

"YOUR BODY" IN 1 COR. 6:19,20  
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A. Why Study the Passage?

Last Lord's Day morning, much of our discussion centered on whether the metaphor, "the Lord's body," refers to the universal church or to some smaller unit, such as a church localized in space or time. 1 Cor. 6:19,20 is one of the central passages in this discussion. To motivate the rest of this memo, I summarize why the extent of the metaphor is important, and why this passage is crucial to the question.

1. How broad is "the Lord's body"?

Paul often uses the metaphor of the Lord's body to refer to "the church" (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 6:15; 11:29, ch. 12; Eph. 1:22,23; 2:15,16; 4:4, 11-16; 5:23,30; Col. 1:18,24; 2:19). In itself, "church" is ambiguous. It may refer to the universal church, which includes all true Christians of every age and every place (as in Matt. 16:18), or to local assemblies of Christians (as in Acts 15:41). The point at issue is this: Does the metaphor of "the Lord's body" refer to the universal church, to individual local churches, or sometimes to one and sometimes to the other?

The question is important because Paul often uses the metaphor in describing spiritual gifts (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). He compares individual Christians with the parts of a body, and says that the different gifts correspond to the different functions of the various body parts. Just as the body needs all of its parts, so the church needs the ministry of all the various gifts, not just of a few that happen to be stylish.

His teaching has two different implications, depending on whether the "body" made up of the gifted parts is local or universal.

- 1) If the "body" is local, then each local church should contain all the gifts. If a particular gift seems to be absent in a certain group of people (such as gifts of healing or tongues in WIBC), we might conclude that the group is not really a church, since God has not given it all the necessary parts. Or we might assume that the group is a church and so all the gifts must be present but hidden, and try to figure out who represents each gift.
- 2) If the "body" is universal, then it is less important that a given local body have every gift. We can profit from gifts

given to those in other churches, just as the impoverished church at Jerusalem profited from the gift of giving bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. We can even profit from gifts given in other ages, just as believers of every age profit from the gift of teaching entrusted to the apostle Paul. In keeping with Paul's admonitions in 1 Cor. 12, we still value all the gifts that are evident in the assembly, but we are not surprised if some gifts do not appear locally, and we will eagerly pursue fellowship with other assemblies so that we and they both may profit from gifts present in one but not another.

Thus our understanding of the scope of the body metaphor will influence how we view gifts in our gathering, and how we interact with other assemblies of believers.

## 2. Evidence for the universal "body of Christ"

In the study last Lord's Day I outlined several arguments that the body metaphor does apply to the universal church. Here are those arguments, ordered roughly from strongest to weakest.

- 1) In three epistles, Paul says that he and his readers are both in the same "body." In all three cases, he is writing from another city, where he is ministering in a different local church from that to which he writes. So the common body that he shares with his readers cannot be a local church, and must be the universal church. The relevant passages are
  - a> Rom. 12:5, written to Rome from Corinth;
  - b> 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13; written to Corinth from Ephesus (cf. 15:32; 16:8);
  - c> Eph. 5:30, written to Asia Minor from Rome.
- 2) The NT never speaks explicitly of several bodies, but always emphasizes the unity of the body. Eph. 4:4, "there is one body."
- 3) In 1 Cor. 12:13, "we have all been baptized into one body" is parallel with "have all been made to drink into one Spirit." The one Spirit is plainly the HS--no one suggests that each local church has its own spirit. The second half of the verse seems to have the universal church in mind, so it is reasonable to see that in the first, as well.
- 4) With 1 Cor. 12:13 "baptized into one body," compare also Gal. 3:27, "baptized into Christ." The HS does not baptize us into a local body (and then repeat that every time we move), but into the one universal church. Otherwise we should symbolize the repeated baptism by repeating water baptism each time we move from one church to another.
- 5) Eph. 1:22,23. God gave Christ, not "to the churches" or "to

your church," but "to the church," thus universal, and it is this that Paul goes on to call his body. Same observation applies in 5:23; Col. 1:18,24. Contrast "the churches" in Acts 9:31; 15:41; 2 Cor. 8:1,19,23,24.

- 6) Eph. 2:15,16 does not seem to be speaking of any local church, but of the union of Jew and Gentile in the universal church.

These considerations leave little question that at least some passages use the body metaphor to describe the universal church. The question that remains is, "Can the metaphor (like "church") also describe a local group?" To answer this question affirmatively, we must produce a passage that illustrates this usage.

### 3. What does 1 Cor. 6:19,20 have to add?

1 Cor. 6:19-20 is important because it is the main evidence that Paul uses the body metaphor of a local church. The crucial clause is, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you." If "body" refers to the church, then the construction "your body" might suggest that the church in view belongs particularly to the Corinthians, rather than to all Christians. In other words, it could refer to the local church at Corinth rather than to the universal church. (Then again, it might not. It is worth mentioning that even if 1 Cor. 6:19,20 does use "body" in the sense of "church," it is not clear that the church would have to be local. The universal church is indeed their church, as it is mine and ours also.)

Several features of this verse suggest that "body" here is a reference to the church.

- 1) Paul describes it using another metaphor, the metaphor of the temple, which commonly describes the church (1 Cor. 3:10-17; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-8).
- 2) In the preceding context (1 Cor. 6:15), Paul has already introduced the figure of the church as the body of Christ by calling individual believers "the members of Christ."
- 3) That same context describes individual believers with the phrase, "your bodies," using the plural to emphasize the separate bodies of the various Christians. In contrast, 1 Cor. 6:19,20 uses the singular, "your body." By changing from "bodies" to "body," Paul may indicate that he is changing his reference from human bodies to the mystical body of Christ.

If these arguments are correct, then 1 Cor. 6:19,20 shows that the body metaphor can refer to a local church, and one might assume that Paul would use the same sense later in

chapter 12 when he discusses spiritual gifts. There is no other clear example, though, of a local church being described with the body metaphor. So if these arguments are incorrect, we will understand the body metaphor in all its occurrences as describing the universal church, and will apply 1 Cor. 12 accordingly.

To decide whether "your body" in 1 Cor. 6:19,20 refers to a local church or to an individual believer, we consider two lines of evidence.

- 1) "Temple" can describe an individual believer, as well as a church.
- 2) The usage of "your body" as contrasted with "your bodies" (and similar phrases) elsewhere in the New Testament does not demand that the singular refer to the church. In fact, there are other cases of the same contrast where the singular cannot refer to the church.

#### B. Can "Temple" describe an individual believer?

There are three lines of evidence that "temple," like "body," can describe an individual person as well as a church.

1. The temple metaphor is clearly used of one individual, the Lord Jesus, in John 2:20-22. Verse 22 in particular shows that the metaphor refers to the Lord's physical human body, since the promise to "raise it up in three days" is fulfilled in the resurrection of the Lord.
2. The metaphor is semantically appropriate for believers. According to 1 Cor. 6:19, the Holy Spirit inhabits this temple. Paul clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit lives within individual believers (Rom. 8:11; 2 Tim. 1:14), so it is appropriate to call our bodies his "temple."
3. The New Testament probably, and other early Christian literature certainly, describes individual believers as temples.
  - a) 2 Cor. 6:15,16 may refer to individuals as temples. Paul is condemning the association of individuals with idols. There is no reason to think that the church as a whole had "agreement . . . with idols." The preceding comparison, in fact, brings the application to individuals into full focus: "What portion has a believer with an unbeliever?"
  - b) Eph. 2:21, according to both the MT and the customary critical editions, reads, "In [Christ] every building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." Where Peter sees believers as stones in the temple (1 Pet. 2:4-8), Paul sees them as individual buildings or shrines

that collectively make up the temple compound.

*no see Robinson.  
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- c) The Epistle of Barnabas is an early Christian document, written sometime between A.D. 70 and A.D. 132. Chapter 16 of this work develops the picture of the individual believer as God's temple in great detail. The writer has seen the fall of Jerusalem to Titus, and the accompanying destruction of Herod's temple, and relates this to OT prophecy. He then cites a prophecy of the rebuilding of the temple, and interprets it not of a physical temple, but of the sanctification of individual believers. This reference shows that someone in the generation that sat under the apostles' teaching was quite comfortable with the use of the temple metaphor to describe individuals.

### C. "Your Body/Bodies"

In this section, I report on a grammatical study that I conducted in examining this question. The key phrase in 1 Cor. 6:19,20 so far as the application of the passage to the church is concerned is "your body," and the contrast with "your bodies" in verse 15. Both phrases consist of a definite noun ("body," "bodies," both with an article in Greek) and an associated "possessive" (really, genitive) plural pronoun ("your"). I collected all of the examples of phrases like this (a definite noun with a plural genitive pronoun) from the epistles of Paul to see what the shift of the noun from plural ("bodies," verse 15) to singular ("body," verses 19,20) might mean. The presentation takes five steps:

1. Any study begins with an hypothesis and a method. I explain these here.
2. We are not the first to ask questions of this sort. I summarize what I was able to learn from published Greek grammars.
3. I collected phrases with all sorts of nouns, not just "body" and "bodies." I begin to summarize my own data from this general class.
4. Nouns referring to parts of the body seem to be treated specially. So I summarize their behavior.
5. Then I discuss every occurrence of the phrase with "body" or "bodies."
6. Finally, I review the status of the hypothesis.

#### 1. Theoretical and Methodological Foundation

- a) Exegesis seeks to find a relationship between the forms of a text and its meaning. In any particular study, we begin with a set of forms, a set of meanings, and some ideas about how they line up. This beginning position is our **hypothesis**. It may turn out to be wrong. In fact, if we knew for sure that it was right, we would not bother making the study! However, we cannot proceed without it, for it serves to organize and direct our work. With our hypothesis in hand, we can

collect and organize data, continually comparing it with the hypothesis (and modifying the hypothesis where we find it in error). The principles we follow in collecting and analyzing data constitute our **methodology**.

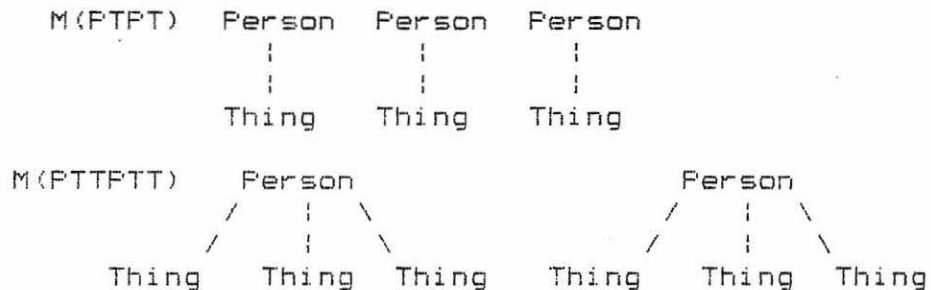
- b) We can draw simple pictures to illustrate the meanings that we are considering. When we say "your body" or "their houses," we are associating one or more people (represented by "your" or "their") with one or more things (represented by "body" or "houses"). This association can take several forms. We will give each a descriptive label for easy reference. The labels begin with "M" to remind us that they represent Meanings.

With only one person, there are two possibilities. The person can be associated with one thing, or with many things, as in these diagrams:

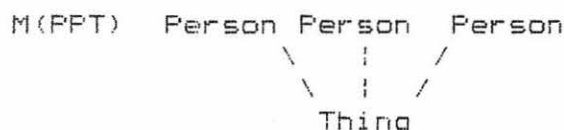


M(PT) describes a relationship between a man and his wallet, while M(PTT) describes the relationship between a woman and her purses.

With more than one person, matters become more complicated. We could, of course, simply have several copies of M(PT) or M(PTT):



M(PTPT) is a room full of men, each with his own wallet. M(PTTPTT) is a room full of women, each with her closet full of purses. But we could also have several people, associated with one thing in common, like a man and wife owning a single house:



Or we could have a group of people associated with a group of things, all of which they hold in common, like the

professors in a university and the books in the library:

M(PPTT) Person Person  
          |     X     |  
          |     X     |  
          Thing Thing

- c) The forms we are studying are Greek phrases made up of an article, a noun, and a plural genitive pronoun. Some of these items require a little explanation.
- 1) An article is a word like English "the." Though the English phrases "your body" and "your bodies" do not have articles, the underlying Greek phrases do: "the body of you," "the bodies of you."
  - 2) Pronouns are words like "I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they," that stand in place of a noun. "It" might refer to a book, a sunset, or a cockroach, depending on the context.
  - 3) A plural pronoun is a pronoun that refers to more than one person or thing, like "we, you, they." Modern literary English does not distinguish singular "you" from plural "you," but slang does: Yankee "youse" and Dixie "y'all" are plural, while "you" is singular. King James English also makes the distinction: "thee, thou, thy" are singular, while "ye, you, your" are plural. Both Hebrew and Greek made this distinction, which the pronouns in the KJV accurately reflect.
  - 4) A genitive pronoun has a special marker that shows its relationship to its noun. In English, "your" is genitive, but "you" is not; "his" is genitive, but "he" is not, and so forth. We usually talk about "possessive" rather than "genitive," but the form (in both English and Greek) can describe a far wider set of relationships than just possession.

Because we are interested in the problem of matching people to things, we will concentrate on differences in the number of the noun and the pronoun. There are four possibilities. Again we assign labels, this time beginning with F to remind us that they describe Forms:

- 1) F(PN), singular pronoun with singular noun ("thy house");
- 2) F(PNN), singular pronoun with plural noun ("thy shoes");
- 3) F(PPN), plural pronoun with singular noun ("your body");
- 4) F(PPNN), plural pronoun with plural noun ("your bodies").

- d) The object of our study is to examine how forms line up with meanings. For example, "your body" in 1 Cor. 6:19,20 is F(PPN). (Remember, "your" is a KJ plural, reflecting a plural in Greek.) If "body" refers to the local church, then "your body" means M(PPT) (several people, all associated with the same church). If, though, the phrase is synonymous with "your bodies," the meaning is M(PTPT) (several instances of the association between a single person and his or her body). "Your bodies" in 1 Cor. 6:15 is F(PPNN), and everyone agrees that it means M(PTPT).

There seems little question that F(PN) corresponds to M(PT) and F(PNN) corresponds to M(PTT). Because these forms are clear, and because neither enters into our specific question, we will not discuss them further. We do want to figure out, though, the relationship between the two forms F(PPN) and F(PPNN), and the four meanings M(PPT), M(PPTT), M(PTPT), and M(PTTPTT). F(PPN) and M(PPT) are suspiciously similar. Both refer to a single thing or noun. So our initial hypothesis is that F(PPN) corresponds to M(PPT), while F(PPNN) refers to any of the other three as needed. According to this hypothesis, "your body" in 1 Cor. 6:19,20 is some single thing that the Corinthians collectively possess, while "your bodies" in verse 15 refers to a number of bodies related in some way to the several Corinthians. By adopting this hypothesis, we are not agreeing with it. In fact, we shall find it to be in error. It is, though, a simple organization from which we can work.

- e) With our hypothesis in hand, how shall we gather our data? Several principles guide us.
- 1) We are interested in the meaning of the forms in 1 Corinthians, which was written by Paul. Different writers can sometimes use forms in different ways, so we should concentrate our attention on occurrences in Paul's writings. Later, we may find it interesting to compare what we learn with the rest of the NT or with other Greek literature.
  - 2) We should try to collect all of the occurrences of F(PPN) and F(PPNN) in Paul's writings. I was able to do this efficiently by using Paul Miller's GRAMCORD program, which uses a computer to read the New Testament and search for patterns of words. Due to limitations of space, I do not give exhaustive examples here, except when I follow a list of references with an asterisk (\*). For technical reasons, I may have missed one or two relevant passages, so if you think of one that does not show up here, please let me know.
  - 3) We could look only at occurrences of "your body" and "your bodies," but it is often wise to spread the net a little wider. So we look at all plural pronouns (not just "your"), and all definite nouns (not just "body" and "bodies"). If we were even more ambitious, we might look at indefinite nouns too, and at all plural genitives (not just pronouns).
  - 4) Ideally, different forms should always mean different meanings, and different meanings should always have different forms. So far as possible, we try to analyze the data in keeping with this principle. We know, though, that it cannot always hold. We have only two forms but four meanings, so sometimes several meanings will collapse to a single form. It may also happen that several forms cover a single meaning, as with synonyms. Such deviations from the principle are not stable in time, but they do occasionally occur, at least to the limits of our data. We call this phenomenon "skewing."



## 2. Previous Work

The standard grammars and commentaries are notoriously silent about grammatical issues of this sort. I could find no systematic treatment that suits our purpose. I did find, though, several interesting notes.

On distributed singulars, see A.T. Robertson p. 409; BDF art. 140; Winer art. 27.

- 1) A.T. Robertson's *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman, 1934) discusses "Idiomatic Singular in Nouns" (p. 409), situations where "the singular appears where one would naturally look for a plural." He notes that "the singular is used where the substantive belongs to more than one subject" in Mark 8:17; Luke 1:66; Matt. 17:6; Eph. 6:14; Rev. 6:11; Acts 3:18, 7:45; and John 10:39, and observes, "In all these variations in number the N.T. writers merely follow in the beaten track of Greek usage with proper freedom and individuality."
- 2) F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. R.W. Funk; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), article 140, discuss the "distributive singular," as in "they shook their head." Classical Greek and Latin prefer "heads," though not without exception, but Aramaic prefers the singular, which may have influenced the NT idiom. They cite Acts 2:23, 3:18, 7:45, 15:23 (but 14:3), 21:24; Luke 1:66, 2:31, 24:4; Mark 8:17; Eph. 6:14; Rev. 6:11; John 10:39; but note that textual variants with the plural often exist.
- 3) G.B. Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament* (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1892), article 27.1, notes "the use of the Singular to express, in reference to a plurality, an object which belongs to each of the individuals," and cites 1 Cor. 6:19 (!); Mark 8:17 (with James 3:14; Luke 1:66; 2 Pet. 2:14); Matt. 17:6 (with Luke 2:31; 2 Cor. 3:18, 8:24); Rev. 6:11 (with Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10); Eph. 6:14; and a number of classical and LXX passages.

Several things are worth noting about these citations.

- 1) The references are not all from Paul, nor all of the same syntactic form, though each writer does cite one or two that meet the requirements of our data.
- 2) Several favorite proof passages come up in all three writers. Grammarians have a disconcerting habit of drawing their examples from one another rather than by exhaustive search of the text!
- 3) Still, it is clear that forms with a singular noun sometimes do correspond to meanings with several things. At the outset, we anticipate that our hypothesis may meet with difficulty.

## 3. Nouns Other than Body Parts

We begin by setting aside data describing body parts, for

two reasons.

- 1) The passage in question describes body parts. We are more likely to treat the matter fairly if we begin with other data, and then compare our results with the questioned texts.
- 2) Body part phrases seem to behave differently from other phrases. This distinction is not surprising. Grammarians have commented on the distinctive "grammar of inalienable possession," the fact that people speak differently about things that are inseparably theirs (like bodies and their parts) than they do about other possessions. French offers a familiar example of this distinction. One speaks of "my car," "my house," "my book," but of "the hands" and "the feet." The possessive pronoun is superfluous with body parts, since the parts are inseparably attached to the owner.

The hundreds of phrases in this category offer examples of the meanings we are studying, and also some cautionary insights.

Here are some examples of the meanings under study. This list of mappings does not claim to be exhaustive. The last three illustrate skewing, since one form maps to three meanings.

- 1) F(PPN) --> M(PPT), common with phrases like "our God" (1 Cor. 6:11), "our Lord Jesus" (Rom. 1:4).
- 2) F(PPN) --> M(PTPT) with mass nouns, like "their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:12), meaning "each his own," but also with a count noun, "their table" (Rom. 11:9). This is a clear deviation from our hypothesis, unless the evildoers are conceived of as sitting at a common table.
- 3) F(PPNN) --> M(PPTT), as in "our fathers" (the entire collection of ancestors belongs collectively to the entire company; 1 Cor. 10:1).
- 4) F(PPNN) --> M(PTTPTT), as in "your children" (Eph. 6:4; each child belongs to only one father, and many fathers have more than one child).
- 5) F(PPNN) --> M(PTPT), "their wives" (Eph. 5:28).

We can learn some other interesting things from these data:

- 1) Some nouns occur only in the singular in our construction. Perhaps these are idiomatic. Examples include
  - a> "word" (*logos*, 2 Tim. 2:17), probably with the sense "speech," thus M(PPT).
  - b> "labor" (*kopos*, 1 Cor. 15:58), "tribulation" (*thlipsis*, 2 Cor. 1:4), "comfort" (*paraklisis*, 2 Cor. 1:5), "joy" (*xara*, Phil. 1:25). Many of these must be M(PTPT) or M(PTTPTT). But some emotions are F(PPNN), such as "sufferings" (*pathemata*, 2 Cor. 1:6).
- 2) So far, I detect no sizeable clumps of idiomatic plurals in this class of nouns.
- 3) Mass nouns are understandably F(PPN), though the meaning is M(PTPT).

- 4) Deviations from the hypothesis exist in the form F(PFN) --> M(PTPT), but not (so far as I have found) in the form F(PFNN) --> M(PPT). Greek does sometimes use the plural of an abstract noun without implying a countable plurality, but this does not seem to occur in our corpus.

Some interesting insights emerge in specific passages. For instance, "sin" (*hamartia*, 1 Cor. 15:3) and "transgression" (*paraptwma*, Rom. 4:25) are always F(PFNN), reflecting the individual's offenses against God [M(PTTPTT)], except in Rom. 11:11,12,27, where they are F(PFN) (and no F(PFNN) occurs anywhere in Rom. 11!). Perhaps the occurrences in Rom. 11 are M(PPT), emphasizing the common class of sin (rejection of the Messiah) for which Israel is condemned.

#### 4. Body Parts in General

When we turn to body parts, some further patterns emerge. Here we divide our discussion into three parts:

- a) Physical body parts, such as the head and the eyes, that mostly describe anatomy.
- b) Psychological body parts, such as the heart and the mind, that are frequently used to speak of mental states.
- c) The word "body" itself (reserved for the next section).

a) A fairly simple pattern emerges in physical body parts:

1) F(PFN) --> M(PTPT), where parts come one to a customer, like the face (1 Thess. 2:17; 3:10\*), the mouth (2 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:8\*), or the throat (Rom. 3:13\*).

2) F(PFNN) --> M(PTTPTT), where each person has more than one, like hands (Rom. 3:13; 1 Thess. 4:11), feet (Rom. 3:15, 16:20; Heb. 12:13\*), eyes (Rom. 3:18, 11:10; Gal. 4:15\*), members (Rom. 6:13,19 (2x each); 7:5\*).

3) Exceptions:

a> "their tongues" F(PFNN) --> M(PTPT) Rom. 3:13

b> "their hand" F(PFN) --> M(PTTPTT) Heb. 8:9 (though this may be an idiom, "lead by the hand")

b) Psychological body parts are much more complicated.

1) Some are always F(PFN). Some of these may be M(PPT), referring to the single collective consciousness of the group addressed, but in other cases M(PTPT) is obvious. Sometimes the plural is very rare, and we probably have M(PTPT) idiomatically.

a> "mind" *nous* (Eph. 4:17,23\*)

b> "spirit" *pneuma* (Rom. 8:16, certainly M(PTPT); Gal. 6:18 = Phil. 4:23 = Phm. 25, 1 Thess. 5:23\*). There is a well-attested plural, but never used in our construction. (Compare 1 Cor. 14:32, a very similar construction with the plural.)

c> "understanding" *sun8d8sis* (1 Cor. 8:7, certainly M(PTPT); 2 Heb. 9:14, again M(PTPT); Cor. 1:12, 5:11)

d> "flesh" *sarc* (Rom. 6:19), probably functions like a mass noun; plural very rare.

8/19/99 This is not as clear as it once seemed - may in some cases be idiomatically "you" = the way.

- 2) In other cases, the plural is always attested. M(PTPT) is inviting, and certainly possible in all cases.
  - a> "mind" *no8ma*, idiomatically plural (2 Cor. 3:14, 11:3; Phil. 4:7\*)
  - b> "bowels" *splaxnoi* (2 Cor. 6:12\*), idiomatically plural.
- 3) "soul" *psyx8* is mixed, mostly plural (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Thess. 2:8; Heb. 12:3, 13:17\*) but once singular (1 Thess. 5:23\*). M(PTPT) is likely in all cases. I can see no difference between singular and plural.
- 4) The data for "heart" *kardia* are extremely confusing. I can detect no credible systematic distinction in meaning between F(PPN) and F(PPNN). Here are all of the references.
  - a> F(PPN): Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:15, 6:11; Eph. 1:18 (contrast 2 Cor. 4:6), 4:18 (contrast Heb. 3:8,15, 4:7), 5:19, 6:5\*
  - b> F(PPNN): Rom. 1:24; 2:15; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:2; 4:6; 7:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 3:17; 6:22; Phil. 4:7; Col. 2:2; 3:15,16; 4:8; 1 Thess. 2:4; 3:13; 2 Thess. 2:17; 3:5; Heb. 3:8,15; 4:7\*

## 5. "BODY" in Particular

We would expect "body" *swma* to follow the rule for physical body parts, and appear in F(PPN), even with meaning M(PTPT), since each person has only one.

- a) Six references follow this rule, and we list them all, paying careful attention to their meaning.
- b) Then we discuss the six that do not.
- c) Finally, we summarize our observations, with an eye to 1 Cor. 6:19,20.
  - a) F(PPN). Of these six references, two are the ones under discussion in 1 Cor. 6, and the other four are all of the physical body, with sense M(PTPT).
    - 1) Rom. 6:12, certainly M(PTPT), of the physical ("mortal") body. (Compare F(PPNN) in 8:11!!!!)
    - 2) Rom. 8:23, "the redemption of your body." Not of the church, which has already been redeemed, but the transformation of the believer's physical body at the Lord's return, in keeping with Phil. 3:21, 1 Cor. 15:35-54.
    - 3) 1 Cor. 6:19,20, under discussion.
    - 4) 2 Cor. 4:10, developing the idea of "earthen vessels" in 4:7, and "mortal flesh" in 4:11, thus in all likelihood a reference to physical bodies.
    - 5) 1 Thess. 5:23, "your whole spirit and soul and body." The use of "soul" of the church would be unprecedented. The verse is most naturally understood distributively, M(PTPT), of the individual Thessalonians.
  - b) F(PPNN) --> M(PTPT). Of these six cases, I can give explanations for the plurality of half.
    - 1) Rom. 1:24, "to dishonor their bodies among themselves." The reciprocal nature of the sin seems to require emphasis on the plurality of bodies involved.
    - 2) Rom. 8:11, "your mortal bodies." Utterly inexplicable, in

the light of 6:12 and 8:23.

- 3) Rom. 8:12, "present your bodies a living sacrifice." Especially puzzling, since "sacrifice" is singular and one would expect that to attract "body" to be singular.
- 4) 1 Cor. 6:15, "your bodies are the members of Christ." Plural "members" attracts plural "bodies."
- 5) Eph. 5:28, "love their wives as their own bodies." Perhaps the plural "wives" attracts "bodies" to the plural.
- 6) Heb. 13:11, "their bodies [the sacrificial corpses] are burned." No explanation.

c) Observations

- 1) Except for 1 Cor. 6:19,20, all occurrences both of F(PPN) and F(PPNN) with "body" are M(PTPT), referring to the physical human body. There is no precedent for "body" with a plural genitive pronoun to refer to the church.
- 2) The body parts rule leads us to suspect that F(PPN) is the normal case and F(PPNN) the abnormal, so that we naturally expect 1 Cor. 6:19,20 to refer to physical bodies.

6. What has Become of our Hypothesis?

We began with the hypothesis that F(PPN) --> M(PPT) and F(PPNN) --> {M(PPTT), M(PTPT), M(PTTPTT)}. Each of the groups of data that we studied led us to modify it.

- a) For nouns that are not body parts, the hypothesis holds quite well, except that mass nouns and perhaps a few special cases exhibit F(PPN) --> M(PTPT).
- b) For physical body parts, F(PPN) --> M(PTPT) (head, throat, mouth), while F(PPNN) --> M(PTTPTT) (eyes, hands, members). There is logic behind this pattern, but it is quite at variance with our hypothesis.
- c) For psychological body parts, confusion reigns. In some cases, nouns may be used idiomatically in the singular or plural, since the ideas involved are abstract and hard to tie down to notions of "counting." The wide variation in "heart," though, suggests there is much to learn here. It does seem clear that there is skewing of the form F(PPN)/F(PPNN) --> M(PTPT).
- d) For "body" itself, the body parts rule makes good sense in just over half of the cases. In about half of the exceptions, we can find good reasons for the deviation. But some exceptions are inexplicable. In every instance, though, the reference seems clearly to be to a physical human body.

D. Summary

1. The evidence of 1 Cor. 6:19,20

Our study of the temple metaphor shows that 1 Cor. 6:19,20

need not refer to the church, and our study of "body" with plural genitives shows that such a reference would be unprecedented. Our phrase with "body" always refers to physical human bodies, never to the church. The reason for the difference between the singular in 6:19,20 and the plural in 6:15 lies not in the singular (which follows the rule for body parts), but in the plural (which is exceptional, for the sake of agreement with "members").

With 1 Cor. 6:19,20 in doubt as a reference to the local "body of Christ," we question whether there is any reason to postulate such an entity.

## 2. The question of 1 Cor. 12

It seems best to take 1 Cor. 12 in the sense of the universal church. There is no clear precedent in 1 Cor. or elsewhere for a local "body," and Paul's use of "we" in 12:13 seems clearly to indicate that Paul considered the "body" to include people from different local assemblies.

Consequently, we should not despair if we do not have all the gifts in our local meeting, but should cultivate contacts with believers of other areas (and through their writings, of other times), so that we can benefit from gifts bestowed on other portions of the body of Christ, and so that we in turn can minister to their lack (2 Cor. 8:14; Eph. 4:16).