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A Tale of Two Baptisms: Ritual and Social Order in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

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The reason why we cannot say that Paul is concerned over baptism is because 1 Cor 1 does not deal with baptism *per se*, but rather in whose name baptism is associated. Paul's concern is clearly identified in terms of two names with which baptism is associated, the name of Christ (1:13c implied by the rhetorical question) and the name of Paul (1:15). Paul's concern about who he baptised is inextricably linked by how many would claim to have been baptised in his own name, for the benefit of his patronage. Thus, in v. 17, Paul is not contrasting baptism versus the proclamation of the gospel, simply because he is not dealing with baptism in this passage but rather with the nominal authority implicated in the ritual washings. Thus, the contrast in v. 17 is a contrast between baptism with versus without the gospel.

A Tale of Two Baptisms: Ritual and Social Order in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

1 Cor 1:10-17 is a text that has perplexed scholars from two vantage points. On the one hand, there is the question of what is the relationship between baptism and the social divisions evident in the Corinthian *ekklesia*; on the other hand, there is the question of how to reconcile Paul's apparent devaluation of baptism in 1:17 with Paul's other baptismal references in 1 Corinthians and his wider corpus. This study seeks to explain both questions in terms of the relationship between ritual and social order. The ritual of baptism functions in 1 Cor 1:10-17 as a mean by which Paul can contrast two incompatible social orders in terms of two antithetical baptisms. Baptism 'in the name of Christ' obligates the Corinthians to live out a shared social order defined by the ethos of the cross. However, conflicts centering on status and patronage evidence a perpetuation of Graeco-Roman values among the Corinthians, which Paul sees as in effect compromising their baptisms as performed 'in the name of Paul', that is, performed for the patronage and benefaction of mere men. Given the relationship between ritual and social order, it is in light of these two contrasting baptisms – baptism 'in the name of Christ' (1:13c) and baptism 'in the name of Paul' (1:15) – that the baptism-gospel contrast in 1:17a is to be read. Paul is not contrasting baptism and the gospel *per se*; rather, he is contrasting baptism *with* and baptism *without* the gospel, the former representing the identifying characteristic of Christian ritual and social life.

By invoking 'the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' in his call to unity at Corinth in 1:10, Paul recalls the power inherent in his apostolicity that was granted to him by Christ according to the will of God in v. 1, a power which has in turn transformed the Corinthians into ἄδελφοί (1:1, 10, 11, 26; 2:1; etc) constituting ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ (1:2).¹ Having been 'called into

¹ For an overview of the socio-economic and cultic contexts of Corinth, see Steven S. Friesen, et al (eds.), *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* (Boston: Brill,

fellowship with God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1:9), this community of siblings shares a common sanctification (ἡ γιάσμενοις) in Christ Jesus, as saints by calling (κλητοῖς ἁγίοις) (1:2; cf. 1:26), enriched in all speech and knowledge by the grace of God (χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ) (1:4-5), and awaiting in eager expectation for the apocalyptic return of Christ in vv. 7-8 and the vindication of his Lordship in the renewal of all things.

However, this shared identity, this κοινωνία, is clearly threatened at Corinth. Paul invokes the name of the Lord Jesus in v. 10 in order to heal the σχίσματα (v.10) and the ἕριδες (v.11) that have developed among the Corinthians. As Paul observes, these divisions among the Corinthians who share a common confession of the Lordship of Christ have penetrated the very rite of baptism itself (1:13c, 15). Instead of ritually demarcating the ἐκκλησία from οἱ ἀπολλύμενοι (1:18), οὗτος αἰὼν (1:20), and ἡ σοφία τοῦ κόσμου (1:20-21), Corinthian baptisms are creating new boundaries *within* the faith-community, forming groups within a group, and are thus dividing Christ (1:13a). Paul responds with a rather blistering disavowal of their baptisms in 1:14-16, thanking God that he had not baptized any more than he seems to have reluctantly recalled, asserting that Christ had not sent him to baptize but to proclaim the gospel (1:17), the very message and power of God that should be unifying the Corinthians as brothers and sisters in Christ (1:18ff).

Among the ten references to baptism in 1 Corinthians, six occur in 1 Cor 1:13-17 and are thus integrally related to Paul's immediate response to the divisive behavior among the Corinthians described in vv. 11-12. However, Paul's rationale with respect to the relationship between baptism and the divisions is obscure. Was the baptism ritual being altered or abused by the Corinthians? What is the nature of Paul's thankfulness for having baptized so few at Corinth? And why does Paul draw what appears to be such a sharp distinction between baptism and evangelizing in v. 17? Is Paul deemphasizing his role as baptizer, or the rite of baptism itself?

In what follows, I shall first rehearse the attempts that have been made at explaining the relationship between baptism and the divisions at Corinth on the one hand, and the relationship between baptism in 1 Cor 1:10-17 and Paul's other baptismal references in 1 Corinthians and his wider corpus on the other hand. Having identified the gaps in these proposals, I shall then exposit a ritual theory that explains the reciprocal relationship between rituals and social order that I believe to be most relevant to the issues surrounding our present passage. I will then demonstrate links between ritual and social order in 1 Cor 1:10-17 which will account for the community dynamics at Corinth. My thesis is that the reciprocity between ritual and social order inherent in ritualized processes illuminates 1 Cor 1:10-17 as exemplifying two distinct social orders represented by two baptisms, baptism 'in the name of Christ' and what Paul rhetorically designates as baptism 'in the name of Paul'. As such, Paul creates a dichotomy between two ritualized social orders that does not pit baptism against the gospel, but rather pits baptism *with* against baptism *without* the gospel.

2010); Daniel Schowalter and Steven Friesen (eds.), *Urban Religion in Roman Corinth: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). For an overview of the history of scholarship on the Corinthian correspondences, see Edward Adams and David G. Horrell (eds.), *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004).

I. A Survey of Proposals for Baptism in 1 Cor 1:10-17

We may divide the various interpretations of 1 Cor 1:10-17 into two main groups: i) those that attempt to answer the question as to the relationship between the baptism references in vv. 13-17 and the divisions in v. 12; and ii) those that attempt to account for Paul's rhetoric in vv. 13-17 while integrating that rhetoric with Paul's other references to baptism (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13; Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-4). I shall look at each of these interpretations in turn.

II. Baptism as the Cause of Divisions and its Deniers

Though there is broad agreement among interpreters that the divisions in v. 12 involved allegiances indicative of Graeco-Roman patron-client relationships,² there are various hypotheses as to the ways in which baptism may have contributed to these divisions. To date, there are three main proposals for baptism-based allegiances: the influence of the mystery cults, the hierarchical nature of ritual, and the influence of Roman bathing practices. However, some scholars deny that baptism made any significant contribution to the divisions. We shall survey each of these proposals in turn in order to determine the extent to which baptism may have played a role in the divisions at Corinth.

Scholars such as Hans Conzelmann,³ C.K. Barrett,⁴ and A.J.M. Wedderburn,⁵ have posited that the special bond forged between the initiate and priest in the mystery religions may have influenced the practice and appropriation of baptisms at Corinth. The History-of-Religions School had laid the research foundation for exploring parallels between the practices constitutive of the mysteries and those of Pauline Christianity,⁶ and while many of their proposals have since been discredited, the reciprocity inherent in mystery cults has stood the test of time. Most recently, the mysteries hypothesis has come to the foreground in Stephen Chester's monograph on the dynamics of conversion evident in the Corinthian correspondence.⁷ Chester's study builds on what appears now to be a consensus on the nature of the factions at Corinth, namely, the households that were baptized together provided the social structure whereby divisions between heads of households would have been amplified

² See, e.g., John K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth*. JSNTSup Series 75 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); L.L. Welborn, "On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Cor 1-4 and Ancient Politics," *JBL* 106.1 (1987): 85-111; Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 93-4, 102-4; Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 19-35; Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 55-58.

³ *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 35.

⁴ *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, second edition (London: A&C Black, 1971), 47.

⁵ *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology Against Its Graeco-Roman Background* WUNT 44 (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987), 248-9.

⁶ Cf. the discussion in Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Neukirchener Verlag: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1991), 1:148ff.

⁷ *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 267-316.

by their *clientele* – extended family, slaves, freedmen, hired laborers and business associates.⁸ But why would this factionalism be associated with *baptism*? Stephen Chester has made the argument that the Corinthians appropriated their baptisms in a manner analogous to initiations associated with mystery cults. Chester argues that if baptism was understood by Paul to confer the Spirit in 1 Cor 12:13, then it is a short step to see how the Corinthians exploited this pneumatic conferral in accordance with the frames of reference indicative of Graeco-Roman initiations.⁹ Besides the potential semiotic affinities between some mystery purifications and Christian baptism,¹⁰ initiation into mystery cults created a special tie between the initiate and the priest performing the rite, such as Lucius’ reference to the priest Mithras as ‘father’ in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 11.25, 21, and the various inscriptions to the ‘fathers’ of Isiac collegia.¹¹ It is this relationship that can account for the loyalty factions that developed at Corinth around the initiation rite, which Chester speculates may have centered on the three persons Paul had baptized, Crispus, Gaius and Stephanas.¹²

Furthermore, initiation into the mysteries served as a means for divine favor potentially manifested in social advancement. Here Chester draws from the latest research into mystery religions that have, for all practical purposes, debunked earlier theories of a magical sacramental initiation that united the participant with the dying and rising of a god.¹³ Instead, mystery cults may have represented more of a means to gain divine favor and advantage as potentially reflected in social and financial status. Again in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, Lucius attributes “a successful legal career to the goodwill of Isis and that of her consort Osiris (11.6, 28). In effect, the divine couple became his patrons, granting blessings in return for continued devotion.”¹⁴ As Wedderburn notes, this union with the divine found in the mystery cults “involves not so much a change of nature or substance as a change of status and potential.”¹⁵ This association between initiation and social advancement could account for the Corinthian sense of exalted spiritual status in 2:1-16.

As an alternative to the mystery cult hypothesis, Richard DeMaris’s monograph on ritual in the NT uses ritual theory to explain the divisions at Corinth. He sees 1 Cor 1:10-17 as evidence against the consensus view that baptism was, by the time of Paul, the universal and self-evident rite of initiation among early Christians.¹⁶ Instead, DeMaris argues that 1 Corinthians gives evidence that baptism was in fact the cause of controversy rather than the amelioration of it. He faults commentators who too easily dismiss Paul’s forgetting whom he baptized as an anomaly specific to the Corinthian situation.¹⁷ DeMaris argues that Paul’s forgetfulness in fact

⁸ Chester, *Conversion* 294; cf. David G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 117.

⁹ Chester, *Conversion*, 282-3.

¹⁰ Cf. the washings associated with the Isis cult in *Metamorphoses* Book 11, the Eleusinian mysteries, etc. See the list of extant mystery cults in Corinth compiled by Chester, *Conversion*, 303-316.

¹¹ See Chester, *Conversion*, 291, n.84 for further references.

¹² Chester, *Conversion*, 293-4.

¹³ Chester, *Conversion*, 267-74.

¹⁴ Chester, *Conversion*, 272-3.

¹⁵ Wedderburn, *Baptism*, 341; Chester, *Conversion*, 279-80.

¹⁶ Richard E. DeMaris, *The New Testament in Its Ritual World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 15-20.

¹⁷ DeMaris, *New Testament*, 16.

betrays uneasiness about his involvement in baptism and his unhappiness that the rite has contributed to divisiveness among the Corinthian house churches and within them (1:10-13)... A few verses later, in 1:17, it becomes abundantly clear that he is trying to distance himself from baptism altogether when he makes the surprising claim ... that he was sent to proclaim but not to baptize... Paul certainly does not take baptism for granted in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians...¹⁸

DeMaris accounts for the allegiances forged at baptism by noting that rituals have the effect of creating not merely social relationships but social *hierarchies*. Quoting Catherine Bell, DeMaris observes, “Ritual practices are themselves the very production and negotiation of power relations.”¹⁹ Thus, the practice of submitting oneself to a baptism at the hand of another “expressed and established a ranking between baptizand and baptizer.”²⁰ As conflict arises from members of the community dissenting from the distinctions and hierarchies that the ritual creates, we can then see how Paul would distance himself from baptismal practices that contributed to the formation of these competing circles.

In a response to DeMaris’ hypothesis that baptism in Corinth may have been a ritualized subversion of Roman imperial ideology, J. Brian Tucker proposes examining Corinthian baptism in light of Roman bathing practices.²¹ Building on the original proposal of Eduard Stommel in 1959 and its development in the work of the liturgiologist, Bryan Spinks, Tucker explores the patronage connections inherent in Roman bathing practices and its potential impact on early Christian baptism. Specifically, the *clientele* relationships inherent in Roman recreational washing “were imposed on the relationship between the baptizand and the officiant of the identity-forming rite.”²² This observation entails the fact that, contra DeMaris, far from subverting or resisting Roman imperial ideology, the hierarchical, status-oriented ideology inherent in Roman bathing practices was in fact affirmed in Corinthian baptism and thus contributed to the divisions within the Corinthian community.

There have been as of late several historical reconstructions of the Corinthian context that marginalize or deny the role of baptism in the formation of the divisions, turning their attention more to social and economic factors as potential causes for their factionalism. L.L. Welborn has argued that partisanship, patronage, and politics were all involved in the divisions, interpreting *σχίσμα* as evidence that the Corinthian church was comprised of “factions engaged in a struggle for power,” noting that *μερίς* is a common term for “party” in Greek (cf. Plb. 8.21.9).²³ Welborn in the process ignores the role of baptism altogether. Andrew Clarke’s influential monograph argues that the social prestige and patronage based on economic status in the Roman world began forging competing alignments within the

¹⁸ DeMaris, *New Testament*, 16.

¹⁹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81, 196; DeMaris, *New Testament*, 30.

²⁰ DeMaris, *New Testament*, 30.

²¹ J. Brian Tucker, “Baths, Baptism, and Patronage: The Continuing Role of Roman Social Identity in Corinth,” in Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker (eds), *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation*, LNTS, 428 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 173-88.

²² Tucker, “Baths,” 175.

²³ Welborn, “On the Discord,” 87. Cf. M.M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), 68, 70; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 33 sees ‘party allegiance’ behind the divisions; so, too, Chester, *Conversion*, 241-2.

Corinthian church.²⁴ Thus, for Clarke, baptism at the hands of another could have easily been interpreted in terms of the formation of patronal relationships.²⁵ Christof Strüder, like Welborn, ignores baptism altogether and instead opts for understanding the division between the Corinthians as an inchoate clash over preferred authorities.²⁶

Each of these socio-economic proposals marginalizes or ignores entirely a role baptism may have played in the divisions, and as a result, they offer little rationale for Paul's several-fold reference to baptism in 1:13-17. The lacuna left by these recent studies has inspired Maria Pascuzzi to find an alternative understanding for the baptized-based allegiances at Corinth.²⁷ Pascuzzi rejects Chester's attempt to revive the explanation for the baptism-based allegiances provided by the mystery rituals in that she finds the supposed parallels with the mysteries unpersuasive. In particular, Pascuzzi is unconvinced about the special bond forged between the initiator and initiate in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, book 11, Chester's most significant piece of evidence. Instead, Pascuzzi argues that there is nothing in the passage to indicate that baptism itself was causing the problems. Pascuzzi posits that Paul may have been responding to an Apollos-party that accused him of being a 'mere baptizer', thus accounting for his baptism-gospel antithesis in v. 17.²⁸ The advantage of Pascuzzi's hypothesis is two-fold: first, it situates the role of baptism within the relational dynamics between Paul and Apollos, which looms large in Corinth (1:12; 3:4-6, 22; 4:6; 16:12);²⁹ second, this reconstruction is able to account for why Paul drops the whole discussion over the role of the baptizer after v. 17.

Pascuzzi's dismissal of a special relationship forged between initiate and initiator in the mysteries goes against the grain of recent scholarship. For example, Richard Gordon has highlighted how individual Fathers in Mithraic congregations expected deference in light of their contributions and donations (such as cult furniture).³⁰ He notes an inscription in Ostia where one Diocles dedicated his altar to Mithras *ob honorem C. Lucreti Menandri Patris*, as a mark of respect to the Father of the congregation (CIMRM 225). A secret utterance known as the Mithraic *symbolon* addresses the initiate as *συνδέξτε πατὸς ἄγαθοῦ*, 'hand-shaker' of an illustrious Father (Firmicus Maternus, *De errore* 5.2). And the best-preserved lines at S. Prisca request that the *sanctus Pater*, the reverend Father, should 'receive the Lions as they offer incense', *accipe thuridremos ... accipe Leones* (lines 16f.). Thus Gordon concludes: "All this suggests that we should think of relations within Mithraic congregations at least partly in terms of patronage."³¹ Further, Pascuzzi does not address what members of the Corinthian church

²⁴ Clarke, *Secular*, 102-4; cf. Witherington, *Conflict*, 19-35; Martin, *Corinthian Body* 55-58; Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 89.

²⁵ Clarke, *Secular*, 93.

²⁶ Christof W. Strüder, "Preferences not Parties: the Background of 1 Cor 1,12," *ETL* 79 (2003) 431-55, esp. 432, 447.

²⁷ Maria Pascuzzi, "Baptism-based Allegiance and the Divisions in Corinth: A Reexamination of 1 Corinthians 1:13-17," *CBQ* 71.4 (2009) 813-29.

²⁸ Pascuzzi, "Baptism-based Allegiance," 822-28.

²⁹ Cf. Corin Mihaila, *The Paul-Apollos Relationship and Paul's Stance Toward Greco-Roman Rhetoric: An Exegetical and Socio-Historical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-4* (London: Continuum International Publishing, 2009).

³⁰ Richard Gordon, "Institutionalized Religious Options: Mithraism," in Jörg Rüpke (ed), *A Companion to Roman Religion* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 392-405.

³¹ "Institutionalized," 402.

would have considered a ‘mere baptizer’ to have been, nor does she explain how such a slogan could be attributed plausibly to Paul who founded the church at Corinth.

More importantly, Pascuzzi offers a false dichotomy. There is no reason to account for the divisions in 1:12 in an either/or manner, entirely socio-economic factors or ritual factors, since the social and the ritual intertwine. DeMaris has demonstrated amply how social hierarchies established in ritual can be the occasion for conflict, and the ubiquity of patronage arrangements among social interactions in rituals and bathing would have rendered baptism vulnerable to such misappropriations. We are on relatively sure footing, given the Graeco-Roman proclivity to social hierarchies and the establishment of hierarchies embedded in ritualized activity, in positing that the baptisms at Corinth made at least some contribution to the divisions within the Corinthian community. If we had to choose between the frames of reference constitutive of the mystery rituals or Roman public bathing practices, the role of the Spirit in baptism (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13), which Tucker does not consider, would tip the scale toward the mysteries, and thus the dynamics constitutive of the mystery cults would be more conducive to Christian washings than the patronage inherent in Roman bathing practices. The problem, however, is that even if we are able to approximate the cause of these divisions, we still have to account for Paul’s rhetoric in vv. 13-17. Why is Paul thankful he baptized so few (1:14)? What does he mean by baptism ‘in the name of Paul’ (1:15)? Why does he draw such a sharp distinction between baptizing and evangelizing in v. 17a?

III. Accounting for Paul’s Attitude toward Baptism

The foregoing questions are the topic of the second group of interpretive proposals. Alongside the ambiguity on the relationship between baptism and the Corinthian divisions are questions concerning the nature of Paul’s ‘thankfulness’ that he didn’t participate in more baptisms than he did in v. 14, his ‘forgetfulness’ of whom he baptized in v. 16, and the baptism-gospel dichotomy in 1:17a. The problem is that an apparent discrepancy emerges when these verses are set beside Paul’s other allusions to baptism that appear to ascribe a high degree of significance to the ritual (cf. 1 Cor 6:11; 12:13; Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3-4). Some scholars have taken care to point out that the apparent depreciation of baptism in this pericope is not representative of Paul’s view of baptism. Beasley-Murray, commenting on what appears to be Paul’s relativizing of baptism in comparison with the importance of proclaiming the gospel in 1:17, writes, “If this is not a minimizing of the significance of baptism, it seems perilously close to it.”³² Yet, Beasley-Murray notes that “the man who formulated the baptismal theology reflected in Rom. 6.1ff, Gal. 3.26 f, Col. 2.11f did not think lightly of baptism and would not have wished to give the impression that he did.”³³ Conzelmann claims that this verse emphasizes Paul’s work as a proclaimer of the gospel, not a baptizer, and therefore Paul “does not devalue baptism, but defines the personal commission to which Paul is subject.”³⁴ So, too, Schrage, who states: “Nicht Zeitnot und nicht Geringschätzung der Taufe oder des »Organisatorischen« gegenüber dem »Geistigen«, sondern rechte Selbsteinschätzung und Selbstbeschränkung des Paulus ergibt sich aus V 17a.”³⁵ Thiselton is more nuanced, noting

³² *Baptism*, 178.

³³ *Baptism*, 178-9.

³⁴ *1 Corinthians*, 36; cf. David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 53.

³⁵ *Der erste Brief*, 157.

that since baptism and the Lord's Supper each proclaim ritually the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-11; 1 Cor 11:24-27), then Paul is distancing himself from the *performance* of baptisms, "with its emphasis on ministerial agency."³⁶

Other scholars are not so convinced and have instead taken Paul's comments to be a clear indicator that baptism was not particularly important to Paul. C.K. Barrett, commenting on 1:17, writes: "I cannot understand 1 Cor 1:14-17 as implying anything less than a relative depreciation of baptism."³⁷ G. Barth sees Paul as subsuming or subordinating baptism to evangelizing.³⁸ James D.G. Dunn argues that 1 Cor 1:10-17 indicates that

Paul himself was evidently anxious lest the Corinthians make a false or too high evaluation of their baptism. ... In each case Paul deliberately deemphasizes baptism. ... He could recall baptizing only Crispus and Gaius, and he almost forgot to mention the household of Stephanas (1.14-16) – so, not a series of particularly significant or memorable events so far as Paul himself was concerned. So far as he was concerned, his mission was to preach the gospel, not to baptize (1.17) – an interesting comment on the role and relative importance attributed by Paul to baptism within the complex of conversion and initiation.³⁹

Ben Witherington begins his chapter on Pauline baptism by commenting: "1 Corinthians says clearly and succinctly that Paul is glad he did not baptize more Corinthians, but we surely cannot imagine him ever saying 'I thank God I did not convert more Corinthians' ... Clearly, baptism is not at the top of Paul's list of things to worry about."⁴⁰

There is, however, a fundamental problem with this line of interpretation. Dunn alludes to the problem when he comments that the Corinthians thought that baptism (and the Lord's Supper) provided "a kind of spiritual inoculation and guarantee against subsequent rejection by God."⁴¹ Witherington, too, dismisses what he calls "the overly magical or overly sacramental view of baptism" at Corinth.⁴² Dunn's allusion to what has been termed a 'magical sacramentalism' on the part of the Corinthians is inextricably linked to a supposed over-realized, or what Fee calls "spiritualized," eschatology at Corinth.⁴³ Because they associate the presence of the Spirit with the eschaton, the Corinthians believe they are experiencing life in the present on a higher spiritual plane above the material and physical. It is the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper that guarantee this present experience of salvation and thus provide a guarantee of future salvation, irrespective of their moral behavior.⁴⁴

³⁶ A. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Publishing Company, 2000), 143.

³⁷ *Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 66.

³⁸ Gerhard Barth, *Die Taufe in frühchristlicher Zeit* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 103.

³⁹ *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 449-50.

⁴⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Troubled Waters: The Real New Testament Theology of Baptism* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 79.

⁴¹ *Theology of Paul*, 449.

⁴² *Troubled Waters*, 80.

⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 12; cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *NTS* 24:4 (1978): 510-26.

⁴⁴ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 167; cf. Chester, *Conversion*, 337-8.

However, it is precisely this over-realised eschatology that has been called into question as of late. The groundbreaking work of John Barclay has demonstrated that the Corinthians are not guilty of over-realized eschatology but rather of not sharing Paul's apocalyptic framework for history where the future will be radically different than the present.⁴⁵ Paul's rhetoric toward the believers at Corinth evidences that he finds their attitudes and practices far too accepting of the practices and beliefs characteristic of the Graeco-Roman world. The Corinthian church therefore lacked sufficient social and ethical *boundaries* between themselves and the wider Graeco-Roman world. Their factions over leaders in 1:10-12 (cf. 3:3-5) is but a prelude to a whole list of problems within the nascent Christian community: there are disputes between litigants in 6:1-8, a conflict between the 'Weak' and the 'Strong' over εἰ δωλόθυτα in chapters 8-10, and shameful exclusions over the Lord's Supper in 11:17-34. Hence, those Corinthians who consider themselves πνευματικοί and ψυχικοί "practise their faith while remaining fully integrated into Corinthian society, taking part in the social, economic, civic, legal and even religious aspects of life in the city."⁴⁶ This reassessment of the Corinthian social context has in effect pulled the rug out from under not only the magical sacramentalist hypothesis, but also many of the proposals that attempt to account for Paul's apparent relativization of baptism. In light of Paul's concerns over social and ethical boundaries, what the above baptismal interpretations would in effect amount to is that Paul is attempting to strengthen and fortify the social and ethical boundaries around the Corinthians while at the same time deemphasizing or undermining the distinctly Christian boundary-forming processes entailed in baptism, resulting in an incoherent analysis of the relationship between baptism and the Corinthian epistolary context.

In sum, two approaches – divisions and discrepancies – represent the main attempts at explaining the role of baptism in this pericope. Our concern is to examine the text in light of a ritual logic that accounts for the relationship between baptism and the social factions on the one hand while relating baptism to the overall Corinthian situation, which is the strengthening and fortifying of social and ethical boundaries circumscribing the *ekklesia*. With these two goals in mind, we shall examine the reciprocity that exists between the socio-ethical order of a people group and their ritualized activity. I will then argue that this reciprocity sheds new light on the role of baptism in Paul's understanding of the divisions at Corinth as well as the logic of his response.

IV. Rituals and Social Order

Since Emile Durkheim, theorists in the field of ritual studies have recognized the social significance of ritualized activities.⁴⁷ According to the cultural anthropologist, Roy A. Rappaport, all ritualized social orders entail what he terms 'ultimate sacred postulates'.⁴⁸ A

⁴⁵ John M.G. Barclay, "Thessalonica and Corinth: Social Contrasts in Pauline Christianity," *JSNT* 47 (1992), 49-74, 64.

⁴⁶ Adams, *Constructing*, 100; cf. Barclay, "Thessalonica," 70. See, too, C.K. Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth: Redefining the System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 28, 98; Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 107; Mihaila, *Paul-Apollos*, 107-8.

⁴⁷ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. by Joseph Ward Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954); cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Aldine, 1969); Bell, *Ritual*.

⁴⁸ Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 263ff.

postulate is sacred if it has the quality of absolute unquestionableness and certainty.⁴⁹ What is interesting about ultimate sacred postulates is that they are generally highly abstract, that is, they are full of meaning but devoid of rational falsification or empirical verification, such as the Hebrew *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” The lack of empirical reference is intrinsic to the term “postulate” itself, in that to postulate is to claim without demonstration. Yet, it is precisely this lack of specificity that accounts for the postulate’s *certainty*, or, in Rappaport’s words: “the unfalsifiable ... yields the unquestionable.”⁵⁰ This is because the power or efficacy of an ultimate sacred postulate resides in its ritualized utterance; that is, the ritual performance constitutes the factuality, the truth, of the postulate so proclaimed. Rappaport gives the example of the medieval Catholic Mass, the performance of which “establishes as a social fact the existence of the God in whose name men are elevated to such conventional offices as kingship, through such conventional procedures as crowning, anointing, and oath-taking.”⁵¹ Because ultimate sacred postulates are established as social and cosmic facts by the performance of ritual, they may be ignored, as is the case today with Zeus’ Lordship, but at no point are they actually falsified, since their truthfulness is established in the unique state of affairs that constitutes ritual performance.

Ultimate sacred postulates in turn sanctify the cosmic and social orders of a population, which is another way of saying that they legitimize as natural and unquestionable the power arrangements, economic structures, and other relations inherent in any given society. Ultimate sacred postulates do not give instructions on how to organize society; instead, they invest other postulates, what Rappaport terms “cosmological axioms,” with a concomitant sanctity, a derived unquestionableness proportionate to the ultimate sacred postulates with which they are related.⁵² It is the function of these axioms to establish social order among a people group in such a way that the king, for example, is not merely invested with authority but so are his proclamations and directives. As such, ultimate sacred postulates and cosmological axioms constitute a regulatory hierarchy that organizes a population into a particular kind of social order, investing the specific rules governing the conduct of relations among the persons, qualities, conditions, and states of affairs with a derivative degree of authority.⁵³ These rules are expressed both in ritual and in the transactions of everyday life, and in effect “transform cosmology into conduct.”⁵⁴

An important constituent to this social model is the reciprocity between the material and social conditions and the integrity of the ultimate sacred postulates as embodied by ritual participants. What Rappaport observed was that material and social conditions effect the willingness of members of the community to participate in the rituals which establish the truthfulness of the ultimate sacred postulates from which the material and social conditions are derived.⁵⁵ This means that the integrity and veracity of the ultimate sacred postulate, though endowed with the property of absolute unquestionableness, is nevertheless contingent upon and is thus effected by the acceptance of such a postulate on the part of ritual participants. If the ritual participants change or challenge the social order that is established by the ultimate

⁴⁹ *Ritual*, 281, 283.

⁵⁰ *Ritual*, 217.

⁵¹ *Ritual*, 279.

⁵² *Ritual*, 263ff.

⁵³ *Ritual*, 263-76; cf. idem, , “On Cognized Models,” in idem, *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Richmond, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 119-120.

⁵⁴ “Cognized,” 120.

⁵⁵ *Ritual*, 429-37.

sacred postulate, then they are in fact ‘de-sanctifying’ the regulatory hierarchy and jeopardizing the sanctity of the postulate from which the regulative structure is derived. A challenge to the social order therefore is a challenge to the ultimate sacred postulate upon which that order is based.

What is essential to grasp from Rappaport’s ritual theory is that ritual participants can affect adversely the integrity of the ritual; specifically, participants can either promote or challenge the veracity or plausibility of a ritual’s defining ultimate sacred postulates by promoting or challenging the social order that is engendered by the ritual. It is this reciprocity between the ritual order and the social order embodied by ritual participants that may be fruitful in explaining the social dynamics between Paul, the Corinthians, and baptism in 1 Cor 1:10-17.

V. Baptism ‘in the Name of Christ’

Paul’s first mention of baptism in the Corinthian correspondence is as the last of a series of three interrogatives in v. 13, which is Paul’s initial response to the factions or rivalries (ἔριδες) among the Corinthians in v. 11: μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός; μή Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, ἢ εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε; That μεμέρισται⁵⁶ appears in the vast majority of early texts without the preceding μή (contra P46) complicates its relation to the two subsequent questions.⁵⁷ If the first question is taken literally, without an implied μή, then, as Lightfoot noted, the answer is obviously ‘yes’, Christ is divided in their factionalism.⁵⁸ However, the majority of scholars appropriate v. 13a as a constituent of the two other interrogatives as each of the three form a *reductio ad absurdum*, the purpose of which is to force the Corinthians to acknowledge the absurdity of their divisions.⁵⁹ As Thiselton writes: “The reference to the crucifixion demonstrates beyond question the absurdity and indeed ‘sinfulness’ of daring to put loyalty to human leaders on the same level as loyalty to Christ.”⁶⁰ The absurdity of Paul’s crucifixion on their behalf (ὑπὲρ) is paralleled with the third of the *reductio* catena, baptism ‘in the name of Paul’. The *reductio* effect requires that baptisms were not actually performed ‘in the name of Paul’ at Corinth any more than Paul was actually crucified on their behalf; the Corinthians were in fact baptized ‘in the name of Christ’ (cf. 6:11).⁶¹ The allusion to baptism ‘in the name of Christ’ echoes Paul’s previous plea (παροκαλῶ)

⁵⁶ The term μερίζω refers to their disunity (1 Cor 7:34; Mark 3:24-26; Matt 12:25-26; Ign. *Magn.* 6:2). Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 51.

⁵⁷ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 136.

⁵⁸ J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries* (London: Macmillan, 1895), 154; so, too, Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 51. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 35, sees an implicit reference to the church as the body of Christ in this phrase as per 1 Cor 12:12, in that in both passages, Paul uses what he otherwise seldom does, the definite article ὁ Χριστός (cf. *1 Corinthians*, 35; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 137).

⁵⁹ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 134, 136-8; Witherington, *Conflict*, 103; Pascuzzi, “Baptism-based Allegiance,” 814; etc. The use of μή preceding Paul is a common way of formulating a question which invites a negative answer, rhetorically implying its own negative proposition (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 137).

⁶⁰ *First Epistle*, 137.

⁶¹ Cf. Barth, *Taufe*, 44-6; Chester, *Conversion*, 292. Rudolph Schnackenburg, *Baptism in the Thought of St. Paul: A Study in Pauline Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 23, argues

in v. 10 where he invokes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) as the foundation and instrument through which their problems can be resolved (cf. 1 Cor 4:15).⁶² For as 1:1-9 makes clear, it is Christ that defines Corinthian unity: in Christ they are ‘sanctified’ (ἡγιασμένοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, v. 2), they call upon the one and same Lord Christ (σὺν παντὶ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, v. 2), the divine grace in which they all share was a gift of Christ (v. 3-5), Christ is their shared testimony (v. 6) and the one around whom they have been called into fellowship (ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, v. 9). It is in Christ, therefore, that their divisions may be healed (κατηρτισμένοι, v. 10).⁶³

With the invocation of the Lordship of Christ, we therefore have before us the Pauline equivalent of an ‘ultimate sacred postulate’, an unquestionably certain ground by which commensurate cosmological, social, and ethical orders are legitimized and normalized. The annunciation of the Lordship of Christ over the baptized (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48), would have the performative effect of bringing to bear upon the baptized not only the power of the exalted Jesus (e.g. 1 Cor 3:23; Gal 3:29),⁶⁴ the very power that brought the Corinthian *ekklesia* into being (1 Cor 1:18, 25), but also the power to penetrate and sanctify the cosmic, cultural, and ethical identities commensurate with this distinctly Christian ultimate sacred postulate.

Paul’s reference to baptism in the name of Christ in v. 13c is situated in immediate proximity to the allusion to Christ’s cross in v. 13b.⁶⁵ Understood as an ultimate sacred postulate, the cross of Christ would by its nature engender a social order. Here, in the Corinthian context, this is precisely what we see: the proclamation of Christ’s cross generates a particular kind of people group set apart from the dominant society. Paul develops the cross motif in vv. 18-31 within an apocalyptic two-age framework characteristic of early Judaism, similar to what we encountered in Galatians, the cross providing the point of demarcation between the *ekklesia* and ‘those who are perishing’ (1:18), ‘this age’ (1:20), and ‘the wisdom of the world’ (1:21).⁶⁶ That this people group involves a distinct worshipping community is implied in 1:24, where Paul brings back the *καλέω* motif from v. 2, noting that the cross, while

that εἰς in baptismal contexts suggests location rather than movement, citing εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν (1 Cor 10:2) as an example of a ‘sign of adherence to Moses’, such that baptism in the name of Christ involves identity with Christ, that is, belonging to Christ (cf. 18-19). So, too, Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 35. Thiselton qualifies the locative εἰς by noting that baptism does involve the transition from one realm to another, as does the baptism ‘into Moses’ in 1 Cor 10:1-4. This would account for the interchangeability between εἰς and ἐν with regard to baptism in Christ’s name (cf. 6:11; Acts 10:48). Thiselton thus opts for a primary meaning of ‘direction’ or ‘relation’, and secondary meaning of ‘movement into another sphere’ (*First Epistle*, 138-9).

⁶² Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 41, who sees the invocation of the ‘the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ in v. 10 as a deliberate echo of the name into which the Corinthians were baptized.

⁶³ The term *κατηρτισμένοι* was used as a metaphor for mending or repairing broken relationships. See Mitchell, *Rhetoric*, 74-5; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 43; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 115.

⁶⁴ Larry W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 82.

⁶⁵ Fee, *First Epistle*, 61, notes that the death of Christ and baptism seem “to flow together naturally in Paul (e.g. Rom 6:2-3; Col 2:12-15).” Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1:153-4.

⁶⁶ Adams, *Constructing*, 98, 107-8.

foolishness to Greeks and a stumbling block to Jews, is manifested as ‘Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God’ for τοῖς κλητοῖς, Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλήσιν.

The social order entailed in the ultimate sacred postulate of the cross of Christ bridges the cross and baptism, in that our present passage evidences that baptism ‘in the name of Christ’ was the ritualized means by which this social order came into being. Early Christian baptisms involved at least *two* persons, the baptized and a baptizer (1:14-16), a feature unique to Christians among the various forms of ritual washing in Second Temple Judaism save for John the Baptist.⁶⁷ Since there is no baptizing oneself, early Christian identity was *received from another*, with baptisms thus exemplifying vividly the mutuality and dependence that Paul expects to characterize and unify the *ekklesia* (1:10; 12:25-27; 13:1-13).⁶⁸ The social nature of baptism is further exemplified by Paul’s recounting of a household baptism in 1:16a, perhaps a ritualized expression of their corporate filial union as ἀδελφοί (1:1, 10, 11, 26; 2:1; cf. Gal 3:26-29) constituting them as ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ (1:2). The performance of the baptism rite can thus be seen as the faith-community in microcosm, the initial ritualized act constituting an extension and thus an anticipation of the customs and practices, the inner-life, shared by those ‘called into fellowship with God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord’ (1:9).⁶⁹

Thus, 1 Cor 1:10-17 exemplifies a reciprocal dynamic between ritual and social order which provides an important insight into Paul’s understanding of community-dynamics at Corinth. Paul *presupposes* a real corporate unity, a shared lifeworld united and identified in Christ, *as such appears manifested in their life of corporate worship* (1:2, 9, 13c). The ritual practices participated in by each of the Corinthian believers involves for Paul the production of a Christological reality in time and space that transforms them into the ‘body of Christ’ as implied in the rhetorical question of 1:13a: μεμέρισται ὁ Χριστός; This shared ritual life entails the overturning and inverting of prevailing mores inherent in the wider Graeco-Roman social order: it is rituals constitutive of the ‘body of Christ’, not the practices and beliefs of the Graeco-Roman world, that define the corporate identity of the Corinthians and thus provide an objective reality to which their relationships in mundane time and space are obliged to conform.

VI. Baptism ‘in the Name of Paul’

And yet, in an almost perplexing move, rather than calling the Corinthians back to their baptismal identities united in Christ, Paul distances himself from their baptisms. The asyndetic εὐχαριστῶ or ‘thanksgiving’⁷⁰ that Paul baptized οὐδέν or ‘none’ of the Corinthians in v. 14 appears as the immediate consequence of the absurdities in v. 13, the last of which is repeated in the subordinate clause of v. 15, εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε. This refrain in v. 15 involves understanding the role baptism ‘in the name of Paul’ plays in Paul’s rhetoric. If we

⁶⁷ Joan Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 50.

⁶⁸ With any explicit information on qualification or authorization related to baptizers, we are left with little more than conjecture on these issues. It appears from our passage that, at the very least, baptism was associated with renowned figures in the *ekklesia* (Paul, Cephas, Apollo, etc.). See the discussion on ‘party’ leaders as baptizers in Chester, *Conversion*, 293-4.

⁶⁹ See further DeMaris, *The New Testament*, 21-26, for a development of the ritual significance of baptism for ameliorating the social crises associated with kinship-breaking and –making in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world.

⁷⁰ ^{8*}, B, 6, 424^c, and 1739 all omit τῷ θεῷ (Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 140).

understand baptism ‘in the name of x’ as an ultimate sacred postulate, then, when Paul gives thanks in v. 14-15 that he did not participate in baptisms that would have been in effect baptisms ‘in the name of Paul’, he is in fact identifying the ritual washings at Corinth with an alternative ultimate sacred postulate. This is no mere rhetorical exaggeration on Paul’s part: in characterizing some of these Corinthian baptisms as done ‘in the name of Paul’, *Paul is dislocating their baptisms from the defining characteristic of Christian baptism: the invocation of Christ’s name over the baptized.*

Of significance here is how ultimate sacred postulates engender their own cosmological and social orders. As I noted above, ultimate sacred postulates legitimize, naturalize, or, as Rappaport puts it, ‘sanctify’ social order and ethical behavior, such that social arrangements and practices are governed by a commonly accepted conception of the sacred. Baptism ‘in the name of Paul’ would therefore serve as Paul’s assessment of the ritualized foundry, that source of accepted sanctity, most compatible with the Corinthians’ concern over prestige, patronage, and social status. Baptism in effect has become a ritual that promotes, advocates, and supports the values indicative of the Graeco-Roman social order. As such, these baptisms are in *social and ethical effect* (cf. vv. 10-12) no different from any other initiation or water washing in the Graeco-Roman world, and thus compromise the apocalyptic significance of the baptism ritual and the ultimate sacred postulate embedded within the washing, the death and Lordship of Christ (1:13), which in turn risks emptying the cross of its effect, its power, to overturn the ‘wisdom of the world’ in ushering in the messianic age (1:17-2:16). As such, Paul’s substitution of an alternative sacred postulate for baptism ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’ draws out the *reductio* logic from v. 13 which was Paul’s rhetorical response to the divisions in v. 12: the Corinthians’ divisions in effect dissolve the Christological identity of their baptisms into the social and ethical characteristics of the Graeco-Roman world and thus undermine the power of the cross to overturn the ‘wisdom of the world’.⁷¹ The Corinthians’ continued adherence to Graeco-Roman social values threatens the very ultimate sacred postulate pronounced at their baptisms, which in effect renders their baptisms as done in the name – and hence power – of *mere* men (i.e. ‘in the name of Paul’, 1:15; cf. 3:4-9, 21-22) and thus undermines the source of the very power of God they depend on for their exalted pneumatic status (2:1-16).

Having qualified the absolute negative in v. 14 (οὐ δὲνα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα) with the baptisms of Crispus and Gaius, we find Paul in v. 16 amplifying his qualification with his recollection that he did in fact baptize Stephanas’ household. It is of course enticing to speculate that Stephanas, who was with Paul at the time of his writing the letter (16:17), directly reminded him of this. And the mentions of Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas further suggest that Paul baptized more than his given impression.⁷² Crispus may well have been the former synagogue ruler who in Acts 18:8 believed with “all his household” and is baptized along with many of the Corinthians. As Pascuzzi posits, it is probable that Paul baptized Crispus, his household, and those believing Corinthians present with them.⁷³ Paul mentions the baptism

⁷¹ Strüder argues that the purpose of vv. 11-12 is to demonstrate the absurdity of relativizing belonging to or being ‘of Christ’ to belonging to or allying oneself ‘to mere men’, thereby undermining the authority and saving work of Christ. The phrase Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ therefore “already alludes to the real consequences of their behavior and lays the foundation for his solution in 3,22-23” (“Preferences,” 451).

⁷² W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1:157, suggests that Paul’s general practice may have been to baptize only the first members of a church-community.

⁷³ “Baptism-based Allegiance,” 824.

of Gaius who, in Rom 16:23, was host to both Paul and the ‘whole church’. Stephanas and his baptized οἱ κος (1:16) are called by Paul the firstfruits of Achaia (ἀπαρχὴ τῆς Ἀχαΐας) who devoted themselves to ministering (διακονία) to the church (16:15-16). This means that Gaius and Stephanas, along most likely with Crispus, were people of some social and economic standing, and Paul considered them key figures as they became the hosts of the congregation.⁷⁴ Chester speculates that the three whom Paul recalls having baptized may have been ‘party leaders’, that is, “local Christians who legitmate their own power by appealing to renowned figures in the church.”⁷⁵ Using Jerome Murphy-O’Connor’s estimate that the Corinthian church was comprised of approximately fifty members, Pascuzzi observes that just these baptismal events alone would have been a significant portion of the Corinthian circle.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Paul’s failed recollection on whom else he baptized has been interpreted as indicating baptism’s relative insignificance to Paul.⁷⁷ The context, however, is clear: Paul in v. 16 is amplifying the exception he made in v. 14b to the universal negative οὐδένα ὑμῶν or ‘none of you’ in v. 14a; he is simply not commenting on the significance of baptism. Indeed, Paul’s comments in vv. 14-16 form what appears to be a chiasmic structure where Paul’s memory lapse is parallel to his universal negative:

- A. εὐχαριστῶ [τῷ θεῷ] ὅτι οὐδένα ὑμῶν ἐβάπτισα
 B. εἰ μὴ Κρίστον καὶ Γάϊον
 C. ἵνα μή τις εἴπῃ ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε
 B'. ἐβάπτισα δὲ καὶ τὸν Στεφάνῳ οἴκον
 A'. λοιπὸν οὐκ οἶδα εἴτινα ἄλλον ἐβάπτισα

Though we can’t be sure that Paul intends a chiasm here,⁷⁸ such chiasmic logic would confirm what we have thus far seen in terms of the reciprocity between ritual and social order: Paul is less concerned with *whom* he baptized than he is with what some might *say* about the social order embedded in those baptisms, that they were performed for the benefaction and patronage of Paul.

It is this concern over the reciprocal relationship between baptism and the behavior of the Corinthians that should govern our interpretation of the baptism-gospel contrast in v. 17a: οὐ γὰρ ἀπέστειλέν με Χριστὸς βαπτίσειν ἀλλὰ εὐαγγελίσει. We can see here that, for Paul, the Corinthians’ partisan behavior not only subsumes the cross and baptism to Graeco-

⁷⁴ Karl Olav Sandnes, “Equality Within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament Perspective on the Christian Fellowship as a Brother- or Sisterhood and a Family,” in *Constructing Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes (London: Routledge, 1997), 150-65, 151-2.

⁷⁵ Chester, *Conversion*, 293.

⁷⁶ Pascuzzi, “Baptism-based Allegiances,” 824; Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (GNS 6; Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1983), 156-8. For a critical evaluation of Murphy-O’Connor’s archeological approach, see Daniel N. Schowalter, “Seeking Shelter in Roman Corinth: Archaeology and the Placement of Paul’s Communities,” in Friesen, *Corinth in Context*, 327-41, 329-32.

⁷⁷ Fee, *First Epistle*, 62-3; Dunn, *Paul*, 450.

⁷⁸ On the interpretation of chiasmus in Paul, see the nine criteria outlined in C.L. Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1-7,” *Criswell Theological Review* 4 (1989) 3-20; 4-8.

Roman norms, but in doing so such behavior compromises Paul's own apostolic calling.⁷⁹ We should therefore take care not to link v. 17a as a clause grounding (γάρ) solely for Paul's forgetfulness in v. 16, such that it would read: "I don't remember who I baptized, because Christ did not send me to baptize."⁸⁰ Not only would this conflict with the logic of the passage, but it disregards the fact that v. 16 constitutes a subordinate clause (δέ) that functions as a further qualification of the absolute negative in v. 14 where Paul states explicitly that he is thankful that he did not participate in baptisms that could be legitimately interpreted as performed for the benefaction of Paul (v. 15). A more grammatically satisfying option is to take the γάρ of v. 17 as an explanatory elaboration marker for the whole subparagraph in vv. 14-16 centered on v. 15. This would mean that the ἵνα-clause in v. 15 and its *implied* contrast between baptism 'in the name of Paul' and baptism 'in the name of Christ' is expanded upon in v. 17a by Paul's *explicit* contrast between two infinitives of purpose, βαπτίζειν and εὐαγγελίζεσθαι.⁸¹ Baptism 'in the name of Paul', that is, the baptizing of Graeco-Roman values, therefore, is mutually exclusive to the purpose for which Paul had been sent to the Corinthians as an apostle of Christ. This purpose is not to baptize but to proclaim the gospel (εὐαγγελίζομαι)⁸² which, in the context of vv. 14-16, would mean a contrast between the proclamation of the gospel and an elided baptism 'in the name of Paul' supported by the parallel purpose clause in v. 15. Paul's rhetoric since v. 13c already entails the contrast between a baptism *with* versus *without* the central postulate of the gospel, namely, the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ. This contrast between *two baptisms*, one with and one without the gospel, and their inherent mutually exclusive social orders, would then be made explicit in v. 17a.

We should note that there is nothing in the text to indicate that the conflict is between performing baptisms and proclaiming the gospel, especially in light of the fact that the gospel was proclaimed as part of performing a distinctly Christian baptism ritual.⁸³ Indeed, as v. 15 against the backdrop of v. 13c makes clear, the conflict is between *two* antithetical baptisms – one in which the apocalyptic integrity of the ritual is maintained and one in which it is compromised. As Paul has asserted here in vv. 10-16 and will expound on in 6:9-11, baptism in the name of Christ obligates the Corinthians to relativize all things to the cross and Lordship of Christ; the values, practices, beliefs, and behaviors indicative of the Graeco-Roman world have all been overwhelmed by the kenotic love of Christ revealed on the cross. For reasons that will be fleshed out by Paul in 6:9-11, Paul sees the baptism event entailing an obligation

⁷⁹ On Paul's self-identity as an apostle, see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul – One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1991).

⁸⁰ On γάρ as a conjunction used to express cause, reason, clarification, or inference, see BDAG, 189.

⁸¹ On infinitives of purpose, see James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanhan, MD: University Press of America, 1979), 133-4.

⁸² In both Jewish and Hellenistic usage, the term εὐαγγελίζομαι basically connotes proclaiming or receiving a good report or news such as liberation from enemies or deliverance from demonic powers (cf. Isa 52:7; 61:1; Nah 2:1; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 66; Josephus *Ant.* 7:245, 250; *B.J.* 3:503; etc). In its distinctly Christian usage, the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι and its nominal equivalent εὐαγγέλιον denote the salvific nature of the Christ-event (1 Cor 1:17; Gal 1:16, 23; 4:13; 2 Cor 10:16; Eph 3:8, etc.). See Gerhard Friedrich, *TDNT* "εὐαγγελίζομαι," 2:707-37; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1:157.

⁸³ Contra Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 143.

on the part of the Corinthians to live a life concomitant with Christ's sacrificial love when he died 'for you' (v. 13b). This is why Paul's commission to proclaim the gospel in v. 17a involves an explicit relativizing of even the *proclaimer* to the power of the cross in v. 17b. Thus Paul can draw out the baptism-gospel contrast in v. 17a with a further contrast, that is, a proclamation of the gospel οὐ κ' ἐν σοφίᾳ λόγου in v. 17b but rather in what we might term the μωρία τοῦ σταυροῦ or 'foolishness of the cross' in vv. 18ff. In contrast to the value placed on σοφία by the Corinthians (2:4-16; 3:22ff) and the status of those identified with such, Paul proclaims 'Christ crucified', a σοφία ἄπὸ θεοῦ that cannot be accounted for in this world and that offers no exalted status. It is the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ, this σοφία τοῦ σταυροῦ, that informs or specifies the performance of ritual washings as distinctly Christian, which is precisely the connection that Paul previously made in the last two of the three rhetorical questions in v. 13. Indeed, as Hartman observes, 'Christ crucified' in 1:13b is subsequently 'proclaimed as a gospel' in 1:17-25.⁸⁴ In fact, the three motifs entailed in rhetorical interrogatives of v. 13 appear together again in v. 17: 'Christ', 'baptism' and 'the cross', all of which are conjoined in relationship to the proclamation of the gospel; hence Paul's thankfulness that as one sent to proclaim the gospel he did not participate in baptisms that could legitimately be interpreted as performed for his status and benefaction. Paul was not sent to baptize Graeco-Roman values, but rather to proclaim the inversion of those values in the foolishness of the cross. Thus, contrary to the interpretations surveyed above, Paul's critical assessment of their baptisms as performed 'in the name of Paul' means that the Corinthians are not overvaluing or overemphasizing their baptisms; indeed the opposite is the case: they are *undervaluing* the social and ethical entailments of their apocalyptic initiations (cf. 1:18ff; 6:9-11; 12:13; Gal 3:27-28; Rom 6:1-4)!

Therefore, the fact that the gospel was proclaimed at the baptism rite renders implausible the attempt to read Paul as pitting baptism against the proclaiming of the gospel, as if Paul was contrasting baptism with the gospel.⁸⁵ Neither is the baptism-gospel contrast in v. 17 an

⁸⁴ Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus': Baptism in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 61.

⁸⁵ Mauro Pesce's article on 1 Cor 1:17 argues unsuccessfully that Paul's intransitive use of the verb εὐαγγελίζομαι is a technical term for the proclamation of the gospel directed towards non believers, not towards those already in Christ (cf. 1:18ff) ("Christ Did Not Send Me To Baptize but to Evangelize," in Lorenzo De Lorenzi (ed), *Paul de Tarse: Apôtre du Notre Temps*, Série monographique de "Benedictina," Section paulinienne 1 [Rome: Abbaye de S. Paul, 1979], 353, 356). For Pesce, the two infinitives in 1:17a represent "two definite activities which are distinct from each other" (347-8). "Evangelizing" is the first Christian, missionary activity both in logical and chronological order while "baptizing" is the means by which the church incorporates the new believers in Christ in its shared lifeworld (362). However as Gerhard Friedrich rightly notes, εὐαγγελίζομαι can be used not only as a missionary term (cf. 1 Cor 9:16) but is a message that is addressed to Christians as well (Rom 1:11, 15; 1 Cor 9:12-18; Gal 4:13): "The same Gospel is proclaimed in both missionary and congregational preaching. Paul makes no distinction. God Himself speaks in preaching and He does not speak to Christians or to heathen, but to man as such, revealing Himself to him in grace and judgment through the Word." (*TDNT* 2:720) Indeed, as he writes in 1 Cor 1:17a, εὐαγγελίζομαι can be used to describe Paul's entire mission as an apostle. So, too, G. Strecker, who writes: "One cannot distinguish between missionary preaching and preaching addressed to the Church (cf. Rom 1:15 with 15:20; Gal 1:16, 23)" (G. Strecker, "εὐαγγελίζω" in *EDNT*, 69-74).

attempt on the part of Paul to undermine or deemphasize baptism, nor is it indicative of the distinct commission of Paul *per se*. Rather, throughout vv. 10-17, Paul is contrasting baptism *with* versus baptism *without* the gospel, the former being the distinct characteristic of a Christian ritual washing and its peculiar ethical obligation,⁸⁶ the latter representing the collapse of the ethical and social boundaries specific to the rite and to Paul's apocalyptic world.

VII. Summary and Conclusions

1 Cor 1:10-17 is a text that exemplifies Paul's understanding of the integral relationship between the baptism ritual and the formation and maintenance of a distinct Christian social order. We found that the various interpretive proposals offered thus far fail to account for Paul's de-emphasis of baptism on the one hand and his call to stronger social and ethical boundaries on the other. Understanding Paul's words in light of a ritual theory that explained the reciprocity between ritual and social order, we found that participation in baptisms 'in the name of Christ' obligated the Corinthians to live out a shared social order defined by the ethos of the cross. However, the Corinthians were contradicting this ritualized community by their divisions and conflicts centered on status and patronage. Paul interprets the Corinthians' factional behavior as nothing less than a challenge to the ultimate sacred postulate of a distinctly Christian social order and thus characterizes their baptisms as performed 'in the name of Paul', that is, performed for the patronage and benefaction of mere men. Such a challenge in fact empties the cross of its power, compromises Paul's apostolic call, and undermines the very pneumatic source the Corinthians depend on for their sense of exalted status. Paul is therefore thankful that he participated in none of their baptisms, having to qualify his absolute negative with the exception of Crispus, Gaius, and Stephanas' household, for Christ did not send him to baptize the Graeco-Roman social order but rather to proclaim the overturning of that order by the proclamation of the power of the cross in the gospel. It is in light of these two contrasting baptisms – baptism 'in the name of Christ' (1:13c) and baptism 'in the name of Paul' (1:15) – that the baptism-gospel contrast in 1:17a is to be read. Paul is not contrasting baptism and the gospel *per se*; rather, he is contrasting baptism *with* and baptism *without* the gospel, the former representing the identifying characteristic of Christian ritual and social life.

⁸⁶ Hurtado, *Origins*, 82 comments: "This ritual invocation of Jesus' name over the baptised has no parallel in other Jewish proselyte practice or in the entrance rites of groups such as the Qumran sect, and it is surely another strong indication of the re-shaping of monotheistic cultic practice that was characteristic of early Christian circles."