

--Basis of identity and relationship

--Affirmation of the goodness of bodily relations

--Marriage as mutual subordination "in the body"

--These innovative ideas were developed in response to Corinthian Gnostics who repudiated the significance of bodily relations

Literature: Jewett, Paul's Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

Summary printed below from IDB, Supplement, pp. 117-118:

***BODY. 1. In the LXX and the gospels.** The distinction between true self and flesh, or body, so natural for Greek and modern thought, is absent from the OT, where the physical body is not abstracted from the living reality and where human beings are defined in terms of their relationship to God, their creator. In the LXX the term $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ appears as a translation for (a) corpses, human or animal; (b) living physical bodies; (c) slaves, and (d) occasionally as a synonym for the self. The same general usage is found in the gospels, except for the innovative saying of Jesus, "This is my body" (Mark 14:22). Since neither $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ nor its Aramaic equivalent were used in connection with the making of an offering, the word here probably denotes the whole self of Jesus given for his disciples.

2. In the Pauline letters. Paul's use of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is so varied and original that it has been variously appraised. The several ways in which he uses the term can be understood best when one takes into consideration the historical context of his dealing with specific issues and with specific Christian congregations.

a. I Corinthians. Paul uses $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ in I Thessalonians, Galatians, and Philemon in a nontechnical sense, to mean the physical totality of a person. But then the same word suddenly appears in I Cor. 6:12-20 to designate that aspect of one's personhood through which one may relate to other persons and to God. This new use of the term

by Paul was evidently prompted by a Gnostic slogan which must have run something like, "Food is to the stomach as fornication is to the body" (cf. I Cor. 6:12-13). In rebuttal Paul insists that the relation God establishes with the Christian's $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ precludes becoming "one body" with a prostitute. $\Sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ here means the whole person entering into both spiritual and sexual relations. The combination is extraordinary in a Hellenistic environment which downgraded the body, and there is a mystical exclusivity in Paul's usage which is profound and unique. The argument is climaxed by the unusual claim that the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19-20).

In the context of marriage this idea manifests itself in an egalitarian rule of conjugal obligation (I Cor. 7:4) whereby $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ denotes the basis of sexual relations. This sets the framework for interpreting I Cor. 7:34: the unmarried seeks "to be holy in body and spirit" by devotion to church work, but this does not imply the married achieve lesser holiness because of sexual relations. The fault in 7:32-35 relates to worldly distractions, not marital relations. See MARRIAGE IN THE NT[S].

In I Cor. 10:16-17 sacramental participation establishes a bond of "one body" between believers, excluding Gnostic participation in pagan meals and prostitution. I Cor. 11:17-34 deals with disorderly celebrations of the Lord's Supper caused by Gnostic disrespect. Paul insists upon the validity of the formula, "This is my body," and argues that the presence of Christ in the sacrament establishes a sphere of divine law which wreaks vengeance on violators. To eat "without discerning the body" (11:29) is to disregard the personal presence of the Lord whose sovereign grace and power claim the believers' lives totally and exclusively.

The most widely debated reference to $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is I Cor. 12:12-13 where Paul inserts the realistic claim, "so it is with Christ" into a traditional metaphor of the body politic. To break from metaphor into realism and to identify a person with the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ of the community were unparalleled in the Hellenistic world. Paul may have patterned this concept after the rabbinic idea of the gigantic body of ADAM which contained the souls of all mankind. The elaboration of the concept in 12:14-30 stresses mutual submission and interdependence, ideas directly opposed to Gnostic individualism.

I Cor. 15 answers a scornful question about the resurrection body (15:35) raised by Gnostics who assumed they had already transcended bodily existence. Paul accepts the premise that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (15:50), but he develops an unparalleled distinction between flesh and $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$, creating in the process the expression "spiritual body" (15:44). Though he is not following Hebraic terminology—the term "resurrection of the body" being unknown in ancient Judaism—Paul expresses a common thought that God alone provides the continuity between this life and the next (15:38-44). Such continuity includes the provision of a $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$, spiritually transformed but still bearing a distinctive personality and relational possibilities.

b. The later letters. In the later letters Paul's employment of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ as a relation term recedes in favor of more traditional usage (II Cor. 4:10; 5:10; 10:10; 12:2-3). The adoption of a Gnostic idea in II Cor. 5:6-8, where the $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ is the prison of the true inner person, indicates a shift in argumentative strategy. The complex use of $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ in Romans also indicates sustained controversy. Only in Rom. 12:4-5 is it used in the technical sense of the basis of unity and relationship, but even here the realistic identification of the church with Christ is avoided. Otherwise $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ in Romans depicts the basis of selfhood in the old aeon (1:24; 4:19) and the new (Rom. 8:11, 23; 12:1).