

RE-DELINEATING PAUL'S BOUNDARIES OF *PORNEIA* IN THE EARLY CHURCH  
VIA THE SEXUALLY AVAILABLE BODIES OF FIRST-CENTURY SLAVES

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

RE-DELINEATING PAUL'S BOUNDARIES

OF *PORNEIA* IN THE EARLY CHURCH

VIA THE SEXUALLY AVAILABLE BODIES OF FIRST-CENTURY SLAVES

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and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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It was not perhaps through the most academic of my faculties that this project came to life. Its impetus was in fact a relatively ignorant gut reaction to the conclusions of Jennifer Glancy's book, *Slavery in Early Christianity*. While Glancy wished to make the case that Paul's theology would have posed difficulties and even perhaps wholly excluded first-century slaves whose masters insisted on using their bodies sexually, my own initial reaction was that this could not have been the case. The Paul I knew was one who sought to welcome and admit all those who longed for participation in the Christian life. For this impulse I am indebted and grateful to the community at Bethel United Church of Christ in Kansas City, MO who always found that space for me as I pushed my own teenage and young adult boundaries. This inclusiveness informed my research on Paul and his theology on sexuality, and in turn helped me form an argument in this paper I find both justified and likely.

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## Introduction

Despite the amount of scholarly material concerning the apostle Paul and his attitude toward and limited discussion of first-century slaves/slavery (his shortest letter to Philemon a most notable exception), little effort has been made to parse out and/or understand his opinion about the sexual demands required of slaves in the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Glancy's *Slavery in Early Christianity*, among some of her other work, attempts to comment on and offer responses to this void in Pauline scholarship. Specifically in her chapter "Body Work: Slavery and the Pauline Churches" she argues for a number of obstacles to slaves' participation in Pauline churches, the most important of which being the vulnerable nature of a slave's body. It is Paul's theology of the polluting nature inherent in (gentile) sexual immorality that Glancy insists would have posed difficulties for the first-century slave. This project critically addresses Glancy's argument as a means to further attend to this deficiency in Pauline studies, based on scholarship of the ancient slave, (his/her) body, and that body's unquestionable sexual availability to the slave's master. While well-established notions of this aspect of Paul's occasional and multi-vocal theology are not overlooked by Glancy, other evidence suggests, as this paper will argue, that the subsequent consequences were perhaps less totalizing than Glancy wishes to

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, as Brent D. Shaw points out in the introduction to his edited and expanded edition of M.I. Finely's *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, issues of slaves' vulnerability in the sexual dominion to his or her master has been "strangely marginal," to discussions of Greek and Roman sexuality. Glancy's work, the current project, and the plethora of citations throughout them both ought to suggest that this aspect of Greco-Roman ideas about slaves and their bodies is gaining significant scholarly interest and concern. See also James Dunn's opening remarks on Pauline scholarship in "The New Perspective on Paul" in *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 89.

insinuate. This paper will offer an alternative to these conclusions, primarily grounded in Greco-Roman conceptions of the body and Paul's realistic expectations for his nascent Christian communities.

What makes this project particularly difficult (but equally exciting and intriguing) is the resounding lack of information about this issue espoused by Paul or any other first-century Christian. Given the periodic nature of Paul's letters, often rather specific in subject matter, it should not be assumed he had no opinion on sexually available slaves and their participation in his established churches, it only appears to not have been an immediate concern for the fledgling church.<sup>2</sup> Calvin Roetzel's *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* reiterates the tie between the content of the epistles and the concerns of early Christians. He says, "once we realize how the ferment in the churches prescribed the scope if not the content of Paul's writings, then it may become obvious why Paul's theologizing was inextricably linked to real life situations in the churches."<sup>3</sup> Indeed it is often the role of the scholar to attempt to fill the gaps of antiquity with reasonable, argued, and researched hypotheses, and Glancy and I both have undertaken the task of creating essentially *argumenta ex silentio* concerning Paul's attitude toward this segment of the newly formed community.

<sup>2</sup> While this and Glancy's project focuses primarily on 1 Corinthians and Paul's notions of sexuality and immorality, this point is particularly underscored. What makes the correspondence between Paul and the Christians at Corinth unique is just that—its reciprocal nature.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversation in Context* (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 85. See also, David Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1993), 71; *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard Horsely (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press Intl. 1997); for Paul's means of addressing individual problems see Stanley Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philidelphia, Penn.: Westminster Press, 1986).

In order to deduce as accurately as possible Paul's theology on this aspect of slaves' bodies, we must engage a host of sources taken to be representative of what is a copious amount of material on the ancient slave and his/her place in Roman society. As Jeremy Punt reminds us in a collected work on Paul's letter to Philemon however, "first-century slavery in the Mediterranean area is difficult to pin down under generalized categories, since slavery was not restricted to a social class or status, and nor did slaves constitute a single, specific social class, with a particular, clearly definable status."<sup>4</sup> This work will attempt to speak broadly about generally recognized and accepted aspects of first-century slavery, most importantly the slave's sexual availability to his/her master.

The make-up of the following augment to Glancy's conclusions, which I will argue are integral to Paul's understanding of the first-century slave, consists of three specific issues that need to be taken into consideration if we are to understand more fully the complexities of the ancient slave's body. First, that of ontology, or categories of being, and in the case of the Greco-Roman slave, that of being other than or less than human.<sup>5</sup> The primary and secondary material on the social and legal ontological designations of slaves will demonstrate the institutionalized powerlessness of slaves over their own bodies. Second, volition, or a slave's ability based on his/her distinctly inferior ontological status to exert his/her own will with regard to his/her body.<sup>6</sup> And third, consent, namely a slave's

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<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Punt, "Paul, Power, and Philemon. 'Knowing Your Place': A Postcolonial Reading" in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, ed. D. Francois Tolmie (New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, 2010), 228.

<sup>5</sup> William Fitzgerald describes a slave in just such terms in *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2000), as both "what a free person is not," and "a lower form of being," 41.

<sup>6</sup> T. E. J. Wiedemann, *Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1987): "Legally slaves had no personality; since the faculty of free choice was denied them (having no will independent

inability to grant or refuse permission for use of his/her body over and against the capricious and often malevolent desires of his/her master.

Parsing out these aspects of the ancient slave's body will come via a number of avenues. Part I: *The Greco-Roman Slave in Context* will make the case for the slave as being conceptually 'less than fully human' philosophically, legally, socially, and morally. The first section will address this primarily by way of the vast amounts of secondary literature concerning the ancient slave and his/her place in Greco-Roman society. Section two will address a couple of exceptions to the previously painted picture, that is a slave's appearance of agency in the courtroom and theater, but ultimately argue that these circumstances are not what they seem and in fact only serve to reinforce the slave's lack of agency. The last section will make an argument that the honor-based society that characterized the first century would have wholly excluded slaves from ever achieving honor, agency, ontological equality with free persons, and ultimately, a self-determined will, each as a result of one another.

The purpose in spending such a significant amount of time and detail on this part of my response lies in establishing exactly how little independence first-century slaves had, with the intention of proposing the unlikelihood that Paul could have expected the degree of sovereignty and autonomy that Glancy insists he did (or may have). If I can accurately construct the realities of servitude in the first century, I believe a second look at the literature will speak for itself in casting doubt on these conclusions.

After defining the Greco-Roman slave as such, Part II will begin a conversation with Glancy's scholarship and conclusions in earnest by way of four sections. First, I will of their master's),” 23.

introduce the shared understanding of the body and mind between Paul's theology and first-century Stoic philosophy. I hope to show the degree to which Paul was informed by such categories to make sense of the various problems he faced with his congregation in Corinth. The second section will rest in a redefinition or reimagining of the Greek category of sexual immorality, *porneia*, as used and understood by Paul in his New Testament letters to his early churches. While Glancy makes the case for Paul's very specific definition of *porneia*, I will at least problematize the likelihood that Paul understood the term so narrowly, particularly with reference to Old Testament examples of illicit sexual relations within the Judaic world. My own expectation is that taken in context, I will be able to show that it is less likely Paul would have held slaves accountable for the actions of their masters against their bodies, thus transgressing *porneia* and necessitating exclusion.

The third section of Part II will use Paul's letter to Philemon to discuss Paul's familiarity with and implicit acceptance of the institution of slavery, and all that it entails. This will take shape via recognition of the language used by Paul in his correspondence with Philemon, which will show Paul to have been perfectly acquainted with the social customs surrounding slaveholding since the letter itself is written to the slave Onesimus' master, Philemon, on his behalf. I will show that beyond the most recent point of contention in scholarship on Philemon—whether Paul was intentionally calling for Onesimus' manumission from Philemon or not—what is more important for this work is the way Paul approaches the Christian slaveholder, recognizing Philemon's total control over Onesimus' fate. A second aspect of this section will address Glancy's own use of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* and how both Paul and the early Christians were

wholly immersed in the Greco-Roman social system, of which slavery was a prominent and nearly unquestioned part.<sup>7</sup>

The last section of Part II will offer alternative explanations of Paul's message and how the early church may have received it. First, I will discuss Paul's use of the noun *heikrateia* ("lack of self-control") when addressing the sexual immorality amongst the Corinthians and suggest that Paul could only have been addressing the immorality of the members of the congregation with the social capital to possess control over themselves. Second, I will suggest that a slave's faith could have acted as a deterrent to pollution via sexual union with their master in the same way believing partners in marriage sanctified their unbelieving spouse. Third, I will discuss one final possible understanding of *porneia* that will serve to delineate exactly who Paul could have meant to be addressing in his discourses on sexual immorality. And finally, I will end with a simple citation of Paul's own words aimed specifically at the slaves in the Corinthian congregation as a means to show that for whatever reason and via whatever theological hoops he had to jump through to include them, Paul welcomed slaves in his communities, all the while knowing exactly what treatment their bodies often endured.

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<sup>7</sup> Punt identifies the common, modern bewilderment about the seemingly obvious contradiction between Christianity's message and slaveholding in his article "Paul, Power, and Philemon," when he says, "how slaveholders negotiated their Christian faith in the early church remains obscure. Whereas there were probably some members of the communities of the followers of Jesus who set their slaves free, other members appear to have maintained the 'long-established power relations of the Roman order.'" *Philemon in Perspective*, 239. G. Francois Wessels agrees that the problem for modern sensibilities begs the question, but that we simply do not know why the early Christians did not wholeheartedly renounce slavery. See Wessels, "The Letter to Philemon in the Context of Slavery in Early Christianity," in *Philemon in Perspective*, 168.

What will not be disputed in the following pages is Glancy's evidence concerning an ancient slave's sexual availability, an undeniable characteristic of this Greco-Roman institution.<sup>8</sup> Our divergence stems primarily from our interpretations of that material and our speculation as to Paul's own attitude toward slaves' bodies. While Glancy makes a case for the likely exclusion of slaves based on the polluting nature of their sexually available bodies, I wish to suggest that perhaps Paul's theology could in fact have accommodated such potentially dangerous elements. What I have found in my research, which I hope to be an important addition to this aspect of Pauline studies, is the notion of intentionality when addressing sexuality in the early church. The scholarship featured in the following pages all leaves something to be desired in this area when their authors seek to parse out Paul's delineation of sexual boundaries. Most often the concern is with the ones transgressing the boundaries, particularly the men in 1 Cor. What most scholars overlook is how Paul's boundaries would have affected those with whom the Christian men are participating in *porneia*. The question for me is not whether Paul permitted sex with "dishonored women" and prostitutes in the church but whether Paul *could have* accommodated women in these lowly positions seeking participation in the fledgling church. Does his theology inherently exclude these people? Does he consider them at all? This project is in search of a theology that addresses all the members of the stratified society of the Roman Empire.

Other reasons for attempting to uncover this seemingly minute aspect of Paul's theology lie in its ability to help us further understand who exactly the first Christians were and from where Paul drew his theological positions, having borrowed from and combined

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<sup>8</sup> See the first paragraph of Glancy's "Early Christianity, Slavery, and Women's Bodies," in *Beyond Slavery*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010).

Stoicism, Hellenistic Judaism, and nascent Christianity. If, as Wayne Meeks famously stated, the early Christian congregations “reflected a fair cross-section of urban society,”<sup>9</sup> and this society included slaves,<sup>10</sup> how might Paul’s theology have been affected? Gerd Theissen’s assessment stated that this “cross-section” in the Corinthian congregation can be identified as a stratified majority of lower class citizens and a few influential upper class members, which he takes to be a characteristic make-up of Hellenistic congregations outside Palestine.<sup>11</sup> We know by way of Paul’s letter to Philemon that some of the earliest Christians were in fact slave owners, and that perhaps their slaves converted as well.<sup>12</sup> Out of self-admitted ignorance about this topic altogether, a colleague pushed me to consider the make-up of the Corinthian community by way of his simple inquisition as to whether there could have been Christian slaves with non-Christian owners present at all, surely the most troublesome scenario possible since the master would have been beyond the judgment of Paul.<sup>13</sup> If Paul’s proclamation that sex only take place between spouses was

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<sup>9</sup> Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U. Press, 1983), 73.

<sup>10</sup> For estimations on slave populations see Joseph Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man*, trans. T. E. J. Wiedemann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1975), 4; K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1984), 15-17; Wiedemann, (1987), 12-13; M. I. Finely, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, exp. edition, ed. Brent Shaw (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Pub., 1998), 147-155.

<sup>11</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*, ed. and trans. John H. Schutz (Philadelphia, Penn.: Fortress Press, 1982), 69-70.

<sup>12</sup> As an extension of the master’s person, it seems likely that slaves would have been expected to follow the religious traditions of their masters, and perhaps Onesimus is returning to Philemon as a convert. See D. Francois Tolmie, “Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon Since 1980” in *Philemon in Perspective*, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2002), 59: “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.”

heard and abided by the Corinthians, surely this would implore the Christian slave owners to cease sexual relations with slaves, but what of slaves with non-Christian owners?<sup>14</sup>

And as yet another work in the vast corpus of scholarly material on Paul, by attempting to identify his opinion on the sexually available bodies of first-century slaves, we may come to a finer and more nuanced understanding of the creative synthesis of the sources that informed his theology. As an educated Roman citizen, literate and familiar with classical rhetoric,<sup>15</sup> and popular philosophy, and a Diasporic Hellenized Jew, born in the pagan town of Tarsus<sup>16</sup> in Asia Minor, trained as a Pharisee in Jerusalem,<sup>17</sup> speaking both his culture's Aramaic and the Empire's *lingua franca* of Greek, it should not come as a surprise that a single origin for his gospel eludes us. Sifting through his potential sources, attempting to identify similarities, differences, divergences, and convergences between traditions, philosophies, narratives, histories, and the like is what makes for a more fruitful and edifying endeavor. This project intends to continue that task, to better know the apostle himself, as well as his earliest adherents.

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<sup>14</sup> For possibility that individuals, including those in pagan households, and not just whole households made up part of the Corinthian congregation see Theissen (1982), 98.

<sup>15</sup> See Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2002); Runia (1993), esp. ch. 4; Mark D. Given, "Paul and Rhetoric: A *Sophos* in the Kingdom of God," in *Paul Unbound* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010); Stowers (1986)

<sup>16</sup> Tarsus' patron god, Tarku paraded through the town every year. Bruce Chilton remarks on the variants of influences on Paul in Tarsus: "The culture that shaped Paul from the beginning of his life was pagan as well as Jewish; even the Aramaic he learned at home had been imported by the Persians. Greek was the intellectual oxygen of his thought. And when it came to his proud Jewish heritage, cultural memory taught him that Rome was its indispensable guardian," Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Paul* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Acts 22:3 has Paul stating that he "sat at the feet of Gamaliel" the most famous Rabbi of his generation for his Pharisaic training, although this is widely understood as an exaggeration, however much Paul was influenced by Gamaliel's teachings. See Chilton (2004), 35.

The next question then is exactly how the following pages will go about this task. As will be shown, the literature that attempts to discuss Paul's gospel with regard to first-century slaves and their bodies seems to do so without reference to its main component—the slave. As part of the project of finding a likely space in the early church for this stratum of Greco-Roman society I have found a postcolonial perspective to be most helpful. As will be seen throughout this text, Jeremy Punt's article on Paul's letter to Philemon using this tool of interpretation informs my work very much. As he says, “postcolonial biblical criticism represents a shift in focus, a strategy of reading that often attempts to point out what was missing in previous analyses, but also to rewrite and correct.”<sup>18</sup> If postcolonialism is uniquely interested in finding the voices of the voiceless throughout history, I argue for a somewhat dual-purpose interpretation of the those voices. First, I agree that indeed these voices are vital to understanding Paul's theology on sexuality and an attempt to delimit their place in the Christian church does add important layers to that theology. Second, I wish to suggest that Paul could have only found space for those voiceless by recognizing their voicelessness. That is, if Paul does in fact have notions of intentionality when he speaks about sexual immorality, he just may have been aware of the inability of the least of those in his congregations to act on their own behalf. In this Paul heeds the circumstances of his entire community when defining the moral boundaries of his new movement.

Beyond pointing out and making use of the voices that were missing in an analysis of Paul's theology, the second advantage of and use for a postcolonial theory involves the rewriting and correcting of history. As R. S. Sugirtharajah says, “the key function of

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<sup>18</sup>Jeremy Punt (2010), 224.

postcolonial criticism is to register how the knowledge we construct and impart as academics is structured by the absence, difficulty or impossibility of representation of the subaltern.”<sup>19</sup> It is my contention that the literature thus far on slaves in the early church fails to take notice of this (their) absence when it attempts to reconstruct the first-century church. A postcolonial reading of Paul's theology with regard to slaves needs to be studied so that we might both better understand him and more accurately disseminate the nature of his gospel to students of Paul everywhere. The gospel we reconstruct and impart in academia is all the lesser without reference to the entire early Christian community, one which we know included not only slave-owners but slaves themselves. This project attempts to remember those slaves when defining Paul's understanding of *porneia*.

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<sup>19</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2002), 201.

## PART I: The Greco-Roman Slave in Context

### *Popular Conceptions of the Slave's Body*

To begin any discussion of Greco-Roman conceptions of a slave's body, particularly in contrast to a free person's body, one must be aware of what William Fitzgerald refers to as "living with contradiction."<sup>20</sup> His observation concerning the reality of owning slaves is an important one when delineating the lines between these two ontological categories.

Though the slave's humanity was philosophically and legally problematic—and this licensed a great deal of appalling treatment—slave-owners knew that their slaves were humans as well as chattel, and in this respect living with slaves involved living with contradiction. Some aspects of the practice and law of slavery assumed the instrumental status of the slave as chattel, but others emphasized the slave's humanity: the institution was contradictory, and no simple characterization or definition could possibly be adequate to Roman attitudes to slaves.<sup>21</sup>

This project will attempt to define slaves in a multitude of ways, arguing that although legally and socially the Greco-Roman slave was inherently without the capacity to exercise control over his/her body, a slave was still recognized as a human agent, as evidenced by Paul's understanding of a slave as able to participate in the early church. What tends to dominate the secondary literature analyzing slavery in a Greco-Roman context is the

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<sup>20</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 6-7.

<sup>21</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 7.

notion that slaves were wholly nothing in the eyes of their owners, other than tools and instruments. While, as Fitzgerald recognizes, this was one aspect of the attitude toward slaves and their ontological status, we ought not over-emphasize their suppressed status in such a way so as to diminish the degree of agency they actually were afforded, however little it may have been. This problematizing of the reality of servitude is a necessary step in ascertaining a true picture of slave existence in the first century. The purpose of the following investigation into typical Greco-Roman conceptions of a slave and his/her body is both to make a case for a slave's subjugated status—which of course did have realistic and real-time consequences in the realm of sexual obligations, but also to highlight the humanity in slaves whom Paul was interested in bringing into the emergent Christian fold.

A further aspect of the ambiguous nature of slaves in a Greco-Roman context can be found in the introduction to Page DuBois' aptly named book, *Slaves and Other Objects*. What is often indiscernible with regard to slaves in the first century is exactly how they were understood over and against free citizens, free women, children, prostitutes, concubines, animals, and indeed simple objects. DuBois presents the difficult task of recognizing what exact ontological space slaves inhabited when she says,

One result of the crucial place of slaves in the ancient Greek economy is the possibility that there were some humans at the beginnings of Western civilization understood to be more human than others; that being human is not an absolute condition but rather a gradual one, on a sliding scale on which some humans approach the status of things, of objects.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Page DuBois, *Slaves and Other Objects* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

One must be aware that the primary literature concerning the ancient slave is at best a multifarious collection of attitudes and ideas scanning this entire spectrum, however singular the voice of the literature. Again, while we may rightfully acknowledge that a less than or other than nature predominates as a slave's main social characteristic, a slave must still occupy shared space with his/her free counterparts, thus Fitzgerald's comment's importance.

T. E. J. Wiedemann reiterates DuBois' acknowledgment of the degree to which one is or is not fully human. He says, "perhaps a better explanation [of why physical violence against slaves was so condoned] can be found in the conceptual inferiority of slaves: like children or barbarians, slaves are outside the fully human citizen community."<sup>23</sup> What may sound like an exaggeration of sorts to speak of clearly biologically human beings—children, barbarians, slaves—as *less than human* deserves some explanation. Wiedemann

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<sup>23</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 25. The potential foil to this rather strictly delineated conception of humanness is of course manumission, a practice which both the Greeks and the Romans practiced with apparent regularity; the main difference being that Roman freedmen gained citizenship, while those released in Greece did not. And while the stigma of slavery could sometimes be overcome in only a generation or two, it often remained a shackle at least in a slave's mind; Horace could never shake the reality of being "born of a freedman father" (*libertino patre natus*, *Satires.I.6.6*). Beyond one's personal attitudes about their new status, as W. Fitzgerald (2000), 87-8 reminds us, "the freed slave retained obligations toward his or her original owner as well as certain legal disabilities, and inhabited legally, socially, and morally, an inbetween world." Remarking on the similarities in a Greek context, R. Zelnick-Abramovitz on p. 320 in *Not Wholly Free* (Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2005): "[manumitted slaves] were no longer slaves, but most of them were still bound to their former masters by various obligations. They had acquired a legal personality, but one inferior to that of citizens. For more detail on manumitted slave obligations see Wiedemann (1987), 27-8; Bradley (1984), 81-112. For reasons to manumit see Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1996), 7; Wiedemann (1987), 27. For details of manumission procedures and limitations see Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (Baltimore, Mary.: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1981), 24-5.

frames his discussion of the lowly status of slaves as being over and against the adult male citizen, most often the control element when imagining “normalcy” in a Greco-Roman context.<sup>24</sup> It is almost too obvious a phenomenon to mention that since the writing we have from antiquity is far and away disproportionately by the hands of free, adult, male citizens that they should measure anyone (anything) else against themselves.

In the introduction to their edited work, *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan speak about the rather similarly subordinated status of both women and slaves.

Ancient Greek and Roman societies always combined slaveholding and patriarchy, and this combination promoted a constant process of comparison and differentiation. Women and slaves were similarly distinguished from free men by their social subordination and their imagined otherness. Both were excluded from full participation in political life; both occupied an ambiguous position in the patrilocal family as indispensable outsiders; and both were viewed as morally deficient and potentially dangerous.<sup>25</sup>

Philosophy, law, history, and the like were all grounded in a centrifugal worldview with the writer at its core; thus the slave, if not conceptually the complete opposite of the free

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<sup>24</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 25. See also, Wiedemann (1981) a sourcebook for primary literature concerning slaves. In particular on pages 64-5 Wiedemann avers that slaves were in principle banned from participating in the activities that made a man a citizen, specifically citing service in the army. In Pliny's letters, 10.29 and 10.30, in correspondence with Trajan he asks what to do with two slaves found among the new troops. Trajan responds that if the slaves came forward of their own accord, knowing their status [as slaves], then they must be punished, assumingly since the measure of free and slave would begin to blur had they been allowed involvement.

<sup>25</sup> Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan, “Introduction: Differential Equations” in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 3.

citizen, was at least significantly marginalized, and likewise the (free or slave) woman.<sup>26</sup>

What is more, K. R. Bradley makes a case, to be discussed more fully below, that sexual abuse of slaves was one other tool for reinforcing the dehumanization of slaves by their free owners—furthering the perceived difference between these social polarities.

What makes this discussion about the ancient slave unusual to some degree is the dearth of attention paid to the economic importance of the Greco-Roman slave. Of course much has been written concerning this aspect of slave owning, as Moses Finley's foundational texts, *Ancient Economy* and *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* show. Indeed quoting Arnold Heeren, Finley reiterates the absolute dependence of Greek civilization on the instrument of slavery.<sup>27</sup> And while the economic lens used to evaluate the importance and use of the ancient slave is an important one, Wiedemann suggests, "ancient slavery can be better understood if it is approached primarily as a social category rather than an economic class." He continues, "It is a slave's total rightlessness against his master which makes slavery a 'peculiar institution'."<sup>28</sup> It is Wiedemann's submission of the due predominance of the social aspect of slavery over the economic, one's 'rightlessness', which concerns the present work.

Again, although primarily interested in the slave's place with regard to economic engagements, Finley does recognize a slave's hardship in another arena as well—that of the slave's personal agency. He says, "the slaveowner's rights over his slave-property were total in more senses than one. The slave, by being a slave, suffered not only 'total loss of

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<sup>26</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 25.

<sup>27</sup> Finley (1998), 80.

<sup>28</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 22.

control over his labour’ but total loss of control over his person and his personality.”<sup>29</sup> This statement concerns at least a couple of the issues mentioned above. Finley speaks not only to the physical servitude required of a slave but also the depreciation of his social, psychological, and ontological states. While identifying the slave as property is not unique or novel in this definition of slavery, what is significant is the recognition of a slave’s intangible losses. A loss of person and personality must surely equate to the loss of one’s self-determined will—including one’s ability to consent and give permission for the use of his/her total person, whatever the purpose. It is a slave’s ontological status that is adversely affected by loss of such qualities—being a slave meant a loss of being.

G. Francois Wessels’ comments on slaves’ bodies augment Finley’s definition by speaking directly about the perceived non-being implicit in Greco-Roman attitudes under his section title “Bodies but not ‘Somebodies’” when he says, “[slaves] were not regarded, in the first place, as other human beings, but as objects, which had to be controlled; they were viewed as chattel or as socially dead people”<sup>30</sup>—an obvious parallel with DuBois’ comments above. Indeed, Wessels argues, slaves had no status as social beings, but were in fact nobodies. Flesh and bone, yes, but nothing more than “a tool that breathes,” (*empsuchon organon*) to use Aristotle’s description.<sup>31</sup> While one must be aware of the potentially specious nature of such a draconian definition as Aristotle offers,<sup>32</sup> it does

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<sup>29</sup> Finley (1998), 74.

<sup>30</sup> Wessels (2010), 159.

<sup>31</sup> J. A. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006), 18.

<sup>32</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 13, “The importance of the slave/free distinction in Greek political thought means that we must be careful about assuming that philosophers like Aristotle are

suffice to exemplify a common Greco-Roman cultural milieu with regard to slaves' bodies.

It is an understanding of the slave as “socially dead” as quoted by Wessels that supplements a working definition of slavery in a Greco-Roman context.

To speak about the loss of physical control of a slave's body Wessels is equally helpful for his simple but crucial statement that “the bodies of slaves did not belong to them,” primarily speaking to the slave owners' free sexual access to the bodies of their slaves.<sup>33</sup> This aspect of institutional Greco-Roman slavery was of course unique neither to the first century nor to the Mediterranean as Orlando Patterson in his nearly exhaustive tour de force on the social ramifications of slavery around the world states: “I know of no slave-holding society in which a master, when so inclined, could not exact sexual services from his female slaves.”<sup>34</sup> This, of course, is Glancy's main concern in her chapter on slaves' participation in Paul's communities. With this aspect of the availability of a slave's body in mind, Glancy wishes to suggest that this availability would have been morally abhorrent to the body of Christ (the Christian congregation) and would necessitate some degree of exclusion.

K. R. Bradley's monograph on the social relations and relationships between slaves and masters in the Roman Empire mirrors Patterson's observations. Though seemingly

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being descriptive rather than using slaves as markers for one extreme of the human condition. What is clear, particularly about the way philosophers viewed the world, was that each category should have its opposite—slave/free, male/female, adult/child, citizen/barbarian. See Fitzgerald (2000), 41.

<sup>33</sup> Wessels (2010), 159.

<sup>34</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1982), 173.

reluctant in the beginning to admit just how widespread the practice was, Bradley finally must succumb to the highest probability. He says, “since slaves by definition were at the complete disposal of their owners it follows that they might become the object of capricious sexual abuse,” unsurprisingly citing Finely’s work. He continues, “It is even more probable, however, that slave-owners gratified their own (sexual) appetites from among the slaves of their household,” which he supports with references to the Latin poets Horace and Martial.<sup>35</sup> Two of Martial’s addressees, Quirinalis and Cinna both receive the poet’s condemnation for their lax attitude concerning sexual interaction with the slaves in their own homes, the result of which is children born by slaves and to slaves. And finally, with regard to both the corporeal and immaterial losses of the abused slave Bradley concludes, “Yet it remains true that slaves were automatically deprived of individuality and self-respect when they could anticipate becoming their owners’ involuntary lovers.”<sup>36</sup>

What will be discussed in more detail later, the vocabulary used to speak about slaves, can here exemplify an important point: a slave’s perceived loss of humanity directly correlates with a rise in an understanding of him/her as simply a body. A clear distinction between slave and free, according to Demosthenes, was that “slaves are responsible [with their bodies] (*soma*) for all offenses, while the freeman, even in the most unfortunate circumstances, can protect their persons.”<sup>37</sup> Also to be discussed further below, a look at slavery in the theater can help illuminate Demosthenes’ point. In Plautus’ *Mostellaria*, a slave says to his master, “Freedom is a cloak over your back,” clearly referring to the

<sup>35</sup> See Horace, Epodes 5.58, Epistle 1.14.21, Martial Epigrams 2.17.1, 1.84, 6.39.

<sup>36</sup> See Bradley (1984), 116-118.

<sup>37</sup> As quoted by Harrill (2006), 39.

corporal protection it provides. And in Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*, a slave character is acutely aware of the difference in the answerability of a free person and a slave for their offenses. He says, "for you there will be words (*verba*), for this man [me] there will be a beating (*verbera*)."<sup>38</sup> As J. Harrill reiterates, "an enslaved person was deemed not a whole human being but merely a 'body', which helps explain why the word *body* (*soma*) is one in the Greek vocabulary for *slave*."<sup>39</sup>

Patterson underscores the difference between slave and free as outlined by Demosthenes when describing the delicts of slaves.<sup>40</sup> Inter-slave crimes as opposed to those between slave and free were treated much less seriously. While only codified much later in Justinian's *Digest*, Macer's commentary on the legal treatment of slaves compared to free men describes just such a practice.<sup>41</sup> A slave is always to receive a harsher punishment than a free man having committed the same crime for the purpose, as Wiedemann says, of "[demonstrating] the slave's inferiority publicly."<sup>42</sup> What seems to be at work is the notion that whatever the situation, the slave's body is significantly trivialized as less 'fully human' than the free person's.

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<sup>38</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 33.

<sup>39</sup> Harrill (2006), 39.

<sup>40</sup> Patterson (1982), 196.

<sup>41</sup> Wiedemann (1981), 30.

<sup>42</sup> Wiedemann (1981), 30.

*Exceptions to a Slave's Lack of Agency*

Before proceeding to outline examples of a lack of agency afforded to slaves in the Roman Empire, I must propose a more full definition of *agency* itself. In this I am primarily indebted to the distinctions cited by Anthony Marcel in “The Sense of Agency: Awareness and Ownership of Action.”<sup>43</sup> Marcel describes agency most simply as “a sense of oneself as an actor or a sense that actions are one’s own.”<sup>44</sup> This paper will likewise define agency via these parameters since as the following examples will show, those circumstances in which the ancient slave appears to be an actor are also those in which he (appears) to act most independently, although as I will argue, these are merely opportunities to reinforce his otherness. The ability to act unencumbered by others was undoubtedly the prerogative of the most elite of this stringently and hierarchically defined society,<sup>45</sup> and perhaps even they felt uneasy with such obligations and restrictions.

For Marcel, among four elements that he identifies as constitutive of this action is a “degree of voluntariness.”<sup>46</sup> What is problematic for the ancient slave, and what distinguished him/her from the ancient slave-owner (and more specifically the elite,

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<sup>43</sup> Anthony Marcel, “The Sense of Agency: Awareness and Ownership of Action,” in *Agency and Self-Awareness: Issues in Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. Johannes Roessler and Naomi Eilan (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2003). Although this is a work written with no intentional applicability to the Greco-Roman world, I take its simplistic phrasing to be appropriate for this project. There is no doubt that slaves knew they often worked as extensions of their owners, were under full control of their owners, and had little opportunity to move and act independently of these parameters. To describe agency as Marcel has, we can begin to better trace the realities of servitude in more ways than one.

<sup>44</sup> Marcel (2003), 54.

<sup>45</sup> See Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U. Press, 1990), 42.

<sup>46</sup> Marcel (2003), 59.

freeborn, male citizen), is the ability to act voluntarily. Following DuBois' sliding scale of humanness, we might imagine a correlative scale of volition imbued in human actors.

Those identified as most fully human commanded a sense that they were responsible for their own actions and those they dominated, while those defined as *less than* (slaves, children, wives) were subject most harshly to the will of those who dominated them.

Sandra Joshel defines this relationship of volition and humanness via the power of the father and head of the household (*patria potestas*).<sup>47</sup> The freeborn citizen (*ingenuus*) was free, but not from the will of the one who held power of life and death (*paterfamilias*). The freeborn citizen gained responsibility for his actions only after being released from this paternal power.<sup>48</sup> The slave was always under this control, and would never be held responsible for his actions, except in cases of damaging his ontologically superior's honor.<sup>49</sup>

While this project argues for the lack of agency afforded to slaves in the Roman Empire, there are two seemingly exceptional circumstances in which the slave is indeed an actor of sorts that ought to be addressed. As I hope to show however, what may appear to be an affording of agency to the Greco-Roman slave was in fact the opposite, even actively working to re-establish the personality chasm. One such situation is that of the courtroom, where the slave was often the representative of a free man in trade and mercantile matters.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome* (Norman, Okla.: U. of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 27.

<sup>48</sup> Joshel (1992), 27.

<sup>49</sup> See Patterson (1982), 200, "It is significant that the slave as an active agent was recognized only when he behaved in a criminal manner."

<sup>50</sup> Steven Johnstone, "Cracking the Code of Silence" in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Context*, 229.

What Steven Johnstone argues in response to this *appearance* of agency is that although the slave seems to be acting of his own accord, he was in fact only understood to be a stand-in for his master, with no interest of his own. The extension of the free man's will via the passive and disinterested vessel that was his slave was not unusual in the Roman Empire as slaves often participated in economic and vocational positions alongside free persons. However, as Johnstone reiterates, “despite hints that slaves may have taken an active part in disputes, the speeches [of Demosthenes and Lysias] fail to represent them with even limited subjectivity” (comparing slaves to women in the courtroom).<sup>51</sup> Here, the slave as a mere stand-in for his master reinforces the slave's lack of agency and dependency on his master for direction and motivation.

Lysias' *Speech 4* on the dispute between two unnamed men and their apparently shared slave property (although her exact status is also disputed) makes use of the language of slaves as things to be given, taken—pawns in legal matters. The accuser claims the defendant broke into his house and injured him in dispute over the ownership of the slave girl (§§ 5-7) after a night of drinking, while the defendant claims to have been invited (§ 11). The accuser refuses to exact testimony from the girl via torture (§ 12), which the defendant claims is proof of the former's love sickness for their joint financial venture into her procurement. Despite the girl's apparent affections at once for both the men and later only for the accuser (§§ 8, 17) her interests in the outcome of and reasons for their dispute are unsurprisingly limited. And although neither of the high-class men are named perhaps out of consideration of their reputations, nor is the girl herself, a point

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<sup>51</sup> Johnstone (1998), 229.

which S. C. Todd suggests may imply an attempt to represent her more as an object than a person.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps Lysias' most famous speech, *Concerning the Killing of Eratosthenes*, features the undisputed status of a household slave and her place in her master's *oikos*, sketching her involvement in the events, though integral to the story, as only one motivated by fear of her own physical harm (§ 18).<sup>53</sup> The defendant and speaker, Euphiletus, admits to the killing of Eratosthenes, whose siblings or close family members have brought the charges against him, but claims to have acted justly since Eratosthenes was having an affair with his wife (§ 30). The slave's role in the narrative is found in her apparent knowledge of and complicity in the affair, which she is said to have intentionally tried to cover up (§ 11) on the wife's behalf. S. C. Todd summarizes, "Euphiletus' own maid, is restricted to indirect speech, she comes across very much as the agent initially of her mistress and then of Euphiletus himself, rather than as a personality in her own right."<sup>54</sup>

As mentioned above, if a slave was indeed brought before a jury for his own knowledge of some dispute, he could expect to have his body subjected to physical torture as a means for exacting the truth of his testimony.<sup>55</sup> Again, Johnstone discusses the permissible use of torture to exact testimony from slaves in Athenian law courts:

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<sup>52</sup> See S. C. Todd, *A Commentary on Lysias, Speeches 1-11* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007), 348, n. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Johnstone (1998), 230.

<sup>54</sup> Todd (2007), 53.

<sup>55</sup> See Wiedemann (1981), 167 for commentary on Lysias's *Speech 4* and the assumption that slaves would be tortured for testimony; also the Senate Recommendation of 10 CE (p. 169) that stated that if an owner was killed, all the slaves within an earshot of the crime had to be interrogated under torture and executed—perhaps following the earlier standard that if one slave in the house killed the master, all slaves were to be killed subsequently.

Slaves must have considered that this impinged on their interests, but this symbolic, sadistic displacement of hostility onto their bodies was possible because they were legally depicted as largely devoid of humanity and therefore of interests. Indeed, the common claim that ‘truth’ spontaneously issued from slaves under torture posits the slave not as a subject but as a body with a reflex.<sup>56</sup>

The slave as nothing more than ‘a body with a reflex’ mirrors the disinterested depiction of the slave in economic engagements on behalf of his master as well as his lack of legal and social personality. Underlying this availability for the option to torture slaves legally is clearly the distinction that harming a slave’s body was of no real moral consequence for the state (*polis*) or the (free) individual. Harming another man’s slave, of course, did have legal repercussions but only in the framework of the destruction of a free man’s property, not one of bodily infringement of the slave him/herself, since it was not his/her own body to begin with. As this presentation of information will continue to show, there was little attention paid to the ‘bodily rights’ of slaves, philosophically, morally, or legally.

The second circumstance in which the ancient slave appears to possess agency is in the context of the theater. As Fitzgerald reminds us, since both the Greeks and the Romans recognized the inherent contradiction in their attitudes toward slaves as being both actual human persons acting as extended arms of their will while also being their (imagined) ontological inferiors, this uneasiness had to be worked out or managed as he says; and the arena in which this project took place was the theater.<sup>57</sup> What characterizes particularly Plautine comedy beyond the inextricable and symbiotic relationship between slave and free

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<sup>56</sup> Johnstone (1998), 229.

<sup>57</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 9.

is the reversal of roles that the plays often develop. Here I am in full debt to William Fitzgerald for his synthesis of the modern literature concerning the social and psychological aspects of slave owning which pervade slave comedy.<sup>58</sup>

The annual Saturnalian festival at Rome (December 17-23) is understood to have been a time when slaves were allowed “various symbolic liberties.”<sup>59</sup> Slaves were said to have dined alongside their masters and been provided special meals by their mistresses. Beyond eating together (and perhaps even being waited on), slaves addressed their masters more casually than usual (as peers?), in remembrance of the golden age rule of Saturn when such an abundance of resources made slavery unnecessary.<sup>60</sup> Fitzgerald points to the work of Erich Segal to discuss the “Saturnalian reversal of the normal hierarchy and decorum” which informs Plautus’ comedies. The image of a Saturnalian party-goer image which accompanies the month of December in the calendar of Filocalus illustrates this reversal. The verse on the edge of the image read: “Behold winter nourishes the seed thrown each year into the ploughed earth; all is wet with rain sent from Jupiter. Now let December call once more the golden festival for Saturn. Now you, slave, are allowed to play with your master.”<sup>61</sup> The verb “to play” in this last sentence (*Nunc tibi cum domina ludere verna licet*) has numerous translational and interpretational leeway, ranging from to play, gamble with, frolic, amuse oneself with, ridicule, rally, banter, and deceive.<sup>62</sup>

Whatever the rendering however, the regular (and regulated) social norms were somehow

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<sup>58</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000). See particularly pp. 36-8.

<sup>59</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 20.

<sup>60</sup> Bradley (1984), 42-3.

<sup>61</sup> Citation and translation by Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome, vol. II: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1998), 125.

<sup>62</sup> John Lockwood, *Chambers-Murray Latin-English Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Chambers Press, 1976).

uspended during this holiday period. It is the “festive license” of the comedy that allows such a fundamental and unusual shake up to take place in the theater, as during the time of the Saturnalia. The audience can appreciate the informed, independently acting human character of the slave while in the safe, confined parameters of the theater, and for the prescribed duration of the play, just as during the festival all the while knowing that “tomorrow will be different, as was yesterday.”<sup>63</sup>

Beyond the willingness to concede some degree of agency to the slave intra-theater, Douglass Parker has proposed another explanation for this aspect of Plautus’ works. As Freud suggested, that humor defuses anxiety (surely a sentiment all people can relate to), Parker wishes to suggest that Plautus’ clever slave (*servus callidus*) character is a source of anxiety for his audience.<sup>64</sup> With a massive influx of slaves during Plautus’ lifetime, as well as four significant slave revolts, the witted slave was “a potentially terrifying specter.”<sup>65</sup> What Parker sees as constitutive of Plautus’ plays is the ever-looming knowledge that the master has complete power over even the most clever slave. Here the thespian slave is provided agency solely as a means to indulge the audience’s fears but then ultimately diffuse them, re-establishing the master’s dominion as well as the slave’s lowly servility.

Fitzgerald suggests another reading of slaves’ participation in comedy that parallel’s Parker’s in some ways—namely the use of slaves as a metaphorical stand-in for

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<sup>63</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 37.

<sup>64</sup> Douglass Parker, “Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: the *Servus Callidus* and Jokes About Torture,” in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 233-46

<sup>65</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 37. As Erich Segal says in *Roman Laughter: the Comedy of Plautus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1968), “Plautine comedy for does break class barriers merely to make every man a ‘citoyen’ [citizen]. Rather, it creates a new—albeit temporary—aristocracy, in which wit, not birth, distinguishes the ruler from the ruled,” 104.

free society's own feelings of suppression.<sup>66</sup> Always cognizant of the exaggerated and fictional reality that is the theater, Fitzgerald makes the slave a tool with which the free could "imagine escaping from the demands of 'liberal' comportment and indulging in revolt against their own superiors."<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the free theater-goer could relate to the demands imposed on the slave as being in some way similar to their own plight in such a rigidly delimited social structure that was the Roman Empire. Likewise, the slave, by being the opposite of the free person, was able to indulge the elements of his humanity that the free person "must subject to rigorous control."<sup>68</sup>

What seems nearly categorical of the slaves in Plautine comedy are their roles as the loveable, sympathetic tricksters. While the slave character indeed plays a significant role in the development of the plot and the like, what distinguishes his actions from free others is his motivation—overcoming to some degree, or at least for the brief period of the play, his lack of social or economic power, thus reversing, however momentarily, normal social hierarchies.<sup>69</sup> Annalisa Rei observes the dramatic functions of slaves *and* women in Plautine comedy as resulting from their social inferiority to, of course, high-class men. As mentioned earlier, everything must be measured against this ever-powerful social standard. The trickster, as a character type, is famously known to disobey standard social rules and conventional behavior, often for the purpose of highlighting his fellow actors' (and the audience's) reliance on and comfort with such customs. However, the seeming will imbued in the slave character in Greco-Roman theater ought to be excused as inauthentic compared

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<sup>66</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 11.

<sup>67</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 11.

<sup>68</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 41.

<sup>69</sup> Annalisa Rei, "Villians, Wives, and Slaves in the Comedies of Plautus," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 93.

to actual agency, given the intentional reversal of well-established social hierarchies for the selfish purpose of the audience's self-satisfaction. Ultimately although slaves did feature prominently in the works of Plautus, Aesop, Horace, and more—their roles were at best temporary, fictional, and tangential to the reality of their primary relationship as servant to their master. All of this is to say that despite the presence of slaves in a number of arenas in Greco-Roman society, they were ever debased socially, morally, legally, and economically.

*Honor ---> Agency ---> Ontology ---> Will*

This next distillation of ancient mores will attempt to make the case for a slave's inherent inability to establish a self-will given the rigidity of Greco-Roman social stratification. I wish to link a lack of dignity and honor inculcated in slaves' relationships with their free opposites to a lack of agency, which inevitably leads to the inability to assume a new (higher) degree of ontology, which I will argue is the only means for manifesting a self-interested will.

The Latin word *honor*, as opposed to the emotion-laden and now wholly idealistic English equivalent, consistently signified specific matters in the Roman mind. Carlin Barton defines the term in numerous ways throughout her laconically titled monograph, *Roman Honor*, but an early statement puts it thus: “*honores* in Latin, were the prizes, the tokens of the esteem and recognition that one received from others and that gave one status.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed honor was an abstract, a virtue, anthropomorphized into a divinity worthy of recognition and supplication; but it was also a tool by which Roman hierarchy was

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<sup>70</sup> Carlin Barton, *Roman Honor* (Berkeley, Cali.: U. of California Press, 2001), 11.

defined, a measuring stick of sorts. The result of honor, however variously achieved, was status. Most basically, this status was delineated unsurprisingly by the categories of free and slave. Cicero writes in *Philippicae*, “All other nations endure slavery, but our city cannot... We have been trained and our minds imbued by our ancestors to refer all our acts and thought to the standard of *dignitas* and *virtus*.”<sup>71</sup> It is the Romans, as a people, as a city, who can never be slaves, for they are heirs to a tradition that *honors* honor; barbarians, outsiders, conquered peoples, slaves are not. Richard Saller identifies this most basic difference between free and slave when he says, “propertied Romans lived in their houses in relations marked by a fundamental distinction between family members whose bodies were protected by their honor and those of lower status who had no honor to protect them from above.”<sup>72</sup> As we know, one way slaves and free were marked was by their in/ability to protect their bodies. Honor protected the free and left the slave open to danger of all kinds.<sup>73</sup>

The freeborn citizen’s respectability and honor could be measured most poignantly against a slave or freedman. Joshel writes:

Inflicted on an individual’s body or his standing (*dignitas*), injury [*inuria*] resulted when one person asserted his power in relation to another... That most of the offenses listed in the legal sources [see below] were physical in nature suggests that honor and physical integrity were inextricably intertwined. The assertion of power offended the victim because

<sup>71</sup> What underlies Cicero’s passage is the inherent dishonorability of servitude. For full citation and translation see Barton (2001), 126.

<sup>72</sup> Richard Saller, *Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1994), 152.

<sup>73</sup> Is it any wonder, then, why Kyle Harper defines *porneia* in the earliest Christian sense and in accord with Second Temple Judaism as “sex with dishonored women?” See Harper, “*Porneia: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, forthcoming.

he was treated, contrary to his status as a freeborn citizen, as if he were a slave, a being without power and physical integrity.<sup>74</sup>

This link between honor and the body cannot be overstated since not only is the *paterfamilias* conscious of the honor of *his* body and the status its virtue reinforces, but that even that of his children, particularly over and against his slaves.

As Saller observes, classical Roman authors distinguished between the means of punishing children and punishing slaves, condemning the use of the whip [the classic disciplining tool] on children, presumably recognizing the child's superiority and thus safety from such degrading bodily harm.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, although sons and daughters owed deference and had liabilities to their father, their position was an honorable one, unlike the slave's, for they owed obedience to a father, not a master.<sup>76</sup> As Barton says, "service to a father was not servitude,"<sup>77</sup> and Seneca writes in *De beneficiis*: "I obeyed my parents, I yielded to their rule, and, whether it was just or unjust and harsh, I showed myself obsequious and submissive."<sup>78</sup>

Saller makes the case that perhaps our modern value sets fail to recognize the virtuous mantel on which honor sat in the ancient world, and the force of arguments made

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<sup>74</sup> Joshel (1992), 27-8. Examples cited include: striking a person with a stick, fist, or sword; flogging him; forcibly entering his home; preventing him from fishing in the sea, catching birds, bathing publicly, taking a seat in the theater, or associating with others in public; behaving in a lewd manner toward a Roman woman; raising a public outcry; or advertising someone's property for sale as if he were a debtor.

<sup>75</sup> Saller (1994), 145 recognizes the granting and withholding of praise as the primary means of socialization for Roman children, not corporal punishment.

<sup>76</sup> Joshel (1992), 27.

<sup>77</sup> Barton (2001), 167. See also Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame*, ed. J. G. Peristiany, Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1966), 36.

<sup>78</sup> Seneca's citation and translation see Barton (2001), 166.

with it.<sup>79</sup> With this in mind, a number of observations about the use of, means to acquire, and attitudes about honor will illuminate just how little a slave was able to achieve. As Patterson reminds us, following Plato's *Republic* we can surely call Greco-Roman society *timocratic*; that is, honor (*time*) was the principal that ruled all social stratification and differentiation.<sup>80</sup> It was Publilius Syrus in the first century BCE and his line, "what is left when honor is lost?"<sup>81</sup> that characterizes the dogged and unflinching importance of this valuable asset.

Undoubtedly slaves served as functions for the acquisition of honor for their masters, despite their own inability to attain it themselves. It was slaves' lack of honor that consequently served to bolster that of their masters.<sup>82</sup> To live wealthily and with prestige required the use of slaves, which at the same time reified what the slave did not have. J. Harrill places the dependent relationship between slave and free in relation to honor when he says, "the aristocratic adult male was not a man unless he acquired honor (*dignitas*) that resulted from successful domination of others."<sup>83</sup> What is clear is the necessity of honor for the free adult male citizen, occasioned by way of his authority (*auctoritas*) as *paterfamilias* over those (perceived to be) beneath him, including his wife, children, and indeed slaves. Surely in the Greco-Roman context this power comes from one's ability to control those around him, those thought to be extensions of him (his wife, children, and slaves). This ability to have control is an essential avenue for the acquisition of both power and honor,

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<sup>79</sup> Richard Saller, "Symbols of Gender and Status Hierarchies in the Roman Household," in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture*, 88.

<sup>80</sup> Patterson (1982), 81; See also Barton (2001).

<sup>81</sup> J. W. Duff and A. M. Duff, eds. *Minor Latin Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1934), 42-3.

<sup>82</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 5.

<sup>83</sup> Harrill (2006), 36.

an ability which slaves would never possess. Fitzgerald reiterates this point while referencing the discussion above concerning a free man's prerogative to protect his person: "it is one of the most important marks of the free man that his body is immune to punishment; for a free man, to be stripped and beaten publicly is to suffer a massive blow to his honor and a total deprivation of personal dignity."<sup>84</sup>

Even for women, who were afforded only limited agency and honor compared to their male counterparts, the slave functioned to instill honor in a number of ways. Plutarch's *Moralia* relays first century attitudes of free women about their husband's carnal interactions with the couple's female slaves. He tells a new bride not to be jealous of her husband's slaves because "it is out of respect for her [the wife] which leads him to share his debauchery, licentiousness, and wantonness with another woman."<sup>85</sup> This situation allows the husband to act as he does because it is *his* honor he compounds by dominating his female slaves as he wishes and *his wife's* honor he preserves by expressing the worst of himself with someone else. As Joshel and Murnaghan rightfully see it, "[the female slave] guarantee[s] the honor of the free woman through her own dishonor."<sup>86</sup>

In a similar way, the act of beating a slave reinforced this same distinction. Again Joshel and Murnaghan are helpful for their observation that "the numerous known instances of women administering corporal punishment to slaves and children suggest that the 'categories of free and slave were more important than hierarchies of gender or

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<sup>84</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 33.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted and translated by Saller (1998), 89.

<sup>86</sup> Joshel and Murnaghan (1998), 7. See also page 4, with reference to Livy's *Rape of Lucretia* and how "the free woman is crucially distinguished from the slave by the honor that comes with her status. Her honor is bound up especially with her chastity, which assures the legitimacy of the next generation and reinforces the honor and authority of her father and husband."

generation,”” citing Saller.<sup>87</sup> Working again to reinforce the free woman’s honor is her role as the one doing the beating, “affirm[ing] the integrity of her body in contrast to that of a slave.”<sup>88</sup> It is the woman’s act of beating which affords her the agency of which in most other situations she would have found herself deprived. Of course women knew they were to be subordinate to the male head of their household, but in this circumstance they shored up the distance between their subordination and that of their slaves.

What this example of wives as slave beaters most proves is that free women were recognized as at least ‘more fully human’ than their slave equivalents. As discussed earlier, no one outside of the elite adult male citizen grouping would have been understood as a complete human being. However, if we are to use DuBois’ notion of a continuum of human ontological grades, the free woman via her honor and subsequent agency as an active operative in private life (against her slaves and over her children), could find herself nearest to the conceptual epitome of full humanness. What categorizes the most fully human end of this spectrum is, according to Marcel, an independent will with which to act as one wishes as well as the legal, social, and moral license to do so. A slave, by being a slave, had none of these elements—honor, agency, ontology, or a will on par with their free counterparts—and thus found him/herself as the complete opposite of the free adult male citizen, totally disenfranchised and utterly powerless with regard to the use of his/her body.

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<sup>87</sup> Joshel and Murnaghan (1998), 6.

<sup>88</sup> Joshel and Murnaghan (1998), 6.

## Part II: The First-Century Slave in the Christian Church

### *The Mitigating Influence of Stoicism*

A look into Paul's influence by and use of Stoic philosophical principles with regard to slaves and their kind of freedom will bridge the gap between a popular Greco-Roman notion of a slave's body and Paul's understanding of it in a Christian context, since as Niko Huttunen so astutely observes, "no one claims that the context of Paul's thinking is only Palestinian Judaism."<sup>89</sup> Indeed this section will concern itself with another of Paul's influences, one which many authors have recognized as significant to his theology.<sup>90</sup> Fitzgerald comments on the shared Stoic and Christian disposition to the unquestionable nature of slavery, "nor is it widely accepted that Christianity played a key role in the undermining of slavery as an institution. Rather like the Stoics, the writers of the New Testament tended to regard legal slavery as insignificant compared to metaphorical slavery to sin (which one should avoid) or to God (which one should accept)."<sup>91</sup> The attainment of

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<sup>89</sup> Niko Huttunen, "Stoic Law in Paul?" in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Tuomas Rasmus, Troels Engberg-Pederson, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010), 39. Huttunen envisions the next monumental analyses of Pauline studies to come via Greco-Roman perspectives. While this essay seeks to identify a number of Paul's influences including his understanding of the Torah, sex, and slavery via the OT, this section's concern with Stoicism in particular follows Huttunen's evaluation.

<sup>90</sup> For example, *Stoicism in Early Christianity*; Engberg-Pederson, *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000); *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Engberg-Pederson (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and The Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006).

<sup>91</sup> William Fitzgerald (2000), 112. While Fitzgerald cites only disputed letters of Paul and non-Pauline epistles, the statement holds for undisputed Pauline sentiment as well. See also John T. Fitzgerald, "The Stoics and the Early Christians on the Treatment of Slaves," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*; Dale Martin (1990) on the importance and use of slave

spiritual freedom was the complete opposite of moral slavery, the former understood as the *sine qua non* for Stoics and Christians alike.<sup>92</sup> For the Stoicism popularized in Paul's day, this spiritual freedom came via the recognition of the complete separateness of the body (*soma*) and the mind or soul (*pneuma*), the latter needing release from the former for the attainment of "absolute mental freedom."<sup>93</sup> This freedom allowed one to seek to be in full communion with one's nature (*phusis*) for the Stoic and with God's commandments for the Christian.

Huttunen's analysis of Paul's Stoic interpretation of Hebrew Law proves an invaluable addition to better understanding the apostle's theology, even as I will argue, in a discussion of sexually obligated slaves. In outlining what he calls a Stoic theory of value, Huttunen addresses the first-century slave-philosopher Epictetus's distinction between the things that are under one's control, and those that are not. Epictetus is cited in the *Encheiridion* thus: "under our control are conception, choice, desire, aversion, and in a word, everything that is our own doing; not under our control are our body, our property, reputation, office, and, in a word, everything that is not our own doing."<sup>94</sup> The things not our own, the "external things" (*ta ekstos*) are "indifferent" (*adiaphora*), meaning that they are not inherently good or bad, like slavery. If one's slave status determines one's ability to regulate the mind then, according to the Stoics, it is a bad thing indeed—but this need not

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imagery in Paul's theology; Garnsey (1996), 131-33.

<sup>92</sup> John T. Fitzgerald (2010) 152.

<sup>93</sup> Adolf Friedrich Böhoffer, *The Ethics of the Stoic Epictetus*, trans. William O. Stephens (New York: Peter Lang Pub., 1996), 35. For history of earlier Stoicism see Brad Inwood, "Stoicism" in *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol. II: From Aristotle to Augustine*, ed. David Furley (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>94</sup> Translation and citation, Huttunen (2010), 42.

be the case. Breaking the tie between body and mind engenders the spiritual freedom the Stoics sought.

However, as Seneca reminds us in *Letter 47*, it was not just an actual slave who was potentially subject to enslavement. As he responds in turn to his interlocutor:

“The man is a slave.” Perhaps he is free in his heart. “The man is a slave.” Is that going to harm him? Show me who isn’t a slave: some are slaves to sex, others to money, some to social prestige, all are slaves to hope and fear. I’ll give you some examples: the man of consular rank who acts as the slave of some old woman [because he wants a legacy from her]; the rich man who’s after a young slave girl; I’ll show you some young men from the best families who have made themselves the property of popular actors—and no kind of slavery is more dishonorable than that which is entered into voluntarily.<sup>95</sup>

Likewise, Paul’s makes a similar statement in 1 Cor. that corresponds closely to this Stoic paradigm. Verse 6: 18 makes an interesting use of this dualism when Paul finishes admonishing the visiting of a prostitute and says, “Shun *porneia*! Every sin (*pan hamartehma*)<sup>96</sup> that a person commits is outside the body; but the sexually immoral man [my trans.] (*poiehseh anthropon*) sins against the body itself.” Is Paul here making the case for all sin residing most importantly in the *pneuma/animus* but only acted upon/with bodies?<sup>97</sup> As Dale Martin has helped illuminate, Paul’s concern in 1 Cor. with the polluting

<sup>95</sup> Translation and citation, Wiedemann (1981), 237-8.

<sup>96</sup> See B. Ward Powers, “Body and Flesh Implications in Paul’s Corinthian Dialogue (1 Cor 6).” *Bible Translator* 60.4: 2009, 224-233. I agree with Powers’ reading of this adjective-noun duo as “every sin” and not “every other sin” as has been translated previously, particularly in the RSV and NIV. The addition of “other” which the Greek does not support delineates sexual sin as unique and above other sins. As he says on 230, to distinguish sexual sin as the only sin that makes use of the body is easily unfounded. His short list of other sins include theft, violence, drunkenness, and gluttony.

<sup>97</sup> Per Paul’s grammatical set-up of quoting the Corinthian opinion and then refuting it, i.e. 6:12-13: “‘All things are lawful to me,’ but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are

nature of sexual immorality (see section 2), rests not with the body, but the *pneuma*.<sup>98</sup> Rom. 8:6 reads, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace.” The Stoic would surely agree. If one constantly worries about his lot in life, he will never be free (have happiness “*eudaimonia*”); conversely, if one sets the mind on how to use the flesh for good or to give it little concern whatsoever, he will find peace, in accordance with his communion with God.

This dualism reflects the Stoic principle that while a master owns the slave’s body, the soul may remain free. Seneca again in *On Benefits 3.20.1* elaborates:

Anyone who thinks that slavery permeates the whole of a man’s character is wrong. The better part of him escapes. Bodies are under an obligation to the owners to whom they are assigned; the mind however is subject to its own authority, which is so free and unrestrained that it cannot even be held within this prison within which it is enclosed.<sup>99</sup>

For Seneca, slave status is nothing, since like Epictetus, the Stoic value system renders physical servitude unimportant to the fulfillment of humanness and happiness, dependent

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lawful to me,’ but I will not be dominated by anything,” J. Murphy-O’Connor in *1 Corinthians* (Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1979) suggests that the first half of 6:18, “every sin that a person commits is outside the body” represents the Corinthians’ view, and that Paul responds in turn, “but the sexually immoral man sins against the body itself.” While Murphy-O’Connor’s reading is plausible and I think even likely, how he states the Corinthian sentiment of sin is most important: “Sin was possible [the Corinthians thought]—but only on the level of motive and intention, and they refused to concede that these could be evaluated on the basis of the actions in which they were embodied.” The importance of Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians is that their intentions *have real time effects* on their bodies as well. Their intentions create sinful actions, against others; and in the realm of sexual immorality, against even themselves. Murphy-O’Connor reasons that Paul understood a man as able to sin against himself “because he does not use [the body] for the purpose intended by God.” In this, Paul’s *sarx/soma*-ology mirrors the Stoic understanding of the body as essentially value-neutral and one’s intentions *and* what one does with it is what gives it positivity or negativity.

<sup>98</sup> Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U. Press, 1995), 170.

<sup>99</sup> Translation and citation in Wiedemann (1981), 239.

only on the mind's ability to use its rational faculties.<sup>100</sup> Seneca's language when discussing slaves in particular is important for Paul and for this project in that when considering sexually-obligated slaves, Paul had a notion of the body/soul dualism informed by and familiar with that of the Stoics, if not one on par with it.<sup>101</sup>

Status in general for the Stoics and Paul alike had little value.<sup>102</sup> As Wiedemann says:

When St Paul proclaims the irrelevance of 'the question of Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, freeman, slave: Christ is all' (Colossians 3:11), [despite the dubious authorship of Col., Gal. 3:28 contains the same sentiment] he is not abolishing social and cultural distinctions, but claiming that each group has a place within the Christian church.<sup>103</sup>

As each of these identities at various times held particularly important social dimensions, Paul's famously egalitarian assertion laid the groundwork for NT scholars in attempting to identify the first Christians. And as best as can be surmised, mentioned above, the unimportance of status in Paul's theology led to a relatively multifarious make-up of the earliest Christian communities. What was known to them, although Paul had to regularly

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<sup>100</sup> See Epictetus *Discourses* 1.3, "we are composed of two parts—a body in common with the animals, and our Reason in common with God." Trans. and citation in John Bonforte, *Epictetus: A Dialogue in Common Sense* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1974), 71.

<sup>101</sup> For further consideration of the body/soul division of the Stoics see Martin (1995), 116-17.

<sup>102</sup> See Martin (1995), 55-68 on the problems in Corinth stemming from two ideological poles—that of the Strong, or powerful and influential members in the church, and the Weak, their opposites. Martin's analysis of the frequency of words like *all*, *our*, and *every* is particularly incisive; Catharine Edwards, "Free yourself, Slavery, Freedom and the self in Seneca's Letters" in *Seneca and the Self*, ed. Shadi Bartsch and David Wray (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 2009), 139-59; Meeks (1983), esp. chapter 3, "The Formation of the *Ekklesia*."

<sup>103</sup> Wiedemann (1987), 14.

remind them of it and rebuke them for their failure to live up to it, was that all were capable of union with Christ, despite social status.

The Stoic proposition that even slaves, the lowliest Romans, could be moral agents rested in their recognition that despite status, the free mind of a slave could seek goodness.<sup>104</sup> Seneca declares in *On Benefits* 3.18.2, “But anyone who denies that a slave may sometimes do his master a good turn is ignorant of human law—for what is crucial is the intention of whoever confers [a] benefit, not his status.”<sup>105</sup> And again in his *Letter* 47 he says, “I am not going to assess [slaves] according to their jobs, but according to their moral character. Everyone makes his own moral character: jobs are assigned by Chance.”<sup>106</sup> Of course the Stoic identification of Chance or *Fortuna*, the thing to which all men are subject paved the way for the Christian subjection of all men to God and his will.<sup>107</sup> Paul’s declaration that “each of you remain in the condition you were called” in 1 Cor. 7:19 is said with the authority of God—it is God’s will that each member of the church remain in his/her social position, for none of them is exclusionary.

Seneca’s depreciation of the body as having any salience with one’s “moral character” has interesting parallels with that of Paul as well.<sup>108</sup> One’s lot in life is not determinative of his goodness; it is his inner disposition that is important.<sup>109</sup> In a similar

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<sup>104</sup> Wiedemann (1981), 236.

<sup>105</sup> Trans. and citation Wiedemann (1981), 237.

<sup>106</sup> Trans. and citation Wiedemann (1981), 235.

<sup>107</sup> See Wiedemann (1981) 232.

<sup>108</sup> Of course we cannot go as far as to say that the body was unimportant to Paul. His language in 1 Cor. makes use of the body, and in fact he is often concerned with the way in which his congregants are using their bodies—see the  *pornos* in 5:2; bodies as members of Christ in 6:15-20; those yearning for sexual gratification in 7:8. This project is interested in nuancing Paul’s understanding of the body as recognizing its separation from one’s mind/soul, i.e. intentions.

<sup>109</sup> See Seneca’s *Letter* 47.15; *On Benefits* 3.18.2 on “intentionality.”

vein Paul perhaps surprisingly relieves the Corinthian converts of their obligation to follow the Law when he says:

However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you. This is my rule in all the churches. Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but obeying the commandments of God is everything.<sup>110</sup>

To be discussed further below, Paul's proclamation that slaves remain as they are, in their given social statuses, could potentially have posed problems for their participation, as Glancy insists, if indeed Paul were only concerned with the bodily act of *porneia* itself.

However, if Paul gave credence to Epictetus's notion of the indifference of externals,

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<sup>110</sup> 1 Cor. 7: 17-20. Circumcision described being "nothing" (*ouden estin*) mirrors Stoic notions of the externals. The monumental work of James D. G. Dunn on Paul and the Law, and the *New Perspective* since the seminal theory of "covenantal nomism" of E. P. Sanders in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977) needs mentioning here for the nuanced relationship Paul thought that Christians had with the Law (*nomos*). Given the tendency of scholarship pre-Sanders to assume the contrast of works-justified Judaism with faith-justified Christianity, Pauline studies since the late 1970s has been predominantly focused on deciphering Paul's understanding of the Law for Christians. Do Christians need to follow the Law to become members, as the Jerusalem council headed by Peter would have it? What of Paul's plethora of comments in his letters on the matter and their sometimes contradictory sounding nature? Against the "hard legalism" which so many scholars assumed characterized Second Temple Judaism, Stephen Westerholm in *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: the "Lutheran" Paul and his Critics* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2004), identified a synergistic "soft legalism"—salvation by one's works along with God's grace to be more appropriate. Dunn has suggested in *The New Perspective on Paul* that the "works of the Law"—the things that work as boundary markers in a Jewish identity are unnecessary for Christians, e.g. circumcision as "nothing." What is important is "existence in Christ." For other references on the *New Perspective* and Paul and the Law see *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, ed. Mark D. Given (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2010); A. Andrew Das, *Paul and the Jews* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2003); Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: A Sociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1986)

slaves' participation in unlawful sexual acts with their masters may not have been such a concern.<sup>111</sup>

### *Redefining Porneia as Used and Understood by Paul*

With an established understanding of the physical and social dimensions of popular Greco-Roman attitudes toward slavery, a more proper addendum to Glancy's conclusions about slaves' exclusion from Paul's early communities can start to take shape. Her arguments will be taken piece by piece throughout the following section as appropriate to the given topic, though not outlined in their entirety here. As mentioned above, Glancy's own observations on the topic of slaves' sexual availability will also factor into this project, for I will argue not against her evidence, but conclusions.

To begin, Glancy admits *ab initio* that her (our) ensuing investigation suffers from the incomplete picture of Paul's gospel dispersed throughout his letters. She says:

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.<sup>112</sup>

In fact she is correct in admitting the limitations of this inquiry; however we may still be able to reconstruct a plausible framework for dealing with these vulnerable bodies based

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<sup>111</sup> Huttunen avers Paul's consensus with the Stoic theory of value, 44.

<sup>112</sup> Glancy (2002), 58.

on a critical reading of Paul's letters and with reference to the previously discussed realities of first-century servitude.

Glancy never denies the evidence for the understandings of slaves' bodies presented in the first section of this paper, but in fact reaffirms them in her own words. She rightfully concludes, "slaves did not have the legal right nor cultural power to say 'no' to their owners' sexual demands."<sup>113</sup> Herein, she says, lies the potential problem for sexually available slaves attempting participation in Paul's communities. It is mainly Paul's longest and more specific reference to sexual immorality in 1 Cor. 5-7 that Glancy argues "would have complicated or even barred the participation of many slaves in Christian life."<sup>114</sup> The issues Glancy is concerned with at Corinth include a man living with his stepmother<sup>115</sup> (taken with all of its sexual overtones and a practice condemned both by Jewish and Roman law<sup>116</sup>), which is said not even to be practiced among the pagans<sup>117</sup>, a man who

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<sup>113</sup> Glancy (2002), 52. We must be cognizant of the attempted universality that Glancy is perhaps fabricating when making such a statement; however it is because of observations and assumptions like these that she is able to draw her conclusions regarding Paul. However it is not my intention to take to task her scholarship per se but only to qualify her judgments based on such understandings.

<sup>114</sup> Glancy (2002), 50.

<sup>115</sup> For alternative renderings of this woman's relationship with the man see C. K. Robertson, *Conflict at Corinth: Redefining the System* (New York: Peter Lang Pub., 2001), 184-87.

<sup>116</sup> See Deut. 22:20; 27:20; and Lev. 18:7-8.

<sup>117</sup> One of the main issues for Paul is convincing his community at Corinth to give up their pre-Christian practices that he deems at odds with his new set of rules. He situates his new congregants in a position in some ways analogous to their "holy" position (that is "set apart") of the Jewish people. He says in 5:12-13, "For what have I to do with judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. 'Drive out the wicked person from among you.'"; See also, Martin (1995), 169: "The condemnation of porneia in Jewish circles was a way of solidifying the boundary between the chosen people and everyone else with their idols and loose morals: porneia was something 'they' did."

frequents prostitutes, and Paul's insistence that sexual activity be confined to marriage.

The issue then is what constitutes sexual immorality in Paul's mind and his Christian communities' minds; and Glancy poses the pertinent question: "does the presence of urban, domesticated slaves and slaveholders among the congregations of the Pauline orbit require that we revise our estimations of the Pauline definition of *porneia*, sexual impurity?"<sup>118</sup> Indeed the issue must be addressed so that we might be able to better estimate Paul's own attitude toward these slaves' bodies.

While it is difficult to define what exactly Paul had in mind when he spoke about *porneia*, some recent scholarship has been devoted to unraveling this mess of metaphor and context.<sup>119</sup> While classical *porneia* from the root "*porneh*" meant simply a prostitute or one who sells oneself, as Jews and Christians reinterpreted it, the term gained a whole new set of moral dimensions.<sup>120</sup> It is clear that Glancy assumes Paul means any sexual activity outside of marriage when he uses *porneia* regardless of one's ontological status, volition, and consent to such acts. She says:

The passage 1 Corinthians 5 establishes parameters for the discourse, raises 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

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<sup>118</sup> Glancy (2002), 50.

<sup>119</sup> See most basically Bruce Malina "Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication" *Novum Testamentum* 14.1 (1972) and Joseph Jensen's response in 20.3 (1978); Kyle Harper, "*Porneia*: The Making of a Christian Sexual Norm"; Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>120</sup> Harper "*Porneia*," 20.

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.<sup>121</sup>

On *porneia* as a problem for the entire community, I am in full agreement with Glancy, although some further qualification might be helpful in ascertaining specifically what Paul had in mind. By referencing the man himself who is frequenting prostitutes, Glancy seems to be (implicitly perhaps) making a case for the man's transgression. Indeed in Paul's mind we can safely agree that choosing to participate in prostitution is incompatible with the Christian life, and that the man is at fault. The distinction I see in this passage however is that it is the man who frequents prostitutes *himself* who is incompatible with the Christian body. By doing so the man is acting of his own free will, thus bringing *porneia* on himself.<sup>122</sup> More on this will be discussed later.

It seems that to attribute sexual immorality to all parties regardless of the three previously outlined categories is to dismiss Paul's Judaic heritage wholesale and here it may be helpful to highlight what exactly constituted biblical sexual norms. The Hebrew word translated into *porneia* in Greek, "*zannah*" stems from the root "*znh*," whose principle meaning is to "to engage in extramarital sex, to be unchaste," and is limited to female subjects.<sup>123</sup> Although the LXX never overtly condemns the use of female prostitutes, the trouble to be found in their midst is never overlooked, and men are subsumed under the regulations of *zannah* as well by the Second Temple period.<sup>124</sup> Although non-canonical and

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<sup>121</sup> Glancy (2002), 50.

<sup>122</sup> Of course the prostitute is not mentioned to be judged presumably because she is outside the purview of Paul's moral domain. See note 77 above.

<sup>123</sup> Harper "*Porneia*."

<sup>124</sup> E.g. Gen. 38:15, Josh. 2.1, Judg. 16.1

earlier than Paul, the Wisdom of Sirach entreats the (male) reader to be ashamed of sexual immorality (41.17), avoid prostitutes (41.20), avoid gazing at another man's wife (41.21), and not to approach the bed of his servant girl for the purpose of meddling with her (41.22). Kyle Harper takes Sir. as emblematic of a shift in the Second Temple period in a sharing of equal standards of sexual immorality between men and women as well as the addition of the prohibition against the use of prostitutes and slaves, and by the first century to cover things as diverse as incest and exogamy.<sup>125</sup> We can see obvious parallels with Paul's rhetoric against those sexually immoral persons in Corinth.

Kathy L. Gaca's exposé into distinctions between the English nouns 'harlot' and 'prostitute' with reference to the Septuagint has helped illuminate Paul's specific meaning when speaking of sexual immorality. Gaca's one qualification is an important one, particularly for Glancy's chapter and the present response. She says:

The harlot is the woman who is deemed to be 'sexually immoral' or 'loose' because her sexual mores transgress the biblically influenced sexual regulations. This is true particularly, but not only, if the woman's sexual transgressions are intentional.<sup>126</sup>  
[emphasis added]

In this, Gaca recognizes a vital aspect of what constitutes sexual immorality, especially over and against proper prostitution.

Similarly, when discussing notable Old Testament passages concerning relations between the early warring Israelites and their enemies, Gaca rightly identifies captured

<sup>125</sup> Harper, "*Porneia*," 9-11.

<sup>126</sup> Kathy L. Gaca, "The Sexual and Social Dangers of Pornai in the Septuagint Greek Stratum of Patristic Christian Greek Thought" in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, ed. Liz James (Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1999), 36.

Israelite women as being without volition. She says, “when religiously alien warriors take female members of the Lord’s people into sexual servitude as prisoners of war, then the women are victims of rape committed by their male captors.”<sup>127</sup> This categorization of ‘victim’ is central to issues concerning Paul’s definition of porneia, for our three working categories must be necessarily affected as a result. It is my contention that when Paul speaks of those transgressing porneia he is aware of such a distinction. Without a will, as with prisoners of war, slaves who are subject to the sexual demands of their masters ought not be understood the same as their empowered initiators.

Further examples of Old Testament stories of sexual assault of a number of sorts will help explicate Gaca’s point, as well as to emphasize the distinction for Paul. Lev. 19: 20-22 outlines the procedures for dealing with a man having had sexual relations with a slave woman, “designated for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom.”<sup>128</sup> Since the slave girl has not been freed neither party shall be put to death (v. 20) under the similar mandate involving proper adultery of a free woman. Instead, the man must bring a guilt offering *for the sin that he committed* (v. 22). The blame placed only at the feet of the man as having acted in sin suggests first, that sex with a slave was common enough to be recognized and regulated in the OT and second, that the slave is somehow exempted from liability and responsibility as a result of her inferior legal and social status—a recognition

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<sup>127</sup> Gaca (1999), 39.

<sup>128</sup> For discussion of whether this slave was the addressed man’s property, betrothed to a third party or a slave belonging to and betrothed to a third party see Raymond Westbrook, *Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law* (Paris: Gabalda, 1988); Richard Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007).

of her inability to provide consent to such acts. Her personhood is not considered; her non-personhood is codified.

A second instance, the story of Dinah and Shechem's illicit sexual union in Genesis 34, takes a woman's blamelessness one step further, as Dinah was a free woman, born of the patriarch Jacob. The first two verses of chapter 34 lay out the basics of the situation. Dinah went out (of the city) to visit the women of the region (v. 1), when Shechem, prince of the region, saw her, seized her, and lay with her by force (v. 2), all in a matter of eleven words. The question of whether Dinah was in fact raped by Shechem has been called into question,<sup>129</sup> although as shown convincingly by Richard Davidson, the grammatical construction of the narrative lends itself to the conclusion that Dinah was in some way forced into sexual union (what Davidson suggests we might call date rape). What is important for this project is the fact that nowhere in the narrative is Dinah blamed for her involvement with Shechem. After Dinah's brothers avenge her defilement by killing Shechem and his ruling father, and plunder their city (vv. 26-8), Jacob chastises them for bringing him trouble by their actions, to which they reply, "Should our sister be treated like a whore?" (v. 31).

The last two examples of blameless (and hence powerless) women sexually abused via forceful men come from the house of David. The first instance involves David's son Amnon and his stepsister Tamar, with whom he falls in love (2 Sam. 13: 1). After devising a plan to feign illness and request Tamar be his caretaker (vv. 5-10), Amnon took hold of his sibling and said, "Come, lie with me, my sister" (v. 11). Tamar's abject refusal: "No,

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<sup>129</sup> See Davidson (2007), 512; Lyn M. Bechtel, "What If Dinah Is Not Raped? (Genesis 34)," *JSOT* 62 (1994).

my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel,” infuriated Amnon, “and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her,” (vv. 12, 14). The narrative describes Tamar’s “desolate” state after the incident but is told by her brother Absalom not to be concerned with the situation (v. 20). Two years later, Absalom orders the killing of Amnon in retribution for the rape of his sister Tamar (v. 32).<sup>130</sup> Again, never is Tamar indicted by her family or the narrator, but is recognized as helpless to the whims of her stepbrother.

Perhaps the most famous example of powerful men and blameless women in illicit sexual union concerns King David himself and his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite in 2 Sam. 11. While “all of Israel” was out at war with the Ammonites (v. 1), David stayed behind and caught sight of Bathsheba bathing on her rooftop<sup>131</sup> as per the Levitical requirement that she be ritually cleansed following her menstrual period (vv.2-4). After inquiring about the woman (as to whether she was married, which she was), David sends messengers to bring her to him. She came to him, he lay with her, and she returned to her house, until realizing she was pregnant (vv. 4-5). While the Hebrew for “lay with” does not stress the overpowering kind of physical brutality as perpetuated against Dinah and Tamar, Richard Davidson’s description of the

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<sup>130</sup> For a discussion of the trouble in translating situations of forced sexual union given the lack of an equivalent for the English verb “rape,” see Harold C. Washington, “‘Lest He Die In the Battle and Another Man Take Her’: Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Laws of Deuteronomy 20-22,” in *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, eds. Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 208-09; Davidson (2007), 515-18, 532-33.

<sup>131</sup> The commentary on this story in the *New Oxford Annotated Bible: Augmented Third Edition*, ed. Michael Coogan (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2007) describes Bathsheba’s rooftop more specifically as her courtyard—a place she might presume to be out of the sight of stranger onlookers. See p. 460, note 2 under *11.1-27: David and Bathsheba*.

circumstantial psychological pressure on Bathsheba from her king amounts to what he calls “power rape,”<sup>132</sup> a distinction I find compelling and probable.

However understood by our modern reckoning of the situation, the biblical narrative continues to portray Bathsheba as faithful to Uriah until his death when she “made lamentations” (v. 26). After her mourning, David “sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son” (v. 27). The next chapter squarely lays the blame at David’s feet via the narrative, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord,” (12:1) as well as David’s conversation with Nathan (vv. 13-14) when David says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan responds in turn, “Now the lord has put away your [sing.] sin; you shall not die [like an adulterer]. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die.”<sup>133</sup> While it is not surprising that Bathsheba exits the narrative given the importance of David as king, the focus on David’s sin alone and not “their” sin resists the reading of Bathsheba as responsible for her actions, like David.

What suggests the likelihood that Paul read these OT stories of powerless and hence blameless women just as the biblical narrative did (since he does not mention any of them specifically in any of his letters) is Paul’s reading of perhaps the most famous parallel of a powerless woman in the Bible—Eve in the garden. After Eve gives Adam fruit from the tree and he eats, God interrogates Eve, “What is this that you have done?” To which

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<sup>132</sup> Davidson (2007), 528. See also, n. 91 on p. 529 for a discussion of the parallel situation from Deut. 22:25-26 which indicts on the man in such a situation, since the woman is presumably unable to call for help. Likewise, Bathsheba could be seen as in a similar situation given that all of Israel was out to war and she would have had no one to rescue her.

<sup>133</sup> Davidson takes this use of the singular pronoun by Nathan as a further indication of David’s singular sin, not an indictment of both he and Bathsheba.

she replies, “The serpent tricked me, and I ate” (Gen. 3:12-13). The Greek word used in LXX for “tricked” is the much more ambiguous *ehpatehsen*, which includes a range of meaning from “deceive” to “seduce” with sexual connotations.<sup>134</sup> In 2 Cor. 11:2-3 Paul reuses this same imagery when telling the story of the Corinthians being prepared as a virgin bride for Christ, but that their thoughts were led astray (to sexual matters?), “as the serpent deceived Eve.” The NSRV note on verse three reiterates Paul’s understanding of Eve’s seduction as one with sexual overtones, reminiscent of the Jewish tradition involving Satan.<sup>135</sup> William Loader concludes that Paul “clearly understood [*ehpatehsen*]” in this sense.<sup>136</sup>

The sexual connotations of Eve’s deception are especially pertinent to the aforementioned OT stories because nowhere is Eve held culpable for her action (or at least not in the same way as Adam). Of course she is punished, having to endure the pangs of childbirth, just as Bathsheba is punished with the miscarriage of her child with David. However, the biblical narrative and Paul’s understanding of accountability lie with Adam. Romans 5 describes Adam as the progenitor of sin in the world— as it came “through one man” (v. 12). Verse 14 also refers to the transgressions of Adam. Who is not understood to have sinned is his partner in crime so-to-speak, for Eve’s fault was conditioned by some kind of (sexual) overpowering. Paul’s near contemporary, the Jewish philosopher Philo,

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<sup>134</sup> See William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2004), 45. What is also important to this reasoning is that Paul was indeed trained in his Pharisaic life via the Septuagint Greek instead of Hebrew, although the Hebrew could have been taken similarly. See Runia (1993), 66.

<sup>135</sup> *New Oxford Annotated Bible: Augmented Third Edition* (2007), 305: n. 3.

<sup>136</sup> Loader (2004), 125.

indeed drew similar conclusions about Adam's role in the Garden of Eden, laying blame in the same place as Paul.<sup>137</sup>

As mentioned above, two of Paul's main targets of rebuke in 1 Cor. are the man living (sleeping) with his stepmother, and the sexually immoral person ( pornos) frequenting prostitutes, both of whom Paul categorizes as transgressing porneia. What is crucial here and a novel addition to the evidence by which Glancy draws her conclusions, is the fact that Paul is speaking first, to men, but more importantly, presumably to free men, acting of their own accord; slaves of course lacking the ability to choose with whom they lived. As a result it seems plausible that when Paul addresses an audience in his letters he does so assuming certain characteristics about his readers. Despite difficult issues of translation as a result of the tendency to address a group of 100 women and only one man collectively as a group of men, Paul does seem to recognize his readers' ability to live with whom they choose, and to use their bodies however they choose—traditionally prerogatives of free persons. It seems as though in Paul's definition, being sexually immoral constitutes possession or control of the vessel with which one offends; and as established above, the body was one thing over which slaves had no dominion.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> See Dorothy Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women* (Providence, R.I.: Brown U. Press, 1990), 109.

<sup>138</sup> While Glancy suggests that prostitution was categorically opposed to the Christian life (for which there seems ample evidence in Paul's own words in 1 Cor. 6:15-20), the recognition that most foreign prostitutes were slaves or were brought as slaves to Rome particularly for prostitution could problematize this hard-lined stance, if in fact Paul was able to accommodate sexually immoral bodies in the Christian body. See Thomas McGinn, *The Economy of Prostitution in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: U. of Michigan Press, 1994), esp. 55-71; Thomas McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1998).

Dale Martin, speaking about Paul's prohibitions to the Corinthians, places the acts of porneia into a category of pollution for the larger Christian body (the congregation) and argues that Paul insists that the Corinthians cleanse the body of Christ by expelling the source of pollution—the offending Christian.<sup>139</sup> Glancy utilizes this category of pollution when speaking about the result of a slave's sexual obligations to his/her master which she avers, "would at times have included actions defined as polluting or aberrant in the Christian body."<sup>140</sup> My contention rather is that in order to pollute, one must have intention and/or the means to offend. Of course the means by which one perpetrated porneia was through the body, a thing over which slaves had no true ownership. It is interesting to note that when Paul speaks to couples enflamed with passion for one another and almost begrudgingly offers marriage as the only acceptable solution, he is most certainly referring to couples on equal social standing, i.e. not a combination of slave and free, for as will be discussed later, mixed marriages so-to-speak were not a realistic option. Therefore we must consider that pollution to the Christian body as a whole could only be engendered by way of free bodies, acting of their own accord.

Glancy summarizes:

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

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<sup>139</sup> Martin (1995), 169.

<sup>140</sup> Glancy (2002), 49.

using them sexually could be seen as a source of potential contamination in the pure Christian body.<sup>141</sup>

It is a new understanding of porneia necessitating a means and will for transgression which must alter these final conclusions. A concession to Antoinette Wire's work on the same topic forces Glancy to admit the ambiguity of Paul's own words on porneia. She says:

Wire proposes that Paul is silent about the stepmother's complicity [in the situation with the pornos mentioned above] because she is not in a position to be responsible for her actions, either because of extreme youth or enslavement. 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. His surviving words do not help us decide the question.<sup>142</sup>  
[emphasis added]

It is possible however that the woman in question is simply not a member of the Corinthian Christian community and thus outside the parameters and judgment of Paul's definitions as suggested above.<sup>143</sup> But taken together with the complete silence from the New Testament and Paul specifically on this issue of slaves' sexual obligations, it may not be irresponsible to postulate Paul's indifference to their current situations, particularly in light of some of his explicit statements to slaves concerning their status, to be discussed later.

Susan Treggiari's observation in *Roman Marriage* further complicates Glancy's notion of porneia: "The assumption seems implicit in Roman society that intercourse with

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<sup>141</sup> Glancy (2002), 59.

<sup>142</sup> Glancy (2002), 64.

<sup>143</sup> In fact Glancy more or less agrees implicitly with this latter option when discussing the second of Paul's two targets in Corinth identifying his lack of theological interest in the prostitute and the stepmother when she says, "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," 65.

a slave, who had no moral responsibility and no choice, was morally neutral for the free initiator.”<sup>144</sup> The double standard by which Roman society operated with regard to free sexual encounters informs Treggiari’s statement. In Cicero’s *Pro Caelio*, this double standard takes shape (perhaps for rhetorical purposes) when Cicero suggests young men can indulge their sexual instincts (within certain boundaries of course) while women who attempt to exert the same freedom are likened to prostitutes. What is important here is three-fold. First, Treggiari accepts that a slave, subject in all manners to her master, was not held responsible for her sexual participation with him, while also acknowledging the inability to resist a master’s desires. Second, the Greco-Roman notion that sex with a slave was morally neutral may seem odd to a modern reader and unfortunately Paul never speaks directly to this aspect of slave-owning. Annalisa Rei comments on this aspect of Roman sexuality when discussing the comedies of Plautus summarizing, “The pursuit of courtesans, both by married and by unmarried men, was not considered immoral in Roman society.”<sup>145</sup> Glancy agrees that, “in general, Greco-Roman societies expected that men would frequent prostitutes and did not morally condemn them for doing so.”<sup>146</sup> And while Glancy does consider this sexual neutrality to be an honest option for Paul’s thoughts on

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<sup>144</sup> Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 1993), 301. One important qualification to this universal norm is William Fitzgerald’s distinction of the permissibility of sex between free *men* and slaves but the taboo often associated with that between free *women* and slaves. See Fitzgerald (2000), 52 as well as Alan Watson, *Roman Slave Law* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 10-11.

<sup>145</sup> Annalisa Rei (1998), 96.

<sup>146</sup> Glancy (2002), 56.

the matter, again we are handicapped by our sources.<sup>147</sup> Third, and perhaps most important for this project, is the identification of the master as a “free initiator.” It is this understanding of the master that complicates Glancy’s definition of porneia as well as her conclusions regarding slaves. Presumably it is not the slave who is seeking to act immorally, but is merely the desired object of that initiator. We have noted a number of examples in which this category of “free initiator” would be appropriate to consider and it seems a vital qualification to notions of porneia.

Another issue confronted by Paul in 1 Cor. is that of sex outside of marriage. Glancy again: “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.”<sup>148</sup> Although Paul, the infamous and intentional bachelor that he was, advised his congregations not to worry themselves with the issue of marriage since the parousia was surely on its way, he did leave space for one reason for marriage—the flames of incurable desire. “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion,” (1 Cor. 7:8-9). What is evident here is that Paul is speaking to couples, or perhaps individuals, who are seeking sexual outlets. If a man or widow cannot control him/herself, he/she ought to find a spouse with whom to release such carnal frustrations.

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<sup>147</sup> And presumably, given Paul’s words on the goodness of marriage as *the* means for extinguishing desire and releasing sexual frustrations in 7:8-9, this is a less likely position to be held by Paul.

<sup>148</sup> Glancy (2002), 50.

This restricts Paul's recipients of this message to non-slaves in two ways. First, by applying this admonition to the sexual relations between master and slave Glancy is presuming equal desire by both parties to cool the flames, and as we have offered, presumably the sexually obligated slave is not actively seeking such bodily infringements. Paul is speaking to "the unmarried" (tois agamois) in the dative plural, as if intending his message to be for couples. And if Paul's use of the third person plural is any indication of his audience, perhaps he is indeed speaking directly to *the couple* whom cannot control themselves (given the occasional nature of Paul's letters-and often for the purpose of addressing specific situations). Again the evidence from antiquity rarely points to consensual relations between master and slave,<sup>149</sup> and nearly never to the slave as initiator.

Second, the institution of marriage amongst slaves was not legally recognized in Paul's day, nor was marriage between a freedman and a slave. Judith Evans Grubbs writes: "Marriage between slaves or between a slave and a free person was a legal impossibility, though relationships between free persons and slaves certainly occurred in real life."<sup>150</sup> Admittedly slaves could enter into unions that passed for de facto marriages, though not legally binding in Roman law.<sup>151</sup> Glancy wishes to make slaves subject to the same legal and social rules that apply to free persons in the Roman Empire by suggesting that Paul

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<sup>149</sup> What seems an obvious statement of course deserves evidence. Beyond the sources cited at the outset of this paper and the tone with which the authors spoke of the relationships between masters and slaves, see more particularly Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1994), Ch. 9, "To be a Slave."

<sup>150</sup> Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 143.

<sup>151</sup> Wessels, (2010), 151. See R. H. Barrow, *Slavery in the Roman Empire* (New York: Kensington Pub., 1928) on the reality of slave family life outside the legal boundaries.

expected them to opt for marriage as well.<sup>152</sup> Unfortunately, as an educated, Hellenized, Roman citizen (if Acts can be trusted), Paul would have been keenly aware of just such restrictions<sup>153</sup> and could not have been speaking to these legal non-persons. Paul does not use more informal language for committed, non-legal unions, but instead speaks directly about officially recognized, legal marriage—*ho gamos*. The preceding information speaks again to the issue of Paul’s audience, and the improbability that he would have understood his default listener in this situation to have been a slave, especially when referencing marriage.<sup>154</sup>

### ***The Habitus of Greco-Roman Slavery in Paul’s Letter to Philemon***

This next section will be concerned with explicating Paul’s Roman heritage in further detail by way of his New Testament letter to Philemon. What I hope to become apparent, although the letter does not directly correspond to Glancy’s and my argument nor the specific situation of the sexual availability of slaves, is both Paul’s familiarity with and complicity in the institution of slavery. The importance of establishing these two realities for Paul is two-fold. First, if indeed Paul is well aware of the corporeal expectations of

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<sup>152</sup> Glancy (2002), 67: “Indeed, Paul seems to assume that those whom he addresses in 7:1-16 could freely choose to marry or not to marry.”

<sup>153</sup> In fact Punt goes even further than simply to say that Paul would have been aware of the expectations of slaves by suggesting, “as a first-century person, and having grown up in an apparently prosperous household (if conclusions about Paul’s higher-than-average literacy level and his family’s Roman citizenship are justified), Paul would not have been a stranger to living in a household incorporating slaves.” (2010), 247.

<sup>154</sup> Harrill (2006), 123: “Paul’s entire response to the Corinthian congregation on marriage, therefore, has little relevance for slaves.”

first-century slaves, Christian and non, then it ought not be surprising to suggest that he may have constructed a theology by which slaves could have participated in Christian life. Second, if one can show Paul's acceptance of the institution of slavery (however begrudged), then a space for sexually obligated slaves' participation may become more plausible, and as I suggest even likely.

The disproportionately vast amount of literature on Paul's shortest letter (only 25 verses) indicates the correspondingly boundless interpretations of it taken throughout history. While this project will not attempt to trace this entire history, some brief notes may be helpful. It is what D. Francois Tolmie refers to as "the traditional view" of the letter—that the letter's subject, Onesimus, was a runaway slave who had wronged his master, Philemon, the addressee of the letter, and then fled to Paul and was converted to Christianity, upon which time Paul sent Onesimus back to Philemon as "more than a slave" which constitutes the general framework with which this paper will work.<sup>155</sup>

Of course since this most basic outline, many more nuanced theories have been suggested. John Knox proposed Onesimus was not in fact Philemon's slave but instead Archippus'. Peter Lampe argued that Onesimus was not a proper runaway slave (*fugitivus*) since he intended to return to his master. Sara C. Winter's contribution was 4-fold—that the letter was not personal but intended for the entire congregation in Philemon's home, that Onesimus was sent to Paul via Archippus instead of having escaped, that Paul was essentially requesting Onesimus be relieved of his duties to the church in Colossae to assist him personally, and that Onesimus ought to be manumitted. Wolfgang Schenk proposed, like Winter, that Onesimus was not a runaway but was instead sent to Paul for the purpose

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<sup>155</sup> For references to this brief overview of Philemon see Tolmie (2010), 2.

of conversion by Philemon. Allen Callahan reversed the idea that Onesimus was a slave at all by suggesting that the slave language (*hos doulon*) in the letter refers to the obligation (“as a slave”) Onesimus had to Philemon as his actual blood relative, a brother. And lastly, Peter Arzt-Grabner suggests that Onesimus had definitely wronged his master and was seeking Paul’s intervention, ever meaning to return to Philemon—referred to by Tolmie as an absconder (*erro*).

Whatever the case, whether a runaway, a truant, or a slave seeking the intercession of Paul, as Wessels says, the fate of Onesimus was in Philemon’s hands, “the decision was Philemon’s. Paul’s power was limited.”<sup>156</sup> Verse 14 indicates Paul’s parity to some degree with Philemon over and against Onesimus when he tells Philemon he does not wish to do anything about Onesimus “without [his] consent.” Philemon’s consent to Paul’s use of Onesimus is conditioned of course by the fact that they both recognize Philemon’s justifiable control over the person (and personality) of his slave, however he came to Paul. Pieter J. J. Botha describes this discourse on power between the two men as “an exchange of ‘rights’ and ‘privileges’” over Philemon.<sup>157</sup> And as Botha points out, quite rightly, the ownership and continued possession of slaves as property are never called into question in the letter, however much modern readers may wish the seeds of emancipation had been planted. It is this implicit affirmation of the “discursive practice of slavery” by Paul that underlines his attitude as totally enveloped in Greco-Roman social norms, if not already informed by his Jewish heritage, at least with regard to slavery.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>156</sup> Wessels (2010), 161-2.

<sup>157</sup> Pieter J. J. Botha, “Hierarchy and Obedience: The Legacy of the Letter to Philemon” in *Philemon in Perspective* (2010), 258.

<sup>158</sup> The question of whether Paul’s ideas on slavery were formed mostly from a Jewish or Greco-Roman background is belied by evidence that “Jews living in the Eastern Empire

What this unintentional case study on first-century slavery in the Christian church does show is the uncritical complacency its members had with the ‘peculiar institution’, as well as Paul’s familiarity with its standards, expectations, and lexicon. One critical question however if we were searching for a glimmer of hope for Onesimus’ manumission, and subsequently a foundation for identifying Paul as the social radical, openly subverting the slave system, can be found in verses 15-16 when Paul tells Philemon to receive Onesimus back “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother.” Many have taken this title of “beloved brother” to be a keyword for Onesimus’ return not only now as a Christian, but as a *free* Christian.<sup>159</sup> A. le Grys categorically denies this reading, calling it nothing more than “wishful thinking.”<sup>160</sup> Did Paul mean that Philemon must set Onesimus free? My own impression follows Wessels in that Paul intentionally left his instructions vague and ambiguous, however I think one could take his notion even further. He says,

The reason for Paul’s reluctance to tell Philemon what to do must be sought in the power relations at play. There was always the possibility that a blunt order, issued by an apostle in prison, requiring an enormous concession from the leader of a house church in Colossae, might be refused—with disastrous consequences for Paul’s position of authority.<sup>161</sup>

Beyond Paul’s fear that his requirement to set Onesimus free might backfire, thus undermining his position above his addressee, it seems that the power relations working

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were influenced by Roman family law and local custom as much or more than they were influenced by rabbinic codes,” Glancy (2002), 6. Likewise Martin argues, “Jewishness itself had little if any relevance for the structures of slavery among Jews...Slavery among Jews of the Greco-Roman period did not differ from the slave structures of those people among whom Jews were living,” in “Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family,” *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 113-129.

<sup>159</sup> See Wessels (2010), 163-5.

<sup>160</sup> Wessels (2010), 162.

<sup>161</sup> Wessels (2010), 165.

between Paul and Philemon are not necessarily bound to that of just apostle and church leader. As Botha reminded us earlier, the two in correspondence are equal in that they are both above Onesimus. They both speak on behalf of him, about him—as someone, something to be exchanged, given and taken, made “useful” to them both (verse 11). It should be noted the cruel play on words that is Onesimus’ name itself—*onesimos* in Greek meaning useful or beneficial.<sup>162</sup> As Jeremy Punt puts it, we must “acknowledge that [the letter] was written from the perspective of slaveholders and not from the perspective of a slave—although the letter is *about* Onesimus, it was certainly not written from his perspective.”<sup>163</sup>

The fact that none of the language Paul uses in his letter to Philemon unequivocally calls for Onesimus’ manumission should not be surprising however, given the *habitus* of Greco-Roman society in which Paul was wholly immersed. *Habitus* here referring to Pierre Bourdieu’s rendering of the “incorporated products of historical practice.”<sup>164</sup> Bourdieu continues to define and refine this crucial observation many times over in his third chapter of *The Logic of Practice*. He says:

The structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences. The *habitus*, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices—more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history.

It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the

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<sup>162</sup> For slave names see Wiedemann (1987), 23; Bradley (1984), 48-80; Martin (1990), 46-7.

<sup>163</sup> Punt (2010), 225.

<sup>164</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford U. Press, 1980), 52.

form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time.<sup>165</sup>

This correlation between Bourdieu’s notion—that actions performed often enough begin to form a type of unconscious worldview by which all future experiences must be seen through and judged by (guaranteeing their ‘correctness’) —and Paul’s (and seemingly the rest of the early Christian community’s) reluctance or inability to attempt to abrogate the institution of slavery seems clear; and Glancy rightfully utilizes Bourdieu’s idea of *habitus* in the same way.

As I stated in the introduction to this work, although I have come to dissimilar conclusions to Glancy’s in some ways, I almost entirely yield to her scholarship on first-century slavery and early Christianity’s relationship with it, including her recognition of the applicability of Bourdieu’s work to this unsettled question. In an article written for the book, *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, Glancy cedes ground to the unlikelihood that Paul (and his early followers) would have been able to see the inconsistency between his message and the perpetuation of slavery. She says, “ancient Christians who heard the Pauline baptismal formula proclaiming that within the body of Christ there was no slave or free, no male and female, continued to act out of deeply conditioned *habitus*.”<sup>166</sup> That is, both Paul and the early Christians were so familiar with the typical *modus operandi* of the Greco-Roman social system that the idea of its abolition would not have been an obvious reaction, despite their own changed social personality as members of the newly-formed Christian cult.

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<sup>165</sup> Pierre Bourdieu (1980), 54.

<sup>166</sup> Glancy (2010), 152.

Whether Paul was ever intentionally calling for Onesimus' manumission is in the end tangential to the purpose of discussing his letter to Philemon. What the letter shows is 2-fold. First, Paul is completely engrossed in and informed by the Greco-Roman *habitus* of slaveholding, which in turn conditioned his gospel and actions in the first century. Second, his correspondence with Philemon illustrates his familiarity with the ways and means of slavery and slaveholding, as evidenced by his choice of words used to speak both about Onesimus and to Philemon. These two points will become essential to establishing Paul's "latent if not active complicity in condoning and therefore reinforcing institutionalized slavery,"<sup>167</sup> as well as his awareness of the realities of servitude.

### *Novel Considerations for a Re-Reading of Paul's Message*

Paul's vocabulary in 1 Cor. 7, verses 5 and 9 adds another element both to the *unlikelihood* that he understood slaves to have the same options as their free peers as well as the *likelihood* that he gave consideration to a person's volition with regard to sexual expectations. To both the married and the singletons at Corinth, Paul's prescriptions to avoid the temptations of Satan (7:5) come via an autonomous action—self-control.<sup>168</sup> It is a "lack of self-control" (*hei akrateia*) that Paul's fears would hand the Corinthians over to the polluted gentile realm of sexual immorality. The man frequenting prostitutes has the choice to control himself, as does the man living with his father's wife. The slave inherently lacks that which protects the free—the ability to control his/her "self." As we

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<sup>167</sup> Punt (2010), 245.

<sup>168</sup> The Stoic Musonius Rufus similarly castigates masters' lack of self-control in their relationships with female slaves. Bradley (1984), 118.

have established, the Greco-Roman institutionalized form of slavery afforded the slave with no real sense of self, apart from being an extension of his/her owner.

Speaking to issues of pollution and marriage, I propose another potential way that Paul may have understood sexual relations between a Christian slave and his/her owner, based largely on the work of Dale Martin's in his section in *The Corinthian Body* on Insider-Outsider marriages.<sup>169</sup> While Paul is clearly aware of the polluting aspect of porneia on the larger Christian community, his response to already married Christians to non-Christians is strikingly surprising. As Martin says, "we would expect him to think that the believing partner runs a risk of incurring pollution and thereby of polluting the entire body of Christ [by way of the unbelieving partner]." But instead Paul's response in 7:14 is the opposite—somehow the unbelieving partner is made holy in his/her union with the believer. Paul here identifies a cleansing aspect of this union, not a contaminating one. By extension, we might consider a similar phenomenon to be working in slaves' bodies with their masters. If the purity of Christ is powerful enough to repel pollution and perhaps even sanctify an unbeliever, Paul may have understood a slave's faith to have the same qualities. Perhaps Paul is employing the Stoic position of the indifferent nature of social statuses and the value in using those external things to further one's inner disposition (or someone else's). If so Paul need not exclude sexually available slaves from his communities for they would not be polluting the rest of the congregation, nor even themselves.

What seems almost implicit in this declaration from Paul is that one must seek immorality in order to pollute the whole. The concern of believers already married to non-

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<sup>169</sup> See Martin (1995), 218-19.

believers in Corinth surely rests with their understanding of certain (theological, salvific, eschatological?) implications of sexual immorality. Of course they have asked Paul specifically about their situation in order that they might not transgress porneia, even unintentionally. Paul's response is refreshingly pragmatic and inclusive and perhaps he here develops a unique theological position on this Insider-Outsider marriage situation based on the necessities of the social environment his communities are in.<sup>170</sup>

The implications for this project are twofold. First, it seems Paul does understand some aspect of intention underlying a transgression of porneia, for the Insider is worried about his/her otherwise sexually immoral union with the Outsider. Paul responds that in this situation, the normal rules are more or less reversed and all have been made holy due to the Insider's faith. Likewise, as Christian slaves do not seek sexual immorality but instead has it thrust upon them by their master, the normal rules again may not apply. Second, this situation reveals a telling aspect of Paul's theology—namely its malleability in light of unusual circumstances. It may be true that Paul understands certain sexual acts to be immoral and hence under the umbrella of porneia, however as this Insider-Outsider predicament illustrates, his theology is not one constrained by absolutes.<sup>171</sup> While a slave's sexual obligations would be considered immoral at their base, it is the slave's faith and desire to do right that keeps the door open to them and necessitates an unusual or counterintuitive theological accommodation.

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<sup>170</sup> Martin (1995), 218.

<sup>171</sup> See Harril (2006), 87: "In his undisputed letters, Paul avoids simple, apodictic commands in favor of indirect persuasion and siding with everyone. This polyphonic style of more reasoning allows multiple voices to be heard, including nonhegemonic ones; Paul's admonitions cannot be reduced to rules."

Speaking about slaves' desire opens the door for yet another reading of *porneia* as might have been used and understood by Paul. Aline Rousselle calls *porneia* "a manifestation of desire for another's body," which she says, "became a measure of human weakness in the service of God."<sup>172</sup> Martin assumes as much in his chapter "Paul Without Passion." By describing *porneia* as an Outsider's problem (though it may find its way into the Christian fold) Martin makes the case that Paul's real interest was not in curbing sexual activity, but sexual desire. He says:

Paul is concerned about *porneia*, which is taken to be the characteristic sin of the Gentile world "outside" the closed boundary of the body of Christ. The passion of sexual desire is part of the polluting complex of the cosmos that threatens the church. The problem of *porneia* is that it is unclean, as opposed to the holy *pneuma* of God that inhabits the church. The passion of desire, therefore, is part of the dirty, polluted cosmos in opposition to God. The way to avoid pollution is for men to possess and control their "vessels" (*skeuos*) as safe receptacles for their sexual overflow.<sup>173</sup>

According to Martin, Paul's offering of marriage as a solution for the enduring desire of weak Christians was not given for the purpose of embracing the "characteristic sin of the Gentile world" but its exact opposite—to extinguish it. Again what situates slaves outside of Paul's discourse is their subjugation and lack of personality. Perhaps slaves involved in voluntary sexual relationships with their masters could have constituted a problem for their participation in the church, being both outside of marriage and fraught with (their own) desire. But to affix the assumption of volition to all slave relations with their masters is of

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<sup>172</sup> Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. Felicia Pheasant (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1988), 4.

<sup>173</sup> Martin (2006), 67.

course not defensible, nor I am sure even what Glancy means to suggest. Therefore it seems that neither Paul, nor Glancy could have expected much more from the sexually obligated slave.

Perhaps the most compelling pieces of evidence to a re-evaluation of Glancy's conclusions lie in Paul's own words, when speaking directly to slaves in 1 Cor. In verses 21 and 24 he says, "were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever. In whatever condition you were called, brothers and sisters, there remain with God." The preceding information concerning the widespread and well-known practice of using slaves' bodies as sexual outlets, Glancy's argument that it restricted and excluded slaves from the Christian body, and these quotes from Paul himself are simply incompatible. Two possible conclusions can be made concerning Paul's attitude toward all aspects of a slave's condition: either he was unaware of the practice of masters using the bodies of even their Christian slaves as sexual outlets or he was aware and simply deemed it inconsequential to ecclesiastical participation. The former I propose is highly unlikely given the seeming universalism of such a practice and Paul's own cultural awareness. The latter makes much more sense in light of Paul's own words on slaves and their stations. In fact it is these verses that most strongly substantiate the proposed thesis that when Paul speaks of porneia he has some notion of intention, volition, and ideas of accessibility. If slaves are commonly used as morally neutral sexual outlets, having no choice but to participate, it seems as though Paul cannot hold them responsible as their bodies are not their own.

## *Conclusion*

It is Glancy's probing couple of introductory questions that sum up the present dilemma. She says:

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?<sup>174</sup>

Glancy is here addressing another important side of this dilemma for Paul, the early Christians, and the Greco-Roman slave—that of the boundaries of the Christian congregation. As has been offered, Paul clearly understood the impurity of Gentile sexuality—one concerned less with the morality of sexual contact but instead with honor, status, and property rights—somewhere and somehow defined under the umbrella of *porneia*, to be a threat to these boundaries. And the urgency of this project for Paul is not an insignificant part of his agenda. Wayne Meeks describes Paul's mission primarily as an “attempt to form moral communities,”<sup>175</sup> by way of his writing skills. And specifically to the community seeming to have the most trouble coming to consensus in the sexual realm C. K. Robertson notes, “the Corinthians ‘were in the process of defining their group identity and boundaries, a process which Paul hope[d] to influence with his letter.’”<sup>176</sup>

Taking these two views, Glancy's question appears all the more appropriate.

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<sup>174</sup> Glancy (2002), 50.

<sup>175</sup> Meeks, “The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul” in *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays*, eds. Allen Hilton and H. Gregory Snyder (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U. Press, 2002), 196.

<sup>176</sup> Robertson (2001), 8.

So how was Paul's message received? Although beyond the scope of the argument in this paper, perhaps a look into the first centuries of Christianity can help illuminate how Paul's admonitions were first understood. In the *Acts of Andrew*, a mid to late second or early third century *vita* of Christ's apostle, the story of a Christian woman named Maximilla sheds some light on our question.<sup>177</sup> Her proconsul, non-Christian husband, Aegeates, was unhappy with her unwillingness to share his bed. Her search for sexual purity leads her to send her slave girl, Euclia, to act as a sexual body double. Can we dismiss Maximilla's actions and her complicity in transgressing the sexual standards that Paul outlined by allowing her husband to use their slave in her stead? Perhaps Aegeates is not bound to the same rules, being a pagan only married to a Christian. Nonetheless, this tale may indicate some early Christian acceptance of Gentile sexuality, a kind that Paul clearly abhorred.

Although Glancy cites Basil of Caesarea as an exception, his fourth-century understanding of the expectations of women, often coerced or forced to have sex against their will, shows semblance with how I have argued Paul would have understood them. He declares corrupted women as not responsible for their sin and avers, "Thus even a slave, if she has been violated by her own master, is guiltless."<sup>178</sup> While we ought not take Basil as representative of most early church fathers' opinions, given their penchant even to value suicide over rape, his motion leaves the door open to finding out how he might have reached his conclusions if so many of his fellow theologians came to dissimilar ones.

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<sup>177</sup> See Glancy (2002), 22.

<sup>178</sup> Trans. and citation in Glancy (2010), 154.

Perhaps he also read Paul's theology on sexual immorality as conscious of *ontology*, *volition*, and *consent*.

It has been my contention that indeed there were means with which the Christian body both accommodated slaves' bodies and still protected and maintained its boundaries. What Glancy proposes in contrast is that Paul did not believe slaves' bodies and the larger Christian body to be compatible. If slaves were constantly transgressing porneia due to their obligatory sexual relations with their masters, Glancy argues, they would have been excluded from membership in Paul's churches. What this response has outlined is a recasting of Glancy's working definition of porneia, specifically augmenting it with notions of ontology, volition, and consent—three aspects of the human person and personality I fear have been overlooked. Having reworked this definition and shown other examples of Paul's flexibility with regard to similar matters, I hope to have made a strong case for a re-reading of the apostle's statements concerning sexual immorality. As Glancy rightfully admits and I cited early on, we are truly playing a guessing game. I only hope this project adds to a more nuanced and informed discussion of such a problematic topic.

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