonstrating the subordination to men that God wills for them (11:10; cf. Schottroff 1990, 123-27; 1993, 108-12). In the same vein, he finds that men have short hair while women have long hair (v. 14). As Bernadette Brooten has shown (1987), Paul attributes basic theological significance to gender polarity being made visible in dress and hairstyle.

His main arguments for women covering the head are drawn from his interpretation of the story of creation: in accordance with Genesis 3:16, the man is the head of the woman, her lord (1 Cor 11:3; see Rom 7:2, *hypandros*). The head covering expresses a relation of dominance (*exousia* as metonymy for the head covering, 1 Cor 11:10; McGinn 1996 sees this differently). When women pray and prophesy without their heads covered (11:5), the God-ordained dominance of men is publicly put to shame. The public humiliation and punishment of women by having their heads shaved (Tacitus, *Germania* 19), or the short haircut of women who want to look like men (which eventually became an expression of lesbian existence; cf. Brooten 1987, 133), is a disgrace to women (vv. 5b, 6). For Paul that disgrace is on the same level as the Corinthian women’s doing away with covering their heads.

There are other arguments derived from the interpretation of the story of creation. Paul declares that the man alone is God’s image and reflection. He means this to be an interpretation of Genesis 1:27, but, in fact, it is contrary to that text and how the rabbis interpreted it (cf. Boyarin 1995). The woman reflects the man, that is to say, the man receives his dignity and power from God, while the woman does not, receiving her dignity and power from the man (1 Cor 11:7). She was derived from the rib of the man (11:8; Gen. 2:22) and was created to be a “helpmate” (1 Cor 11:9; Gen. 2:18).

The comment that women should cover their heads “out of regard for the angels” (1 Cor 11:10) is in reference to Genesis 6:1-4. According to this interpretation, women without a head covering are in danger of being sexually attacked by angels. Therefore, for Paul the female gender means a God-willed subordination to the male gender; the boundaries of the latter are not to be questioned. Masculinity is defined in terms of God’s image and domination of women, and femininity in

terms of subordination and sexuality that need to be kept under control through men's dominance.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 are clearly intended to be a positive assertion about women, but it remains within the framework of men's domination of women and is not meant as such to break it open. This is how Paul understands the equality of the sexes "in the Lord" in Galatians 3:28; heterosexual marriage is a structural norm for men and women and relates them one to the other (1 Cor 11:11; his own "marriage-freedom" and that of many Christians do not trouble him in this argument). All men are born of women (11:12). Even though verses 11-12 do not change the construction of femaleness of the entire section, one has to take seriously that Paul tries to create a positive counterweight against 11:3-10 by means of positive theological determinations of femaleness ("in the Lord," "all things are from God"). Still, it remains within the patriarchal frame of reference. But it is clear that Paul is caught up in a process of discussion that challenges him.

Verses 13-16 leave behind the theological argumentation and endeavor to draw on arguments from nature (11:14, 15; on the "natural" law of the gender boundaries, cf. especially Brooten 1996), on generally held customs and the sense of what is proper and decent (11:13, 16). Paul knows well that in this matter he does not have the last word. The one "disposed to be contentious" (11:16) refuses to be silenced by Paul; it is above all women who are meant here, women who pray and prophesy in public without their heads covered and who obviously are not at a loss for arguments. Presumably, their arguments are different interpretations of the Genesis narratives in Jewish tradition (cf. Boyarin 1995 and Jervell 1960, 112); they would also have different understandings of Galatians 3:28 and the equality of spiritual giftedness in Christ. Their conclusion is that according to the will of God, women are precisely not second-rate human beings subject to men.

### *Togetherness in Eating and in Memory (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; cf. 10:16-21)*

It is because of the presence of a concrete conflict that Paul talks about the shared meal in the congregational assembly. Yet the Corinthian praxis is illumined far beyond the conflict.

The "Lord's Supper" (11:20; cf. 11:23) is a celebratory time around the evening meal (11:25; *deipnēsai*). It presupposes the holiness of the gathered congregation, expressing communion with the murdered (11:26) and risen Christ, and of the gathered people one with another as the body (*sōma*) of Christ. The holiness of the congregation and its common meal presupposes of course that Jewish dietary laws are kept, at least as far as they apply to Noachites/Gentiles. This applies in particular to food offered to the gods and the consumption of meat and blood. In addition, holiness is dependent on the inviolability of the community (*koinōnia*): idolatry excludes communion with Christ (10:21), and communion of all, one with another, ex-

cludes a private meal (*idion deipnon*) in the place of gathering. Every participant is obliged to distinguish between holy and profane (*diakrinein*, 11:29, 31; *dokimazein*, 11:28). Whoever violates holiness falls ill or dies (11:30; cf. Acts 5:1-11). Participation is completely voluntary and whoever cannot fulfill the demands of holiness should eat at home (1 Cor 11:22, 34; the issue here is not the separation of private and public but the holiness of the congregation; Wire [1990; 1994] sees it differently). The holiness of the congregation also manifests and presupposes social justice among themselves (11:22). That is why a private meal in a small circle in the place where the eucharistic community comes together is a violation of holiness. The presence of women in these meals is taken for granted (cf. Luke 22:13-20; Quesnell 1983). It is even imaginable that groups of women celebrated the Eucharist without men being present, as Jewish women celebrated the Passover meal and proselyte women the Sabbath worship (Acts 16:13; cf. Schottroff 1990; Richter Reimer 1992). What is not to be assumed is that at this early period of Christianity there was a special role for women in the Lord's Supper that assigned them to kitchen duties (Schottroff 1994b; Wire 1990 and 1994 provide a different interpretation).

I understand what Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 in connection with 1:11. The group around Chloe had informed Paul and hoped for his support against those who sought to demonstrate publicly during the community meal that there were status differences in the congregation by showing off their economic superiority and affluence.

Like a festive Jewish meal, the community meal is built around a liturgy. It receives its own proper form as a commemoration of the martyr's death of Jesus Christ. The blessing of bread and wine makes present the participation in the body and blood of the martyr whose death is to bring liberation from oppression to the people and all human beings. Christian feminist women do have good reason to critique sharply the theology of the atoning death (11:24-25) that is found in the history of Christian dogma and the interpretation of the Second Testament texts, especially in connection with the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (cf. above, Tamez on Rom 3:21-26).

The common meal of the community is part of the Lord's Supper liturgy. In later Christian tradition, the meal and the Lord's Supper became separated. This separation of eating and liturgy, of eating and sacrament, is an expression of a hostility that arose subsequently; a hostility toward the body and also, in that respect, toward women. What was also lost through that separation was the awareness that the communion liturgy grows out of the liturgy of festive Jewish meals.

### *The Diverse Gifts of the Divine Spirit to Women and Men* (1 Corinthians 12-14)

The opinions Paul expresses in this section are also a rich source for the practices of early Christian congregations. All those who acknowledge Jesus to be the Mes-

siah and *kyrios*, and are baptized, are endowed by God with the Spirit of God (12:13). Undreamt-of powers and abilities arose in the women and men. They were able openly to sing and pray, interpret Scripture, critique others' interpretations, discuss, and speak out against something. The dynamic power of the Spirit enabled them to heal sick people, go to court without fear, and see God's future before them. These gifts were diverse, wild, inexhaustible, driven by the breaking-in of the communion and nearness of God. What Paul deals with in these chapters is the question of how to prevent the diversity of gifts from leading to the development of hierarchies.

Paul lists charismatic gifts more than once (12:4-11, 28-30; 14:26; Rom 12:3-8; in 1 Cor 13:1-3, 8, other listings are apparent). Arranged differently every time, these gifts are not ordered. The numbering in 12:28 (first, second, third) leads into an unordered list and does not express priority, for the congregation or for Paul himself. Nevertheless, there is in the congregation a pursuit for "weightier" charisms (12:31, where I read *zēloute* in the indicative).

There is a plethora of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian congregation. Depending on interest and situation, one person may claim to have several such gifts. Particularly treasured is the gift of glossolalia, speaking in tongues, a worship-happening like that in the story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13; 10:44-48).

Paul regards the preference for speaking in tongues as dangerous because the diversity of gifts is lost thereby and a hierarchical ordering of gifts may come about.

No depiction of gender asymmetry can be discerned in how these gifts are evaluated or distributed. Neither is the domestic work associated with house and feeding excluded from the service to the community or held to be a lesser charism, nor are there areas that are not open to women. Paul's highly favored gift of prophecy is freely granted to women as well (1 Cor 11:5; cf. Eisen 1996 on prophecy and other "offices" of women) as is speaking in tongues, which I see to be an aspect of women's praying (cf. 14:14). Women are apostles (cf. Rom 16:7 in relation to 1 Cor 12:29) and teachers (cf. 1 Tim 2:12, which implicitly refers to common early Christian practice, in relation to 1 Cor 12:29). I see no Pauline conception in 12:23 of "love patriarchy," the maintaining of social asymmetries — including that of gender (cf. Wire 1994, 182 where she refers to her own and to the traditional interpretation of 7:17-24, which I critique fundamentally; see above). *Timē*/honor has material/financial connotations. Honoring parents (Exod 20:12; Deut 5:16) is understood in Judaism and early Christianity to mean, among other things, to look after aged parents also financially (see Mark 7:10-12). In other words, honoring does not consist only in well-pleasing words and friendliness in the interaction with people who provide "menial" services in society. Rather, everyone in the congregation has the same right to material survival. Social hierarchy is effectively broken down by the fact that all participate in being "slaves" (Mark 10:42-45 and par.) and in hard physical labor (*kopian*; cf. Rom 16 for the use of that word).

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul praises *agapē* as the comprehensive praxis of every gift of the Spirit. He wants to put the valuation of this gift in place of the pursuit of glossolalia (13:1; 12:31). There are numerous references in chapter 13 to the literary context, making it possible to discern concrete manifestations of love from the context (or from a comparison with Rom 12:9-21). Traditional interpretation understands *agapē*/love to be sacrificing the self and voluntary suffering with others that have thereby evoked feminist critique (Wire 1990; 1994). I restrict myself to examining only those phrases that tend to support the traditional interpretation as sacrificing the self. Love “does not insist on its own way” (1 Cor 13:5), “bears all things” (13:7). There is a concrete example in 10:24, 33 of a demeanor that is oriented by self-interest: eating meat sacrificed to the gods when one’s monotheistic consciousness asserts that those gods are nothing. For Paul love that “does not insist on its own ways” means being oriented toward another for whom the gods still have power (see above on those verses). Love that “bears all things” refers back to 9:12: Paul turns down financial support from the congregation, earning his keep with manual labor because in the congregations the right of itinerant missionaries to such support is sharply disputed and readily regarded as an easy way to enrich oneself at others’ expense. Both contextual examples do not support the interpretation of love as sacrificing the self in the sense of patriarchal education of women.

For an overall interpretation of 1 Corinthians 13, it is important not to leave those phrases to a general praise of love, which in the text itself they are not. They need to be filled from the literary and social context.

*Falsifying for the Benefit of Politics of Women’s Oppression  
(1 Corinthians 14:34-35)*

Marlene Crüsemann has formulated what I regard as the decisive argument that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was not written by Paul but was inserted later into the text (Crüsemann 1996, 211). Prohibiting women from speaking in public has no Jewish parallel but is to be found in Greco-Roman writers. “A text from Tosefta *Megillah* 4:11 is frequently cited as Rabbinic evidence, but most often the second half of the verse only: ‘One does not let a woman come forward to read [from the Torah] in public.’ The sentence preceding this, stating the overall principle, declares: ‘All are counted among the seven [that read the Torah on the Sabbath], even a boy under age, even a woman.’ This highlights that the active participation of women in the synagogue worship cannot be categorically rejected, and that their participation is subject, both in theory and in practice, to dispute” (Crüsemann 1996, 211). There is an example in Luke 13:13 of a woman speaking in the synagogue. Crüsemann’s argument against the Pauline authorship of this text persuades me because throughout 1 Corinthians Paul moves within the framework of contemporary Jewish discussion and practice. His conception of the worship of God is shaped by the

service of worship in the synagogue in which women's participation also takes the form of speaking. To this can be added these long-known arguments: the contradiction between 11:5 and the command to be silent is quite apparent (Vander Stichele 1995 sees it differently), and 14:34-35 is placed elsewhere in the text (after 14:40) in part of the manuscript tradition. Marlene Crüsemann's argument also refutes the widespread anti-Judaistic usage of the interpolation thesis: that it is not by Paul but is typically Jewish in the repression of women.

The text ties together the subordination of women (by the reference to "the law," presumably Gen 3:16), the absolute prohibition to speak in public, the enthronement of the man (husband) as woman's sole teacher, and the incarceration of women's activity in the home. In terms of content, it is to be seen as of equal substance with 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Like the Pastoral Epistles, it was inserted into the Pauline corpus most likely in the mid-second century C.E. Those additions wholly change Paul's hermeneutic of the politics of women. In the concrete case of 1 Corinthians 12-14, it means that all the Spirit's gifts to women associated with speaking are to be prohibited. The question is whether the designation of the Pastoral Epistles as "pseudepigraphs" and of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as an "interpolation" does not conceal that what we have here is a conscious manipulation of the text grounded in a specific politics of women. That is why I speak of "falsification."

### Women and Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15)

Little of the praxis and thinking of the Corinthian congregation becomes visible in 1 Corinthians 15. The key verse, 15:12, tersely names a critique of the hope in the resurrection of the dead that is not simultaneously a critique of the significance of Christ's resurrection (cf. 15:3). The many attempts to identify the position of this group in the congregation in terms of history of religion have not yielded a conclusive result. In addition to this, these attempts are burdened by the hermeneutical conception that sees Paul in dispute with "opponents." Therefore, the chapter has to be read as an expression of Paul's opinion, that is, of Paul the apocalypticist, a link in the chain of Jewish apocalypticists (Sutter Rehmann 1995).

The text is utterly androcentric. Nonetheless, it is to be probed for its significance for the women of Corinth. To help with this task I draw on two statements from the ancient church on women and resurrection. In *The Dress of Virgins* 22, Cyprian cites Luke 20:34-36 with reference to "virgins," that is, Christian women of his time living "marriage-free." The passage cited from Luke ends with the words "children (sons) of the resurrection." Then Cyprian continues: "What we shall be, already you have begun to be. The glory of the resurrection you already have in this world; you pass through the world without the pollution of the world." I do not take this citation as an isolated opinion of a church "father," but as a summation of the early Christian view of "marriage-freedom," being mindful of the dif-

ference in the interpretation of *enkrateia* as sexual continence or as “marriage-freedom” and liberation from the “world’s” structures of violence (cf. above on chapter 7). Next to the words of Cyprian I place some notes from the Acts of Thecla. Paul’s preaching is spoken of there as “the word of God concerning autonomy [this is how I translate *enkrateia* here] and resurrection” (5). Resurrection is promise for the future and at the same time possibility and mystery of existence in the world now. Those whose body is the temple of God (cf. above, on 6:19; this applies to women and men and not only to those living “marriage-free”) already know what it means to become angels of God (Cyprian, *The Dress of Virgins* 22; cf. Acts of Thecla 5; further references in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles; cf. 1 Cor 6:14, noting that some manuscripts have the verb in the present tense). Since *enkrateia* was lived out more by women than by men, there is a specific connection between women’s lives and the experience of resurrection. The mythical scenario of the apocalyptic hope in resurrection ought not to be read in a rigorous dualism of now and then. This hope now transforms the bodies and lets them have experiences now of resurrection (see Rom 6:13). The experiences of resurrection in the present time are experiences of the body. The apocalyptic hope in resurrection, seen in the perspective of social history, is the hope of oppressed and threatened women, men, and children who rely on God’s judging justice in the world that seeks to separate them inwardly and outwardly from God and to destroy them. Resurrection — like apocalyptic hope as a whole — means a qualification of the present: the present in relation to God who is creator and judge.

In 1 Corinthians 15:35-49 and 20-22, Paul shows the connection between creation and resurrection, between old and new creation. (Even though he does not use the words “old” and “new,” they assist in understanding his meaning.) The (old) creation contains the future within itself like a seed (15:36-37). In its extravagant abundance of variety, creation can help our eyes to see resurrection bodies, the bodies wrought by the Spirit (*sōma pneumatikon*, 15:44) “in a mirror dimly” (13:12). In their variety, creation bodies are transparent to resurrection bodies. The present is marked by death (15:42-49, 53-57). This death is not primarily physical death but the pervasive antigodly power of destruction (cf. especially 15:26, “the last enemy”). Resurrection is victory over that death and its slave hustling (15:55; the *kentron* is a goad, studded with iron barbs used to drive slaves). The end-times battle has already begun. At its conclusion, death will be conquered (15:23-28) and all dominance will be at an end because “God will be all in all” (15:28; cf. especially Sutter Rehmann 1995 on 15:23-29). Understanding the “old” creation as a place of transitory vainglory obscures the power of hope in this text. The “old” creation is the very place of hope, of struggle (cf. only 15:32), and of the taste of God’s future. The decision on how to interpret the resurrection chapter is made, in other words, on the level of hermeneutics: How do I understand apocalypticism? My interpretation of this chapter is based in a social-historical approach to apocalypticism. I ask about the significance of apocalyptic mythology for people and about the situation of their lives.

In a short statement (15:56) Paul addresses the problematic that he develops in the span of many chapters in Romans (→ Romans). The idea that the "law" gives power to sin has traditionally been given an anti-Judaistic meaning: Christ is the end of the law because the law, seeing that Jews want to fulfill it, leads to people wanting to earn salvation on their own and, in so doing, rebelling against God. Today an alternative reading can be given, for historical reasons, against that anti-Judaistic tradition of interpretation. The Torah is given by God as a means to life, while in the structures of death people become incapable of living according to the Torah's instructions. The Torah gives power to sin *because it is not being done* (Schottroff 1990).

Chapter 15 is thoroughly androcentric. Presumably, the women who were the first witnesses of the resurrection (Mark 16:1-8 par.) and the remembrance of them fell victim to androcentrism (1 Cor 15:3-8; how many women are among the five hundred "brethren," 15:6?) or, worse, to a patriarchal construction of history in which women have no importance. But I see Paul the apocalyptic on a level with many women and men to whom apocalyptic myths brought hope, strength, and experiences of resurrection now in the everyday existence of their lives. Therefore, since women emphatically related themselves to the resurrection tradition, I hear in Paul's words the voices of many women.

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