

Love and Paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians

The social identity of a newly formed Christ group

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1. Introduction

The first decennia after the death of Jesus the followers of Jesus formed communities. These communities rapidly increased in size and spread out over Palestine and the Roman world. Those early Christian communities developed customs such as sharing meals, baptizing new members and preaching. The main mode of communicating was by the spoken word, besides reading and explaining the Scriptures. Part of the communication was via letters as witnessed by the Pauline letters dating from the fifties from the first century AD.¹

The content of the communication was theological in the first place, i.e. explaining the meaning of the suffering and death of Jesus and its implications for the daily life of the Christian communities. The practical exhortations and advices for daily life and moral behavior, found often at the end of the Pauline letters, but as well present in the Gospels are termed ‘paraenesis’. These paraenetic discourses are thought to be part of the initial oral and later written traditions within the Christian communities. These traditions were very important, establishing the social identity of the new converts, now belonging to ‘Christ groups’.²

The intrinsic connection between faith and life, which has its roots in the event of Jesus Christ, makes that paraenesis is an integral part of New Testament (NT) theology. In this connection between faith and life, love plays a major role. To understand these connections correctly, it is important to realize that early Christian thinking was closely related to its Jewish roots and background.³

The command to love occurs already in the oldest book of the New Testament (1 Thessalonians). This letter to one of the earliest urban communities shows a loving and personal affection of the apostle Paul for the Thessalonians in the context of the soon expected arrival of the Lord. Paul exhorts the young believers on several issues.

Studying 1 Thessalonians I was struck by the social and psychologically supportive aspects and tone of Pauline paraenesis. I expect this study to contribute to reshaping the ‘image’ Paul has especially in Protestant thinking. Several aspects of Pauline paraenesis contribute to the image of Paul as a ‘Christian law maker’. 1. Paul’s ethics is often associated with opposition between “law” and “love”. 2. Paul’s exhortations are often deemed applicable to individual Christian behavior. 3. Many “rules” in churches e.g. the role of women in the community, are derived from elements from Pauline exhortation, deemed misogynic.⁴

Paraenesis continues to be part of teaching and preaching in both Christian communities and missionary endeavors. Studying how it relates to Christian love, from the early Christianity up till now, is therefore important. My thesis focuses on the association between love and exhortation in 1 Thessalonians.

¹ Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord. How the early Church wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2014), 1-21.

² In addendum 3. I describe the social context of the new Christ group in Thessalonica

³ Beth M. Stovell, “Love one another and love the world: The love command and Jewish Ethics in the Johannine Community,” in *Christian Origins and the establishment of the early Jesus Movement*. ed. Stanley Porter et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 429-459.

⁴ Linda Bridges, *1&2 Thessalonians* (Macon: Smyths and Helwys Publishing, 2008), accessed from ebscohost.com, 5.

The main question of my research is: What is the role of love in the paraenesis of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12?

The first sub-question is: What is the nature and context of the paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians 4.

I will focus on the following issues:

1. What is paraenesis and how to view its function. (*chapter 2*)
2. The historical, sociocultural and religious background of Pauline paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians. Special attention will be given to the social and professional *identity* of the Thessalonians. (*chapter 3.1*)
3. A literary analysis of 1 Thessalonians, especially chapter 4 pertaining to paraenesis. (*chapter 3.2*)

The second sub-question is: How does Christian love function in early Christianity paraenesis, with 1 Thessalonians 4 as an example?

I will focus on the following issues.

1. Love in 1 Thessalonians 4: *agape* and *philadelphia*. (*chapter 4.1*)
2. An analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4 pertaining to paraenesis and love. (*chapter 4.2*)

Methods

In chapter 2 the current status of thinking on paraenesis and its functionality is summarized. In chapter 3. I describe the context of the encounter between Paul and the Thessalonians using available data, from a historical, sociocultural and religious perspective. The focus is on the social identity of the recipients of 1 Thessalonians. In chapters 3 and 4, I will study, with the help of literary analysis 1 Thessalonians chapter 4: 1-12. with emphasis on paraenesis and love.

2. Paraenesis: introduction of the concept and definitions

In this chapter I introduce the concept of paraenesis and its definitions.⁵ I use the term paraenesis mainly as a technical term. In 2.1 I first describe definitions from a recent commentary and a lemma from an encyclopedia. In 2.2 and 2.3 the term paraenesis is analyzed in more depth and defined, especially drawing on the work by Wiard Popkes. I conclude with my proposal for a working definition for the term paraenesis.

2.1 How to define paraenesis?

In her commentary of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Linda Bridges provides a recent summary of what paraenesis is. “Paraenesis addressed themes or topics of moral concern, such as friends, sex, money, parents, food, etc., offering clear, down to earth counsel”. She gives a number of characteristics. “Paraenesis : 1. Consists of traditional ethical material, expressing conventional wisdom, approved by society, 2. Is general in nature, applicable to many situations, 3. Is so familiar that it is often presented as a reminder, 4. Is illustrated by the use of individuals as examples or models of virtue, 5. Is given by persons who claim to be more experienced than their audience”.⁶ Many Pauline letters contain paraenetic material, such as Romans 12:1-15:13, Galatians 5:1-6:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:22, Colossians 3:1-4:6, and Ephesians 4:1- 6:20. The verbs used in paraenesis are often in the imperative mood, such as abstain from evil in 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

When reading 1 Thessalonians 4, it becomes clear at first glance, that a number of characteristics mentioned do not seem to apply. Paul brings up the subject of sexuality apparently opposing the views of the first century Thessalonian Greco-Roman culture. Paul’s exhortations are apparently not so familiar. He needs strong verbs, appeals to his love for the Thessalonians and arguments to convince his audience. For the case of sexual behavior he does not give personal examples. The question arises if 1 Thessalonians is paraenetic according to the characteristics given by Bridges.

A number of other scholars have studied paraenesis in more detail. In a lemma in *Religion Past and Present*, Niebuhr describes paraenesis as syntactically incoherent (asyndetic), general (pertaining to everyday life) ethical admonitions, in isolation or in series, with a didactic function. The term paraenesis is not used in ancient literature as a technical term nor as a description of a genre. He considers the paraenetic material from the Gospels not to be different from the ethical instructions in Jewish or Greco-Roman ethical discourses. Paraenesis in Paul is often interwoven with Pauline theology for example in Romans 6:13 and 13:8-14. Pauline paraenesis is situational as in 1 Corinthians 5-7 and addresses traditional general *topoi* such as sexual and social ethics as in Romans 2:21. Paraenesis in Pauline letters can consist of catalogues as in Romans 1:29-31, conventional passages, called *Haustafeln* in Ephesians 5:22-6:9, catalogues of virtues and vices, as 1 Timothy 1:9f, and behavioral instructions for specific groups such as in Titus 2: 2-10.⁷

⁵ The verb *paraineoo* itself occurs only twice in the NT. In Acts 27:9 and 22, the verb is used by Paul to exhort his ship mates to stay confident amidst a storm.

⁶ Bridges, *1&2 Thessalonians*, 97.

⁷ Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, “Paraenesis”, in *Religion, Past and Present*, consulted online on 29 October 2020.

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Although this more broad definition of paraenesis by Niebuhr and a description of a variety of ways in which paraenesis is used in the Pauline corpus, makes it possible to call 1 Thessalonians 4 :1-12 paraenetic, some questions still need to be answered. Where does the use of the term paraenesis come from? Can a definition be given with implications for interpretation? Is the paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians of a specific type? This last question is important with respect to the fact that the paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians appears in the oldest Christian letter, a very personal letter with a strong emphasis on love and social ethics.

2.2 An analysis of paraenesis

To answer these questions we have to resort to scholars who studied paraenesis in depth.⁸ Popkes starts with analyzing paraenesis from three perspectives. First Popkes mentions the genre approach, represented by Martin Dibelius, who viewed paraenesis as a genre (embedded in his *Formkritik* approach). In his view, paraenesis is composed of a series of disconnected exhortations, the major unifying element being a uniform group of addressees. Paraenesis in this view is composed of shorter statements, lacking logical structure and coherence. The second perspective Popkes mentions is the use of paraenesis as a term, denoting a positive benevolent urgent advice, not to be disregarded. The third approach is to view paraenesis entirely as a situational advice.⁹

A good starting point for determining the meaning of paraenesis according to Popkes is a semantic analysis of the term. Paraenesis (*parainesis*) is a compound Greek word (*para* + the verb *aineoo*) denoting to praise, approve, recommend, advise.¹⁰ Both the verb and the compound word have positive, benevolent connotations. Paraenesis means giving a positive advice on a positive action in a determined setting. It is important to note that paraenesis is a term also used by non-Christian authors. Seneca, a New Testament contemporary, devoted one of his ‘Moral Epistles’ to the use of precepts. He called precepts the basic tool of ‘the department of philosophy, which the Greek call *paraenetic* and we Romans call the *preceptorial*’.¹¹

The use of terminology, types of literature and traditions in relation to exhortation and advice in texts from antiquity can be confusing. According to Stowers, paraenesis is one term used for exhortation or advice. However, *paraklesis* and *protrope* are also used for exhortation. Popkes lists a number of more or less similar terms.¹² Paraenesis can refer to the content, e.g. to the traditional maxims of moral wisdom, but also to the form or the process of moral teaching.¹³

In letters from antiquity, the aim of exhortation can be to confirm a recipient in continuing the way he or she is proceeding, or the exhortation to change the way of life, in opposition to ordinary customs. *Paraenesis* is advice to continue, and *protreptic* exhortation means to change a way of life. In Thessalonica Paul’s initial discourses to the Thessalonians were likely to be *protreptic*. In the letter, he refers to his previous teachings, providing paraenesis, exhorting them to continue and grow in the things they converted to, i.e. a life with a Christian identity.

⁸ Wiard Popkes, *Paränese und Neues Testament* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), 29-53.

⁹ Wiard Popkes. “Paraenesis in the New Testament: an exercise in conceptuality,” in *Early Christian Paraenesis in Context*, ed. James Starr et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 14.

¹⁰ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 16.

¹¹ Quoted by Wayne Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 76.

¹² Popkes. “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 14,15.

¹³ Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 91.

Concerning the third, situational approach Popkes relates semantics and situations to each other. Important aspects of the situations for which paraenesis is used, are the urgency of the situation, the experience of the advisor and the reaction of the recipient.¹⁴ Generally, paraenesis is unquestionably sound, having a solemn character, with the emphasis on the authority and experience of the exhorter in an asymmetrical relationship, e.g. officer-soldier or preacher-audience. An important interim conclusion regarding paraenesis is, that semantic and situational aspects lead to a functional understanding of paraenesis. Paraenesis is considered a verbal act, becoming embedded in a statement, preferably precise, concise and clear in order to become and memorable and recordable.¹⁵

Its function in the New Testament era relates to rites de passage, such as baptism. It guides the newcomer in how to walk the Christian path, to internalize values, to cope with difficulties and develop an identity. The advices and exhortation are given by someone with experience and authority. The adviser using paraenesis in the New Testament era can draw on many sources such as own experience, logical reasoning, wisdom, Scripture and elements of the Jesus tradition.¹⁶

Both the Gospels and the New Testament letters show the presence of paraenetic material according to this functional definition. Mark, sometimes called the ‘Manual of Discipleship’, addresses conversion, accepting the new rules of the community, becoming a disciple of Jesus, and the loss of social structures.¹⁷ A classic locus for paraenesis (intimately related to *agape*) is found in John 13-17, in the so-called ‘Farewell dialogue’.

The Pauline letters contain a great deal of paraenesis. The vocabulary of paraenesis such as *paraggelloo*, *elegxoo*, *parakolouteoo* addressing duty and obedience are frequently used. Pauline paraenesis contains rules, for proper behavior, narrative sections, reminders and prayers and catalogues of virtues and vices. Community and individual are addressed. In the paraenetic sections the author refers back to tradition. The paraenetic material is closely related to the expectations for the future. Both Colossians and Ephesians show paraenetic material with a strong association with the indicative and the paraenetic imperative. In both letters the intention of the paraenesis is the *paraklesis* of the hearts, leading to strengthening in love and unity, an increase in knowledge and power and walking in the way worthy of the Lord. The other (genuine) Pauline letters show the same characteristics.

2.3 Definitions

In view of the fact that a broad definition of paraenesis results in it being found anywhere, scholars attempted to give a clear definition of paraenesis. The OSLO 2001 scholarly consultation (in which Popkes participated) on paraenesis in the New Testament suggests the following working definition. “Paraenesis is [1] a concise benevolent injunction [2] that reminds of moral practices to be pursued or avoided [3] that expresses or implies a shared world view. [4] consequently paraenesis does not anticipate disagreement”. Several issues are relevant to note. The functional aspects prevail. There is no mention of genre. The people involved, both the giver and receiver of the message are behind the message. The authority is wrapped up in

¹⁴ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 17.

¹⁵ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 28.

¹⁶ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 18.

¹⁷ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 19.

the message itself. There is no mention of the situation involved, neither a role for newcomers or an established congregation, but the situational background is implied. Giver and receiver share a common ground for communication. The idea that the material should be traditional is left out. And lastly, paraenesis is linked to practical moral behavior.¹⁸

When applying this working definition, it appears that 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 is the best fit (next to Luke 3:10-14, and Colossians 3:18-4:1).¹⁹ In 1 Thessalonians 4 Paul reminds the receivers of the message of the rules he gave them. They know and actually need no instruction. The intention of Paul is to exhort them to progress. The shared world view is evident. The style is short, pertains to moral conduct and is linked to the religious values of holiness and mutual love. Other paraenetic texts do fit less well in the OSLO definition for a variety of reasons, creating a problem for the usefulness and applicability of the definition. Popkes comes up with the suggestions to drop ‘moral’ leaving ‘practices’ from the OSLO definition. For example *agape* implies moral practice but also more than that. Changing ‘concise injunction’ in ‘clear concrete guidance’ stresses the functional and less the literary aspects of paraenesis.

2.4 Conclusion

For the purpose of this thesis I agree with Popkes’ proposal, who advocates an adaptation of the OSLO 2001 definition: “Paraenesis is [1] a clear, concrete, benevolent guidance, that [2] reminds of practices to be pursued or avoided in the Christian way of life, [3] expresses a shared, articulated world view, and [4] does not anticipate disagreement”.²⁰ I consider this definition a good starting point for analyzing the Pauline exhortations to the Thessalonians, especially with attention to the functional aspects. Paraenesis with the aim to build identity will receive special consideration in the following chapters.²¹

¹⁸ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 34-35.

¹⁹ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 35.

²⁰ Popkes, “Paraenesis in the New Testament,” 43.

²¹ Philp F. Esler. “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1199- 1212.

3. Paraenesis in the context of the Thessalonian community

In this chapter I first (3.1) describe the historic, sociocultural and religious background of the encounter of Paul and his hearers and later readers in Thessalonica.²² I ask myself why after such a short period of acquaintance, Paul (the Jewish man, raised in the Greco-Roman culture), places the topics of mutual love, sexuality and work ethic as very important on his paraenetic agenda. As paraenesis has an identity building and preserving functionality (see chapter 2.), to answer this question I will study the encounter between Paul and the Thessalonians and its consequences for social identity in more detail in 3.1. I will describe, the city, the encounter, the audience and the opposition. I will focus on the recipients of his message, especially their sociocultural background as the basis for their social identity.

In 3.2 I will describe the first letter to the Thessalonians in general and attend to date and place of writing, and to the letter as a genre. Subsequently I describe the structure of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 in more detail, providing a verse by verse analysis. I will provide my own commentary, focusing on the content of the paraenesis in relation to the social identity. When instructive I will use the insights of recent commentaries.

3.1 Thessalonica in the 1st century: history, politics, religion and people

The city

Thessalonica was built in the year 316 BCE in Macedonia by the military leader and later king Cassander. Thessalonica became quickly famous due to its port. From 168 BCE it was a Roman city and by choosing the right political sides became a so-called free city (*civitas libera*). Most likely they were proud of this sociopolitical achievements in the Roman empire. In the time of Paul Thessalonica was a city with a Greek, Thracian, and Jewish population. Religiosity in Thessalonica was of a diverse character. Both the traditional Greek deities, as well as Egyptian gods were honored. Historical, archeologic and numismatic evidence makes clear that Thessalonica was not ambivalently, but enthusiastically involved in Roman culture.

The encounter

According to Acts 17:2 Paul preached about Jesus the Messiah during three Sabbaths, persuading Jews, numerous God-fearing Greeks (Jewish proselytes) and prominent women. After getting in trouble, Paul proceeded to Athens and subsequently to Corinth. Paul probably wrote to the Thessalonians from Corinth, having received a report on the Thessalonians by Timothy. Luke's story of the encounter is different from Paul's story in 1 Thessalonians. For this essay it is relevant that Luke's description of Paul's hearers is different from 1 Thessalonians.

The audience

Paul paid great attention in his missionary work to the characteristics of his audience. The elaborate introduction of 1 Thessalonians (up to 3:13) is just one example. It is therefore important to ask what the cultural and ethnic composition was of the community of

²² Nijay K. Gupta, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 47-90.

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Thessalonian believers. According to 1 Thessalonians 1:9, the community consisted of Gentiles. Following Ascough I will call them the 'Christ group'.²³

According to Acts 17:1-4, both Jews and God-fearing gentiles were included. As Luke provides us with "a theological pattern" for Paul's encounters, most scholars stick to the reading that the Thessalonian Christ group were gentiles (converted from the idols according to 1 Thessalonians 1:9). According to Bridges the Thessalonian Christian community was an artisan community working and worshipping in their artisan workshop and houses.²⁴ Ascough suggests that Paul, being an artisan himself, making leather tents, met and stayed with his colleague tentmaking artisans in Thessalonica.²⁵

The opposition

Scholars have wondered if the opposition focused on Paul's religious views or on sociocultural issues. Most likely, as Thessalonians were very loyal to the Roman social and cultic practice, a call to exclusive devotion to one God leading to withdrawal from the Roman pagan cults was viewed as unacceptable and dangerously harmful to the established relation with the Roman empire. An important concern for Paul and his associates was therefore the loyalty of the Thessalonian believers to Jesus and His message. Their challenged *pistis* is not their challenged religious views, but their challenged adherence to the new social and cultic identity. This perspective does not answer the motives for the opposition by the Jews according to Acts. They may have been afraid that some of them in becoming Paul's follower were seen by the authorities as disloyal to the Roman empire's social and cultural frame work and endangering the status of Judaism as *religio licita*.

3.2 A literary analysis of 1 Thessalonians, especially chapter 4 pertaining to paraenesis

Introduction to the letter

It is with reasonable confidence that we can date the first letter to the Thessalonians to the late forties/early fifties CE on the basis of the following external evidence. After his stay in Athens Paul proceeds to Corinth and met Gallio (Acts 18:12). Because there is an inscription, dating Gallio's appointment to proconsul to 51 CE, 1 Thessalonians is most likely written around that time.²⁶ That Paul (including his companions) wrote 1 Thessalonians is hardly debated (unlike the authorship of 2 Thessalonians). Nevertheless, one wonders how Paul could write such an elaborate personal letter when Acts mentions that Paul and Silas stayed only for three Sabbaths in Thessalonica. Most commentators assume therefore a stay of at least a few months.²⁷

²³ Richard S Ascough, "What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations," *Currents in Biblical Research*, 13 (2015) 207-244.

²⁴ Bridges, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 8-11. In addendum 3, I provided a summary on associations as a model for the early Christ group.

²⁵ Richard Ascough, *1 and 2 Thessalonians. Encountering the Christ group at Thessalonike*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014) 8.

²⁶ Gupta, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 28.

²⁷ Gupta, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 28.

Genre and Structure of 1 Thessalonians

The first letter to the Thessalonians gives us a personal insight in how Paul experienced his encounter with Thessalonians, their response to his preaching and subsequent incorporation of his message in their daily and sociocultural life. Since 1 Thessalonians is a letter, it has to be studied as a letter. As a medium letters were quickly adopted by the early Christians, because the new Christ groups were spread along the Roman trade and traffic routes of the Mediterranean basin. They made communication easy via traveling Christian messengers. Letters also helped to strengthen the identity of the spread out newly started Christ groups. Often the letters were either sent to more than one group, or, by repeated reading, core messages were distributed over larger area's like Macedonia.²⁸

The Greek word for letter '*epistole*' originally referred to an oral communication sent by a messenger.²⁹ The relation between the written letter and orally communicated speech is important for several reasons. Firstly, there is the influence of the education in ancient rhetoric on delivering an oral message, which has a bearing on literary genres as well. Secondly, both in oral but as well as in written communication social stratification was very important, because it determined not only what, but also how things were said.³⁰

The structure of 1 Thessalonians is remarkable in a few respects. The letter starts with an address (1:1), to continue with a very long thanksgiving (ends at 3:13). The content of the thanksgiving starts with the praise for the Thessalonians (1:2-10), a description of Paul's ministry (2:1-12), their endurance under persecution (2:13-16) and ends with a description of Paul's love and pride (2:17-3:11). The thanksgiving section ends with a prayer (3:11-13). In contrast with other Pauline letters, it is furthermore remarkable that the thanksgiving immediately proceeds to exhortation with no other subjects in between. Chapter 4:1 to 5: 22 is an exhortatory section, with a central section on the day of the Lord. The letter concludes with a blessing and greeting section from 5:23.³¹

*Paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-12: structure and verse by verse analysis*³²

In my view, Paul introduces the subject, the addressees, the source for authority, the role of Paul and the end of the exhortation, sanctification in 4:1-3a. From verse 3b to 9 he addresses the subject of sexuality, how it can go wrong, what to do and the reasons for 'Christian sexual behavior'. The verses 9 to 13 address behavior in the Thessalonian Christ group, related to work ethics and its important repercussions for the relation to the world outside.

Vs.1 Furthermore, brothers, we beg you, and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, so that, (just as you received from us, how you are supposed to behave and please God, as you in fact behave now), you excel even more.

²⁸ Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality*, 80.

²⁹ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 158.

³⁰ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 158. In addendum 2 an outline of the letter is provided and in addendum 4. the epistolary theory is further explained.

³¹ Addendum 2. demonstrates a number of different views on the structure of 1 Thessalonians from the perspective of epistolary theory.

³² For the Greek text and textual notes: see addendum 1. Verses from 1 Thessalonians will be indicated by chapter and number.

Paul starts his paraenesis in chapter 4 with the rarely used adverb *loipon*. Many translations do translate this with “finally,” as Paul is about to close the letter with some final practical matters, but the parallels and the important content of what follows concur better with translating *loipon* as “furthermore, as for other matters, or as for what remains to be said”. Addressing the Thessalonian Christ group as brothers Paul demonstrates his affection and establishes them as a group resembling a family on the way to a common identity.

Subsequently Paul notes that he instructed the Thessalonians, that they followed his instructions, but that his point now is to improve their way of living. The verbs he uses are fit for a letter with friendly overtones. *Parakaloumen* is the usual word for exhortation. The addition of *erootoomev* is rare in Pauline letters and suggest a somewhat stronger variant of asking : “entreating or begging”.

Although Paul does not refer to OT or Jewish sources, his use of verbs point to his Jewish background. The verb *parelabete* is a well-known word indicating oral transmission of traditional sayings in Judaism. *Peripatein* literally means walking, but can also mean behave. Walking/behaving are also closely related in the Hebrew verb *halach*.

Vs.2 For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus

In both verse 1 and 2 Paul he emphasizes the relation of his message to the Lord, pointing to the foundation of his authority to give instructions.

Vs. 3 For this is the will of God: your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.

In verse 3 -8 Paul zooms in on the first of the specific problems he wants to address with regard to the Thessalonian conduct: sexuality. Paul ends his general introduction declaring that the Thessalonians know the will of God. He sets the standard: God wants their sanctification. I will attend to sanctification in chapter 4. For now it suffices to say that this primarily OT concept refers to being set apart from other people to live holy, because God is holy.

Paul declares that the Thessalonian Christ group should stay away from all kinds of sexual immorality. Fee uses a citation from Demosthenes here to depict the pagan versus the Jewish, and in its offspring Christian, view on sexual morality: “Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our persons, but the wives to bear us legitimate children”.³³ This citation gives perhaps a too black and white picture of Greco-Roman morals.³⁴ Moral philosophers, especially the Stoics, have a more conservative view on sexuality.

By appealing to the will of God, Paul states first that the Thessalonians apparently knew what was meant by the will of God. He does not explain it further. The use of this term demarcates pagan from Jewish ethics. In pagan ethics the gods are not a source of revelation on how to live holy. While, the pagan gods are not concerned with holiness, Judaism is very clear, that the will of God asks to lead a holy life (because God is holy, Leviticus 19:2).

³³ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009) 143.

³⁴ In addendum 5. a summary of sexuality and marriage in antiquity is provided.

Vs. 4. That each of you know how to keep his own body in holiness and honor,

Abundant literature exists about the exact meaning of the expression ‘*skeuos ktasthai*’. Basically *skeuos* denotes a vessel, as in several NT parallels, either thought to refer to wife or to the human body. The verb *ptaomai* means “to acquire”, but can be used as well in the sense of “keeping or gaining control over”. Fee gives a number of arguments against translating *skeuos* as “wife”. 1. Such a metaphor is not Pauline and seems completely unnecessary, 2. “Each of you” would imply all men need to get married. 3. Why using “your own” instead of saying simply not to sleep with someone else wife? 4. There is no obvious relation with the use of vessel in 1 Peter as suggested. 5. When one translates *skeuos* with “wife”, the connection between verse 4 and 5 is awkward. In the classical era wives were not “acquired” on the basis of lust but on their presumed abilities to bear children and to manage a household. So what is Paul warning against? 6. Lastly how can you wrong a brother when acquiring your own wife in lust? For the translation of *skeuos* as male sexual organ, there is evidence from the LXX translating the Hebrew *keli* as *skeuos* (1 Samuel 21:5-6).³⁵ Elgvin provides further evidence for this use of the Hebrew *keli* as male sexual organ in the Qumran.³⁶ I choose to translate *ptaomai* as gaining control over (giving it a perfect tense meaning) either the body or the male sexual organ. Paraenesis in this pericope is focused on male sexuality.

Vs. 5. And not in passionate lust, as the Gentiles (do), who do not know God,

Paul now proceeds to explain how the Christ group should create another Christian identity. The Gentiles do not know God and their sexuality is marked by lust, the Christ group knows the will of God and should contain their sexual desires.

Vs. 6. Not taking advantage or exploiting his brother in this issue, for the Lord is an avenger for all these things, just as we told you before and sternly warned (about).

It remains unclear what Paul exactly means by the term *pragmati*. Some commentators suggest business activities, creating in my opinion an awkward break in the flow of thought. In relation to sexual matters one can think of, for example, having sexual affairs with the slaves of the brothers or sisters or being adulterous with the wife of the brother. Paraenesis on sexual matters curtails male sexuality, with as consequence no damage to the relation with brothers and women outside marriage. Verse 6 makes clear that Paul does not take this matter lightly. Paul uses stern language to keep the Thessalonians away from an unholy life in excessive lust.

Vs. 7. Because God called us not to impurity, but to holiness.

In this verse the differences between Gentiles and the Christ group are again highlighted. Eubank stresses the Christian identity that Paul tries to promote by comparing Gentile behavior with Christian behavior in sexual matters. According to 4:7 impurity (*akatharsia*) and holiness (*hagiasmos*) are antithetical, belonging to both the moral and cultic spheres. Morally, impurity

³⁵ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 149.

³⁶ Torleif Elgvin, “To master his own vessel’ 1 Thess 4:4 in light of new Qumran evidence,” *New Testament Studies*, 43 (1997) 604-619.

is associated with sin, and holiness with a love ordered life. In a cultic sense holiness refers to nearness to God, impurity to distance from God.³⁷

Vs. 8. Therefore, someone rejecting this, disregards not man, but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you

Another argument to stay away from impurity is given in verse 8. The brothers are called to holiness. Not staying away from *porneias* is despising God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to them, and continues to be with the Thessalonians as indicated by the use of the present tense. The experienced reality of the Holy Spirit is the power for truly Christian identity.
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Vs.9. Now concerning brotherly love, it is not necessary to write to you, for you are taught yourselves by God to love one another.

With the connecting *peri de*, Paul changes the subject in verse 9, like he does in vs. 13 and 5:1.. Key words in this paraenetic section, are love and brotherly relations, with love as the driving force in the context of the expected Parousia. Perhaps linked to Isaiah 54:13 (*didaktheou theou* in the LXX) Paul states with a neologism (*theodidaktoi*), that these Thessalonian ex-gentiles are God taught.

Vs. 10. And you are doing this to all the brothers in the whole of Macedonia. We exhort you however to excel even more.

This verse suggests the existence of more Christ groups in Macedonia. The exhortation to excel even more suggests an *inclusio* with verse 1. Paul refers back to his prayer in 3:12-13 that “the Lord will cause your love for one another to be abound”. He is completely convinced of their love for one another and its fruits beyond their own community.

Vs. 11. And to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs and to work with your own hands, just as we instructed you.

This verse is addressing the work ethic for the artisan community. All these items fall under the umbrella of the social identity of a newly formed Christ group. It is not clear what exactly Paul had in mind. It is possible he refers to the meals and festivities of the artisan community to entertain patrons. Or he has in mind that the artisan should aspire to live from the results from their own manual labor, like he did with them (2:9) and suggests in the next verse.

Vs. 12. In order to behave properly toward outsiders, and that you may not depend on anyone.

Apparently Paul indicates here the system of patronage, with its cultic aspects. It is not unthinkable that the link between work ethos and sexuality lies in the meals and cultic festivities

³⁷ Eubank, Nathan. *First and Second Thessalonians (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture)*, Baker Academic, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uvtliburg-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5928846>, 78-89.

³⁸ Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, 155.

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associated with the system of voluntary associations. Such festivities could give rise to improper sexual behavior according to Paul.

Interim conclusions

From the previous discussion the following conclusions can so far be drawn:

Content and context of paraenesis: 1 Thessalonians 4 gives insight in how paraenesis functions in a letter (with elements of classical rhetoric) of Paul to a recently formed Christ group in Thessalonica. Paul with his authority as apostle, embedded in the story of the encounter of himself with the Thessalonians, appeals to the brothers to progress and excel in moral behavior, focused on sexuality and work ethics. These topics seem unrelated, but find a common ground in the love for each other, *philadelphia* or brotherly love. The paraenesis is directed to a Christ group, living under persecution, and being somehow confused with regard to the Parousia.

Sources for Pauline paraenesis: Paul uses a number of arguments to underscore the relevance and importance of his exhortations. He appeals in various ways to the Lord Jesus and to God, as the ultimate source and authority for his paraenesis. Although not citing OT sources, Paul refers to his OT sources by, for example, stressing sanctification. Paul demonstrates how appropriate sexual morals and work ethics affect the brothers in a positive sense, but also the outsiders. Not acting holy ultimately is despising God and the Spirit.

Sexuality: Interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4 provides fresh insights when viewing the Christ group as gentile male members of a so-called voluntary association of artisans, probably Paul's colleagues in trade. As evidence from antiquity shows, attention for (male) sexuality is common amongst males. It is not strange that talking about sexuality is important for this newly formed Christ group. Bluntly spoken, Paul exhorts his male companions to curtail their sexual desires from a totally different angle, namely holiness. Greco-Roman gods were neither very strict in sexual morals or holy nor sources of authority, in contrast to the God of Israel. Speaking as a male to males, Paul urges his hearers 'to curtail their sexual desires' (*'skeuos ktasthai'*), either using slang or a known metaphor, to stay away from excessive, passionate lust.

Boundaries at work: These artisans depended not only on their own work, but also on patrons who supported them in their cultic activities. However, Paul urges them to stay away from cultic associated activities generating money and to be self-supportive. With these exhortations the Thessalonian Christ (artisan) group acquired a new social identity. From 'woman, money and cultic activities' they switched to an identity as Christ followers, living a moral life, founded on the precepts of mutual love (*philadelphia*) and holiness.

With these short summaries of the findings of my historical-literary analysis I hope to have shown that much is to be gained by such analysis. The analysis demonstrates the peculiar characteristics of the Pauline encounter with the Thessalonians and helps to understand how to interpret Pauline exhortations.

4. Paraenesis and (brotherly) love in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

After I discussed the definition of paraenesis in chapter 2 and provided data on the historical and social context and content of Pauline paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 in chapter 3, I proceed in this chapter to analyze the reasons for exhorting the Thessalonians as described in chapter 3. Reasons for advising on morals can be manifold. A reason for a certain moral behavior can have its source in divine revelation, in seeking individual gain or aiming at the welfare of other individuals in or outside the own community. The question is how to evaluate this Pauline paraenesis: is it simply an exhortation to behave and become exemplary Christians, distinct from those outside or can more be said about the foundations of Pauline moral and exhortative thinking. In this chapter I focus especially on the role of love to explore this further. I first describe the terminology involved, then the relation between love and morals in the OT and lastly I explore the relation between love and paraenesis.

4.1 The terms *agape* and *philadelphia*

Love: the terminology

The meaning of the verb *agapeoo* according to the lexicon by Liddell Scott Jones is: 1. greet or regard with affection, love, of children, but in the LXX also of the love of God for man and of man for God, 2. to be fond of, to prize to desire for things, 3. To be well pleased, contented. *Agapeoo* and *phileoo* are used interchangeably, but *phileoo* indicates more an affection. *Agape* is used as a noun, for the first time in the LXX. It means love, e.g. between husband and wife, but as well indicates the love of God for man, and of man for God.³⁹ The LXX and the NT prefer the verb *agapao* to the verb *phileo* to refer to love, with the exception of the Gospel of John. *Phileo* is never used to describe the love of man for God. Both *agapao* and *phileo* are not used in the NT for bodily love.⁴⁰

Philadelphia, translated as brotherly (and sisterly) love, occurs only seven times in the NT. In Romans 12:10 *philadelphia* is, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, associated with the exhortation to excel. In Hebrews 13:1 there is a plea for continuity in loving. In 1 Peter 1:22 brotherly love is associated with purification of soul and heart. And in 2 Peter 1:7, where it is used twice, *philadelphia* is part of a triad including fearing God and loving the king. In all these instances the use of *philadelphia* appears in a paraenetic context.

Paul's use of love and holiness

In 1 Thessalonians Paul uses *agapao* and *agape* a number of times. In 1:3 he indicates the labor of love by the Thessalonians. In 1:4 he calls them the beloved brethren. In 2:8 he calls their souls beloved. Timothy brought a report of their love (3:6). In his prayer for the Thessalonians Paul asks for more abundance in love (3:12). In 4:8 he associates *philadelphia* with loving each other. In 5:8 he exhorts them to put on the breastplate of love. Paul exhorts them further to considers their leaders in love (5:13). Love for the members of the Christ group

³⁹ Henry G Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, s.v *agapeoo*, and *Philadelphia*, accessed 02082021.

⁴⁰ G. Stahlin, "Phileo," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds), translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985),1262-1269.

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is a thread throughout 1 Thessalonians. I think that Paul uses all aspects of the meaning of agape. In 1 Thessalonians he certainly declares to be well pleased with them, to be fond of their actions and relate their love to God and vice-versa.

If I consider what Paul's source is for his use of love in 1 Thessalonians, I think it is likely that he refers to the part of the Holiness code in Leviticus 19:18: "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord". With respect to the extent of love it is important to note that here the term neighbor is restricted to the own group. But in Leviticus 19:34, as in Deuteronomy 10:19, the concept of love for the neighbor is extended to the resident alien.⁴¹ This finding is relevant for the use of love in 1 Thessalonians. For example in 5:15, Paul extends the love of the neighbor to those outside, even to those who persecute the Christ group. One finds a parallel in Romans 12:14-21, echoing the instruction to love the enemy from Matthew 5:10-12.

Love and holiness appear together in the OT Holiness code. The concept of holiness was the most important identity marker of the people of Israel, separating them from the surrounding peoples (Exodus 19:5,6). Paul as a Pharisee (a separated one), was certainly aware of this concept of holiness. It is therefore quite remarkable that he applies this concept in his paraenesis to a group of Thessalonian gentile artisans, placing them at the same level as the covenant people of Israel. Paul extends therefore the social boundaries to the ex-gentiles who are now 'knowing God'. This Thessalonian Christ group is now like Israel separated from those outside who do not know God, with as their identity marker their sexual conduct and brotherly love. The eschatological character of these Divine interventions in the life of the Thessalonian Christ group makes them enjoy the blessings and to endure the hardships of their new status as the gentile branch of the covenant people.⁴²

Although Paul does not refer explicitly to sayings of Jesus, his use of love is intimately associated with the use of love by Jesus.⁴³ Jesus is not only the authority behind the commandment, but Jesus Himself is the incarnation of God's love and the source of reconciliation with God as well with the other. As a result strangers become brothers. Based on the love commandments of Jesus, Paul develops his theological foundation for the command to love. In 4:14 and 5:10 Paul stresses the death and resurrection of Christ and the Parousia, in 1 Corinthians he explains the relation between the command to love and the Cross, and in Galatians and Romans the soteriological basis for love and paraenesis lies in his theology of justification.⁴⁴ Last but not least, the command to love in OT and NT is always practical for communities taught and empowered by God, serving as a basic rule underlying all other rules.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Victor P. Furnish, "Love of neighbor in the New Testament," *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 10 (1982): 327-334.

⁴² G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 880.

⁴³ Richard J. Hays, introduction to *Theology and Ethics in Paul* by Victor P. Furnish (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox Press 2009), 15.

⁴⁴ Thomas Soding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, (Munster: Aschendorf, 1995), 274

⁴⁵ Furnish, "Love of neighbor in the New Testament," 334.

4.2 Love and paraenesis

In this paragraph I will follow Thomas Söding's analysis of the relation between love and paraenesis (coined *Paraklese*).⁴⁶ As love is a thread throughout the letter I will address the exhortation to love in the context of the complete letter with emphasis on the intercession for agape in 3:11-13.⁴⁷

The intercession in 3:11-13 prepares for the paraenesis in the subsequent chapters. The Lord is asked to empower the Thessalonians and the exhortation is placed in the context of the eschatological perspective. *Agape* leads to moral action, aimed at sanctity in an eschatological perspective. The *agape* is related to the members of the Christian community, indicated by *allelous*. Söding (based on 5:15) explains the Pauline request for more overflowing love, also directed to those outside, both in 5:15, and 3:12. He explains *peripassein mallon* (4:10b) as extending love beyond the own community, i.e. in a relational sense. The intercession in 3:11-13 lastly indicates that to love is not only an exhortation but also a gift.⁴⁸

How to love is made concrete in various ways. In 4:6, love is related to sexual behavior, to keeping the peace (5:13b), to correcting the idlers (5:14a), to helping the faint hearted (5:14b), supporting the weak (5:14c) and in exercising patience (5:14d). In 5:15 it is clearly demonstrated, that the exhortation to love extends beyond the own community. The maxim not to answer evil with evil, known as well from Stoic philosophy, receives a special emphasis. Paul exhorts them to answer evil with demonstrating love, given by God, witnessing to their newly found identity.⁴⁹

Paul further specifies the abundant love for the ones outside in 4:10b-12. Under the verb *filotimeomai* three other exhortations appear: to live quietly (4:11), to mind their own business and to work with their own hands, all related to society beyond one's own community. Paul does not ask for Stoic withdrawal, nor apocalyptic passivity, neither for inner withdrawal, but he exhorts them to win those outside over for the Gospel, as they were practicing already (1:8), through love-based interaction. Paul wants to convince the Thessalonians that their brotherly love learned from God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, determines their love based relation with non-Christians.⁵⁰ Paraenesis is directed not only community building but also a missionary activity.⁵¹ If the Thessalonians are exhorted to love both the group and the neighbors, I ask, how we have to view the social identity of the Thessalonian Christ group.

Love and paraenesis in social context

In the conclusions of his research into the functional aspects of Pauline paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians 4, Collins points out that Paul is primarily concerned with the relation of the *adelphoi* between themselves. Paul sets boundaries between the *adelphoi* and those outside, but without neglecting those outside. Collins concludes that: "the paraenesis of 1 Thessalonians 4,

⁴⁶ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 1-40.

⁴⁷ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 68-70.

⁴⁸ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 71.

⁴⁹ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 82.

⁵⁰ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 90.

⁵¹ Thomas Söding, *Das Liebesgebot bei Paulus*, 268.

1-12 and 5, 12-22 functions as a means of socialization of the Thessalonian believers as a group of God's holy people".⁵²

Collins points to the analysis of 1 Thessalonians using the so-called Social Identity Theory (SIT) as described by Esler, for whom the SIT approach is a crucial key to understanding 1 Thessalonians.⁵³ Two aspects are relevant here for the analysis of 1 Thessalonians 4. First, the concept of 'symbolic boundaries', defined as conceptual distinctions, is made by the social actors (Paul) to categorize objects, people and practices. These symbolic boundaries are meant to differentiate between groups to create a sense of social similarity. Second, SIT addresses the temporal aspects of identity formation by indicating the importance of past, present and future, often by emphasizing the role of life stories of the social actors.⁵⁴ Many aspects of SIT can be found in 1 Thessalonians. In the thanksgiving section, for instance, Paul gives an elaborate description of the life story he shares with the Thessalonians. Furthermore, Paul stresses throughout the letter their affectionate familial relation by addressing the Thessalonians as *adelphoi*, bound by brotherly love to him and each other. O'Reilly understands – from a SIT perspective - holiness as the most distinctive identity marker of the people of God. Paul in his benediction in 5:23 stresses that holiness should characterize the whole of their lives.

Interim conclusion.

My analysis in chapter 4 demonstrates the relation between love and paraenesis. *Philadelphia* used exclusively in the context of paraenesis, links love and paraenesis at a semantic level. The relation between love and exhortation is not new. Love in the OT is an intrinsic part of the law, both for Israel, as well as for those outside. Both Jesus and Paul extend the law of love to those outside. In fact the Thessalonian Christ group was initially outside! Excelling (*peripassein mallon*) not only indicates improving on individual and group morals, but also extending love to those outside. So practically speaking the results of Pauline exhortation are for those inside, but also outside. Love is both in the OT and the NT the indicator of holiness, (separated from those outside, loving and living holy). Love for the brothers linked to living holy in sexual and work ethic is the 'symbolic boundary' marker of the Thessalonian Christ group. Nevertheless, boundaries can be transgressed to add outsiders to the *adelphoi*.

⁵² Raymond F. Collins, "The Function of Paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians 4,1-12;5,12-22," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis*, 74 (1998): 398-414.

⁵³ Philp F. Esler. "1 Thessalonians," 1201-1202. It is beyond the scope of this essay to give a comprehensive introduction to SIT. In short SIT describes how group identity is formed and maintained.

⁵⁴ O'Reilly, Matthew P. "1 Thessalonians." In *T&T Clark Social Identity Commentary on the New Testament*, by J. Brian Tucker and Aaron Kuecker, 421–434. London: T&T CLARK, 2020. Accessed July 17, 2021. <http://dx.doi.org.tilburguniversity.idm.oclc.org/10.5040/9780567667878.0021>.

5. Conclusions

I start my evaluation with discussing my findings regarding the sub questions formulated in the introduction and I end with an answer to the main research question. In general, I think that this definition of paraenesis proposed by Popkes and his reflections on the functionality of paraenesis fit very well with the paraenesis of 1 Thessalonians, but there are a few comments possible.

Both Paul's exhortations on sexuality and work ethos are clear, concrete and benevolent. His exhortation is embedded in love for the Thessalonians. Benevolent, yes, but the warnings to stay away from impurity are stern. A number of times in the letter he warns for the coming wrath of God (1:10, 4:6, 5:9). In a present day sermon, such warnings would be considered not to be very benevolent.

Why does Paul make repeated use of an emphasis on a Divine authority (4:2-3)? I consider his use of Divine authority to have a practical purpose. Paul is very eager to build up the Thessalonian Christ group in Christian identity (1:5-7). He preferably wants to do this himself, but is unable to (2:17). To enable the Thessalonians to remain strong and grow in their identity he prays for them (3:10-13) and appeals to the Lord (4:1), to the Spirit (4:8) and to the fact that they are *theodidaktos* (4:9). In the definition of Popkes the 'divine revelatory' aspect of paraenesis in 1 Thessalonians seems to be absent.

I discovered that paraenesis is a useful term with its own peculiar characteristics. Paraenesis is neither just preaching the Gospel, explaining God's love, neither a set of strict rules (law) without background or bearing of the message of the Gospel. It is in fact a mix of both, as demonstrated by the results of this study of 1 Thessalonians. I consider it important that in an interpretation of paraenesis, one should be open for additional aspects of the definition.

Paraenesis aiming to build social identity received special consideration in the commentary on 1 Thessalonians by Esler.⁵⁵ I think the concepts of the social identity theory fit very well with the concepts of paraenesis as laid down by Popkes. The idea of a family of loving brothers, sharing common life and work stories (2:1-19) and the creation of symbolic boundaries by a different sexual and work ethic, concurs with benevolent exhortation, shared world views and Christian practices defining the identity of the Christ group as opposed to the gentiles (4:5). I agree with Esler, that the SIT is a good model to interpret early Christian writings and communities.

Interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4 with the help of a historical and literary analysis, I gained some fresh insights. Especially the evidence of viewing the Christ group as gentile male members of a so-called voluntary association of artisan's, probably Paul's colleagues in trade creates a new perspective on difficult interpretative issues. Evidence from antiquity shows that attention for (male) sexuality is common amongst males. It is not strange then, that talking about sexuality is also important for this newly formed Christ group. Paul exhorts his male companions to view their sexual desires from a totally different angle, namely holiness. Greco-Roman gods were neither very strict in sexual morals nor holy, nor sources of authority in contrast to the God of Israel. Speaking as a male to other males, Paul urges his hearers 'to curtail their sexual desires'

⁵⁵ Philp F. Esler. "1 Thessalonians," 1201-1202.

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(*skeuos ktasthai*), either using slang or a known metaphor to stay away from excessive, passionate lust.

As these artisans depended not only on their own work, but on patrons as well to support them in their cultic activities, Paul urges them to stay away from cultic associated activities generating money, but to be self-supportive. With these exhortations the Thessalonian Christ (artisan) group acquired a new social identity. From ‘women, money and cultic activities’ they switched to an identity as Christ followers, living a moral life, founded on the precepts of mutual love (*philadelphia*) and holiness.

I found the study of the background of 1 Thessalonians very rewarding. The idea that not all the first Christian congregations have one set of properties, but can be very different helps interpreting a Pauline letter. The concept of the Thessalonians Christ group as an artisan community gives direction to the view on Paul’s exhortation on sexuality. This leads me to conclude that also present day Christian moral exhortation should not be one size fits all.

From my analysis of love and paraenesis I conclude, that Paul goes back to the connection of love and holiness, as explained in the Holiness code (4:3), without explicitly citing Leviticus. Love is for those in, but for those outside as well. Being separated, but connected with the outside world is the Jewish foundation for moral life. Both Jesus and Paul stress this principle. Paul applies this principle to his exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 4. In Paul’s application the attention for those outside, is concerned (4:12) with having good relations with the pagan Thessalonians. In chapter 5. he applies this further to the moral sphere, by advising the Christ group not to pay evil with evil. As already practiced by the Thessalonians (1:8), a moral attitude to those outside gets a missionary character. Both Paul and the Thessalonians want those outside to become insiders! *Philadelphia* and holiness become the ‘symbolic boundary’ markers for the social identity of the Thessalonian Christ group. These boundaries are to be opened up, to add to the number of the ‘Christ group’.

The source of love is God, both according to Leviticus and expressed as well in 1 Thessalonians (4:9) . So in Pauline ethics the basis is not social, cultural or whatever is relevant in Greco-Roman culture, but Divine love. This basis for ethics is utterly different from Greco-Roman religion where the gods were neither good examples, nor providing moral guidance. Ultimately both in Leviticus and in 1 Thessalonians the people of Israel and the Thessalonian Christ group are God-taught.

1 Thessalonians is a short, personal and practical letter. Studying 1 Thessalonians in detail revealed words and modes of saying pointing at Paul’s embeddedness in the Jewish tradition. This finding asks for further study. How did the Jewish tradition function in Pauline ethical instruction? Was his instruction comparable to the rabbinical method, i.e. sitting with the students discussing the tradition and its effect on practical life? How did his students, the artisans of Thessalonica internalized these messages? Can we understand the process of implementing exhortation into behavior better, by using the concept of oral tradition?

In the present interpretation of 1 Thessalonians I think another perspective on Paul is created. Many ‘images ‘of Paul do exist. Paul is sometimes portrayed as the representative of a new sometimes misogynic, Christian law, despite preaching freedom. The picture resulting from our evaluation is different in presenting Paul as a loving Christ group leader. I learned from this analysis of the first Christian letter to value Paul as a missionary, joining a community, working

with his own hands and in a short time becoming their adviser on moral issues. This brings me to the main question phrased differently: what is the secret of Paul's mission in Thessalonica?

With this analysis I hope to have shown that love is a key issue in 1 Thessalonians. Although the friendly, positive tone of the letter underscores the affective relation between Paul and the Thessalonian Christ group, the love (*agape*) in 1 Thessalonians is the source for brotherly love. And this brotherly love is central in Pauline paraenesis. The outcome of Pauline exhortation does not aim at increased affection, but at holy, moral behavior. Christian morality in work and sexual ethics will keep the brothers together as a group. Brotherly love, founded in God-taught love separated the brothers from the Gentiles. Nevertheless, the same love extends to those outside, first living peacefully, but then, with the missionary zeal, winning those outside for Christ. Christian love is not an exclusivist, but an inclusivist social identity marker. The foundation for love-based paraenesis in the early Church is laid down in 1 Thessalonians.

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Addendum 1. Translation and textual notes.

ΠΡΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΕΙΣ Α΄ 4:1-12⁵⁶

Translation

1 Λοιπὸν οὖν, ἀδελφοί, ἐρωτῶμεν ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα καθὼς παρελάβετε παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ πῶς δεῖ ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀρέσκειν θεῷ, καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε, ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον.

Furthermore, brothers, we beg you, and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, so that, (just as you received from us, how you are supposed to behave and please God, as you in fact behave now), you excel even more.

2 οἴδατε γὰρ τίνας παραγγελίας ἐδώκαμεν ὑμῖν διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus

3 Τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἁγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας,

For this is the will of God: your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality.

4 εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἁγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ,

That each of you know how to keep his own body in holiness and honor,

5 μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν,

And not in passionate lust, as the Gentiles (do), who do not know God,

6 τὸ μὴ ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν ἐν τῷ πράγματι τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, διότι ἔκδικος κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων, καθὼς καὶ προείπαμεν ὑμῖν καὶ διεμαρτυράμεθα.

Not taking advantage or exploiting his brother in this issue, for the Lord is an avenger for all these things, just as we told you before and sternly warned (about).

7 τοῦ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσία ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῷ.

Because God called us not to impurity, but to holiness.

8 τοιγαροῦν ὁ ἀθετῶν οὐκ ἄνθρωπον ἀθετεῖ ἀλλὰ τὸν θεὸν τὸν [καὶ] διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς.

Therefore, someone rejecting this, disregards not man, but God, who also gives His Holy Spirit to you.

⁵⁶ NA 28th ed. accessed from <https://www.academic-bible.com/en/home/> 02082021

Klaas W. van Kralingen, *Love and Paraenesis*, 12082021

9 Περὶ δὲ τῆς φιλαδελφίας οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοὶ ἐστε εἰς τὸ ἀγαπᾶν ἀλλήλους,

Now concerning brotherly love, it is not necessary to write to you, for you are taught yourselves by God to love one another.

10 καὶ γὰρ ποιεῖτε αὐτὸ εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς [τοῦς] ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ. Παρακαλοῦμεν δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, περισσεύειν μᾶλλον

And you are doing this to all the brothers in the whole of Macedonia. We exhort you however to excel even more.

11 καὶ φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν καὶ πράσσειν τὰ ἴδια καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ιδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν,

And to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs and to work with your own hands, just as we instructed you.

12 ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε.

In order to behave properly toward outsiders, and that you **may** not depend on anyone.

Notes by verse (verbs marked in red, important words marked yellow)

1. **Λοιπὸν οὖν**: Often translated as finally, starting a concluding section, but Paul wants to address his readers with an important matter so better translated as furthermore... **ἀδελφοί**; brothers, views a community as family, generally assumed to include sisters, in 1 Thessalonians, most likely male readers. The verbs **ἐρωτῶμεν** and **παρακαλοῦμεν** are verbs used in paraenetic sections. **μᾶλλον**: repeated in verse 10, indicates paraenesis as progressing from and building on previous teaching.
2. **παραγγελίας**: instructions, commandments, associated with authority.
3. **ὁ ἁγιασμὸς ὑμῶν**: main aim of paraenesis presented here, **πορνείας**: only relevant text critical issue: some manuscripts have *porneia pases* or *porneia pases tes*, stressing all kinds of porneia. **πορνείας** can be translated as illicit sexual activity.
4. **σκεῦος**: for explanation see text. **κτᾶσθαι**: to acquire, in the perfect it denotes to possess or keep, with a durative aspect, so this translation is chosen here for the present. **τιμῆ**: honor, used by Paul for decency in sexual matters (1 Cor:12-23-24).
5. **πάθει ἐπιθυμίας**: excessive or passionate lust, for explanation see text, **ἔθνη**: people, with this term the outsiders are labeled to stress the identity of the **ἀδελφοί** of the Thessalonian Christ group.
6. **πράγματι**: relation to preceding verse, content related to sexuality. Verbs both in infinitive: denotes results or purpose. **ὑπερβαίνειν** : to exceed the proper limits. **πλεονεκτεῖν** : to have more than one's due, to selfishly attempt to gain more at all costs and by all means with disregard for others and their rights **ἔκδικος**: avenger, literally just after a legal decision, one who carries out that what is right, or the one who carries out a sentence connection this section to the section (verse 13 -) on the Parousia.

7. ἀκαθαρσία: association with πορνείας
8. τοιγαροῦν: so then, connecting this verse with a strong emphasis to the previous verse.
9. φιλαδελφίας and ἀγαπᾶν: for explanation see text. θεοδίδακτοί: adjective, meaning God learned, again a marker for establishing an identity separate from the ἔθνη in vs. 5.
10. Παρακαλοῦμεν: a verb indicating paraenesis, περισσεύειν, again stressing the importance of growing in the important identity establishing morals.
11. φιλοτιμεῖσθαι ἡσυχάζειν: to make it one's ambition, to consider it one's honor. και connects the verbs indicating practical examples, παρηγγείλαμεν: verb associated with paraenesis
12. πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω: 'those outside' , i.e. anyone outside the community.

Addendum 2. Outline of 1 Thessalonians (adapted from Gupta)⁵⁷

	Gupta(content)	Wanamaker(rhetoric)	Malherbe(content)
1:1	Prescript	Epistolary prescript	Address
1:2-10	Thanksgiving for the Thessalonians praise worthy trust	<i>Exordium</i>	Autobiography
2:1-12	Paul's blameless ministry	<i>Narratio</i>	Autobiography
2:13-16	Praiseworthy endurance amid persecution	<i>Narratio</i>	Autobiography
2:17 -3:13	Paul's love, pride, and concern	<i>Narratio</i> (transition to <i>probatio</i> in 3:11-13)	Autobiography
4:1-12	Exhortation to persevere and grow in holiness, love and integrity	<i>Probatio</i>	Exhortation
4:13-18	The hopeful fate of the Christian death	<i>Probatio</i>	Exhortation
5:1-11	The day of the Lord: preparedness and perseverance, not prediction	<i>Probatio</i>	Exhortation
5:12-28	Final instructions	<i>Probatio</i> to 5:22	Exhortation to 5:22
		<i>Peroratio</i> and epistolary closing in 5:22-28	Conclusion

⁵⁷ Gupta, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 41-46.

Addendum 3. Summary: Christ groups and associations.

Traditionally the first Christian communities, congregations or, according to Ascough, more aptly called ‘Christ groups’ were assumed to start from a household as the primary building block for these groups.⁵⁸ Other building blocks under consideration are synagogues, philosophical schools, and voluntary associations. These voluntary associations were defined as organizations around a common ethnic identity, a deity or cult, a profession or a neighborhood.⁵⁹ Ascough considers the model of associations to be useful as an analogy for understanding early Pauline church formation.⁶⁰

Subsequent research of evidence of associations from papyri and steles yielded a detailed description of a variety of 1st century associations.⁶¹ These associations can be characterized by a number of items. The goal of the associations could be varied, e.g. bringing together a certain group of artisans. These artisans, for example the silversmiths from Ephesus (Acts 19:25) joined to protect their business. They generally placed emphasis on caring for the burial of their death (probably the reason behind much of the evidence is found on association funeral steles). The associations were used to hold meals together, to honor deceased members, but as well as to honor patrons. These patrons were financially supporting the associations in exchange for loyalty from the members of the associations. Evidence shows that voluntary associations items such as the role of leadership, rules for membership often moral issues were carefully regulated.

Especially the Christ groups in Corinth, Rome and Thessalonica are well researched for their relationship with the structure of an association. Ascough suggests that the Thessalonian Christ group originated from the contact between Paul and his fellow missionaries as a local artisan shop, probably leather workers. These artisans were lower-class, Gentile and male. They switched allegiance to the God of Judaism, mediated through Christ, as a consequence of Paul’s preaching. Despite their switch to another God (1 Thessalonians 1:9) they maintained a structure of an association, with a leader, whose role is discussed in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14.

Paul seems to exhort them to change certain patterns common for associations such as eschewing the system of patronage, by living a quiet life and working with their own hands (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12). The advice to stay “low” might be related to the switch the Thessalonian association made to a monotheistic religion, staying away from the cults and the devotions of the pagan Thessalonians.

As associations were commonly devoted to care for their death, their new allegiance generated questions on the continuity of their practices such as making monuments for the death, holding banquets at the tombs and graveside ceremonies. Paul reassures them of the continuity of the community in view of the approaching Parousia (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).⁶²

In 2 Thessalonians other aspects of the functioning of an association are suggested by the description of the fate of disruptive members not being allowed to eat, i.e. to join meals.

⁵⁸ Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983) 78-79.

⁵⁹ Richard S. Ascough, “What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations,” *Currents in Biblical Research*, 13 (2015): 207-244.

⁶⁰ Ascough, “What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations,” 208.

⁶¹ Richard S. Ascough, *1 and 2 Thessalonians. Encountering the Christ group at Thessalonike*, 9-13.

⁶² Ascough, “What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations,” 219-220.

Evidence of research into associations shows all these aspects to be relevant characteristics of associations.

The model of an association for the early Pauline Christ groups has been criticized as well. Communication between Christ groups is mainly by letter, evidence for the role of associations is mainly from inscriptions and not from any kind of textual evidence. Furthermore the process of comparing complicated social structures asks for more structure and modelling according to Stowers.⁶³ The following table presents an overview of similarities and differences between Christ groups and associations. The first column lists similarities in structure, the other two columns show differences in content, but also demonstrate evolving concepts, when an association group became a Christ group like the Thessalonians.

I agree with Kloppenborg cited by Ascough, that the associations are a ‘good way to think with’, without stating that Christ groups are ‘Christian associations’.⁶⁴ Nevertheless the association as a model for an early Christ group is a very fit model, to ‘associate’ with the social identity approach.

Table		
Characteristics	Association	Christ group
Purpose	Divers, religious, economical	Religious
Membership	Divers, male dominated	Inclusive to woman, poor and slaves.
Introduction	Artisan, cultic	Faith, baptism
Founders	Divers	Paul, apostles,
Rules	Business, cultic, religious	Religious, related to Judaism
Meals	Cultic, burials	Related to Last Supper, social
Morals	Philosophical	Based on Judaism
Language	e.g. <i>charis</i> , a greeting	Evolving into a Christian concept of grace
Relationship	Collegial	Brotherly love (<i>philadelphia</i>)

⁶³ Ascough, “What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations,” 231.

⁶⁴ Ascough, “What are they now saying about Christ Groups and Associations,” 235.

Addendum 4. Epistolary theory

In the New Testament there are twenty-two letters. The letters can be classified in a number of ways. With respect to the type of communication, one can consider 1. letters between individuals, 2. letters between individuals and groups (most Pauline letters), 3. circular letters, 4. the letter as framing device in another genre (Revelation), 5. an anonymous homily in the form of a letter, but without prescription, and 6. embedded letters as in Acts 15 and 23. Epistolary theory provides lengthy classifications of letters according to content varying from three to forty-one subdivisions.

Aune proceeds to analyze NT letters according to formal literary analysis, rhetorical analysis and form-criticism. The formal literary analysis is mainly focused on the beginning and end of NT letters, as central sections are more difficult to analyze. The opening of Pauline letters contains two elements, prescript (containing superscription or sender, adscription or addressee, and salutation) and thanksgiving. Unlike in other Pauline letters, Paul does not identify himself as an apostle in 1 Thessalonians. In the letters, except the Pastorals, Paul uses: “Grace to you and peace”. He plays with words changing the customary *chairein* to *charis*, from greetings to grace.

The thanksgiving section starts immediately after the salutation in all Pauline letters except Galatians and 2 Corinthians with a prayer of thanksgiving. Thanks to the cordial relationships between Paul and the Thessalonians the thanksgiving section of 1 Thessalonians is extraordinary long. The closing formulas of the letters always have a *charis* benediction and have as optional formulas, a peace wish, a request for prayer, secondary greetings, a holy kiss and an autographed greeting.

The central section containing the purpose of the letter is the hardest to analyze formally. Generally this section starts with a so-called internal transitional formula. A sentence using *parakalo* and/or *eroto* is a kind of fixed formula often found in antiquity. It occurs nineteen times in Paul. The transitional sentences indicate a change of subject.⁶⁵ The subjects in the central section’s i.e. themes and constituent motifs are called *topoi*. These can vary from, letter writing, health, domestic events, reunion, but as well moral *topoi* such as evil, love, and eschatology. The central section can also have autobiographical elements, as well as travel plans and generally concludes with paraenetic statements.

Another relevant categorization focusses on the use of rhetoric. These categories are called: “deliberative, judicial and epideictic”. In broad terms deliberative is concerned with planning for the future, judicial (used in lawsuits) has an evaluative character and epideictic (used ceremonially) is concerned with reaffirming the presence situation and beliefs. Deliberative rhetoric can be persuasive (*protreptic*) or dissuasive (*apotreptic*).⁶⁶ Paul’s pastoral, consoling way of trying to establish the loyalty of the Thessalonians amidst troubles and worries emphasizes the epideictic character of Paul’s rhetoric, but a deliberative orientation on the future is also present.

The rhetorical parts of speech or writing are described as *exordium*, *narratio*, *probatio*, and *peroratio*. In addendum 2. examples of this structural epistolary approach are outlined.

⁶⁵ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 188.

⁶⁶ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 198.

I consider it important for the message of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 to call it probation: i.e. delivering proof for ethical exhortation. To call this section of the letter thematically: “Supplying what is lacking” (Fee) or simply exhortation (Malherbe) is just descriptive. There are several good arguments for the rhetorical structuring of 1 Thessalonians. In the classical era letter writing was a rare form of communication, considering that only 10% of the population was literate, therefore a letter had considerable importance and impact. Secondly a letter like 1 Thessalonians was most likely read out to the newly formed congregation, giving the hearers the opportunity to memorize and communicate arguments. Taken together from the point of view of the medium it is relevant to view the exhortatory section of 1 Thessalonians as belonging to the rhetorical category of *probatio*. As rhetoric pertains especially to oral communication, the use of rhetorical techniques in letters points to the association between message (paraenesis), medium (rhetoric category of *probatio*) and the so-called oral tradition (the main form of communication).

The form critical analysis focusses on two subjects namely the liturgical and the paraenetic. Form-criticism tries to analyze what elements of the “oral transmission” are present in the NT letters. Liturgical forms are *charis* benedictions, blessings, doxologies, hymns, confessions and liturgical sequences. The paraenetic forms are vice and virtue lists, household codes (*Haustafeln*) and the so-called two ways tradition.

Vice and virtue lists (more than three items) are common in the N.T. They can be *polysyndetic*, i.e. using connective particles, *asyndetic* (without particles), or *amplified*, expanding on the items as in 1 Thessalonians 4.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment*, 195.

Addendum 5. Sexuality and marriage in antiquity: a summary

A description of the Roman world with respect to sexuality and marriage is necessary to fully understand what Paul tries to say to the Thessalonians. A summary of available data and its interpretation is given by Peter Brown in his famous book entitled *The Body and Society in Antiquity*.⁶⁸

An important basic observation for this discussion is the demography of the first century Roman world. The average lifespan was only twenty-five years. Only 4 out of 100 of the Roman males reached the age of 50. A Roman wife needed to have five children to keep the continuity of society intact. Hence marriage and procreation were important forces determining the role of sexuality. Roman girls married young from the age of fourteen on. Raising a family for a Roman man was a virtuous act. After the reproductive years the spouse held an important place, governing the household but supporting the husband in his worldly career as well. There are many known examples of Roman marriages where the principle of living in concord played a large role. This suggests that Roman social structure is not all licentiousness. Nevertheless the availability of the slave population in a household provided an accepted way of dealing with male sexual desires. So in the times of Paul there was a stable part of society ensuring continuity of the Roman empire, but an unstable “*porneia*” culture as well.

In Judaism marriage and raising a family were religiously founded cornerstones of society. Strict laws prohibited *porneia*. After the destruction of the temple in AD 70 the rabbi’s realized the importance of continuity of the Jewish people, reaffirming the positive values of sexuality within the bounds of marriage.

In a detailed study Ellis analyzes in depth the role of sexual desire in Pauline writings (mainly 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 7).⁶⁹ His study is responding to the arguments of David Fredrickson and Dale B Martin, stating in short that Paul is mainly in agreement with ancient thought, condemns all sexual desire and preaches passionless sex in marriage.⁷⁰

After analyzing Jewish documents (in a period between 200 BCE and 200 CE) Ellis concludes that Jewish thinkers did not condemn sexuality per se, but condemned lack of control leading to overpowering sexual desire. Jewish thinkers condemn sexual immorality, and excessive, misdirected desire.⁷¹ Analyzing 1 Corinthians 7, in relation to Greek literature, Ellis concludes that Paul supports a positive view on desire, sex and marriage. Ellis proceeds to state that he considers it unlikely that a 1st century hearer or reader of Pauline sayings will view sexual desire as negative, but will rather hear Paul affirming sexuality in marriage but under exercise of self-control.⁷²

⁶⁸ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 33-65.

⁶⁹ Edward, Ellis, J. *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire : Paul's Sexual Ethics in 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 Corinthians 7 and Romans 1*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2007. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uvtilburg-ebooks/detail.action?docID=742706>, 5-17.

⁷⁰ David Frederickson, “Passionless sex in 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5,” *WW 23* (2003):23-30 and Dale B. Martin, “Paul without Passion: On Paul’s rejection of Desire in Sex and Marriage,” in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as a social reality and Metaphor*, ed. Halvor Moxnes. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 201-215.

⁷¹ Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 95.

⁷² Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 16,17.

If Paul does not condemn sexual desire as such, but excessive, overpowering desire and lack of self-control, what is the reason behind the exhortation in 1 Thessalonians. If *skeuos* in 1 Thess. 4:4 is taken as body or male genitals Paul simply states that his hearers are exhorted to stay away from pagan immorality in the Greco-Roman world, according to Ellis. This exhortation would point to a confirmation of the Christian identity.⁷³

In 1 Thessalonians it is important to note that Paul writes to the Thessalonians in a very affective way, demonstrating repeatedly the importance of brotherly love. This respectful loving Pauline attitude is the basis for considering the relation between brothers, and marriage partners. Paul's ethics are based on an anthropological model characterized by respect and love. Furthermore this relation of love permeates all the other exhortations in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5. When the Lord appears, Paul wants to find a Thessalonian congregation bound by respectful love, as the hallmark of Christian identity.

⁷³ Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 160.

Klaas W. van Kralingen, *Love and Paraenesis*, 12082021