

Is Every Sin outside the Body except Immoral Sex? Weighing Whether 1 Corinthians 6:18b Is Paul’s Statement or a Corinthian Slogan

ANDREW DAVID NASELLI

andy.naselli@bcsmn.edu

Bethlehem College & Seminary, Minneapolis, MN 55415

In 1 Cor 6:18b–c, Paul writes, “Every sin, whatever a person commits, is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.” This essay weighs whether 1 Cor 6:18b is Paul’s statement or whether Paul is quoting a Corinthian slogan, and it concludes that the second view is more plausible.

[a] Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν.

[b] πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐάν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν.

[c] ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει.

—1 Cor 6:18

[a] Flee from sexual immorality.

[b] Every sin, whatever a person commits, is outside the body,

[c] but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

(my form-based translation)

The highlighted words above (1 Cor 6:18b) have puzzled people for centuries. What does Paul mean? His main exhortation to Christians in verses 12–20 is straightforward: *Glorify God with your body by not committing sexual immorality.* And the first and third parts of 6:18 are relatively straightforward: *Flee from sexual immorality...* *The sexually immoral person sins against his own body.* But how to interpret the middle part (v. 18b) is not straightforward. Does it prove that immoral sex is uniquely against one’s body? Translators have attempted to make sense of verse 18b in one of two ways: (1) Some add the word *other* to smooth it out: “Every *other* sin a person commits is outside the body” (ESV). If this is the correct reading, then Paul divides sin into two categories: nonsexual sins take place outside the

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body, and sexual sins are against a person's own body. (2) Some translators attribute these words not to Paul but to the Corinthians: the Corinthians claim, "Every sin a person commits is outside the body," and Paul refutes them. If this is the correct reading, then the Corinthians are using this slogan to justify sex outside of marriage. They are arguing that sin occurs only outside the body—that you cannot sin in or through your body. Paul then refutes that wrong view of the body.

English translations render verse 18b in one of three ways: (1) as Paul's statement without adding the word *other*; (2) as Paul's statement but adding the word *other*; or (3) as a Corinthian slogan. Most render it as Paul's statement, and most of those translations add the word *other* to smooth it out (see table 1). Translations that do not add the word *other* imply it, so there are really just two main views: 6:18b is either (1) Paul's statement or (2) a Corinthian slogan. In this essay, I weigh the arguments for each view and then conclude which is more persuasive.

I. ARGUMENTS THAT 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18B IS PAUL'S STATEMENT

At least six arguments support the view that verse 18b is Paul's statement.

A. Paul's Argument Implies That He Means "Every Other Sin"

The words πᾶν ἁμαρτήματα ("every sin") do not seem to harmonize with the second half of the sentence: ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει ("but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body"). In other words, πᾶν ἁμαρτήματα seems to *include* sexual immorality. But if that is the case, then what Paul says here is incoherent. He must therefore be implying that πᾶν ἁμαρτήματα refers to every sin *except* sexual immorality; he must be speaking hyperbolically and then qualifying himself.¹ Paul's argument implies that he means "every *other* sin."

B. Paul Means That Sexual Immorality Is Uniquely against One's Body

Other sins are obviously against one's body such as gluttony or drunkenness or suicide. But Paul argues in verse 18 that sexual immorality is *uniquely* against one's body. How? Many exegetes simply assert that sexual immorality is uniquely against one's body without precisely specifying how it is qualitatively different from other sins such as drunkenness.² Exegetes who do specify how sexual immorality is different from other sins suggest at least five ways (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive).

¹ Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, 4 vols., EKKNT 7 (Zurich: Benziger, 1991–2001), 2:32–33.

² E.g., Johann Albrecht Bengel, "Annotations on Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *Gnomon of the New Testament*, trans. James Bryce, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1860), 3:242; Will Deming, "The Unity of 1 Corinthians 5–6," *JBL* 115 (1996): 289–312, here 304 n. 55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3266857>.

TABLE 1. Three Ways That English Translations Render 1 Cor 6:18b

Paul's Statement: Not Adding <i>Other</i>	Paul's Statement: Adding <i>Other</i>	Corinthian Slogan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRSV: Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. • CEB: Avoid sexual immorality! Every sin that a person can do is committed outside the body, except those who engage in sexual immorality commit sin against their own bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASB: Flee immorality. Every <i>other</i> sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. • RSV: Shun immorality. Every other sin which a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. • ESV: Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. • NIV: Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. • NJB: Keep away from sexual immorality. All other sins that people may commit are done outside the body; but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. • NLT: Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. • God's Word: Stay away from sexual sins. Other sins that people commit don't affect their bodies the same way sexual sins do. People who sin sexually sin against their own bodies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCSB: Run from sexual immorality! "Every sin a person can commit is outside the body." On the contrary, the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body.³ • NET: Flee sexual immorality! "Every sin a person commits is outside of the body" — but the immoral person sins against his own body.

³The Holman Christian Standard Bible changed its name to the Christian Standard Bible in early 2017, and the CSB updates verse 18 without a translator's note so that it now belongs in the middle column: "Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body."

1. Immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because it creates a one-flesh union that uniquely defiles the body. Some proponents of this view add that immoral sex is not merely physical but has a spiritual component (vv. 15–17). Advocates of this view include Augustine, Marcus Dods, Eckhard J. Schnabel, Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, and Gordon D. Fee.⁴ The modern advocate whom recent exegetes most frequently cite for support is Bruce N. Fisk, who concludes:

The body against which one sins sexually (18c) is the body that has been joined illicitly to another (16a). Sexual sin is uniquely body-defiling because it is inherently body-joining. Again, because Paul believes sexual immorality establishes a “one body” union with the prostitute, he views that act as destructive self-violation.

... For Paul, sexual sin is intrinsically different (F. Grosheide, R. Gundry) and more destructive (H. Conzelmann); it *does* have powerful and negative effects on the sinner (C. Hodge, R. Bultmann), and it *does* distort both vertical (G. Fee [1st ed.]) and horizontal relationships (E. Käsemann). But too many of these views import concepts and categories into the argument Paul develops in 1 Cor 6. Given the antecedent Jewish themes and the rhetorical structure we have highlighted, v. 18 should be taken closely with v. 16a; the two are mutually explanatory. In this sense, Paul can declare sexual sin to be fundamentally different. Other sins may be physically destructive (e.g. suicide, gluttony), corporately

⁴Augustine, *Serm.* 162.1 (PG 38:885): “It seems that the blessed apostle, through whom Christ was speaking, wished to make the evil of fornication greater than other sins. These others, although they are committed through the body, do not bind and subjugate the human soul to fleshly lust as the overpowering force of sexual desire does. Only the sexual act makes the soul mingle with the body, fastening the one to the other with a kind of glue. The result is that the person engaged in such vice has a mind submerged and drowned in carnal lust and can think of or intend nothing else” (trans. Judith L. Kovacs, in *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, Church’s Bible [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 100). See also Marcus Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, ExpB (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1889), 156: “This is the only sin in which the present connection of the body with Christ and its future destiny in Him are directly sinned against. This is the only sin, he means, which by its very nature alienates the body from Christ, its proper Partner”; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, HTA (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2006), 343–44; Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PiNNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 264: “In v. 18b Paul is not saying that only *porneia* damages the body, but rather that only *porneia* establishes a ‘one-flesh’ union that is ‘against the body’”; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 290: “In fornicating with a prostitute a man removes his body (which is a temple of the Spirit, purchased by God and destined for resurrection) from union with Christ and makes it a member of her body, thereby putting it under her ‘mastery’ (v. 12b; cf. 7:4). Every other sin is apart from (i.e., not ‘in’) the body in this singular sense.... The unique nature of sexual sin is not so much that one sins against one’s own self but that one sins against one’s own body, as viewed in terms of its place in redemptive history.”

destructive (e.g. gossip, divisiveness), or spiritually defiling (e.g. idolatry) but for Paul, because sexual sin is uniquely body-joining, it is uniquely body-defiling.⁵

2. Immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because it has more serious effects. It leaves a permanent stain on the body. The best-known advocate of this view is Calvin, and others who hold this view include C. K. Barrett, John H. Armstrong, Craig Blomberg, and F. F. Bruce.⁶

Charles Hodge observes that views 1 and 2 are not mutually exclusive. He argues that number 2 is the *result* of number 1.⁷

3. Immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because it is against one's *entire* body. The most prominent advocate of this view is John Chrysostom.⁸

⁵Bruce N. Fisk, "Πορνεία as Body Violation: The Unique Nature of Sexual Sin in 1 Corinthians 6.18," *NTS* 42 (1996): 540–58, here 557–58.

⁶John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848–1849), 1:219–20 (italics original): "The body, it is true, is defiled also by theft, and murder, and drunkenness.... I explain it in this way, that he [Paul] does not altogether deny that there are other vices, in like manner, by which our body is dishonoured and disgraced, but that his meaning is simply this—that defilement does not attach itself to our body from other vices in the same way as it does from *fornication*. My hand, it is true, is defiled by theft or murder, my tongue by evil speaking, or perjury, and the whole body by drunkenness; but *fornication* leaves a stain impressed upon the body, such as is not impressed upon it from other sins. According to this comparison, or, in other words, in the sense of less and more, other sins are said to be *without the body*—not, however, as though they do not at all affect the body, viewing each one by itself." Others who cite Calvin in support of this view of 1 Cor 6:18 include C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1968), 150–51; John H. Armstrong, *The Stain That Stays: The Church's Response to the Sexual Misconduct of Its Leaders* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications; Reformation and Revival Ministries, 2000), 53–54, 59, 60, 62, 63. See also Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 128: "We dare not lose sight of the unique seriousness of sexual sin that verse 18 upholds. The effects of gluttony are usually reversible by an increase in sweat and a decrease in calories. Some effects of illicit sex can never be undone (though of course they can be forgiven). Memories, emotions, and attachments stay with us for life, although excessive promiscuity can eventually dull or numb our senses in certain ways." Cf. F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 65.

⁷Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Carter, 1860), 105–6: "This does not teach that fornication is greater than any other sin; but it does teach that it is altogether peculiar in its effects upon the body; not so much in its physical as in its moral and spiritual effects. The idea runs through the Bible that there is something mysterious in the commerce of the sexes, and in the effects which flow from it. Every other sin, however degrading and ruinous to the health, even drunkenness, is external to the body, that is, external to its life. But fornication, involving as it does a community of life, is a sin against the body itself, because incompatible, as the Apostle had just taught, with the design of its creation, and with its immortal destiny."

⁸*NPNF* 1/12:101.

4. Immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because it uses only one's body and not any means external to one's body. Advocates of this view include Christian Friedrich Kling, Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, Charles J. Ellicott, Leon Morris, Simon J. Kistemaker, and Andreas Lindemann.⁹

5. Immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because the *σώμα* in verse 18 is a vehicle of personal self-communication. The most prominent advocate of this view is Brendan Byrne.¹⁰

C. Paul Does Not Clearly Introduce the Statement as a Corinthian Slogan

Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians Paul clearly signals when he is quoting the Corinthians (see esp. 1:12 and 7:1), but in 6:18 he does not clearly introduce a quotation.

This view [i.e., that v. 18 is a Corinthian slogan] is to be rejected because Paul includes no marker to signal the presence of a quotation. The *δέ* (*de*), unlike the *ἀλλά* (*alla*) in 6:12, does not function as a contrastive particle but expresses an exception: "Every sin a man commits is outside his body with the exception of the immoral man who sins against his own body."¹¹

⁹Christian Friedrich Kling, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. Daniel W. Poor (New York: Scribner, 1868), 133–34; Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, rev. and ed. William P. Dickson, trans. D. Douglas Bannerman, 2 vols., CECNT 5–6 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1877–1879), 1:185–86; Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: With a Critical and Grammatical Commentary* (London: Longmans, Green, 1887), 106; Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 101; Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NTC 18 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 201; Andreas Lindemann, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, HNT 9.1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 151–52.

¹⁰This follows Ernst Käsemann's view of *σώμα* (see "The Pauline Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague, SBT 41 [London: SCM, 1964], 108–35). See Brendan Byrne, "Sinning against One's Own Body: Paul's Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Corinthians 6:18," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 603–16, here 613: "But there is something about fornication that strikes at one's own 'body' in some particularly direct way, in comparison with which other sins are somehow 'outside' the body.... If *sōma* is understood as the physical body particularly under the aspect of personal self-communication and if it carries with it from the argument built up in the preceding verses (15–16) the specific overtones of instrument of personal communication in the sexual act, then the character of fornication as peculiarly a sin 'against one's own body' becomes clear. The immoral person perverts precisely that faculty within himself that is meant to be the instrument of the most intimate bodily communication between persons. He sins against his unique power of bodily communication and in this sense sins in a particular way 'against his own body.' All other sins are in this respect by comparison 'outside' the body."

¹¹David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 236. Cf. Fisk, "Πορνεία as Body Violation," 545 n. 10.

D. Internal Clues Do Not Suggest That the Statement Is a Corinthian Slogan

Verse 18b immediately follows Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν (v. 18a). It is unnatural for what follows to be a Corinthian slogan because the transition would be too abrupt.¹²

E. 1 Corinthians 6:18c Does Not Correspond with 6:18b as a Slogan

Verse 18c (ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἀμαρτάνει, “but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body”) emphasizes one’s *own* body. But verse 18b emphasizes that sin occurs outside *the* body; verse 18c, therefore, does not seem to respond to verse 18b as if verse 18b were a slogan.¹³

F. The Grammar Supports Adding the Word Other¹⁴

At least one other place in the Greek New Testament does not use the word for “other” but necessarily implies it. The grammatical construction in verse 18b parallels Matt 12:31:

πᾶσα ἁμαρτία καὶ βλασφημία ἀφεθήσεται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις,
ἡ δὲ τοῦ πνεύματος βλασφημία οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται.

Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people,
but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

In Matt 12:31, the second clause clarifies the first. The first clause cannot mean “every sin and blasphemy without exception” because the second clause clarifies that there is an exception. So the first clause is a blanket statement, and the second clause is an exception. This parallels 1 Cor 6:18b:

πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν·
ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἀμαρτάνει.

Every [other] sin a person commits is outside the body,
but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

Thus, the grammar supports adding the word *other*.

¹²Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 290.

¹³This is the main argument of Byrne, “Sinning against One’s Own Body.” Similarly, Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther*, 343: “Die Formulierung lässt nicht erkennen, dass es sich um ein Zitat handelt, und die Wendung ‘gegen seinen *eigenen* Leib’ im nächsten Satz wäre keine Entgegnung auf eine solche Parole, die das nicht-leibliche Wesen der Sünde betonen würde.”

¹⁴See Archibald T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1914), 127–28; Fisk, “Πορνεύειν as Body Violation,” 544; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 237; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 263 n. 86.

II. ARGUMENTS THAT 1 CORINTHIANS 6:18B IS A CORINTHIAN SLOGAN

At least ten arguments support the view that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan.¹⁵ I am not aware of a proponent of this view who uses all of these arguments to support it. The closest is Jay Smith.¹⁶ The most influential recent proponent of this view is Jerome Murphy-O'Connor.¹⁷

The question is not whether immoral sex creates a one-flesh union that uniquely defiles the body or whether immoral sex is qualitatively worse than other sins because it has more serious effects. The question, rather, is whether that is what Paul is specifically arguing in verse 18. If verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan, then Paul is not focusing on how immoral sex is qualitatively worse than all other sins but is instead refuting the claim that sin occurs only outside the body.

A. A Slogan Is a More Natural Reading

Taking verse 18b as a Corinthian slogan is a more natural reading because it does not qualify πᾶν ἁμαρτήματα (“every sin”). Otherwise, in order for the statement to make sense, one has to supply the word *other*; but “the word *other* is not in the Greek text; this interpretation assumes that Paul has expressed himself imprecisely.”¹⁸

¹⁵This is a cumulative-case argument. The order of the arguments is not crucial.

¹⁶See the following works by Jay E. Smith: “Can Fallen Leaders Be Restored to Leadership?,” *BSac* 151 (1994): 470–78; “The Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 and Its Contribution to Paul’s Sexual Ethics” (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1996); “1 Corinthians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Word Study: Acts–Ephesians*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor, 2006), 250–53; “The Roots of a ‘Libertine’ Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18,” *JTS* 58 (2008): 63–95; “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” *BSac* 167 (2010): 68–88; “A Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b: Pressing the Case,” in *Studies in the Pauline Epistles: Essays in Honor of Douglas J. Moo*, ed. Matthew S. Harmon and Jay E. Smith (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 74–98.

¹⁷See Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, “Corinthian Slogans in 1 Cor 6:12–20,” *CBQ* 40 (1978): 391–96. He reprinted this essay and added an eight-page postscript in Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 20–31. New Testament scholars did not immediately embrace Murphy-O'Connor’s argument; many remained undecided while acknowledging that verse 18 is a challenging passage. One author who did embrace Murphy-O'Connor’s view is Roger L. Omanson, “Acknowledging Paul’s Quotations,” *BT* 43 (1992): 201–13, esp. 206–7.

¹⁸Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 105. See also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 268–69; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 50; Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVP New Testament Commentary 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 102–3; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “1 Corinthians,” in *Romans–Galatians*, 2nd ed., EBC

The only problem with this translation [i.e., adding the word *other*] is that there is absolutely no exegetical justification for adding the word “other” except that commentators have difficulty explaining the meaning of the verse without it. Without adding “other” to the translation, the phrase becomes an impenetrable mystery if construed literally as Paul’s words.¹⁹

B. The Other View Is Theologically Incoherent

Reading verse 18b as Paul’s statement is theologically incoherent. If verse 18b is Paul’s statement, then Paul is confusing and unclear. Why is only immoral sex a sin against your body but not other sins such as suicide or gluttony or drunkenness—a sin he explicitly names in verse 10? Section I.B above explains how those who argue that verse 18b is Paul’s statement answer this question: they argue that sexual immorality is *uniquely* against one’s body. But the logic that Paul uses in chapter 6 regarding immoral sex is essentially the same argument he uses in Rom 6 regarding any kind of sin: *Christian, you are united to Christ, so don’t use the members of your body to sin.* (See table 2.)

TABLE 2. Paul’s Similar Arguments in Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 6

Romans 6	1 Corinthians 6
Christian, you should not sin because you are united to Christ (vv. 1–11). So do not let sin reign in your mortal body (v. 12). Do not sin with the members of your body (vv. 13, 19).	Christian, your body is a member of Christ, so you should not make it a member of a prostitute (v. 15). If you have immoral sex, then you are denying your union with Christ. You become “one flesh” with someone you have sex with, and you should not become one flesh with a prostitute (v. 16).

Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 6 specifically applies what he argues broadly in Rom 6 regarding all sin in general. There is a sense in which you can say that any sin is unique—that there is no other sin *exactly* like that sin.²⁰ But is Paul’s point in 1 Cor 6:18 that sexual sin is the *only* sin against the body? If verse 18b is Paul’s statement,

11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 312; B. Ward Powers, *First Corinthians: An Exegetical and Explanatory Commentary; A Consideration of Some Views Ancient and Modern in the Light of a Verse-by-Verse Look at What the Text Actually Says; A Somewhat Traditional Interpretation Plus Contemporary Application* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 102–4.

¹⁹ Denny Burk, “Discerning Corinthian Slogans through Paul’s Use of the Diatribe in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20,” *BBR* 18 (2008): 99–121, here 117. Cf. the NET Bible note on this phrase in 1 Cor 6:18: “This is the most natural understanding of the statement as it is written. To construe it as a statement by Paul requires a substantial clarification in the sense.”

²⁰ See Smith, “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” 68 n. 3; Smith, “Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b,” 86 n. 48.

then the answer is yes; but if verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan, then the answer is no. If the answer is yes, then that leaves us guessing precisely how immoral sex is the *only* sin against the body. Exegetes and theologians have been postulating elaborate theories for two thousand years (see section I.B above). “Perhaps it is time to employ Occam’s razor to cut this Gordian knot” by recognizing that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan.²¹

C. The Grammar Does Not Support Adding the Word Other

Contrary to the argument in section I.F above, the grammar does *not* support adding the word *other* but is decisively *against* this. The most authoritative source on this is J. William Johnston’s monograph *The Use of Πᾶς in the New Testament*.²² After meticulously categorizing how the New Testament uses the word πᾶς, Johnston exegetes over a dozen debated passages, one of which is 1 Cor 6:18.²³ Verse 18b is what Johnston classifies as an *E5b* construction: πᾶς + noun + relative clause with ἐάν or ἄν. It occurs only four times in the New Testament: Matt 18:19, Mark 3:28, Acts 15:36, and 1 Cor 6:18.²⁴ “The sense in 1 Cor 6:18” is this: “every single sin a person commits or might commit.”²⁵ The closest parallel is Deut 19:15 LXX: κατὰ πᾶσαν ἀδικίαν καὶ κατὰ πᾶν ἁμάρτημα καὶ κατὰ πᾶσαν ἁμαρτίαν ἣν ἂν ἁμάρτη. That is the closest parallel because the texts share not only similar vocabulary but also similar form: a relative clause intensifies how all-inclusive the statement is.

The grammatical construction in verse 18b–c does not parallel Matt 12:31 in a crucial way (see section I.F above) because Matt 12:31 does not include a relative clause.²⁶ This is significant because 1 Cor 6:18b includes an indefinite relative clause in an unusual way: πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐάν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν (“Every sin, *whatever a person commits*, is outside the body”). An indefinite relative clause usually functions like a substantive, but here it functions like an adjective by modifying its antecedent, ἁμάρτημα. This unusual construction emphasizes that there are no exceptions to this rule: *absolutely every sin without exception that a person commits is outside the body*. Πᾶς here means *all without exception*.²⁷

²¹Smith, “Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b,” 87. Cf. Preben Vang, *1 Corinthians*, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 242 n. 7: “Creating qualitative differences between sins proves inherently difficult and significantly coincidental. Furthermore, Paul does not seem to attempt a qualitative distinction between ‘bodily sins’ and other sins but underscores the spiritual problem in not considering sins against one’s own body.”

²²J. William Johnston, *The Use of Πᾶς in the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek 11 (New York: Lang, 2004).

²³Ibid., 148–57.

²⁴Ibid., 98.

²⁵Ibid., 99.

²⁶Ibid., 149.

²⁷Smith, “Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b,” 75–87.

Johnston observes that Matt 12:31 and 1 Cor 6:18b–c differ in another significant way:

Another difference is that in the contrasting clause in 1 Cor 6:18c, ὁ πορνεύων suddenly replaces πορνεία, as though the actor rather than the action is the emphasis.... It is almost as if Paul has changed from speaking about sins in theory and now speaks of the person who is sinning.²⁸

Johnston concludes that the grammar does not allow one to add the word *other* to verse 18b. Consequently, the best way to read the passage is as a Corinthian slogan:

Paul does not single out πορνεία as a particularly heinous example of sin against one's own body, but rather as the particular example of sin against the body; just the kind of sin which the Corinthians want to maintain affects the body but not the spirit.... Paul's objective is not to argue that πορνεία is particularly bad because it is against the body, but that the Corinthian logic allowing πορνεία is patently false. πορνεία is neither one exception to the rule nor a particularly heinous sin; it is one of a number of particular sins that affect the body, and for that reason he shows the Corinthian logic is in error.... The full force of the statement helps to identify it as a Corinthian slogan rather than a statement of the Apostle Paul, enhancing our understanding of the dialog between Paul and the church at Corinth.²⁹

D. 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 Is an Ideal Context for Paul to Quote Corinthian Slogans

If one of my students submitted a research paper that cited sources the way Paul does in 1 Corinthians, I would have to give that student a failing grade for committing plagiarism. Paul, who of course was not following our modern-day standards for research papers, quotes many people in 1 Corinthians without acknowledgment.³⁰ And that makes it all the more likely that, if he were quoting Corinthian slogans or mottos, he would not explicitly introduce all of them with a formula such as, “As you yourselves say.”

What are the criteria, then, for determining whether Paul is quoting a Corinthian slogan? In his 2010 article “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,”³¹ Smith explains how interpreters have historically handled Corinthian slogans, and he examines the methodology for identifying those slogans. He suggests nine “specific criteria for

²⁸ Johnston, *Use of Πᾶς in the NT*, 149.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

³⁰ See Smith, “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” 72–73, who lists a dozen passages in 1 Corinthians where Paul cites without acknowledgment Old Testament quotations, Old Testament allusions, allusions to sayings of Jesus, the Greek poet Menander, and creedal or hymnic fragments.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68–88. See also Paul Charles Siebenmann, “The Question of Slogans in 1 Corinthians” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1997), who identifies 1 Cor 6:18b as a Corinthian slogan.

identifying and isolating Corinthian slogans in 1 Corinthians” and then adds “three additional tests”:

1. Explicit introductory formulae such as the recitative $\theta\tau\iota$ (e.g., 8:1, 4; cf. 7:1).
2. A brief, pithy, and often elliptical statement or generalization in the present tense—that is, a proverb, maxim, catchphrase, or motto (e.g., “all things are lawful,” 6:12).
3. Rhetorical features and parallel structures that enhance memorability (e.g., the chiasm in 6:13: food–stomach–stomach–food).
4. Repetition elsewhere in the letter that suggests common currency and/or a formulaic pattern (e.g., “all things are lawful,” which occurs four times, twice in 6:12 and twice in 10:23).
5. Diatribal features that suggest “imaginary” dialogue (e.g., 6:12–20).
6. Vocabulary, syntax, or ideas foreign to or inconsistent with Paul (or not normally used for certain concepts) (e.g., 7:1b, which expresses an asceticism foreign to Paul; cf. 9:19–22; 10:25–26, 29b–30; Eph 5:22–33).
7. Contextual or syntactical dislocation (a statement that is inserted abruptly or “point blank,” change of addressees, shifts in vocabulary) (e.g., change of addressee from 8:7 to 8:8).
8. A sharp counterattack (including a severe qualification or total rejection) or point–counterpoint argumentation (e.g., 6:13: “Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food... Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body”). [In his n. 59, Smith comments that this is perhaps the most reliable criterion. Paul introduced a statement only to reject it when it held significance for the Corinthians.]
9. Vocabulary or theology that other contexts suggest is exclusively or characteristically Corinthian (e.g., the presence of the Corinthian “buzz word” $\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$, “knowledge,” in 8:1).

Three additional tests are these:

1. Contextual congruence: Do identifying and isolating a slogan make the best sense of the immediate context?
2. Confirmation by others in the history of exegesis (the mature reflection and collective wisdom of “the interpretive community”).
3. Convergence of multiple strands of evidence.³²

The four slogans in table 3 below fit at least criteria 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8, and they pass tests 1, 2, and 3 with one exception regarding test 2: the interpretive community is split on whether 1 Cor 6:18b is a Corinthian slogan.³³

³²Smith, “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” 84–86. I changed bullet points to numbers in these two lists.

³³On the structure of 1 Cor 6:12–20, see David L. Woodall, “The Presence of a Corinthian Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b” (paper presented at the 64th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 14 November 2012). Woodall’s primary argument is that the structure of 1 Cor 6:12–20 indicates that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan.

What may be decisive in confirming that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan is that verses 12–20 are an ideal context for a Corinthian slogan. C. F. D. Moule popularized this exegetical option in the 1950s when he understatedly suggested that verse 18b makes more sense in light of diatribe and implied dialogue.³⁴ This passage is a dialogue called diatribe, and diatribe is an ideal genre for quoting and refuting one's opponents (see criterion 5 above).³⁵ This passage includes four formal features of diatribe:³⁶

1. The phrase *μὴ γένοιτο* appears (v. 15).
2. Paul objects to false conclusions (esp. v. 15).
3. Paul rhetorically asks *οὐκ οἶδατε* (“Do you not know...?”).
4. Paul directly addresses the Corinthians in the second person.

Paul adapts the diatribe form by dialoguing not with an imaginary partner but with a real one.³⁷

In vv. 12, 13, and 18, Paul inserts Corinthian slogans where we would normally expect to see rhetorical questions. Whether Paul uses a rhetorical question (v. 15b) or a Corinthian slogan (vv. 12, 13, and 18), in either case the words function as an *objection* to the argument within the diatribe form. The *objection* is from an imaginary interlocutor in v. 15b but from real ones in vv. 12, 13, and 18.³⁸

Paul quotes and refutes the Corinthians three times in 1 Cor 6:12–14, so it is even more plausible that Paul would quote and refute the Corinthians a fourth time in this very same unit (1 Cor 6:12–20).³⁹ (See table 3.)

The English translation in table 3 tweaks the ESV in three ways: (1) It extends the third slogan by an additional phrase in v. 13 (“and God will destroy both one and the other”)—something the parallelism strongly suggests.⁴⁰ Contrast the ESV: “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will

³⁴ C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 196–97.

³⁵ Some exegetes who argue that 1 Cor 6:18b is Paul's statement (e.g., Fisk, “Πορνεία as Body Violation,” 551, 553) affirm that 1 Cor 6:12–20 has features of diatribe.

³⁶ Burk, “Discerning Corinthian Slogans,” 99–121, esp. 103–5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 105–12.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 112 (*italics original*).

³⁹ *Ibid.*: “Paul's use of the diatribe form makes the presence of slogans not only likely but expected. Moreover, the diatribe form suggests that the slogans would appear not only in vv. 12 and 13 but also in v. 18. If this text does in fact comprise a special adaptation of the diatribe, then the phrase ‘Every sin, whatever a person may do, is outside of the body’ appears in precisely the place where we would expect Paul to introduce another objection. Since Paul has used slogans to form an objection in vv. 12 and 13, it is not unlikely that he would do so again in v. 18. Thus, the form of the diatribe in 6:12–20 suggests that v. 18 should also be understood as a Corinthian slogan.”

⁴⁰ See Hays, *First Corinthians*, 102–3.

destroy both one and the other.” (2) It deletes the word “other” in verse 18b. (3) It treats verse 18b as a slogan rather than Paul’s statement by adding quotation marks.

Further, in the very next sentence after this unit concludes, Paul again quotes the Corinthians: “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: ‘It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman’” (7:1). Relatively few exegetes debate whether Paul is quoting the Corinthians in 1 Cor 6:12a, 6:12b, 6:13, or 7:1. So it should not be surprising that Paul may be quoting the Corinthians in 6:18b.

TABLE 3. Corinthian Slogans and Paul’s Rebuttals in 1 Corinthians 6:12–14, 18

Verses	Corinthian Slogan	Paul’s Rebuttal
12a	Πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν “All things are lawful for me.”	ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντα συμφέρει. But not all things are helpful.
12b	πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν “All things are lawful for me.”	ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπό τινος. But I will not be dominated by anything.
13–14	τὰ βρώματα τῇ κοιλίᾳ “Food is meant for the stomach	τὸ δὲ σῶμα οὐ τῇ πορνείᾳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κυρίῳ, The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord,
	καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν, and the stomach for food,	καὶ ὁ κύριος τῷ σώματι· and the Lord for the body.
	ὁ δὲ θεὸς ... καταργήσει. and God will destroy	ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ... ἤγειρεν And God raised
	καὶ ταύτην both one	τὸν κύριον the Lord
	καὶ ταῦτα and the other.”	καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ. and will also raise us up by his power.
18b–c	πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν· “Every sin a person commits is outside the body.”	ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει. But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.

E. Paul Uses *ἀμαρτημα* Instead of *ἀμαρτία*⁴¹

Recall Smith's criterion 6 in section II.D above: "Vocabulary, syntax, or ideas foreign to or inconsistent with Paul (or not normally used for certain concepts)." This is the case with 1 Cor 6:18b: *πᾶν ἀμαρτημα δὲ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν*. Except for Rom 3:25, where Paul likely quotes a formula that did not originate with him, this is the *only* time Paul uses the word *ἀμαρτημα*.⁴² In contrast, Paul refers to sin as *ἀμαρτία* sixty-four times in his letters.⁴³ Paul overwhelmingly prefers to use *ἀμαρτία* over *ἀμαρτημα*, and in 1 Cor 6:18b *ἀμαρτία* works just as well as, if not better than, *ἀμαρτημα*. Secular Greek, on the other hand, preferred *ἀμαρτημα* over *ἀμαρτία*.⁴⁴ This argument is not decisive, but it is further evidence that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan rather than Paul's statement.

F. Verses 13–18a and 18b–20 Are Parallel

Verses 18b–20 parallel vv. 13–18a. (I agree with Hays that "a new subsection begins in 6:18b.")⁴⁵ This suggests that the back-and-forth between Paul and the Corinthians in vv. 12–14 continues through v. 20.⁴⁶ (See table 4.)

As with the two slogans in verse 12 (as well as the slogan in 7:1), Paul introduces the slogans in verses 13 and 18 with asyndeton. The slogans themselves parallel each other by concisely stating a theological maxim, and Paul refutes the slogans by beginning with an adversative conjunction (*δέ*). The two cycles in verses 13–18a and 18b–20 parallel each other further in the manner of their conclusions: Paul theologically supports his refutations by beginning with the question *οὐκ οἴδατε*. This suggests that if verses 13–18a begin with a Corinthian slogan then verses 18b–20 begin with a Corinthian slogan as well.

G. *Σώμα* in 1 Corinthians 6:13–20 Refers to a Person's Physical Body, Not to the Whole Person⁴⁷

Some argue that *σώμα* in verses 13–20 refers to the whole person—not merely that *σώμα* is synecdoche for the whole person but that *σώμα* itself refers to the whole

⁴¹ Smith, "Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b," 87–91.

⁴² See Lindemann, *Der Erste Korintherbrief*, 151.

⁴³ There are fifty-nine occurrences in the undisputed letters (forty-eight in Romans, four in 1 Corinthians, three in 2 Corinthians, three in Galatians, and one in 1 Thessalonians) and five in the disputed letters (one each in Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy, and two instances in 1 Timothy).

⁴⁴ Smith, "Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b," 87–91.

⁴⁵ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 105.

⁴⁶ Smith, "Slogan in 1 Corinthians 6:18b," 91–95.

⁴⁷ See Smith, "1 Corinthians," 250–51.

TABLE 4. Parallels between the Argument of 1 Corinthians 6:13–18a and 6:18b–20

Argument	6:13–18a	6:18b–20
Corinthian slogan (vv. 13ab, 18b)	<p>τὰ βρώματα τῇ κοιλίᾳ καὶ ἡ κοιλία τοῖς βρώμασιν, ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ ταύτην καὶ ταῦτα καταργήσει.</p> <p>“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other.”</p>	<p>πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐν ποιήσῃ ἀνθρώπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν·</p> <p>“Every sin a person commits is outside the body.”</p>
Refutation (vv. 13c–14, 18c)	<p>τὸ δὲ σῶμα οὐ τῇ πορνείᾳ ἀλλὰ τῷ κυρίῳ, καὶ ὁ κύριος τῷ σώματι· ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ τὸν κύριον ἡγειρεν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.</p> <p>The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.</p>	<p>ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει.</p> <p>But the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.</p>
Theological support (vv. 15–18a, 19–20)	<p>οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν μέλη Χριστοῦ ἐστίν; ἄρα οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνης μέλη; μὴ γένοιτο. [ἢ] οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἐν σώματι ἐστίν; ἔσονται γὰρ, φησὶν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύματι ἐστίν. Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν.</p> <p>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality.</p>	<p>ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν οὗ ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶ ἐαυτῶν; ἠγοράσθητε γὰρ τιμῆς· δοξάσατε δὴ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ σώματι ὑμῶν.</p> <p>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.</p>

person.⁴⁸ This may be possible in some passages, but Robert Gundry convincingly argues that it is not possible in verses 13–20.⁴⁹ This is significant because these two views of *σῶμα* correspond to the two views regarding verse 18b: (1) The view that verse 18b is Paul's statement lines up best with the view that *σῶμα* refers to the whole person. (2) The view that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan lines up best with the view that *σῶμα* refers to a person's physical body.⁵⁰ The issue is not whether it is theologically accurate to say that sexual immorality affects a person's entire being, not just one's body, but whether that is Paul's main argument in verses 12–20. I agree with Smith that "Paul's immediate concern" in vv. 12–20

is to show that the physical body, because of its relationship with the Lord (vv. 13, 15, 19–20), is of moral and theological significance.... In other words, Paul rejects the Corinthians' view of the body as morally irrelevant and stands opposed to their immorality precisely because it involves the physical body, not because it involves something more than the physical body. Thus, where the Corinthians argued for moral irrelevance because of bodily action, Paul argues for the moral relevance of bodily action.⁵¹

H. The Statement Fits Well with What Paul Says about the Resurrection of the Body in 1 Corinthians 6 and 15

At least some of the Corinthians wrongly thought that God would destroy their bodies in the end. This is especially clear in 6:14 and 15:12, and in both passages Paul argues that God will resurrect the bodies of Christians. A Christian's body matters to God. God cares about a Christian's soul *and* body. The idea that one's soul matters but that one's body does not matter is pagan. That is why Christians affirm in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe ... in the resurrection of the body."

Some of the Corinthians who believed that God would not resurrect their bodies extrapolated that every sin is outside the body. In other words, they argued that what they do with their physical bodies is morally irrelevant.⁵² That logic is exactly what 6:18b captures (if it is a Corinthian slogan), and Paul strongly refutes it in chapters 6 and 15 since it contradicts the gospel.

⁴⁸E.g., John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology*, SBT 5 (London: SCM, 1952), 28, 31; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 263–64.

⁴⁹Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, SNTSMS 29 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), esp. 79–80.

⁵⁰Admittedly, in his 1976 monograph Gundry preferred the view that verse 18b refers to Paul's statement (*Sōma in Biblical Theology*, 70–75), but he reversed his position in his 2010 commentary, arguing that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan; see Robert H. Gundry, *Commentary on the New Testament: Verse-by-Verse Explanations with a Literal Translation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 648–49.

⁵¹Smith, "1 Corinthians," 250.

⁵²Dieter Zeller, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, KEK 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 226.

I. *The Statement Plausibly Matches Corinth's Social, Cultural, and Religious Context*

Smith attempts to prove that the false proposition “Every sin a person commits is outside the body” (6:18b) plausibly could arise from Christians in Corinth in light of Corinth’s social, cultural, and religious context.⁵³ He notes two major factors that may have given rise to such a slogan: (1) the Corinthian Christians apparently applied philosophy that was popular during the Hellenistic-Roman period, especially Stoicism and incipient Gnosticism; and (2) the Corinthian Christians may have misunderstood what Jesus (Mark 7:14–23) and Paul (1 Cor 8:8) taught about food not defiling a person.

Similarly, Bruce W. Winter demonstrates how elitist secular ethics likely fueled Christian permissiveness in 1 Cor 6:12–20, 10:23, and 15:29–34.⁵⁴ In Philo, for example, “the ancient doctrine of hedonism is justified by means of a particular anthropology concerning the mortality of the body but not the soul.”⁵⁵ The presence of this common philosophy supports the view that 6:18b is a Corinthian slogan rather than Paul’s statement.⁵⁶

J. *If the Statement Is a Corinthian Slogan, Then It Does Not Matter If It Seems Abrupt to Us*

Some argue that Paul does not clearly introduce verse 18b as a Corinthian slogan (see section I.C above). Two counterarguments seem to nullify that argument. First, the three statements in verses 12–13, which most modern translations render as Corinthians slogans, are not introduced as such. Second, speakers or writers can signal that they are quoting someone else in more ways than by explicitly stating “And I quote” or “As you say.” One of those ways is by diatribe (see section II.D above).

A related argument is that verse 18b must be Paul’s statement because it is simply too abrupt to be a Corinthian slogan (see section I.D above). But if it were a Corinthian slogan, then the Corinthians knew it. It may seem abrupt to us today, but it would not have seemed abrupt to them. It should not surprise us that Paul would use “insider” language in a letter to the Corinthian Christians since he had a close relationship with them. That is a natural way to communicate.⁵⁷

⁵³ Smith, “Roots of a ‘Libertine’ Slogan,” 63–95.

⁵⁴ Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 76–109.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78. See Philo, *Worse* 33–34.

⁵⁶ Although Winter does not engage the debate whether 6:18b is Paul’s statement or a Corinthian slogan, he does call Bruce Fisk’s essay (see section I.B above) “an excellent discussion of Paul’s argument on” how *πορνεῖα* is a sin against one’s body (*After Paul Left Corinth*, 91 n. 51).

⁵⁷ See Smith, “Slogans in 1 Corinthians,” 77–80.

III. CONCLUSION

Is verse 18b Paul's statement or a Corinthian slogan? The evidence strongly supports the view that it is a Corinthian slogan. I am not 100 percent certain—more like 90 percent sure. The distance between Paul's historical-cultural context and ours is significant enough to leave some room for doubt, but it is more plausible that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan. The cumulative force of the arguments has more explanatory power for the view that verse 18b is a Corinthian slogan than for the view that it is Paul's statement.

The following points follow from this conclusion: (1) Verse 18b does not prove that immoral sex is uniquely against one's body. Immoral sex may uniquely defile the body, and it may be qualitatively worse than other sins because it has more serious effects. But that is not Paul's point in verse 18b. (2) Bible translations should add quotation marks to the slogan in verse 18b to cue readers that it is a slogan and not Paul's statement (just as many translations already do for the slogans in verses 13–14). At the very least, translations should indicate in a footnote that reading verse 18b as a slogan is a viable option.