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Paul, Scripture and Ethics. Some Reflections*

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How far should one take account of the wider context of OT citations used by NT writers in interpreting a NT text? This question is addressed in this article in relation to the first readers of NT texts, and focuses in particular on two texts from 1 Corinthians. General considerations make it rather unlikely that any very broad context would have been 'heard' by most readers/hearers in the first century. Detailed study of 1 Cor 5.13 (with its possible allusion to exclusion formulae from Deuteronomy) suggests that no reader is likely to have picked up such an allusion. There is a stronger case for a slightly wider context having been in mind in the case of 1 Cor 1.31; but this may have been because the Corinthians themselves had the text in mind already, and this may in part explain Paul's words in 1 Cor 4.6.

The general question I want to address in this article is a relatively narrow one: in considering the use made by NT writers of OT texts, whether in explicit citations or in more implicit echoes or allusions, how far should one take account of the wider context within the OT from which the citation or allusion is taken? Such a question has been answered in positive terms by a number of scholars in recent years in relation to a wide range of NT texts.[1]

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1 In general terms, see the early study of C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures. The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London, 1952). Many other more recent studies could be cited, though space precludes naming them explicitly here. But pre-eminent in the contemporary debate has been the work of R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven/London, 1989) and others developing insights from so-called 'intertextuality'. (And if my debate is primarily with Hays, this is simply a recognition of the programmatic significance of his work here.)

It is, however, doubtful whether this really should be described as 'intertextuality', at least insofar as that word is used by secular literary critics: see my 'Scripture and Q' in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; BETL 131; Leuven, 1998) 3–26, esp. 4–6; also T. R. Hatina, 'Intertextuality and Historical Criticism in New Testament Studies: Is There a Relationship?', *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999) 28–43; M. Rese, 'Intertextualität. Ein Beispiel für Sinn und Unsinn "neuer" Methoden', *Scriptures in the Gospels*, 431–9. It is noteworthy that, although Hays presented his work in *Echoes* using the words 'intertextuality' or 'intertextual' freely, he has more recently stated that he is prepared to surrender it: see his 'A Response to Critiques of *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*' in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 83; Sheffield, 1993) 70–96, on p. 81 (responding to W. S. Green): 'Nothing is at stake for me in the use of the term.'

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The question can be taken at a number of different levels. We can consider the authors of the NT texts: how far did one author, in referring to an OT text, have in mind the broader context from which the text came? We can ask about the first 'readers' of the text:[2] how far would/did the initial readers recognise and take account of the broader context? We can bracket off the historical question and simply ask whether we as readers might/can/should take account of the broader context of a quotation or allusion in order to enrich our understanding of the NT text. No doubt too there are a number of other hermeneutical possibilities, each with its own legitimacy within its own frame of reference.

In order to keep the discussion within manageable limits, the focus here will be primarily on one of these hermeneutical possibilities. In particular, I shall be adopting a broadly historical-critical approach in that I shall be considering how NT texts might have functioned in their original historical contexts. Further, within such an approach I will be concerned here primarily with the first *recipients* of the text: how far might first-century readers/hearers of the NT texts have recognised and taken account of the broader contexts of OT citations and allusions in the texts they read or heard? The question of how much first-century authors intended such contexts to be heard is of course also relevant; but the focus on the reader means that the question is not so much what an author may have had in mind, but how much of the broader context an author expected to be picked up by his readers/hearers and recognised as significant in interpreting a citation/allusion. The focus here will thus be primarily on NT texts as forms of communication between author and reader, and communication is primarily a two-way process involving both author and reader.

The question posed initially is in one way a relatively narrow one (it does not for example ask about the importance of the OT generally for NT writers), yet it is clearly too wide-ranging to be treated with any adequacy in a single article. For example, to talk of 'the' OT and 'the' NT in this context runs the real danger of generalising too quickly. As we have all learnt as standard critical orthodoxy today, the NT is not a monolithic unity; equally, the OT citations and allusions in the NT do not form a monolithic unity. Thus what applies to one writer may not apply to another. Further, the same writer may have adopted different strategies at different points.

In this article the focus will be on Paul alone, and clearly all the caveats mentioned above apply here. Very similar considerations also apply in relation to the recipients of Paul's letters. For example, it is well known that the Paul of Romans and Galatians is rather different from the Paul of 1 Thessalonians in the extent to

2 I am fully aware that many of the first recipients will have been hearers rather than readers: see below. However, I have kept the term 'reader' simply to avoid an over-cumbersome use of 'reader/hearer' on each occasion.

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which he cites scripture. Equally, the various recipients of Paul's letters may have been attuned in different ways to hear possible 'echoes' of broader contexts. Just as the Corinthian and Thessalonian Christian communities may have been different socially,[3] so too may have been their capacity to 'hear' unstated allusions to scripture in Paul's writings (and indeed Paul himself may have been aware of this).

We must also be alive to the fact that different OT quotations or allusions may function in different ways. For example, reference to named individual OT figures is clearly intended to evoke broader contexts and associated ideas. Thus the phrase 'the blood of Abel' in Luke 11.51 clearly evokes, and is intended to evoke, the whole story of the murder of Abel in Gen 4, and unless this is picked up by the readers/hearers, any communication is lost completely. So too references to figures like Moses, David or Abraham would be meaningless without recourse to the stories and traditions associated with these figures in the OT.

The same probably applies to key parts of Israel's history. With any society, the founding events that established the identity of that society will always play a key role in subsequent history.[4] Thus in the case of the nation Israel, the events associated with the Exodus, including the giving of the Law at Sinai as well as the events of the wilderness wanderings as recounted in the Pentateuch, would be easily recalled and evoked in different contexts. So, for example, the failings of the Israelites at the time of the Exodus in the wilderness period could be, and were, used in various retellings of the story to encourage repentance and a renewal of commitment by later Jews (cf. Pss 78, 106; Neh 9; also the song of Moses in Deut 32). Paul's evoking of the same events in a similar way in 1 Cor 10.1–13 lies in the same tradition.[5]

More debatable perhaps is the use of prophetic and other texts not so clearly related to Israel's founding history and where no proper names are mentioned such as to make the locating of the citation/allusion in its original context inevitable. Here it is not so easy to find close parallels to the alleged phenomenon in non-Christian texts.[6] For example, the Qumran texts for the most part seem to have had a blithe disregard for any concern with the 'original' context

3 See J. M. G. Barclay, 'Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity', *JSNT* 47 (1992) 49–74.

4 Cf. R. E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark* (WUNT 2.88; Tübingen, 1997) 29–45, with reference to the work of Ricoeur, Ellul and others.

5 Cf. R. A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville, 1998) 135.

6 Hays refers on several occasions to the work of M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, 1985): cf. his *Echoes*, 14; also 'The Conversion of the Imagination: Scripture and Eschatology in 1 Corinthians', *NTS* 45 (1999) 391–412, on p. 393 and n. 5. However, Fishbane is seeking to analyse a slightly different phenomenon, viz. what he calls 'inner Biblical exegesis' (i.e. interpretation of earlier scripture in later passages in the Hebrew Bible itself). He explicitly excludes Paul and other early Christian texts from this because their claims about, and their relationship to, early Jewish scripture are rather different (p. 10). In any case it is not

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when interpreting OT prophetic texts: all the concern is with how the wording of the text relates to the new context to which the Qumran writer has chosen to apply the prophecy.[7] Nor too is it easy to find parallels in Philo or Josephus.

In seeking to answer the question posed at the start of this paper, what criteria might one apply? The question is probably more easily posed than answered.[8] So too it is in one way far easier to stake a claim that the broader contexts of OT quotations are in mind than to try to claim that they are not. Certainly one can always develop theories which claim to show how the broader context of a citation or allusion has affected, and is intended to affect, what is said in a NT text. Sceptics can always then be chided for being blind or deaf and not having 'eyes to see or ears to hear'.[9] But how can we be sure that such theories have anything at all to do with how the NT texts were written, or heard, in the first century? How do we know that it is not simply our modern reading that hears and identifies the echoes of the wider context?

The main thrust of this essay will be to try to argue the negative case, to claim that it is unlikely that much wider contexts were intended to be evoked by authors to readers afresh. Yet clear evidence for this is, by the very nature of the case, difficult to obtain. There are, however, two instances in the NT where adjacent OT verses are cited consecutively, but apparently as separate quotations and with no obvious awareness that the two verses were originally consecutive (cf. Luke 4.10–11 citing Ps 91.11, 12, and Heb 2.13 citing Isa 8.17, 18).[10] So too Paul sometimes uses texts from originally closely related contexts in very different ways and in widely different contexts, suggesting that the original context of the quotation may not have

clear that the first readers of Paul can be compared so easily with the later readers of Jewish scripture interpreting earlier scriptural texts. Would Paul's letters have been regarded as having scriptural status?

7 See F. F. Bruce, *Bibical Exegesis in the Qumran Texts* (The Hague, 1959); also D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis. Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1987), ch. 2; cf. too T. H. Lim, *Holy Scripture in the Qumran Commentaries and Pauline Letters* (Oxford, 1997), esp. ch. 7.

8 Hays proposes seven 'tests' or guidelines (*Echoes*, 29–32). On these, see the critique of S. E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology', in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; Sheffield, 1997) 79–96.

9 Cf. Hays, 'Conversion of the Imagination', 392: 'Allusions and echoes are for those who have ears to hear'. Perhaps this is a good example of the kind of 'intertextual echo' which, for an audience of professional NT scholars, would be clearly heard: the quotation marks are almost unnecessary to indicate the allusion to Mark 4 (or is it Isa 6?!). But then equally, there is absolutely no intention in making this echo to try to evoke the wider context of Mark 4, as if only those with 'eyes to see' have been granted somehow the mystery of the kingdom!

10 In both instances an extra mini-'introduction' (καὶ ὅτι in Luke, καὶ πάλιν in Hebrews) suggests that the NT author thought of the two as separate quotations.

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been important for him.[11] Such examples are of course only isolated ones. Nevertheless, a consideration of some general and down-to-earth factors may be relevant here in suggesting the implausibility of positing more than a relatively limited awareness of broader literary contexts by the audience of NT texts.

First, we must remember that standards of literacy in the ancient world were not very high generally. It has been estimated that the number of people who were literate cannot have been much more than 20 per cent of the population as a whole and may have been considerably less.[12] Further, it is now widely accepted that early Christian groups were not from the lowest classes of society, but equally were not predominantly from the highest strata either.[13] It is thus unlikely that Christian communities were significantly more literate than the wider population in Hellenistic cities or elsewhere.[14]

All this means that in, say, Pauline communities, virtually all 'literature', be it Paul's own letters or Jewish scripture, would have been available to most members of the community in *oral* form: they would have *heard* it, rather than read it.[15] Any detailed awareness of the wider context of a quotation or allusion would have had to be based on at best recollection from memory, and this must make such a theory a priori a little uncertain.

Second, we must remember that Jewish scriptures in Paul's day were presumably available only to those who could read in scroll form, and probably in a number of different scrolls.[16] Locating allusions and citations in an original text in

11 Cf. Paul's use of verses from Isa 28: vv. 11–12 are cited in 1 Cor 14.21, v. 16 in Rom 9.33; or from Isa 29, v. 10 is cited in Rom 11.8, v. 14 in 1 Cor 1.19. So too the same OT text can be cited more than once by Paul, but in different ways: cf. Jer 9.23/1 Kgms 2.10 LXX (see below), cited in 1 Cor 1.31 and 2 Cor 10.17.

12 See H. Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church. A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven/London, 1995) 2–10. The standard work on literacy is W. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, 1989).

13 See, for example, the well-known studies of Pauline communities by G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (ET Edinburgh, 1982); W. A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven/London, 1983); A. J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia, 1983).

14 It is true that relatively soon the new Christian movement became extremely productive in terms of producing new literature (cf. Gamble, *Books*, 93–108). But our evidence comes from the post-Pauline period; in any case we do not know how far such productivity was accompanied by any general increase in the level of literacy by Christian groups as a whole.

15 Cf. C. D. Stanley, 'The Social Environment of "Free" Biblical Quotations in the New Testament', in *Early Christian Interpretation* (see n. 8 above), 18–27. More generally, P. J. Achtemeier, '*Omne verbum sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity', *JBL* 109 (1990) 3–27.

16 D. M. Smith, 'The Pauline Literature', in *It Is Written. Scripture Citing Scripture. Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (ed. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson; Cambridge, 1988) 265–91, at 280: 'The Bible was a collection of scrolls, not a single volume.' See too C. D. Stanley, 'Biblical Quotations as Rhetorical Devices in Paul's Letter to the Galatians', *SBL 1998 Seminar*

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scroll form must have been a cumbersome and awkward procedure. Moreover, scrolls were expensive to produce and copies of Jewish scripture in scrolls were presumably only available to relatively few people (most, presumably, Jews).[17] This makes it further unlikely that first-century hearers (or the few readers around) would have encountered much of Jewish scripture in its 'original' literary context. Thus when most of Paul's hearers/readers encountered a citation or allusion by Paul from the OT, the primary context would have been the literary context of Paul's letter and *his* citation.[18]

The nature of scrolls also makes it difficult to conceive of any very broad 'broader context' of an OT verse being in the mind of any reader or hearer. An awareness of the broader context consisting of (what was later regarded as) a few 'verses' might be conceivable. (For example, a verse from Isa 53 *might* evoke the whole of the description of the 'servant' figure of that chapter.) But theories involving whole books are harder to conceive simply in physical terms: how could one reader easily hold in view (literally!) a passage from Deutero-Isaiah with the passage in Isa 9 about the ideal king?[19]

There is too the question whether the first readers of the NT texts were themselves Jews. If they were in fact Gentiles, how much access would they have had to copies of Jewish scripture?[20] No doubt some Gentile converts to Christianity may have had some contact with Jewish groups prior to their conversion.[21] But Gentiles will inevitably only have had limited access, and presumably also limited exposure, to Jewish scripture. Detailed knowledge of all scripture and its contexts

Papers (Atlanta, 1998) 700–30, at 717f. It is now widely accepted that the beginnings of the use of the codex may well have been significantly affected by early Christians: see C. H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (Oxford, 1983); Gamble, *Books*, 42–81; G. N. Stanton, 'The Fourfold Gospel', *NTS* 43 (1997) 317–46, at 336–41. But this is unlikely to have pre-dated Paul's letters.

17 Cf. Smith, 'The Pauline Literature': the Jewish Bible (as scrolls, not as a single book) 'was possibly not accessible outside a synagogue'. On the costliness of books, cf. Gamble, *Books*, 83–93; also Harris, *Literacy*, 193–6, 224–5.

18 C. D. Stanley, 'The Rhetoric of Quotations: An Essay in Method', *Early Christian Interpretation* (see n. 8 above), 44–58, at 52f. (referring to the work of M. Sternberg); also *idem*, 'Biblical Quotations as Rhetorical Devices', 720.

19 Cf. the theories of M. L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke–Acts. The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (JSNTSup 110; Sheffield, 1995), or Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, which presuppose knowledge of, and cross-referencing within, texts as wide-ranging as the whole of the present book of Isaiah. On this, see my 'The Christology of Luke–Acts', in *The Unity of Luke–Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; BETL 142; Leuven, 1999) 133–64, at 159.

20 Cf. n. 17 above.

21 Otherwise the assumption of so many Jewish beliefs and presuppositions, e.g. in the areas of theology (i.e. the idea of God), eschatology, ethics, etc. by early Christian writers makes it very difficult to see how communication could have taken place.

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would thus presumably be the exception rather than the norm for Paul's audiences.

We can of course seek to find possible parallels to Christian communities in other Jewish groups using scripture,[22] and the obvious parallel phenomenon so often adduced is that of the Qumran literature. It is, however, not at all certain how close the two groups of literature really are. How far is there any *generic* similarity between Qumran texts and early Christian literature? (The closest parallel might be between Paul's letters and 4QMMT, but even here the similarities are not great.) Qumran does not contain anything that looks remotely like a life of the Teacher of Righteousness or (with the exception of 4QMMT) letters directly addressing a group in another location. First-century Christianity did not produce a rule book for the conduct of its members (possibly excepting the *Didache*), nor did it (as far as we know) write out biblical texts or produce commentaries on such texts. Socially the two groups were dissimilar (Qumran in the desert, Christian groups in towns and cities), nor do Christian groups appear to have had the same degree of literary sophistication that is evident in much of the Qumran literature. In all it is doubtful how useful the comparison between the Qumran texts and the Pauline letters in their use of scripture really is.[23]

As stated earlier, blanket claims covering the use of the OT in the whole NT, or even in one writer as a whole, are not easily sustainable. All one can do within the confines of a single article is to test a relatively small sample. Thus the focus here will be on some parts of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 1–5. Of course, this may be an atypical passage: Paul's use of scripture in 1 Cor 1–5 may be unlike the rest of Paul, or even other parts of 1 Corinthians. Nevertheless, it is a part of the Pauline corpus where Paul does refer to scripture and hence must be taken into account as part of the total picture of Paul's use of the OT; moreover, it is a passage where some have claimed recently that Paul's debt to scripture goes deeper than a surface reading might suggest. It may therefore serve as a useful test passage.

If our concern is primarily with *readers*, and with how Paul's letters might have been read/heard by their initial recipients, then we must first ask about the Corinthians and their capacity to hear any possible echoes of scripture. Such a

22 Seeking to find parallels to the alleged practice of reading Jewish scripture in other Jewish groups of the period is one thing. But I find it difficult to accept that the use of allusive 'echoes' in English poetry is necessarily a good parallel to use for illuminating the way in which Paul's letters might have been read in the first century. Cf. Hays's indebtedness to the work of John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley, 1981). Quite apart from the temporal problems of comparing much later texts with Paul's letters, there is the generic problem: Paul's letters are surely *mis*read if they are read as 'poetry' with all the interpretative presuppositions we might bring to bear in reading what we regard as 'poetry'.

23 *Pace* Lim (especially if attention is focused on the *Pesharim* commentaries): see the review of Lim's book by C. D. Stanley in *JTS* 49 (1998) 781–4.

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question is of course unanswerable with any certainty. We have nothing directly from the Corinthian Christians. Nevertheless, Paul's letters, together with other evidence, may help a little.[24] 1 Corinthians itself suggests that the Corinthians were not ignorant about OT scripture (or at least Paul apparently thought they were not ignorant). Paul can, and does, remind them in 1 Cor 15.3 of a pre-Pauline formula about the death and resurrection of Jesus, a formula which clearly has a lot of interpretation built into it, viz. that 'Christ' died 'according to the scriptures' and that he was raised on the third day 'according to the scriptures'. Paul's language suggests that this is common ground to himself and the Corinthians: hence the Corinthians must have accepted the claim about κατὰ τὰς γραφάς. Of course we do not know how much substance they put into that general claim though it may be reasonable to assume that they thought that such a claim could be substantiated. Similarly, in what may well be another pre-Pauline fragment,[25] Paul's statement in 1 Cor 5.7 ('Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us . . .') presupposes some familiarity with the feast of Passover, its symbolism and its ritual. In 1 Cor 10.1–13, Paul appeals to the example of the wilderness wanderings and evidently presupposes a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the Corinthians. (The passage would be all but incomprehensible for any who had never heard the Exodus stories at all.)[26] In the middle of that section too, Paul makes the famous equation between the 'rock' of the wilderness wanderings and the person of Christ (v. 4), an equation that many have argued needs a middle stage, equating the rock with the 'person' of Wisdom, in order to be comprehensible.[27] Again it is notable that Paul

24 See, however, the caveats expressed (in general terms) in the important recent article of C. D. Stanley, '"Pearls Before Swine": Did Paul's Audiences Understand His Biblical Quotations?', *NovT* 41 (1999) 124–44. Stanley offers many general arguments against the theory that Paul's audiences understood much if anything of his references to scripture, let alone that they might have been sensitive to unquoted parts of broader contexts. He warns against 'the kind of "mirror-reading" that assumes we can discover what Paul's addressees knew about the Jewish Scriptures by studying how Paul himself interprets the biblical text' (136; cf. too 124).

As will have been evident, I am very sympathetic to Stanley's overall approach and have learnt much from this and all his writings (as the footnotes make clear; his most recent article reached me after the present essay was already in draft form.) Nevertheless Stanley makes little of the variation in Paul's use of scripture between different letters. Such variation might reasonably suggest that Paul at least *thought* that some of his readers were more 'attuned' to hearing OT quotations than others. And if we are to be sensitive to the potential *variety* between and within Pauline communities in this respect (as we surely should be), then perhaps Paul's own use of scripture may not be wholly irrelevant.

25 Cf. below.

26 Cf. G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, 1987) 443: 'The nature of the following argument [in 10.1–13] suggests that they [the Corinthians] were well aware of the data of the text.'

27 The equation is made by Philo, *Leg. all.* 2.86. See C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London, 1968) 222; H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (ET Philadelphia, 1975) 167, and many others.

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does not stop to explain, let alone argue, his point here. He seems to assume that he can take it as read. Thus it would seem that the Corinthians may have had some knowledge of scripture already, and indeed, in the last case, of Jewish traditions interpreting scripture.[28] On the other hand, we may note Paul's passing remark in 12.2 that the Corinthians were Gentiles prior to their becoming Christians.[29]

At first sight these two pieces of data – the Corinthians as having some knowledge of scripture and the Corinthians as Gentiles – might not seem easy to reconcile. If, though, we take the evidence of Acts into account, we may gain a reasonably plausible picture.[30] According to Acts 18, Paul went first to the Jewish synagogue in Corinth before being driven out.[31] He then settled in the house next door belonging to a certain Titius Justus who is said to have been a person who 'worshipped God' (Acts 18.7). The synagogue official Crispus also became a Christian believer (v. 8). The general picture might then fit the evidence of 1 Corinthians itself reasonably well if we postulate the Corinthian community as made up largely of people who had been on the 'fringe' of Judaism (both metaphorically and in one case at least literally), perhaps as 'God-fearers' (if such existed).[32] Thus it may not be unreasonable to postulate a certain amount of knowledge of OT scripture on the part of the Corinthians.

I turn now to a consideration of two possible examples of Paul's use of scripture in 1 Corinthians.

1 Cor 5.13

Paul's language in 1 Cor 5.13 ('Drive out the wicked person from among you') has been the subject of some debate in recent studies. The words are not prefaced by any introductory formula by Paul; yet the language used is very close

28 For further evidence of some familiarity on the part of the Corinthians with the OT, see 1 Cor 15, where Paul indulges in some detailed arguments based on the OT (cf. especially vv. 24–8); also, if 2 Corinthians is relevant, there is Paul's use of the story of Exod 34 in 2 Cor 3.

29 Cf. too 6.10–11; 8.7 (some were idolaters – hardly language appropriate to Jews). Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 4. I am assuming throughout this paper that the addressees in 1 Corinthians form a unified single group. I am fully aware that this is disputed, but there is no space here to debate the issue.

30 On this see A. Lindemann, 'Die paulinische Ekklesiologie angesichts der Lebenswirklichkeit der christlichen Gemeinde in Korinth', *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; BETL 125; Leuven, 1996) 63–86, esp. 67f. For the basic reliability of the account in Acts here, see G. Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts* (ET London, 1987) 201–4.

31 This is of course a typical Lukan feature; but that does not make it ipso facto unhistorical.

32 There is no space here to enter the vexed debate about the existence of a specific group of 'God-fearers' in Judaism at this period. See the discussion in M. C. de Boer, 'God-Fearers in Luke–Acts', in *Luke's Literary Achievement* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; JSNTSup 116; Sheffield, 1995) 50–71.

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to a number of verses in Deuteronomy,[33] and indeed the Nestle–Aland text prints the words in italics, indicating the editors' view that this is some kind of 'quotation'. The lack of introductory formula has led a number of scholars to ignore the verse in their studies of Paul's OT quotations.[34] Others, notably Rosner and Hays, have however argued more recently that the words should be seen as a quasi-quotation, indicating Paul's deep debt to the OT in his ethical teaching.[35] The subject of the chapter is the question of a Corinthian man apparently having sexual relations with 'his father's wife' (v. 1), a practice explicitly forbidden in Deut 23.1 (LXX 22.30). Further, one of the occurrences of the execution/exclusion formula in Deuteronomy comes in the close context of this verse, viz. in Deut 22.22.[36] Thus, it is argued, Paul's instructions here are strongly influenced by the Deuteronomic legislation, and the allusion in v. 13 evokes the wider context from which it comes.

How much though would the Corinthians have heard/read from Paul's language here? We have already noted the lack of an introductory formula to the words of v. 13: hence it is not at all certain that, as Gentile readers with *some* – but not necessarily unlimited – knowledge of Jewish scripture, they would have recognised the words as scriptural at all.[37] Further, the words in question come at the very end of Paul's discussion of the issue. There has been no explicit reference to the law in Deuteronomy proscribing sexual relations with one's father's (or anyone else's) wife earlier in Paul's discussion. Would then Paul's readers have realised that his ethical decisions were based – in whole, in part, or even at all – on the Deuteronomic law before reaching v. 13? At the very least one would expect some allusion earlier in the discussion if any 'echo' in v. 13 was to have been 'heard' by the Corinthians.

Rosner has however argued that such allusions might be present. He suggests that the Deuteronomic legislation about expulsion is governed by three factors:

33 Deut 13.5; 17.7; 19.19; 22.21, 22, 24; 24.7.

34 Cf. E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1957); D.-A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums. Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verhältnis der Schrift bei Paulus* (BHT 69; Tübingen, 1986); C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (SNTSMS 74; Cambridge, 1992). Others cited in B. S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics. A Study of 1 Corinthians 5–7* (AGAJU 22; Leiden, 1994) 61–2.

35 Rosner, *Paul*, ch. 3. In his earlier work Hays argued that the allusion was to Deut 17.7 (*Echoes*, 97); in his more recent essay, Hays has moved slightly to seeing the allusion to Deut 22, partly under the influence of the work of Rosner: see his 'Conversion of the Imagination', 410–11 and nn. 45, 47.

36 There it is in relation to a man having sexual relations with the wife of any other man. According to W. Horbury, 'Extirpation and Excommunication', *VT* 35 (1985) 13–38, these commands, originally referring to execution, were widely interpreted later as implying exclusion and expulsion from the community.

37 On the importance of some kind of 'marker' that a quotation is being given, at least for Paul's *audiences*, see Stanley, '"Pearls Before Swine"', 132–3.

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the idea of covenant obligations, an idea of corporate responsibility, and also an idea of holiness; moreover, he claims that the same ideas recur in Paul.[38] Yet it is hard to see much of this in the rest of 1 Cor 5. Certainly the idea of specifically *covenant* obligation is not clear in Paul's language. Paul starts the chapter by noting that the behaviour of the Corinthian man would not even be tolerated 'among the Gentiles'. The implication seems to be that the ethic Paul is promoting, viz. that living with one's father's wife is morally unacceptable, is one which would command universal assent, i.e. from Gentiles as well as Jews. There is then no appeal here to specifically Jewish ideas of *covenant* obligation; rather, the appeal is to what is claimed to be the universal moral rejection of such behaviour.

> Rosner also seeks to reinforce the covenantal and/or Deuteronomic basis for Paul's argument by referring to the vice list in 1 Cor 5.11–12: he claims that Paul's list of vices can be seen to correspond to the list of offences in Deuteronomy for which the exclusion/banning order is ordained.[39] However, the alleged correspondences are at times rather weak: for example, the parallels drawn between the person who gives malicious false testimony (Deut 19.18–19) and Paul's 'reviler' (λοίδορος), or between the rebellious son who is a profligate and a drunkard (Deut 21.20–1) and Paul's 'drunkard' (μέθυσος), or between a kidnapper (Deut 24.7) and Paul's 'robber' (ἅρπαξ), are very general. In any case, as Rosner admits, sexual immorality and idolatry (Deut 17.3, 7; 22) are often linked both in Paul (cf. Rom 1.19–27; 1 Cor 6.9–10; Gal 5.19–21) and by others, so that we do not necessarily need the Deuteronomic exclusion formulae to explain their being linked here. In view of the very general nature of some of the parallels, it seems highly unlikely that any Gentile readers/hearers of Paul would have picked up the alleged set of parallels, even if they may have been in Paul's mind.

It is also not easy to see any idea of corporate responsibility reflected in Paul's language. It has been argued that Paul's demand in v. 2, that the Corinthians should not have been 'puffed up' but should rather have 'mourned', is an indication of this, implying a demand for repentance; and parallels have been sought in e.g. the figure of Ezra mourning for the sins of the people (cf. Ezra 10.6; 1 Esd 8.72; 9.2).[40] However, 'mourning' takes place in a wide range of contexts and it is difficult to press the meaning of the word on its own, without any other contextual indications, into a meaning of repenting, let alone for *corporate* sins.

> Nor does the example of Ezra really provide a clear parallel to what is alleged here. In Ezra 10.6, Ezra does indeed 'mourn', but there seems little suggestion that Ezra himself is accepting responsibility for the sins of others: when Ezra then addresses the people, it is all in the second person, not the first person

38 Rosner, *Paul*, 65–81.

39 Rosner, *Paul*, 69, referring to D. Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians* (Leicester, 1985) 85; P. Ellingworth and H. Hatton, *A Translator's Guide on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* (London, 1985) 105.

40 See Rosner, *Paul*, 71–3.

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(v. 10: '*you* have trespassed and married foreign women . . .'; v. 11: 'separate *your*selves;' etc.). There is clearly a corporate idea here, as there is in other parts of the OT.[41] But it is very doubtful whether there is any idea implied in the references to 'mourning' alone of corporate *responsibility* or *guilt*.

In fact Paul here clearly distinguishes the incestuous man and the Corinthians, with respect both to the sin committed and to the punishment. He is guilty of incest (v. 1), they are guilty of pride and arrogance (v. 2); he is to be handed over to Satan (v. 5),[42] they are not. Hence it is hard to see any idea here of corporate *guilt* being imputed to the rest of the Corinthian community by Paul. They are indeed not without blame in Paul's view: but that is because of their *reaction* to the man's behaviour, not because of their being deemed to be guilty of the same incestuous actions themselves. It is thus very doubtful whether there is any idea here of corporate responsibility.

That there is some idea of holiness implied here is undeniable.[43] But whether this is connected to the Deuteronomic legislation explicitly seems very unclear. Once again we may doubt how far any reader of Paul could have related his instructions in 1 Cor 5.1–12 with Deuteronomy via such a general theme before the allusion/quotation in v. 13.

In fact, if OT legislation does lie behind Paul's instructions here, his language in v. 3 and his use of the first person singular ('*I* have decided' how to deal with the situation) seems extremely odd. If the basis for the decision is that the OT law of Deuteronomy is held to be still valid for the situation of the Corinthian Christian community, then one would surely expect a clear reference to this here. The decision would not be a human decision but that of God himself as the legislator of Deuteronomy. But v. 3 says that the decision is being made by Paul himself.

Paul himself does seek to explain his decision in the verses that follow. Perhaps, in seeking to discover the basis of Paul's own ethic, as well as how his ethic might have been heard/read by others, we would do well to find the primary evidence in what Paul himself actually says: presumably Paul's first readers could at least be forgiven for thinking that the basis for Paul's ethical teaching was what Paul actually said was the basis for his teaching![44]

41 Though any idea of 'corporate personality' needs to be handled with some care: see J. W. Rogerson, 'The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-examination', *JTS* 21 (1970) 1–16.

42 Whatever that implies. There is no space to be able to discuss the issue here.

43 See too A. Y. Collins, 'The Function of "Excommunication" in Paul', *HTR* 73 (1980) 251–63. The Passover references which follow also suggest that an idea of holiness is in mind.

44 See L. E. Keck, 'Re-thinking "New Testament Ethics"', *JBL* 115 (1996) 3–16, at 8, for the importance of taking seriously what the authors themselves say in their justification for moral decisions. Contrast e.g. the argument of T. Holtz, 'The Question of the Content of Paul's Instruction', in *Understanding Paul's Ethics* (ed. B. Rosner; Carlisle, 1995) 51–71 (German orig-

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Paul's argument in 1 Cor 5.1–12 has nothing to do with the Deuteronomic legislation at all. It is in fact something of a 'hotch-potch' of different 'arguments' or claims. There is the general 'christological' appeal to the fact that the Corinthian community will be gathered together with Paul present 'in spirit' and will make their decision in the name, and by the power, of the Lord Jesus.[45] He then appeals to a general proverb about the contamination engendered by leaven (v. 6), a proverb which he uses elsewhere (Gal 5.9) and for which there are clear non-Jewish parallels as well.[46] This proverb is then applied and developed in slightly confusing ways. In one development, what is bad is seen as *old* leaven which must presumably be replaced by new, fresh leaven (v. 7a, 8aβ); but this is then developed into a contrast between leaven itself, which is taken as bad, and a situation of no leaven (v. 7b, 8bβ). And this idea of 'unleaven' in turn leads to the idea of Passover and the parallel/typology drawn between the death of Jesus and the sacrifice of the Passover lamb (vv. 7b, 8a). There is almost certainly a tradition being used here.[47] Possibly too the tradition had already 'ethicised' the imagery, associating 'leaven' with malice (κακία) and wickedness (πονηρία), and 'no leaven' with sincerity (εἰλικρινεία) and truth (ἀληθεία). None of these four terms correlates very closely with the situation Paul is addressing in 1 Cor 5: the Corinthians and the Corinthian man are not necessarily guilty of 'malice', and 'wickedness' is very general;[48] and the 'virtues' of 'sincerity' and 'truth' are not the obvious antitheses of the Corinthian attitude of being 'puffed up'. Hence it seems most likely that Paul is taking up a tradition which compared Jesus' death with the Passover sacrifice and which had already developed this symbolism via the leaven/unleaven motif in an ethical direction.

All this suggests that the primary basis for Paul's argument here is the *christological* claim about the nature and significance of Jesus' death seen as a Passover sacrifice with general ethical implications already drawn from this by an earlier tradition. And all this is then applied to the situation in Corinth by reference to a

inal *TLZ* 106 [1981] 385–400) at 55, who claims that the real reason for Paul's demand to the Corinthians not to frequent brothels cannot have been what he actually says in 1 Cor 6, since this would exclude all sexual relations: hence the real reason must be found somewhere else (i.e. in the OT and Jewish tradition). Perhaps one should 'let Paul be Paul' (and 'let the reader understand' the 'intertextual' echoes!).

45 There is not enough space here to discuss the complicated problem of the precise syntax of vv. 3–4: see all the commentaries.

46 See H. D. Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia, 1979) 266 for references.

47 See J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (ET London, 1966) 60, who refers to the sudden change to the first person, as well as some Semitic and un-Pauline elements in the language used here.

48 πονηρία might be seen as a word play on πορνεία (cf. P. Zaas, '"Cast Out the Evil Man from Your Midst"', *JBL* 103 [1984] 259–61, at 259), but if so it is not clear why any word play was felt to be needed at all.

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moral judgement which Paul believes – and states – can be assumed as universally accepted (v. 1). Insofar then as the community is to rid itself of the incestuous man, the idea is probably more related to the Passover ritual of getting rid of 'leaven' (here taken as symbolic of evil and wickedness) than seen in terms of Deuteronomic legislation of execution or expulsion.

All this does then presuppose some knowledge of the OT and of Jewish customs on the part of the readers/hearers. But it is knowledge of the Passover, and the rituals associated with that feast, not of Deuteronomic legislation and sanctions laid down there. Such knowledge would not, however, be unprecedented, and it seems not unreasonable to think of Gentiles on the fringe of Judaism, both metaphorically and literally, having some awareness and knowledge of the Passover rituals as practised by Jews, perhaps too with some awareness of an interpretation of leaven/unleaven in ethical terms.[49] But in any case it is here a heavily Christianised Passover symbolism, referring to Jesus and his death, that is presupposed by Paul. Thus, for Paul, Christology (at least in general terms) is the overriding consideration in his ethical teaching here. The OT legislation of Deuteronomy does *not* seem to be an important factor in Paul's argument. Such legislation *may* have been in the background of Paul's thinking. But it is hard to see that this would have been picked up in any way by Paul's audience on the basis of what Paul actually says in vv. 1–12 at least. V. 13 may simply represent a use of at most biblical terminology or phraseology with no further overtones detectable, at least to the readers. It thus seems very improbable that Paul's language here would have led his readers to any wider context of Deuteronomy. Nor is there any indication that Paul would have wished to lead them in that direction. They had surely been led – by Paul! – down other avenues of biblical imagery already. Any 'echo' engendered by Paul's language in v. 13 would appear to be strictly limited.

1 Cor 1.31

The other OT quotation to be examined here is Paul's quotation in 1 Cor 1.31. Unlike 1 Cor 5.13 this is explicitly signalled by Paul as an OT quotation with the introductory formula καθὼς γέγραπται. There is, however, slight uncertainty

49 Cf. too Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 48; Fee, *First Epistle*, 218: Paul 'clearly assumes that his Gentile readers will understand this thoroughly Jewish image'. It is notable that Philo interprets the Passover in allegorical terms in *Quaest. Exod.* 1.4; and in 1.15 he too interprets the leavened/unleavened bread in ethical terms: 'Such [leavened/unleavened bread] is a symbol of types of soul, one [leavened] being haughty and swollen with arrogance, the other [unleavened] being unchangeable and prudent ... We eat the opposite of overboastful arrogance through meditation on humility, which is called reverence.' See below for the possible importance of Philo's writings for illuminating the background of the Corinthians' thought and ideology.

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about what this is actually a quotation of: most assume that it is a quotation (albeit involving some substantial abbreviation) of Jer 9.23–4 (MT; 9.22–3 LXX). However, the same saying appears in the LXX version of the song of Hannah in 1 Kgms 2.10; and a strong case has recently been made for the view that it is the latter that is in mind rather than Jeremiah.[50] As will be seen, I am in agreement with this view, but for rather different reasons and with rather different conclusions drawn. In one sense, the issue may be immaterial since Jer 9.23–4 and 1 Kgms 2.10 LXX are all but identical.[51] My primary concern is how far, if at all, the wider context of the quotation in the OT is in view.

In this instance a strong case can be made for the slightly wider context of the words quoted by Paul being in mind here. Jer 9.23–4 and 1 Kgms 2.10 LXX have the words which Paul 'quotes' as part of a longer oracle:

> Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who practises kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth. (Jer 9.23–4 MT)

Paul's words in 1 Cor 1.31 represent an abbreviated version of the final positive clause of this oracle.[52] Yet just a few verses earlier, Paul seems to have the negative parts of the same oracle in mind when he tells the Corinthians that 'not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth' (1.26). Many have seen Paul's triad here of 'wise–powerful–noble birth' as engendered by the triad 'wise–mighty–wealthy' from the oracle in Jeremiah, thus providing clear evidence that Paul did have a wider OT context in mind other than just the part he actually quoted in v. 31.[53]

One difference between Paul and the OT oracle may be noted here. The OT

50 J. Ross Wagner, ' "Not Beyond the Things which are Written": A Call to Boast only in the Lord (1 Cor 4.6)', *NTS* 44 (1998) 279–87.

51 The versions differ slightly at the end: Jer 9.24 MT has '. . . knows me, that I am the Lord who practises kindness, justice . . .'; Jer 9.23 LXX has '. . . knows that I am the Lord who practises mercy, justice . . .'; 1 Kgms 2.10 LXX has '. . . knows the Lord, and practises justice . . .'. The differences between the two versions do not affect the issue here.

52 Paul deletes any mention of activity by the human subject in the boasting: one is simply to boast 'in the Lord': one does not oneself 'understand' or 'know', let alone actually 'practise' the justice etc., as in the 1 Kgms 2 version.

53 See G. O'Day, 'Jeremiah 9:22–23 and 1 Cor 1:26–31: A Study in Intertextuality', *JBL* 109 (1990) 259–67; R. B. Hays, 'The Role of Scripture in Paul's Ethics', in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters. Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* (ed. E. H. Lovering and J. L. Sumney; Nashville, 1996) 30–47, at 44; also *idem*, 'Conversion of the Imagination', 405–6; Wagner, 'Not Beyond', *passim*. Although much has been made in terms of 'intertextuality' as illuminating Paul's procedure here, the suggestion that Jer 9 lies behind more than just v. 31 of the passage had been made well before 'intertextuality' became such an in-word in NT studies: cf. Barrett, *First Epistle*, 51–61; also Fee, *First Epistle*, 78.

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oracle tells those who (think they) *are* wise and powerful not to boast in their own wisdom and power; and yet Paul (on the usual reading of 1 Cor 1.26) seems to presuppose that his Corinthian addressees were *not* wise or powerful.[54] How then could the fuller oracle of Jer 9/1 Kgms 2 be relevant to them?

This may be related to another difference between Paul and the OT: the parallelism between 1 Cor 1.26–31 and the oracle in Jer 9 does not involve identity in the wording of the triads. Above all, Paul does not refer to the 'rich' here, but to those of 'noble birth'.[55] It may be that Paul is aware of the fact that, at one level, the community is reasonably well-off financially and not destitute: certainly Paul can presume later that they have enough money to be able to set aside some surplus for his collection (cf. 1 Cor 16.1; 2 Cor 8). But although fairly well-to-do materially, they may not have been of very high status socially.[56] Hence Paul may have changed the

54 This is the usual interpretation of the verse (and has of course given rise to many conclusions about the social setting of the Corinthians community). However, in seeking to reinforce the theory that the full oracle (of Jer 9) is in mind, Gail O'Day has defended an alternative reading of the verse, taking up an earlier suggestion by W. Wuellner about v. 26: rather than being an indicative statement about the position of the Corinthians, v. 26 should be taken as a series of questions expecting the answer yes: 'Were not many of you wise? Were not many of you powerful?' to which the implied answer is 'yes, indeed we were/are' (W. Wuellner, 'The Sociological Implications of 1 Corinthians 1:26–28 Reconsidered', *SE* 6 [*TU* 112; Berlin, 1973]) 666–72, at 668–9; O'Day, 'Jeremiah 9:22–23', 263–5). On the more usual reading of v. 26, it is the actual situation of the Corinthian community that inverts the world's values and shames others, yet this is 'theologically dubious, because for Paul it is the cross, not the divided and divisive Corinthian community, that shames the world' (ibid., 265).

Such a reading does not, however, seem persuasive. First, Paul is not claiming that it is the 'divided and divisive Corinthian community' as such that shames the world. No doubt for Paul it is ultimately the cross that shames the world. But the point of his argument in vv. 27–8 is that there is some positive correlation between the cross and aspects of those whom God has chosen, in that all serve to invert the world's values. Second, it is hard to believe that Paul's addressees are not included (by Paul) in the list in vv. 27–8. In the introductory βλέπετε γὰρ τὴν κλῆσιν ὑμῶν, the γάρ suggests that the appeal to Corinthians to 'consider their calling' will positively support Paul's general claim in v. 25 about the superiority of divine folly/wisdom and weakness/strength over human wisdom and power. O'Day's reading implies a contrast between the situation of the addressees and Paul's claims. But the γάρ in v. 26 suggests that the appeal to the Corinthians' position supports, rather than works against, Paul's argument. The alternative reading of v. 26 would have to assume that the foolish/weak/no-accounts who have been chosen by God (vv. 27–8) are precisely *not* the Corinthian addressees. However, Paul says in v. 30 that it is 'you' – not 'they' or 'others' – who have their origin in the God who has called all these 'nobodies'. The implication is that those addressed are among the foolish/weak etc. and also that they acknowledge the fact. Otherwise the rhetoric of the argument never gets off the ground. Cf. too the discussion of the reference to 'noble birth' above: Paul is proposing a negative statement with which the Corinthians will agree.

55 Paul's δυνατός is also not quite identical to Jeremiah's ἰσχυρός although Paul uses ἰσχυρός in v. 27 and in any case the two words are close in meaning if not exactly synonymous.

56 See Meeks, *First Urban Christians*.

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third term of the triad to find a point of (negative) agreement: they could indeed agree that very few of them were of noble birth, whereas they perhaps would not agree that they were materially poor and not 'rich'.[57] Thus 1 Cor 1.26 seems to be formulated as an indicative statement in negative terms about the Corinthians' situation and status with which they will agree.

But if the oracle of Jer 9/1 Kgms 2 is in the background throughout 1 Cor 1.26–31, how much of the broader context of the text actually cited in v. 31 may have been in Paul's mind *and* could have been picked up by the Corinthians themselves? Hays suggests that the whole section in Jer 8.3–9.26 may be in mind: 'a repeated theme of this unit is that the people who claim to be wise will soon incur God's judgment (e.g. Jer 8.9 'the wise shall be put to shame, they shall be dismayed and taken; since they have rejected the word of the Lord, what wisdom is there in them?')'.[58] It is hard, however, to envisage any Corinthian readers/hearers making such a connection. The alleged unit in Jer 8–9 is very long and it is some 35 verses back to the alleged key verse of 8.9. In any case the section is not very clearly about false *wisdom* (the word occurs only rarely in the section). Given all the general problems noted earlier about the nature of the accessibility of scriptural texts, it seems unlikely that any Corinthian reader of Paul's argument would have gone so far afield in bringing in the wider context in this way.

As in 1 Cor 5, Paul's explicit citation with the introductory formula does not occur until the very end of the section. If, then, it is Paul who brings in the wider context, it is hard to see how the Corinthians would have known that there was an OT text, *and* its associated context, to pick up until the clear marker given by Paul in v. 31.[59] As already noted, the majority of Paul's addressees would presumably have heard, rather than read, his words. Hence it would have been very hard, if not impossible, to retrace steps backwards to an earlier part of an oral text and recognise echoes in words that had previously been spoken. Further, Paul's possible allusion to the oracle in 1 Cor 1.26 changes at least one of the three terms of the triad from 'rich' to 'noble birth' (cf. above). If this were all new to the Corinthians, they would have had to recognise an allusion that had altered the text significantly at one point. On the other hand, the tie-up between Paul's language in v. 26 and the oracle in Jer/1 Kgms is extremely striking and seems scarcely accidental. All this suggests that if the 'echoes' of the fuller oracle were heard by the Corinthians – and the close tie-up between v. 26 and v. 31 suggests that they were – then *the Corinthians had the oracle already in mind*.[60]

57 See too Fee, *First Epistle*, 80. Paul would presumably not want them to agree that they were 'poor' when he appeals to them for money (cf. 16.1)!

58 Hays, 'Conversion of the Imagination', 405.

59 On the importance of 'markers' indicating a quotation, at least for audiences, cf. n. 37 above.

60 I am aware that this might be illegitimately equating Paul's 'implied readers' with his real readers (cf. Stanley, '"Pearls Before Swine"', *passim*). On the other hand, Stanley himself concedes that the general situation would be significantly different if the audience already knew

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But how might the oracle have been used? It is widely agreed that in 1 Cor 1–4 Paul is addressing a problem of an overvaluing of σοφία on the part of the Corinthians. However, Paul's language may suggest a varying level of 'wisdom' on the part of the Corinthians. For example, 1 Cor 4.8 is widely held to be Paul's sarcastic reflection of Corinthian claims for themselves: they are 'filled', they are 'rich', they have become 'kings' and are 'reigning' in some sense. So, too, the language of 4.10 probably echoes (with heavy irony on Paul's part) the Corinthian claims: they are 'wise' (φρόνιμοι), 'strong' (ἰσχυροί), and 'held in honour' (ἔνδοξοι), language very similar to 1.26. But in 1.26, Paul seems to assume that the Corinthians will accept that they are *not* σοφοί, δυνατοί, εὐγενεῖς. How are these to be reconciled?

One possibility is that the two claims refer to different times. The claims reflected in 4.8, 10 presumably refer to the present state of the Corinthians: they are now wise, rich, reigning, etc. Paul's appeal in 1.26 is rather to their circumstances when they were 'called' (to be Christians):[61] then they were (mostly) not wise by human standards, powerful, or of noble birth. If, though, the Corinthians are now claiming to be wise etc., but concede they were not so at the time of their calling, this must imply that there has been a change: God has made the foolish wise, the weak have become strong, the poor have become rich.[62] But this is precisely the story line and the governing motif of the song of Hannah in 1 Kgms 2! The broader context in 1 Kgms 2.1–10 of the oracle cited in 1 Cor 1.31 and alluded to by Paul is precisely about the reversal of fortunes brought about by God.[63] According to the song, God is the one who 'makes poor and *makes rich*' (v. 7 LXX πλουτίζει), he 'raises the poor from the dust and makes them sit with rulers of peoples (δυναστῶν λαῶν) and makes them inherit a *throne* of *glory* (θρόνον δόξης)' (v. 8). Although, as many have pointed out, the language of the apparent claims of the Corinthians in 4.8, 10 can be paralleled in a wide range of sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish,[64] it is striking how much the slightly wider

the OT texts being alluded to or cited (cf. 130, 132). What follows is admittedly a little speculative, but perhaps worth exploring as a possibility.

61 So Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 49; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 51; Fee, *First Epistle*, 79.

62 It is noteworthy that 'rich' does appear in 4.8, unlike 1.26: cf. above.

63 Wagner, 'Not Beyond', 284, claims that the song 'resounds from start to finish with the theme of the reversal *of human pride*' (my stress), and hence regards the whole song as meshing in with *Paul's* argument. More apt seems to be Hays's characterisation: 'a song that extols God for having reversed the fortunes of the poor and the downtrodden' ('Conversion of the Imagination', 405, though Hays himself follows Wagner as seeing this as fitting Paul's argument). In fact, in trying to find any resonance between Paul and the wider song, Hays can only refer to one verse in the song, viz. v. 3: 'do not boast, and do not speak lofty things; do not let grandiloquence (μεγαλορρημοσύνη) come out of your mouth'. (Cf. too his 'Role of Scripture', 44.)

64 See Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 87–8; D. W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict. Paul's Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (NovTSup 66; Leiden, 1992) 217–18. Not irrelevant also may be the parallels in the Jesus tradition of the beatitudes.

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context of the oracle cited by Paul in 1 Cor 1.31, if taken from the version in 1 Kgms 2, seems to fit the *Corinthian* situation and self-understanding almost like a glove. Could it be then that the echoes of the fuller oracle, which do seem to be there in Paul's language in 1.26, may have been heard precisely because the oracle and its slightly wider context in 1 Kgms 2 (rather than Jer 9) were already in the minds of Paul's readers/hearers as providing the basis for their own self-understanding?[65]

In general terms, the idea does not seem implausible. We have already seen that some knowledge of the OT on the part of the Corinthians is not improbable (cf. above). The possibility that the Corinthians might have sought to establish their beliefs on the basis of scripture may also be implied by Paul's words in 1 Cor 1.20 'Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?': the three nouns σοφός, γραμματεύς, συζητητής, suggest work in interpreting scripture.[66] Hence the σοφία of the Corinthians may come, at least in part, from *their* use of scripture.[67]

Further, there is some evidence for the use of the song of Hannah at this period. Pseudo Phocylides 53 parallels the oracle of 1 Kgms 2.10/Jer 9.22–3. Pseudo Philo expands the song very considerably but also clearly knows the presence of the LXX version of 1 Kgms 2.10 (cf. Ps-Philo 50.2).[68] Within the early Christian tradition, we know too that the song was influential in providing the basis for the Magnificat of Luke 1. Some evidence from Philo may also be relevant here. A number of scholars have argued in recent years that the most important background for illuminating the Corinthians' ideas may be ideas about Wisdom in Hellenistic Judaism, especially as found in Philo.[69] It may then be significant that

65 Stanley, 'Biblical Quotations as Rhetorical Devices', 704–5, points out that one of the rhetorical functions that quotations can serve is the establishment of common ground between the two parties involved in the communication process. (Stanley's essay is an excellent study of the way in which quotations can and do actually *function* within discourse.) Cf. too D.-A. Koch, 'Schriftauslegung II', *TRE* 30.2.3 (1999) 458.

66 See J. A. Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit* (New York, 1984) 73, referring to N. A. Dahl, 'Paul and the Church at Corinth according to 1 Corinthians 1.10–4.21', in *Christian History and Interpretation* (FS J. Knox; ed. W. R. Farmer *et al.*; Cambridge, 1967) 313–35, at 328, and others; cf. too Fee, *First Epistle*, 70–1.

67 Thus agreeing in part with M. D. Goulder, 'Σοφία in 1 Corinthians', *NTS* 37 (1991) 516–34, though I have difficulty with other aspects of his theories: see my 'Jewish Christian Wisdom in 1 Corinthians?', in *Crossing the Boundaries. Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (ed. S. E. Porter *et al.*; Leiden, 1994) 201–20.

68 Cf. P.-M. Bogaert, 'Luc et les écritures dans l'évangile de l'enfance à la lumière des "Antiquités Bibliques": Histoire sainte et livres saints', in *Scriptures in the Gospels* (see n. 1 above), 243–70, at 259–60.

69 See B. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos–Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians* (Missoula, 1973); R. A. Horsley, 'Pneumatikos versus Psychikos: Distinctions of Status among the Corinthians', *HTR* 69 (1976) 269–88; *idem*, 'Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom', *CBQ* 39 (1977) 224–39;

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the song of Hannah is alluded to at a number of places by Philo. At one point Philo explicitly refers to Hannah as 'the gift of the wisdom of God' (*Quod Deus* 5). Elsewhere, on a number of occasions he refers explicitly to the verse in 1 Sam 2.5 ('the barren hath borne seven'), interpreting the words variously of the soul free from passions (*Quod Deus* 10–15; *de Mut.* 143–4; cf. too *Praem.* 159–60; *de Ebr.* 145–52). The use of the song of Hannah by Philo may then add some support to the theory that the Corinthians themselves had already appealed to this song to justify their own position as people who possessed true wisdom and who had been made 'rich', 'powerful' and enabled to sit on some kind of a throne by God.

Paul's response is perhaps a little coded and guarded. Paul's exhortation is that one should 'boast in the Lord' but it is a κύριος who is characterised by a cross. Paul's use of the oracle is thus strictly limited, and he almost seems to want to avoid any discussion of the wider context. Could this then be the force of Paul's (in)famous words in 1 Cor 4.6, where he tells the Corinthians not to (go) 'beyond what is written'? There is no time to rehearse here the various possibilities that have been proposed to explain Paul's highly enigmatic statement.[70] I am persuaded by the arguments of those who propose that ἃ γέγραπται here refers to OT scripture, and that the scriptures concerned are probably the texts which Paul has cited thus far in the letter.[71] Nevertheless, the ὑπέρ here has always been problematic: in what sense should one not go 'beyond' what is written? Most of those who have wrestled with the problem acknowledge the difficulty, but often seem to end up effectively making the ὑπέρ mean 'against', so that Paul is simply made to say 'do not disobey' scripture.[72]

If, though, the situation in Corinth was as suggested above, then it may be that the Corinthians were 'going beyond' the texts actually cited by Paul by appealing

idem, ' "How Can Some of You Say that There is No Resurrection of the Dead?" Spiritual Elitism in Corinth', *NovT* 20 (1978) 203–31; also his *1 Corinthians*, 35; Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*. Cf. too above on Philo's ethical interpretation of 'leaven' and 'unleaven'.

70 Many are covered in Wagner, 'Not Beyond', *passim*. See too Hays, 'Conversion of the Imagination', 407–8 n. 40, for discussion and (in my view justified) critique of two recent studies, viz. R. L. Tyler, 'First Corinthians 4:6 and Hellenistic Pedagogy', *CBQ* 60 (1998) 97–103; and J. C. Hanges, '1 Corinthians 4:6 and the Possibility of Written Bylaws in the Corinthian Church', *JBL* 117 (1998) 275–98.

71 See especially Wagner, 'Not Beyond', developing the earlier study of M. D. Hooker, ' "Beyond the Things Which Are Written": An Examination of 1 Cor. IV.6', *NTS* 10 (1963) 127–32, repr. in her *From Adam to Christ. Essays on Paul* (Cambridge, 1990) 106–12.

72 Cf. Hooker, *Essays*, 109; also Wagner, 'Not Beyond', 280: 'As a positive command it [1.31] is liable to transgression, and so the exhortation not to "go beyond" the command makes sense' (apparently equating 'going beyond' with 'transgression'). Also Hays, 'Conversion of the Imagination', 406–7: 'It [1 Cor 4.6] means that Paul is trying to teach the puffed-up Corinthians not to *transgress* the specific scriptural warnings against arrogance' (my stress).

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to the broader context of, say, the song of Hannah to justify their own self-understanding. It is then Paul who may be somewhat uneasy about such a procedure. Paul wants the Corinthians to stick to what *he* has said, and to the form in which *he* has cited the scriptural texts to support his argument.[73] It could be then that the situation in 1 Cor 1–4 is not dissimilar to that in 1 Cor 15, where both Paul and the Corinthians are appealing to an earlier tradition (in 1 Cor 15 it is probably the primitive Christian kerygma) but drawing rather different conclusions from it.[74] The dispute is thus a hermeneutical one: how is one to interpret a tradition valued by both sides in a debate but giving rise to radically different interpretations? If the above suggestion is anywhere near the truth, Paul's argument seems to be to want to stick to individual texts, at times suitably adapted, and to go no further. If there are 'echoes' of scripture to be heard in the sense of allusions to (only slightly) broader contexts, it may be the Corinthians who are more prepared to do this and it is Paul who sets his face (at least here) against such a procedure. Paul may be thus wanting to *limit* any appeal to wider contexts of scripture.

In any case Paul's appeal to scripture in this section may be less important than other factors in his overall argument. Far more central to Paul's argument here are the twin (or connected) appeals to the person of Jesus and to the figure of himself as an apostle as paradigms for Christian existence. Thus in 4.6 itself Paul says that he has applied all the previous argument to himself and Apollos so that the Corinthians may learn what it means 'not to go beyond what is written': i.e. it is Paul and Apollos who provide the real criterion for determining how scripture is to be read. So too in the heavy irony of 4.8ff., it is Paul's own apostolic life that provides the counter to Corinthian claims about their status, their 'wealth' and their 'wisdom'. In 4.16, Paul explicitly says 'be imitators of me', and in 4.17 it is Paul's own 'ways in Christ Jesus' that the Corinthians are to be reminded of by Timothy. Earlier in the section it is the person of Jesus as the crucified one who provides the primary criterion for mounting the critique of the Corinthian claims about their σοφία: cf. the stress in chapter 1 on the cross as providing the true σοφία of God which undermines all other claims to wisdom. In 2.2 Paul states that he will have no other basis for his preaching than that of the crucified Jesus. And the wisdom that Paul will concede and accept for the mature (2.6–16) is the wisdom that comes from the mind of Christ (v. 16). It is the gospel of Christ crucified, and the claim that this gospel is exemplified in his own apostolic existence, that provides the fundamental basis for Paul's attempt to change the self-understanding of the

73 Cf. too 1 Cor 3.20, where Paul cites Ps 94.11, but where he changes the psalm's original ἀνθρώπων to σοφῶν, almost certainly to suit his own argument and claims (cf. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 194–5).

74 See my 'The Corinthians Who Say "There is No Resurrection of the Dead" ', in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; BETL 125; Leuven, 1996) 247–75; also J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* (SNTSMS 26; Cambridge, 1975) 84–113.

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Corinthians.[75] In all this, OT scripture is occasionally cited but generally plays only a subsidiary role in the argument as a whole.

To say that Paul's ethic is primarily christocentric is scarcely very startling in terms of contemporary scholarship.[76] Nor is it very novel to say that the OT plays a rather subsidiary role in Paul's ethic (though there has been a strong upsurge of support in recent years for the opposite view).[77] Rather then one could say that this study gives some support to the view of Barnabas Lindars, in a paper originally given nearly 25 years ago to the Society, that it is Christology that is central for Paul and that the OT is used primarily to back that up where appropriate.[78]

75 For the idea that the apostolic life exemplifies the gospel, see especially Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy*; also G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography* (SBLDS 73; Atlanta, 1985); B. Gaventa, 'Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm', *NovT* 28 (1986) 309–26. B. Dodd, *Paul's Paradigmatic 'I'. Personal Example as Literary Strategy* (JSNTSup 177; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

76 Cf. Keck, 'Rethinking', 10; R. B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York, 1996) 27–32; D. G. Horrell, 'Theological Principle or Christological Praxis? Pauline Ethics in 1 Corinthians 8.1–11.1', *JSNT* 67 (1997) 83–114; and many others.

77 See the classic essay of A. von Harnack, 'The Old Testament in the Pauline Letters and in the Pauline Churches', ET in *Understanding Paul's Ethics* (ed. B. Rosner; Carlisle, 1995) 27–49 (German original 1928). For a fuller list of those who have downplayed the role of scripture in Paul's ethics, see Rosner, *Paul*, 4 (though of course Rosner himself would wish to argue against such a position). For the contrary view, cf. the recent studies of Hays and Rosner, as well as the work of scholars such as P. Tomson, M. Bockmuehl and K. Finsterbusch.

78 See Barnabas Lindars, 'The Place of the Old Testament in the Formation of New Testament Theology', *NTS* 23 (1976) 59–66, at 66.

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