Standing at Cameron’s Corner with 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
Power and Politics in Paul’s Corinthian Missionary Maxim

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged. I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Library Services, or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.

William Brett Gallagher
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Abstract

The interpretation of Paul’s letters is a difficult task. The fact that modern interpreters are so far removed from the original production and dissemination of the correspondence make this task more complicated. Even further this interpretive task is a contested space. Methods and reading strategies have arisen to help with this task but this has created competition rather than clarity. This thesis will examine a short passage of the Pauline corpus, known as Paul’s missionary maxim, 1 Cor 9:19-23. It seeks to foreground society wide relational dynamics of a text, as part of a multidimensional interpretative approach that holds “traditional” historical critical method together with other interpretive aproaches, whilst being consistent with the findings and methods of the New Perspectives on Paul.

Firstly the paper will outline a brief survey of literature concerning both 1 Cor 9:19-23, and the impetus behind the political reading of Paul, the writings of the Paul in Politics group of SBL. It will then examine 1 Cor 9:19-23 using the historical-critical method as well presenting a word study of some of the significant words in the passage. This is word study is important as it establishes the need for further investigation of the passage using alternate reading strategies that point to the politics of the situation.

A chapter of the thesis is devoted to teasing out the need for this contested political reading strategy in order to determine both its need and relevance. This is done through defining how the broad spectrum of political readings can be focussed and brought to bear on this passage.

The focus of the thesis is then provided through the outlining of a new interpretation of the missionary maxim by holding Paul’s “Jewishness”, “Greekness” and “Romanness” in tension. Using this interpretation comments are then outlined to whether this method can be used for the rest of the Corinthian correspondence as well as the whole Pauline corpus. The thesis is guided by the overarching analogy of standing at Cameron’s Corner, that physical place in Australia where you can be in three states at once. This thesis seeks to show how with Paul’s letters by holding these three, at sometimes competing views together it is possible to produce a balanced nuanced understanding of Paul’s writings.
Cameron Corner is that place in the outback of Australia where the states of New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia meet. Standing at Cameron Corner and being in three different states at the one moment presents an interesting manner in which to view the world. Actually the only residents of Cameron Corner run a store that is a registered business of Queensland, with a New South Wales postal code, and a South Australian telephone number. It is truly a unique place. It is possible to arrive at this point from three different directions, and this presents the defining analogy for this thesis. By examining 1 Cor 9:19-23 from three different positions it will be shown that a distinct way of looking at the passage is able to be developed, and that this distinct methodology, by holding the three positions in tension with one another creates a new interpretive framework with which to not only examine this Pauline passage, but possibly all Pauline passages.

**Literature Review**

Throughout the years, 1 Cor 9:19-23 has been used by many Christians,
particularly those working in the area of missiology, to argue that many different
methods should be used in reaching people with the gospel. It is the contention
within this thesis that all too often the many complex issues of this passage are not
treated with the diligence or the care that is required of the contemporary exegete.
This passage, over the years, has come under periodic exegetical scrutiny from a
number of scholars using the historical critical method. In 1955 Chadwick’s paper
“All Things to All Men” (1 Corinthians 9:22),” was published in New Testament
Studies. Chadwick’s main point is that although many interpreters see Paul as a
case study in adaptability, in that, depending on his audience he always
contextualised his message; he argues that Paul was not a “mere weathercock”
tossed about by the issues he was confronted with, but rather a master “preacher.”

Another contributor to the discussion about this passage is David Daube. In
his seminal article “Κερδαίνω as a Missionary Term,” Daube argues using Rabbinic
Literature that κερδαίνω, the word translated as “win” in the text, has at its root the
concept of proselytising. The word is actually the word of the market place meaning
“to make profit” and so the understanding is most likely best understood as the
“gaining by God of men whom he had previously cast away.” Also associated
with this concept of proselytising is the contention of when an adherent can be
classed as being in the faith. Most scholars who follow the rabbinic background of
this passage also agree with the idea that accommodation is the main theme behind
the passage.

Grosheide, in his commentary when commenting on the parallelism
developed in 1 Cor 9:20-22, notes that, as a Jew, Paul is basically paralleling a

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1 Chadwick, H. “All Things to All Men.” NTS 1 (1955): 274.
3 Accommodation in this sense is the parameters by which another viewpoint is deemed acceptable.
criterion in which humankind can be classified.\textsuperscript{5} E.P. Sanders’ seminal work, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}, was instrumental in driving the idea that the traditional way of looking at Paul may not have been as helpful.\textsuperscript{6} The post-Reformation view of Paul as being anti-Jewish was beginning to be replaced by a point of view now known as “The New Perspective on Paul.” Proponents of this multi-faceted concept agreed that a more balanced view of Paul’s theology had its basis not only in the Hellenistic world (the world that he actively ministered, evangelised and lived in), but also his Jewish heritage, a world-view that formed much of his thought.

Krister Stendahl’s The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West was also an influential work in challenging the post-Reformation view of Paul.\textsuperscript{7} Stendahl’s work was used as the basis for some scholars, such as Richard Horsley, in challenging whether the “New Perspective” had actually gone far enough in opposing the traditional view of Paul.

Dale Martin, in his study on Paul’s use of the slavery metaphor in 1 Corinthians 9, states that for the modern reader their understanding of slavery is a negative image. However, for Paul this metaphor was seen as a designation of leadership.\textsuperscript{8} This once again challenges the modern exegete’s understanding of such a common Hellenistic concept, again seeking to ask questions of the current interpretive framework. Martin also states that there is a soteriological sense to the ‘slavery’ metaphor, and adds to our understanding when brought alongside of the business metaphor of ‘winning’ also found in the passage.

Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary, synthesises the two worldviews of Paul, the Judaic and Hellenistic, into his analysis of the text when he states,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Grosheide, F W. \textit{Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians}. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953, 212f.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Martin, Dale B. \textit{Slavery as Salvation}. London: Yale University Press, 1990, 51ff.
\end{itemize}
Paul does all that he does to make transparent by his everyday life in the public domain the character of the gospel which he proclaims as the proclamation of the cross. . . . whether in day-to-day lifestyle as an artisan or in the pastoral and missionary strategy by standing alongside those he seeks to win Paul’s ultimate purpose is to be part of all that; to have a joint share in it.9

Both Martin and Thiselton can be situated amongst the vast group of scholars that use the interpretive framework of the New Perspective with which to study 1 Corinthians, and Pauline Literature in general.

Ernest Best states that Paul’s sensitivity to his converts is demonstrated in his statements of 1 Cor 9:19-23 and 10:33a. Continuing he says that, it has sometimes been alleged that Paul is like a weathercock tossed around by the winds of change, or a politician seeking votes and not really standing for anything. This flexibility is one of intent to above all else see his converts saved, both men and women.10 It can be seen that the language of politics is one that has been in the vocabulary of understanding even pre-dating the “New Perspective.”.

Further investigation by scholars such as Margaret Mitchell has led to a growing sense that the political interpretive framework may need further investigation. She states on a number of occasions that the use of “freedom” and “slavery” in 1 Corinthians 9 is a “political” use of these words.11 Politics and the empire have for most scholars been seen as a subset of the analysis of the Hellenistic background to Pauline Literature.

This growing sense of the importance of politics led to the formation of the “Paul and Politics” group as part of the Society for Biblical Literature. Over the last ten years papers have been presented by Richard Horsley and others about the impact of the Empire on Paul’s thought. The New Perspective interpretive

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framework of the “two worlds of Paul”, Judaic and Hellenistic, has been expanded to incorporate a third, empire, politics and Paul’s citizenship legacy.

In the Introduction to his book *Paul: Fresh Perspective*, NT Wright argues that Paul’s world, and thus Pauline studies, is a bit like climbing a mountain in his native Yorkshire, where upon reaching the summit you can place your feet and hands in three different counties. Contextualising that for our Australian context, it is like standing at Cameron Corner with one foot in New South Wales, another in Queensland, and reaching out to touch South Australia. Wright comments that although you climb the mountain from one county, or arrive at Cameron Corner driving in one state, it is possible to arrive at the same point from two other directions. Wright argues that it is the same for Pauline studies with the three states/counties being, Second Temple Judaism, the Hellenistic culture of the first century, and the Roman Imperial context. In order for a balanced view of Paul’s writings and theology these three contexts need to be taken into consideration.

Clearly, Wright’s Fresh Perspective is taking the New Perspective and allowing the Roman imperial context to be brought to bear on it. More recently Wright in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* has fully explains this understanding of a diverse Paul.

The question becomes, is it a valid distinction to separate the political context from the cultural context? It has only been as recent as the eighteenth century CE that church and state become separate entities, mainly due to the bourgeois revolutions. These revolutions led to the agreement that both jurisdictions would not to interfere in the others area of influence. Horsley argues that this had the effect of Christian theology and biblical studies primarily focussing on religious affairs and neglecting the political and economic dimensions of the

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biblical account.\textsuperscript{14} This separation has been reversed to some extent with the advent of post-colonial and other alternate readings of the text.

Horsley argues that based on its nineteenth century foundations, and the historical critical method, New Testament studies, and particularly Pauline studies have focussed on a Christianity developing as a purely spiritual religion from the parochial and often overtly political religion of Judaism.\textsuperscript{15} The question then becomes, why has little work been done in analysing the Pauline correspondence from a political point of view?

The underlying view of scholarship, as Horsley and others in the Paul and Politics Group would see it, is that:

“Imperial politics were seen as framing the historical context or ‘background’ of the period of Christian origins, in the persecution of Judaism by Antiochus Epiphanes and the Roman destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. But Jesus and especially Paul were by definition concerned about religious matters, not politics.”\textsuperscript{16}

Other disciplines have increasingly become aware of the need to consider the imperial context and relations, mostly due to the influence of non-Western intellectuals. Old Testament scholars have engaged in how other imperial powers of the time have influenced the accounts of their text.\textsuperscript{17} While New Testament scholars have paid less attention to this area of study, this is beginning to change and a number of studies are starting to emerge.\textsuperscript{18} However, little attention has been

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Horsley, Richard A. Paul and Empire. Harrisburg, Penn: Trinity, 1997, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{17} An example of the post-colonial readings on the Old Testament is Kari Latvus' Decolonizing Yahweh: A Postcolonial Reading of 2 Kings 24-25 in The Postcolonial Biblical Reader (ed RS. Sugirtharajah ;New Jersey: Blackwell, 2006).
\item \textsuperscript{18} Examples of emerging New Testament studies into the influence of Empire on the text can be seen in Ched Meyers Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus (New York: Orbis, 1989), Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther's Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now (New York: Orbis, 1999) and Fernando Sergovia and R.S. Sugirtharajah's (eds) Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings(London: T&T Clark, 2007).
\end{itemize}
devoted to the Roman imperial context of Paul’s mission,\textsuperscript{19} even though it forms a major part of the background of the mission. One possible reason for this is that by the end of the first century CE to the middle of the second, Christian apologists were at pains to show that this newly formed religion was not at odds with the Roman imperial order, but actually an exemplar of the imperial order.

It has been argued by some classical historians that the emperor cult was actually the means by which the power of the empire was manifested. This presents a challenge for those scholars, such as Koester,\textsuperscript{20} who see the emperor cult merely was a manner of expressing another imperial title, and that the emperor cult not developing into any sort of significant religion.\textsuperscript{21}

The Roman imperial patronage system formed one of the most powerful and determinative conditions on the Pauline mission. The extremely hierarchical system with its focus in the royal family and local administration was a sharp contrast to the horizontal reciprocal relations of the assemblies that Paul was travelling around the ancient world establishing.\textsuperscript{22}

Stendahl exposed the “introspective” Augustinian and Lutheran formulations of this understanding of Paul. The New Perspective scholars "following in Stendahl's footsteps," as Horsley describes them, used this new interpretive framework to deconstruct the, mainly German, Lutheran theological construction of Paul as the hero of justification by faith versus works righteousness. This “new perspective” was not a significant shift in that it still focussed on the view that Paul was establishing a new religion, Christianity, over and against his

\textsuperscript{19} Seyoon Kim's Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) focuses on the antithesis between the Kingdom of God and the Roman Empire as alternative authority structures.


\textsuperscript{21} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 4.

\textsuperscript{22} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 5.
previous religion of Judaism.\textsuperscript{23}

Paul has been understood primarily as the paradigmatic individual who underwent a conversion from Judaism to Christianity and, in that connection, as the first great Christian theologian who articulated the tortured transition of \textit{homo religiosus} from justification by works to justification through faith. During the last generation this view of Paul has undergone severe criticism and deconstruction.\textsuperscript{24}

Recent studies in Pauline terms such as “salvation”, “gospel” and “the cross/crucifixion” standing over and against the imperial cult have meant that a re-evaluation of what Paul actually stood against is underway.\textsuperscript{25} Paul’s opposition to Judaism has been challenged by these studies in the use of imperial salvation language, as well as studies in epistles, particularly Romans 9-11. Resulting in Horsley stating,

Paul’s gospel announced doom and destruction not on Judaism, or the Law, but on the ‘powers of this age’. Given the Roman imperial context of Paul’s mission it is not difficult to draw the implications.\textsuperscript{26}

The term Paul uses for communities of believers, \textit{ἐκκλησία}, was primarily a political term for the citizens assembly of the Greek city-state. But as stated previously politics and religion were hard to separate, and so the Greek \textit{ἐκκλησία} were both political and religious. Paul’s use of this term, Horsley argues, is to be taken in both senses of the word.\textsuperscript{27}

The communities that Paul established around Greece and Asia Minor were alternative societies. Paul insisted that these societies were exclusive communities, open to recruiting from the local setting, but not participating in the imperial society in which they were present.\textsuperscript{28} For Horsley, “... in his mission Paul was building an international alternative society (“the assembly”) based in local egalitarian

\textsuperscript{23} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 5.
\textsuperscript{24} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 5.
\textsuperscript{26} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 6.
\textsuperscript{27} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 8.
\textsuperscript{28} Horsley, Paul & Empire, 8.
communities (“assemblies”).”

John Barclay has been one of the leading scholars that has questioned the approach of the Paul and Politics Group. Barclay asserts that although he believes that Paul’s theology is not apolitical his thesis is that to give politics prominence in Pauline theology is to misconstrue the way that Paul addressed not only the political but all dimensions of human life. One of Barclay’s greatest disagreements with the political focus to Pauline studies is that the broad definition of politics in the debate can be confusing. Both sides of the debate use the terms “politics” and “political” across a spectrum, from the narrow description of politics as statecraft to the extremely broad politics as communal organisation or the exercise of social power.

Barclay sees the debate as being rooted in Adolf Deissmann’s thesis in *Light from the Ancient East* where he states that the polemical parallelism exists between the cults of emperor and Christ. Barclay states that Deissmann noted in his work that there was much commonality in vocabulary between terms used by the early Christian communities and those of the imperial cult. Barclay then sees that in the 1980’s Deissmann’s work was reopened to political interpretation by both Klaus Wengst and, especially Dieter Georgi, who presented Paul’s theology as a direct antithesis to Roman ideology.

Barclay acknowledges that Deissmann believed that Paul and the first Christians were influenced by “the minds of those in the great cities,” and thus New Testament scholars have underestimated the importance of Roman politico-religious features for the first Christians. For Barclay, Deissmann’s

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29 Horsley, Paul & Empire, 8.
31 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 363.
32 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 364.
33 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 364.
34 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 366.
historical research was then used as a second crucial step in this antithesis to Roman ideology. That is to say that if the gospel preaches peace, this is directly counter to the imperial gospel where the empire sought to pacify the first century world.35

Barclay identifies that many who argue for a reading of Paul that takes this into account sit on a broad spectrum from the imperial cult being just one characteristic of a broad oppressive ideology opposed by Paul, to others who see it as the main point Paul was arguing against, to others who see it as encompassed in Paul’s broader argument with regard to idolatry. For Barclay, Wright sees it as the central focus of Paul’s argument.36

Barclay rightly asserts that the anti-imperial interpretation where Paul’s polemics are directed against imperial power, rather than against ‘Judaism’ offers a fresh framework in interpreting Pauline literature beyond both the traditional and ‘new’ perspective. This reading challenges the modern distinction whereby religion and politics are separated and distinct.37 Barclay warns that this type of reading needs to be careful of distortions that can arise in situating Paul’s theological politics within the shape of our own understanding of politics. He states, “... if there is a danger of modernisation it is separating ‘religion’ from ‘politics,’ there is also a danger of allowing the fusion of these domains to be governed by modern expectations and perceptions.”38 In summary Barclay’s position on Wright39 can be expressed as:

1 the pervasiveness of the Imperial cult in the first century was extensive, and due to this,

2 Wright sees plenty of ‘echoes of Roman imperial ideology in the vocabulary of Paul,

35 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 366.
36 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 367.
37 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 367.
38 Barclay, Pauline Churches, 367.
3 the message of Paul could therefore not but be construed as counter-imperial and as such subversive to the Roman Empire,

4 Barclay states the Wright detects echoes of Caesar throughout the Pauline text and that,

5 Wright highlights that the Caesar-cult is a form of paganism and thus the target of much of Paul’s polemics,

6 thus Paul’s reaction to empire is consistent with a Jewish reaction to paganism,

7 meaning that for Paul’s intended audience the Lordship of Christ is the key point of contact as allegiance to God/Christ is counter to an allegiance to imperial worship, and because of this,

8 as Wright has not presented Paul as opposed to every aspect of Empire Wright can present the contentious Rom 13:1-7 passage as a Jewish picture of submission to authorities whilst presenting a critique of it.  

Barclay does not see this as significant for Paul in his dealing with the churches he established across the ancient world and responds to Wright by arguing that his portrayal of Paul’s perception of Rome and impact on the nascent communities of Christ followers is at odds with his understanding of their concerns. Secondly, that Wright makes too much significance of the interpretation of parallel terminology. Thirdly, he states that by using the reading strategies that he proposes Wright is reading between the lines on many occasions. And finally, that he cannot hold Wright position of Paul’s theopolitical construct of conflicting powers between the Imperial and the nascent church.  

Whilst Barclay makes many good points in his case to show that the Roman empire was “insignificant” to Paul, he does down play the obvious foreground of Empire and its constructs that Wright emphasises. Although both scholars are not at the extremes of the debate this summary of their

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41 Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 373.
positions demonstrates that there may be potential for a position in the middle, which presently neither scholar seems willing to accept.

**Methodology**

From a survey of just some of the literature that is available on the 1 Cor 9:19-23 and other discussion of Pauline interpretation it can be seen that the present interpretive framework follows a steady development. The New Perspective added to the traditional post-Reformation view of Paul and started to seriously consider the Judaic interpretive questions a study of the Pauline Literature asks. The Paul in Politics Group is now pushing the point about whether an empire based interpretive framework has been missing from the current analysis of Pauline passages. And scholars like John Barclay are pushing back arguing that this interpretive framework is going too far.

Some passages lend themselves to such a political analysis. However it is the intent of this research to establish whether it is possible to create a multi-dimensional interpretive framework in which to analyse any Pauline passage, whereby aspects of the analysis of Jewish, Hellenistic and Roman contexts are held together in tension. It is this holding together of sometimes conflicting positions in tension that leads to a deeper understanding of the passage.

The passage from 1 Cor 9:19-23 has been chosen specifically due to the fact that it is a missiological passage that is used often by Christians and “on face value” contains limited, if any, political overtones with which to analyse. The starting point for this investigation comes from Richard Horsley when he states in *Paul and Politics*:

While some still read Paul through the lens of Lutheran theology, it is becoming increasingly clear that, in anticipation of the termination of ‘this evil age’ at the parousia of Christ, Paul was energetically establishing εἰκόνες αὐτοῦ among the nations that were alternatives to official ‘assemblies’ of cities such as Thessalonica, Phillipi, and Corinth. As expressed in the
baptismal formula Paul quotes in Gal. 3:28, the principal social divisions of
“this world ... that is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:29, 31) were overcome in
these communities of the nascent alternative society: 'There is no longer
Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or
female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.'.

Paul’s discourse with the Corinthian Church is a power discourse, a
political discourse, and this needs to be taken into account when analysing any
Corinthian passage. Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, in an article in Paul and
Politics, states that it is the interpretive framework of “otherness” that a
political interpretation opens to the exegete. The multi-dimensional
interpretive task will thus investigate whether it is possible to move from the
sideline such reading strategies as post-colonialism, spatial interpretation and
economic interpretation. These as representative of "others" focussed reading
strategies will be brought into the centre and held in tension so as to become a
part of a reshaped interpretative process in a constructive manner. This thesis
will seek to determine whether the mainstream historical-critical method can be
reconstructed by the inclusion of these reading strategies.

If, as Horsley suggests, Paul’s mission was the establishment of alternate
assemblies, we should be able to find evidence of this in his missional activity.
First Corinthians 9:19-23 has been described as Paul’s “missionary maxim,”
and so this dissertation will explore the evidence to determine whether a thesis can
be developed around the idea that Paul’s missionary strategy was indeed creating
“alternate assemblies” to the emperor worshipping gatherings prevalent across the
Empire at the time. This thesis will be analysed using a multi-dimensional

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42 Horsley, Paul & Empire, 1.
43 Horsley, Paul & Empire, 4.
44 Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, “Paul and the Politics of Interpretation” in Paul and Politics,
45 The historical-critical method is that hermeneutical method for the understanding of
particular biblical passages whereby the text is questioned on the basis of historical, literary, textual,
grammatical, and theological background.
interpretive approach that was in some way proposed by Wright. It will take the Cameron Corner analogy loosely and determine whether the complementary reading strategies is one of universal application in Pauline Studies.

The implications for missiology are far reaching, because if this thesis is able to be sustained it then means that issues such as social justice and holistic mission would be seen as the basis of Paul's missionary endeavour. The implications of this change could be a challenge for the church in that it will reconstruct how it is to see mission and its mission activities. This will be the first study of 1 Cor 9:19-23 that will use a political/imperial reading. Previous studies have looked at the passage from a New Perspective point of view, which this research will use as platform with which to base the main focus of this study.

The method used to examine critically these questions just raised will be to undertake an exegetical study of 1 Cor 9:19-23 using the historical critical method. Associated with this study will be an in depth word study of some key words from the passage, the words being: κερδαίνω, ἐλευθερία, and ἀσθενής. These words are important concepts in understanding this passage and our in depth study of them will become illuminating as a background to this thesis.

The exegetical study using the historical critical method that is the standard in the discipline of Biblical studies will then itself be questioned. Some of the questions left unanswered or partially answered by the literature review involves the question of historical background and its influence on the interpretation of not only this passage, but many, not only within the Corinthian correspondence, but across the whole of the Pauline corpus. The exegetical study and the word study will form Chapter 2 of the thesis. The exegetical study will lead naturally to an examination of the three influences that lie behind Pauline thought as outlined below.
The literature survey has shown that currently there are two schools of thinking on the influence on Pauline thought found in 1 Cor 9:19-23. This thesis is attempting to outline a third and to present a framework under which this third area of analysis can be used. Chapter 3 will propose a political reading of 1 Cor 9:19-23 including a discussion on the limit of the term politics in this thesis. Using the scholars discussed above and with the addition of other voices the objections and acceptance of a political reading will be discussed. One of the areas to be addressed is that whether the main phrase of “all things to all people” in the passage comes from Rabbinic teachings, contemporary to Paul, and the concept of “accommodation” in the context of proselytising is the background to this phrase. This will also examine whether Paul remained Torah-observant and how this might affect our interpretation. It will also lead to a discussion about whether this practice could be described in some sense as "political."

The chapter will also examine whether the main influence in the passage comes from Hellenistic literary construction of rhetoric, particularly the deliberative form. As was shown in the literature review many people coming from a point of view of looking at the Hellenistic background of this passage have started discussing the "political" use of some of the key words. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate this link that leads to the formation of a political reading.

Chapter 4 will then hold the three identified influences in tension to determine whether a new interpretive framework can be established. That is whether a rhetorically “salvation” arguing evangelist, a Torah-observant accommodating Jew, and a political “norm” challenging man of his time can be held together, or are they mutually exclusive. The "Cameron Corner" interpretive framework, whereby Paul is able to stand in three states at once will then be extrapolated to determine whether the modern reader needs to “stand at Cameron
Corner” in order to gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the passage. This chapter will outline this author's understanding of the passage that has been developed through this study, whilst also discussing the viability of multiple perspectives of Interpretation and unity. An account of how the interpretive framework leads to the application of the concept of “all things to all people” can be applied in contemporary mission will be outlined.

Finally conclusions, including a description of the three-fold interpretive method, implications and other areas of investigation arising from this study will be outlined in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 2

WHAT DO THE COMMENTATORS SAY AND WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?
AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-23

Situating the Passage Narratively

The question of where does this passage come in relation to the whole work is one of the contentious issues that scholars debate for this passage. Those such as Lockwood and Sampley¹ and refer to the whole of chapter 9 being an excursus in the rhetoric of Chapters 8-11. Others such as Stephen Barton argue that this passage is not an excursus, loosely related to the argument about eating meat sacrificed to idols, but rather an integral part of the argument to persuade the “strong” of Corinth to give up their freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols for the sake of the “weak”.² Blomberg sees that passage as part of Paul’s larger discussion of morally neutral matters found from chapters 5 through to 11.³

For Barton, Paul’s positive example in chapter 9 is then contrasted with a


negative example from the history of Israel. It has been noted that chapter 9 functions in relation to chapters 8 and 10 in the same manner that chapter 13, the so-called Love Chapter, does for chapters 12 and 14. Upon closer examination Barton’s hypothesis appears to be plausible, and so it is possible to state that this passage is just one small part of the argument of chapters 8-11. Margaret Mitchell would stretch this even further in saying that it is just one of the arguments against factionalism that 1 Cor is trying to address.

Thiselton describes 9:19-23 as the rhetorical climax to the argument of the chapter (9:1-18). Thiselton suggests that these verses form the rhetorical climax to ch. 9 and confirm that this chapter is not a digression on the subject of apostleship. Thiselton has demonstrated that whereas the first 18 verses focus on strategy using Paul’s personal example of foregoing his “apostolic right” the verses under study demonstrates a solidarity with “the other” as the focus of the gospel. Concern for “the weak” is the profound pastoral and missional strategy that lies at the heart of, and is the very nature of Paul’s gospel.

Thiselton summarising Glad argues that 1 Cor 9:19-23 combines two distinct aspects of strategy and stance. Firstly it recognises the need for flexible and adaptive approaches to others, a familiar strategy of educators or “wise people” in the Graeco-Roman world. And secondly a challenge for the “strong” to act like the “wise” and allow their own concern for self-affirmation and freedom to be subject to concerns of the “weak.”

Paul Sampley writes that the “dominant motif” of the passage is κερδαίνω, “winning” or “gaining” people for the gospel and it is Paul’s

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4 Barton, “All Things,” 273
7 Thiselton, First Epistle, 698f.
8 Thiselton, First Epistle, 699.
discussion about this evangelistic task that this passage is examining. The implications of the use of κερδαίνω will be examined further when we look at some significant words in the passage later in this exegesis.

The question of the progression of thought in the passage is an important one, but for this passage it is strongly linked to stylistic issues and so will be discussed later. Paul’s statement of his missionary strategy “has an opportunistic sound that seems to be determined by tactical considerations, especially when read in context, and it is to that context that we know turn.”

Situating the Passage Historically.

The first thing to note is what was happening in the house churches of Corinth. It is accepted that the Christian community in Corinth were struggling with a number of issues that were dividing the church. These issues were varied, some along racial lines, whether they were Jew or Gentile, others along the right way to worship, and still others on which person has the authority to instruct the church.

Paul is attempting to stave off the disintegration of the Christian community at Corinth, he is engaged in politics as the “father” of this community. And so it is generally accepted that this letter was written around 53-54CE, and has as a background to it the practices of Second Temple Judaism. Horsley helpfully reminds us that the only way to understand the context of Paul’s Corinthian mission is through the understanding that at Corinth Paul encountered a Hellenistic urban ethos fully assimilated into the Roman imperial order.

Margaret Mitchell in her work Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation describes the whole of 1 Corinthians as being a polemic against factionalism in the Corinth house churches, of which the different problems are just symptomatic of

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this turmoil. One of the important background issues is this fractured church that Paul had established and he now corresponds with in order to encourage them to act as intended. In this sense it is a political letter.

Another of the important background ideas that the passage assumes, is a knowledge of the practice known as accommodation. This was a technique that many rabbis used in order to make proselytes. It is not surprising that Paul, a Pharisee by training, would know of this practice and use this practice for encouraging people to hear and respond to the gospel. Accommodation was whereby a rabbi would accept a Gentile into the faith if the potential proselyte could accept a certain subset of Jewish beliefs. For some rabbis assent to just one of the tenets of the Jewish faith would be enough. For other rabbis it may have been a whole group of beliefs before the person was accepted into the Jewish faith. Daube has ascribed to the rabbi Hillel the principle “when you enter a city, follow its customs”. Accommodation here is not only a theological principle, but also a missiological principle.

Conzelmann agrees with Daube in that there are inherent in this text ideas of Jewish self-humiliation and accommodation. The concept that Paul has accommodated himself to the Jews runs contrary to not only the decision of the Apostolic Council recorded in Gal 2:9, but also the position stated by Paul as recorded in Gal 2:5 that to be a Jew was to be under the Law. FF. Bruce states that although feeling no obligation to comply with Jewish ceremonies and regulations Paul did not regard these as forbidden to the Christian. Paul beginning with the

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17 Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 160.
Jews sought to “win many” to this nascent Christ following community. Paul’s strategy was to begin with the Jews first due to the implications that come with salvation history and because for Paul this was the most logical place to start.\(^\text{19}\)

Paul then turned to living like a Gentile with the aim of winning Gentiles by conforming to their way of life\(^\text{20}\). This idea may not have been totally Jewish however. Glad notes that it was common in Graeco-Roman world for the “wise” to recognize the need for flexibility and adaptability in the education of their students and so Glad argues that here Paul is challenging the “strong” to be like the “wise” and assume an attentive approach to the “weak” in regard to their attitudes to self-affirmation and freedom\(^\text{21}\)

Conzelmann states that Paul’s argument as to how he is able to participate in Jewish dietary practices without also encouraging that the law is “the way of salvation” hinges on the way that he uses ὡς (meaning “like”) and μὴ ὁν σῶτος ὑπὸ νόμον (meaning “although I am not myself under the law”).\(^\text{22}\) It is interesting to note that Conzelmann’s pre-New Perspective idea is still one of the ways that this passage is interpreted today. However, others like Barrett provide a corrective in that they see Paul as “Christ’s law abiding one” (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ) meaning that he can adopt his varying attitude because he recognises a greater debt to God than legalism provides.\(^\text{23}\)

Paul may well have claimed that his faith and practice “were what Judaism had always been intended to be”, although “conformity to the social and religious customs of his environment” would have been somewhat acceptable this may have been the tension point that caused the break between Jewish and Christian

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\(^{19}\) Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 160.

\(^{20}\) Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 87.


\(^{22}\) Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 160.

Although Paul understood that he no longer lived under the law of Moses, but rather Christ he was happy enough to live under the condition of the law when living among people who held these beliefs. It is easy to see how the claim that Paul was an opportunist may have arisen because of this ministry practice.

Ciampa and Rosner sum it up well when they state:

“Paul’s ability to adapt his life and culture according to the context in which he worked would have been strategic not only for the initial communication of the gospel but also for the ability of his converts to understand what it would look like for them to become members of Christ’s body”.

Although Paul is a Jew by heritage and ethnicity, he no longer understands himself to be part of Judaism, if that is defined by an adherence to the Mosaic covenant.

For Conzelmann this passage shows that the accommodation that Paul practises is toward the two classes of mankind from the Jewish standpoint.

Ciampa and Rosner argue that Paul is not calling here for a utilitarian culture in which all diversity is eliminated, but actually a diverse body of many cultures brought together by Christ. Paul must direct the Corinthians’ obedience in the way of Christ, but without making a replacement for the law to become a new law. Reflecting on the history of Christianity shows just how dangerous this was.

Although Paul accommodates the cultures in which he seeks to minister these are moderated so that he does not cross over into syncretism. When with Jews or God-fearers although outwardly he acts culturally relevantly, he knows that it is not through the observance of the law that he is justified. Similarly, he adds a comment about the moderation of his cultural relevance when with

24 Barrett, First Corinthians, 215.
26 Ciampa, and Rosner, First Letter, 425.
27 Ciampa, and Rosner, First Letter, 426.
28 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 160.
non-Jews, not straying into paganism, but acknowledging that he is bound by Christ’s law.\textsuperscript{31} This is important as it demonstrates that Paul accepted there was a “boundedness” to his freedom. It can be seen that the concept of “accommodation” is important in understanding and interpreting this passage.

The concept of slavery is another issue that is important to the analysis of this passage. In the first century slaves were common, and not all slaves lived in poor circumstances. Many officials within the Roman government were actually slaves. This is actually where the phrase “servant of the crown” that is associated with public servants these days.\textsuperscript{32} These servants or slaves would often have their own slaves and so were often wealthy people themselves, they had just been sold as a slave to the king or other high placed official. Although this was common practice in the early first century the taking of a lower station in life was not seen as a virtue.\textsuperscript{33} The challenge that we have as modern interpreters is that our view of slavery is clouded by the African slaves of the 1700 and 1800’s. The slave-free dualism was a basic of Roman society, just as the Jew-Gentile dualism was to Jewish thought.\textsuperscript{34} Rosner and Ciampa quote Wiedemann\textsuperscript{35} in stating that in the Ancient world the dualism of slave and free was a very natural way of dividing up the human race, just as natural as male and female and young and old.\textsuperscript{36}

Quoting Wiedemann again, Rosner and Ciampa state that the relationship between being a slave and becoming like them would have been clear to the Corinthians as a slave had no rights from their former society and no claims on the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{29}{Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 426.}
\footnotetext{30}{Barrett, \textit{First Corinthians}, 214.}
\footnotetext{32}{Martin, Dale B. \textit{Slavery as Salvation}. London: Yale University Press, 1990.}
\footnotetext{33}{Martin, \textit{Slavery}, 135.}
\footnotetext{34}{Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 421.}
\footnotetext{35}{Thomas Wiedemann, \textit{Greek and Roman Slavery}, (London: Routledge, 1981),15.}
\footnotetext{36}{Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 421.}
\end{footnotes}
society that maintained him.\textsuperscript{37} “The slave’s cultural adaptability is a reflection of the requirement of their life situation, the fact that Paul sees himself having to adjust to whatever cultural context he might minister within … reflects the transcendent identity flowing from his participation in a greater reality …”.\textsuperscript{38} By being a slave to all Paul continues to turn around the values of the first century. He is in essence making slavery a position of influence. This ties in with his earlier theme of the inversion of values when discussing the wisdom of the cross and the wisdom of the world.\textsuperscript{39}

Another area of enquiry consequential is that of imperial worship and the pervasiveness of the empire into Corinth. The city of Corinth was a diverse one, with a mix of indigenous Greek religion and emperor worship. Just as these two religions were interwoven so to was religious life and the political-economic institutions and practices that supported and maintained them.\textsuperscript{40} Only recently have scholars begun to realise how important the emperor cult was in cities such as Corinth.\textsuperscript{41} Archaeologists have found that whilst the old civic centre may still have been operating as a commercial area, there was a newly constructed temple in the west end of the agora that honoured the emperor and it was here that a new centre for political and commercial activity was established. This area was also central to most of the public life of the city.\textsuperscript{42}

Whether or not residents of Corinth participated in an active way in the emperor cult, the imperial presence surrounded them when participating in public life.\textsuperscript{43} Due to the fact that imperial power was exercised through the strong patronal relations and ceremonies in Corinth, Horsley asserts that the key role in the

\textsuperscript{37} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 424.
\textsuperscript{38} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 425.
\textsuperscript{39} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 422.
\textsuperscript{40} Horsley, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 27–28.
\textsuperscript{41} Horsley, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 27.
\textsuperscript{42} Horsley, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 27.
patron-client system was played by the provincial elite. Family distinction and wealth thus formed the basis of this system. In Corinth where freedmen where allowed to hold office competition for the regional power and honour ensued.\textsuperscript{44}

It has been shown that underlying 1 Cor 9:19-23 is a diverse historical context that needs to be understood and acknowledged as we endeavour to interpret this passage.

**The Importance of Words.**

The word κερδάω is a word that comes more from commerce than the sporting or warfare arena. Although translated by most translators as “win”, it has at its root the idea of receiving a profit, or some sort of gain from an activity. It was not uncommon to find the word “win” referring in a Jewish context to the principle known as accommodation.\textsuperscript{45} In one sense it was considered a gain when more converts were made due to the fact that the act of self-renunciation had resulted in advantage.\textsuperscript{46} The word κερδάω reflects a Jewish usage and Jewish ministry practice where the place of accommodation, service and humility are seen as methods of evangelism, though not to the extent that the radical Paul displays.\textsuperscript{47} The verb κερδώνω is used for winning non-Christians and is synonymous with “conversion.”\textsuperscript{48} The question is then raised how does one win those who are weak in the faith?\textsuperscript{49} A more detailed word study will follow in this chapter where this question will be answered.

It is interesting to note the use of the categories “those under the law” and “those outside the law”. Some commentators make unique distinction of Jews being

\textsuperscript{43} Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 27.
\textsuperscript{44} Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 26.
\textsuperscript{45} Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 211.
\textsuperscript{46} Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 702.
\textsuperscript{47} Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 211.
\textsuperscript{49} Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 433.
those in the faith by birth, “those under the law” being another way of referring to
God-fearers, and “those outside the law” referring to Gentiles.50 Others scholars
such as Paul Sampley51 see the construct of “those under the law’ as just another
way of saying Jews and that they sit together as a couplet in which to emphasise the
argument that Paul is making. The same applies for gentiles and those “outside the
law”. We will see below that this possibly relates more to style and rhetorical
convention than it does to meaning, as Collins points out in neither of the social
worlds in which Paul lives is he under the law.52

The word ἐλεύθερος translated “free” by most translators is found in a
prominent and emphatic position at the start of the sentence that is this passage.
Wright states that Paul returns to this theme by pointing out, again in order to serve
as an example to them, that he is ‘free’ in all the important senses, but has made
himself ‘slave of all’, again for the sake of the gospel.53 His overall point is to help
the church at Corinth see that Christian freedom is not freedom to do what you like,
but freedom from all the things that stop you being the person God really wants you
to be, which is freedom for the service of God and the gospel.54

In using this word in the emphatic position Paul is challenging the
Corinthians who have been misusing their freedom by demonstrating that it is the
same freedom that Paul uses.55 It is interesting to note that Martin Luther in his
work the Liberty of a Christian Man states “A Christian man is a most free lord of
all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”56
And so there is a vein of rich interpretive history when the word free and freedom

50 Thiselton, First Epistle, 703–4.
54 Wright, 1 Corinthians, 114.
55 Orr, William F, and James Arthur Walther. 1 Corinthians: A New Translation. New York:
appear in this passage. It is this freedom in Christ that Paul has been arguing about throughout the whole of chapter 9.

For Barrett one of the important phrases is καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς ... ὡς. Barrett states that Paul could become a Jew only if having been a Jew he ceased to be to become something else.\(^{57}\) To be a Jew is to be under the law and related to God in legal terms. Paul no longer sees his relationship to God in this manner, rather he is related through Christ.\(^{58}\) The linguistic difficulty of the discussion on the law in verses 20 and 21 is really to do with a theological difficulty with this many-sided and complex formulation of what the constitutes the law.\(^{59}\) This is further complicated by the fact that to win Jews seems to mean Paul conducted a mission to Jews, which as stated previously is contrary to the account in Acts and Gal.\(^{60}\)

It has been shown that through the careful examination of some important words our understanding of 1 Cor 9:19-23 is enhanced.

**Any External Influences.**

Already in this exegesis we have seen that Paul was making an argument to encourage the “strong” Christians in Corinth to make some accommodation for the weak so that they may be won for the cause of Christ. Some scholars say that this is an example of Paul’s used of deliberative rhetoric, where he is trying to persuade his readers to accept his argument.\(^{61}\) Although we have recognized that there are repetitions to be found in the text, we have already discussed how they are more stylistic than evidence that Paul has used a number of sources in the construction of this passage.

This passage is part of a distinct form and does follow the accepted pattern

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56 Luther, M cited in Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians*. 86.
57 Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 211.
58 Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 212.
60 Barrett, *First Corinthians*, 211.
for deliberative rhetoric, whereby the author is arguing from a position of influence and trying to strongly encourage his readers to take on the point of view being discussed. The passage under study presents a climax to that argument over chapters 8 and 9 and could be considered poetic in the manner that the couplets are linked together\textsuperscript{62} to create this climax.

**An Interesting Style.**

Collins identifies an inclusion as the means by which Paul communicates his message. It features the double use of “all” in verse 19b and 22b. Grammatically the unit is characterized by seven purpose clauses of which six are parallel to each other:

“… to all,
so that I might win over many more
for the Jews I have become as a Jew
so that I might win over Jews
for those under the law as one under the law […]
so that I might win over those under the law
for those outside the law as one outside the law […]
so that I might win over those outside the law.
for the weak I have become weak
so that I might win over the weak
to all people I have become all things
so that I might surely save some.”\textsuperscript{63}

Others see each couplet as talking about the same group of people, equating the Jews and those under the law, and those outside the law, the Gentiles equated with the weak. A structure such as this can be described as a chiasm, with the two Greek words \(\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma\) (“free”) and \(\epsilon\delta\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omega\sigma\alpha\) (“I enslave myself”) beginning and ending the clause creating the chiastic structure.\textsuperscript{64}

Ciampa and Rosner state that:

“The parallel between 9:19-22 and 10:32-33 leads to the possibility that

\textsuperscript{61}Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 698.
\textsuperscript{62}Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 698.
\textsuperscript{63}Collins, *First Corinthians*, 350.
\textsuperscript{64}Ciampa, and Rosner, *First Letter*, 421.
Paul’s categories here reflect those given in 10:32, where he appeals to the Corinthians to avoid giving offense to Jews, Greeks [Gentiles], or the church of God, with the weak referred to in ch. 8 being part of the church of God most likely offended by the rest of the Corinthians.  

Ciampa and Rosner argue that the chiastic structure proposed by some may be flawed as nowhere in the letter are the weak and Jews seen as antitheses of each other. They propose an ABCA’ structure where the usual B and C and C’ and B’ are combined. Whichever position you hold on the chiasm it can be agreed with Conzelmann that verses 20-23 form a unity in style and content. The rhetorical parallelism of the passage can obscure the fact that while consistent in intent as an expression of his freedom and faith it is different in practice.

These stylistic issues help us to begin to understand special emphases of Paul. As a Jew he would have seen the world as characterised as being either Jew or Gentile. This helps us to understand that Paul is not talking about accommodating others for any sake, but just to win them for Christ. Some have argued that this passage means that as a follower of Christ they can do whatever it takes to see people come believers, in some cases relinquishing beliefs or values, anything for the cause. By carefully seeing that Paul is just grouping people into standard groups rather than advocating any and all tactics to evangelise certain groups of people.

The Current Understanding of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

As we have seen 1 Cor 9:19-23 is the culmination of the argument of chapter 9 where Paul has been discussing what the response to freedom in Christ should be for the Corinth church. He has used a principle of evangelism that was common in the Jewish faith, the principle of accommodating people for the sake of prosteletysing them. For Bruce Paul is relating that his dedication is to the higher

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good in practising accommodation as a strategy for evangelism.\textsuperscript{69} This echoes the language of Jesus in Mark 10:45 and Luke 22:7.

It is interesting to note that for Paul this accommodation for the gospel does not become a loss of identity\textsuperscript{70} but rather a means to which the “strong” can come alongside the “weak” and encourage, and exhort the “weak” to come to a new position of understanding. He conforms to the customs of the people he is with, in this case the context of food offered to idols, but it could be anything that is indifferent, in order to put no obstacle in the way of “winning” them for the gospel.\textsuperscript{71} “All things to all people” has to do with evangelism, it means going to people, where they are and on their own terms, he does not ask them to come to him. But importantly it does not require Paul to give up or lose his important beliefs.\textsuperscript{72} Paul accommodates his style of living, not his ethical or theological position.\textsuperscript{73} This is what this passage has been encouraging the church at Corinth to consider and follow. In the company of Jews although not constrained by the dietary laws he maintained them out of consideration although persuaded that all foods were declared clean.\textsuperscript{74} The phrases ὡς Ἰουδαῖος and ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον are especially revealing of Paul’s theology of the new creation: “Since Paul was in fact a Jew, this formulation shows how radically he conceives the claim that in Christ he is … in a position transcending all cultural allegiances.”\textsuperscript{75}

For Ciampa and Rosner the first three examples defines the most basic differences to those groups in which that Paul ministers - Jews, by birth or choice, and Gentiles. The fourth group is chosen due to the context of the passage and

\begin{itemize}
  \item Conzelmann, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 160.
  \item Bruce, \textit{1 & 2 Corinthians}, 86.
  \item Sampley, “First Letter,” 908.
  \item Bruce, \textit{1 & 2 Corinthians}, 86.
  \item Sampley, “First Letter,” 911.
  \item Lockwood, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 211.
  \item Bruce, \textit{1 & 2 Corinthians}, 87.
\end{itemize}
Paul’s discussion on food offered to idols. The later two categories can be considered Gentile categories.\textsuperscript{76}

The need for restraint, sensitivity, and a measure of accommodation may be demanded by a given calling, sometimes even contrary to a person’s own cultural background and traditions.\textsuperscript{77} This “adaptability and versatility” appeared as inconsistency to Paul’s critics and thus the phrase “all things to all people” has become one of condemnation rather than praise.\textsuperscript{78}

Whatever the crosscurrents of debate between the more traditional “Lutheran” understandings of Paul on the law and the so-called post-Sanders New Perspective, Hays pinpoints the practical issue:

“being free from the Law does not mean that Paul runs wild with self-indulgence—a word pointedly spoken to the Corinthians who are proclaiming ‘I am free to do anything.’ Instead, he lives with a powerful sense of obligation to God, defined now by his relationship to Christ.”\textsuperscript{79}

Even among those in the Christian community with scruples Paul avoided those things that may have placed a stumbling block to winning them to a better appreciation of Christian liberty.\textsuperscript{80} Paul was “willing to submit to any restriction upon his liberty in the Messiah if it would bring the gospel to more people, and ‘win’ them for God’s kingdom.”\textsuperscript{81}

Wright sums it up with,

“Paul’s rights, his freedoms, are as nothing: what matters is whether people are being won for God, being saved from the corrupting wickedness around and within them, being rescued from darkness and brought onto the light.”\textsuperscript{82}

For Paul his intention is to never lose sight of the priority of reaching others with

\textsuperscript{75} Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 702.
\textsuperscript{76} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 423.
\textsuperscript{77} Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 705.
\textsuperscript{78} Bruce, \textit{1 & 2 Corinthians}, 88.
\textsuperscript{79} Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 704f.
\textsuperscript{80} Bruce, \textit{1 & 2 Corinthians}, 88.
\textsuperscript{81} Wright, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 116.
\textsuperscript{82} Wright, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 117.
the gospel. By stating that he is a slave to all people, Paul is referring to the manner he ministers to different people in different contexts, with verses 20-22 as examples of Paul’s adaptive mission strategy. This passage then demonstrates how Paul has taken over these ideas and modified them for his missionary purpose.

Paul’s strategy for evangelism is to submit to slavery in serving others for the sake of winning as many as possible to Christ, by accommodating his practice to that of the people to whom he is trying to reach. The message remains constant. It is the messenger who must humble themselves, give up their rights, and change his freedom into slavery in order to reach those trying to be evangelised. Although others charged him with inconsistency because of this, Paul states that his inconsistency was actually subjected to a higher consistency which was his apostolic charge “for the sake of the gospel” and the hope of sharing in its blessings.

Collins states that Paul’s argument reflects a rhetorical and political topos that portrays a populist leaders as enslaving themselves to the people they are to lead. Such leaders lower themselves socially. They even change their appearance in order to win the support of the masses. Paul’s πάντων πᾶσιν, (“all things to all people,”) echoes this populist appeal.

Throughout this exegesis it can be seen that there have been hints to the politics of the situation. The occasion of the letter, use of words and the manner that those words have been delivered, all point to a political situation being negotiated here by Paul. Although these hints are present as yet a political reading or

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83 Ciampa, and Rosner, First Letter, 423.
84 Ciampa, and Rosner, First Letter, 423.
85 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 160.
86 Orr, and Walther, 1 Corinthians, 243.
87 Wright, 1 Corinthians, 117.
88 Bruce, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 89.
interpretation of this passage has yet to be undertaken. The question lingers however is there really enough support for a political reading. By further investigating three terms from 1 Cor 9:19-23, it is possible to establish this need. Firstly by looking at the word κερδαίνω we can see that there is a range of possibilities yet to be explored. Then by examining Paul’s use of ἐλεύθερος further possibilities will be examined. And finally, ἀσθενέσιν will be subject to study in order to draw out the political implications of its use.

For the purposes of this thesis it needs to be stated that the widest possible understanding of “politics” is being used. Politics for the purposes of this work refers to the art and science of organising the public space. For the ancients this was possibly best encapsulated in the term πόλις. The πόλις was not just another name for the city. Plato likened the πόλις to the body. When the body is working at its best, when it is being governed at its best the entire community works as a body. When one part suffers it all suffers. This same imagery is used by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of Christ’s body in 1 Cor 12. For the ancient the πόλις was a living organism that was their social, political and religious life.

κερδαίνω: Salvation, Profits or Control

Even from a cursory reading of the passage the reader is struck by the repetition of the word κερδαίνω. It is obvious that one of the important task in trying to establish the meaning of 1 Cor 9:19-23 is to establish the meaning and use of κερδαίνω and how it might be interpreted in this context.

Paul uses the word for ‘win’ five times in this passage, before changing it to ‘save’ in verse 22. The verb “win over”, used by Paul only here and in Phil 3:8 belongs to the semantic domain of “advantage,” an argument used with great

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89 Collins, First Corinthians, 352.
90 Plato, Republic Book V, 462CE.
profit in deliberative rhetoric.\textsuperscript{92}

It is interesting to note that although κερδαίνω and its variants occur 17 times in the NT, it does not appear in the LXX. And so unlike other words that Paul has taken from his Jewish theology, this construct appears to be Paul’s own. Thiselton states that Daube shows that it was probably used as a technical term for “winning a proselyte” in Judaism, but speaks here of the winning of more disciples for the gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{93} Whilst Garland quoting Daube\textsuperscript{94} observes that from contexts where κερδαίνειν is used in the NT for conversion, “they represent humility as an instrument of conversion.” Courtesy towards those one hopes to win is crucial for success.\textsuperscript{95}

Orr and Walther state that “win” in verses 22b-23 show that Paul is here concerned to relate people to the gospel through salvation.\textsuperscript{96} He does this by redefining the word. “Save” is here a synonym for “win”, and actually demonstrates the connotations of what “win” was attempting to imply.\textsuperscript{97} And so Collins is able to state that the reference to salvation in the last of the purpose clauses paraphrases and explains what it is for Paul to win over various people groups.\textsuperscript{98}

On speaking about κερδαίνω Rosner and Ciampa also demonstrate that it corresponds to “saving” although the usual meaning of the word is to “gain, derive profit or advantage” through business of some sort, and so we can see that Paul has may have taken this word from the marketplace.\textsuperscript{99} It is used to denote the gaining of profit or advantage in Matt 18:15 and 1 Pet 3:1. It is interesting to note that Paul

\textsuperscript{91} Wright, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 15.
\textsuperscript{92} Collins, \textit{First Corinthians}, 353.
\textsuperscript{93} Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 701.
\textsuperscript{95} Garland, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 429.
\textsuperscript{96} Orr, and Walther, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 239.
\textsuperscript{97} Garland, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 429; Barrett, \textit{First Corinthians}, 216; Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 705.
\textsuperscript{98} Collins, \textit{First Corinthians}, 356.
\textsuperscript{99} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 423.
does not expect all men to be saved in the sense that he uses the word in verse 22.\textsuperscript{100}

In fulfilling his role as the evangelist he then appropriates the Gospel himself.\textsuperscript{101}

The verb \textit{κερδαίνειν} applies not only to the conversion experience and but also the entry into the community, but it is argued, it can also refer to the “continuing process of winning people from inadequate ideas to a deeper Christian consciousness.”\textsuperscript{102}. The purpose clause “so I might win over many more” is paralleled in Paul’s construction of his argument with the purpose clause in verse 22 “so that I might surely save some.”\textsuperscript{103}

So it can be seen that a great weight of scholars interpret \textit{κερδαίνω} as meaning win people for the gospel, even though the original intention and semantic range of the word came from the background of commerce. Originally the word derived from the commercial background of gaining an asset or making a profit.\textsuperscript{104} It was therefore a word of the Marketplace, the agora. The word’s original semantic range is not so much winning a prize, but making a significant profit on an investment.\textsuperscript{105}

Paul’s profit (\textit{μισθός}) is not a material profit, carrying on the economic theme of \textit{κερδαίνω}, but one of taking the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles.\textsuperscript{106} The metaphor found in 1 Cor 2:12-15 is followed here with regard to the permanent effects of this “gain” based on the notion of restraint for a greater cause. Thiselton argues that this is why \textit{κερδαίνω} is repeated several times in vv. 20-22. Maybe a more careful examination would show that slavery, “the voluntary restraint for

\textsuperscript{100} Barrett, First Corinthians, 216; Thiselton, First Epistle, 701.

\textsuperscript{101} Barrett, First Corinthians, 216.


\textsuperscript{103} Collins, First Corinthians, 350.

\textsuperscript{104} Thiselton, First Epistle, 701.

\textsuperscript{105} Wright, 1 Corinthians, 115.

\textsuperscript{106} Garland, 1 Corinthians, 429.
greater good” ¹⁰⁷ is the defining metaphor of this passage and so an economic analysis of κερδαίνω would be more appropriate.

Paul’s argument about winning or “gaining” all the more converts coheres precisely with Margaret Mitchell’s identification of a rhetorical appeal to “advantage”, again playing on the more general use of the word.¹⁰⁸ And maybe it could be argued that this is the start of an argument about κερδαίνω being used as a method of control.

The concept of “shareholder” although continuing the economic theme of this passage does not bring to bear the full meaning associated with the adjective συγκοινωνός. A more precise translation would convey “an intimate, organic, reproductive sharing which transcends” a commercial or business interest and is better translated “business partner”.¹⁰⁹ And so again does Paul make a word play on this whole economic interpretation of κερδαίνω.

The semantic range of the word κερδαίνω has been extended by Paul to include salvation, and because of that many commentators have fallen into line with this concept and not explored the commercial side of things implied through the word. Later in this thesis the commercial side of the word will be explored through an economic interpretive approach.

**Freedom**

The adjective ἐλεύθερος, is the catchword in sociopolitical and religious aspirations and concerns of the “strong” at Corinth. Paul signals the conclusion of vv. 1–18 by placing “free” as the first emphatic word of vv. 19–23.¹¹⁰ Wright summarises the argument that Cicero stated that Rome was by nature free, and that Rome considered it was sharing the gift of freedom in its conquering of many

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¹⁰⁸ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 702.
¹¹⁰ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 700.
nations and people.\textsuperscript{111} It is interesting that through oppression and subjugation Rome was imparting their gift of freedom to the ancient world.

Rosner and Ciampa make the point that Paul is free from all the obligations as he is no one’s slave or patron, and thus does not belong to anyone.\textsuperscript{112} Yet ἐλεύθερος is so strongly emphatic, we may retain the positive term free to denote the Corinthian catchword taken up by Paul, but also combine it with NJB’s subtle use of the negative \textit{though I was not a slave to any human being, I put myself in slavery to all people}, since this picks up the theme expounded in Martin’s \textit{Slavery as Salvation}\textsuperscript{113} better than most.\textsuperscript{114}

Paul again turns this around, just like he has turned around the meaning of κερδαινω, by choosing to act as a slave to all. A real conundrum. But this is further complicated because he is Christ’s slave, and due to this he does not receive pay and is thereby free from all people.\textsuperscript{115} Paul’s refusal to accept support is tied to his decision to freely enslave himself to others for their benefit. Although he has established his freedom to accept support, he argues for the paradoxical enslavement for others benefit\textsuperscript{116}

Paul refuses to exploit his apostolic status and freedom, the freedom that he has in Christ\textsuperscript{117} Ciampa and Rosner point out the radical manner in which in Christ Paul is free with respect to all in that his expressions shows that he has transcended all cultural allegiances.\textsuperscript{118} This is an important point, because again it is starting to point to something that is counter-cultural.

As well as their ‘rights’, the Corinthian teachers prided themselves on their

\textsuperscript{111} Wright, \textit{1 Corinthians}, 113.
\textsuperscript{112} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 421–2.
\textsuperscript{113} Martin, \textit{Slavery}.
\textsuperscript{114} Thiselton, \textit{First Epistle}, 700f.
\textsuperscript{115} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 422.
\textsuperscript{116} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 420–1.
\textsuperscript{117} Ciampa, and Rosner, \textit{First Letter}, 420.
‘freedom’. This had several aspects. They were ‘free’ because Corinth, as a Roman colony, had freedoms and rights that other cities didn’t. They were ‘free’ because, in the popular philosophies of the day, people who had true knowledge and wisdom (as they thought they had) had discovered true human freedom. And now they were ‘free’ because, as Christians, those who had previously been ‘under’ the Jewish law were now free from it, and all of them were now free from the corruption of the world as a whole. So now they could do what they liked.119 Paul is not describing a lawlessness in verse 21 when discussing his freedom, but an adherence to “within the law of Christ (ἐννομος Χριστοῦ).120

Again through the careful redefining of words and his great rhetorical skills, Paul is establishing a different order of things. A counter-cultural manner in looking at the world, and the life of this nascent church.

Weak

There is a debate about “the weak” being the socially vulnerable who are inhibited by socioeconomical dependence and a sense of insecurity.121 Thiselton states it is tempting to translate τοῖς ἀσθενέσιν as to the overscrupulous or to those who feel insecure on the basis of the emerging meaning of the weak as a technical term in the earlier part of this topic of self-restraint in 8:7, 9, 10.122 In this context, however, the weak may mean those whose options for life and conduct were severely restricted because of their dependence on the wishes of patrons, employers, or slave owners.123

For Barrett the weak are those that are not fully emancipated Christians.124 Hence these are people who are most probably the vulnerable in sociopolitical

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118 Ciampa, and Rosner, First Letter, 425.
119 Wright, 1 Corinthians, 114.
120 Conzelmann, 1 Corinthians, 161.
121 Thiselton, First Epistle, 699.
122 Thiselton, First Epistle, 705.
123 Thiselton, First Epistle, 705.
terms, forced into dependency on patrons, owners, or employers, which makes
decisive initiative or boldness a foreign habit of mind. Paul behaves, and observes a
strategy, which takes account of the inhibited, vulnerable, and dependent. In
today’s terms, he does not proclaim merely a “success” gospel for extrovert
“winners.” If these people are too scrupulous in their eagerness “to do the right
thing,” Paul stands with them. The weak stand in contrast to those with “social
power, influence, political status … ability or competence in a variety of areas” and
by contrast have “low social standing” and crave for identity, recognition, and
acceptance.125

Quoting Schultz “, Thiselton states:

Paul sees his life as making transparent what the gospel tells about, the
power and weakness of God acting in those events which constitute the
beginning of the new creation … through the weakness and power of
Christ’s death and resurrection.126

To stand alongside the Jew, the Gentile, the socially dependent and vulnerable, or to
live and act in solidarity with every kind of person in every kind of situation is to
have a share in the nature of the gospel.127

Again it can be seen that there is a latent political discourse behind the
term ἀσθενέσιν, although this is probably more obvious than the previous two,
and is an area that is yet to be fully explored by the commentators.

**Summing up our Findings**

As stated above this passage is about evangelistic strategy and how we are
to go about “winning” others to the cause. “All things to all people” has to do with
evangelism, it means going to people, where they are and on their own terms, Paul
does not ask them to come to him. But importantly it does not require Paul to give

125 Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 705f.
up or lose the important beliefs.

1 Cor 9:19-23 helps us to understand our evangelistic task. We are to go out to where people are. Meet them on their own terms and walk with them through life. This will present us with opportunities to reveal who Jesus is to them, and offer opportunities for them to come to trust in Jesus also. This passage shows how Paul’s evangelistic strategy was not to put on a large event expecting people to come and find Jesus, but rather have Christians out participating in the world in order to have others influenced to faith by a Christian’s presence. But it leaves the question of what’s in a word? Does the use of specific words support or privilege one type of interpretation or another?

We can detect hints that are raised about the “politics” of the situation. This is a counter-cultural call that Paul is making and so at its heart is a deference to the politics of the situation. In this case “politics” is used in the broadest sense possible. It speaks of the way that groups of people are organised and how people interact with authority in the world. This is not an interpretive framework for the majority of commentators.
CHAPTER 3

CAN BURK, BARCLAY, WRIGHT AND HORSLEY COEXIST?
THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES

Introduction

From the proceeding discussion it can be seen that using the interpretive methods of the New Perspective, even on a passage with no overt political overtones, that references to the politics of the situation and occasion keep occurring. This chapter will examine what Warren Carter has described as the political foreground to this text,¹ to determine how Paul’s experience as living within the Roman imperial context impacts the interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-23. This emerging area of New Testament studies² will be used as the basis for making the assertions of this chapter.

For scholars like Carter the foreground of the context that the New Testament was produced in was very much a Roman Imperial context. Much of New Testament scholarship in the twentieth century with a few exceptions have been either oblivious to the pervasiveness of empire, preferring to spiritualised or

individualised references that depicted empire, or unwilling to engage with the impact of the empire due to an understanding that empire was insignificant to these nascent faith communities.\(^3\) The main manner in which this was performed was by referring to empire as a “background” influence. Carter considers this dismissive term as woefully inadequate and inappropriate. Some scholarly endeavours continue to be quite hostile to the notion that the first century believers had anything to do with the Roman Empire. Even worse these writers see nothing but the early Christian movement adopted a submissive role to the empire as being divinely ordained.\(^4\)

Carter would describe the religious environment of the first century as local religious divinities and observances being intertwined with the imperial cult in some localities as well as various other traditions and groups that were separate from the imperial cult.\(^5\) Many people try to homogenise the religious environment of the first century, however the more that is discovered by archeologists at sites across the ancient world shows how pervasive religious pluralism was in the culture and societies of these developing communities. This is the basis upon which Carter and others like him are able to claim that an analysis of the political influence in a passage is one of the main issues with which interpreters need to grapple.

Classists such as Karl Galinsky have pursued an investigation of how first century Christians sought to engage and negotiate the “web of power”, the embedded and entangled culture, that was the imperial cult.\(^6\) Carter also notes that classicists often ignore New Testament texts as they try and understand the imperial

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\(^2\) The Paul and Politics Group of the Society of Biblical Literature lead by Richard Horsley and others continue to challenge New Testament Studies through a hermeneutical approach that makes a political reading of the Pauline corpus essential to understanding Paul's letters.


\(^5\) Ibid., 141.
cult. He states that as most of the texts that classicists usually use are texts from the elites, when looking for alternate view classicists should turn to the New Testament. Galinsky states that often New Testament scholars have not given much attention to the way that the cult of the emperor was intertwined with that of other gods. He continues quoting Carter from *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* that “The Gospel’s encounter with Rome is much more multifaceted and complex than allowed by a limited and ahistorical binary construct of ‘us against them’ of opposition to Rome.”

Also this chapter will examine the recent contributions of David Rudolf and Mark Nanos to the debate about 1 Cor 9:19-23, and their assertions that Paul was a Torah-observant Jew and that the passage under investigation is actually Paul outlining his mission strategy of accommodation and the underlying assumption that this should be considered as part of the interpretive framework of the Pauline corpus.

**The Politics of First Century Corinth.**

First Century Christians did not negotiate empire in the shadow of persecution, except some isolated, localised harassment and opposition. By attending to the New Testament as texts from non-elites and acts of imperial negotiation, insight into how non-elites negotiated the imperial cult and the empire can be further explored.

In the first century Rome dominated the territory from Britain, through

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modern day France and Spain, across Europe, around the Mediterranean and across North Africa. It is estimated that approximately 60-65 million people of diverse cultures and ethnicities.  Corinth was a Greek city by origin that was refounded as a Roman colony after its occupation. Corinth therefore has a dual Greek and Roman cultural identity. This identity has important implications for our understanding of its religious system. The Roman imperial cult was an important part of the religious pluralism of the city of Corinth and surrounds.

The first century was ruled by about 2 to 3 percent of the population, the aristocratic class. The Roman empire was an agarian empire, in that the wealth was based in the land, due to this so also was power. The more land you owned the greater influence and power you had. With power based in land holdings, so power was under hereditary control. The elite not only owned the land, but consumed 65 percent of its production. They exploited the labour of slaves and tenant farmers, living at the expense of the non-elite. They imposed taxes and rents that was usually imposed in goods and so it is estimated that peasant farmers and fishermen handed over 20-40 of the produce they caught, cultivated or raised. To not pay the taxes was considered rebellion and would be met with military retaliation.

Carter speaks of the spaces of the Empire, the places where the imperial power was most evident in the city. With Corinth as the capital city of the province of Achaia it played an important role in the Empire. As the city was destroyed in 146 BCE and then rebuilt and resettled in 44 BCE by Roman

12 Carter, Roman Empire & the New Testament, 3.
14 Ibid., 66.
15 Carter, Roman Empire & the New Testament, 3.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
colonists it testified to the might of Roman occupation. By the middle of the first century the population has grown to around 100,000. Its sociopolitical structure was one of a small number of ruling elite families controlling the hierarchical power structure of the city and its surrounds.\textsuperscript{19}

The church in Corinth was composed of both elites and non-elites as attested by Paul in 1 Cor 1:26, with Erastus being possibly the highest profile citizen in the church. Erastus was the city treasurer and a benefactor of the city (Rom 16:23),\textsuperscript{20} and so this nascent church had a great cross-section of the Corinth society as members. Due to this it is the contention of this thesis that the correspondence to the Corinthians forms a discourse of power and negotiation. In chapters 8 through 10 of the what has become known as the first letter to Corinth Paul discusses the early church’s participation in the cultic meals in temples. The meals involved such activities as the honouring of the imperial cult, celebrating important civic events such as the Isthmian games, or seeking the favour of another god or goddess.\textsuperscript{21} So it can be seen that the passage under investigation sits directly in the middle of the discussion about the church’s involvement in these meals and thus is part of a general discussion of the spaces of Empire. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Carter speaking on the topic of Economics, Food and Health states that only 2-3 percent of the population possessed most of the empire’s wealth. This wealth was dominated by the elites control of land ownership. By controlling the land the elite were able to control the production, distribution and consumption of the products of the empire.\textsuperscript{22} The elites used taxes, rents, loans, interest, tribute and trade to redistribute the wealth acquired by farmers, artisans and other unskilled

\begin{flushleft}\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 3–4. \\
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 56. \\
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 56–57. \\
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 57–58.\end{flushleft}
workers to the ruling class. The ruling few then used this wealth on lavish lifestyles and consumed most of this production.\textsuperscript{23}

The New Testament has a great deal to say about food in the first century. This concern with food within the Roman imperial context was about power, this power enabled the elite to eat a diverse diet, reflected in their health. Quality and plentiful food was actually another symbol of status and wealth, like clothing, housing, transport and education.\textsuperscript{24} It is through economics, especially with regard to production that power was wielded in the empire. Although initially established through might and military power, it was through control of the economy that the elite were able to maintain order. In times of plenty they stored their wealth, in time of insufficiency they sparing gave to those in need. This economic control enabled the elite to keep order in the Empire, with only the occasional uprising of the underclass.

The main discussion of this chapter is the examination of the language of power that exists in 1 Cor. This examination will include the manner in which this language of power provides an interpretive lens through which to view 1 Cor 9:19-23. The new insights that this examination brings to a passage, that on initial reading has no political overtones or undercurrents, will then be used to draw wider conclusions. This will be done through the lens of the agora, the forum.

In cities like Corinth across the empire, the space that defined the political and economic power of the empire was the agora. This marketplace had originally been a place of politics, where young politicians would come and debate and gather a following in order to grow in prestige in the community. As time went on the space became not only a place of debate, but a space in which trade and the normal

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 100–101.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 109–10.
business of life took place. Trade of produce and trade of slaves, mixed with the
trade of ideas of the political class in the agora. It is through this lens of the agora
that a political reading of the passage 9:19-23 will be undertaken.

Scope of this Chapter.

Essentially the dispute over whether a political reading of 1 Cor 9:19-23 can
be established will become one of hermeneutical approach. This thesis is seeking to
establish a case for the three-fold understanding of the interpretative task of Paul’s
writings and so is attempting to demonstrate that this hermeneutical approach is
able to be sustained. In so doing passages such as Romans 13 where support for the
political situation of Paul’s day is sustained needs to be addressed, in the light of the
counter-imperial reading to which it is asserted this passage lends itself.

Two scholars that have critiqued a political reading of Paul along with John
Baclay25 are Denny Burk and Seyoon Kim.26 Their main criticisms will be
summarised and critically discussed in this chapter in order to establish the thesis
that is being constructed. Although not exhaustive Barclay, Burk and Kim’s
arguments are indicative of those scholars that disagree with a political reading of
Paul and so provide a basis on which to test the assertions of this chapter.

Finally, a way forward will be presented that will outline the consequences
of adopting a political line of interpretation when we come to 1 Cor 9. The way
forward will be a springboard in which to launch into the final chapter of this
dissertation where the implications of the three-fold interpretative framework for
interpreting Paul will be outlined.

Definition of the Political Reading used in this Work

Unlike our current Western society, for the people of the first century,

25 John Barclay’s arguments against a political reading were presented in Chapter 1.
politics, religion and societal interaction were inseparable. Part of the manner that the Roman Empire was able to control such a vast expanse of territory was through the co-opting of local authorities in each of the conquered areas. More often than not the elites of an area were also the local religious and societal leaders.27 One only has to look at the manner in which the priestly class of Jerusalem held sway over first century Judea to see an example of the local religious leaders also being the political leaders of the region.

The Modern Western concept of the separation of Church and State was unthinkable in the first century. This post Enlightenment concept is something that modern interpreters are often guilty of reading into their understanding of the first century. The people of the first century accepted the concept that religion and politics were inextricably entwined.28 It is impossible to talk of one without the other, and both were used as a way of asserting authority in the first century.

As stated previously the widest possible understanding of “politics” is being used in this thesis, where it refers to the art and science of organising the public space. This is best encapsulated in the term πόλις. The πόλις was a living organism that was their social, political and religious life.

If the πόλις is considered the body, then drawing the analogy further, the αγόρα was the heart. The αγόρα was the place in the city that all activity was focussed around. Excavations of ancient Corinth have shown the centrality of the forum to the plan of the city.29 As stated above the agora was not only a place of political debate but also a place of trade. It was in this space that the cross-section of

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28 Ibid.
29 Spaeth, “Imperial Cult in Corinth,” 63ff. Throughout this work the term forum and agora will be used interchangeably. In most instances as Corinth is a Greek based city the Greek agora will be preferred, however due to some commentators commenting from an imperial/counter-imperial context the Latin forum will occasionally be used.
the population of Corinth gathered, from slaves and free citizens, from elites to non-elites, Romans, Greeks and other ethnicities. The agora was the great gathering place of ancient Corinth.

For this work the concept of a political reading does not take the stance of being an ideological one. A political reading is not seen as either supporting or subverting current powers, although that inevitably might be a consequence of this type political reading, but a reading that takes into account the public sphere and its influence on scripture. The definition of the political reading used here is one of being mindful of the undertones of the αγόρα, the public sphere that forms not just an undercurrent to the Letter, but also a constant foreground presence. As NT Wright has stated “... there are echoes, indeed more than just echoes, of the rhetoric of imperial Rome in the writings of Paul.” As modern interpreters this is one area that we need to be more mindful of in our work.

It could be argued that such a broad definition means that the assertion of this thesis is easier to make. The reason for such a broad definition is that the ancients, such as Plato would not countenance a narrower view. For them πόλις and αγόρα were not just about the politics of governing, but about economics, trade, worship, it truly was the marketplace of ideas and life.

Such politics was enforced through rhetoric, coercion and force. In one sense then, this brings the concept of a political reading of Paul down to a study of rhetoric and its use in coercing or persuading the Corinthians of Paul’s arguments against current practices and solutions for these issues. In another sense this broad definition includes the manner in which hierarchy (or power), economics and community all interact. In this sense a political reading can be seen as counter

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31 As modern interpreters we need to enter as best we can a first century mindset in our attempts to understand not only our discussion of the situation, but the recipients understanding.
imperial as claims about the current empire and an alternate approach to existence are inherent in this definition.

The Objections to the Political Reading of Paul

Denny Burk in his paper for the Journal of Evangelical Theology presents his objections to a political reading of Paul’s Letters from an evangelical perspective.\(^{32}\) Firstly the concept of drawing too much from parallel language. For Burk the overuse of imperial language by those that hold a Fresh Perspective\(^{33}\) position,\(^{34}\) to reflect a counter imperial message means that interpreters have resorted to what Samuel Sandmel has called “parallelomania.” (Sandmel, 1962, 1-13).

Burk argues that the use of parallels is made on the presumption of suspicion rather than an analysis of the arguments presented by a number of the Fresh Perspectives Group. It would appear that the reason for his criticism has more to do with a likely a clash of interpretive frameworks rather than a criticism of the Fresh Perspective movement.

Burk turns his attention next to the hermeneutical approach of the distinction between meaning and implication. His argument follows from his previous point. Burk expands his criticism of the Fresh Perspective scholars where he merges his discussion of parallels and the concept of authorial intent. Burk focuses on the distinctly anti-American commentary provided by some of the proponents of the Fresh Perspective.\(^{35}\)

His assessment is true in that much of the political reading of Paul becomes

\(^{32}\) Burk, “Is Paul’s Gospel Counterimperial.”
\(^{33}\) Burk has followed NT Wright who coined the term “Fresh Perspective” as a term to describe all political readings of Paul's Letters. For Burk his use of “Fresh Perspective” covers the full spectrum of political readings from counter imperial readings with implications for 21st century interpreters to those that agree that politics forms a background for their interpretation.
interpreted as anti-American sentiment. It seems to this author that this is due to the context of most of the scholars being North American-European. One of the challenges of hermeneutics is to assess how the interpreters underlying assumptions may have impacted their interpretation. For Burk as an evangelical American academic it is understandable that an anti-American interpretation would cause offence.

Burk’s critique that these interpreters do not apply their interpretations to other oppressive regimes does not hold when we consider the contexts in which these scholars write. The whole premise of a political or post-colonial reading is to comment on the colonial setting in which the interpreter inhabits. For these interpreters it is possible to argue that American imperialism is seen in the stance of Rome. I would agree with Burk when he asserts that a political reading of Paul should also challenge other oppressive regimes around the world, but would suggest that this is the place of those interpreters living under those regimes, or working within the confines of those regimes. This, however, does not diminish the critique of worldwide capitalism that a political reading of Paul has been used to assert.

Burk’s next criticism of the Fresh Perspective is one of varying applications of the Reader-response methodology. Burk’s main point here is a polemic against the use of the eisegetical approach of reader-response interpretive approaches compared to the favoured exegetical author-centred approaches. Again many broad assumptions are being made here. There is not sufficient space to argue against the misuse of author-centred approaches to interpretation in this thesis, suffice to say that proponents of the historical-critical method have been just as

36 Ibid., 222.
37 Ibid., 325.
implicated in eisegetical analysis.

As stated previously there is potential for misuse in any reading strategy of any biblical text. Author centred and reader response methodologies must be held in tension with each other in order that a deeper understanding of the implications of the passage may be drawn. This is one of the strong underlying assumptions of this author, and the premise that this thesis is attempting to confirm. For Burk this is not an interpretive framework that is able to be entertained, and appears to flow from his underlying assumptions.

Burk next comments on the Fresh Perspectives narrow application of the impacts of the Emperor cult, and the way that he says that they minimise the pluralistic societal backdrop that was the first century.38 This author agrees that society in the first century was totally pluralistic, but when Burk quotes NT Wright as supporting this position he minimises Wrights comments elsewhere when he states that the emperor cult was a technique used by the Romans in order to impose their rule on the subjugated peoples of the Empire.39 For Wright, the shadow of the Empire was oppressively cast over all the Empire, there was not a part of Empire that did not affect its citizens daily life. Burk again here seems to be minimising his opponents arguments without support.

The next challenge to the Fresh Perspectives by Burk is on of the place of the Disputed Paulines in determining a Pauline Theology and thus a consistent application of a political reading of Paul. Burk acknowledges that there is a difference in approaches between some of Paul’s letters and the so-called Disputed Letters.40 However, he assumes that since many proponents of the

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38 Ibid., 326.
39 Wright, Fresh Persp., 64.
40 Burk, “Is Paul’s Gospel Counterimperial,” 328. There is a current debate about whether all the letters attributed to Paul where actually authored by Paul. The Undisputed Letters are Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians,Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The Disputed Letters are Ephesians, Colossians 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.
Fresh Perspectives understanding hold this view of disputed Pauline Letters that this constitutes a degree of warning for interpreters following this method of interpretation.

Burk does not even consider that a political reading may be a way of determining whether the hypothesis of Disputed Paulines can be maintained. In this point Burk comes from a position of support for the Pauline authorship of the whole corpus, and although he states that this issue is still undecided, it appears that his position is well established. For Burk that constitutes enough to present caution for a political reading of Paul. It is the opinion of this author that a political reading is probably one of the best methods to establish Pauline authorship. The idea that something has been written pseudonymously follows directly from the concept that a corrective needs to be established for the letters of Paul, and this is what a political reading seeks to establish. By applying the methods of a post-colonial reading of Paul, it explains many of the so-called interpolations or late additions that some scholars identify. It explains why many of these additions relate to issues or questions outside the scope of what the original intended audience would be expecting. On this point I cannot agree with Burk.

Burk turns his attention to his problem with the analogy between America and Rome. Burk sees the totalising use of power by Rome through military might and economic controls as different to the manner in which modern America has exerted its presence on the world through military proliferation and economic capitalism. Through a number of examples such as a comparison of the crucifixions along the Appian Way compared to the expansion of McDonald’s and Coca Cola into many Western countries Burk argue for the difference between these two “empires”.

It is here that Burk most overstates his case. It is imaginable that he is not able to see the affect that Americans have had on the world. That through the relentless pursuit of wealth Western nations have continued to marginalise and destroy not only other foreign third world economies, but also people. Nationality is important to people, and we are often unable to see the atrocities that is created due to our countries constant push for self-interest. It is true that America does support humanitarian causes in a way that many other nations do not but this does not negate the way that economic protectionism disadvantages much of the world community. Although military wise the Americans may not be as ruthless as the ancient Roman Empire, it appears that this is the area that galls Burk the most, the effect of their economic policies are just as devastating.

This comparison should not only be levelled at America alone. The Western world continues to dominate the world economy and through economic cooperations like the G-8 and G-20, act like the ancient Roman Empire in dominating and dictating to the rest of the world.

Finally, Burk confronts the Fresh Perspectives interpretation of Rom 13:1-7. Here he analyses both Robert Jewett and NT Wright’s position on this passage. This passage that on face value Burk says supports the idea of submission to God ordained government, but also to a “just war” theory. Although both these interpreters arrive at the same conclusion from different arguments Burk is prepared to group them together as anti-American understandings of the text. Burk states that Jewett argues for a local application of ingratiation so that his mission to Spain might not be disrupted. Whilst Burk summarises Wright’s position as demotion of arrogant and self-divining rulers under the authority of

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42 Ibid., 330.
God through Christ, and as such a critique of Empire.\textsuperscript{43}

Burk’s arguments against both authors appears to be that they end at a common position that is anti-American. It strikes this author that for Burk this exercise has become a challenge to his belief system and possibly even his nationalism and he holds that the State is to be served unless it contradicts his interpretation of the Scriptures. It will be shown that Burk falls under the same criticism that he levels at the Fresh Perspective, but just on the other side of the debate.

Seyoon Kim in his book \textit{Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke} has similar objections to a political reading of 1 Cor to that of Denny Burk. The objections are fourfold.\textsuperscript{44} Firstly the claim of “Parallelomania.”\textsuperscript{45} Kim here chooses to not even consider that there could be parallels. Although conceding the use of common language, Kim, like Burk, argues that there is no significance.\textsuperscript{46} It appears that both Kim and Burk use this claim without trying to argue the claim with evidence from the text. Their objections again seem to be because they would not consider a different interpretive framework to the one from which they choose to situate themselves in. Harrison has argued that claims to parallelomania actually can be used to stifle debate rather than engage in a contest of ideas.\textsuperscript{47}

Kim’s second claim is that political interpreters come to their position by deduction from assumptions. Citing a number of the deductions that the political interpreters make, however, he does not try to show how these assumptions are not

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 333.

\textsuperscript{44} Kim, \textit{Christ and Caesar}.

\textsuperscript{45} By “Parallelomania” Kim is trying to assert that proponents of the political reading of Paul try to draw too many parallels to make their point. He states that just because there is a parallel language and terminology in the political or social sphere does not mean that the assumptions of the Paul in Politics group can be made.

\textsuperscript{46} Kim, \textit{Christ and Caesar}, 29–30.

\textsuperscript{47} James R Harrison, \textit{Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome} (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 7.
able to be sustained. As commented earlier, each side of any argument often
assumes their assumptions. It seems in Kim’s work just by listing the political
interpreters assumptions he feels that he has established their falsehood. This then
becomes Kim’s third challenge to a political interpretation, that being of
proof-texting. Again, just by listing the claims of the political interpretation Kim
seems to believe that he has established a case.

Kim’s final challenge is to assert that a political reading appeals to coding to
establish their position. Here Kim footnotes that if Paul’s preaching had been
counter imperial, surely this would have produced a counter imperial movement in
his established churches. This is exactly what a political reading is seeking to
determine. It seems that both Burk and Kim are prepared to dismiss a political
reading on the grounds that it does not fit into their interpretive framework, rather
than by arguing against particular points of difference.

Kim and Burk whilst making some valid points about whether we can read
a political context in Paul should be tempered by the moderating voices of Scot
McKnight and Joseph Modica. They state that New Testament writers do address
the concerns that are revealed through empire criticism, but that they are not the
primary aim of their writing. They see the New Testament writers as being
cognisant of the issue of empire and the manner in which this is in direct
opposition to their intended goal of showing that Jesus inaugurated the kingdom
of heaven. Joel White stresses that those proposing an anti-imperial Paul have
not “convincingly established the existence of subversive subtexts in his letters”,
but also that it cannot be denied that there is a “subversive quality” to Paul’s

48 Ibid., 30–31.
49 Kim, Christ and Caesar, 32.
50 Ibid., 32–33.
51 Harrison, Paul and Imperial Authorities, 8.
52 McKnight, Scot and Joseph B Modica, Jesus is Lord, Caesar is Not: Evaluating Empire in New
testament Studies (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 2013), 197f.
It has been shown that although there are a number of objections to a political reading of Paul these basically are due to a different hermeneutical approach. The assumptions made by those that object are actually similar to the assumptions that they claim that proponents of a political reading make.

**Is a Political Reading anti-imperial?**

As outlined in Chapter 1, one of the difficulties some interpreters have with a political reading of Paul’s writings is the perception that support for the empire is encouraged in some places and discouraged elsewhere. Passages such as Gal 3:28,29 seem to support a change to the imperial order whilst passages such as Rom 13 support keeping the status quo. This is the point that Barclay acknowledges that the position that Wright holds is less embarrassed by Rom 13 as he has not stated that Paul is anti-imperial, just anti anything that takes the focus away from Christ.55

For many interpreters, Rom 13 points to a reading of Paul in support of the ruling authorities. His discourse on authorities, the “alleged un-Pauline vocabulary” and the abrupt way that it interrupts Paul’s argument on love have led many to see this passage as a later addition.56 Others have argued that this was a common Pauline rhetorical technique, breaking the current discussion with comments that come from a different angle before returning to the issue being discussed. In fact the passage that is under examination in this thesis is one such passage that uses this technique.57

For scholars like Gordon Zerbe, Rom 13 has been described as the

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53 Ibid, 198f.
“Monumental Contradiction.” In this place in Romans the authorities appear exalted and under the authority of a sovereign God, whilst elsewhere, even in the previous chapter Paul seemed to be advocating for something different.\textsuperscript{58} Zerbe states that there seems to be four alternate explanations for Rom 13. Firstly, that Paul was pre-empting a violent revolution by those that had joined the ranks of the “Messiah’s community” and had not fully understood the nature of its “warfare of love”.\textsuperscript{59} As a Salvationist I can understand this comment as many of the forming statements and songs that we traditionally sing speak of warfare and it can be easy to take this analogy too far. Paul may truly have been trying to apply a corrective before things became too misunderstood.

Secondly, he states to preclude further repercussions on the nascent community of believers in Rome.\textsuperscript{60} The Roman believers more than any other had been the subject of persecutions and threats by both the Gentile majority and the Jewish minority. Some argue that this passage is to show that church being established in Rome was not a threat to the imperial order, and that they were just part of the Jewish community that had been privileged so far in the manner in which they were able to continue to practise their religion. This corrective is to show authorities that the growing community was not a threat to Caesar.

Thirdly, Zerbe suggests that the corrective of Rom 13 was to rehabilitate Paul’s own reputation within the Gentile dominated community as being fully loyal to Rome.\textsuperscript{61} For a citizen that travelled the Empire like Paul to continue to have that freedom, it was important for him to not be seen as a revolutionary. Some scholars

\textsuperscript{57} Wendell Lee Willis, \textit{Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10} (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), 272ff.


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
therefore believe that Rom 13 is actually a corrective of appeasement due to the nature of the proceeding inflammatory remarks in Romans 12.

Finally, the comments of Rom 13 were actually to ensure that Rome would still be a viable base for his missionary drive into Spain. Following on from the previous point, some scholars believe that in order for Paul to spend time in Rome without raising the ire of the authorities, the corrective of Rom 13 ensured that he is seen as a model citizen. This would give him the freedom to establish the base that he needed for a missionary campaign into Spain.

By all accounts Rome was a politically volatile place. Rom 13 could be seen as a way that some of this volatility would be appeased for the developing community. By exhorting Rome and taking into account the situational background, Paul weighed carefully what was needed so as not to cause offence. When taken with the rest of the letter it does not hold that Paul was seeking to maintain the imperial order. For those scholars who seek legitimacy for the state as part of their interpretive framework Rom 13 can be a suitable passage to establish their thesis. It is the opinion of this author that Rom 13 whilst calling for submission to ruling authorities, is actually a political manoeuvring so as not to draw attention to himself by Paul. This manoeuvring is in the context of a “war” that is metaphysical rather than physical and so presents no issue for the Roman authorities, whilst staying consistent with his call to non-conformation.

Discussion of the Paul and Politics Group’s Approach

The approach of the Paul in Politics Group has been to look at a political reading of Paul’s Letters from a fourfold approach. This approach is to examine Paul’s Letters using four overlapping kinds of politics. The four areas of analysis are: Paul and the politics of the churches, Paul and the politics of Israel, Paul and

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62 Ibid.
the politics of the Roman Empire and Paul and politics of Interpretation.

This analysis uses a broad approach to the definition of politics similar to the definition earlier in this chapter. The first area of investigation examines the internal politics and the rhetoric of power and persuasion in the churches that Paul established or was considered as the “father” of the church, such as Corinth. The second area seeks to examine the politics associated with the faith influences on Paul. The third examines the societal influences on Paul, whilst the final area examines the politics behind and often in front of how Paul’s Letters are interpreted. All four of these areas are a background to the analysis of this thesis.

For this thesis the politics of the Corinthian church can be seen in the language of power in the passage under study. This will be done by examining the two phrases “slave to all,” “become like in order to win,” and the use of the term “weak.” The examination of the politics of Paul’s faith context will be seen in the way that “Accommodation” is used as a method to control and evangelise. This is encompassed by the phrase “become like to win” and will be discussed in that section below. The examination of the politics of the social context of 1 Cor 9:19-23 will centre around the idea of slavery and being a “slave to all”. Finally the politics of interpretation is seen through the use of the imagery of slavery and the marginalising term the “weak.”

Although these terms have been examined using the historical critical method in Chapters 2, the remainder of this chapter will analyse these terms from the point of view of a political reading taking the aforementioned analysis as a given. In so much as the interpretive framework that this thesis is proposing uses the historical critical method as a starting point, it is seeking to demonstrate that a political reading continues to add meaning and another dimension of interpretation.

63 Ibid., 72.
to the analysis.

**The Politics of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.**

Of most interest is the analysis of a discourse and language of power and the related “politics” that can be found in a passage that on first reading is not overtly political. This will be presented as an analysis of the grammatical constructs of “slave to all,” “become like in order to win” and “the weak.” The language of the power and its use in the discourse to persuade and conform the church in Corinth to “acceptable” behaviour is one of the underlying factors of this political reading of Paul.

“Slaves to All.”

The phrase “slave to all” has lost its impact in modern western society. We are no longer confronted with the reality of slavery on a daily basis and our ideas of slavery are very much influenced by the slave trading of Africans to the Americas of the nineteenth century. This however does not mean that slavery is nowhere present in the western world, today still children are made to work on farms across the developing world to supply cocoa for chocolate, and women from Eastern Europe are trafficked to join the sex trade in Western Europe, and Asian men, women and children are made to work long hours in so-called “sweat shops” to supply designer clothes for the West. These forms of slavery go mostly unseen and unacknowledged.

For the vast majority of those living in the first century slavery was a way of life. Estimates place the amount of slaves at being between 30 and 35 percent of the population in the first century.64 These slaves were not a homogeneous group of persecuted people, some were quite wealthy in their own right, having slaves of

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their own. The greatest grouping of slaves however struggled each day to survive, were the property of their master to be dealt with however he wished and lead a dependent life of subsistence. As previously discussed the concept of freedom takes on a new light in such a context.

Possibly the most controversial aspect of the phrase is that Paul describes himself as a slave to all. In the first century context this would be shocking as a slave is usually the possession of one person. Even a household slave is seen not as the slave to the whole of the family, but as the slave to the head of the family. So what is the consequence of being a slave to all?

Firstly a “slave to all” breaks all hierarchy rules of the first century. If Paul is a “slave to all”, in some sense this is a reversal of the social pyramid. The slave rather than being insignificant and really just an attachment to a person of power, is released from this position of dependence and in that sense becomes free. The phrase “slave to all” becomes synonymous with humility and relinquishing of privilege. Due to the nature of Paul as “father” of this church stating this it in turns makes the privileged the status of “slave” the top of the hierarchy, turning society as the ancients knew it upside down.

Secondly, a “slave to all” means that those who have been marginalized because of their position in the social hierarchy are now elevated as they now have a “slave.” Although this may be considered semantics by some critics, it doesn’t negate the point that the term “slave to all” could be seen as egalitarian term. Again this term would be counter cultural, counter social status, and thus counter imperial.

Another implied social context aspect of this analogy is an economic one.

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65 Although I have tried to be gender sensitive in this thesis. I have used the masculine personal pronoun here as in the first century it was the male “head of the house” that was the owner of all slaves.
66 Ibid.
By changing the established order, by nature Paul would be disrupting the established economic status of the Corinth church community. If all are to be “slaves to all”, could this be considered a challenge to break the economic stranglehold the minority had on the majority?

By using the term “slave” Paul has chosen a non-entity in the economic sense. Most slaves actually had little materially. Although as Martin has shown, for a good proportion of slaves economically they would be considered financially independent, however, this independence was still dependent on the relationship with their master.67 So although wealthy these slaves still were very much the property of their master and their wealth considered his wealth. Economically, the term “slave to all” would therefore have economic implications for the nascent Christian community at Corinth.

In the context of the Corinthian house churches, the use of the phrase “slave to all” is a deliberate use of a controversial image in order to bring some sense of order to the dysfunctional nascent Christian community. For Paul, possibly the greatest challenge that the Corinth church presented, was the manner in which it still remained locked in the dominant culture of the society in which it existed where status and power were attributes to be sought after. By using this controversial statement Paul was encouraging a different experience of existence, but due to his position of founder of the church, he is seeking to bring about a change through an internal politic that is in place.

The founder of any church, movement or group often has disproportionate power in the establishment of the group’s culture and practice. As an example, in the author’s own context of The Salvation Army, William Booth, the founder of the church, along with his wife Catherine still hold a great amount of power in the
manner in which ideas are presented, ministries started and organisational direction is visioned, even though they have been dead for close to a century. It seems to be the same here for Paul. Although groups are rising up to challenge his power over the Corinth church phrases like “slave to all” appear to be used to bring about an internal politic in order to conform behaviour.

“Become like in order to win”.

The phrase καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς ... ὡς ..., ἵνα ... κερδήσω is repeated throughout the passage under study and forms a rhythm in the argument of the passage. The deliberative rhetoric of this passage again has strong political overtones. Mitchell has demonstrated in her work on rhetoric and reconciliation that at every turn there is accommodation, freedom and thus politics involved in this phrase.68

Accommodation69 was one of the methods whereby proselytes to the faith of Israel were made. This again can be seen from a political point of view. Accommodation becomes political when the argument over what constitutes true belief occurs. For some there is a certain subset of “not negotiable” beliefs. Whilst for others just asserting one of the common beliefs of the community is enough for them to be included as members. Thus the accommodating practises of a community of believers like those at Corinth can be shown to be politics at work in that community.

The full weight of this accommodation is found in the word ἵνα (in order that) of the phrase. As an adverbial word of purpose this term implies some sort of compromise. It continues to builds on the concept of accommodation that ἐγενόμην (becomes) elucidates. It is again the language of politics.

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67 Ibid., 50ff.
69 By “accommodation” is meant the assent to a set or subset of beliefs in order that a convert can be accepted as a believer into the faith group.
Another interesting part of the phrase is the καὶ ἐγενόνης τοῖς ... ὡς (Become like). Inherent in the phrase is the sense of a superior giving up to become inferior, again the language of marginalisation. This term is probably the strongest term of marginalisation that we have in the text under study. The politics of interpretation is a major part of this discourse.

Chapter 2 has discussed the word κερδάνω in depth. From that discussion we were able to draw the conclusions that the term is one of the agora, the marketplace. In the contest of ideas and religions, Paul turns to economics to explain the salvation process. Again it is through the political reading of this passage that we are able to draw out this interesting illusion and so see the added nuance a political reading of 1 Cor 9:19-23.

The Weak.

Paul’s use of the term weak is another politically loaded term. Inherent in the discussion of the strong and the weak is the concept of a power relationship. Most scholars would agree that Paul is writing to the self-named “strong” in Corinth, encouraging them to continue with the community relations as he had instructed them whilst present, in order that they conform to good faith practices.

Due to the fact that imperial power was exercised through the strong patronal relations and ceremonies in Corinth, Horsley asserts that this may be one of the reasons that Paul came into conflict in his mission there. Paul was challenging the blatant use and abuse of those of lower socio-economic standing for the betterment of the “strong’s” social standing. As was the custom of the time, if a patron supported you, there was a requirement that you publicly lavished praise on him, and supported him as he went about his business in the marketplace. A modern analogy would be the way that lesser members of the Australian parliament follow
and laud praise on the leader of their particular party.

The key role in the patron-client system was played by the provincial elite. Family distinction and wealth thus formed the basis of this system. In Corinth where freedmen were allowed to hold office, competition for the regional power and honour ensued. This meant that the “strong” were in competition with each other and the “weak” were pawns in the game of power.

The only way to understand the context of Paul’s Corinthian mission is through the understanding that at Corinth Paul encountered a Hellenistic urban ethos fully assimilated into the Roman imperial order. The elite “strong” were politically superior. For Paul this was unacceptable in the community of believers. Now, as then, the term “weak” has the full connotation of marginalizing and disadvantaging an economic minority.

Wendell Willis in his seminal dissertation Idol Meat in Corinth has shown that Paul’s appeal to the “weak” in chapter 9 is consistent then with his instructions to the rich in chapter 10. Whilst some have regarded chapter 9 as unrelated and an aside Willis argues that it is part of a rhetorical construct that builds the force of his instructions about cultic temple meals. He sees in Chapters 8-10 a similar construct to that of 12-14, where the middle chapter jumps to important general material rather than specific details and prescriptions to deal with the issue. Chapter 9 expounds on the concept of freedom and rights and so is consistent then with his instructions to those he addresses as “strong” and likely rich. Paul clearly labours the point through chapter 9, culminating in his call in the passage under study where he pleas that the “Christian life is not one of privileges but service. He identifies this

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid., 28.
73 Wendell Lee Willis, Idol Meat in Corinth: The Pauline Argument in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 (Chico, California: Scholars, 1985), 272.
74 Ibid., 273.
as a fundamental concern in the conduct of his ministry.” The term “weak” although loaded and marginalising then becomes one of power and formation, a complete political reversal.

**Analysis and a Way Forward**

We have seen how the tenets of the Paul in Politics group have been able to be applied to 1 Cor 9:19-23, let’s now return to the previously raised point of the agora as a framework with which to understand a political reading of Paul. As stated before the excavated site of ancient Corinth is informative to our discussion. The agora in Corinth was the size of two football fields and at least five temples, other statues and altars surrounded this space. This marketplace of not only goods, but ideas and deities, ethnicities, citizens and slaves thus forms the background on which any interpretation of the Corinthians correspondence is undertaken.

Concepts such as slavery and freedom, accommodation in a pluralistic society and the dichotomy of the weak and the strong can all be seen as language of the marketplace. As stated at the start of this chapter it is through language and rhetoric that the power of Empire was expressed. Due to the size of the empire force alone was unable to control the masses. Paul is here in 1 Cor 9 taking a similar path. Using the images and language of the agora he is enforcing his will on this developing church that he was instrumental in establishing.

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that all the elements of a political interpretation as outlined by the Paul and Politics Group are evident in 1 Cor 9:19-23, factors like the internal politics of the Corinthian church, the politics of the social context, the politics of faith and the politics of interpretation are

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75 Ibid., 273–74.
77 Ibid., 301.
interwoven as part of the fabric of this discourse.

It has been demonstrated that from a passage without much overt political commentary, that it is possible to provide a political reading. The fact that this is a passage from a letter written by Paul to a church that he established means that there will be politics involved, politics in the broadest, and narrowest sense of the definition. The defining interpretive framework of the agora demonstrates that a political reading of 1 Cor 9:19-23 is possible.
CHAPTER 4

PROPOSING A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION.

Introduction

The issue that this chapter will address is whether we are able to hold all the different interpretive positions outlined previously for 1 Cor 9 together in a meaningful manner that aids our understanding. The real question becomes whether the positions are mutually exclusive, in that you need to only apply one method or technique to the passage, and thus take sides in our interpretation or whether it is possible to overlay all of the techniques in a manner that brings clarity rather than diversity.

Firstly, a discussion of what the multi-dimensional interpretive framework would involve. Then this chapter will outline an interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-23. This will involve using the multi-dimensional interpretive framework. A discussion will then be presented as to whether it may be possible to extend this interpretive framework to the whole of the Corinthians correspondence and Pauline corpus. A comment will then be made about multiple perspectives of interpretation and whether this creates unity or diversity, followed by a comment on Cameron’s corner as the defining analogy of this thesis.

This discussion will then establish a point from which the final conclusions
can be drawn and the analysis of Chapter 5 undertaken, where unanswered questions will be outlined and summarised.

**Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.**

We can see from Chapter 3 that many of the objections to a political reading were about pushing the boundaries of interpretation too far according to those making the comments. In order to establish the multi-dimensional interpretive framework we need to take into consideration firstly a historical critical reading. The next aspect is to reconsider our interpretation in the light of the New Perspective where due diligence is given to making sure that the true nature of Paul’s Jewish heritage is acknowledged and accounted for in our reading. This is followed lastly by an interpretation of the marketplace, a political reading of the passage involving a renewed look at the rhetorical context in the light of spatial, economic and post-colonial reading.

Mark Nanos has outlined on a number of occasions in a number of different forums and publications\(^1\) that he holds that Paul remained Torah-observant throughout his life. For Nanos 1 Cor 9:19-23 speaks of a rhetorical adaptability whereby according to audience he would adapt his speech to fit and adapt his manner of arguing and reasoning so as to fit with their premises.\(^2\) Here he draws on the description of Richardson and Gooch where they describe this notion as "epistemological accommodation."\(^3\) So in this understanding Paul was not adapting behaviour, but rather the way that he communicated the gospel to different people groups. The argument here is compelling as it takes away the claim of

\(^1\) The chapter in *Paul and Judaism: Crosscurrents in Pauline Exegesis and the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations*. has been previously presented at conferences such as SBL Annual Meeting in November 2009 where this author first heard this material presented, and New Perspectives on Paul and the Jews: Interdisciplinary Academic Seminar, at Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, Belgium, September 14-15, 2009.
The inconsistency that has been levelled at Paul by some commenting on this passage. 4 This is actually a consistent application of rhetorical analysis for 1 Cor 9:19-23.

David Rudolph, using Nanos, in his work A Jew to the Jews: Jewish Contours of Pauline Flexibility in 1 Cor 9:19-23 5 argues that this passage does not preclude Paul being a Torah-observant Jew who uses accommodation and table fellowship, just like Jesus in matters of piety when it comes to ministry. 6 Rudolph argues that Paul has not lost his Jewishness in Christ, 7 but rather he chooses to eat as Jesus did with strict Jews (“those under the law”), ordinary Jews and Gentiles. 8

Rudolph’s argument is persuasive and compelling, and bases his analysis on Paul’s “calling” language in 1 Cor 7:17-24, where he demonstrates that Paul intended Jewish Christians to continue following Torah, while Gentile Christians need not adopt these precepts. Each was to remain “called” in the state they were in. Rudolph argues that this provides the lens through which we should understand Paul’s own relationship to Jewish law not just his missionary endeavours. 9

Nanos and Rudolph help us to understand Paul’s missionary endeavours and especially through a lens of consistency explaining the links not only with table fellowship, but with the whole discussion on eating together/table fellowship. Rudolph perhaps best describes this when he links in the statement of 1 Cor 10:33-11:1 with this passage using Jesus as the archetype of table fellowship. 10

Nanos and Rudolph through a re-examination of 1 Cor 9 using the principles of the

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6 Rudolph, Jew to the Jews, 19.
7 Rudolph, Jew to the Jews, 23.
8 Rudolph, Jew to the Jews, 190.
New Perspective have provided another layer of meaning with which to hold in
tension with the traditional historical-critical interpretation.

Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the issue at hand has been given by
James Harrison in his monograph. Harrison continues to call exegetes back to the
fact that the original recipients of these letters were in the vast majority auditors
rather than readers of the letters. This is a crucial difference that only when
reflected upon can the significance be appreciated. Often modern interpreters with
their access to the scriptures reflect that back on the first recipients without
acknowledging this fact. This then affects their interpretation. The importance of
the words used and the manner in which they are constructed into logical units
needs to be taken into account. The way that passage sounded as the auditors
listened is one of increasing importance.

This leads to the investigation of the rhetorical situation through the tools of
rhetorical interpretation. Rhetorical Interpretation involves us looking at the
argument of the passage involved. The art of persuasion is ideological by nature and
cannot be viewed as unbiased or apolitical. This is due to the fact that our
communication proceeds from a set of presuppositions of how the world operates.
Our values, assumptions and principles of social engagement will always shape the
form, content and delivery of our rhetoric. One important point to note is that just
because we find an argument persuasive or compelling does not mean that the
argument is true. For ancient orators whether people were convinced by the
argument was an indicator of success, not the truth of what they were saying. Thus
a rhetorical analysis is not necessarily interested in the truth claims of the argument,

9 Rudolph, Jew to the Jews, 162.
10 Rudolph, Jew to the Jews, 190.
11 James R Harrison, Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome (Tübingen: Mohr
Siebeck, 2011).
12 Todd Penner and Davina C Lopez, “Rhetorical Approaches,” in Studying Paul’s Letters:
Contemporary Perspectives and Methods, Joseph A Marchal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 35.
but rather whether it is persuasive.\textsuperscript{13}

In order to do this we need to construct a rhetorical situation which often is
guesswork and circular.\textsuperscript{14} Penner and Lopez argue that understanding rhetoric is
important for understanding Paul as it is what we have most readily available.\textsuperscript{15}
Rhetoric often inspires social responses, and it is in this area of socio-historical
context that is most enlightening.\textsuperscript{16}

When we examine 1 Cor 9:19-23 in the light of a rhetorical analysis it is
interesting that we find a number of things. As already outlined using Nanos and
Rudolph’s analysis we find a consistency where rather than the passage
explaining appropriate actions, it speaks rather of appropriate language. For the
most interpreters have seen this passage as expressing appropriate lifestyle and
behaviour in order to “win” others to the cause the corrective that it might be
speaking about using appropriate language seems compelling.

Another insight of a rhetorical nature is the power that rhetorical analysis
allows us to determine. Here Paul as “father” of this church community comes with
authority to not only instruct but to persuade and so inspire the Corinthian church to
respond. This response was a call to follow his example in following Jesus, by
participating in table fellowship with those in the community in order to share the
gospel. This would have been formative, due to the person that was espousing these
missionary strategies, and the same would be formative for us today, as we listen to
and read these verses. We respond, because we are convinced because of who
spoke these words. So not only does the rhetoric of the situation affect the original
auditors, but also modern auditors and readers.

This point should not be lost in the midst of all the others. One of the great

\textsuperscript{13} Penner and Lopez, “Rhetorical App,” 37.
\textsuperscript{14} Penner and Lopez, “Rhetorical App,” 40.
\textsuperscript{15} Penner and Lopez, “Rhetorical App,” 41.
\textsuperscript{16} Penner and Lopez, “Rhetorical App,” 42.
strengths of a rhetorical approach is that it also allows modern day readers to respond to the situation as well. This is something that the assumptions of the historical critical method would not entertain, as that method is about finding what it meant for the original recipients.

One of the emerging areas of NT studies is that of spatial interpretation. Spatial interpretation is more interested in places rather than words, and is that part of NT studies that has the closest links to archaeology. Laura Nasrallah is one of the leading scholars in this area of interpretation and sums up spatial interpretation thus:

“If we are interested in how the earliest communities in Christ developed, we need to ask what was going on politically, socially, economically, theologically in cities such as Corinth, Antioch and Thessalonikē. They walked the streets of their cities, to work, to temple, to home, past the civic center, past the butcher, past the imperial cult temple, and, departing the city gate, past the necropolis, the “city of the dead.”

From this comment it is possible to see the direct link to our interpretation of 1 Cor 9:19-23. The space of the agora is central to the language used in this passage. Slaves, profits in the context of the cultic temple meals all find their place here in this approach.

The interesting point that “Place matters, but so too our conceptions of place. Thus space matters.” So the space of the agora with its many facets of empire. The temples dedicated to the royal family, alongside the knowledge that many in the church would have been sold in this market to their current masters. And with this fresh in their minds they hear the words “I make myself a slave to all.” For the elite this would have been shocking imagine in that context lowering themselves in society to be a slave. For those that were slaves in the community,

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18 Nasrallah, “Spatial Persp,” 54.
imagine the mixed emotions as they considered their sale in that market, ad Paul’s call for them to be slaves to everyone. It is easy to imagine the uproar in the church as this section of the letter was read.

Edward Soja quoted by Nasrallah expounds the concept of “thirdspace” as a “fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and-virtual locus of structured individual and collective experience and agency.” The concepts of place and space are important in modern day society but entwined with this concept is that of power and political “mapping”. This is implied in the concept of “the production of space.” Our experiences of lived out space and perceived space depend upon the power exercised or impressed in that space or by the viewer of that space. So from whatever situation we come depends on our experience of the space. Nasrallah states it well when she says:

“what you see depends upon where you stand, and where you stand depends in part on who you are and how you are formed socially, economically, politically by the culture that surrounds you.”

Place matters, but so too does space, and indeed, the two are inseparable. The experience of the slaves and the elite of the congregation would be experiencing the reading of this letter differently. Maybe for some slaves it was reassuring, whilst for the elite it was world changing.

Without a concept of the space that was the Corinthian agora, it appears that we are missing some of the important interpretive opportunities of 1 Cor 9:19-23.

Nasrallah states:

“ But we should be attentive to the spatial elements in Paul’s letters, in order to understand more deeply the range of possible meanings and interpretations of such language to its first users and to recognise its

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23 Nasrallah, “Spatial Persp,” 64.
strangeness to our conceptions of the world.”24

If we are interested in the historical aspects of the first communities who received letters from Paul. If we are interested in specific historical and material conditions, then we must consider and begin to understand that the letters were received in a particular place with its particular conditions, that maybe not even Paul would have realised, even having lived and even dwelt in some of these communities.25

A focus on place and space in our exegesis of scripture means that we must begin to turn away from the idea that through exegesis we reach a singular conclusion. A close reading of scripture can open many possibilities for our understanding of the first reception of Paul and the spaces in which these letters were read, heard and discussed.26

Turning to economic approaches for studying Paul’s letters, Oakes citing Theisen argues that the tension between the rich and the rest of the community is the defining factor in passages such as 1 Cor 8-10.27 In the church at Corinth there was a broad cross section of society. Economic approaches look at things such as the disparity of wealth, the language of wealth and the allocation of those resources.28

Also citing Andrew Clark he states that the elite at Corinth led to problems as they behaved as the elite did everywhere in the Greco-Roman world competing for honour and precedence29 and a greater share of the scarce resources that they controlled.30 And so to this group of people in the church when Paul spoke of

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26 Nasrallah, “Spatial Persp,” 70.
“enslaving” of giving his all, it would have been shocking, world changing teaching. It is possible to envisage that the message of Paul was seen as counter-cultural. It turned society’s imperial order on its head.

Economic interpretation can either be the examination of the analytical framework, the aim of the interpretation to provide insights into the economics of the situation or it provides the resources for interpretation. With such a diverse range of methods it could possibly be difficult to determine the usefulness of an economic interpretation. In 1 Cor 9:19-23, as previously stated Paul redefines the use of κερδαινω. For many this might seem to be semantics, but the redefinition of κερδαινω to have the meaning of salvation makes a comment about his theology. God is claiming converts as a reward, a profit through the evangelising work of Paul. That this is one of the few times that the word is used in scripture shows that it is a Pauline formulation rather than a formulation adopted and co-opted.

So we can see from our analysis across this thesis that Paul is calling for a different manner of thinking of his Corinthian converts. They are called to be different from the society, those things like societal position, and prominence in the community are not to be important to the nascent community. They are called to be an alternative society to the one around them, and do this not so much by changing their behaviour and so possibly diminish the call of the gospel, but by using a vocabulary that their listeners can understand. Service, humility are to be embraced, those that are struggling, the weak, are to be encouraged and lifted up. And this is to done in an attitude of working together rather than drawing apart.

This then leaves questions about where to proceed from here. Is there a politically-informed framework in which interpreters of Paul’s letters are able to situate themselves so as to provide a consistent hermeneutical approach? This will

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be the guiding question of the next and final chapter of this thesis.

**An Interpretive Framework for the Corinthian Correspondence and the Pauline Corpus**

As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis many of the issues that we have discussed are not just relevant to the passage under study. Approaches such as rhetorical, economic and spatial to the interpretation of the Corinthians correspondence can easily be applied. This is due to the fact that we cannot treat this passage in isolation. It is important to see it as part of the whole. This is one of the important premises that arises from the historical critical method. That is, we do not deal with the passage in isolation, but part of a whole.

It can be seen that using the historical critical method as a starting point, foreground society wide relational dynamics of a text, as part of a multidimensional interpretative, whilst being consistent with the findings and methods of the New Perspectives on Paul provides the exegete with a clearer picture than just using or privileging one method or strategy over the others. Care must be taken to hold these in tension as there will be a tendency to try and normalise these approaches, but that moves against all that this thesis has purported to demonstrate. Sometimes the process of holding these interpretative frameworks together will not be possible, as they will be mutually exclusive. The value of the framework demonstrated in this thesis is that the attempt is made before dismissing and anomaly.

**Multiple Perspectives of Interpretation and Unity**

One of the great tensions in biblical studies is situating your work within a consistent framework. For many scholars the task has become one of applying a methodology or reading strategy to the text. This thesis has endeavoured to show that the interpretive task is much more complex than a simple application of a method or technique, in so doing it echoes the work of scholars like John Barton who see the interpretive task as not identifying the “original sense” of the
text, but the “plain sense.” This view sees that there are many different approaches that enlighten the reader/interpreter.

John J. Collins released a similar book: *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Like Barton, Collins sees a future for the historical-critical method, though for him, it will evolve with the significant insights gained from ‘committed’ or ‘advocacy’ readings. Collins can only see a future where these methods come closer together. As he says, ‘…it would be naïve to think that scholarship a century from now will look much like it does today…’

Barton’s and Collins’ books are indicative of the current state of biblical studies in that there is a multiplicity of methods being used, and those using more traditional methods are coming under attack by those using newer methods. Barton acknowledges that because of this damage is being done to the guild of biblical studies from within. In a sense he is correct when he speaks of the necessity for “healing.” This was actually a topic that became more public with the publication of *An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible*

The most telling comment comes when they state:

As everyone in the Society for Biblical Literature knows, historical critics and postmodernists are entrenched, embattled groups that speak to one another across the field of biblical studies only in sniping, intellectually unengaged footnotes.

Both sides have played a part in creating an atmosphere where the choice needs to be to become an adherent to one or the other methodologies. It is the contention of

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this thesis that this does not need to be the status quo, if the goal of the
historical-critical method is seeking an assured, agreed upon interpretation,
understood in relation to the author’s intention, the understanding of the first
recipients, or in reference to actual historical events. And the object of a
postmodern stance is to embrace diversity of method and result, the possibility and
even invite alternate readings. Is it not possible that these methods can stand
alongside each other, together in tension, but still helping the other to see another
reality? For Aichele, Miscall and Walsh they desire that the debate become more
respectable, it is the hope of this author for something higher than that.

"Cameron Corner" Analogy - A True Reflection of the Interpretive Framework

From the preceding arguments and discussion it can be seen that the
“Cameron’s Corner” analogy is a helpful guiding principle as the work of
interpreting the Pauline correspondence is undertaken and possibly biblical studies
in general. It is not an easy task to hold these points in tension. It is probably not
easy for that General Store at Cameron’s Corner to exist in three states at once, with
their similar, but different laws. No matter how you arrive at Cameron’s Corner it is
possible to come to the intersecting point, the corner. It is the contention that this is
possible when we sit with the interpretive framework of the Pauline
correspondence.

CONCLUSIONS

Where to From Here?

It has been shown throughout this thesis just how complex the interpretive task is on even the one of the most innocuous of passages. There are many factors that need to be taken into account as we undertake the interpretive task, especially through the different reading strategies and methods that are available for the exegete. So the question is posed, “Where to from here?”

It has been demonstrated that it is possible to hold a number of positions, that some would argue are mutually exclusive, together in tension for the interpretive task. This has revealed a more nuanced reading of 1 Cor 9:19-23. It has demonstrated the value of not dismissing reading strategies that are outside the normal methods of the exegete.

This thesis has attempted to propose a corrective so that the heated debate and snide comments that have come in the debate on interpretive methods. Just like standing at Cameron’s Corner, it is possible to have a foot in all camps, no matter how difficult that may be.

This has been a valuable endeavour for this exegete as it has provided insights for further studies in the area of interpretive methods. It has opened this author to a number of different methodologies.
Holding the Methods in Together

When I first undertook this area of study, it was with the desire to bring about some common ground through the different methodologies present in the guild of biblical studies. Although only just starting out down the academic path I had already been exposed to the vitriol and division over methodologies for interpretation. I stood with Aichele, Miscall and Walsh\textsuperscript{41} in the hope that the debate could be different. In the hope that some middle ground could be found.

It was through the course of the preparation of this thesis that I found the Cameron’s Corner analogy, that it is possible to be in three states at once. Since that time I have also found the Triple Point in science, where at the just the right temperature and pressure water can exist as ice, liquid and vapour simultaneously. It is approaching these points in the analogies that I hope that I may have demonstrated a way that differences may be held in tension. However, just as in these analogies sometimes these interpretive tensions are so tenuous, or even disparate, that the conflicting positions may not be able to coexist. In this case the multi-dimensional framework will lead the interpreter into making a decision about the best fit for the passage.

At present in order for this to occur some voices need to be sidelined. They are the extreme voices of both sides of the debate. So the voices that we are left with are John Barclay and NT Wright. In answer to Wright’s criticism of John Barclay I think we can demonstrate that the Roman Empire was not insignificant.\textsuperscript{42} It may be overstated by some in trying to make their point, but there is definitely a need to engage more fully with the elements of the imperial order, especially the way that society was ordered, that the early church and the Christ-followers engaged with

\textsuperscript{41} Aichele, Miscall, and Walsh, “Elephant in the Room.”

\textsuperscript{42} Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 363–87.
every day.

In answer to Barclay’s criticism of Wright I think we can show that the audacious claim “and Caesar was not” was probably not always at the forefront of Paul’s thought. This may be overstated, but in Wright’s rhetorical style he may have pushed the boundary a little too far.

As was shown in the previous chapter it is possible, but not entirely comfortable to hold the multi-dimensional interpretive framework together. In so doing a more nuanced insight emerged of 1 Cor 9:19-23 and possibly the entire Pauline corpus.

Other Areas of Investigation

As in the course of any research it raises more questions rather than giving all the answers. So it is with this thesis. One area that needs further investigation is whether the economic and spatial interpretations provides the optimum lens into the imperial order in order to provide a political critique. The fact that rhetorical criticism can be used across the range of the three-fold task ensures that it is a method that is valuable in determining understanding of passages, although this might not be true for spatial and economic interpretations. Further research in this area would be helpful.

Following from the helpfulness of economic interpretation in this study the question arises should a Marxist Interpretation be considered as another helpful vehicle for insight into the imperial order.

Conclusion

This thesis has allowed an exploration of a growing area of interest in biblical studies. Through the efforts of the Paul in Politics group of the SBL, and
especially the voices of John Barclay and NT Wright it has been assessed whether a political reading can be sustained for a passage of Pauline Literature that on the outset had no overt political themes. How successfully this has been performed is for others to judge.

The overriding analogy of Cameron’s Corner has provided guidance throughout and helped provide focus for the method. That exegetes need to be happy to hold conflicting views together in tension is most likely the best position at which we can arrive. As stated before the debate between the historical-critical method proponents and those that use alternate reading strategies needs to be moderated. Middle ground continues to need to sought and the language of the debate toned down. It is the contention of this thesis that the Cameron’s Corner analogy is a technique that will prove useful in allowing this to happen.

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43 NT Wright, *Fresh Perp.*, 69–79.


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