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INTRODUCTION

At first glance, Paul's words to the Corinthians about their being the body of Christ in 1 Cor. 12 seem simple and straightforward. He compares them with a human body so that they may be encouraged to work together, each member contributing to the good of the whole according to his or her special gift. However, the passage raises several critical questions which point to its deeper implications. Does Paul mean that the community is only "like" a body or is he saying that they are in some sense a real body? What is the significance of being specifically the body of *Christ*? Is the primary purpose of the passage to instruct on the correct use of spiritual gifts or is Paul also making a statement about the identity of the Christian community? The goal of this work is to present fresh answers to these questions by examining more closely the evidence from others who also spoke about the importance of being a body, specifically the Stoics, and how their conception of bodily unity was critical for social ethics. In doing so, I hope to shed new light on both the content and the purpose of Paul's description of the body of Christ in 1 Cor. 12 and also as it relates to the rest of his instructions in 1 Cor. 13 and 14.

Key issues

The body of Christ: physical body or metaphor?

One of the key questions is whether Paul was speaking of a literal or a figurative body, a question represented in the exchange between J. A. T. Robinson and Robert Gundry. Robinson contends that Paul was referring to Christ's actual physical body; he argues that the term must be understood in light of Paul's "Christology" instead of linguistic sources.[1] The church is "in literal fact the risen organism

[1] John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM Press, 1966) 48.

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of Christ's person in all its concrete reality" and the individuals are members of Christ's person.[2] Although this constitutes a "very violent use of language," Paul intended it to be so. Robinson explains that it was meant to be "offensive" and "It is almost impossible to exaggerate the materialism and crudity of Paul's doctrine of the Church as literally now the resurrection *body* of Christ."[3] However, the difficulty for Robinson is that he is not able to give a satisfactory explanation of how this "real" connection could exist.

Gundry rightly objects to the equation of believers with the physical body of the risen Christ. He explains, "To equate the present physical body of Christ with believers wreaks havoc with the temporal distinction Paul carefully makes between the pastness of Christ's resurrection and the futurity of believers' resurrection."[4] However, he does not deny some sort of equation between Christ and the believers, for he also states, "On the other side, not to equate believers with a body of Christ, merely to attach them sacramentally and mystically, would fail to do justice to Paul's statement ... that the Church *is* the Body of Christ and that individual believers make up the specific organs and limbs."[5] He only denies that the church can be identified with Christ's glorious and risen body.[6]

Furthermore, Gundry notes that the "body of Christ" image appears solely in paraenetic passages for the purpose of exhortation and deals primarily with the working relationships among the Christians. The ethical nature of the passage implies that the phrase is not to be taken physically.[7] The ecclesiastical body is metaphorical because it equates members with the eyes, and the like, in only a figurative way.[8] Gundry

[2] Ibid., 50–51.   [3] Ibid.

[4] Robert Gundry, *SOMA in Biblical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 228.

[5] Ibid., 228.

[6] Andrew Perriman argues that the problem lies in a misunderstanding of the nature of metaphor. He says that one cannot distinguish precisely between metaphor and "literal" language since the very use of metaphor implies a "real" state ("'His Body, Which Is the Church ...' Coming to Terms with Metaphor," *EvQ* 62 [1990] 123–42).

[7] Although there may be an equation between Christ and the church, it is not necessarily physical, despite the physical language. For example, in Gal. 3:16, 29 the Christians are Abraham's offspring, with "offspring" denoting something definitely physical. But being Abraham's offspring is a matter of faith alone (Gundry, *SOMA*, 23–32). Or as Ernest Best states, while "body" may be a physical term, since it is used as a metaphor, "that does not imply that the reality behind (the metaphor) need necessarily be considered as physical" (*One Body in Christ* [London: SPCK, 1955] 16).

[8] Gundry, *SOMA*, 230. As mentioned, Gundry still states that the church is Christ's body in a very real way. He distinguishes between the individual body of Christ, which arose and ascended, and an "ecclesiastical body, consisting of believers, in which he

asserts that Robinson emphasizes the "extreme violence and crudity" of the expression because Robinson himself recognized "the impossibility of its making good literal sense."[9]

But if the primary purpose of the metaphor is comparative, why did Paul use the phrase "body of Christ"? It would have been easier for him to discuss the "body of the church." We come to the significance of naming the church the body of *Christ*. To say the phrase is "metaphorical" or the passage is "paraenetic" does not fully answer these questions, and perhaps the answer lies in finding an alternative way of explaining how the church can be Christ's body in other than the literal physical sense.

Some within the Roman Catholic tradition have attempted to preserve the real connection between Christ and the church through the use of terms such as "supernatural" and "mystical." For many of these scholars, the Spirit's role has led them to search for new ways of defining the union beyond "physical," "figurative," and "metaphorical."

For example, Alfred Wikenhauser asserted that the reception of the Spirit brought the believers into the "mystischen Einheit."[10] In this way the church becomes the "mystical" body of Christ. L. Cerfaux sought to modify this definition so that it was not so much a "mystical body," but a "mystical theory of life in Christ."[11] For Cerfaux, Christians were still a "spiritual organism . . . mystically identified with the body of Christ"[12] although not a "mystical body" as a collective person forming the church.[13]

In the end, the use of terms such as "mystical" prove not very illuminating in terms of how Paul actually conceived of this relationship.[14] A historical explanation for the content of this relationship is needed.

dwells on earth through his Spirit" (*SOMA*, 228). Other studies have emphasized the comparative aspect of the metaphor more exclusively than Gundry, e.g. Brian Daines, who says "'Body of Christ' is used in the New Testament essentially to make practical points and to turn it into a mystical concept relating to the aggregate of individual believers rather than to congregations is to turn it into something completely different" ("Paul's Use of the Analogy of the Body of Christ," *EvQ* 50 [1978] 78). Also, Gosnell L. O. R. Yorke, "The human σῶμα and *not* Christ's σῶμα is used consistently as the term of comparison for the church as σῶμα" (*The Church as the Body of Christ in the Pauline Corpus* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991] 10).

[9] *SOMA*, 235.

[10] Alfred Wikenhauser, *Die Kirche als der mystische Leib Christi nach dem Apostel Paulus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1937) 92.

[11] L. Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959) 267.

[12] Ibid., 282.   [13] Ibid., 283.

[14] In general, the lack of a historical explanation for the terms has led to a great deal of confusion about terminology. For example, Ernst Käsemann said that the body of

Indeed, part of the problem may lie in the limitations of contemporary definitions of what it means to be a body.

Albert Schweitzer's work highlighted this problem. He emphasized the importance of bodily union with Christ in *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*.[15] He even stated that "shared corporeity" between Christ and the church was the central idea of Paul's thought.[16] While stated most explicitly in ch. 12, this "shared corporeity" was also the best way to explain such passages as 1 Cor. 6.

Schweitzer pointed out that the explicit nature of the church as Christ's body was a significant part of Paul's beliefs and ethics, even though it is difficult to conceptualize this type of bodily unity. Paul's language virtually demands a corporeal relationship between Christ and the church, even if it is not at all clear how this relationship could exist.

Jewett calls Schweitzer's work "extraordinary" because it "accepts and makes sense out of the Pauline understanding of the body in a way which no earlier interpretation could match."[17] Although Schweitzer could not explain the content of this bodily unity, he did point to the possibility that Paul may have intended a literal corporeal relationship which went beyond the intellectual categories available to him in the twentieth century. As Jewett summarizes, "modern man does not appear to possess the philosophical assumptions to grasp such ideas of somatic unity."[18]

Dale Martin specifically argues that modern readers have been misled by a Cartesian construction of a body–soul dualism as an ontological dualism which cannot adequately accommodate the

Christ was a "mythological" conception that Paul viewed "realistically" (*Perspectives in Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971] 104 n. 9). Cerfaux argued that it was a "real" body as opposed to a "mystical" body, but one which nevertheless created a "mystical" union between Christ and the believers (*Church*, 280–81). Current scholars are more wary of speaking of a "mystical" body, but still have not found a satisfactory way of describing the connection. For example, Ben Witherington says, "[The body metaphor] is not merely an analogy, since he believes that it describes a real supernatural entity: Christ's people bound to him and to each other by God's Spirit" (*Conflict and Community in Corinth* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 255).

[15] Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1956).

[16] Ibid., 110. It is called the body of Christ on account of Christ being "the most exalted personality which shares in it, and because its special character was first consummated and made manifest in Christ."

[17] Robert Jewett, *Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971) 215.

[18] Ibid., 215. Similarly, Käsemann notes that "what seems to us mythological was viewed by Paul quite realistically" (*Paul*, 104).

ancient conception of corporeality. For example, whereas Descartes distinguished the body as material and the soul as immaterial, Aristotle viewed the soul as incorporeal but not as what the modern reader would call "immaterial."[19] As a result of the differences in conceptual categories, Martin asserts that interpreters need to "wipe clean our slate of corporeal vocabulary" and "take an imaginative leap into the past" in order to reconstruct how the ancients understood corporeality.[20] A goal of this study is to yield some of these categories with which to understand the image by examining the significance of being called a "body" in Paul's culture.

I will attempt to show that the Stoics provide the means for understanding Paul's concept of bodily unity, including how this affects his ethics. I will attempt to show that Schweitzer was correct, and that the main part that was missing from his solution was a historical *and* philosophical explanation for the content of "somatic union."

Naming the body: the body of Christ as a statement of identity

In addition to understanding Paul's use of "body," it is necessary to consider the significance of Paul's naming the Corinthians as Christ's body specifically. According to Käsemann, the phrase "body of Christ" is primarily a statement of identity and the stress lies on the genitive.[21] Paul does not simply say that the church is a body but that it is so "in Christ." His argument is ultimately a "Christological one."[22]

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[19] Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 8.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Käsemann, *Paul*, 102–21. Several scholars have asked whether the very characterization of a group as σῶμα has pre-Christian precedent. For example, A. E. J. Rawlinson asserted that "(σῶμα) does not appear in pre-Christian Greek usage to denote the idea of a 'society,' a 'body corporate,' with 'members'" ("Corpus Christi," in *Mysterium Christi*, ed. G. K. A. Bell and Adolf Deissmann [London: Longmans, 1930] 226). See the discussion in Jewett, *Terms*, 229–30. Jewett denies that there are any pre-Christian examples. W. L. Knox proposed the phrase ὡς ἑνὸς σώματος in Philo, *Spec.* 3.121 ("Parallels to the N.T. Use of σῶμα," *JTS* 39 [1938] 243–46); and T. W. Manson τῷ τῶν Ἑλλήνων σώματι in an inscription dating to 7/6 BCE ("A Parallel to a N.T. Use of σῶμα," *JTS* 37 (1936) 385). Jewett points out that the latter is based upon a mistranslation because σώματι should be connected with λειτουργεῖν, resulting in the phrase "to perform bodily service." Jewett dismisses the example from Philo as being "speculative," but I will examine the passage in more depth below.
[22] Käsemann, *Paul*, 103.

Like Gundry and others, Käsemann notes that Paul uses the body of Christ in a paraenetic context. However, he makes a more explicit connection between "theology" (or Christology) and "ethics" when he says that the passage gives the "theological reason" for unity in the midst of diversity.[23] He asserts that one must go beyond comparison to understand the significance of the very real "body of Christ." Since the church was baptized into one body by the Spirit, the phrase is not a metaphor but rather reflects the transformation that occurs at baptism "in which the old man dies and a new creature comes to life."[24] Thus, the comparative aspect must be understood in the perspective of the entire exhortation with the result that "the comparison brings out the reality which is intended through the concrete application of the statement of identity to the life of the Christian community."[25] A critical part of Paul's argument is his identification of the church as the specific body of Christ and how this provides a foundational element in his exhortation.[26]

The relationship between identification and exhortation in Paul's method has been noted by other commentators, especially those who describe it as "indicative-imperative."[27] Paul's ethics are inseparably

[23] Ibid., 118.

[24] As Käsemann explains, the "sacrament" involves the person in Christ's death, incorporates him or her "in Christ" and allows the person to participate in the "Divine Spirit." Thus the person's identity "in Christ" exists first. Christ has a heavenly body that fills and embraces the earth, a body which is then identified with the church. Only after this idea is established does Paul use the idea of the organism for paraenetic purposes. Christ exists before the church, and people become members of the church only because they first partake in Christ (*Paul*, 103–104, 116). Similarly, Rudolf Bultmann explains that it is what happens to the believer in Christ that determines the application of "body" language. "Paul explains the inner unity of believers with each other and with the Redeemer by using the Gnostic term 'body' (i.e. in the phrase 'body of Christ,' Rom. 12:4f.; 1 Cor. 12:12–27; also 1 Cor. 6:15–17) and in so doing very materially determines *the development of the Church-concept*" (*Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel [2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954] I:178).

[25] Käsemann, *Paul*, 104.

[26] Indeed, those who support the theory of the Stoic metaphor will often note the way in which Paul seems to depart from normal usage by identifying the body with Christ, although in general they do not pursue an in-depth explanation. Wayne A. Meeks, for example, notes Paul's use of a rhetorical commonplace and adds that the specification of the body as Christ's "makes the usage extraordinary" (*The First Urban Christians* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983] 89).

[27] Victor Paul Furnish states, "The relation of indicative and imperative, the relation of 'theological' proclamation and 'moral' exhortation, is *the* crucial problem in interpreting the Pauline ethic" (*Theology and Ethics in Paul* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1968] 9). Research on the indicative and imperative in Paul can be divided into three

related to the content of his preaching, in particular what it means to be "in Christ" and to "belong" to him. Victor Furnish states,

> The study of the Pauline ethic, therefore, is not the study of his ethical theory, for he had none, nor of his code for Christian living, for he gave none. It is the study, first of all, of the theological convictions which underlie Paul's concrete exhortations and instructions and, secondly, of the way those convictions shape his responses to practical questions of conduct.[28]

In a somewhat similar manner, I will argue that we must understand the convictions underlying Paul's "indicative" in ch. 12 before we can understand how they shape his "imperative" in what follows. Specifically, Paul's method of linking community identity as a body and corporate ethical exhortation is similar to what is found in Stoic paraenesis. This identification sheds light both on Paul's ethical method and on how he conceives of the nature of the eschatological community.

Methodological considerations

Theological interests have often influenced the contours of the discussion about the body of Christ. For example, Jewett notes the tendency to read a church tradition back into the text. Referring to a portion of the Roman Catholic debate, he observes, "There

categories: (1) the two are separated from and not related to each other (C. H. Dodd, *Gospel and Law* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963]); (2) the two are so closely related that they are virtually indistinguishable (Rudolf Bultmann, "Das Problem der Ethik bei Paulus," *ZNW* 23 [1924] 123–40; trans. Christoph W. Stenschke, "The Problem of Ethics in Paul," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics*, ed. Brian S. Rosner [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 195–216; *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. I, trans. Kendrick Grobel [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955] 315–32; Furnish, *Paul*); (3) the two are closely related but maintain their distinctiveness (G. Bornkamm, *Paul* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1971] 201–203; T. J. Deidun, *New Covenant Morality* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981] 78; L. Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. II [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982] 136; W. G. Kümmel, *Theology of the New Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1980] 227; R. N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977] 179; C. E. Braaten, *Eschatology and Ethics* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974] 121; Michael Parsons, "Being Precedes Act: Indicative and Imperative in Paul's Writing," in *Understanding Paul's Ethics*, ed. Brian S. Rosner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 217–47 (reprinted from *EvQ* 60 [1988] 99–127). See Parsons for a more detailed discussion of the positions.

28 Furnish, *Paul*, 211–12.

appears to be a minimum of wrestling with the historical intention of (Paul); instead one scheme is set up against the other with the claim that it provides a more satisfactory compromise between the text and the theological tradition."[29] Gundry's denial that the believers are attached "sacramentally and mystically" to the body of Christ reflects a different aspect of the theological debate, specifically the arguments against the "mystical" body of Christ. The present inquiry will, as much as possible, approach the text from the standpoint of the ancient philosophers and not from a concern to support a specific contemporary theological position. The hope is to discover new categories for thinking about both the content and function of "body" language in 1 Corinthians.

Identifying the "source" of the metaphor: potential and problems

One of the key issues for scholars has been the "source" for Paul's use of the "body of Christ" phrase. The proposals are numerous,[30] including the Jewish concept of corporate personality,[31] the gnostic Redeemer myth,[32] the body of Adam from rabbinic Judaism,[33] and the temple of Asclepius in Corinth.[34] Some scholars have looked to Paul's own experience to provide the explanation. The Damascus

[29] Jewett, *Terms*, 205.

[30] For a detailed analysis of the source theory of the metaphor see ibid., 200–304. Other, more brief surveys can be found in Robinson, *Body*, 55; Josef Hainz, *Ekklesia* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1972) 260, n. 2; Yorke, *Church*, 1–10.

[31] According to this theory, Christ incorporates the church within himself analogous to the way in which a Hebrew Bible figure incorporated ancient Israel within himself as their inclusive representative (Best, *Christ*; Schweitzer, *Mysticism*).

[32] The Urmensch consisted of a gigantic body which came to earth and was incarcerated in the material world. Although the Urmensch escaped, fragments of his body remained imprisoned on earth (Ernst Käsemann, *Leib und Leib Christi* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1933]; Bultmann, *New Testament*, I:175–83; Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, trans. John E. Steely [Nashville: Abingdon, 1971]).

[33] In the opinion of W. D. Davies, Paul derived it from the rabbinic doctrine of the unity of humanity in Adam. According to this doctrine, Adam's body was symbolic of humanity's oneness. Paul simply adapted the idea to the new humanity which was "in Christ" and animated by the Spirit (*Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980] 55–57; also Jewett, *Terms*, 239–50).

[34] The idea is derived from votive offerings in the form of body parts found in the temple (Andrew E. Hill, "The Temple of Asclepius: An Alternative Source for Paul's Body Theology?" *JBL* 99 [1980] 437–39; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1983] 165–67).

Road theory[35] and the Eucharist[36] have been proposed as ideas for the bodily unity between Christ and his church.

None of these ideas, however, has gained a scholarly consensus. Numerous scholars have also suggested a combination of theories rather than a single "source."[37] This work will not attempt to examine all of the possible "sources," but rather will focus upon the potential of Stoic philosophy as a backdrop.

Probably the most enduring "source" is the political/philosophical image of the cosmos or state as a body.[38] The image was widespread in antiquity, with its best-known form that of the Menenius Agrippa fable, in which Agrippa persuaded the plebeians to cease their rebellion against the senate by arguing that since the state, like a body, is made up of a number of diverse parts, all of the parts perform a necessary function, including the senators, for the good of the whole.[39] Conzelmann notes, "[The figure of the body as an organism] was to begin with a popular figure; it was then taken over by philosophy, especially by the Stoa."[40]

Perhaps the most thorough application of this theory is the important study by Margaret Mitchell in *Paul and the Rhetoric of*

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[35] Seyoon Kim argues that Paul's concept of the solidarity of the people with Christ came from his conversion experience when he encountered the risen Christ, who says, "Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me? . . . *I am Jesus whom you persecute*" (*The Origin of Paul's Gospel* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984] 252–56; also Robinson, *Body*, 58).

[36] Rawlinson suggested that bodily union between Christ and the believer took place through the Eucharist as a communion with the Lord's Body and Blood and a participation in Christ's sacrifice ("Corpus Christi," 225–44. Also Cerfaux, *Church*, 262–82).

[37] E.g. Käsemann who sees the influence of the Stoic notion of the organism, the Jewish idea of "corporate personality," and the Anthropos myth (*Paul*, 103).

[38] Others who have held similar views include: Traugott Schmidt, *Der Leib Christi* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1919) 193–248; W. L. Knox, *Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) 160–65; G. Johnston, *The Doctrine of the Church in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943) 85–99; Cerfaux, *Church*; C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968) 287; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, trans. J. W. Leitch (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 210–16; Meeks, *Urban Christians*, 89–90; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 600–603; Witherington, *Corinth*, 258–59; Robert M. Grant, "Hellenistic Elements in 1 Corinthians," in *Early Christian Origins*, ed. Allen Wikgren (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961) 63; Wikenhauser, *Kirche*, 130–43.

[39] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.83.2; also Livy, *History of Rome* 2.32.8–12.

[40] *1 Corinthians*, 211. This will be demonstrated in more detail in chapter 2. Unfortunately, this idea was not treated in Max Pohlenz, *Paulus und die Stoa* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956).

Reconciliation.[41] Her overall thesis is that the entire epistle is an example of deliberative rhetoric, specifically, a "concord" speech in which Paul is arguing for unity. 1 Cor. 12 then forms a significant section of his overall argument.

She documents how the metaphor was used for the society or state in ancient political literature to show the need for cooperation among all the parts or members of society. It was specifically used to combat factionalism, such as that which is evident in 1 Corinthians, beginning with the thesis statement in 1:10. Thus, the metaphor in 1 Cor. 12 is a primary part of Paul's argument for the community to end their factionalism by working for the "common good." Mitchell further supports her claims by showing that the similarities extend beyond the thematic connection to include specific terms and motifs. These include the appeal to cooperation for the "common good" ($\sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\acute{\epsilon}\rho\text{o}\nu$) as well as details such as specific body parts (e.g. eyes and ears), the reference to "necessary" parts ($\mathring{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\alpha\mathring{\iota}\alpha$), and even the personification of body parts.[42]

Mitchell's identification of the political background is significant not only because of her close identification of the image and its "source" but also because she moves beyond "source" to examine closely its function. In light of the preceding discussion on the various issues which interpreters encounter in analyzing the "body of Christ," it seems that a proper methodology would need to take into account the integration of the "source" and its function. A full understanding of 1 Cor. 12 must link the identification of the community as the body of Christ (content), and its paraenetic purpose (ethics).

In spite of Mitchell's detailed study, however, an understanding of the body as a metaphor for the political organism could be greatly enhanced by a deeper knowledge of the philosophical background to the image. Conzelmann notes the relationship of the metaphor to politics, while also noting its close association with the Stoics.[43] Barrett compares Paul's metaphor to the Menenius Agrippa fable with its political purpose, but also sees a connection with Stoic speculation on the nature of the universe as a body.[44]

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[41] *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991).
[42] Such correspondence in detail gives Mitchell's hypothesis another advantage over the proposals mentioned above.
[43] Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 211.
[44] Barrett, *Corinthians*, 287.