The influences that shaped Paul have been an issue that has long concerned students of the apostle. Paul’s writings express the impact of his Jewish upbringing, the surrounding Greco-Roman culture, and his Christian conversion. The relationship between these influences, however, is less than certain. N. T. Wright in his volume *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* begins his volume by addressing the sway of each of these upon Paul’s life, describing them as “multiple, overlapping and sometimes competing narratives.”¹ In *The Paul Quest*, Ben Witherington notes the importance and uncertainty of Paul’s Jewish, Roman, and Christian background. He explores each of these in a chapter cleverly entitled “The Trinity of Paul’s Identity.”² The quest for a primary influence is still in doubt as S. J. Hafemann rightly stated in 1993 in his article entitled “Paul and His Interpreters” within the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. Referring to studies of Paul that consider his Jewish or Greco-Roman influence, Hafemann states, “the fundamental issue still to be resolved in Pauline studies is the determination of the primary religious and theological context within which Paul’s thought is to be understood.”³

A decisive answer to the interaction between these various worlds is well beyond the scope of one essay. In order to approach a conclusion on this matter, a starting place ought to identify agreed upon influence from a particular background. It then should consider how that influence extends into Paul’s composition within individual letters.

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When the data from each of Paul’s backgrounds is assembled, conclusions may then be made regarding the influence of particular thought worlds upon Paul’s writing.

The following article will crystallize the influence of Paul’s Jewish background in 1 Corinthians. It will consider agreed upon Jewish influence within 1 Corinthians in the form of citations and allusions. There are eighteen such examples within 1 Corinthians that have been identified in major studies on Paul’s use of Scripture. Commentaries as well as studies that examine First Corinthians exegetically or in relation to the Greco-Roman background generally agree on the presence of these Jewish references. After each reference is identified, the article will then explore how that Jewish influence extends within the text that surrounds the citation or allusion.

Isaiah 29:14 in 1 Corinthians 1:19

From the beginning of 1 Corinthians, Jewish elements can be found within Paul’s instruction. After addressing the divisions within the church in 1 Cor 1:10–18, Paul inserts the first clearly Jewish idea within the letter, the quotation of Isa 29:14 in 1 Cor 1:19. It reads, “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’”

While its presence is plain, there is uncertainty concerning the extent of its influence. Some believe that Paul uses this as a scriptural proof to sustain his argument. Another asserts that Paul rips the quotation

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4 Due to space considerations, the investigation of echoes and themes cannot be considered. The certainty of these is less agreed upon than the citations and allusions.
6 All Biblical citations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.