1 Corinthians 15.1-58 Baker Exegetical, Garland

X. The Resurrection (15:1–58)

In chapter 15, Paul moves on from the problem of "their disorderly worship, which required correction (14.40), to their disordered belief, which was equally in need of being set right" (McDonald 1989: 38). Unlike the other issues he has addressed in the letter, this is not a case of inadmissible behavior, but the ethical admonitions in this discourse betray his conviction that errant belief inevitably leads to inadmissible behavior. Also, unlike his handling of every other issue raised in the letter, he does not explain at the outset what precipitates this lengthy deliberation on the resurrection. Not until 15:12 does he note that some are claiming that there is no resurrection of the dead. He mentions no oral report or written query that informs how he knows this. But this discussion falls structurally in the section of oral reports. How he came to know about this problem is unknown. His only concern is to correct this misinformed opinion about the possibility and nature of the resurrection of the dead.

The Corinthians do not deny the futurity of the resurrection by assuming that it has already occurred and is past (cf. 2 Tim. 2:18) but have come to believe that there is "life after death without a resurrection of the dead" (Soards 1999: 315). Paul is not trying to prove the resurrection of Jesus but to argue from it that Christians will be resurrected (Sellin 1986: 235–36; Fee 1987: 718). As Christ was resurrected from the dead, so those who are in Christ and pattern their lives after him can hope to be resurrected by God.

The Corinthians' error is not rooted in some deliberate doctrinal rebellion but in honest confusion, given their Greek worldview. They fail to comprehend how an earthly body that is physical and perishable can be made suitable for a heavenly realm that is spiritual and imperishable. The question "With what kind of body are the dead raised?" (1 Cor. 15:35) is not sarcastic, as Sider (1977: 131) suggests, but states the heart of the enigma for them. Earthly bodies and heavenly existence are altogether incompatible, as different as chalk from cheese. The Corinthians fail to understand, then, how the resurrection of the dead makes sense, given this inherent polarity between the earthly and the heavenly spheres. J. Wilson (1968: 94) is correct that Paul is "not dealing with a rebellion of the Corinthians against previous, clearly spelled out teachings of his. He is making explicit, probably for the first time, a new line of thought on the basis of his Jewish presuppositions but contrary to their Hellenistic presuppositions." Paul's argument in this chapter combines history, the church's preaching, and logical argument to make the case for the resurrection of the dead.

The argument divides into two distinct sections. The first section, 15:1–34, makes the case for the reality of the resurrection. The second section, 15:35–58, explains how the resurrection is possible. The first section has a tripartite structure. In 15:1–11, Paul gives a prolonged recitation of the facts that provide the essential background for the discussion of the issue. This opening unit is set off by an emphasis on what was and is preached by Paul and others (εὐηγγελισάμην, *euēngelisamēn* [15:1], and κηρύσσομεν, *kēryssomen* [15:11]) and by what the Corinthians believed (ἐπιστεύσατε, *episteusate* [15:2, 11]). In this introductory segment he establishes the resurrection's connection to the essence of the gospel that has been preached

from the very beginning and does not attempt to prove that the resurrection of Christ actually happened (Barrett 1968: 341; Conzelmann 1975: 250; cf. Fee 1987: 737). By reiterating the tradition, he establishes the uniform apostolic witness to its truth and the continuity of that witness. The resurrection is and always has been the foundation of all preaching about Christ. Without it, the gospel dwindles into an inspiring story of a wise teacher who suffered heroically as a victim of human perfidy. Paul hints that if they deviate from this belief, it brings their salvation into question.

In 15:12, Paul states the issue that prompts his discussion, and in 15:13–28, he lays out his arguments for the resurrection of the dead. He contends that because Christ was raised, the dead also must be raised. Christ as the firstfruits implies that there will be a harvest of others at the end. In 15:29–34, he draws out the implications of no resurrection of the dead and the ethical consequences of belief in the resurrection.

The second section of the chapter (15:35–58) begins by presenting the issue in question form (15:35): How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have? It is followed by arguments for the possibility of resurrection (15:36–57) and a concluding brief exhortation (15:58). Paul begins with the diatribe form, answering the imagined objections of a slow-witted student, by which he can explain how so counterintuitive a thing as the resurrection could possibly occur and even must occur. The resurrection of the dead does not mean the resuscitation of mortal human bodies. The argument proceeds, using illustrations from agriculture (15:36–38), with the example of the seed that dies and is transformed and comes to life. One could not imagine from merely looking at the seed of a watermelon what a watermelon will look like.

In 15:39–41, Paul appeals to biology and cosmology—the example of the many different kinds of bodies in animal life and the different kinds of heavenly bodies—to prove that the resurrection body can be a different kind of body from anything experienced on earth. Since God has provided earthly creatures and celestial bodies with flesh or glory suitable for their environment and purpose, God can provide a glorious body for the dead in the resurrection.

In 15:42–44, Paul appeals to anthropology. The natural (physical), perishable body is sown as a body suitable for its earthly habitation. The dead are raised and given a spiritual, imperishable body suitable for its heavenly habitation.

Christology comes to the fore in 15:45–49. Paul contrasts the first man, Adam, with the last Adam, Christ. The first Adam became a living soul; the last Adam is a life-giving spirit. The first Adam was a man of the dust of the earth, who began the sequence of life for those who also are of the dust of the earth; the last Adam is the man of heaven, and his resurrection marks the inauguration of life for those who will be raised in him. Just as they bore the earthly image of the first Adam, so those who are raised from the dead will bear the heavenly image of the last Adam.

In 15:50–57, Paul concludes with a description of how what is mortal will put on immortality and how God will conquer all the opposing powers and, finally, death itself. The essence of his argument is based on the polarity between the resurrection body and the earthly body. Those who are resurrected will be transformed and clothed with immortality and incorruptibility. Scripture will be fulfilled (15:54–55; Isa. 25:7; Hos. 13:14), and thanks will redound to God's glory (1 Cor. 15:57). Paul concludes with an ethical exhortation to be steadfast and excel in the work of the Lord (15:58). Jesus' resurrection means that we are saved from our sins (15:14, 17), and the Corinthians must come to their right minds and sin no more (15:34). The chapter can be outlined as follows:

A. Prologue: preaching and belief about the resurrection of Christ (15:1–11)
B. The consequences if the resurrection of the dead is not true (15:12–19)
C. The consequences since the resurrection of the dead is true (15:20–28)
D. The consequences if the resurrection of the dead were not true (15:29–34)
E. The bodily character of the resurrection (15:35–49)
F. All will be changed (15:50–58)

A. Prologue: Preaching and Belief About the Resurrection of Christ (15:1–11)

Paul begins with a prologue about what has been preached from the beginning about Christ's being raised from the dead. His purpose is not to argue that Christ's resurrection was real—he assumes as much—but to remind the Corinthians of "the consensus of preaching and testimony that he shares with the apostles and other resurrection witnesses" (Sloan 1983: 73). He chooses to start with a matter on which there is complete unanimity among the Corinthians—Christ was raised from the dead—and then argue from that the necessary consequences of Christ's resurrection for believers. His strategy is to work from where they are—asserting twice that they believed the preaching about his resurrection—to get them to move to where he wants them to be. Eriksson (1998: 7) correctly observes that throughout the letter Paul deliberately begins his argumentation from Corinthian premises, but here he begins with the basic kerygma, which they believed, but whose eschatological implications they have not fully apprehended. He wants them to understand that all Christians will be raised from the dead (or changed if they are alive at Christ's coming), which means that the victory of sin and death is only temporary. God will defeat the last enemy. While graveyards may remind one of the brevity of life, the resurrection ensures the brevity of death.

Exegesis and Exposition

[1]I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the gospel, which I preached to you, which you also received, in which you also stand, [2]and through which you are being saved, with what message I preached to you, if you hold fast, unless you believed to no avail. [3]For I delivered to you among the first things what I also received, that Christ died on behalf of our sins, according to the Scriptures. [4]And that he was buried and that he has been raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures. [5]And that he appeared to Cephas, then to ❒the Twelve❒. [6]Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, many of whom remain alive until now, but some have passed away. [7]Then he appeared to James and then to all the apostles. [8]And last of all, as to an aborted fetus, he appeared also to me. [9]For I am the least of the apostles and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10]By the grace of God, however, I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. Indeed, I have labored harder than all of them, yet not I, but ❒the grace of God with me❒. [11]Whether I or they, thus we preach and thus you believed.

15:1–2 The introduction to the first section on the resurrection is abrupt and launched by the address "brothers and sisters" (ἀδελφοί, *adelphoi*). The phrase "I make known to you" (cf. 12:3; Gal. 1:11; 2 Cor. 8:1) solemnly heralds the initial subject—the gospel Paul preached (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17)—and indicates Paul's intention to teach and persuade (S. Lewis 1998: 30). He wants the Corinthians to know what they should already know since they believed the gospel that he preached to them. The language of "handing on" and "receiving" was used in 11:23 to refer to his transmission of the tradition of the Lord's Supper. In both instances, the reminders of the tradition he passed on to them imply that they have veered off course. He does not question their loyalty to the gospel, however, but seeks to establish at the outset their common ground. They are not willfully perverting what he preached but are confused about a central tenet. The difficult syntax of 15:1–2 can be clarified when it is recognized that Paul correlates his preaching of the gospel with their response.

The Announcement of God's Act in Christ	**The Believers' Response**
the gospel I preached	which you received (past)
	in which you stand (present)
	through which you are saved (present/future)
with what word I preached	if you hold fast
	unless you believed to no avail

The first reference to Paul's preaching is followed by an affirmation of the Corinthians' positive response. The second reference to his preaching is followed by a caveat implicitly warning them not to deviate from that gospel. The phrase "with what word [τίνι λόγῳ, *tini logō*] I proclaimed the gospel" does not refer to the reasoning he used or the form of his speech (Barrett 1968: 336) but to the content of his message: "the substance of the gospel I proclaimed to you" (Thiselton 2000: 1185). In 15:3–5, he reminds them of the gospel's basic content he preached to them but introduces the possibility that they could have believed the gospel in vain if they fail to hold it fast (cf. 11:2). According to S. Lewis (1998: 29), this tactic subtly appeals to the audience's emotions "by provoking doubt and anxiety about their existential condition." The implication is that they may be departing from it (Sider 1977: 130), whether they accepted it in a hasty fashion without due deliberation of the facts or now decide to question it. Thiselton (2000: 1186) contends that Paul refers to a lack of a coherent grasp of the gospel (cf. Robertson and Plummer 1914: 332, "without consideration"; BDAG 281, "without careful thought"; Morris 1958: 205, "belief on an inadequate basis").

The Corinthians' belief is confused, which suggests that they accepted the gospel without fully understanding the facts that lie at its foundation. We cannot exclude the possibility that Paul also has in mind the ultimate outcome of such a truncated faith (cf. Rom. 13:4; Gal. 3:4; 4:11), since it has an impact on their salvation. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16), and they owe their new existence as Christians to Paul's preaching of this gospel. He uses the present tense "you are being saved" (σῴζεσθε, *sōzesthe*), which refers to both a present process

(cf. 1 Cor. 1:18) and a future reality (Findlay 1910: 918; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 331). If they do not hold firmly to what has been preached about the resurrection, they jeopardize their future with God. If they do not have faith that holds out, they believed in vain (cf. 15:58; 16:13). If they have faith in something that is untrue, they believed in vain (15:14). The resurrection is the keystone that integrates the incarnation and Christ's atoning death. If it is removed, the whole gospel will collapse. If there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12), humans remain under the tyranny of sin and death, and their bouts of doubt and despair are fully justified.

15:3–5 Before citing the content of the tradition of faith he preached, Paul establishes that it was something he received and passed on to them like a baton. He stresses the continuity of tradition. "Among the first things" means "the most important things," or "things of first importance." What was first in importance was also probably spoken first. The statement that he received the gospel from others is only an apparent contradiction of his declaration in Gal. 1:11–12 that he did not receive the gospel that he preached "from a man," nor was he taught it, but he received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. The same verb (παραλαμβάνειν, *paralambanein*), a technical term for receiving tradition, appears in both passages. In 1 Cor. 15:3–5, however, Paul is speaking only about the facts surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection. Many agree that he was not an eyewitness to Jesus' ministry, and these facts were passed on to him by the tradition. In Gal. 1:11–12, he does not have in view the historical details on which the gospel is based but the interpretation of what those facts mean. The gospel is not simply a litany of facts, but something much more. It is the message that by grace God has acted decisively to save all humans, Jews and Gentiles, through Jesus Christ alone, apart from the law and human performance. Paul asserts in Gal. 1:11–12 that he came to understand the theological ramifications of Christ's death and resurrection through a revelation from Christ and did not receive it from another's interpretation, which his limited contact with the other apostles proves (Gal. 1:15–2:21). Schütz (1975: 111–12) clarifies: "The tradition cannot by itself be substituted for 'the gospel' and hence agreement on the tradition does not guarantee that the word is rightly heard and understood." The Corinthians heard and accepted the tradition about Christ's death and resurrection, but they did not rightly understand it.

Most understand Paul to be taking over a compressed account of the facts expressed in creedal form, though they disagree on its extent and Paul's redaction of it (see Conzelmann 1975: 251–54). Wilckens's (1963) attempt to extract the different traditions supposedly inlaid in 1 Cor. 15:3–7 is intriguing (see also Kloppenborg 1978; Murphy-O'Connor 1981c), but I concur with Lambrecht (1991: 661) that Paul himself probably articulated this traditional formula, which summarizes the historical basis of the gospel in a nutshell. It offers a theological snapshot of the gospel, reminding the Corinthians of basic facts that do not need any amplification because the story had already been narrated and interpreted for them (Hengel 2000: 147; cf. 11:23–26). The key verbs underscore Christ's atoning death and resurrection and are punctuated by the assertion that it was in accord with the Scriptures:

Christ died for our sins
    according to the Scriptures
and that he was buried
and that he was raised on the third day

according to the Scriptures
and that he appeared to Cephas and the Twelve

That Christ died and that he was resurrected on the third day are facts, but their meaning is interpreted by the Scriptures.

Christ's atoning death is a central tenet of the faith (Rom. 5:6, 8; 8:32; 1 Cor. 8:11; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; Eph. 5:2; Titus 2:14; cf. Gal. 1:4). This death was not a sad misadventure but something God destined for him because of (or "with reference to," "concerning"; Barrett 1968: 338) the sins of humankind. Thiselton (2000: 1191) contends that since Paul rarely uses the plural "sins," it suggests that he is citing tradition. However, Paul uses the plural "sins" in 1 Cor. 15:17 and is not citing tradition there (see additional note). Fee (1987: 724) observes that since "Christ" refers here to the Messiah, though it functions like a proper name, and since Judaism did not connect an atoning death to the works of the Messiah, whoever made this connection is "the founder of Christianity." I would agree with Fee that this interpretation goes back to Jesus himself (cf. 11:23–25). Paul faithfully passed on this tradition, which presumes that the sins of humankind made Christ's death necessary. Hengel (1981: 37) states that Christ's vicarious death for others and his resurrection is "the most frequent and most important confessional statement in the Pauline Epistles."

The idea of dying for others was not unique, since its expression can be found in a wide variety of secular writers who laud those who died to save others from enemies or defeat. As Origen notes (*Cels.* 1.30.31), Celsus affirmed that a life laid down for others could and did remove evils that have fallen upon cities and countries, but he denied any value to Christ's death because his manner of dying was so inglorious and shameful in comparison with that of the Greco-Roman heroes. In answer to the objections of a Celsus, Christ's death is unique because of

1. the manner of his death, which is so foolish and scandalous to the world;
2. the purpose of his death as an atonement that expiates human sins and extricates them from the tentacles of sin and death;
3. the universal consequences of his death for all who will trust, not just for a particular city, nation, or group;
4. the conformity of his death to God's purposes revealed in the Scriptures; and
5. his being raised by God to life after death.

The phrase "according to the Scriptures" (see Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:24; Luke 24:32; Rom. 1:2; 15:4) affirms in shorthand that Christ's death was "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23). It continued the story of God's saving activity, but it uniquely accomplished God's purposes established before the foundation of the world and fulfilled God's promises of old. Paul does not necessarily have in mind a particular passage, such as Isa. 52:13–53:12 (cf. Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:22–25). The allusions to the psalms of the righteous sufferer in Mark's passion narrative, for example, reveal how Christians found scriptural antecedents and associations with Jesus' death in a broad range of Scripture. Godet (1887: 331) notes that Paul ranks the testimony of the Scriptures *before* all the apostolic testimonies that follow.

The brief notice that "he was buried" is connected primarily to Jesus' death, not his resurrection (Conzelmann 1975: 255). Death and burial are interconnected in Scripture. This detail verifies the reality and finality of Christ's death (Calvin 1960: 314; J. Wilson 1968: 92; Bruce 1971: 139; Fee 1987: 725; Schrage 2001: 37). It could be used to combat docetic ideas that deny that Christ died, but that is not Paul's primary purpose. Instead, this fact serves to corroborate the statement about the "resurrection from the dead" (15:12; Wolff 1996: 363). Paul does not mention Jesus' burial to highlight the empty tomb (Lindemann 2000: 331; Schrage 2001: 35–37). An empty tomb allows for different explanations (cf. Matt. 28:13; John 20:2, 13, 15). The mention of the burial functions "as the bridge between cross and resurrection" (Lambrecht 1991: 664).

Paul shifts from using the aorist tense to describe Christ's death and burial to the perfect tense (ἐγήγερται, *egēgertai*) to describe Christ's resurrection (see additional note). It is not something that belongs to the past, but something that has an effect on present reality (Schrage 2001: 38). Holleman (1996: 45) contends that he uses the perfect tense (see also 15:12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20) in its classical sense and not as a simple past, because he believes that "Jesus' resurrection is the new situation which, by necessity, must come to its completion in the eschatological resurrection." The use of the passive voice, "has been raised," assumes that he was raised by God, because it is unthinkable that anyone—even Christ—could raise himself (see M. Dahl 1962: 96–100). "The third day" refers to the next day plus one (Luke 13:32) and is an expression most prominent in Luke-Acts (Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40). Paul rehearses the bare facts from the tradition, and "the third day" is a historical reminiscence that goes back to the discovery of the empty tomb on the third day (Héring 1962: 160; Wolff 1996: 365).

"According to the Scriptures" may apply only to the resurrection (see Ps. 16:9b–10; 56:13; 116:8) rather than to resurrection on the third day. Hays (1997: 256) cites 1 Macc. 7:16 as reflecting similar syntax, in which the reference to what is written refers to the deed and not the timing of the deed. Hays suggests the translation "and that he was raised in accordance with Scriptures, on the third day." Thiselton (2000: 1195) contends that Paul has no specific text in Scriptures in mind, but the phrase ties Jesus' resurrection to patterns of promise and grace in the OT. It is more likely, however, that just as the phrase "according to the Scriptures" applies to the entire statement "he died on behalf of our sins," so also it applies to the entire statement "he was raised on the third day." Hosea 6:2, which speaks of the national revival of Israel, is thought by many to be an obvious allusion:

> After two days he will revive us;
> on the third day he will raise us up,
> that we may live before him. (NRSV)[6]

This text is never cited elsewhere in the NT, however. Christensen (1990) contends that Christ's rising on the third day is connected to the third day of creation (Gen. 1:11–13) and the new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). The scriptural connection possibly derives from a slew of texts that link "the third day" with the day of salvation and divine manifestation (Gen. 22:4; 42:18; Exod. 19:11, 16; Josh. 3:2; Hos. 6:2; Jon. 1:17 [2:1 MT]).

As Christ's burial follows his death and confirms its reality, the account of his appearances to others after death confirms the reality of resurrection. The verb ὤφθη (*ōphthē*) can mean "was seen" or "appeared." The usage of the verb in the LXX, in which it became a technical term for

the appearance of God or God's messengers (cf. Gen. 12:7; 26:24; 35:1, 9; Exod. 3:14–16; see Bartsch 1979–80: 184–89; see also the comments of Philo, *Abr.* 17 §77, §80), suggests that Jesus took the initiative in the appearances. Given this scriptural backdrop, the use of this term in the tradition would imply that the Lord made himself visible or showed himself (Lorenzen 1995: 131; cf. Michaelis, *TDNT* 5:358), and it should be translated "he appeared." The chiastic structure of active and passive verbs (noted by Schrage 2001: 48) supports this interpretation:

He died
    he was buried
    he was raised
He appeared

The common view that Jesus appeared to persons who really saw him has been challenged by Michaelis (*TDNT* 5:358–59), who argues that the visual aspect is never stressed when the verb is used in the LXX for encounters with God. Michaelis concludes that when it is used in the NT to denote the resurrection appearances, "there is no primary emphasis on seeing as sensual or mental perception" (*TDNT* 5:358). Rengstorf (1967: 119) argues just the opposite, that the verb ὤφθη refers to seeing with the eyes. Lorenzen (1965: 133) concludes that the verb connotes an actual experience in which these persons encountered Jesus—in this case, a unique event. The appearances of Christ to these persons cannot be limited to visual perception, but must also include hearing him. They comprise presenting "himself to them as living by many convincing proofs" (Acts 1:3). Lorenzen (1995: 133–34), while acknowledging that all analogies and similarities break down when comparing Christ's resurrection to OT appearance narratives, draws three important conclusions that may help give some context for understanding Christ's appearances. (1) Persons see God only when God makes special provision for it. (2) This sovereign God "step[s] out of his elusive mystery and reveals himself in a real and perceptible way to people." Lorenzen (1995: 134) notes, "God or his messengers 'appear' and 'speak,' and the people 'see' and 'hear.' " (3) The appearance often results in a radical call to a divine task. Lambrecht (1991: 664) argues that the appearance does more than verify the facticity of the resurrection; for Paul, it also implied "conversion, vocation, sending." The emphasis in 1 Cor. 15:5–8, however, falls on the appearances that attest to Christ's actual resurrection (Wolff 1996: 369). The eyewitnesses did not glimpse a mirage or hologram; rather, Christ encountered them as the one raised from the dead. Paul does not bother to identify the circumstances, timing, or nature of these appearances, because he is only rehearsing something already familiar to the Corinthians and wishes to keep things brief.

Paul normally uses the Aramaic name "Cephas" for Peter (1:12; 3:22; 9:5; Gal. 1:18; 2:9, 11, 14). Luke 24:34 and perhaps Mark 16:7 support this personal appearance to Peter, but the Gospels do not develop this tradition. This is the only place where Paul mentions "the Twelve," which suggests that he is drawing from the tradition. "The Twelve" refers to the disciples of Jesus, and the continued use of this number, even after Judas's defection, shows its important pre-Easter symbolic significance to the disciples (but contrast Matt. 28:16).

15:6–7 Paul continues a tally of the resurrection appearances: to five hundred brothers and sisters, to James, and to all the apostles. If he is adding a supplement to the basic tradition, as many assume (Conzelmann 1975: 257), why does he do so?

1. One reason would be to confirm the tradition's veracity (Fee 1987: 729). An array of witnesses can testify to Jesus' resurrection, which is inferred by his appearance to them. Sider (1977: 128) asserts against K. Barth (1933: 150, 154–58) and others that "it is altogether more satisfactory to admit, however much some deplore the fact, that in 6b Paul intends to guarantee the historicity of the resurrection by suggesting that doubters may check with the many eyewitnesses who are still living." Paul did not necessarily assume, however, that some in Corinth had come to doubt this teaching (contra Sider 1977: 132). Again, he provides no details—when, where, how—about this appearance to the five hundred. Presumably, this conclave was not simply a continuation of their pre-Easter gatherings but was precipitated by reports of Jesus' resurrection (Schrage 2001: 55). The adverb ἐφάπαξ (*ephapax*, at the same time, at once) emphasizes that this was not a spiritual vision that each experienced over the course of time; it was an event that all witnessed together. Murphy-O'Connor (1981c: 586) argues that adding this adverb underlines "the objectivity of the experience." If it were only a small group, they could be accused of collusion in trying to deceive others or of suffering from a self-deception.
2. A second reason for mentioning these witnesses is to form a chain from Cephas to the Twelve, to the five hundred, to James, to the apostles, to Paul himself. It establishes a continuity in the message that he passed on to them that goes back to the very beginning. It also reveals a pattern in which Jesus appeared both to larger groups and to individuals. Christ's appearance to Paul was not something unusual, but comparable to the appearances to Peter and James.
3. The chain of witnesses leads to the conclusion in 15:11: "Whether I or they, thus *we* [together] preach and thus you believed." In other words, Peter, the Twelve, James, Paul, and all the other apostles are unified on the basic fact of Christ's resurrection and its meaning. There are not several conflicting versions. Had there been, the movement would have collapsed in on itself.
4. Noting that many of these witnesses are alive while some have died may imply that many are still around to be consulted, if any should want to investigate this account. But Paul provides no names. How are they to check out the facts if they entertain doubts? The emphasis must fall instead on the fact that *some have died.* Paul uses a euphemism, ἐκοιμήθησαν (*ekoimēthēsan*, fallen asleep; cf. 7:39; 11:30; 15:18, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 15). Thiselton (2000: 1220) observes that the notion of sleep "carries with it *the expectation of awaking to a new dawn in a new day.*" Paul may wish to convey that even encountering the risen Lord does not preserve one from death. It is more likely, however, that he broaches the subject of these Christians' deaths as preparation for his argument that the dead are raised (Lindemann 2000: 333). Their deaths are nothing alarming. Death precedes resurrection, and using the figure of sleep for death implies that it is not a permanent condition but one of waiting.

Paul presumes that the readers know who James is, and this casual mention also testifies to his importance. He does not identify him as the brother of the Lord. No record of this resurrection appearance to James occurs elsewhere in the NT, but Jerome cites a fictional account of it from the Gospel of the Hebrews.

The third group to which Christ appeared, "the apostles," comprises a larger group than "the Twelve" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5; 12:28; Gal. 1:17, 19; Rom. 16:7), though it can also be inclusive of the Twelve.

15:8 Paul confidently includes the risen Christ's appearance to him in the roll call of eyewitnesses even though it occurred at some distance in time from the other appearances and no one else could corroborate his account. Schütz (1975: 105–6) takes the phrase "last of all" in a nontemporal sense to mean "the least significant." Schütz (1975: 106–7) contends that Paul is last because apostles generally are last (4:9) and are "the living exemplification of the truth of the kerygma" in which the power of the resurrection is accompanied by the "weakness and ignominy of death." Though this statement is true, it is not Paul's point. "Last" (ἔσχατον, *eschaton*) in 15:8 is not synonymous with "least" (ἐλάχιστος, *elachistos*) in 15:9. After four occurrences of "then" (εἶτα, *eita*; ἔπειτα, *epeita*), the phrase "last of all" (ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων, *eschaton de pantōn*) must have a temporal connotation (cf. 15:26, "last enemy"; Mark 12:22, "last of all"). Paul is listing the resurrection appearances in a chronological sequence (Lietzmann 1949: 77) in which Christ appeared to him last of all (cf. Acts 26:16). He declares two things: he is last in time (1 Cor. 15:8) and least in dignity (15:9; P. Jones 1985: 13). As the last one, he represents the closing of a series "so that from the time of this 'last' there can be no similar or equivalent events" (P. Jones 1985: 16). He writes in a culture and environment in which visions, dreams, and ecstatic experiences were not unusual, and identifying Christ's resurrection appearance to him as the "last" restricts the appearances to a certain period of time and makes clear that others should not expect to experience such an event (Lorenzen 1995: 135). Others may have visions of Christ, but they are not on the same level as the appearances of the resurrected Christ to the apostles.

Paul is not trying to legitimize his apostolic authority in this section (contra Wilckens 1963: 62–69; 1968: 73) or to make the case that he stands on the same level with Peter and the Twelve as an apostle. Instead, he seeks to authenticate the gospel he preached (Plevnik 1988), which assumes the facticity of the resurrection (Sider 1977: 131; Lambrecht 1991: 669–70). He is responding to those Corinthians who say that there is no resurrection of the dead, not to those who say that Paul is no apostle. He argues more for "the equivalence of the appearances" than for the equality of the witnesses (Schrage 2001: 66). Schütz (1975: 99) points out that Paul does not ground his sufficiency as an apostle in the resurrection appearance given him, "but in the surpassing 'grace' of God manifested in his missionary labors" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1–6). Paul is not on the defense here (contra Schmithals 1969: 73–80) and is not taking their criticism of him a step further (contra Fee 1987: 734). We must not take everything he says about his apostleship as a defensive remark. Schütz (1975: 101) is correct that Paul identifies himself "with a wider apostolic circle," but he is interested not in "the size of the circle" but in the "nature and function of the apostle." Insisting that he qualifies as an apostle has nothing to do with the issue at hand and would not persuade the Corinthians that his view about the resurrection was right (Schütz 1975: 109).

In Paul's mind, the nature of the appearance to him differed from that granted to Cephas and the rest of the Twelve in only one detail: he was not yet a follower of Jesus when it occurred (perhaps that was also true of James); he was instead a persecutor of Jesus' followers. This fact occasions his use of the term ἔκτρωμα (*ektrōma*). The term appears in the LXX of Num. 12:12; Job 3:16; and Eccles. 6:3; and in Ps. 57:9 (58:8 MT) in the Greek versions of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus for a dead fetus or stillborn child. What Paul intends by the point of comparison is much debated. Many assume that the word reflects some anti-Pauline sentiment, an abusive epithet that he appropriates and bends to his own ends (so Weiss 1910: 351–52; Parry 1926: 218; Fridrichsen 1932; Björk 1938; Boman 1964; Schneider, *TDNT* 2:466–67; Fee 1987: 733). Neyrey (1986: 168) takes it to mean that he is the "runt of the litter." But there is no evidence that this term was used as an epithet against Paul or any evidence in this letter that the Corinthians viewed his apostleship as somehow abortive, monstrous, or demonic. The simplest explanation is that it is Paul's own description of his calling as an apostle (see Nickelsburg 1986: 205; Lambrecht 1991: 120; and Schrage [2001: 64–65], who compares it with 1 Cor. 4:13). The ὡσπερεί (*hōsperei*, as if) softens the harshness of the expression (Schrage 2001: 65).

The metaphor is often thought to refer to the timing of Paul's call, "as to one untimely born" (NRSV, NASB). The point of comparison of not being born at the right time would be that he was not privileged to be a disciple during Jesus' earthly ministry (Schneider, *TDNT* 2:466). The resurrection appearance came to him "out of due time." The timing of this appearance, however, is not Paul's concern, and this view is ruled out because an ἔκτρωμα is always born prematurely, never late. It refers to a fetus expelled from the womb before being fully formed, whether it lives or not (Schneider, *TDNT* 2:465).

Calvin (1960: 315) thinks that the metaphor refers to Paul's being "pushed out from the womb, before the living spirit had scarcely had time to be properly conceived in him." Barrett (1968: 344) follows this line of reasoning by interpreting it to mean that Paul "was hurried into the world before his time." Compared with the "other apostles who had accompanied Jesus during his ministry, he had been born without a due period of gestation." The REB captures this idea with the translation "it was like a sudden, abnormal birth." But Barrett concedes that this is an odd term to use to make this point.

Others connect the image to what follows and take it to refer to the odious fact that Paul persecuted the witnesses of the resurrection (Fridrichsen 1932; Björk 1938). The NEB renders it "though this birth of mine was monstrous."

Munck (1959b: 190–91) suggests that the term refers to "something embryonic" and needing to be formed. Munck thinks that Paul refers to his experience in Judaism as embryonic and that he became fully formed only when he became a Christian. Boman (1964: 49) agrees with this line of reasoning but thinks that Paul means that he had hardly been born as a Christian when Christ appeared to him. The accounts of his Damascus experience in Acts suggest, however, that he was not a Christian when Christ appeared to him. He had no rudimentary faith. Nickelsburg (1986: 200–205) modifies this approach by connecting it to Paul's statement in Gal. 1:15: alluding to Isa. 49:1, 5, 6, Paul reflects on his call and affirms that he had been set apart by God in his mother's womb. In 1 Cor. 15:10, he alludes to Isa. 49:4 ("I have labored in vain") in affirming that God's grace toward him was not in vain, because he has labored more abundantly than all. Nickelsburg concludes from this connection that Paul understands himself to be an ἔκτρωμα "with respect to the purpose for which he was appointed from the womb." His persecution of the church meant

that God's purpose for him, established in the womb, had "miscarried or been aborted" (Nickelsburg 1986: 204). The appearance of Christ to Paul made him what God intended him to be. Nickelsburg's proposal assumes that the Corinthians were aware of Paul's divine appointment in the womb, to which the term ἔκτρωμα alludes, whether it was his own coinage or that of opponents. As attractive as this connection to Gal. 1:15 is, this assumption remains rather speculative.

A simpler interpretation of this term would allow the readers to understand the point of comparison from the context without some previous insight into Paul's calling. Sellin (1986: 250) is correct that Paul refers to his pre-Christian existence (contra Tuckett 1996: 268, who thinks that it refers to the context in which "resurrection faith is created, preached, and handed on"). He was tantamount to an ἔκτρωμα *when* Christ appeared to him, not afterward. If he means by this that he was something embryonic and unfit for life, then his life could be sustained only by divine intervention (Schütz 1975: 104–5). If he means that he was an aborted fetus or a stillborn child, which is more likely, then he is referring to his state of wretchedness as an unbeliever and persecutor of the church. Hollander and van der Hout (1996: 230–32) contend that Paul draws on Jewish usage of the term to stress that the person in question is in a "deplorable position," whose life is "miserable and worthless" and "cannot sink lower." Hollander and van der Hout (1996: 234–36) contend that the figure fits the traditional prophetic motif of sufficiency in spite of insufficiency. Paul was unfit for the task God called him to do. God's grace does not remove this obstacle but overcomes it so that it is clear that God, not the messenger, "is responsible for the message." Hollander and van der Hout (1996: 227–28) point out that the fundamental idea of the word in classical and Hellenistic non-Jewish texts is that of miscarriage implying death. Though it tended to be used literally in this background, it does not exclude the possibility that Paul could apply this meaning in a figurative sense. Before his call and conversion he was dead, but he was miraculously given life through God's grace. God made him sufficient to be a minister of a new covenant, "not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6). His sufficiency as an apostle is tied to resurrection imagery of being given life. The appearance of the risen Christ to him was a kind of resurrection from the dead (Sellin 1986: 250). This image fits the theme running through the chapter of God's power giving life to the dead. Both his unworthiness and his lifelessness are overcome by God's power.

15:9–10 Paul's self-abasement is sincere. He regards himself as the least of the apostles (cf. Eph. 3:8), primarily because of his past record of persecuting the church. As a persecutor, Paul acted out of zeal for the law and faithfulness to a vision of what he thought the nation of Israel should be (Gal. 1:13; Phil. 3:6; see also Acts 9:1–5; 22:7–8; 26:14–15). He believed that those who were not properly obedient were a contagion needing to be eradicated. Doing what he thought was well pleasing to God became the cause of his greatest guilt because it was directed, he later discovers, against the church of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:2). This ignoble past means that he is an apostle by God's choice (cf. John 15:16) and God's grace (Rom. 1:5) alone. Christ's appearance to him and his call reveal God's extraordinary power to create change in people. Fee (1987: 734) contends that Paul's encounter with the risen Christ formed the basis of his theology of grace: "Since God was gracious to him, God's enemy, in this way, he came eventually to realize that this is the way God is toward all, Jew and Gentile alike, making no distinctions." He was not worthy (ἱκανός, *hikanos*; cf. 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5–6), but grace takes persons who are not worthy or sufficient

and makes them fit. Grace does not so much require response as it enkindles response. It empowers and equips. Paul hints at his success as a successful missionary by asserting that the grace shown to him was not without its intended effect (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). Its goal is being accomplished as he successfully spreads the gospel through his labor (contrast Isa. 49:4, where the prophet laments that he has labored in vain; cf. 1 Thess. 2:1; 3:5). Paul does not believe, however, that he is repaying the divine grace shown to him with hard work. Robertson and Plummer (1914: 342) compare it to the child who joyfully gives the parent a birthday present after having spent the parent's own money to buy it.

Fee (1987: 735) notes that Paul is not comparing himself to the others, "as if to say, 'I am better than they because I worked harder.' " Schütz (1975: 103) avers,

> The apostle's sufficiency comes solely from God's grace, not from the apostle's own resources. His *calling and authority* are not the product of his own natural gifts, but are attributable only to God. Thus if Paul did labor harder than all of the others, it was still "not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

Paul's boast is in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31), and he testifies that his work is evidence of a continuing abundance of divine grace that produces abundant results. God's grace, which brought this stillborn child to life, continues to work itself out in his life. It changed him from zealous persecutor of Christ to zealous laborer for Christ. The greater (περισσότερον, *perissoteron*) laboring may be a reference to his hardships suffered in the course of carrying the gospel to the world beyond Palestine (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–29) and its fruitfulness (Rom. 15:18–19; Phil. 1:22). His intention is not to set himself on a par with other apostles or on a level above them. He sets an example for the Corinthians, and at the conclusion of this discourse he admonishes them also to abound (περισσεύοντες, *perisseuontes*) in the work of the Lord because "you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

15:11 Paul reprises the opening verse (15:1) in 15:11. "Thus we preach" (κηρύσσομεν, *kēryssomen*) includes all of the apostles, and the present tense conveys that it continues to be their message. Christ's resurrection is the common denominator on which all are in accord. It is nonnegotiable and cannot be jettisoned without gutting the Christian faith. The Corinthians received this word from the least of all the apostles so that the same grace that had made him a most improbable apostle worked also to make them believers (15:2), though they were, according to the world's criteria, a foolish, insignificant, and weak lot (1:26–31). The word that he preached and that they believed is not merely a digest of historical facts; it is a living and powerful word that transforms lives and conveys the power of God (2:4). This statement declares that the proclaimers of the gospel were not riddled by confused diversity of opinion on this matter.

Additional Notes

15:3. De Saeger (2001) concludes from his analysis of the phrase ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν in 15:3 and Gal. 1:4 that the context in 1 Cor. 15:3 is the future eschatological judgment. Christ's death delivers believers from the penalty for their sins. In Gal. 1:4, the phrase refers to liberation in the present.

15:4. The use of the perfect tense in the death-and-resurrection formula in the NT is without parallel (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:34; 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Thess. 4:14). Holleman (1996: 44–45) argues that it is not a postclassical perfect, which would function as an aorist. Few examples of such usage of the perfect occur in the NT. The emphasis here is on the abiding results of the event.

15:5. Some texts (D*, F, G, 330, 464*) change "the Twelve" to read ἕνδεκα (eleven) out of an overly fastidious interest in accuracy, since Judas could not have been included (cf. Matt 28:16; Luke 24:9, 33; Acts 1:26). They fail to realize that "the Twelve" is being used as a title for a particular group of disciples.

15:10. The majority of the texts read ἡ σὺν ἐμοί, but $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$ reads ἡ εἰς ἐμέ. This reading seems to be a mistaken repetition or deliberate assimilation of that phrase in the first part of the verse. Some texts (א*, B, D*, F, G, 0243, 0270*, 6, 1739) read σὺν ἐμοί, omitting the definite article. The lack of ἡ could be an accidental omission, or its presence could be insertion following the pattern of the previous phrase.

B. The Consequences If the Resurrection of the Dead is Not True (15:12–19)

In 15:12, Paul announces the topic and what has precipitated his long discussion of the resurrection. Some of the Corinthians are saying that there is no resurrection of the dead in spite of believing the apostolic proclamation that Christ has been raised. I agree with Asher (2000: 2, 30–90) that Paul is not countering opponents in this section, as so many assume, but dealing with the Corinthians as students who need further instruction. His tone and style are didactic throughout. The Corinthians' cosmological categories made the resurrection of the dead in which a terrestrial body ascends to the celestial world seem inconceivable. Paul will show that their denial of the resurrection of the dead is theologically untenable (15:12–19) and how the resurrection is not only possible but also can fit into their cosmological thinking (15:35–58). The polarity between earth and heaven exists. A body fit to inhabit this world therefore must be changed by the power of God before it is fit to inhabit the heavenly world.

In 15:12–19, Paul correlates the tenet that Christ has been raised with the Corinthians' denial of the resurrection of the dead to expose the logical implications of this denial. He sets up, as it were, theological dominoes that fall, one after another, when the first domino—if Christ is not raised—is knocked over. McDonald (1989: 38) perceptively comments, "The nub of the issue is precisely the connection which Paul has taken as self-evident, namely, that the raising of Christ cannot be neatly extracted from its eschatological setting, which includes the resurrection of the dead (15:13)." Christ's resurrection entails the resurrection of the dead.

Paul argues his case from a syllogism that omits the middle term:

There is no resurrection of the dead
[Christ died, 15:3–4a]

Therefore, Christ has not been raised from the dead.

He restates this conclusion as another false premise, which leads to further logical consequences. The false premise—if Christ is not raised—is repeated again in 15:16, followed by a list of more repercussions:

Premise (false): if there is no resurrection of the dead (15:13a)
Conclusion: then Christ is not raised (15:13b)
Premise (false): if Christ is not raised (15:14a)
Conclusions: our preaching is null and void (15:14b)
your faith is null and void (15:14c)
we are false witnesses (15:15)
Premise (false): if the dead are not raised (15:16a)
Conclusion: then Christ is not raised (15:16b)
Premise (false): if Christ is not raised (15:17a)
Conclusions: your faith is futile (15:17b)
you are still in your sins (15:17c)
the Christian dead have perished (15:18)
we are the most pitiable of humans (15:19)

This is the first section of 15:12–34, whose structure follows an ABA´ pattern:

A The consequences if the resurrection of the dead is not true (15:12–19)
B The consequences since the resurrection of the dead is true (15:20–28)
A´ The consequences if the resurrection of the dead were not true (15:29–34)

Exegesis and Exposition

[12]But if Christ is being preached as raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13]And if there is no resurrection from the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. [14]But if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is null and void, and so is ❒your❒ faith. [15]And we are found also [to be] false witnesses about God because we bear witness about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if indeed the dead are not [really] raised. [16]For if the dead are not raised, then neither has Christ been raised. [17]If Christ has not been raised, then your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. [18]Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. [19]If in this life we have hoped in Christ—that and nothing more—we are the most pitiable of all human beings.

15:12 Paul's question "How do some among you say… ?" expresses astonishment (cf. Gal. 4:9; Lindemann 2000: 337). He has established that all apostolic preaching is unified in proclaiming that Christ has been raised from the dead, and he has confirmed that the Corinthians believed this preaching (1 Cor. 15:1, 11). If they did not deny that Jesus was raised from the dead, what is it that they denied about the resurrection of the dead (cf. 2 Clem. 9:1; Pol. *Phil.* 7:1)? How many are the "some among you" (ἐν ὑμῖν τινες, *en hymin tines*)? Was their influence in the community dominant (Fee 1987: 713), or were they only a faction (M. Mitchell 1993: 176–77)? The wording suggests the latter. Paul addresses a conviction held by some of the community's members.

We can reconstruct what they denied about the resurrection and the reasons behind this denial only by making inferences from Paul's reply. Obviously, this method is fraught with difficulties that can result in a serious misreading of the text, and proposals about what the Corinthians denied about the resurrection differ.

Based on Paul's response in 15:17–19, 22–34, some argue that the Corinthians denied any postmortal life (Schweitzer 1931: 93–94; Spörlein 1971: 190–91). The Epicurean position that the soul can no longer exist after the dissolution of the body appears to have been prevalent (Acts 17:18–21, 32). Lattimore (1942: 342) concludes from his study of Latin epitaphs, "The belief of the ancients, both Greek and Roman, in immortality, was not widespread, nor clear, nor strong." One tombstone inscription, *non fui, fui, non sum, non desidero* ("I was not. I was. I am not. I am free from wishes" [*CIL* 8.3463]), was so common that it was abbreviated *nffnsnd*[*uro*] (like R.I.P., *requiescat in pace*, "may he/she rest in peace"). In the dialogue with Socrates about the immortality of the soul, Cebes points out that most are prone not to believe in it: "They fear that when the soul leaves the body it no longer exists anywhere, and that on the day when the man dies it is destroyed and perishes, and when it leaves the body and departs from it, straightway it flies away and is no longer anywhere, scattering like a breath or smoke" (Plato, *Phaedo* 70A). Aeschylus (*Eumenides* 645–48) has Apollo lament that Zeus could undo the fetters of death, but when the dust has drunk a person's blood, "once he is dead, there is no resurrection [ἀνάστασις, *anastasis*]."

Such fatalism led people to want to live life now to the fullest: "Eat, drink, and be merry" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:32). Concern was primarily for blessing in *this* life, not a life to come, which seemed unlikely to come. Trimalchio, at his gluttonous feast, says, "Well, well, if we know we must die, why should we not live?" (Petronius, *Satyr.* 72; see also 32). People yearned for "salvation" but not the salvation that entails "deliverance from this world and safe passage to the next" (Savage 1996: 27). Salvation had to do with matters of this life and present benefits: health, wealth, protection, sustenance. The use of the "I" in the inscriptions, however, might suggest that individuals really did want to continue after they were dead. Christianity offered the promise of resurrection, a promise not truly offered elsewhere. Since the Corinthians baptized for the dead (15:29), it seems highly unlikely that they did not hold out a hope for life with God beyond death.

A handful of interpreters assume that Paul misunderstood the Corinthians' position and mistakenly thought that they denied any hope in the life hereafter (Bultmann 1951: 169; Schmithals 1971: 156). Not only does this misread what Paul says, but also, as Holleman (1996: 36) responds, "If one supposes that Paul misrepresents the Corinthian opinion it becomes impossible to know the Corinthian point of view at all."

Others surmise that some Corinthians, influenced by an "over-realized eschatology," believed that they had already experienced resurrection (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16–18). They understood Jesus' being raised as exaltation to heaven, not as bodily resurrection, and concluded that they were exalted with Jesus through the sacraments (cf. Rom. 6:4). These Corinthians would be the theological forerunners of the second-century gnostics who appear to adapt and rebut Pauline statements. The Nag Hammadi *Treatise on the Resurrection* alludes to a spiritual resurrection: Christ swallowed up death, gave us the way of our immortality, and we suffered with him, rose with him, and went to heaven with him (45.25–28; 49.15–16). The Gospel of Philip declares, "Those who assert: 'One dies first and is then raised,' are wrong. If the resurrection is not received first,

while still alive, there is nothing to be received upon death" (73.1–5; see also Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* [*Against Heresies*] 1.23.5; 2.31.2; Tertullian, *De anima* [*The Soul*] 50.2).

This interpretation might explain why Paul emphasizes the futurity of the resurrection, but the wording of 1 Cor. 15:12 militates against it. He does not say, as he does in 2 Tim. 2:18, that the Corinthians claim that the resurrection has already happened, but says, instead, that they claim that "there is no resurrection of the dead" (Wedderburn 1981: 231; Boer 1988: 105). Wedderburn (1987: 164–295) offers a lengthy refutation of the view that the Corinthians believed that a resurrection had already happened to them. Kuck (1992a: 16–25) persuasively critiques those who appeal to realized eschatology to explain various problems that have arisen in Corinth (see also Asher 2000: 39–41).

It is most likely that the Corinthians rejected a materialistic aspect to the resurrection. Seneca (*Ep. morales* 24.18) outlines the two alternatives about what happens at death that were considered to be the most reasonable—immortality of the soul or annihilation: "Death either annihilates us or strips us bare. If we are then released, there remains the better part, after the burden has been withdrawn; if we are annihilated, nothing remains; good and bad are alike removed." The Corinthians apparently believed in an afterlife but retained the dualistic anthropology that was the legacy of their Hellenistic environment. According to this view, humans are composed of two inharmonious parts, body and soul, that are of unequal value. At death, the mortal body is shed like a snake's skin, and the immortal soul continues in a purely spiritual existence. In Homer, the vital breath or psyche of a person leaves the body at death and exists merely as a specter separated from the world of the living by an impassable barrier. In Plato's *Phaedo* 73A, Socrates assumes that the soul is immortal and that death is a release from the body (see also *Phaedo* 66E–67A). The "soul" is "entirely fastened and welded to the body and is compelled to regard realities through the body as through prison bars" (Plato, *Phaedo* 82D–E), but death is the separation of the soul from the body (Plato, *Phaedo* 67D). Winter (2001: 96) contends that "evidence abounds for the concept of the immortality of the soul," as can be seen in this inscription: "[Friend, this] tomb Attica did win. But Italy [kept my body], and my soul went up on high" (SEG 37 [1987], no. 198). Josephus (*J.W.* 7.8.7 §344) reflects this view in his report of the speech of the Zealot chieftain Eleazar, who sought to rouse those trapped on Masada to kill themselves rather than to die at the hands of the Romans or to become their slaves: "For it is death which gives liberty to the soul and permits it to depart to its own pure abode, there to be free from all calamity; but so long as it is imprisoned in a mortal body and tainted with all its miseries, it is, in sober truth, dead, for association with what is mortal, ill befits that which is divine." Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 80) derides false Christians who say that there is no resurrection of the dead but that their souls are received up into heaven at death. The Corinthians may have assumed the inherent immortality of the spirit or some kind of assumption into glory at death in much the same way that Paul was whisked up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–3), which from this perspective would have been "outside of the body." Their absorption with wisdom may have augmented this view since, according to Wis. 8:17, immortality comes from kinship with wisdom. D. Martin (1995: 122) also shows how natural it would have been for them to think about "the resurrection of the dead" in terms of the popular tales of the resuscitation of corpses. The less educated might think of the resurrection in terms of magical spells; others, educated in the assumptions of philosophers, would tend to think of this as unsophisticated or ludicrous. For the latter, the spirit needs no transformation or body to enter eternity.

That some in Corinth questioned how a terrestrial body could be raised up to live in a celestial realm makes the best sense of Paul's explanation of the nature of the resurrection body. He rejects any idea of the existence of the soul/spirit without a body. It is possible that the Corinthians may have thought of the resurrection of the dead in literal terms of a reanimation of decayed corpses. They may have been mystified as to how a body that perishes and rots could be resurrected, or they may have found the whole idea repulsive.[7] Paul's argument in 15:35–41 that God can give a different body to each creature as it suits its environment may correct this mistaken impression. This view also makes sense of his argument that spiritual immortality is not received upon death and that death is not destroyed until the end. It clarifies why he argues that a radical discontinuity exists between mortal existence and life after death, a discontinuity that can be bridged only by the resurrection. Holleman (1996: 38) comments, "Resurrection will therefore be another act of creation, this time resulting in a spiritualized body."

15:13–19 In 15:13–19, Paul argues ad absurdum to show how futile the Christian faith would be if there were no resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then how can Christ be raised from the dead? If Christ is not raised from the dead, then everything based on that belief collapses in a heap of broken dreams.

The first thing to fall is the content of the gospel, which he summarized in 15:3–5. The preaching that led the Corinthians to faith would be empty (κενός, *kenos*), devoid of any spiritual value (15:14). It makes no difference whether it was delivered with a persuasive, rhetorical flourish or not (2:1–4); if it is bogus, it is worthless. Everything stands or falls on the truth of the assertion that God raised Christ from the dead.

The second thing to fall is their faith. If this core belief proves to be a delusion, then everything else they believed from this preaching of the gospel is discredited. The gospel is not good news but a hoax that has no real power to change lives or to do anything else except to deceive.

Third, the trustworthiness of all the apostles who proclaimed that Christ is risen (15:15) is thrown into question. They are perjurers conspiring to make false statements by announcing that God raised Christ, when in fact, God does not raise the dead. They speak in God's name what they know to be untrue. God is not, as they claim, the one who raises the dead.

Fourth, the Christian assertion that Christ died on behalf of humankind's sins is to be discounted. If Christ was not raised, then they are still damned in their sins and will not inherit the kingdom of God (6:9–11). Death's stinger (15:56) still spears its victims; its shroud will forever bind them. Sin's wages must be paid (Rom. 6:23), and redemption has been foiled by the last enemy. Paul asserts in Romans that Jesus was raised "for our justification" (Rom. 4:25), which enables us "to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4–5). He visualizes the resurrected Christ at the right hand of God, interceding for us against all who would condemn us (Rom. 8:34). But if Christ has not been raised, none of this is true.

Fifth, those believers who have died (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6) remain in the clutches of death. They have perished (15:18). The ἄρα (*ara*, then) goes back to the εἰ (*ei*, if) in 15:17a. If Christ has not been raised, then there will be no resurrection of Christians either. "In Christ" governs those who have fallen asleep (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16). If Christ has not been raised, then those who "fall asleep in Christ" are no different from unbelievers, who are consigned to doom and ruin (1 Cor. 1:18). The human terror of death as a gloomy portal leading to oblivion and divine condemnation would be justified, for God abandons to perdition even those who have been faithful. This

statement packs a punch because, as Goulder (2001: 181) trenchantly states it, "No one wants to think that their relatives have kidded themselves in this life and are now rotting or, worse, frying."

Sixth, all hope is dashed (15:19). Paul uses a perfect periphrastic (ἠλπικότες ἐσμέν, *ēlpikotes esmen*), "we have set our hope and continue to hope." The word "only" (μόνον, *monon*) occurs at the end of the clause and could apply to "this life" ("if only for this life we have hope in Christ," NIV) or to "setting one's hope" ("if in this life we have set our hope only in Christ"). Since "only" appears at the end of the clause, it is more likely that it applies to the whole clause: "if in this life we have hoped in Christ—that and nothing more" (Edwards 1885: 407; Morris 1958: 212; Barrett 1968: 350). The Corinthians have nothing more than "a mere wistful, faint trust in some larger hope, which rests on nothing," and they "face life with nothing better than a Christ of their own devotional dreams or speculative insight" (Moffatt 1938: 242, 244). Hope then becomes only wishful thinking. "This life" may contrast with "eternal life" (cf. Rom. 2:7; 5:21; Wolff 1996: 380), but Paul does not say so. Instead, he seems to be saying that if Christ is not raised, then the relationship with Christ and any hope based on that relationship cannot continue beyond the grave. "In Christ" refers to the source of this hope that "if we have been united together in the likeness of his death, then we shall certainly be united in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:5). But if Christ is not raised, then our hope is nothing more than whistling in the dark. Christians become pathetic dupes, taken in by a colossal fraud. Their transformation and glorious spiritual experiences in this life are all make-believe. They are the most pitiable (ἐλεεινότεροι, *eleeinoteroi*) of all human beings because they have embraced Christ's death and suffering in this life for nothing. Christianity would be an ineffective religion that is detrimental to one's health since it bestows only suffering on its followers. Suffering the loss of all things because of Christ and sharing his sufferings by becoming like him in his death with the hope of attaining the resurrection (Phil. 3:7–11) turn out to be foolish. The world would be right: the cross is utter folly (1 Cor. 1:23). The joy that characterizes the basic orientation of Christian life is based on the confidence that Christ will return, the dead will be raised, and all wrongs will be made right. If that is not true, then joy is replaced by despair.

Additional Note

15:14. The reading ἡμῶν ("our" faith) is found in B, D^{gr}*, 0243, 6, 33, 81, 1241, 1739, 1881 instead of the ὑμῶν ("your" faith) found in the majority of texts. Both words would have been pronounced the same, but the ἡμῶν is probably an unthinking assimilation to the previous ἡμῶν ("our" preaching). The thought would seem to anticipate "your faith" as the response to "our preaching."

C. The Consequences Since the Resurrection of the Dead is True (15:20–28)

In 15:20–28, Paul argues that Jesus is the first to be raised and his resurrection will be followed by others. He introduces the idea of corporate existence and a contrast between Adam and Christ. All humans are included in Adam with respect to sin and death; all Christians are included in Christ with respect to the future resurrection. Christ's resurrection cannot be viewed in isolation from that of others (McDonald 1989: 39). Jesus is the representative of others who also will be raised, and the eschatological resurrection "is the necessary sequel to Jesus' resurrection" (Holleman 1996: 44). A chronological order exists between the resurrection of Christ and the eschatological resurrection, and Paul emphasizes that Christ reigns from the time of his resurrection until all enemies are subjugated (S. Lewis 1998: 63). The two "when" clauses in 15:24 describe what happens at the Lord's parousia: the kingdom is handed over to God when every ruler, authority, and power has been destroyed. In 15:25, Paul explains why this is so: Christ must reign until he puts all enemies under his feet. This leads to the key statement that death is the last enemy to be eliminated, which demands the resurrection of the dead. He explains why this is so in 15:27: God has put all things, including death, under Christ's feet. When this last enemy is annihilated, then Christ submits himself in obedience to God.

This unit unveils why Paul so adamantly defends the resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then death remains unconquered and still holds sway beyond the end as a power set over against God. This circumstance, obviously, is theologically untenable. Therefore, because God is sovereign and omnipotent, death must be vanquished in the end, which demands the resurrection of the dead.

Exegesis and Exposition

[20]But now [as a matter of fact] Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since through a human death [came], so also through a human [comes] the resurrection from the dead. [22]For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. [23]Each one in his own rank: Christ the firstfruits, then those who belong to Christ at his parousia. [24]Then [comes] the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he will have dethroned every ruler, every authority and power. [25]For it is necessary for him to continue to reign until that time when he sets all his enemies under his feet. [26]Death is the last enemy to be abolished. [27]"For he subjected all things under his feet." But when it says, "All things have been made subject," clearly that excludes the one who made all things subject to him. [28]And when he subjects all things to him, then the Son himself will be made subject to the one who made all things subject to him, in order that God might be all in all.

15:20 Paul begins the next phase of his argument with a new premise that is true. Barrett (1985b: 102) notes that elsewhere when Paul uses the expression νυνὶ δέ (*nyni de*, but now), it is followed by "profound statements of the gospel" (cf. Rom. 3:21; 6:22; 7:6; 1 Cor. 12:18; 13:13). A resurrection from the dead *has already occurred.* Christ has been raised from the dead (15:4), and Paul identifies him as "the firstfruits [ἀπαρχή, *aparchē*] of those who have fallen asleep." "Firstfruits" is a cultic term that Jews used for the first sheaf of the grain harvest (Lev. 23:10–11) that on the sixteenth of Nisan was consecrated to God in the temple. In the LXX, the concept of firstfruits applies to "offerings" (Exod. 23:16; 34:22), "taxes" (Exod. 25:2–3; Num. 18:8, 11; Ezek. 45:13), and "children" (Gen. 49:3). The custom of offering the firstfruits of the harvest was

common in the Greco-Roman world as well (Spicq, *TLNT* 1:145–47). Firstfruits of any kind "were holy to the divinity and were consecrated before the rest could be put to secular use" (BDAG 98), but it is assumed that this original meaning "is greatly weakened" so that it becomes almost equivalent to "first" (BDAG 98.1.b.a). Spicq (*TLNT* 1:152) notes that in Philo and the NT, what is emphasized is the link between the firstfruits and the whole of the harvest rather than the offering to God. Paul uses the term in Rom. 8:23 and 11:16 to refer to the "first and representative part," and in 1 Cor. 16:15 and Rom. 16:5 to refer to the first converts of a region—the household of Stephanas in Corinth and Epaenetus in Asia.

The term "firstfruits" does not simply signify Christ's chronological precedence as the first one raised from the dead, however. It conveys that his resurrection is the "first of a kind, involving the rest in its character or destiny" (Parry 1926: 223). That is why Paul says that Christ is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," not "of the resurrected." His resurrection was not simply God's miraculous intervention that rescued him from death, but was "the beginning of God's renewal of all things" (Perkins 1984: 318; cf. Schrage 2001: 160). The concept of firstfruits expects that "the rest *must* follow" (Weiss 1910: 356). Holleman (1996: 204) contends that by choosing this term, "Paul presents Jesus' resurrection as the beginning of the eschatological resurrection." As the firstfruits, Christ's resurrection is a pledge of the full harvest of resurrection to come: "The resurrection bodies … of the redeemed … are to correspond to and flow from Christ's in the same way that the harvest corresponds to and flows from its first fruits" (Kreitzer, *DPL* 11). The imagery expresses that the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers are integrally related and that they are two decisive moments "comprising the total event of the resurrection" (Sloan 1983: 77). The imagery conveys this point: "Christ risen is to the multitude of believers who shall arise again at His Advent what a first ripe ear, gathered by hand, is to the whole harvest" (Godet 1887: 351).

15:21–22 Paul explains how Christ's resurrection was not merely an isolated occurrence (Dykstra 1969: 211) but one that has consequences for others who follow by comparing it to Adam's sin (C. Hill 1988: 304). He presents the comparison through a double parallelism:

> For since through a man death [came],
> so also through a man [comes] the resurrection from the dead.
> For just as in Adam all die,
> so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Paul is not interested in making the point that Adam's sin brought death (cf. Rom. 5:12–21), but in showing how Adam's sin had a universal effect on all who came after. The same applies to Christ's resurrection. As physical death came inevitably from Adam's sin, so physical resurrection comes inevitably from Christ's resurrection. He underscores the incarnation with the phrase "through a man." This detail prevents anyone from arguing that Christ was some divine figure whom death could not really touch. It also foils the argument that his resurrection was of a different order because he was divine (Fee 1987: 751). Christ's death was the death of a man, and his resurrection was the resurrection of a man (cf. Heb. 2:14–15).

The analogy assumes human solidarity with those at the beginning of a line who then become the representatives of those who follow. Adam leads the way and represents the old order; Christ

leads the way and represents the new order. Paul assumes that the representative determines the fate of the group. All those bound to Adam share his banishment from Eden, his alienation, and his fate of death so that death becomes the common lot of his posterity (see additional note). All those bound to Christ receive reconciliation and will share his resurrection and heavenly blessings. Not all humans are in Christ, however. Holleman (1996: 53) comments, "Since only Christians are united with Christ, only Christians will be made alive through Christ." Christ's death and resurrection will finally drive sin and death from the field at the very end, but the effects of these salvific events benefit only those who believe in him and become in him a new humanity.

Edwards (1885: 412) explains the difference in this way: humans "are in Adam by nature, in Christ by faith." But this view needs to be refined. If Paul modeled the phrase "in Adam" after the phrase "in Christ," "it will involve more than the necessary hereditary relationship; an element of choice, or decision, will be included" (Barrett 1985b: 108). According to Barrett, "in Adam" would imply that humans "have taken Adam's side, they have joined the revolt against God, and for that reason die" (cf. Rom. 5:12). Not all have chosen Christ's side, however. Only those who are so united with him such that they die with him (Rom. 6:8) will be those who also rise with him. In this section, then, Paul speaks only about the Christian dead, not about a general resurrection (Conzelmann 1975: 264–65; Fee 1987: 749 n. 19), and the phrase "all will be made alive" refers only to those who have fallen asleep in Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16; contra Boer 1988: 112–13; Lindemann 2000: 344; Schrage 2001: 163–66). Paul affirms throughout the letter that those who are not in Christ ultimately will perish (1 Cor. 1:18; 3:17; 5:13; 6:9–10; 9:27; cf. 2 Thess. 1:9). Death's power is broken, however, for those who are in Christ. The verb ζῳοποιηθήσονται (*zōopoiēthēsontai*, will be made alive) implies a new creation (cf. Rom. 4:17), and Paul applies the verb only to believers, not unbelievers (Kistemaker 1993: 550; cf. Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:45). He uses the term here for those who will be made alive to enter into eternal life—namely, Christians.

15:23–24 The imagery of "firstfruits" implies that Christ's resurrection sets in motion a series of events that will culminate at his parousia. Paul is not answering the question "Why is the resurrection in the future and not now?" (contra J. Wilson 1968: 95), but he does affirm that it lies in the future. He describes a divinely ordained chronology of events related to the resurrection but makes no attempt to elaborate on all that will happen. Robertson and Plummer (1914: 355) contend that the wisest course in interpreting these verses is not to attempt to ferret out the details of the consummation but "to adopt a reverent reticence and reserve." Paul's main argument is this: The resurrection of the dead follows a certain sequence ("each one in his own rank"): first, Christ is raised as the firstfruits; then, at his parousia, all those who belong to Christ will be raised (cf. Rom. 8:11); and then comes the end.

The noun τάγμα (*tagma*) refers to something placed in its proper order, and the text can be translated "each in his own proper rank (or order)." The word was used in a military context for a body of soldiers (a regiment; 2 Sam. 23:13 LXX; Ign. *Rom.* 5:1; Josephus, *J.W.* 1.9.1 §183), but it was used also for the order or rank assigned to individuals (see 1 Clem. 37:3; 41:1). If the military image predominates, it pictures Christ as the leader (captain; Heb. 2:10) rising first, then his sleeping army rising when the last trumpet sounds (1 Cor. 15:52; Findlay 1910: 926). It may imply a third order rising after the resurrection of Christians. If the image of ranking predominates (so Carrez 1985: 129), the picture is similar to the image of firstfruits and harvest. The sequence of

the resurrection occurs according to the rank: first, the resurrection of Christ as the one who ranks highest; then, the resurrection of the host who belong to Christ. This last view best fits Paul's conviction that Jesus' resurrection inaugurates the eschatological resurrection (Holleman 1996: 51), which has two stages and two categories: Christ, who already has been raised, and those who belong to Christ, who will be raised at his parousia (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16–17). It means also that the resurrection of Christians "is not merely an arbitrary, isolated occurrence but is grounded in the cosmic victory of Christ over the power of death itself (v. 26)" (Doughty 1975: 81).

The term παρουσία (*parousia*) means "to be present" or "to become present." It was used in this latter sense for the arrival of a potentate in a formal visit to a place as well as for the epiphany of a deity (Oepke, *TDNT* 5:859–61; Spicq, *TLNT* 3:53–55). As inhabitants of a Roman colony, the Corinthians would have been fully aware of the pomp and circumstance associated with imperial visits in which sovereigns were honored as gods. Paul subverts imperial ideology by applying this term to Christ's glorious arrival at the end (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1). Fee (1987: 752–53) grasps the point of this outline of the events leading up to the end. Paul has not lost the focus of his argument against those who say that there is no resurrection of the dead. He is arguing that the final events marking the end, with the final defeat of all other dominions, including death (15:54–55), are all integrally linked to the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. The significance of Christ's resurrection from the dead extends not only to the resurrection of those belonging to Christ, but also to the destruction of every ruler, authority, and power, and to the final enemy, death.

Christ's parousia and the resurrection whistle the close of world history: εἶτα τὸ τέλος (*eita to telos*, then the end). Some, however, take the "then" (εἶτα) in 15:24 to refer to a third stage of resurrections: the raising of non-Christians (so Weiss 1910: 358; Lietzmann 1949: 80–81, who is corrected by Kümmel [see Lietzmann 1949: 193]). The argument for this view assumes that 15:22–23 refers to Christians and that τὸ τέλος in 15:24 refers to "the rest" or "the last" of those to be raised—all the unbelievers. From the parallelism in 15:22–23, it is assumed that since all humans die in Adam, all humans must also be made alive in Christ. This conclusion is untenable. (1) The first "all" in 15:22 refers to those related to Adam; the second "all" refers only to those related to Christ, which does not include all humans. (2) Paul's purpose is to convince the Corinthians that Christians will experience a bodily resurrection. A reference to the resurrection of non-Christians would only confuse matters. He mentions only those things that are germane to his argument (Holleman 1996: 54). Barrett (1968: 355) concludes, "Nothing is said about the future life of those who are not Christians, and with this silence we must be content." (3) No evidence exists that the word τέλος was ever used to mean "the rest" (Héring 1962: 166; Delling, *TDNT* 8:49–59; C. Hill 1988: 309; Wolff 1996: 386), but it is used in the NT to mean "the end of all things" (see Matt. 24:6, 14; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9). Fee (1987: 754 n. 39) observes that Paul "is perfectly capable of saying οἱ λοιποί [*hoi loipoi*, the rest] when that is what he intends." In the context, τέλος could balance ἀπαρχή (*aparchē*, firstfruits; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 354). (4) His statement in Phil. 3:11, "if I might somehow attain the resurrection of the dead," suggests that he does not understand this event to include every single person. (5) The sequence "Christ … those who belong to Christ … the end" indicates only that the handing over of the kingdom of God will take place after the resurrection of Christians. (6) The noun τέλος is tied directly to two ὅταν (*hotan*, when) clauses, which clearly give it a temporal stamp (Lambrecht 1994: 130 n. 16). Those clauses—"when he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father" and "when he will have

dethroned every ruler, every authority and power"—describe events completely unrelated to the resurrection of the unrighteous. The noun must refer to the end of human history as well as God's goal for history (Schrage 2001: 169–71).

Since an interval exists between the first order of the resurrected and the second, some interpreters assume that another interval exists between Christ's parousia and the final handing over of the kingdom to God (Godet 1887: 359–60; Lietzmann 1949: 81; Barrett 1968: 357; W. Wallis 1975; Kreitzer 1987: 142–45). Some assume that this verse alludes in passing to the millennial kingdom (cf. Rev. 20:4–6). C. Hill (1988: 312–20) argues against this view and contends that the kingdom refers to Christ's present, cosmic reign exercised from heaven until the end. The next verse, affirming the necessity of Christ's continuing reign until every enemy is neutralized, would seem to support this view. Christ's reign does not wait until the parousia, but rather begins at his resurrection (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20–23; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 3:22). Plevnik (1997: 129, 142) argues that a reign of Christ after the resurrection of the dead would transfer the climax from the resurrection of the dead—the theme of the entire chapter—to a subsequent act of Christ, but in 1 Cor. 15:54–55 the ultimate act of Christ is the eradication of death. If this eradication does not occur at the resurrection of the dead, then what could it be? I favor this second view, but S. Lewis (1998: 55) offers a balanced judgment: "There is no conclusive argument preventing one from holding that Paul believed in an intermediate kingdom between the parousia and the final resurrection, but if he did, he failed to develop it in any of his works." In this passage, Paul mentions only what is pertinent: the resurrection of the dead and the handing over of the kingdom, which symbolize "the final and full sovereignty of God" (S. Lewis 1998: 55).

"Every ruler" (ἀρχή, *archē*; cf. 2:6, 8), "every authority" (ἐξουσία, *exousia*) and "power" (δύναμις, *dynamis*; cf. Rom. 8:38) could refer to cosmological powers or earthly rulers. Forbes (2001: 68–69) notes Paul's "characteristic clustering of abstract, impersonal terms where names or types of spiritual beings might have been expected," and since death is named as the last of these powers, it is likely that he has in mind powers from the spirit world.[10] These enemies and archenemies of God all take the side of death, the last and greatest of the opponents to be defeated. They all challenge the lordship of Christ and must be overcome (Wengst 1987: 78–79). The verb καταργεῖν (*katargein*) means "to render ineffective" (see the discussion on 2:6). It is best to translate it here as "dethrone," "abolish," or "overthrow," rather than "destroy." This allows for the possibility of Christ's reconciling all things (Col. 1:20). Paul does not precisely lay out when Christ will make these powers impotent. Presumably, the dethronement of the powers occurs before the handing over of the kingdom, so the aorist subjunctive καταργήσῃ (*katargēsē*) functions like a future perfect (R. Collins 1999: 553). The handing over the kingdom occurs after the destruction of every rule, authority, and power. Paul's only intent is to show that Christ's resurrection will culminate in the dethronement of all the malignant powers. Faith in Christ's resurrection embraces the conviction that the oppressors will not ultimately triumph over their victims (Lorenzen 1995: 274). The victory belongs to the God who raises the dead. Paul has no interest, however, in delineating any end-time battles.

15:25–28 Barrett (1968: 358) aptly translates the present infinitive βασιλεύειν (*basileuein*) in 15:25 as "to continue to reign." Christ reigns from the time of his resurrection until he subjugates every enemy at the end. Paul draws the imagery of every enemy being set under "his feet" from

the concluding words of Ps. 110:1 (109:1 LXX).[11] The subject of the verb θῇ (*thē*, he sets) is debated. If he quotes from Ps. 110:1 and in 1 Cor. 15:27 quotes from Ps. 8:6 (8:7 LXX), then, it is assumed, the subject in both statements must be the same. This verse would anticipate 1 Cor. 15:27, where the subject is assumed to be God's putting all things under Christ's feet (so Maier 1932; Heil 1993: 28–29; Boer 1988: 116–17; S. Lewis 1998: 66). In the psalm the messianic figure reigns passively while God crushes the enemies (S. Lewis 1998: 65). God is the agent and source of power, and Christ is the one to whom all things are subjected.

Psalm 110:1 is not cited exactly in 1 Cor. 15:25, but Paul appears to paraphrase and adapt it to his context (Plevnik 1997: 131–32; see additional note for the differences). The context suggests that the subject is Christ (Edwards 1885: 416; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 356; Conzelmann 1975: 273; Fee 1987: 755–56). Beginning in 15:23, Christ is the referent: "his parousia," "he hands over the kingdom," "he dethrones," "it is necessary for him to continue to reign." To shift to God as the subject of "he sets" without injecting the noun "God" only confuses the reader. Paul may have deliberately replaced the first person, "I set" (θῶ, *thō*), which clearly refers to God, with the third person, "he sets," to allow for Christ to be the one who sets all his enemies under his feet. This subjection of the enemies would also explain why "it is necessary" (δεῖ, *dei*) for Christ to continue to reign. He does not reign passively from afar, having completed his assignment, but remains actively engaged in vanquishing all the powers hostile to God until the end, when they are all finally subdued. To be sure, "although it is Jesus who actually destroys every rule, authority, and power, it is God who acts through Jesus" (Holleman 1996: 60). It is impossible for Paul to think of Christ's acting independently of God, or of God's acting independently of Christ, or of one doing all the work while the other does nothing.

No conjunction or particle connects 15:26 to what precedes; consequently, it stands out from its surrounding context. Since death has the definite article (ὁ θάνατος, *ho thanatos*), it should be treated as the subject of the verb, with ἔσχατος ἐχθρός (*eschatos echthros*, last enemy) placed first for emphasis. S. Lewis (1998: 58) comments, "By separating it and drawing special attention to it, emphasis is placed on the fact that the reign of Christ is not complete until death is conquered; everything is still in process."

This last enemy is vividly represented by the psalmist as strangling with cords (Ps. 18:4–5). Fear of it causes anguish and distress (Ps. 116:3; cf. Heb. 2:14–15). Paul personifies death as "a cosmic power which entered into the world through Adam and reigns over everyone" (Holleman 1996: 65) and continued its dominion even after the giving of the law (Rom. 5:14). The verb καταργεῖται (*katargeitai*, it is rendered inoperative) is repeated from 1 Cor. 15:24. The present tense is the present of certainty (Robertson and Plummer 1914: 356). This certainty explains why Paul assumes that not even death can separate believers from God's love (Rom. 8:38–39) and that the Christian dead belong to the Christ (Rom. 14:7–9). Death's eradication serves as a metaphor for the resurrection of the dead (Plevnik 1997: 126, 128). Death will be rendered impotent by the very raising of the dead (Fee 1987: 756). The process began with Jesus' resurrection; it will be completed with the resurrection of Christians at the end. Robbed of its victims, death's threatening menace is neutralized. Paul's purpose here is not to describe the end-time events but to explain the logical and salvific necessity of the resurrection of the dead. The relevance of this point to his larger argument is this: if there is no resurrection of the dead, then death will still hold sway beyond the end as a power set over against God. These verses (1 Cor. 15:24–28) are not intended to reveal why the resurrection has not yet taken place (contra

Plevnik 1997: 124–25) but to make clear that if the dead are not raised, then death remains unconquered.

In 15:27, Paul explains why death is to be conquered: God has subjected all things under his feet. The subject from 15:25, "he sets" (θῇ, *thē*), shifts from Christ to God, "he subjected" (ὑπέταξεν, *hypetaxen*), because Paul understands God to be the one who raises the dead. Therefore, God is the one who defeats this last foe. The exegetical principle of *gezerah shawah* (comparing similar expressions) leads Paul to Ps. 8:6 (8:7 LXX): "And you set him over the works of your hands, having put all things under his feet."[13] Paul interprets this psalm as applying to the Messiah, not to Adam or human beings in general. The key word he finds in this psalm is πάντα (*panta*, all things), which he inserts in the allusion to Ps. 110:1 in 1 Cor. 15:25. He interprets "all things" to include death.

"When it says" (ὅταν … εἴπῃ, *hotan … eipē*) refers to what the Scripture says that needs special interpretation, not to Christ's making an announcement or to God's speaking in Scripture. Paul wishes to avert any mistaken impression that somehow God becomes subject to Christ or that Christ's reign infringes on God's absolute sovereignty. We need not speculate whether the Corinthians held some fanciful notion that God would become subject to Christ. Paul holds fast to his monotheism, which creates a tension. All things have been placed in subjection to Christ, but that does not include God. It refers only to creation and the hostile powers that have provoked and abetted creation's fall, not to the Creator. The ultimate power belongs to God at the beginning and at the end. He explains, "When it says, 'All things have been made subject' [by God], clearly that excludes the one [God] who made all things subject to him [Christ]."

Paul sums up his argument in 15:28. The powers had rebelled against God; the Son subjects himself to God in obedience. "But when he [God] subjects all things [through the raising of the dead] to him [Christ], the Son himself will become subject [God as agent] to the one [God] who subjected all things to him [Christ]." This is the only place in Paul's letters where the absolute use of the title "the Son" appears (which corresponds to the absolute use of God the Father in 15:24 [Lindemann 2000: 348]). It connotes submission to the Father. This is "the Son" who prays to his Father, "Not my will but yours be done" (Mark 14:36/Matt. 26:10). The title refers to the subjection of his will to God's will and does not imply the inferiority of his person. Schweizer (1970: 283) explains,

> "Son of God" (see [Mark] 15:39) is an expression of majesty, in contrast to "son of a human father." But whenever "the Son" is used absolutely, it calls to mind the contrast to "the Father" and at the same time it describes a subordinate position in relation to the Father. In the same way, 1 Corinthians 15:28 uses this expression in an eschatological context to warn against the misunderstanding of Christ the Lord of the end-time as a second God alongside the Father. The strong emphasis upon the exaltation of Jesus as the Son of God who reigns in heaven (Rom 1:4) must have compelled the church, which had its roots in the Old Testament, to stress that Jesus was not a second God, but that in him the one God turned his attention to the world.

Calvin (1960: 327) comments, "Of course we acknowledge that God is the Ruler, but His rule is actualized in the man Christ. But Christ will then hand back the Kingdom which He has received, so that we may cleave completely to God."

The affirmation "God will be all things in all" refers to "the unchallenged reign of God alone," not some metaphysical absorption (Barrett 1968: 361; so also Fee 1987: 759–60). It applies to

the pacification and redemption of the created order and is similar to saying that God is over all (Rom. 9:5; see also Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Sir. 43:27–28). It affirms God's undivided and total power over the enemies (S. Lewis 1998: 68). According to Boer (1988: 126), all things "constitute the *totality* of the world experienced by human beings." It means that humans will no longer be subject to the destructive forces of the powers. Therefore, whoever denies the resurrection of the dead basically denies God's power over death and that God will reign over all things unchallenged (Lindemann 2000: 349).

Additional Notes

15:22. "In Adam" is a Jewish idea rooted in Gen. 3:19 (cf. 4 Ezra [2 Esdr.] 3:7, 21; 4:30–31; 2 Bar. 17:2–3; 19:8; 23:4; 48:42–43; 54:15, 19; 56:6; Sir. 25:24 attaches the blame to Eve). It is fully expressed in 4 Ezra (2 Esdr.) 7:116–26: "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants" (7:118).

15:25. Comparing Ps. 110:1 (109:1 LXX) with Paul's citation of it reveals the following differences:

ἄχρι οὗ θῇ πάντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ (1 Cor. 15:25)

ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου (Ps. 109:1)

Paul changes direct speech, with the verb θῶ (first person), to indirect speech, with the verb θῇ (third person). He inserts the word πάντας and changes references to the second person, "your enemies" and "your feet," to "every enemy" and "his feet." He omits the word "footstool."

D. The Consequences If the Resurrection of the Dead Were Not True (15:29–34)

Paul's argument in 15:29–34 parallels 15:13–19 in bringing to light the negative consequences if there were no resurrection (S. Lewis 1998: 70). He appeals to *pathos* with two examples, one from the practice of baptism on behalf of the dead and the other from his own personal brushes with danger. These examples are punctuated with rhetorical questions that show baptism and personal sacrifice to be meaningless if there is no resurrection of the dead. The two examples are separate from one another and not part of a continuous argument, so attempts by some interpreters to make 15:29 somehow fit what follows are unnecessary. The examples intersect only in showing the foolishness of both activities if there is no resurrection from the dead.

Paul's argument moves from the third person: what those do who are baptized on behalf of the dead (15:29); to the first person: his own experiences of suffering as an apostle (15:30–32); and culminates in second person plural imperatives for the Corinthians to come to their senses

and stop sinning (15:33–34). For Paul, Christian belief in the resurrection clearly impinges on ethical living (cf. 6:12–14), and he draws a close connection between moral decadence—one of the dangers facing the church—and the failure to believe in the resurrection. If there were no resurrection of the dead, then hedonistic self-indulgence and overindulgence (cf. 11:21) would be legitimate options because the ethical prohibitions no longer would have their foundation in a legitimate faith. The resurrection of the dead is true, which imposes on believers the need for moral rectitude in this life.

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[29]Otherwise, what will those do who are being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why indeed are they being baptized on behalf of them? [30]And why do we also face peril every hour? [31]Every day I die, truly, ❒brothers and sisters❒, by my boast about you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. [32]If with only human aspirations I fought with wild beasts in Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." [33]Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins reputable behavior." [34]Wake up from your stupor, as you ought, and do not go on sinning, for certain ones have no knowledge of God. I say this to put you to shame.

15:29 What Paul means by the phrase "those who are being baptized on behalf of the dead" (οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν, *hoi baptizomenoi hyper tōn nekrōn*) presents the interpreter with a major conundrum. The gist of his argument is clear, but its specifics are not. The ritual of a baptism for the dead assumes that there will be a future resurrection of the dead. He cites this practice to highlight the absurdity of baptizing on behalf of the dead while denying the resurrection of the dead. The future tense of ποιήσουσιν (*poiēsousin*, what will they do?), however, is unusual. Does it mean, "What will they achieve?" "What will they do?" or "What are they doing?" The parallel in 15:32, "What does it profit me?" suggests that it implies "What good will it do them?" If there is no resurrection of the dead, nothing could possibly accrue from that rite. They will be shown to be fools.

Conzelmann (1975: 276) asserts that the "the ingenuity of the exegetes has run riot" in trying to explain the baptism of the dead, but some throw up their hands in despair at ever being able to understand its meaning (Kistemaker 1993: 560). Many different interpretations have been proposed, but I will discuss only the three most defensible options (see additional note for a listing of other, less plausible options).

The majority of commentators today think that Paul refers to some kind of vicarious baptism for dead persons: "in the place of the dead." This view offers the most natural interpretation of the phrase "on behalf of the dead." DeMaris (1995a, 1995b) demonstrates the existence of a preoccupation with the underworld in Corinth, and the Corinthian Christians may have shared the interests of their surrounding culture (R. Collins 1999: 556). They may have pioneered this ritual in response to these interests: to claim a place for the deceased in the world of the dead (DeMaris 1995a: 679), to ward off the threat from hostile cosmic principalities and powers to their nonbaptized dead (Downey 1985), to assure an early resurrection for the deceased to participate in the messianic kingdom (Schweitzer 1931: 279, 285), or generally to impart the benefits of their spirituality or their salvation to the dead (cf. 2 Macc. 12:43–45 in the additional note).

Evidence exists that in pagan cults persons underwent rites in the place of others (BDAG 165), but three problems cause this particular interpretation to founder.

First, although DeMaris's study (1995a) demonstrates that an interest in the underworld existed in Corinth, it can provide no trace of evidence that anyone baptized on behalf of the dead. Tertullian (*Marc.* 5.10; *De resurrectione carnis* [*Resurrection of the Flesh*] 48) and Chrysostom (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.1) refer to the Marcionites practicing this rite in the second century. Epiphanius (*Panarion* [*Refutation of All Heresies*] 28.6) refers to a similar practice among the Cerenthians, and Philaster (*Heresies* 49) refers to the Montanists. None of these writers believes that Paul has this practice in mind, however.

Second, it seems unlikely that Paul would pass over, without comment, a practice that "smacks of a 'magical' view of sacramentalism of the worst kind" (Fee 1987: 764). Such a ritual is not theologically benign, since it completely bypasses the necessity for an individual to express his or her own faith to receive the benefits of Christ's death. Conzelmann (1975: 275) explains Paul's failure to criticize this practice by contending that he only wishes to make use of it for the sake of his argument (cf. Oepke, *TDNT* 1:542, "the argument is purely tactical"; and Schrage 2001: 240). Paul intends only to highlight the inconsistencies between their belief and their practice. But would he tacitly sanction (through silence) such a practice simply to score a point for his argument about the resurrection? To win one argument, he opens a Pandora's box of new theological problems. Edwards (1885: 424–25) accounts for it by attributing it to the nature of an ad hominem argument. One risks appearing to approve of, in this case, a superstitious custom. If this view is correct, however, one can understand why Paul might confuse his charges and must constantly have to write letters to put out theological backfires arising from that confusion.

Third, the use of the third person—"What will *they* do?" "Why are *they* being baptized?"—rather than the second person (cf. 15:12, "some among you") is puzzling. It could suggest that the practice of vicarious baptism was not widespread among the Corinthians. If it was not widespread among them, then how could Paul expect the argument to carry any weight?

Another view explains the term "dead" (οἱ νεκροί, *hoi nekroi*) as a metaphor for the condition of believers who receive baptism. The recipients are, in effect, dead bodies when they are baptized (Oliver 1937; K. Thompson 1964; R. Martin 1984: 120–21; Talbert 1987: 99). O'Neill (1979–80) understands "on behalf of the dead" to refer not to some third party but to the subject, "those who are being baptized," and paraphrases it "Otherwise what do those hope to achieve who are baptized for their dying bodies? If the completely dead are not raised, why then are they baptized for themselves as corpses?"

This view has several advantages.

First, it was the unanimous view of the Greek fathers, who argue that the dead are the bodies "because of which we are baptized" (Staab 1963). Chrysostom (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.2) contends that the wording recalls a baptismal confession.

Second, it explains the use of the third person. Paul uses the third person because he is referring grammatically to those who are being baptized.

Third, it is compatible with Pauline theology. Paul interprets baptism as a symbol of death and resurrection, and "the dead" either characterizes the individual's prebaptismal state or refers to the individual's soon-to-be dead body (cf. Rom. 6:3–14; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13). Paul's specific statement in Rom. 8:10 that "the body is dead because of sin" gives further credibility to this

interpretation. If this view is correct, then he uses a theological shorthand, familiar to his readers, to refer to Christian baptism.

Fourth, it fits the context. If, as I argue, the problem is that the Corinthians assumed the inherent immortality of the soul or some kind of assumption into glory at death (1 Cor. 15:12, 36), then the issue addressed here is "death as a presupposition of resurrection" (R. Martin 1984: 121). Baptism connotes sharing Christ's death to share his resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:3–14, which uses the image of dying and rising in baptism differently to convey the necessity of ethical living).

A third view contends that the preposition ὑπέρ (*hyper*) need not mean "in place of" or "for the benefit of" but can mean that they are being baptized "with a view toward" or "for the sake of." Some interpreters imagine that they are being baptized with the view toward being reunited with their departed loved ones in heaven (Findlay 1910: 931; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 359–60; Raeder 1955: 260; J. Howard 1965: 140–41; Thiselton 2000: 1248–49). This interpretation, however, places too great a burden on the meaning of the preposition. One also has to assume that a dying mother, for example, appeals to an unbelieving child, "Meet me in heaven," and the child responds by becoming a Christian (so Findlay 1910: 931). Nothing in the context suggests such a touching scene as the backdrop. If Paul had this idea in view, he could have expressed himself more clearly.

The view that bests suits the context is the second one (for still others, see additional note). Paul refers to "the common Christian experience of baptism" (Talbert 1987: 99). Baptism assumes death and resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then baptism becomes a pointless rite that falsely represents something that will not happen. The dead will not rise.

15:30–32 Paul next appeals to his own life to reveal an inconsistency between the motivation behind his apostolic travail—the hope of the resurrection—and the reality if there is no resurrection of the dead. His hardships testify that death remains a dark, menacing foe (J. Wilson 1968: 95). He tallies in 2 Cor. 11:23–27 the many times and ways that carrying out his commission endangered his life and brought him to the brink of death. If there were no resurrection of the dead, he would be foolishly risking his life for nothing. If he places his trust in something that is completely false, he would be well advised to give up the fight since the fight results in his dying "every day."

The verb ἀποθνήσκω (*apothnēskō*) implies real death in 1 Cor. 8:11; 9:15; 15:3, 22, 32, 36 and probably alludes here to the mortal danger he faces in the course of his ministry (R. Collins 1999: 539). Thiselton (2000: 1250) renders it "From day to day I court fatality." It means that he not only faces death (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8–9), but also lives in willing "identification with the death of Christ" and accepts "the vulnerability and fragility of life" that Christian service brings (Thiselton 2000: 1250). He does not have in mind the martyr's death but refers to "the concrete consequence of a life of service as a disciple and apostle of the crucified and risen Christ" (Lorenzen 1995: 216–17). This death encompasses the sleepless nights, the hunger and thirst, the ceaseless labor, and being ill-clad, buffeted, reviled, persecuted, afflicted, beaten, imprisoned, and homeless (see 1 Cor. 4:8–13; 2 Cor. 1:3–7; 4:8–10; 6:1–10; 11:23–29; Gal. 6:17). It entails willing identification with the death of Christ. His dying can be seen as an allusion to Christian baptism in 1 Cor. 15:29 (as I interpret it) and would explain the καὶ ἡμεῖς (*kai hēmeis*, we also) at the beginning of 15:30.

Paul punctuates this statement that he dies every day with a strong asseveration, "truly, by my boast in you." The νή (*nē*, as surely) serves as a marker for a strong affirmation or oath

followed by the accusative of the person or thing affirmed or sworn by. It is found only here in the NT (cf. Gen. 42:15–16). The phrase τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν (*tēn hymeteran kauchēsin*) functions like an objective genitive and means "his boast over them," not "their boast over him" (contra Parry 1926: 229–30). His boast is that the Corinthians are the fruit of his apostolic labor and suffering (1 Cor. 9:1–2). It is not a self-serving boast, but rather confirms that Christ has worked in and through him as his apostle; and this work is distinguished by "always carrying in his body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10), so that death's mortal coil entwines Paul as life takes hold in those he serves (2 Cor. 4:12). Edwards (1885: 425–26) interprets this affirmation to mean "In proof of his declaration that his life was a constant dying unto himself and the world, he calls to witness the glorious results of his ministry at Corinth, self-sacrifice being a necessary condition and infallible guarantee of ministerial power." Thiselton (2000: 1251) notes that people swear by something "of *ultimate importance* to them." Fee (1987: 770) affirms this by commenting that Paul "swears by that which is dearest to him, their own existence in Christ, which also came about by labors that had exposed him to such dangers." In his boast over them, he never forgets that he is but a lowly servant through whose "foolish" preaching they came to believe (1 Cor. 3:5). He was only the sower, and the Lord gave the harvest, but he was a sower who has laid his life on the line to scatter the seeds of the gospel. Barrett (1968: 365) interprets Paul's statement to mean that winning the Corinthian believers to the Lord is worth many deaths to him. This sentiment reveals his deep attachment to this troubled church. He trusts that he will receive his recompense from the Lord in the resurrection (3:10–15), and in 2 Cor. 4:16–5:10, he affirms that his body, weighed down and wasting away, will be transformed in the resurrection. If there is no resurrection, all is for naught.

Paul does everything in expectation of the future resurrection. If there is no resurrection of the dead, why not eat, drink, and be merry, since life is so short? Why fight with beasts? Why not join those who try to drown out death's relentless knell with ceaseless reveling? Fighting wild beasts (θηριομαχεῖν, *thēriomachein*) in Ephesus is unlikely to refer to a gladiatorial struggle with beasts in the arena. How would he have survived such an encounter except by some miraculous Daniel-like deliverance? Why would Acts not mention something so dramatic? Why is it absent from his list of travails in 2 Cor. 11:23–29? Many cite the Roman law (see Justinian, *Digest* 28.1.8.4) that those condemned to the beasts lose their civil rights. Paul, however, can still appeal to his citizenship in Acts 22:25–29 and 23:27 (Lietzmann 1949: 83). Weiss (1910: 365–66) and Héring (1962: 171–72) think that it expresses an unreal condition: "Had I fought with beasts in Ephesus with only human hopes (which I did not) …" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:3). But one would expect Paul to try to make his case with an example of something that really happened, not some imaginary event.

Malherbe (1968) provides evidence that the expression "fighting with beasts" was used metaphorically in Cynic-Stoic diatribe as a euphemism for struggling with human passions so as to become virtuous (cf. 9:24–27). Human passions are described as "wild beasts" as early as Plato, and this view may tie into the ethical admonition in 15:34. But it is more likely that Paul speaks metaphorically about great danger that threatens his life (cf. 2 Tim. 4:16–17). If he is writing this letter from Ephesus, he speaks of an open door of opportunity but many adversaries (1 Cor. 16:8–9). The "wild beasts" plausibly are bloodthirsty human antagonists who would eagerly tear him to pieces. His Roman citizenship did not provide him protection from mob violence, but only the

right to certain formal procedures. Ignatius (*Rom.* 5:1) uses the verb θηριομαχεῖν metaphorically in referring to the guards escorting him from Syria to Rome as "ten leopards" but also mentions the literal beasts that await him when he arrives, and he expresses his hope that they will devour him promptly. He also uses the verb in a literal sense to refer to "the privilege of fighting wild beasts in Rome" (*Eph.* 1:2). Paul draws on the image of the arena to describe the deadly peril he faces in his mission. In Jewish legend, the willingness to sacrifice one's life in the arena for God is evidence of faith in the resurrection (see 2 Macc. 7, which records the story of the brothers who proclaimed their belief in the resurrection in the face of roasting, scalping, and dismemberment).

The phrase κατὰ ἄνθρωπον (*kata anthrōpon*) can be rendered variously, depending on the context. It can mean "from human motives" (NASB)—that is, from human sentiments and not those implanted by God's Spirit (Edwards 1885: 427). If that is its meaning here, then Paul could be saying, "If I did this looking for some kind of payoff from God, it will prove entirely unprofitable." In the context, it is more likely that it means " 'from a human viewpoint,' with a horizon limited by earthly humanity, that is, without hope of the resurrection" (Héring 1962: 171; see also Fee 1987: 771; NRSV; REB). If there is nothing more than life on this earth, why suffer voluntarily? Why not pursue sensual pleasure instead?

Resurrection means endless hope, but no resurrection means a hopeless end—and hopelessness breeds dissipation. Barrett (1968: 362) comments, "Take away the resurrection and moral standards collapse." A cynical fatalism toward life encourages people to try "to go for the gusto," to have it all now, to amuse themselves endlessly. If life ends at death, why not live it up? Paul quotes Isa. 22:13 (cf. 56:12; Wis. 2:6–9), "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," but the sentiment was widespread (Luke 12:19–20). Herodotus (*Historiae* [*Histories*] 2.78.1) reports, "After rich men's repasts, a man carries around an image in a coffin, painted and carved in exact imitation of a corpse two or four feet long. This he shows to each of the company, saying 'While you drink and enjoy, look on this; for to this state you must come when you die.' " If the Christian hope is taken away, not only will any motive for a person to endure suffering for Christ be crushed, but also any moral standards will be crumpled (Barrett 1968: 366–67).

15:33–34 Paul has warned the Corinthians before about being deceived (3:18; 6:9). He may be trying to prevent anyone from taking what he says in 15:32 seriously. Do not be misled, he warns: bad company (ὁμιλίαι, *homiliai*; here referring to "company," "social intercourse," not "conversations" or "speeches") destroys or corrupts (like leaven; 5:6) reputable behavior. This may be a quotation from Menander's (died 292 B.C.) lost comedy, *Thais* (fragment 187 [218]), but one cannot assume that Paul was familiar with Menander any more than one can assume that a person who cites a famous line from a Shakespeare play has read Shakespeare. It had become a cliché, perhaps even before Menander. Paul does not specify whom they are to shun, but one may presume that it includes those who deny the reality of death, who do not share the Christian hope of resurrection, and who behave disreputably.

The command to come out of their drunken stupor and to stop sinning caps his argument in this unit. The stupor would refer to a benighted worldliness and a lack of spiritual awareness. Philo (*Drunk.* 38 §154) defines drunkenness in the soul as "ignorance of things of which we should naturally have acquired knowledge." Similarly, Paul insists that the Corinthians come to their senses: "Wake right [δικαίως, *dikaiōs*] up" (Moffatt 1938: 257), "Snap out of it, as you ought." The root of the problem is their ignorance of God. He does not itemize all the things about God

they do not know, but this sweeping accusation is a sharp jab, particularly if it is directed at those in the church who claim to have special spiritual knowledge (so Barrett 1968: 368). In a similar vein, Jesus accused the Sadducees of being deceived and knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God because of their disavowal of the resurrection (Mark 12:24). Jews also took for granted that ignorance of God led inevitably to immorality (Rom. 1:18–32; 1 Thess. 4:5).

Paul eschews shaming other Christians (1 Cor. 4:14), and he vigorously objects to the "haves" shaming the "have-nots" at the Lord's Supper, and those with more conspicuous spiritual gifts shaming those with less noticeable gifts. Treating other Christians in a shabby way serves only to nudge them away from the community and "back into the bosom of society to no good purpose" (DeSilva 2000: 77). It is a different matter, however, when it comes to core values and beliefs. Shaming is one way to enforce these values and beliefs to prevent persons from behaving and believing inappropriately (6:5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15; 1 Tim. 5:20). This deviance is not to be tolerated. It can corrupt the whole group.

Additional Notes

15:29. Other options for interpreting "those who are being baptized on behalf of the dead" explain it by tweaking the meaning of the verb "baptize," the preposition ὑπέρ, or the noun "the dead."

1. The term "baptism" is explained as a metaphorical reference to martyrdom. It refers to a baptism in blood or being drowned in suffering (cf. Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50) rather than water baptism. The Corinthians were being baptized into the ranks of the dead (Godet 1887: 389–90). Murphy-O'Connor (1981a) adapts this view by claiming that the phrase originated with the Corinthians as a gibe at Paul. "Baptism" refers to his apostolic suffering (see also J. R. White 1997), and "the dead" are the unspiritual who are not worth bothering about. Murphy-O'Connor paraphrases it "Supposing that there is no resurrection from the dead, will they continue to work, those who are being destroyed on account of an inferior class of believers who are dead to true Wisdom?"
2. The term "baptism" is redefined as a reference to the ritual washing of the dead body before burial (Beza).
3. The preposition ὑπέρ is interpreted in a localized sense to mean that the Corinthians are being baptized "over" the graves of the dead (Luther; Grosheide 1953: 373).
4. The preposition ὑπέρ is interpreted to mean that the Corinthians are being baptized "because of" the influence of deceased Christians on their lives (Reaume 1995) or because of the heroic behavior of Christian martyrs (John Edwards [1692], cited by Edwards 1885: 422).
5. The term "dead" is explained as referring to people "nearing death" (Calvin 1960: 330–31). It may refer to recent converts or those on the way to becoming converts who died before receiving baptism (see Rissi 1962: 85–92; Fee 1987: 768; N. Watson 1992: 172). The baptism functions as a sign of the person's union with Christ rather than as a magical rite that effects that union. Though Chrysostom (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.1) does not think that this is what Paul meant, he mockingly describes the practice among the Marcionites when an unbaptized catechumen dies. Someone approaches the corpse and asks if the corpse wants to be baptized, and a living person, hidden beneath the couch on which the corpse lies, answers yes and is baptized in the corpse's stead.

6. Paul's use of the third person leads Oster (1995: 388) to suggest that he refers to a pagan practice that formed the matrix of the Corinthians' understanding of baptism. The other two occurrences of the third person plural of ποιεῖν in Paul's letters refer to what Gentiles do (Rom. 1:32; 2:14). It would be odd, however, for Paul to allude to some pagan practice to try to buttress the Corinthians' belief in the resurrection.

15:29. Second Macc. 12:43–45 offers an interesting parallel to 1 Cor. 15:29:

> He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin. (NRSV)

Fee (1987: 767 n. 32) contends that this passage does not depict a vicarious sacrifice for the dead but makes "an appeal to God to have mercy on the circumcised Jews who at the time of their death were wearing expressions of idolatry."

15:31. Important witnesses ($\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, D, F, G, Ψ, 075, 0243, 6, 424, 1739, 1852, 1881, 2200, Byz, Lect, it$^{b, d, f, g, o}$) omit ἀδελφοί from the text. Zuntz (1953: 175–76) argues that had it been original, its omission by these witnesses would be "inexplicable." The vocative occurs nineteen other times in the letter and may have been inserted as a natural complement to Paul's solemn affirmation.

E. The Bodily Character of the Resurrection (15:35–49)

In the next segment of his argument, Paul corrects those who deny the possibility of the resurrection because they assume that earthly embodied existence is completely incompatible with heavenly spiritual existence. He corrects them indirectly by adopting the guise of chiding a foolish student who espouses this view. He grants that the principle of polarity between heaven and earth is valid, but the student fails to understand that transformation can occur. As in nature the bare seed that is sown is not the plant that miraculously sprouts from the ground, so in the resurrection the earthly body that is sown is not the spiritual body that is miraculously raised. As God chooses to give the seed a different body (15:37), so God will give humans, sown with a natural body, a spiritual body in the resurrection (15:42–44a).

Any observer can also note that different kinds of earthly flesh and different kinds of heavenly glories exist. "Flesh" represents earthly bodily existence; "glory" represents the heavenly bodily existence. The varieties reveal that God is not restricted in what kind of body he can give to any creation. The body's present fleshly mortality, then, does not prohibit the possibility of resurrection to glory, because the body fit for our earthly habitation is not the body that will be raised. For Paul, resurrection is not the resuscitation of the corpse. What is mortal will be changed by the power of God so that those who are raised will be given a body that is consistent with its

new celestial habitat. The polarity between earthly and heavenly existence will be bridged by the power of God, who will not raise mortal "flesh" but will give those who are resurrected a new, glorious, spiritual body. Lorenzen (1995: 289) comments, "While the present life is lived within the parameters of time and space, and is delimited by death, the resurrection of Christ has revealed the foundation for a new reality: He 'will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him' (Rom 6:9)."

The argument begins with the question of an objector. Paul delineates various principles before presenting the solution that explains how the resurrection of the dead is possible:

1. A skeptical question setting up the issue of how bodily resurrection is possible (15:35)
2. The principle of change from the example of botanical processes (15:36–38)
3. The principle of different types of bodies and glories from the example of terrestrial bodies and celestial glories (15:39–41)
4. The radical difference between the risen body and its earthly counterpart (15:42–44a)
5. The explanation of how the polarity between the earthly and heavenly will be bridged through Christ (15:44b–49)

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[35]But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" [36]Fool! What you sow is not brought to life unless it dies. [37]As for what you sow, you do not sow the body that the seed will become, but the bare grain, whether it be wheat or of some other kind, [38]but God gives to it a body just as he willed and to each one of the seeds its own body.

[39]Not all flesh is the same flesh, but there is a different kind for human beings, a different kind of flesh for animals, a different kind of flesh for birds, and a different kind for fish. [40]And there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly [body] is of a different order than the glory of the earthly [body]. [41]There is a different kind of glory for the sun, a different kind of glory for the moon, and a different kind of glory for the stars. For glory differs from star to star.

[42]Thus also the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in a state of corruptibility, it is raised in a state of incorruptibility. [43]It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. [44]It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, then there is also a spiritual one. [45]Thus it stands written: "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam [became] a life-giving Spirit. [46]But the spiritual [body] does not [come] first but the natural [body], then the spiritual [body]. [47]The first human [came] from the earth [and was] made of dust; the second ❒human❒ [will come] from heaven. [48]As [was] the one made of dust, so also [are] the others made of dust, and as [is] the heavenly one, so also [are] the heavenly ones. [49]And just as we have borne the image of the [one] made of dust, so also ❒we will bear❒ the image of the heavenly [one].

15:35–38 The objector's question (cf. James 2:18; Rom. 9:19; 11:19) may be a serious inquiry, "How is it possible that the dead are raised?" or a mocking question that presents a grotesque conundrum, "How can the dead come with a body?" (cf. Mark 12:23). Will the body not rot in the grave and become nothing more than dust? For the first time the word "body" appears in the

discussion of the resurrection. Many assume that the objectors cannot imagine how a new body, fit for the glorious spiritual experience of the next world, could arise from a carcass (Findlay 1910: 934). Because the Corinthians could not fathom *how* this was possible, they had abandoned any trust *that* it was possible (Fee 1987: 779). Though many think that the problem of "how?" is tied to Paul's insistence that the body is raised (see Müller 1985: 171–76), it is more likely that he takes the objection "There is no resurrection of the dead" (15:12) and turns it into a leading question to teach rather than to answer some specific objection (Asher 2000: 67–68). Jeremias (1955–56; so also Sider 1974–75; Soards 1999: 342) errs in arguing that Paul deals with two questions and takes them up in reverse order: (1) What kind of body will the resurrected believer assume (15:36–44 plus an addendum in 45–49)? (2) How are the dead raised (15:50–57)? Both questions ask the same thing, but the second is more specific. It clarifies the issue involved in the question of the resurrection of the dead (Conzelmann 1975: 280; Fee 1987: 780; Wolff 1996: 402). The first question is a " 'leading question' designed to limit possible alternatives." Paul introduces "body" as a philosophically neutral term that moves the discussion in the direction he wishes it to go (Asher 2000: 71–77). It allows him to present evidence for the resurrection of the dead that the Corinthians had not considered. For Paul, life after death is unthinkable without some kind of bodily existence, and the objecting question "With what kind of body?" allows him to show how a resurrection body is possible (see additional note). He does not offer answers to the questions immediately, however. Only at the conclusion of this section do the answers to the questions become clear (Boer 1988: 128). The dead are raised incorruptible (15:52), and they are raised with a spiritual body (15:44a).

Placing a leading question in the mouth of a conjectural objector allows Paul to rebuke the questioner as a "fool" (Asher 2000: 77) without directly insulting the Corinthians as foolish students. The "fool" (ἄφρων, *aphrōn*) is the opposite of the "wise" (φρόνιμος, *phronimos*; 4:10; 10:15). In this segment Paul sets himself up as the wise teacher correcting the dull-witted student and is not directly disputing argumentative Corinthians. The objector is undiscerning, because everyone knows that a seed's life springs from its death. The harsh epithet "fool" has deeper biblical roots, however. It is the fool who says in his or her heart, "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1; 53:1). The fool does not simply suffer from an intellectual deficiency but fails to take God into account (Barrett 1968: 370; Fee 1987: 780; Schrage 2001: 280–81; cf. Rom. 1:21–22). In particular, this fool fails to take into account the creative power of God.

Paul's first example argues by analogy from the known world of seeds to the unknown world of the resurrection (Bonneau 1993: 79). The illustration contains three points (Asher 2000: 79):

1. The seed is not made alive unless it dies.
2. The seed planted is not the body that will come up from the ground.
3. God effects the transition between the seed and the plant.

The resurrection remains a mystery, but its mystery does not tell against its reality (Findlay 1910: 934). The same mystery shrouds the germination of seeds. Moderns, influenced by a scientific understanding of germination as a natural process of development (Boer 1988: 130), may misunderstand what Paul says. He is not talking about a natural development but thinks in terms of God's transforming a bare grain and making it into something different. He understands God

to give the growth in physical and spiritual harvests (1 Cor. 3:6–7). The farmer does not know how the seed grows in the earth (Mark 4:27) but only trusts that God is active and will bring it to pass. What is true in the case of seeds planted in the earth provides a lesson that can help the objector appreciate the possibility that a human corpse buried in the earth can also be transformed into something new. Paul has no intention of explaining how the resurrection happens but wishes only to make the case that it can happen. The assertion that the seed does not live unless it dies is not intended to underline a pattern of dissolution and new life or to underscore the necessity of death (contra Godet 1887: 403; Riesenfeld 1970: 174; cf. John 12:24), since Paul specifically argues in 1 Cor. 15:51–54 that not all will die. Nor is the purpose of the analogy to reveal that "dissolution and continuity are not incompatible" (contra Robertson and Plummer 1914: 369). He intends only to underscore *the change* between the naked seed sown in the ground and what will be harvested. The farmer plants a bare seed, and "God miraculously clothes it with a new body, green and thriving" (Goulder 2001: 191). In the same way, the body that dies is not the same body that God raises (see additional note).

Asher (2000: 80) observes that by introducing the notion of the body in his leading question, Paul is able to chide the imaginary objector "for not considering that bodies change," as "exemplified in botanical processes." Paul explains the discontinuity in 15:37: the body sown is not the body that will be (γενησόμενον, *genēsomenon*). Findlay (1910: 934) catches Paul's point: "The grain of wheat gives to the eye no more promise of the body to spring from it than a grain of sand." A bare seed is sown, dies, is made alive, and is given a new body as it is transformed through God's creative power into "a plant luxuriantly clad in leaves" (Edwards 1885: 434). The same is true of humans. The eye sees nothing in a mortal, perishing body that promises any hope of a resurrection to come, but God will transform it into a body clothed with glory through the same creative power that gives life to seeds. As humans were dressed at birth in the clothing of the "man of dust," so Christians will put on the clothing of the "heavenly man" in the resurrection (15:47–49).

In 15:38, the emphasis once again is on the dramatic contrast between before and after. The seed buried in the ground is subject to forces outside of its control. The phrase "God gives to it a body just as he willed [ἠθέλησεν, *ēthelēsen*; aorist tense]" refers to the apparent laws established for plants in creation (Gen. 1:11–12; Godet 1887: 405; Findlay 1910: 934; Müller 1985: 196–97). The key concepts are "God gives" and "God wills." Divine agency must be accounted for in life and in death and in what comes after, or else one is to be accounted a fool. Paul assumes that plants do not rise of their own volition or by chance, but as God has determined (Morris 1958: 225). Likewise, the resurrection of the dead is something willed by God and realized by God's power. God wills to raise the dead and transform the body committed to the grave into one fitted for glory, and God has the power to do so. This point is especially emphasized by Asher (2001: 104, 108), who claims that 1 Cor. 15:36–38 is "merely an illustration of how God's creative power effects the transition between a seed and a plant."

To fit his argument about the resurrection of the dead, Paul uses the term "body" to describe the sprouting of the seed and partially answers the question "With what body?" by saying "With its own body"—one that is proper to it, but one that has been transformed. The body raised is not the body that inhabits the earth or that lies moldering in the grave, but one that has been utterly transformed (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 3:21). Edwards (1885: 435) comments that Paul "introduces here the conception of identity of kind. If the seed is rye, the plant is rye." The

assumption that some kind of somatic continuity exists lies behind the earlier argument that a Christian may not use the body for fornication as if it were something disconnected from the future resurrected life (1 Cor. 6:13).

15:39–41 Paul expands on the statement that each seed has its own body, but he takes the argument in a new direction by shifting the imagery from agricultural realities to different kinds of terrestrial flesh and different kinds of brilliance among celestial bodies. Bonneau (1993) demonstrates that the examples given in 15:39–41 do not reiterate the point in 15:36–38 (see Burchard 1984: 234 n. 6 for a list of scholars who think that it is redundant), but make a new point (see also Asher 2000: 100 n. 22). The problem that must be resolved to the Corinthians' satisfaction is how the polarity between the earthly sphere and the heavenly sphere is to be bridged. How can an earthly body be made fit for heavenly habitation, since what is perishable cannot inherit imperishability (15:50)? Asher (2000: 82; see also 91–145) cites many ancient philosophers who contended "that it is metaphysically impossible for a terrestrial body to ascend to the celestial realm." The Corinthians appear to have shared this presupposition. In 15:39–41, Paul acknowledges its validity but introduces the principle of transformation in 15:42–44, 50–57 to show that it is not an insurmountable problem for belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Fee (1987: 783) discerns a chiastic structure in 15:39–41:

A Not all flesh is the same flesh.
  B There is a different kind for human beings,
    a different kind of flesh for animals,
    a different kind of flesh for birds,
    a different kind for fish.
    C There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies.
      the glory of the heavenly is different from the glory of the earthly.
  B´ There is a different kind of glory for the sun,
    a different kind of glory for the moon,
    a different kind of glory for the stars,
A´ For glory differs from star to star.

The key words—σάρξ (*sarx*) in 15:39 and δόξα (*doxa*) in 15:41—are preceded by the adjective ἄλλη (*allē*, another). The items in 15:39 are listed in descending order of complexity: humans, animals, birds, and fish (cf. Gen. 1:20–27). The list also reveals a different kind of flesh for their different domains: earth, sky, and sea. The items in 15:41 are listed in descending order of their radiance: the blazing of the sun, the soft glow of the moon, the twinkling of the stars. The statement in 15:40 that the glory of heavenly bodies is different in kind from that of earthly bodies serves as "the pivot" between 15:39 and 15:41 (Bonneau 1993: 84). It introduces the term "glory," which, in this context, means "radiance," but can also apply to what is heavenly (cf. 1 Thess. 2:12). All of the examples in 15:39 and 15:41 contribute in different ways to Paul's case for the feasibility of the resurrection of the dead.

Bonneau (1993: 85) notes that in 15:36–38, Paul highlights the distinction that exists between the seed before it is sown and after it is sown. In 15:39–41, he highlights the distinction that exists between below and above. The "below" is characterized by the use of the term "flesh"; the "above" is characterized by the use of the term "glory." This creates a hierarchy of opposites:

“earthly/below/lesser” and “heavenly/above/greater.” “Flesh” is used in a nonpejorative way to refer to the physicality of earthly bodies—their creatureliness, weakness, and transitoriness (Schrage 2001: 290). The substance of heavenly beings is “glory” (Lietzmann 1949: 84), which is one reason why it is so reprehensible for humans to exchange the glory of the immortal God for images of mortal humans, birds, four-footed animals, or reptiles (Rom. 1:23). Since the stars have a resplendence unlike anything on earth, one can expect the resurrected body, fit for a heavenly existence, to be unlike anything known on earth (Bonneau 1993: 85). Paul wants to disabuse the Corinthians of the mistaken impression that all bodies are the same so that they can begin to appreciate that the resurrection body is not identical with the familiar, earthly body—a mistake that is reinforced in the modern era by cartoons, commercials, and movies that portray heavenly scenes with characters taking on accustomed, earthly characteristics.

Paul notes that God’s creation includes a differentiation of various kinds of flesh. Just as the flesh given to humans is not one that is appropriate for animals, birds, or fish, so also the resurrection body will not be the same as the one that is buried and returned to dust. The Corinthians’ familiarity with “the infinite variety that reigns in the world which God created” (Bruce 1971: 151) should lead them to expect that the human body experienced in this life is not the only kind of body possible. Even heavenly bodies emit different levels of brightness. The body that is raised will be transformed into something entirely different from what is known on earth and something appropriate for heavenly existence. The Corinithians should also recognize that heavenly bodies differ from earthly bodies. It would be foolish to think that an earthly body is appropriate for a heavenly existence. Mentioning the stars might be intended to bring to mind the glorious state of those resurrected from the dead, who are likened to astral bodies (Dan. 12:2–3; Matt. 13:43; Wis. 3:7; 2 Bar. 51:10; so D. Martin 1995: 118–20). Paul’s point is that the resurrection body is not a reanimated corpse but something of a completely different order that is appropriate to celestial existence. Since the Corinthians recognize that heavenly bodies differ from earthly bodies, they should not expect the resurrected body to be a recycled earthly body.

Bonneau (1993: 85–86) contends that the two examples lead to the following question: “Can God transform (before/after) an earthly body into a heavenly body (below/above)?” This question is addressed in the next units. God, who provides appropriate bodies for cows and fish and appropriate glory for the sun and moon, certainly can be trusted to provide an appropriate celestial body for those who are raised. What this body will be and the nature of its glory are beyond imagining since it is beyond earthly experience, but it is not an absurd notion to think that the risen will exist in an altogether different body.

15:42–44a “thus [is] the resurrection of the dead” serves as the conclusion of Paul’s preceding argument and the heading for its next step. He does not specify the subject of the verbs σπείρεται (*speiretai*, it is sown) and ἐγείρεται (*egeiretai*, it is raised), but “whatever ‘it’ is, it represents a measure of continuity between the two orders” (Sloan 1983: 81). Yet Paul wants to emphasize that the body that will be raised is radically different from its earthly counterpart. This difference is underscored by four antitheses in which he contrasts what is sown with what is raised. Elsewhere, he uses the verb “to sow” figuratively to refer to his mission work (9:11), to charitable giving (2 Cor. 9:6, 10), and to moral/immoral living (Gal. 6:7–8). Its figurative meaning in this context is not clear. Several options are possible; here, I focus on two.

"Sowing" could refer to the burial of a human being (Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor.* 41.5; Weiss 1910: 371; Robertson and Plummer 1914: 371–72). Since Paul introduces the topic as "the resurrection of the dead," it seems reasonable to infer that the subject of the verb is "one of the dead": "One is buried in corruptibility, raised in incorruptibility." It also comports well with the expectation that what is sowed will be harvested (2 Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7–8). This interpretation has several problems, however. "In dishonor" and "in weakness" do not seem applicable descriptions of interment, though some interpret them as references to the foulness and immobility of the corpse. But "weakness" applies to a lack of power, not to its complete absence (Asher 2001: 110). It hardly seems fitting to refer to a corpse as "animated by the soul" (σῶμα ψυχικόν, *sōma psychikon*; 15:44). This phrase is difficult to translate, and the renderings "natural body" or "physical body" do not adequately convey its meaning. It means a "soulish body" (Edwards 1885: 440), which suggests a "body formed by and for a soul" (Godet 1887: 413) as its instrument to carry out its wishes. A dead body, however, is soulless. Therefore, it is improbable that "sowing" refers to burial.

The verb "to sow" can be used for the procreation of humans (see Gen. 9:19; 4 Macc. 10:2), and many assume that it applies to human existence in general ("the present state from birth to death" [Edwards 1885: 438–39]). This view makes the best sense of the passage, but Asher (2001: 102) refines it by arguing that "sowing" is "an anthropogenic metaphor describing the creation of the first human being, Adam." It refers to "the state of humanity upon its creation in the person of Adam" (Asher 2001: 110). Asher contends that the examples from 1 Cor. 15:36–41 are intended to illustrate the creative power of God in the generation of life, but that the divine passive, "it is raised," repeated three times, makes it difficult to assume that humans are the agents of the "sowing." "Sowing" was used as a metaphor in the Greco-Roman world for human origins (Asher 2001: 112–21), and Paul's first readers could have understood it in this sense. The advantage of this interpretation is that it draws on the contrast between those in Adam and those in Christ articulated earlier, in 15:21–22, and anticipates the contrast between Adam and Christ in 15:45–49. Humankind bears all the hallmarks of the first human, made of the same corruptible dust. This interpretation means that throughout these verses Paul refers to one-time events: Adam's creation, Christ's resurrection (15:45–48), and the believers' resurrection (15:49, 51–52).

The Corinthians have trouble conceiving of the resurrection of the dead because they know the terrestrial body to be

1. Susceptible to corruption—the condition of fallen creation (Rom. 8:21; Gal. 6:8; Col. 2:22; see also 2 Bar. 44:9)
2. Dishonored—the condition of being subject to shame and shameful treatment (1 Cor. 4:11–13; 2 Cor. 6:8)
3. Weak—the condition of being embodied in something that is subject to physical infirmities and deformities (2 Cor. 12:9–10) and that wastes away (2 Cor. 4:16)

Paul's point is that the resurrection body is not a spruced-up version of the physical body. The two bodies are totally different:

The physical body is sown …	The resurrection body is raised …

in a state of corruptibility	in a state of incorruptibility
in dishonor	in glory
in weakness	in power
a natural body	a spiritual body

What Paul is talking about becomes clear in 15:44a. "The body kindled by the soul [σῶμα ψυχικόν]" and "the body kindled by the Spirit [σῶμα πνευματικόν, *sōma pneumatikon*]" are poles apart. The first term characterizes earthly life; the second, heavenly life (see additional note). In 2 Cor. 5:1, Paul likens this earthly body to a tent that is to be folded up and replaced by an eternal building waiting in the heavens. Those who are raised will be given spiritual bodies, ones animated by the Spirit of God (Barrett 1968: 372) and bearing the image of the heavenly person. The spiritual body is a body "that eye has not seen and ear has not heard and has not entered the human mind" (1 Cor. 2:9), that is transformed into the likeness of Christ (Phil. 3:21), and that is fitted for the new age. All of this is possible only by the power of God.

15:44b–49 Boer (1988: 129) notes with many that the comparison with the first Adam and the last Adam in 15:45–49 seems to break the flow of the argument begun in 15:35 (cf. Fee 1987: 787). But that is not the case if the sowing in 15:42–44a is understood to be a reference to the creation of the first human being, Adam. Only when one fails to grasp the logic of Paul's reasoning and the nature of the Corinthians' objections to the resurrection do these verses seem to break the flow of the argument. The argument contains five steps (Asher 2000: 113):

1. The statement in 15:44a introduces the principle that an opposite presupposes its counterpart: "If there is a natural body, then there is also a spiritual one." The contrast assumes a polarity between the locations where these bodies are suitable—the terrestrial and the celestial. The οὕτως (*houtōs*, thus) in 15:45 draws the conclusion from this principle.

2. Paul argues in 15:45–46 that these opposites are temporally successive. He cites Gen. 2:7 as proof and adds "first" and "Adam" to that text. There is a first and a last. The last has the sense of being the ultimate. Adam received life as an embodied soul in a natural body (see also Wis. 15:11). Christ gives life as a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. 1 Thess. 4:14). "Giving life" is synonymous with raising the dead (Rom. 4:17; 8:11; 2 Cor. 3:6). The point is this: If there is a natural body represented by the first Adam in a sown body, then there must be a spiritual body represented by the last Adam, the risen Christ. The first is appropriate for existence in creation; the second will be appropriate for existence in the world to come.

In 1 Cor. 15:46, the adjectival nouns τὸ πνευματικόν (*to pneumatikon*, the spiritual) and τὸ ψυχικόν (*to psychikon*, the natural) are neuter, so it is clear that Paul is talking about the bodies in 15:44 and not Adam or Christ (15:45, 47–49). He is not arguing against hypothetical dissenters in Corinth who supposedly "assumed that they had already entered into the totality of pneumatic existence while they were still in their *psychikos* body," as Fee (1987: 791) would have it (see also Kistemaker 1993: 577; Soards 1999: 350). Oster (1995: 401) strongly rejects this view as "ill-founded exegetically" and "flawed historically." Paul's argument in this passage has nothing to do with the Corinthians' self-centered spirituality but with their bewilderment over how a

terrestrial body can be raised as a celestial body. We cannot be certain whether the Corinthians did or did not use the terms ψυχικός and πνευματικός (contra Dunn 1973: 129; R. Horsley 1976), and so we should be careful before constructing theories based on the assumption that they did. We do know, however, that one of these terms, ψυχικός, appears in the scriptural proof cited in 15:45 (Gen. 2:7). The use of the other term, πνευματικός, would follow from the principle enunciated in 1 Cor. 15:44b that the one thing, the natural body, demands an opposite counterpart, the spiritual body. Asher (2000: 111) concludes, "Paul uses this terminology for the sole purpose of moving his argument from a discussion of the relationship between the resurrection and locative polarity to a discussion of the relationship between the eschatological resurrection and locative polarity." Oster (1995: 402) maintains,

> For Paul, in light of Adamic influence, the natural body is annihilated at the return of Christ and the End. The spiritual body, on the other hand, does not refer to the condition and state of the believer following his personal death, but rather to the body at, and only at, the time of Christ's return and the End.

The Corinthians are not trying to assume their "heavenly body" now (contra Fee 1987: 795), but rather fail to understand that in the resurrection their earthly bodies will be completely transformed into spiritual bodies. Paul argues that they will not become spirit vapors at death. The inherent incompatibility between earthly and heavenly bodies is remedied by the transformative power of God.

3. The first two points of locative polarity and temporal succession are combined in 15:47. The natural or sown body and the spiritual or heavenly body are appropriate to different cosmic spheres that are polar opposites, and they are also temporally successive and not coexistent opposites.

Paul does not use verbs in 15:47, and so they must be supplied. He is talking not about the substance of the first and the last Adams but about their origin and character. The first human (ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος, *ho prōtos anthrōpos*) "came" from dust from the earth, and the second human (ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος, *ho deuteros anthrōpos*) "will come" from heaven. A past tense verb is the obvious choice to refer to Adam. The future tense is more suited for Christ's coming (Barrett 1968: 375). The removal of the Adamic condition occurs only at the resurrection.

The prepositional phrase ἐξ οὐρανοῦ (*ex ouranou*, from heaven) does not mean that Christ is made of heavenly stuff as Adam was made from dust. Paul is talking about how the polarity between heaven and earth is to be bridged. The backdrop for understanding this conclusion is not, as some propose, Philo's (*Alleg. Interp.* 1.12 §31) exegesis of Gen. 2:7:

> There are two types of persons; the one a heavenly person, the other an earthly. The heavenly person, being made after the image of God, is altogether without part or lot in corruptible and terrestrial substance; but the earthly one was compacted out of the matter scattered here and there, which Moses calls "clay." For this reason he says the heavenly person was not molded, but was stamped with the image of God; while the earthly is a molded work of the Artificer, but not of his offspring.

Philo interprets Adam's becoming a living soul to mean that God breathed into his corruptible (φθαρτός, *phthartos*), earthlike mind the power of real life. Paul's emphasis is totally different. It is christological and eschatological and picks up the contrast between above and below in 15:40–

41, the earthly flesh and the heavenly glory. The second person is the resurrected Christ, and "from heaven" identifies him as coming from the divine and eternal realm at the parousia (see Robertson and Plummer 1914: 374; Schweizer, *TDNT* 9:478; contra Lincoln 1981: 45–46). Paul writes elsewhere that we await God's Son "from heaven" (ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, *ek tōn ouranōn*; 1 Thess. 1:10), that Christ will come down "from heaven" (ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ, *ap' ouranou*) at the parousia (1 Thess. 4:16–17), that he will be revealed "from heaven" (ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ) with his mighty angels (2 Thess. 1:7), and that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which [ἐξ οὗ, *ex hou*] we also eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our body of humiliation into conformity with the body of his glory" (Phil. 3:20–21; cf. Dan. 7:13; Mark 13:26; 14:62). These parallels make clear that the one from heaven is the one who appears at the end, when the dead will be raised.

4. Paul treats Adam and Christ as representatives, not simply individuals (Barrett 1968: 376). The first Adam influences humans, all of whom are sown with a natural body in this terrestrial habitat. The principle of antithetical counterparts laid out in 1 Cor. 15:44b leads to this conclusion: If humans take the shape of the first Adam sown with a body made from dust that goes back to dust, then Christians will take the shape of Christ in their heavenly existence, who is from heaven and has a spiritual body. The last Adam, then, sets the pattern for all who will be resurrected and given a spiritual body for their new celestial habitat.

5. In 15:49, Paul makes clear that this transformation has not yet occurred. It lies in the future at the resurrection. Until then, humans bear the image of the person of dust, Adam. In the resurrection, Christians will bear the image of the heavenly person, who has dominion and uses it properly in complete obedience to God. Cosmic polarity, therefore, is not an insurmountable problem. In the same way that those in Adam bear Adam's characteristics in their home on earth, those in Christ will be made like Christ, with spiritual bodies appropriate for their new heavenly existence.

Additional Notes

15:35. When Baruch asks God how the dead will be raised ("In which shape will the living live in your day?" [2 Bar. 49:1–3]), he receives the answer that they will be raised in the exact same form in which they were buried (50:1–4). This facilitates the recognition of persons for the judgment, after which the righteous will be transformed into a state appropriate to eternal glory (51:10). The debate in *b. Sanh.* 90b about the nature of the resurrection is much closer to Paul's form of argument. An emperor asks Rabbi Gamaliel how the dead, who have turned to dust, can come to life. The rabbi's daughter intervenes with a clever parable that argues for the case from the greater to the lesser:

> "In our town there are two potters; one fashions [his products] from water, and the other from clay: who is the most praiseworthy?" "He who fashions them from water," he replied. "If he can fashion [man] from water [semen], surely he can do so from clay [the dust to which he returns]!"

Morissette (1972a) contends that Paul's argument follows the same pattern: an objecting question (1 Cor. 15:35), examples from everyday life (15:36–41), and concluding application

(15:42–49). Bonneau (1993: 86–89) limits the application to 15:42–44a, rightly pointing out that 15:44b begins another argument.

15:37. An argument for the resurrection in rabbinic literature that is attributed to Rabbi Meir uses the imagery of the naked seed, but the question prompting the response and the application is completely different from Paul's. The question is "Will the dead rise nude or clothed?" The naked seed is used to argue from lesser to the greater: "The seed is sown naked and it comes up clothed. How much more will the dead, which depart clothed (in shrouds) come up clothed" (*Eccles. Rab.* 5.10.1; see also *b. Sanh.* 90b; *b. Ketub.* 111b).

15:44a. Christians have been given "the firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23; or "first installment" [2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5]) in anticipation of the spiritual body but still groan inwardly as they await the redemption of their earthly bodies. In the meantime, they are being transformed by the Spirit into the image of the glory of the Lord by degrees (2 Cor. 3:18). The total transformation awaits the resurrection.

15:47. The reading ἄνθρωπος after "second" has strong textual support from a broad geographical range (א*, B, C, D*, F, G, 33, 1739*, it$^{ar, b, d, f, g, o}$, vg, cop^{bo}). It is the shortest reading and best explains the others, ὁ κύριος (1912), ἄνθρωπος ὁ κύριος (א^{2}, A, D^{1}, Ψ, 81), and ἄνθρωπος πνευματικός (𝔓^{46}), which appear to be attempts to bring the wording into line with the spiritual one (15:46) or the heavenly one (15:48).

15:49. The future indicative φορέσομεν has weaker attestation (B, I, 6, 630, 945^{vid}, 1881) than the aorist subjunctive φορέσωμεν (𝔓^{46}, א, A, C, D, F, G, Ψ, 075, 0243, 33, 1739), but a hortatory subjunctive, "let us bear," is impossible if Paul is arguing that bearing the image of the heavenly person awaits the future resurrection. This mode of existence is possible only at the end. Until the end, Christians bear all the hallmarks of Adamic existence. Only Christ has been granted this mode of existence. It cannot have an ethical thrust in which Paul exhorts the readers to look to Christ "as source and hope of transformation, rather than looking to their own wisdom or to some primal divine image within" (contra Hays 1997: 273–74; cf. Héring 1962: 179; Sider 1974–75: 434; Lincoln 1981: 50–51; Fee 1987: 787 n. 5, 794–95; Eriksson 1998: 271). Robertson and Plummer (1914: 375) recognize that the subjunctive implies that "the attaining to the glorified body depends upon on our own effort." Nothing could be more wrong. Internal evidence must outweigh the external evidence. The context is neither polemical nor hortatory, but didactic. Paul is teaching the Corinthians how "a body, conditioned by ψυχή, derived from Adam, will be transformed into a body conditioned by πνεῦμα, derived from Christ" (Robertson and Plummer 1914: 374). The variation in the readings probably arose from the identical pronunciation of the two verbs (see Caragounis 1995a) or from a mistaken desire, repeated by some modern commentators, to turn Paul's argument about bodies into an ethical discourse.

F. All Will Be Changed (15:50–58)

Deciding how the concluding remarks of Paul's resurrection discourse link with what precedes is key for interpreting them. A majority of scholars assume that 15:50 introduces a new issue (Weiss 1910: 377; Jeremias 1955–56: 154–55; Thiselton 2000: 1290–91). Jeremias (1955–56) interprets 15:50–57 as providing the answer to the question raised in 15:35, "How are the dead raised?" Only a few scholars (Gillman 1982: 332; Fee 1987: 798; Asher 2000: 147–57) posit any connection to what immediately precedes. As in 7:29, the phrase τοῦτο δέ φημι, ἀδελφοί (*touto de phēmi, adephoi*) solemnly signals that an important declaration follows: "I mean this, brothers and sisters." Asher (2000: 151) contends that here this phrase introduces a principle "that summarizes what [Paul] has previously said" and guides the subsequent discussion. With this solemn introductory formula, Paul authoritatively states an enduring fact. As Gillman (1988: 443) expounds it,

> An absolute opposition is drawn between earthly entities and heavenly entities, such that the former cannot inherit the latter. This faith conviction upon which Paul stands firm is given first in more Semitic, concrete terms "flesh and blood," "kingdom of God," then in more Hellenistic, abstract terms, "perishable," "imperishable." The Hellenistic terms give the logical basis for the exclusion principle: the condition of flesh and blood, because it is perishable, is inappropriate for the kingdom of God because it is imperishable. The new body must be compatible with its new environment. The force of v 50 conclusively sets forth the opposition between two incompatible conditions.

What few have recognized is that this principle summarizes the Corinthians' basic objections to the resurrection: a human body is unfit for a heavenly abode. Paul continues his rhetorical strategy, evidenced throughout the letter, of accommodating the Corinthian view by stating "as a principle what has been assumed all along" (Asher 2000: 154). The Corinthians are indeed right that the earthly sphere and the heavenly kingdom of God represent extreme opposites. The phrase "flesh and blood" underscores that physical polarity even more. In Jewish parlance, "flesh and blood" generally denotes the frailty of human creatures. The Corinthians' inferences about life after death based on this polarity, however, are wrong. Paul draws his argument for the resurrection of the dead to a close by emphasizing in this unit that this polarity will be overcome when both the living and the dead are changed.

In 15:50–57, Paul expands on his previous argument by introducing the tenet of change that resolves the problem of how it is possible for the dead to be raised. As J. Wilson (1968: 96) summarizes these verses, "Every Christian must undergo a future transformation. No one, living or dead, can enter the kingdom of God without radical change." Paul hammers home this concept in 15:51–53:

> Not everyone will die before the parousia, but everyone will be changed (15:51).
> The dead will be changed, and those still alive will be changed at the parousia (15:52).
> Whether one has died or survived until the parousia, the corruptible and mortal will be clothed with what is incorruptible and immortal (15:53).

A divinely wrought transformation occurring at the parousia will make what is earthly become fit for heavenly existence. God then will claim the final victory over death, which is vanquished by the resurrection.

Exegesis and Exposition

[50]But I mean this, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can what is corruptible inherit what is incorruptible. [51]Behold, I tell you a mystery. ❒We will not all sleep, but all will be changed❒, [52]in a flash, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. [53]For this corruptible [body] must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body] must put on immortality. [54]But ❒when this corruptible [body] puts on incorruptibility❒, and this mortal [body] puts on immortality, then the word that stands written will come to pass, "Death has been swallowed up in victory." [55]Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? [56]The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. [57]Thanks be to God, who gives to us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58]So then, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firm, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

15:50 Jeremias (1955–56: 153–54) has convinced many interpreters that Paul contrasts the living with the dead in 15:50–53. In 15:50, Jeremias maintains that "flesh and blood" refers to the living (cf. Gal. 1:16; Matt. 16:17; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14; Sir. 14:18; 17:31) and that "corruption" (ἡ φθορά, *hē phthora*) refers to corpses in the state of decomposition. "Flesh and blood" (15:50), the living (15:52), and "that which is mortal" (τὸ θνητόν, *to thnēton*; 15:53) will be changed and put on immortality. "Corruption" (15:50), "the dead" (15:52), and "that which is corruptible" (τὸ φθαρτόν, *to phtharton*; 15:53) will be raised incorruptible and put on incorruption. In other words, "the dead experience what happened to the Lord in the resurrection, the living experience what happened to the Lord in the transfiguration" (Jeremias 1955–56: 154).

Jeremias misinterprets Paul's train of thought. Paul is not using synthetic parallelism that introduces a further thought ("flesh and blood" = the living; "corruptible" = the dead), but synonymous parallelism ("flesh and blood" = "corruptible") to refer to the condition of physical human existence. The first assertion, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, is explained by the second in ways that any Greek reader could understand. "Flesh and blood" represents what is corruptible, and what is corruptible cannot stake a claim on what is incorruptible. In 15:42, the word φθορά (corruption) applies to the living, not the corpse buried in the ground (see also Rom. 8:21). "Flesh and blood," a Semitic expression, recalls the many kinds of flesh confined to the earth in contrast to the different glories of the heavenly bodies (1 Cor. 15:40–41). Its meaning cannot be confined to the living (Gillman 1982: 316; cf. Sir. 14:17–18, which refers to "the generations of flesh and blood: one dies and another is born"). Paul is not making a distinction between the living and the dead, and his concern here is not that of 1 Thess. 4:13–18: Will the living precede the dead at the parousia (contra Jeremias 1955–56: 159)? He has made no previous reference to any contrast between the living and the dead in this chapter. Instead, he simply concedes the point that this earthly dress is unfit for heavenly habitation. The emphasis falls on the necessity that the living and the dead be changed, because in their earthly physicality they cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

In 1 Cor. 15:50–57, Paul continues to address the same problem that has driven the entire discussion: the metaphysical incompatibility between the heavenly order, which is spiritual and imperishable, and the earthly, organic order, which is fleshly and perishable. The polarity between the terrestrial and the celestial prohibits the ascent "of a terrestrial human form or substance to the celestial region" (Asher 2000: 153). Older commentators get it right: "Our present bodies, whether living or dead, are absolutely unfitted for the Kingdom" (Robertson and Plummer 1914: 376; cf. Godet 1887: 434; Edwards 1885: 449; contra Thiselton 2000: 1291). What is raised is not flesh and blood. The earthly frame will be utterly changed into a heavenly body of glory. Barrett (1968: 379) missteps in saying that Paul does not intend "to teach a direct incompatibility between flesh and the kingdom of God." He does not need to teach it, because the Corinthian dissenters already take it for granted. Paul only concedes it. What he wishes to teach, however, is that this inherent incompatibility is overcome by change. His view differs significantly from 2 Bar. 50:2, which has God telling Baruch that the earth gives back the dead as it received them, "not changing anything in their form." For Paul, change is *absolutely necessary* to make what was flesh and blood and perishable fit for what is imperishable and immortal.

"Inheriting the kingdom of God" is a Jewish turn of phrase. Jewish texts speak of inheriting ("to come into possession," or "to acquire") "the earth" (1 Enoch 5:7; Jub. 32:19), the coming "time" (2 Bar. 44:13), or "what is to come" (4 Ezra [2 Esdr.] 7:96); but "inheriting the kingdom of God" is found only in the NT (Foerster, *TDNT* 3:782). The expression appears in a context of moral exhortation in Matt. 25:34; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; and Gal. 5:21. Witherington (1995: 310) assumes that it is a moral exhortation in this context: "One must not be so satisfied with one's present spiritual life as to mistake the part for the whole of Christian existence." But spiritual pride is not the problem that Paul is addressing in this section, and it should not be imported into the discussion. In 1 Cor. 15:50, he merely acknowledges the Corinthians' point that this terrestrial body cannot simply relocate from this world to the heavenly realm. He headlines this metaphysical roadblock to set up its solution. All will undergo transformation, allowing both the living and dead to rise to a new, celestial existence (Perriman 1989: 515; Asher 2000: 157).

15:51–53 If "flesh and blood" cannot inherit "the kingdom of God" and if "what is susceptible to corruption" cannot inherit "incorruption," it certainly would seem that the resurrection of the dead is impossible and that life after death should be conceived in purely immaterial terms. "Behold" (ἰδού, *idou*) injects a solemn accent into Paul's unveiling of an eschatological mystery that reveals how the impossible will happen (cf. Rev. 17:7 for similar wording). "Mystery" refers to something that was formerly hidden and undiscoverable by human methods but now has been divinely revealed (Rom. 11:25; cf. 1 Cor. 2:1, 7; 13:2).

Paul does not intend to hint that he and the Corinthians belong to the last generation with the assertion "we will not all sleep" (cf. 11:30; 15:6). Those who interpret this verse to mean that he assumed that he would survive until the parousia must reckon with what he says in 1 Cor. 6:14, "God both raised the Lord and will raise us through his power." This statement could be interpreted to mean that he expected death for himself and the Corinthians, but the identity of the "us" in 6:14 is as indeterminate as the "we" in 15:51. "We will not all sleep" anticipates only that the parousia will break into human history and directly affect those who are alive at that time (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15). When that event will occur is unknown and not at issue. The "all" refers generically to Christians who happen to be alive at the parousia. Since it can happen at any time,

and since he is still among the living, Paul can include himself and the Corinthians in the first group: "We will not all sleep."

The second "all" ("all will be changed"), however, must include both the dead and the living, since the only way that the barrier presented by the polarity between an earthly body and a celestial body can be overcome is through a dramatic change. The Corinthians considered this barrier to be insuperable, which caused them to question the possibility of the resurrection of the dead. It is the only issue that Paul addresses. Paul's answer, as Asher (2000) explains, is that the polarity is overcome by the change that will occur at the end. The verb ἀλλαγησόμεθα (*allagēsometha*) is repeated twice in 1 Cor. 15:51–52 and is aptly translated "undergo transformation" (Thiselton 2000: 1258). The mystery is not that the living and the dead will be on a par with one another at the parousia but that both the living and the dead will undergo the prerequisite transformation so that they can attain incorruptibility and immortality. This "mystery" that all will be changed is a revealed truth, but it also connotes that this transformation will be effected by God's mysterious power—a power that only the "foolish" fail to appreciate.

Paul has no intention of outlining the events of the parousia. The final judgment, for example, is omitted, though it is clearly assumed in other parts of the letter (3:8, 13–15; 5:5; 6:2–3; 9:27). He intends to argue only that the change will occur at a certain moment in time—on the last day, when this world is brought to an end. The word ἄτομος (*atomos*) refers to what is indivisible (the "atom" was considered to be a particle too small to split). In the context of time, it refers to the smallest conceivable instant (BDAG 149). The image of "the blink of an eye" reinforces the instantaneous nature of the change—it all happens in a flash. According to Gillman (1988: 443), the imagery emphasizes the equality of the living and the dead, refutes any view of a gradual transformation of the resurrected (cf., for example, 2 Bar. 50:1–51:10), and "highlights the miraculous, supraterrestrial and ineffable nature of the transformation event." The image of the blasting trumpet is a traditional eschatological motif (see Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16; Joel 2:1; Zeph. 1:14–16; Zech. 9:14; 4 Ezra [2 Esdr.] 6:23; Sib. Or. 4:173–75) and is associated with manifestations of God's presence (Exod. 19:13, 16, 19; 20:18; Zech. 9:14). The "last" trumpet is not the last in a series (Rev. 8:2–13; 11:15–19) but is the trumpet that signals the end (Fee 1987: 802).

The clothing imagery in 1 Cor. 15:53–54 provides a concrete picture of the transformation mystery by which a mortal, corruptible body changes to an immortal, incorruptible body. "Putting on" is equivalent to bearing the image of the heavenly one (15:49) and affirms that the new existence will be corporeal. The demonstrative τοῦτο in 15:53 refers to the bodies of all believers, living and dead. "It is necessary" (δεῖ, *dei*) may refer to "the compulsion of divine authority" (Gillman 1988: 444), but it is also self-evident that this investiture is necessary for something that is perishable to be made fit for imperishable existence.

Gillman notes that Paul does not say that the old, earthly body is to be stripped off so that the (immortal) soul may escape—an idea found in Philo (*Alleg. Interp.* 2.15 §§54–59; 2.19 §80; *Dreams* 1.8 §43) and in the *Corpus Hermeticum* (1.24–26; 10.18; 13.3, 14). Instead, Paul's clothing imagery conveys the idea that the transformation to an immortal body is accomplished by adding a new garment to the mortal body. In 2 Cor. 5:2 and 5:4, he uses the doubly compounded verb ἐπενδύσασθαι (*ep* + *en* + *dysasthai*), meaning "to put on over," to stress continuity in the process of moving from an earthly tent to a heavenly dwelling (M. Harris 1971: 44). Therefore, "one does not have to slip off the earthly body before being garbed in the heavenly one" (Garland 1999:

258). Though Paul never attempts to explain "the nexus between the present physical frame and the spiritual body" (Moffatt 1938: 265), he understands the change as something that occurs within the same genus, like the seed miraculously changing into the plant.

15:54–55 Paul repeats the clothing terminology in 15:53, but the δέ in 15:54 introduces "a subtle, though significant, advance in thought" (Gillman 1988: 444). He moves from what "must" take place (15:53) to what will take place "when this corruptible [body] puts on incorruptibility and this mortal [body] puts on immortality." The prophecy from Scripture seals its certainty and draws out the theological implications. The citation combines Isa. 25:8 LXX (25:7 MT) with Hos. 13:14 (see C. Stanley 1992: 209–15). From Isa. 25:8, Paul gleans that death will be "swallowed up." The LXX version, however, reads that death, "being strong," has swallowed up the nations. He adopts the verb καταπίνειν (*katapinein*, to gulp down), suggesting "hostile destruction" (Goppelt, *TDNT* 6:159), but follows the Hebrew textual tradition in which God will destroy death forever (cf. Rev. 21:4, citing the same tradition). He treats the realm of death as a "power in its own right" that destroys earthly life and looms as an unremitting threat (Gillman 1988: 445). Death, for him, is not a blessed release but "the annihilation of the human person by an alien, inimical power" (Boer 1988: 184).

Where Paul came up with the phrase εἰς νῖκος (*eis nikos*, in victory) is difficult to discern. He may have altered δίκη (*dikē*, plague), found in Hos. 13:14 LXX, to νῖκος (*nikos*, victory) and inserted it in his quotation to create a word link (Hays 1997: 276), or utilized a "pre-Theodotion" version of the LXX (Gillman 1988: 444; see also the text of Aquila), or drawn upon an idiom connected to the cognate Aramaic verb of the Hebrew adverb לָנֶצַח (*lāneṣaḥ*, forever) in Isa. 25:8 that means "to overcome, prevail over" (Caird 1969: 34; Morissette 1972b: 168–70; Fee 1987: 803). This last option best explains the variations in the different Greek renderings of the Hebrew text. What is clear is that the ultimate destruction of death requires the resurrection of the dead.

The rhetorical questions "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" derive from Hos. 13:14, though the text is so different that Calvin (1960: 344–46) thinks that Paul does not cite the prophet but adapts his words according to his own purposes. Barrett (1968: 383) surmises that he is "writing freely, in scriptural language, of the ultimate victory over death." In Hosea's context, death and Sheol serve to punish the iniquity of Ephraim and are summoned to inflict due punishment. Paul's citation turns "plague" or "penalty" (δίκη) into "victory" (νῖκος), replaces the reference to "Sheol" (or "Hades" in the LXX) with "death," and interprets the passage from the perspective of Christ's resurrection by turning it into a taunt. The rhetorical questions now sneer defiantly at death's impotence before the power and mercy of God, who wills to forgive sins (1 Cor. 15:3, 17) and to raise the dead.

The noun κέντρον (*kentron*) can refer to a goad that drives on or wounds (Acts 26:14; Prov. 26:3; Sir. 38:25; Ps. Sol. 16:4), or to a stinger (Rev. 9:10 [of scorpions]; 4 Macc. 14:19 [of insects]). Does Paul picture death wielding a goad in its hand to rule over humans and torture them? Or does it puncture the flesh with its poison-filled stinger? Here it must refer to something that harms far more seriously than either a goad or a stinger, and it must be synonymous with "power" in 1 Cor. 15:56 (Schmid, *TDNT* 3:668; Schrage 2001: 381). It enables death to exercise its dominion over the entire world, but its venom has been absorbed by Christ and drained of its potency so that the victory over death now belongs to God and to God's people, who benefit from it.

15:56 Paul adds a theological aside that identifies "the sting of death" as "sin," and "the power of sin" as "the law." The relationship between sin and the law is developed in Romans (5:12–14; 7:7–13), which most believe was written in Corinth, but not in this passage. One should not assume, however, that Paul had not yet fully thought through this connection until he finally worked it out in Romans. The letter to the Romans is written to a community he had never visited. Presumably, what he writes to them he had taught others before. Here, he must assume that the Corinthians would understand this theological shorthand. He did not need to provide an in-depth explanation on the connection between sin and the law, because he had articulated this idea previously, and the law as a delusive basis of salvation is not at issue (see additional note).

From its mysterious laboratory where death distills its poisons, it unleashes the power of sin (adapting a metaphor from Godet 1887: 445). Death gains its power over humans through sin because sin demands capital punishment as its moral penalty (Rom. 6:23). The law, not only unable to arrest sin, spurs it on and pronounces death as its sentence. Paul assumes that his readers understand that through Adam came sin and death (1 Cor. 15:21–22). Through Moses came the law. The law brings awareness of sinfulness (Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19), provokes impulses to sin, which then become deliberate transgressions, with the result that death tightens its stranglehold. The law cannot give life or impart righteousness (Gal. 3:21) but brings only condemnation (2 Cor. 3:6). Through Christ alone come the gracious forgiveness of sins, redemption from the law, and the resurrection from the dead. It is this last element, the resurrection of the dead, that is at issue and that the Corinthians fail to grasp. The resurrection does not simply overturn death's destructive forces of decay but prevails over sin's deadly poison (see Fee 1987: 806). Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins causes death to lose its ultimacy, because "when sin is overcome, death is robbed of its power" (Schmid, *TDNT* 3:668). Christ's death and resurrection signify that Christians are delivered from the fallen world under the tyranny of the triumvirate of sin, law, and death and await only the final manifestation of Christ, which will inaugurate their final transformation.

15:57–58 In 15:57–58, argument gives way to praise as Paul offers thanks to God (cf. Rom. 6:17; 7:25) for the victory won through Christ (1 Cor. 15:57) and the salvific benefits of the resurrection. The Corinthians would have been familiar with the songs of victory celebrating the feats of athletes at the Isthmian games. But Paul does not celebrate the victory of Christians over death (Moffatt 1938: 268). It is God's victory—but a victory in which all believers are graciously allowed to share. The present participle in "God, who gives [τῷ διδόντι, *tō didonti*] to us" reveals that Paul understands the victory over death to be certain because of the resurrection of Christ, who is now a "life-giving spirit" (15:45) and redeems us from sins (15:3). Christians will not be the most pitiable of human beings (15:19), because their hope is assured. But the present tense also indicates that Christians experience forgiveness of sins now and can celebrate this victory proleptically in their daily lives (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

Paul concludes this second stage of his argument on the resurrection with a moral word to the wise, just as he did the first stage in 1 Cor. 15:34. The affectionate address "my beloved brothers and sisters" reveals that he is not engaging in hot polemic. He has been teaching them. The exhortation consists of three parts. The first part, "be firm, immovable," interlocks with his opening admonition in 15:1–2. There, he reminds them about the gospel he preached to them, "in which you stand" and "through which you are being saved," with a significant proviso: "if you

hold fast, unless you believed to no avail." They should not allow anything to knock them loose from the moorings of the testimony about Christ (15:3–5) that has been established among them (1:6; cf. Col. 1:23). If they lose their grip on the foundational truth that Christ was raised as the firstfruits of the dead and move away from it, they will have believed to no avail.

The second part, "abounding in the work of the Lord always," recalls his earlier language describing the Corinthians as the work of God because of the labors of God's servants (1 Cor. 3:5–15; 9:1; 15:10; cf. 16:10). The exhortation "to abound" or "to excel" (περισσεύειν, *perisseuein*) also appears in 14:12 and is connected to building up the church. Putting these two pieces together may shed light on the meaning of the ambiguous phrase "abounding in the work of the Lord." It would be related to whatever contributes to building up the church.

The third part, "knowing that your labor is not in vain [κενός, *kenos*] in the Lord," recalls the statement in 15:14: "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is null and void [κενός] and your faith is null and void [κενός]." Paul connects the adjective κενός to his own labor in 15:10. "God's grace to me," he says, "was not in vain, because I labored harder than all of them." Convinced of the resurrection of the dead, the Corinthians also know that their labor for Christ (3:8; cf. 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:23, 27; 1 Thess. 1:3), which may lead them into life-threatening peril, is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor. 15:29–33). God will use it to give growth (3:6) and will give the laborer the due reward in the end (3:8). Until the end, the present is marked by struggle and labor. It is "an existence under the cross, sustained by the hope which is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (Lorenzen 1995: 274). The reality of the future colors the reality of the present, which is why Paul uses the present tense, "your labor is not in vain," rather than the future tense, "your labor will not be in vain."

Additional Notes

15:51. The textual tradition preserves five readings for 15:51.

1. πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα (B, D^c, K, Ψ, 075, 0243, 1881, $syr^{p, h}$, $cop^{sa, bo}$, Maj) surely is correct. Other readings appear to be attempts to correct perceived theological problems with this reading.
2. πάντες [μὲν] κοιμηθησόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα (א, C, 0243*, 33, 1739) may be attributable to a scribe's recognizing that Paul and the Corinthians had already died and seeking to remove any hint of error by transferring the "not" from the first clause to the second to express that all humans will die, but not all will transformed as believers will be.
3. πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα ($\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, A^c, Origen) appears to conflate readings 1 and 2. A scribe either carelessly repeated the negative in the second clause (Barrett 1968: 380) or assumed that "change" could apply only to those who were alive at the time of the parousia.
4. οἱ πάντες μὲν κοιμηθησόμεθα, οἱ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα (A*) removes the οὐ and replaces it with the οἱ in both clauses.
5. πάντες ἀναστησόμεθα, οὐ πάντες δὲ ἀλλαγησόμεθα (D*, Marcion, Tertullian, Ambrosiaster) introduces an extraneous issue: the fate of the unrighteous. It assumes that all will be raised in the last day, but the unrighteous will not be changed as the righteous will be.

In the best reading, πάντες οὐ κοιμηθησόμεθα does not mean that all will not die. Paul negates the verb even though it is the "all" that he intends to negate (cf. 2 Cor. 7:3; Edwards 1885: 452–53; Barrett 1968: 380). He transposes the negative particle to create a parallelism with the next clause (Robertson and Plummer 1914: 158; Schrage 2001: 370). He means that some Christians will be alive at the parousia.

15:54. The general rule that the shorter reading is to be preferred does not apply to the reading represented by $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$, ℵ*, 088, 0121, 0243, 1175, 1739*, 1852, 1912, 2200, which omits the clause "when this corruptible [body] puts on incorruptibility." The omission probably is attributable to a trick of the eye caused by the similar beginning or similar ending of both clauses. Apparently, this same type of visual error explains the omission of the entire verse in F, G, 6, 365, because of the similar ending in 15:53. Metzger (1994: 502–3) attributes the reading found in A, 326, cop$^{sa\ ms}$, arm, which reverses the order of the clauses, to an errant attempt to correct the oversight in manuscripts that omit the one clause: the missing clause was restored, but in the wrong order.

15:56. Why does Paul insert a short aside on death, sin, and the law into an argument about the resurrection of the dead in which the law has not figured at all? This is difficult to answer. Some suggest that 15:56 was an interpretive gloss that slipped into the text or was added by a later editor (Weiss 1910: 380; Moffatt 1938: 268; Horn 1991: 104–5; R. Horsley 1998: 215). Horn (1991) notes that this idea was first proposed in 1865 by J. W. Straatmann and reviews the subsequent history of research. Using various methodologies, Horn concludes that it could be a gloss. Without question, however, it expresses Paul's theology. Thielman (1992: 249) concludes, "Paul can make compressed statements about the law which have underneath them a coherent—albeit unexpressed—foundation." Weima (1990) challenges Räisänen's contention that Paul's treatment of the law and sin was muddleheaded, and understands the different passages as expressing one of three interrelated functions: (1) cognitive—the law reveals a person's true sinful condition (Rom. 3:20; 7:7; Gal. 3:19); (2) converting—the law transforms sin into more clearly defined and serious acts of transgression (Rom. 5:13; 4:15); and (3) causative—the law provokes or stimulates sin (Rom. 7:5, 8–11; 5:20; 1 Cor. 15:56). Fee (1987: 806) concludes that this statement on death, sin, and the law expresses matters theologically essential to Paul apart from the Judaizing controversy that forced him to discuss them in a more thoroughgoing way in Galatians and Romans. Hollander and Holleman (1993) contend that the connections between death and sin and between sin and law should be understood against the background of popular Hellenistic notions of the degeneration of humanity and the Cynic view that regarded laws as a contributing factor to that degeneration. This view sheds more light on how such a declaration could have been understood by Paul's auditors than it does on where he derived the idea or why he included it here (see Wolff 1996: 419 n. 421).[1]

[1] Garland, D. E. (2003). *1 Corinthians* (pp. 678–749). Baker Academic.