

PARAINESIS ON ἉΓΙΑΣΜΟΣ (1 Th 4:3-8)

I. The problem

1 Th 4:3-8, esp. its nucleus, vv. 3-6, is one of those few NT texts that have hitherto defied final certainty in interpretation. Almost all of the basic words of our text constitute problems of interpretation: πορνεία, σκεῦος, κτᾶσθαι, ὑπερβαίνειν, πλεονεκτεῖν, ἀδελφός. Particularly two of these terms, σκεῦος and ἀδελφός have caused the greatest of difficulties.

With regards to σκεῦος two interpretations have commanded the field. (a) σκεῦος, which normally means ‘vessel’, ‘utensil’, ‘furniture’¹, here refers to the body (as the dwelling of the Holy Spirit).² This interpretation has been advocated by *inter alios* Tertullian,³ Chrysostom⁴, Theodoret⁵, Calvin⁶, Grotius,⁷ Schlatter⁸, Milligan⁹, Rigaux¹⁰, Dibelius¹¹, and others. A variation of the above view, which constitutes a third meaning of σκεῦος, is

¹ I.e. Mt 12:29; Mk 3:27; 11:16; Lk 8:16; 17:31; Jn 19:29; Acts 10:11, 16; 11:5; Rm 9:21; 2 Tim 2:20, 21; Heb 9:21; Rev 2:27; 18:12 have the sense of vessel, container, etc. Acts 27:17 sail? gear? anchor?

² Another instance is 2 Cor 4:7.

³ According to Alford, *Greek New Testament*, III, 268.

⁴ Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου, Ἑρμηνεία εἰς τὴν πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς in Ἑλληνες Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, Vol. 22, Θεσσαλονίκη 1983, 452-4, *ad loc.*

⁵ Τοῦ Μακαρίου Θεοδορίτου Ἐπισκόπου Κύρου, Ἑρμηνεία τῆς πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς Ἐπιστολῆς, TLG citing Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 82, *ad loc.*

⁶ Calvin, J., *The Epistles of Paul to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, Tr. R. Mackenzie, Grand Rapids 1995, 358-360.

⁷ According to Alford, *Greek New Testament*, III, 268.

⁸ Schlatter, A., *Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher, Philipper, Timotheus und Titus*, Stuttgart 1950, *ad loc.*

⁹ Milligan, G., *St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians*, London 1908, *ad loc.*

¹⁰ Rigaux, B., *Saint Paul: Les Épîtres aux Thessaloniens* (ÉBib) Paris 1956, *ad loc.*

¹¹ Dibelius, M., *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus. II. Die Neun Kleinen Briefe* (HNT), Tübingen 1913, *ad loc.*

Morris¹², Bruce¹³, Marshall¹⁴, Donfried¹⁵, and Wanamaker's¹⁶ seeing in 'body' a euphemism for 'genitals'. (b) The other interpretation, which takes σκεῦος to refer to one's wife, was in ancient times espoused by Theodore of Mopsuestia¹⁷ and Augustine,¹⁸ and has the support of many modern commentators, e.g. Alford¹⁹, Schmiedel²⁰, von Dobschütz²¹, Frame²², Dibelius²³, Oepke²⁴, Vogel²⁵, Maurer²⁶, Best²⁷, Collins²⁸, Holtz²⁹ and others.

Of the Lexica *LSJ* and *ΔΔ*³⁰ accept the meaning 'body' (as a vessel of the soul). This meaning is adhered to by *MM* and *BAG*,³¹ who quote as support *Test.Naphth.* 8:6; a magical prayer; Hermas, *Shepherd: Mandate* 5:2,

¹² L. Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NICNT), Grand Rapids 1959, rp. 1970, 123 f.

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (WBC), Waco, Texas 1982, 83.

¹⁴ I. H. Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCBC), Grand Rapids, London 1983, 107-110.

¹⁵ K. P. Donfried, "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence", *NTS* 31 (1985), 336-56.

¹⁶ C. A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids, Carlisle 1990, 151-53.

¹⁷ Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentarii i 1 Thess.-Philemon* 4:4(Migne 66, 932 d): σκεῦος τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκάστου γαμετὴν ὀνομάζει.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Contra Jul.* 4, 10 (Migne 10, 765).

¹⁹ Alford, H., *The Greek Testament*, etc. 4 Vols., Vol. III *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timotheus, Titus, and Philemon*, Cambridge 1865, 268-270.

²⁰ Schmiedel, P. W., *Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher und an die Korinther* (HCNT), Frieberg 1892, *ad loc.*

²¹ v. Dobschütz, E., *Die Thessalonicher-Briefe*, 1909, rp. Göttingen 1974, *ad loc.*

²² J. E. Frame, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians* (ICC), rp. 1979, 146-150.

²³ Dibelius, M., *Die Briefe des Apostels Paulus: Die Neun Kleinen Briefe*, *ad loc.*

²⁴ Oepke, A., *Die Briefe an die Thessalonicher* (NTD), Göttingen 1953, *ad loc.*

²⁵ Vogel, W., "Εἰδέναι τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι. Zur Deutung von 1 Thess 4,3ff in Zusammenhang der paulinischen Eheauffassung" *TBl.* 13 (1934), 83-85.

²⁶ Maurer, Art. σκεῦος in *TDNT*, VII, 358-67.

²⁷ E. Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* (BNTC), rp. London 1982, 161-62.

²⁸ R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians* (BETL 66), Leuven 1984, 311-14.

²⁹ T. Holtz, *Der erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (EKKNT), Zürich 1986, 157f.

³⁰ Δ. Δημητράκου, *Μέγα Λεξικὸν ὅλης τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Γλώσσης*, 9 τόμοι, Ἀθῆναι 1964.

³¹ *BAGD* leave the options open, though they seem to prefer 'wife'.

and the *Epistle of Barnabas* 7:3 – all of them passages which evidence the sense of ‘body’.

The meaning of ‘wife’, which has no direct support in Greek literature nor in the NT³², has been based mainly on rabbinic evidence, reference to a certain OT usage, and Semitic views of sex.³³ The evidence for this point of view has been ably presented by Chr. Maurer, and has been applied to our passage with sensitivity by Best.

The third meaning hinted at above has been based on Aelian, *Nat. An.* 17:11, as well as in a reference to a writer of the I A.D., Antistius³⁴. In these passages σκεῦος is used in place of αἰδοῖον (pl. αἰδοῖα), that is, the *genitalia*. A third passage, 1 Sam (LXX) 21:5, uses σκεῦος to translate Heb. כֶּלִי, usually = ‘vessel’³⁵, but here ‘genitals’, though the garbled translation of the LXX makes it uncertain that its translators perceived this meaning.

The difficulty with ἀδελφός is not semasiological, but contextual: how does this brother fit in in this particular context?

II. The Two Basic Interpretations

For the two basic interpretations referred to above a brief presentation may suffice.

For the interpretation σκεῦος=‘wife’ we may make J. E. Frame our point of departure. He interprets ἀπέχεσθαι ... πορνείας as “That you hold aloof from fornication”, εἰδέναι ... τὸ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ... (with a comma after σκεῦος) is understood as implying two injunctions³⁶: (i) “that each of

³² The application of σκεῦος to the woman in 1 Pt 3:7 has no sexual overtones, and is, therefore, no evidence for σκεῦος = ‘woman’. Moreover, her being the ‘weaker’ vessel, implies that man, too, is thought of as a vessel. In fact, the human person is described as a vessel: Acts 9:15; Rm 9:22, 23.

³³ See Strack, H.-Billerbeck, P., *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 5 Vols., München 1926-1928, 1956, rp. 1986 III, 632f.

³⁴ *Anthologia Palatina*, 16:243.

³⁵ See also J. Whitton, “A Neglected Meaning for *skeuos* in 1 Thessalonians 4.4” *NTS* 28 (1982) 142-3.

³⁶ On this cf. also H. Schlier, “Auslegung des 1 Thessalonicherbriefes (4:1-12)” *Bibel und Leben* 3 (1962), 243.

you respect his own wife” addressed to married people, and (ii) “that each of you get his own wife in the spirit of consecration and honour” addressed to unmarried people; ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ would refer to holy and honorable conjugal relations; μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας etc. would again refer to one’s relations to his wife: he should treat her “not in the passion of lust as is the case with the Gentiles”. Then vs. 6 τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ... τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ is understood of one’s invading a brother’s home to commit adultery with the man’s wife.

In other words, this interpretation seems to assume that the Thessalonian Christians were in the habit of visiting prostitutes, then at home they showed unbridled sexual passions towards their wives, and finally they invaded another man’s house to commit adultery with his wife. This is simply too much! To relieve the obvious absurdity of this interpretation, it is suggested that the three sins refer to two distinct groups of Christians. But the difficulties are still not removed. Why, for example, does not Paul treat the alleged adultery and the alleged fornication together, as would have been more natural, but separates them by inserting between them his treatment of the husband’s relations to his wife? More importantly, the flow of the text gives no indication that Paul is treating of different matters (see below).

Best³⁷, who accepts Maurer’s thesis, is led by considerations of the meaning of κτᾶσθαι, which he finds inappropriate in connection with ‘body’³⁸, to choose ‘wife’ as the meaning of σκεῦος. He rejects, however, Frame’s making the σκεῦος rather than κτᾶσθαι the object of εἶδέναι. With respect to vs. 6a he thinks ἐν τῷ πράγματι refers to πορνεία, but the ἀδελφός to a brother who will marry the woman later³⁹.

For Holtz⁴⁰ the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῦ is inappropriate with σκεῦος understood as ‘body’, but natural if σκεῦος is understood as ‘wife’. What is decisive, however, is that the infinitive κτᾶσθαι demands taking σκεῦος as ‘wife’ rather than as ‘body’. Holtz accepts Maurer’s interpretation.

³⁷ E. Best, *First and Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*, 161-62.

³⁸ Similarly Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. III, 268.

³⁹ Best, *First and Second Thessalonians*, 166.

⁴⁰ T. Holtz, *an die Thessalonicher*, 157f.

A variation of the above understanding is to see in vs. 6 not adultery, but fraud and exploitation in business transactions.⁴¹ This position has been defended by e.g. R. Beauvery⁴² and Holtz.⁴³ It is based on (a) the idea that the infinitives here fit only a commercial situation, (b) the article preceding the infinitives, suggests a different subject, (c) that it is difficult to make sense of the brother in a sexual context, which was concerned with marriage relations, and (d) the likelihood of small businessmen whose transaction ethics needed scrutiny. This interpretation presupposes understanding ἐν τῷ πράγματι as a reference to business matters. This is, however, unlikely both in itself and because it would introduce a thought foreign to the context (cf. also vs. 7).⁴⁴ For a criticism of these arguments, see Best.

The other basic interpretation, represented by e.g. Morris⁴⁵, Bruce,⁴⁶ Marshall,⁴⁷ Wanamaker,⁴⁸ *et al.* takes σκεῦος as ‘body’, especially in its sexual aspects. Morris thinks that the meaning of ‘body’ for σκεῦος conflicts with κτᾶσθαι, which he takes to mean ‘to acquire’. Nevertheless, the inappropriateness of ‘vessel’ to designate a wife, and the altogether too low view of marriage, which this interpretation would attribute to Paul, lead him and the other interpreters of this group to choose ‘body’ as the meaning of σκεῦος, as a euphemism for *genitalia*. Accordingly they understand πορνεία generally of sexual immorality. Even for this interpretation the ἀδελφός of vs. 6 is a problem. Morris, followed by Best, understands it as referring to anyone in the community who is thereby offended, but particularly the brother who one day is going to marry the debauched woman. Marshall, thinks that it refers to “disregarding and taking advantage of somebody else

⁴¹ The Versions: Rheims, (AV ?), RSV marg., La Sainte Bible (new ed. 1979)?, La Sacra Bibbia, Santa Biblia marg., Luther (rev. 1984).

⁴² R. Beauvery, “Πλεονεκτεῖν in 1 Thess 4.6a”, *Verbum Domini*, 33 (1955), 78-85.

⁴³ T. Holtz, *an die Thessalonicher*, 161f.

⁴⁴ See further Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 165f.

⁴⁵ Morris, *The First Thessalonians*, 121-27.

⁴⁶ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 81-85.

⁴⁷ Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 106-12

⁴⁸ Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, 150-55.

by adulterous behaviour”. Bruce⁴⁹ does not indicate how the ‘brother’ is affected.

Before proceeding to a more detailed exegetical discussion of the complex issues of vv. 3-6, and hopefully to a solution, it is deemed necessary to clarify the parameters within which any interpretation of these verses must be contained.

III. Clarifying the Parameters

1. Basic Presuppositions in the Interpretation of 1 Thessalonians

a. Length of Paul’s Stay and Date of the Letter. The data of 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Acts lead to the conclusion that Paul’s stay in Thessalonike lasted about two months,⁵⁰ and that he wrote this letter some five-six months after leaving Thessalonike. His teaching thus being cut short, was in important respects incomplete, and the letter comes to supply part of that need⁵¹.

⁴⁹ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 85.

⁵⁰ On Macedonia and Thessalonike, see the basic study edited by M. B. Sakellariou, *Macedonia. 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilization*, Athens 1983 rp. 1994, esp. 192-221. The presence of Jews in Thessalonike is very meagerly attested. The oldest reference seems to be Philo, *Legatio*, 281, which, however, mentions no numbers. For Paul’s time Acts is the only source. There are some inscriptions from late Roman times, on which see E. Schürer, G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Goodman, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, III.1, Edinburgh 1986, 64-67; I. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, Vol. 5: *Diaspora Setting*, Grand Rapids, Carlisle 1996, 154-57. See also A. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*, Philadelphia 1993, esp. 5-33.

⁵¹ Acts 17:2 speaks of Paul’s addressing the Jewish synagogue of Thessalonike three consecutive sabbaths. However, Paul must have spent more than one month in this city. When the Jews come to seize Paul they go to the house of Jason, a well-to-do citizen (cf. he could give security, 17:9), in whose house the Church met after breaking with the synagogue. Paul may thus have been in Thessalonike for a period of up to two months before he was obliged to flee to Beroea (On the question of persecution, see K. P. Donfried, *NTS* (1985), 349 ff.).

b. Size of the Church. How large the Church was is impossible to say with any certainty. Our only source here is Acts, and this may suggest that when Paul left Thessalonike there might have been around 100 Christians. At the time of his writing they may have grown by a few more dozens.⁵²

c. Whom does the paraenesis address? The paraenesis opens with the words: Λοιπὸν οὖν ἀδελφοί (4:1). The introduction of this letter, which is sent to τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων also addresses them as ἀδελφοί (1:4).⁵³ There should be no doubt that the paraenesis of chs. 4-5 is directed to the entire Church, and not to any particular group within it. A Church composed of at least 100-150 members ought to contain all five categories of persons: married men, married women, unmarried men, unmarried women,

His stay in Beroea can hardly have lasted more than a few weeks when he is again compelled to flee, this time to Athens. It is doubtful whether he spent more than a month or two at Athens, from which he moved on to Corinth. There he was joined by Silas and Timothy, and the three of them addressed this letter to the Macedonian capital. From 1 Th 1:7-9 it appears that news of the faith of the Thessalonians had reached even Achaia and other places, which implies that at least a brief time had elapsed after Paul's arrival in Corinth. All this leads to the conclusion that the letter was written about five-six months after Paul had left Thessalonike. This is in accord with Riesner's finding, *Die Frühzeit des Apostels Paulus* (WUNT 71), Tübingen 1994, 301-25

⁵² Acts, which is often enthusiastic in its descriptions, speaks of *τινες* of the Jews, of a *πλῆθος πολὺ* of God-fearing Greeks, and of *οὐκ ὀλίγαι* of the prominent Thessalonian ladies joining Paul. But all this is quite relative. According to Riesner, *Frühzeit*, 301, Thessalonike may at this time have had a population of c. 65.000 within the walls, or c. 100.000 including the outlying districts. Being the largest city of Macedonia (see Strabo vii.7,4), its Jewish population may have numbered at least one or two thousand. The figures of Acts may be translated as something like this: in a large synagogue *τινες* can hardly mean less than 10-15 persons; *πλῆθος πολὺ* not fewer than 50, probably more, and *οὐκ ὀλίγαι* perhaps some 20-25. In a very conservative estimate the initial group of Christians may thus have been about 100 persons. How much the Church grew during Paul's absence, when they were subjected to persecution (1 Th 2:14-6), is impossible to say. We may then assume that Paul is writing to a congregation of 100-150 persons. This is important to bear in mind for the kind of problems that may be presupposed in the Church, e.g. actual occurrences of adultery with a brother's wife, and that of the *ἐπίκληρος* daughter (see below).

⁵³ On the theme of "church" in general see R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 285-98.

and children. Therefore, the exhortation to sanctification through abstention from fornication ought to concern all of these groups except that of the children.

d. Why Paul Addresses this Exhortation. Does Paul direct his exhortation against any occurrences of infringement of the moral code? Some commentators think that Paul must have received news through Timothy of cases of fornication or adultery.⁵⁴ The text is, however, devoid of any such references or even hints. On the contrary, the whole discussion is carried on on the basis of principle⁵⁵. It may be suspected that it is this mistaken presupposition that has to a certain extent vitiated the interpretation of the passage. It was different with 1 Corinthians (e.g. ch. 5). There Paul was addressing a concrete problem. A comparison of the handling of the Corinthian problem with how he writes in 1 Th shows unmistakably that he had no such case in mind. That such cases might one day come up was, naturally, possible, and present to his mind. Paul's reason for writing is not corrective, but prophylactic. This puts the interpretation of the paraenesis in a different light.

2. *The Train of Thought (Structure)*

Vv. 1-2 are a general introduction to the parenetic section of chs. 4-5. Λοιπὸν οὖν ... ἐρωτῶμεν ... καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν has the previous three chs. as its spring-board and extends forward to embrace the contents of the next two chs. The essence of Paul's exhortation is "that you walk" etc. This was to be expressed by an ἵνα [περιπατήτε] clause. Now to have expressed

⁵⁴ Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 160; Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 85; Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 107.

⁵⁵ In his instructive study "The Cults of Thessalonica and the Thessalonian Correspondence" *NTS* 31 (1985), 336-56, K. P. Donfried argues that the pagan cults of Thessalonike, the most important of which was that of the Cabiri, with their phallic features seem to have created "a situation of grave immorality" (341). In the light of this he argues for *genitalia* as the meaning of σκεῦος. My own analysis of these verses, the use and meaning of σκεῦος, the fact that commentators have exaggerated the feature of pagan immorality, and finally, the fact that Paul addresses both unmarried and married men as well as unmarried and married women make the rendition of σκεῦος with *genitalia* unlikely, if not actually impossible.

himself like that would have been rather flat, though correct. However, the conception he wishes to impart is more nuanced. Thus, he lets the ἵνα hanging as it were, in the air, while he brings together in one sentence their acceptance of the charge he had committed to them (καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν), the content of the charge (τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν τῷ Θεῷ), and their having already been active in fulfilling it (καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε), three elements that belong closely together⁵⁶. Having thus praised them for their exemplary life, and thereby already used the verb he had intended for his ἵνα-clause, he now chooses another verb, not merely an equivalent but an advance on it, a climax, to present his request, not, indeed, to do something new, but to increase and intensify what they have been doing all along. In this way he achieves a much higher effect, as the 'exhortation' takes the form of praise for their conduct. The composition technique of Paul's paraenesis undoubtedly has important implications for its function.

vs. 2 has a double function: one, to remind them of the injunctions he had given them with a view to the exhortations to follow, and two, through οἶδατε to help them realize that what he is asking of them is no new demand.

These two verses form the matrix for the paraeneses of chs. 4 and 5, and thus also the context for the interpretation of our text, which constitutes the first paraenetical section.

Our paraenesis is structured in the following way: τοῦτο of vs. 3 introduces the first exhortation (3-8). The anarthrous θέλημα is intentional, limiting God's will to this particular paraenesis, in which it is described by the apposition ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν. Through its climactic position the apposition ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν has a powerful and elevated effect. In itself ἁγιασμός is a wider concept, but here it is limited to sexual purity. 3b explains in a more prosaic way the implications of ἁγιασμός here, i.e. to abstain from πορνεία. What is meant by abstention from πορνεία is explained by the three infinitive clauses of vv. 4-6. Vs. 4: εἰδέναι ...

⁵⁶ Both R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians* 328 f. and G. P. Carras, "Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts. Remarks on 1 Thess 4,3-8" in R.F. Collins, *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, Leuven 1990, 306-15, have stressed the Jewish element in Paul's paraenesis.

κτᾶσθαι (building one compound idea), presents the matter positively, i.e. how to actively pursue sanctification. Vs. 5: μὴ [κτᾶσθαι, understood from vs. 4] ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας explains negatively what is to be avoided, while vs. 6a: τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν, brings a new factor into the picture, a third party that is being injured by the action here criticized. Vs. 6b is a solemn warning that no one can infringe God's ordinances with impunity. This is related specifically to vs. 6a. Finally, vs. 7 summarizes the contents of 3b-5 as ἀκαθαρσία, and constitutes an *inclusio* with ἁγιασμός. Vs. 8 is a stern warning against anyone who might disparage what Paul is writing (ἄνθρωπον refers to the authors of this letter)⁵⁷. The structure envisaged is:

Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν

ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας

εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ
μὴ κτᾶσθαῖ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν

Θεόν

τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ

διότι ἔκδικος Κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων

καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα

οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῷ

Τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν Θεόν τὸν καὶ δόντα τὸ

πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς⁵⁸

IV. The Interpretation of Vv. 3-6

1. Πορνεία. The term πορνεία is normally distinguished from μοιχεία in that whereas the latter implies that at least one of the partners involved in μοιχεία is married, the former makes no such presupposition. It usually

⁵⁷ However, this understanding is not to be related to Schmithals' thesis (*Paul and the Gnostics*, New York 1972, 157 f.) that this injunction was necessitated by the Gnostics' making headway in Thessalonike, and undermining Paul's authority.

⁵⁸ For a somewhat different structure, see Collins, *Studies in the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 329 f.

denotes sex outside marriage, but also more generally an illicit sexual affair.⁵⁹ Of the two terms πορνεία is the wider term, and can even encroach on the more special territory of μοιχεία.

The context seems to imply that πορνεία is here used in its wider sense of sexual relations outside the prescribed bounds, which may include the breaking of marriage as well.

2. Σκεῦος. Chr. Maurer has definitely made a case for σκεῦος meaning ‘wife’ in Jewish contexts. His arguments are so well known to interpreters of 1 Thess 4:3 ff. that I do not need to repeat them here⁶⁰. There are, however, serious difficulties in the way of applying this meaning to our text. (a) The meaning “wife” in late Jewish texts is altogether too obscure for a Greek context; it hampers communication. (b) Limiting σκεῦος to “wife” goes contrary to the finding above that σκεῦος refers to all four classes of Christians comprising the Thessalonian Church, i.e. married and unmarried men and married and unmarried women. (c) The meaning “wife” has been based on the dubious assumption that κτᾶσθαι bears the sense of “acquire”, i.e. “marry”, but not “have”, “keep”⁶¹. (d) Perhaps the most decisive consideration for this interpretation has been the negative picture that is often painted of ancient morality and marriage. Best, for example, speaks of “the

⁵⁹ B. Malina, “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? *NovT* 14 (1972) 10-17, has unsuccessfully tried to prove that πορνεία does not include pre-marital sexual relations. His position has been refuted by J. Jensen, “Does *Porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina” *NovT* 20 (1978), 161-84.

⁶⁰ Maurer’s interpretation has been accepted by e.g. R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 299-325, esp. 311 ff., and 326-335, esp. 333 ff., where he writes: “To interpret σκεῦος as woman and v. 4 of marriage is to interpret the verse in a fashion which is consistent with rabbinic Jewish colaration of Paul’s paraenesis at this point, that is consistent with rabbinic parallels, that is, parallels with a similar thought elsewhere in Paul—particularly the idea of marriage as a means of avoiding πορνεία,—that takes into account the use of the emphatic ἐάουτοῦ, and that it is in accord with the fundamentally ingressive use of κτᾶσθαι”. I am afraid I am unable to subscribe to this interpretation. My arguments against it are given below. As for 1 Cor 7:1-7, which Collins uses to interpret 1 Th 4:3-6, I have offered a different interpretation in my “Fornication and Concession? Interpreting 1 Cor 7,1-7” in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer), BETL 125), Leuven 1996,543- 559.

⁶¹ Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 161.

prevalent two-standard morality which allows the man sexual freedom but refuses it to the woman”⁶². By “sexual freedom” is no doubt meant the circumstance in ancient times whereby beautiful, intelligent, flamboyant coquettes, called ἑταῖραι⁶³, kept company to (prominent) men and granted them their favors.⁶⁴ However, being rather expensive, sometimes exorbitantly so, these women could only be afforded by the wealthier classes of Athenians and others⁶⁵. It is thus very unlikely that Paul had in mind such a relatively infrequent occurrence as relevant for the small number of members of the Thessalonian Church. Further down Best speaks of the Christian man, who is “ ‘to make his own wife favourably inclined towards him for sexual intercourse’ ... not in the passionate and licentious manner of the pagan who used his wife to produce children and enjoyed himself with other women”, and ends with the sweeping generalization that “pagan marriage is motivated by lust”⁶⁶. This is not only confused, but also self-contradictory. What seem to lie in the background is Pseudo-Demosthenes’ oration *Against Neaera*, 122: Τὰς μὲν γὰρ ἑταίρας ἡδονῆς ἔνεκ’ ἔχομεν, τὰς δὲ παλλακὰς τῆς καθ’ ἡμέραν θεραπείας τοῦ σώματος, τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας τοῦ παιδοποιεῖσθαι γνησίως καὶ τῶν ἔνδον φύλακα πιστὴν ἔχειν. In spite of the first person plural ἔχομεν, Ps-Demosthenes certainly does not mean that this was a general practice in Athens. Now if the legal wives were married

⁶² Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 162.

⁶³ In his *Dialogi meretrici*, Lucian (fl. 120 A.D.) treats of some twenty-five *hetairai*, while Athenaios (fl. 200 A.D.) in his *Deipnosophistai* Book 13, names over 100 *hetairai* (from c. 600 B.C. onwards), and informs that Aristophanes of Byzantium’s list contained some 153 *hetairai*.

⁶⁴ Among the most famous ἑταῖραι were Aspasia, Phryne, Lais, and Thais. See Lukianos, *Dialogues of the Hetairai*, *passim*, and Athenaios, *Deipnosophistai*, 13. Of the many European equivalents—sometimes involving diplomatic espionage—may be mentioned such courtesans as Dutch Mata Hari, French Mme de Pompadour, and the idealized picture of the prototype (Marie Duplessis) in A. Dumas Fils’s novel *La Dame aux camélias* in the person of Marguerite Gautier or Violetta (in G. Verdi’s opera *La Traviata*).

⁶⁵ For example, Phryne (the prototype of Praxiteles’ and Apelles’ Aphrodites) is known to have demanded a mina (= 100 drachmas, i.e. 100 days’ wages) for a night (Athenaios, *Deipn.* 13: 45). She became so rich that she offered to rebuild the walls of Thebes at her own expense. Lais’s exorbitant fee is said to have left Demosthenes disappointed, remarking that he would not buy repentance at such a high price (Ovid, *Amores* 1, *el* 5).

⁶⁶ Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 165.

only for the purpose of producing legitimate children, while the “other women” (i.e. the ἑταῖραι) were had for pleasure, how could the wives have been used in a “passionate and licentious manner”? And, we may further ask: How many children did they produce? Again, to claim that pagan marriage is “motivated by lust”, or to say with Bruce that πορνεία was encouraged, but never discouraged⁶⁷, is altogether too one-sided and at variance with the evidence as a whole. Also Plato⁶⁸, Aristotle⁶⁹, Musonius⁷⁰, Epictetus⁷¹, Plutarch⁷² *et. al.* must be taken into consideration. And their picture of ancient morality and ancient views of marriage is quite different.

⁶⁷ Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 82.

⁶⁸ E. g. Plato, *Laws*, 840 d-841 d: of his ideal State: ὅταν δ' εἰς τοῦτο ἡλικίας ἔλθωσι, συνδυσασθέντες ἄρρην θηλεία κατὰ χάριν καὶ θηλεία ἄρρην τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον ὀσίως καὶ δικαίως ζῶσιν, ἐμμένοντες βεβαίως ταῖς πρώταις τῆς φιλίας ὁμολογίαις ... τάχα δ' ἂν, εἰ θεὸς ἐθέλοι, κἄν δυοῖν θάτερα βιασαίμεθα περὶ ἐρωτικῶν, ἢ μηδένα τολμᾶν μηδενὸς ἄπτεσθαι τῶν γενναίων ἅμα καὶ ἐλευθέρων πλὴν γαμετῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικός, ἄθυτα δὲ παλλακῶν σπέρματα καὶ νόθα μὴ σπείρειν μηδὲ ἄγωνα ἀρρένων παρὰ φύσιν...

⁶⁹ E. g. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII. xii.7: ἀνδρὶ δὲ καὶ γυναικὶ φιλία δοκεῖ κατὰ φύσιν ὑπάρχειν ... τοῖς μὲν οὖν ἄλλοις [i.e. τοῖς ζώοις] ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον ἡ κοινωνία ἐστίν, οἱ δ' ἄνθρωποι οὐ μόνον τῆς τεκνοποιίας χάριν συνοικοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν εἰς τὸν βίον· εὐθὺς γὰρ διήρηται τὰ ἔργα, καὶ ἐστὶν ἕτερα ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἕτερα γυναικός· ἐπαρκοῦσιν οὖν ἀλλήλοις, εἰς τὸ κοινὸν τιθέντες τὰ ἴδια. διὰ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον εἶναι δοκεῖ καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φιλίᾳ. εἴη δ' ἂν καὶ δι' ἀρετῆν, εἰ ἐπιεικεῖς εἶεν· ἔστι γὰρ ἑκατέρου ἀρετῆ, καὶ χαίρειεν ἂν τῷ τοιούτῳ.

⁷⁰ Musonius (O. Hense's ed., pp. 67-8): Τὸν γὰρ γαμοῦντα, ἔφη, καὶ τὴν γαμουμένην ἐπὶ τοῦτῳ συνιέναι χρὴ ἐκάτερον θατέρῳ ὥσθ' ἅμα μὲν ἀλλήλοις βιοῦν, ἅμα δὲ [παιδο]ποιεῖσθαι, καὶ κοινὰ δὲ ἡγεῖσθαι πάντα καὶ μηδὲν ἴδιον, μήδ' αὐτὸ τὸ σῶμα [καὶ πάντα κοινὰ πεποιημένων μέχρι καὶ τῶν σωμάτων, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ αὐτῶν τῶν ψυχῶν...].

⁷¹ Cf. e.g. Epictetus, *Discourse*, II. 4 see also frg. 15; II.18; IV.9.

⁷² Cf. e.g. Plutarch's works: *Γαμικὰ παραγγέλματα*, *Γυναικῶν ἀρεταὶ*, and *Παραμυθητικὸς πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα*, all of them works which should be read in their entirety. These works by Plutarch as well as the Musonius passage (above) prove that the way marriage was viewed in antiquity was not monolithic, nor was it one-sidedly to the disadvantage of women. There were also marriages in which the husband and wife were true partners. “It has been invariably overlooked in this connection that the Greek word for “husband” and “wife” has been from [Aeschylus and] Euripides time to the present day σύζυγος, i.e. two persons yoked together, pulling in fellowship life's one and the same “yoke” (ζυγός)!” C. C. Caragounis, “ ‘Fornication’ and ‘Concession’ ? Interpreting 1 Cor

The meaning of ‘body’ for σκεῦος as the container of an inner life or the soul, though unknown in pre-NT Greek literature⁷³, is clearly attested in the NT⁷⁴. Best’s objection that Paul did not share the basic Greek “dualism of body and soul” rests on a misunderstanding⁷⁵. As we have seen σκεῦος has also the sense of ‘instrument’, in which it is used as an euphemism for the (male) generating organs (see above). Another term for ‘instrument’ is ἐργαλεῖον, and this term, too, occurs in Modern Greek as an euphemism of the (male) reproductive organ. There is thus a continuous tradition of using a term meaning ‘instrument’ (σκεῦος or ἐργαλεῖον) euphemistically for *genitalia*.

Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that this concrete thought was present to the Apostle’s mind, and that he intended us to understand σκεῦος as ‘genitals’. His habit of using euphemistic circumlocutions⁷⁶ should suggest here the general meaning of ‘body’ as the word intended by σκεῦος. This is also more appropriate in an exhortation directed to both men and women.

7, 1-7” in Bieringer, R., *The Corinthian Correspondence*, 552, — a thought that reveals a high ideal of marriage among the Greeks, which, however, was not always followed in practice. See also G. N. Bernardakis, *Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia: Λείψανα Συγγραμμάτων Ἀδήλων* [incerta] Vol. VII, Lipsiae 1896: pp. 151-82; No. 4 pp. 151-52.

⁷³ Maurer, Art. σκεῦος in *TDNT* VII, 359. E. Plümacher, Art. σκεῦος in *EDNT* III, 250, claims that a metaphor common to Hellenistic and Jewish tradition is that of “the human person or the human body as a vessel” but the Greek texts he quotes (Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* v.25 and Epictetus, *Dissertations*, III, 24.33) do not have the meaning he supposes.

⁷⁴ I.e. 2 Cor 4:7. This is the reason why σκεῦος by extension can cover the whole person: Acts 9:15; Rom 9:21, 22, 23; 1 Pet 3:7. In Christian lit. the word occurs in the sense of ‘body’ in e.g. *Barnabas* 7:3; 21:8; *Acta Iohannis* 22; Eusebius, *Demonstr. Evang.* 7:1 (Βιβλιοθ. Ἑλλήν. Πατέρων καὶ Ἐκκλησ. Συγγραφέων, Vol. 27, p. 270), etc.

⁷⁵ I hope to show this in a study (under preparation), which compares Paul’s anthropology with Plato’s.

⁷⁶ Cf. e.g. 1 Cor 7:5 καὶ πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἦτε for sex relations; 12: 23-24 ἀτιμότερα, ἀσχήμονα for male and female sex organs; Gal 5:12 ἀποκόψονται, for cutting off their male member.

3. The use of ἑαυτοῦ is no hindrance to the meaning of ‘body’⁷⁷, as has sometimes been supposed⁷⁸.

4. The use of κτᾶσθαι, understood strictly inchoatively, ‘to acquire’, has been considered a more serious objection to rendering σκεῦος with body. How can one be said to acquire his own body? The sense of ‘wife’ is supposed to suit the verb, inasmuch as it would then refer to “acquiring”, i.e. ‘marrying’ a wife. Unfortunately, however, this solution is not possible here, because the sense demanded by the context is not a one-occurrence event, but a continuous or repeated action. The Thessalonians are to learn how to continuously κτᾶσθαι their body (or, hypothetically, ‘their wife’) in holiness and honour. The root idea obviously contains both the inchoative and the durative types of action. This is proved by the following considerations: (a) The inchoative sense of ‘to acquire’ ‘to get’ easily passes on to the durative sense ‘to possess’, ‘to have’ (especially in the perfect)⁷⁹. (b) The durative sense of κτᾶσθαι is seen from its compounds, e.g. κατακτάομαι = ‘to have in my possession’⁸⁰. (c) Moreover, derivatives from this root have the durative sense of (continuous) possession⁸¹. (d) In Ignatius the perfect normally has linear sense⁸². (e) Chrysostom himself⁸³, who spoke

⁷⁷ The reflexive pron. in the NT is often used to signal possession. Cf. e.g. 1 Cor 10:33 τὸ ἑαυτοῦ συμφέρον; Mt 8:22 τοὺς ἑαυτῶν νεκρούς; Mk 6:4 ἐν τῇ πατρίδι ἑαυτοῦ; Lk 12:36 τὸν κύριον ἑαυτῶν; Acts 14:14 τὰ ἱμάτια ἑαυτῶν; Rom 4:19 τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σῶμα; 5:8 τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀγάπην; 8:3 τὸν ἑαυτοῦ υἱόν; 1 Thess 2:7 τὰ ἑαυτοῖς τέκνα; 2:8 τὰς ἑαυτῶν ψυχάς.

⁷⁸ Frame, *Thessalonians*, 150. Cf. also Best, *1 Thessalonians*, 161, Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 313, 333, and Holtz, *an die Thessalonicher*, 158.

⁷⁹ Cf. A. N. Jannaris, *An Historical Greek Grammar* etc., London 1897, §1868. For examples see *1 Enoch* 97:8-10; *Aristeas* 229; Philo, *Cherubim* 119; *De Vita Mosis* I, 157; Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 212.

⁸⁰ E.g. Thucydides IV. 86 ἐχθίονα ἀρετὴν κατακτόμενοι.

⁸¹ κτήμα(τα) (‘possession(s)’, from Homer to Modern Greek), ἀκτήμων (‘without possessions’, this, too, from Homer to Modern Greek), κτήτωρ (‘owner’, from Diodorus Siculus to Modern Greek, cf. also *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, ed. G. H. R. Horsley, Vol. 2, Macquarie University, 1982, 89).

⁸² Ignatius, *Ephesians* 1:1, 3; 14:2; 15:1; *Magnesians*, 15:1; *Philadelphians* 1:1; 6:3 (fut.); *Polycarp* 1:3; 8:1.

⁸³ Ἰωάννου Χρυσοστόμου, *πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς*, 454.

practically the same language as Paul, explains the present infinitive κτᾶσθαι duratively: "Ἄρα ἡμεῖς αὐτὸ κτώμεθα, ὅταν ἦ καθαρὸν· ὅταν δὲ ἀκάθαρτον, ἢ ἁμαρτία. (f) There is Papyrological evidence for a durative sense not only for the perfect, but also for the present as well as the future.⁸⁴

Accordingly, of the six occurrences of κτᾶσθαι in the NT (excepting our text), all of which are usually interpreted inchoatively, in two instances the inchoative interpretation is (leaving the Aorist aside, for the moment), problematic; a durative sense would seem to be more suitable, especially in the second text. In Mt 10:9 μὴ κτήσησθε χρυσὸν ... εἰς τὰς ζώνας ὑμῶν, an

⁸⁴ In a number of Papyri the present infinitive κτᾶσθαι occurs in legal documents ensuring the right of possession, use, and disposal of the real estate purchased or inherited, e.g. *SB XVI*, 12946, r, 12 (A.D. 474): ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν κρατεῖν {κρατιν} σε καὶ κυριεύειν ... καὶ ἐξουσίαν σὲ ἔχειν χρᾶσθαι κτᾶσθαι διοικεῖν οἰκονομεῖν περὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐὰν αἰρή [παντὶ τρόπῳ ἀνεμπο]δίστως καὶ ἐξεῖναι [σο]ι ταύτης διὰ παντὸς κυ[ρι]εύειν τῆς [ἀ]ρο(ύ)ρης καὶ δεσπ[ό]ζειν καὶ δι[ο]ικ[εῖν καὶ] [οἰ]κονομεῖν καὶ νέμεσθαι καὶ κτᾶσθαι ἢ καὶ φορολογεῖν καὶ ἐκμισθο(ῦ)ν ... ἀνεμπο]δίστως; *PCair. Mas II*, 67169,7 (A.D. 566-70): καὶ ἐξεῖναι [σο]ι ταύτης διὰ παντὸς κυ[ρι]εύειν τῆς [ἀ]ρο(ύ)ρης καὶ δεσπ[ό]ζειν καὶ δι[ο]ικ[εῖν καὶ] [οἰ]κονομεῖν καὶ νέμεσθαι καὶ κτᾶσθαι ἢ καὶ φορολογεῖν καὶ ἐκμισθο(ῦ)ν ... ἀκωλύτως κ(αὶ) ἀνεμπο]δίστως. It is quite obvious that the meaning of κτᾶσθαι is durative; "to be in possession of". Sometimes κτᾶσθαι occurs before χρᾶσθαι, which might lead us to render κτᾶσθαι with "to take possession of", i.e. "to buy". However, the fact that other Papyri from the same period have the opposite order, as well as the use of other terms preceding which are indicative of ownership, shows that also in these cases κτᾶσθαι has the durative sense of "to be in possession of"; *PDura I*. 26 (A.D. 226): τὴν χάραν αὐτῷ ἔδωκεν εἰς τὸ ἔχειν αὐτὸν κυρίως καὶ βεβαίως εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον κτᾶσθαι χρᾶσθαι πωλεῖν δι[ο]ικεῖν τρόπῳ ᾧ ἂν αἰρήται...; *PLond. V*. 1724,54 (date unknown): κυριεύειν καὶ δεσπόζειν καὶ πωλεῖν καὶ μεταπωλεῖν καὶ οἰκεῖν καὶ κατοικεῖν καὶ οἰκοδομεῖν καὶ ἐποικοδομεῖν, κτᾶσθαι, χρᾶσθαι παντὶ ἀρέσκοντι ὑμῖν τρόπῳ ἀνεπικωλύτως καὶ ἀνεμπο]δίστως; *BGU I*. 316r,20 (A.D. 359): καὶ διὰ χειρός [χιρος], καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτῷ τὸν [προγεγρ(αμμένον)] δοῦλον κυρίως ἔχειν καὶ δεσποτικῶς κτᾶσθ[αι χρᾶσθαι (καὶ)] πωλεῖν διοικεῖν, ὃν ἂν αἰρήται [αιρητε] τρόπον, ἀπὸ τῆς σ[ήμερον] ἡμέρας καὶ εἰς αἰεὶ; *SB VI*. 8987,29 (A.D. 644-5): ἔχειν καὶ κρατεῖν καὶ κυριεύειν καὶ δεσπόζειν τοῦ εἰρημ... [συμποσ]ίου καὶ τῆς μικρᾶς αἴθρας ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἐξῆς καὶ ἅπαντα καὶ διηνεκῆ χρόνον, καὶ [ἔ]χειν ὑμᾶς τὴν ἄδειαν τοῦ κτᾶσθαι, χρᾶσθαι, νέμεσθαι, διοικεῖν, οἰκονομεῖν, βελτιοῦν, φιλοκαλεῖν ... Finally, *POxy II*. 259,6 from A.D. 23 documents the durative sense for the future infinitive κτήσεσθαι: Καίσαρα Νέον Σεβαστὸν Αὐτοκράτορα ἢ [ει] μὴν κτήσεσθαι ἡμ[έ]ρας τρίακοντα [830]8 ἐν αἴσ[ο] [αι] ἀ[πο]καταστήσω ὃν ἡγγύημα [ενγεγυημαι] παρὰ σοῦ ἐκ [τ]ῆς πολιτικῆς φυλα[κ]ῆς.

inchoative translation of this would be “Do not acquire [i.e. put] money in your purses”⁸⁵. But then why does he not use a verb that signifies “put”, since κτήσησθε cannot mean that. The most suitable sense in this context, where a prolonged journey is in view, would be “Do not carry (keep) money in your purses”. The second text is Lk 21:19 ἐν τῇ ὑπομονῇ ὑμῶν κτήσασθε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν. Even if this referred to the eschatological salvation, rather than to possessing (or keeping) their souls in patience—a meaning that ought to be contemplated,—they are not said to obtain or acquire something they do not already have, sc. eternal life (in which case we should have expected ζώή), but to ‘save’, in the sense of ‘to preserve’, ‘to keep’ something they already have, sc. their souls.⁸⁶ This seems to argue for a durative sense in the basic form of the verb, even though the Aorist gives it an aoristic, i.e. a punctiliar aspect in the tense; in other words, the action is viewed as a whole without respect to its linearity.⁸⁷ Bearing in mind that words are no rigid things, and in view of the fact that the NT occurs at a time of transition from ancient to modern Greek, the vocabulary and its syntax are in a state of flux. Nothing militates against a sensitive understanding of the NT as trying to put it in a strait jacket, applying a rigidity that is inspired by what is thought to be classical norms.

But there is more to it. The infinitive κτᾶσθαι is here used closely together with the present infinitive εἰδέναι.⁸⁸ This infinitive colors the meaning of κτᾶσθαι. The verb οἶδα *cum* infinitive signifies “to know (how) to ...”, “to learn (how) to ...” The construction signifies a process of learning, where learning implies repeated attempts or a duration. Thus in

⁸⁵ The sense given by *BAG* and *BAGD* s.v. “acquire gold (in order to put it) into your (money) belts” is forced and artificial, dictated by the assumption of inchoative action in the basic form of the verb.

⁸⁶ Differently from Mark, Luke, by interposing vs.18, seems to have left the thought of martyrdom (vs. 16) behind him and to be thinking in vs. 19 only of perseverance.

⁸⁷ G. P. Carras, “Jewish Ethics and Gentile Converts. Remarks on 1 Thess 4,3-8” in R.F. Collins (ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, Leuven 1990, cites Lk 18:12, following *LSJ*, but κτῶμαι here is certainly inchoative, since the tithing took place at the acquisition.

⁸⁸ The construction does not occur anywhere else according to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* except in Patristic quotations of 1 Thess 4:4. The two words occur once in Aristotle’s commentator Eustratius; the words, however, occur in the reverse order and in separate constructions (clauses).

Phil 4:12 Paul says οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν, whereby he means that he has learned how to live in want and how to live in plenty—something that has happened repeatedly, during which time he has learned it. The infinitive εἰδέναι occurs once *cum* infinitive: Col 4:6: εἰδέναι ... ἀποκρίνεσθαι “to know / to learn how to answer”. This is precisely the sense in 1 Th 4:4. The Thessalonians are to learn how to κτᾶσθαι their σκεῦος in holiness and honor. The understandings of “wife” for σκεῦος and of “to acquire”, “to get”, in the sense of “to marry” for κτᾶσθαι are here impossible. Κτᾶσθαι not only in its own right, but also by virtue of the modification of εἰδέναι, has here the durative sense of “to have in possession”, “to have under control”, “to keep”. This implies that the interpretation of σκεῦος as “body” is unexceptionable. The meaning then is: “that each one of you learn / know how to keep (under control) his body in sanctification and honor”.

5. Vs. 5. is fairly straightforward without any words that are really difficult to fit in the context. Having given them in vv. 3-4 a positive admonition to practise holiness in their everyday life, he now parenthetically puts the matter negatively, that is, what they are not to do, by referring to the way of gentile life. Here we need not exaggerate the vices of the heathen, as is common with interpreters. For that matter their quality of life was, from the Christian point of view, not much different from the quality of life in our Western World.⁸⁹ Nor does there seem to be any reason to suppose that Church morals were worse than they are in the average Church today.⁹⁰ It is enough to state that the quality of life expected of the followers of Jesus was diametrically different from the quality of life rife round about them.

⁸⁹ For example, it is to be seriously doubted whether homosexuality and other perversions were more rife in Greece and Rome than they are in the Western World. As for incest, which in modern societies has become a daily occurrence, it “did not occur among the gentiles” (1 Cor 5:1), which explains why there is no proper word for it in Greek (αἰμομιξία is a late (apparently Christian) formation).

⁹⁰ See my comments in “Fornication and Concession? Interpreting 1 Cor 7,1-7” in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer), BETL 125), Leuven 1996, 544.

6. Vs. 6a: τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ has caused a great many problems. The articular infinitives have been thought to introduce a new item⁹¹, and this has opened the way to seeing behind Paul's words a Christian scrutiny of dishonesty in business transactions. This interpretation has been buttressed by a mistaken exegesis of ἐν τῷ πράγματι as 'business', and then been corroborated by the apparent impossibility of understanding ἀδελφός here in any other way.

The articular infinitive occurs some 33 times in the NT, of which some 20 times in the nominative neuter, and always preceded by a preposition, apart from three instances. These are: Rom 14:13 τοῦτο κρίνατε ... τὸ μὴ τιθέναι πρόσκομμα, where the article of necessity substantivizes the infinitive after the demonstrative τοῦτο; Rom 14:21 καλὸν τὸ μὴ φάγειν κρέα, in which the infinitive as the predicate of καλόν [ἐστίν] is necessarily articular, and 2 Cor 2:1 ἔκρινα τοῦτο ... τὸ μὴ πάλιν ... ἐλθεῖν, which is similar to Rom 14:13. In our text the articular infinitives are necessitated by the digressional vs. 5, which has interrupted the flow from vv. 3-4. Τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν etc. thus marks the end of the digression of vs. 5, and the resumption of the same theme that formed the subject of vv. 3-4, abstention from πορνεία. Ἐν τῷ πράγματι can under no circumstances be referred to any business transactions.⁹² The meaning is 'the matter in hand', 'the subject under consideration'⁹³. The two infinitives ὑπερβαίνειν and πλεονεκτεῖν may be used of business matters, but are not typically business language. The *hapax legomenon* ὑπερβαίνειν can have positive⁹⁴ ('to go beyond', 'to pass over') or negative ('to overstep') significance. It is often used of going beyond the legitimate bounds, of transgressing. This is the meaning here though what is being transgressed is not specified. Πλεονεκτεῖν (only in Paul: 5 times) means 'to take advantage of', 'to outwit', 'to cheat'. In no one

⁹¹ R. Beauvery, "Πλεονεκτεῖν in 1 Thess 4.6a" *VD* 33 (1955), 78 ff.

⁹² In Rom 16:2 πράγματι refers to any matter that may arise during Phoebe's sojourn in Rome. This may include business, but this is not the uppermost idea here. In 1 Cor 6:1 πρᾶγμα refers to a law-suit. 2 Cor 7:11 ἐν τῷ πράγματι simply means 'matter', though the issue behind it is probably the case of incest (1 Cor 5:1).

⁹³ Similarly taken by R. F. Collins, *Studies on the First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 335.

⁹⁴ E.g. Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 213 βραχέα βούλομαι εἰπεῖν, τὰ δὲ πολλὰ ὑπερβήσομαι; Chrysostom *Πρὸς Θεσσαλονικεῖς*, 450, uses it positively as an equivalent to περισσεύητε (4:1).

of the other four instances is the word used of business.⁹⁵ Nor is πλεονεξία particularly collocated with words having business or sexual import. The meaning is simply ‘greed’ of any sort.⁹⁶

7. Finally ὁδελφός. The reason why this term has been so problematic to fit in the context has been partly the parameters assumed and partly the problematic interpretations of the various crucial words: πορνεία, σκεῦος, κτᾶσθαι, as well as the articular infinitives⁹⁷.

The recognition that the paraenesis is directed to the entire Church, i.e. married and unmarried men and married and unmarried women, that it does not address any concrete instances of fornication or adultery, but instead forms part of the general apostolic exhortation to all Christians in view of the

⁹⁵ In 2 Cor 2:11 Paul seeks to hinder Satan from taking advantage of the Corinthian Church. In 7:2; 12:17, 18 the sense is regularly that Paul disowns having ever misused his position as Apostle or founder of the Corinthian Church to attain personal gains.

⁹⁶ H. Baltensweiler (“Erwägungen zu 1. Thess. 4,3-8” TZ 19 (1963),1-13) has advanced the thesis that πρᾶγμα refers to a law-suit which has in view the marriage of the ἐπίκληρος daughter. According to Solon’s laws a female heiress was to marry one of her relations in order to keep the property within the family. From this awkward situations might arise, and these were left to the discretion of the judge. The worst that might occur was that even if the heiress were married, her relative might be disposed to claim his rights and force her to divorce her husband to marry him (for the law see Plato, *Leges* 924d-926d; cf. Aristotle, *The Constitution of Athens* VIII.5. In Plutarch’s time this law was considered ἄτοπος καὶ γελοῖος (*Solon*, XX,2-3)). It is argued that in Paul’s Jewish eyes such a union would be considered incestuous. His admonition then would be that a Christian brother should not press his inheritance rights and force a sister to divorce her husband — the brother!—in order to marry him. This highly imaginary interpretation is far from convincing. Even if this old Athenian law was current in Thessalonike in Paul’s day, it is highly unlikely that in the small group of Christians in Thessalonike such a rare case would have arisen. Besides, who would have divined Paul’s mind that by the defrauded brother he meant the husband of an ἐπίκληρος daughter? If any refutation is needed, Best’s (*1 Thessalonians*, 164) will suffice.

⁹⁷ N. Baumert, “Brautwerbung. Das einheitliche Thema von 1 Thess 4,3-8” in R. F. Collins, *The Thessalonian Correspondence*, 316-39, building partly on Maurer’s and partly on Baltensweiler’s theses as well as on a number of questionable exegetical judgments, comes to the fantastical conclusion that the main issue is concerned with courting or wooing a (prospective) wife: “Aber dieser ‘Fall’ bestünde nun darin, daß jemand durch πορνεία die zu einem anderen gehörende Braut an sich zu binden suchte ...”

dangers with which they are surrounded, is a basic presupposition for interpreting the bearing terms in their true context and significance. It has been pointed out above that *πορνεία* refers to illicit sexual relations, not only outside marriage but also—being the general term for such relations—covers the case of adultery as well. Moreover, we have seen that *σκεῦος* refers to the body of every Christian member irrespective of sex, and that *κτᾶσθαι* (together with *εἰδέναι*) has durative sense, the paraenesis being that *all* the members of the Thessalonian Church, men and women, are exhorted to keep their bodies in holiness and honor. At this point a parenthesis intervenes, which in negative manner tells the Thessalonian Christians not to conform to gentile habits. Following this digression, Paul resumes the thought of *πορνεία*, and this time applies it to the other person that is thereby injured. In vv. 3-4 Paul spoke of the hypothetical Christian—man or woman—who might take the initiative in committing *πορνεία*, whether in the sense of fornication or of adultery. A Christian's involvement in fornication or adultery implied that he or she did not live in holiness and honor. What is said in vv. 3-4 and by extension in vs. 5, is concerned with one's personal standing with God. The standpoint here is that of personal purity (as in 1 Cor 6:15-16). However, in the case of adultery there is more damage that is being done over and above the damage done to one's own self. So, in vs. 6 Paul takes up the injured person in the case of adultery. This means that Paul says nothing about the other person involved in the act of adultery. The reason why he does not explicitly point out the adultery partner, is that that person by having consented, obviously shares in the guilt of the initiative taker. There is, therefore, only reason to speak of the third party, the deceived husband, or the deceived wife. The term *ἀδελφός* is, of course, quite clearly not to be taken strictly sex-wise of a male member, but in accordance with the genius of the Greek language, as a generic depiction of an *ἀδελφός* or an *ἀδελφή*, according as the case may be. However, although both possibilities are contemplated, the greater likelihood is that a male member in the Church might take the initiative toward a female member, and in that case the person injured would be an *ἀδελφός* rather than an *ἀδελφή*.

It seems to me that this is the most straightforward interpretation of Paul's words, their collocation, and the structure of the passage. In my

opinion this interpretation satisfies all the conditions, and interprets the text homogeneously, without leaving any loose ends.

V. The Place of the Paraenesis in Chs. 4-5

Two points stand out immediately. The first is that unlike the other paraeneses of chs. 4-5, which are introduced by *περὶ δέ*, possibly implying the receipt by Paul of the Thessalonians' queries on these various subjects, our paraenesis is not introduced by any such phrase. The second point is that the series of paraeneses of chs. 4-5 is introduced by precisely this paraenesis. Its position implies that it has a special place of importance. These two points, that our paraenesis is differently introduced from the others and that it heads the others, is also indicative of its being the most general paraenesis, and in this respect, too, we have another confirmation of the insight, above, that the question Paul is treating is not a concrete question, but one of general applicability. This is confirmatory of the viability of the above interpretation.