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**Arzt-Grabner, Peter, Ruth Elisabeth Kritzer,  
Amphilochios Papatomas, and Franz Winter**

***1. Korinther***

Papyrologische Kommentare zum Neuen Testament 2

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This is the second volume in an ambitious project to write a series of commentaries on all the books of the New Testament that has as its major focus the evidence from the documentary papyri. The first volume, on Philemon, appeared in 2003 and was from the pen of Peter Arzt-Grabner, who is one of the three co-editors of the Papyrologische Kommentare (the other two are Amphilochios Papatomas and Mauro Pesce) and the driving force behind the whole project. To a far larger degree than this first volume, the one on 1 Corinthians is the result of teamwork. The team consisted mainly of Peter Artz-Grabner, Ruth Elisabeth Kritzer, Amphilochios Papatomas, and Franz Winter, but also included are two contributions by Michael Ernst, the long-time fellow traveler of Artz-Grabner in this project. The contributions of each member of the team are duly indicated. The volume has been prepared in three dissertations. Papatomas studied the juridical terminology in 1 Corinthians. His work is now being published as a monograph in the series of NTOA (*Juristische Begriffe im ersten Korintherbrief*). The reader is referred to it as an absolutely indispensable supplement to the commentary (5: “unbedingt empfohlen”). Winter (2000) and Kritzer (2004) submitted dissertations on, respectively, 1 Cor 1–4 and 5–6 that have been largely included in this volume (“die hiermit veröffentlicht werden, teilweise gekürzt”). Artz-Grabner was responsible for the final redaction and has himself

contributed numerous sections, some of them in collaboration with Winter or Kritzer. The German translation of the letter was prepared by Kritzer and Artz-Grabner.

Those familiar with the volume on Philemon will notice the similarities in the approach, but probably also the differences. *Philemon* was introduced by a very long chapter surveying the papyrological (and some other) evidence for slavery in antiquity. By contrast, the introduction to this second volume is very short (27–34) and basically limited to the question of the epistolary genre. On the other hand, *1 Corinthians* contains thirteen excursus, most of them on functions (scribes, teachers), on the status of certain categories of people (widows, virgins), or on certain social and legal practices (divorce, manumission of slaves).

Paul's letter to the Corinthians offers ample opportunities for citing papyri, and the authors do not seem to have missed one to do so. The list of papyri or ostraca cited or referred to contains about 3,800 documents! As one might expect, by far the larger part of the evidence that can be gained from the papyri informs us about socioeconomic realities rather than about religious or, for that matter, theological issues. Due place is given to papyri illustrating marriage and divorce procedures, invitations to (cultic) meals, or realia of various sorts. One will understand that not all of these references bear equal weight. But even comments or illustrations of a more "mundane" nature can be of some interest for clarifying the text, if only to show that some words one would consider to be part of the common vocabulary are only rarely or not attested at all in the papyri. Thus, in the "daily-life" image in 5:6 of "the leaven leavening the whole lump," φύραμα is found only once in the whole corpus of papyri that are studied, and no illustration can be cited for the verb ζυμώω (210). Likewise, a word such as μάκελλος in 10:25 is not so well attested as one would assume, and then only from the third century C.E. on (see 374).

In other cases the evidence of the papyri, while quite substantial in documenting a particular praxis, offers no help for deciding on the interpretation of the letter. The elliptic μάλλον χρῆσαι in 7:21, for example, has been interpreted as "avail of the opportunity to get one's freedom" or, on the contrary, "to remain in slavery" or even "of the opportunity of being a Christian." Different procedures of manumission are mentioned in the papyri, but so far they have not produced an instance that would support the second possibility. It has been argued on this basis that one simply could not refuse the offer to be freed, but Artz-Grabner notes that it would be hard to find such evidence proving that one decided to remain in slavery, as this kind of decision was probably not put in writing (281: "der Nachweis für einen solchen Fall [kann] zumindest aus dokumentarischen Quellen gar nicht erwartet werden, da die von Paulus beschriebene Situation offensichtlich noch im Vorfeld eines rechtlichen und somit schriftlich erfassten Aktes liegt").

In yet other instances the negative evidence of the papyri may help to realize the exceptional character of Paul's thought. The papyri apparently offer only one late (sixth–seventh century) and somewhat ambivalent instance of the expression ἄνδρα ἔχειν (7:2). Kritzer comments: “Dieser Befund macht deutlich, wie lange eheähnliche Verbindungen im griechisch-römischen Kulturkreis ... in grossem Ausmass vom Mann bestimmt waren” (255). Paul, on the contrary, takes care to describe the situation from the perspective of both parties, and he goes on to do so in verses 3–4 as well. In this respect, it is worth noticing that the papyri describe instances of (financial) debts between partners, but not the kind of “obligations” (“marital duties”) Paul is speaking about in 7:3 (256: “Eine direkte Parallele dazu ist in den Papyri bisher nicht zu finden”). Similarly, if the evidence of the papyri obviously does not help to decide on the authenticity of 14:34–35, it offers a rare example of the passive use of ἐπιτρέπω with a positive meaning (BGU I 347, col. ii), the subject subsequently being identified as the archpriest (466).

These few examples, selected at random, may illustrate that, even though for many a word papyrological evidence can be cited, it is not always easy to find a real “match.” On the other hand, the papyrological material as often helps to clarify the background against which a particular word or expression may have been understood by Paul's readers. But the major asset of this project is the help it provides in opening up and sifting through a corpus of texts that still largely remains a sealed book for many biblical scholars, Deissmann or Moulton-Milligan notwithstanding. To wit, Berger-Colpe-Boring's *Hellenistic Commentary* contains only three references to papyri for the whole of 1 Corinthians: 5:1–13 (PGM I 4.1227–1264); and 8:10 (P.Oxy. I 110 and III 523). The famous PGM I 4 is now cited no less than seven times: at 5:4 (206 n. 53); 5:5 (208 n. 67); 10:1 (363); 14:7 (447); 14:23 (459 n.942); 15 (474); and 16:13 (517 n. 60). One should realize, however, that the same evidence can be used in somewhat different ways. The Papyrological Commentary duly refers to PGM I 4.1238 for the word “Satan” at 1 Cor 5:5. Boring (398) rather draws attention to the curse formula by which one is delivered to perdition, thus apparently taking Paul's παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι in this sense. The Papyrological Commentary does not comment on this interpretation and understands the expression in a neutral or even a positive way (202: “diese sorgende ‘geistige Anwesenheit’”), citing UPZ I 69.2–3 and BGU IV 1080.6–8. One should further realize that sometimes an element of subjectivity may have played in deciding which text can or should be cited in a particular instance. The *Neuer Wettstein* cites only one papyrus for 1 Cor (P.Oxy. I 110, at 10:27). Boring cites the same text at 8:10. The Papyrological Commentary mentions it twice in the introduction to 1 Cor 8 when dealing with invitations to meals (321–27) but does not quote the text and instead prefers to cite P.Oslo III 157, P.Köln VI 280, and P.Oxy. XXXI 2592 and LII 3964,3–4.

One hopes the editors and collaborators of this giant project will find the courage and means to continue their research. The project certainly has the support of several prominent papyrologists, as indicated in the preface (6).