



2.3 Paul's Churches: I Corinthians

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It's very assuring, when reflecting on the specific and general challenges facing the church today, to look back at the past and see the momentous internal and external issues that have confronted the "Body of Christ" in the past. If you think your congregation is dysfunctional ... *just look at what confronted Paul in trying to remotely oversee and discipline his recently-founded church in Corinth!* Corinth was an incredibly cosmopolitan Greco-Roman port city, in honor of whom the Greek comic dramatist had invented a verb - "*to Corinthianize*" - as a synonym for sexual immorality and depravity. It was in this city that Paul had founded a church during his second Missionary Journey (Acts 18) – a church with some Jewish converts, but overwhelmingly Gentile – a church which seemed to test the limits of Paul's experiments in the social and ethical implications of the shape of early Christian community. Issues of hierarchy, class and wealth, idolatry, pagan (sexual) immorality, leadership and authority seem to have plagued this church from the outset; and Paul wrestles to assert his oversight and impose his supervision from a distance, while attempting to sort out and resolve the many issues besetting this far-from-exemplary community. Nevertheless, in this most "occasional" of Letters, with many dramatic shifts in subject-matter and tone, we find some of Paul's most lyrical, inspired and theologically nuanced passages.

Assignment #6 for Class on Saturday 23rd February 2019

Reading

Please read through Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. I suggest reading the Introduction to the Letter in your Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible beforehand; and then reading through the Letter in a number of self-contained sections, related to the problems and challenges in the Corinthian Church: (1) Elitist Snobbery in the Church [1-4]; (2) Sexual Improprieties [5-7]; (3) Meat Sacrificed to Idols [8-10]; (4) Conduct in the Church [11-14]; (5) Resurrection [15]; and Conclusion [16]. Go back and re-read the Letter again at a subsequent time, using the annotations in your NRSV to help with clarification and interpretation.

Thinking & Responding

For this week's Response Paper, I want you each to write a Response to Paul's analysis of one (1) of the five (5) problems and challenges in the Corinthian Church (see "Reading" section, above). For each particular problem / challenge you select, think about the following Questions: *What is the Problem / Challenge? Why is this an Issue for Church Life? How does Paul Address it? What Theological Resources does he muster to Resolve the matter at hand?* Please write a Response of approximately 400-500 words on your assigned sub-section (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper). Type up and print your Reflections, and be ready to share and discuss your Insights. I will collect them in to review and grade at the end of the class.