

Your Body
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1 Cor 6:19

(NA 27th ed.)

(KJV)

ἢ οὐκ οἶδατε

What? know ye not

ὅτι τὸ σῶμα ὑμῶν

that your **body**

ναὸς τοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐστίν οἷς ἔχετε ἀπὸ θεοῦ,

is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you,
which ye have of God,

καὶ οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐαυτῶν;

and ye are not your own?

The Greek here is pretty simple, right? Note *sōma* for “body,” as in “psychosomatic.” In line 3, of course the verb is last, while in KJV it is first. The line reads, “Temple the in you Holy Spirit is.” Gotta love it. I chose the King James because its Old English distinguishes the number of the second personal pronoun; “ye” and “you” are plural (as opposed to singular “thee” and “thou”). The plural and singular of things is at issue here. My musings are inspired by Felix Sung (1992).

“Your” (plural) “body” (singular) is (singular verb) “the” (a specific Temple that warrants the definite article in English even though it is lacking in Greek) “Temple” (singular, I always capitalize it) of the Holy Ghost which is in “you” (plural), which “ye have” (plural) from God, and “ye are” (plural) not “your own” (plural). Whew!

There are many individual readers of 1 Corinthians (you all, in fact), but there is a singular body which comprises a single Temple. The Spirit is in all of you, corporately (line 3), in your single Body (line 2). This as distinguished from Paul’s point a few verses before, where *sōma* is definitely plural, “your bodies are members of Christ” (v15). If Paul had meant v19 to be understood as “your bodies” he could have written it like in v15, *sōmata*. But he didn’t.

Let me paraphrase how I think we are supposed to understand it. I read it like this, “Do you people not know that your congregation is a singular Temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells among you all? In other words, you people are not your own.” (Note that I am reading an explicative *kai*, “in other words.”) He is using “body” in the singular like he does elsewhere. For example, “you are the *sōma* of Christ and individually members of it” (12:27). Or, “we who are many are one *sōma*” (10:17). This last reference follows a meditation on the Israelites in the wilderness. Paul says that the experiences in the desert are examples for us. It is not hard to imagine that our verse has in mind the Spirit dwelling in the Israelite camp, visibly filling the Tabernacle. God dwelt among the Corinthians corporately as he did with Israel in the desert.

So, our verse is an appeal to pursue Christ in community, as a people of God who together are indwelt with his Spirit. We are saved together as a people. In other words, the Christian life is not really about your personal walk with Jesus. It is about our walk together with Jesus.

Why tolerate immorality in your midst as if it doesn’t make a difference? Why go after one another in pagan courts? Why tolerate fornication and even perversity in our midst? Your church is a Temple of the Holy Ghost. So glorify God in your (plural) singular Body (v20).

Now go on and read how to do this in the rest of 1 Corinthians.