This afternoon I would like to talk about two of the earliest Christian texts that forbid foul language, namely, the deuteropauline epistles Colossians and Ephesians. For the modern interpreter of these texts, it is not immediately clear what such prohibitions would have meant in the ancient world. We know what it means to "watch our mouth" or to "keep it clean." But in the ancient Mediterranean foul language was used at religious rites for the pleasure of the gods; it was shouted at victorious generals during their triumphal parades; it was used in state-sponsored drama. Were Colossians and Ephesians talking about those uses of foul language? Nor is it clear what sort of moral logic undergirds these strictures. So in this talk I would like to do three things. First, to situate the prohibitions of Colossians and Ephesians in their ancient context—to figure out what sort of speech they were talking about and why they were against it. Second, to consider the ways Colossians and Ephesians differ from each other. And third, to explore what their moral stances tell us about how these early Christians conceived of their identity and mission.

**Colossians**

Let's look first at Colossians' brief mention of foul language. When Colossians draws the ethical implications of having "died and risen with Christ" (Col 2.20-3.17), it urges the addressees to think about what is above, not what is on earth (3.2), since their real life is hidden with Christ in Heaven (3.3-4). They are also to mortify their earthly behavior:

> Therefore put to death what is earthly in you: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you once walked, when you lived in them. But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.
It is this last phrase that interests us. Anger, wrath, malice, slander—these aren't difficult to understand. But what did it mean in the first century to tell someone to put away "foul talk"? Colossians doesn't give us a lot of help answering this question as it goes on to generalize about putting on the "new eschatological person."

So we have to ask where foul language occurred in the ancient world, what people said about it, and to see if this sheds any light on Colossian's advice.

As mentioned, foul language occurred in Old Comedy (later the dramatic genre best known for smutty language was mime). Foul language was also used in a variety of religious festivals, often with the explanation that the goddess or god being honored was delighted by obscene jokes. Foul language was also used abusively, written in the Iambics of Archilochus or the epigrams of Catullus or Martial, or in Lucian's essays. The walls of Pompeii are covered with graffiti that reminds one of what one sees scrawled on bathroom walls—who did what to whom. One papyrus complains that a person "came and spoke a lot of aischrologia into my face." Aristotle wrote at some length about how it was preferable, in the case of pleasant conversation, to avoid direct obscenities, which were beneath a gentleman. (He also said you should avoid being so squeamish or dull that you never make a joke. The golden mean was entrapelia, witness. We'll return to that word later.)

Lots of other moralists at one time or another objected to all of these uses of foul language. Plutarch wrote a whole dialogue on whether mime was an acceptable post-prandial entertainment and concluded that the obscene language of after-dinner skits was more dangerous than wine. As for religious rites, Xenocrates and Plutarch recoiled at
the thought of gods enjoying obscenities; they concluded that it must actually be
malevolent demons that took pleasure in such gloomy filth. As for abuse, a whole range
of ancient sources express outrage and disgust at the thought of people hurling obscene
names at each other in the heat of a verbal duel.

Turning back to the command in Colossians with this range of possibilities in
mind, the context in Col 3.8 strongly suggests that aischrologia refers to abusive language.
The word comes after a list of terms dealing with anger, and follows immediately on
"slander." Taken as a whole, Col 3.8 is forbidding anger and the sort of angry, vehement
attack on others that so often involved nasty language. The author is simply not
addressing whether or not to use prohibited words in playful conversations; or what sort
of drama to watch or what sort of poetry to read out; he is not advising the readers about
whether they can attend the bawdy religious festivals. He is addressing foul-mouthed
abuse.

It is also clear that Colossians is not drawing any connection between foul
language and sex. That comment might seem both abrupt and also so obvious as to be
unnecessary, but if you look up the Greek word aischrologia in a lexicon of Christian
Greek, it will refer you to a use of the word in the Didache. On the face of it this would
seem to represent the use of aischrologia nearest to Colossians in terms of time and
cultural milieu. But the Did 3.3 warns that the outcome of foul language is adultery.
This connection is picked up in later Christian authors, as well. Clement of Alexandria
and John Chrysostom also worried about the way obscene language would lead to sex.
(Chrysostom even called foul talk "the chariot of fornication.") But in Colossians there
is no indication that the danger in foul words is that they lead to sexual misconduct.
So why might Colossians oppose an angry, slanderous use of foul language? You might think say, Well, because it's just bad. I think that's basically right. The ancient world is different from ours in so many ways. But this isn't one of them. There was a widespread sense that angry abuse—and a fortiori abuse that was obscene—was evidence of bad morals. Plutarch said that when people are angry, their tongues turn "rough and dirty" and they say "disgusting words" which show them to be "hostile, slanderous, and malicious." Lucian describes with his satirical relish a banquet at which the philosophers got into a terrible fight and abused each other with shameful terms; the conclusion he draws from the affair is that their philosophy was of no value. Had it been of any worth, they would not have said what they said. It is thus entirely unsurprising that Colossians saw slander and foul language as behavior inappropriate for the "new human being" created in God's image (3.10-11).

One passage from Epictetus provides an excellent parallel to the idea that putting away angry, foul talk (τὸ ἀἰσχρολόγον) was a mark of moral progress. He says to the students of philosophy, "if you see any of the things that you have learned and studied thoroughly coming to fruition for you in action, rejoice in these things. If you have put away (ἀποτέθεισα) or reduced a malignant disposition, and reviling, or impertinence, or foul language (τὸ ἀἰσχρολόγον) . . ." then you will know you are making moral progress.

II. Salty Speech:

This isn't Colossian's last word on speech. Colossians forbids foul-mouthed abuse, but it also advises the addressees as to how they should speak with non-believers.
Translated quite literally it reads, "Walk wisely toward outsiders, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one" (Col 4.5-6). In my opinion, the words "grace" and "salt" have thrown off a lot of NT scholars. When we see "grace," we think of God's free gift, of freedom from the Law, and a host of other theological concepts. One commentator translates this verse, "Let your speech be determined by God's grace." And "salt" has made them think of Jesus' saying about being the salt of the earth, and how salt that loses its saltiness is worthless.

But neither the concept of grace or something Jesus might have said about salt is relevant here. Colossians is in fact commending witty, ingratiating speech. The word "grace" in this context does not refer to a theological concept but rather to the "attractiveness" or "charm" of words ("grace" in the aesthetic sense). And when "salt" was used in the context of speech, it often meant piquant wit; the metaphor drew on salt's bite—salt as flavor enhancer rather than salt as preservative. "Salt" was used so often in this way that you could discuss an author's style of humor simply with reference to his "salt." ("Aristophanes' salt was a bit much, but Menander's salt, now that's delightful.")

Ancient authors speaking of "charming wit" sometimes used the word χάρις in a set phrase with ἐπτραπέλια, Aristotle's word. Both Philo and Josephus write about speakers who had "charis and entrapelia," meaning that they had a sprightly wit that exhibited a winsome savior faire. In light of what charis and salt mean in the context of speech, Col 4.6 would be better rendered: "Let your conversation always be graciously winsome and seasoned with the salt of wit and pungency."
Now, if it seems a bit dilettantish for the Epistle to the Colossians to be commending "charming, piquant speech," we need only note that the pleasant "salt" and "charm" of speech were not necessarily thought of as ends in themselves: they were a way to get people to listen to what you really had to say. Quintilian says that "Just as salt gives relish to food . . . so in the case of those who have the salt of wit there is something about their language which arouses in us a thirst to hear" (Inst. 6.19; Plutarch). That sentiment suits the context in Colossians admirably.

So Colossians forbids slander and sordid accusations as the sort of earthly behavior that their eschatological community must leave behind. But it also urges the addressees to use pleasant, witty speech to endear themselves to the uninitiated.

III. Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians draws extensively on language from Colossians, with just under half of the verses in Ephesians seem to have been drawn from Colossians.

In language reminiscent of Colossians, Ephesians urges the addressees to "lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (4.1). A worthy life requires "putting off the old human being" (4.22). Under the rubric of "putting off" the old person and putting on the new, the author addresses well-known sins such as lying (4.25), anger (4.26), and theft (4.28). He also commands: "Let no rotten talk come out of your mouths" (4.29).

The author continues in chapter 5 with specific exhortations detailing which sins are to be avoided and why (5.3-14). Several forms of speech are prohibited:

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is fitting among holy people. (4) Let there be no ugliness, nor stupid
talk, nor wittiness, which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving. (5) Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Later he reiterates: "For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret" (5.12). So there are several references to avoiding the wrong sort of talk.

The logic of the passage is confusing in several places, but I'd like to note just one. If verses 3 and 4 both treat speech, then verse 5 appears to be a non sequitur, since it does not warn against talking the wrong way about fornication and uncleanness, but instead tells the readers that those who commit such sins—the fornicator, the unclean person and the greedy person—have no place in the Kingdom. We would have expected some argument against bad speech—something like, "for this sort of talk lowers you in the eyes of outsiders," or, "for bad words are the first step to bad behavior," or simply, "for God hates that sort of talk." Instead there seems to be a missing term, as the passage jumps from "no bad speech" to the warning about three types of bad people. Is the missing term here the idea that speech leads to such "fornication, uncleanness and greed," as in Didache 3.3? Is the idea that the speech is itself tantamount to such activities—with a quasi magical notion about the power of words?

I think it's neither of the above. I suspect it actually has more to do with Ephesians' use of Colossians than with some unstated premise. Colossians first mentions some sexual sins and then some anger sins; Colossians only mentions foul language in the context of the latter. Ephesians reverses the order. First it uses the material from Col 3.8, representing Colossians' word aischrologia with "shouting" (κραυγή, 4.31). This is Ephesians' treatment of the destructive speech used in anger, with "shouting" and "slander" following on "bitterness," "anger," and "wrath."
Ephesians also draws on the wording of Col 3.8 ("out of your mouth") when it forbids letting "any rotten word out of your mouths" (Eph 4.29).

Having used the material from Col 3.8 in Eph 4.29-31, Ephesians then returns to the topic of foul language by changing the material of Col 3.5 into a warning about speaking of sexual sins: these must not even be named (5.3), and there must be no ugly, stupid humor about them (5.4). This is one of Ephesians' most striking redactions of Colossians, since in Col 3.5 makes no reference to speaking.

Considering how Ephesians has used Colossians 3.5 might help explain the peculiar transition I mentioned previously. After Ephesians lists sins from Col 3.5 and addresses them as things not to talk about (Eph 5.3), it explicates what it means by "let them not be named" in v 4 with the phrase "and let there be no ugliness, or stupid talk, or facetiousness." But the author of Ephesians still wanted to use what Colossians said about "covetousness" being "idolatry," as well as Colossians' warning about God's wrath (Col 3.5-6), so Ephesians restates Col 3.5, not in terms of vices but of the people who practice such vices.

No Wittiness?

So Ephesians has more to say than Colossians; it has another point to make about bad speech. "No ugliness and stupid talk, nor wittiness, which are not appropriate." The question you might ask is what is inappropriate about wit? The Greek word is εὐτραπελία. Since Aristotle used εὐτραπελία to designate the golden mean in humorous conversation, it appears that Ephesians is ruling out not only grosser forms of speech but even a pleasant wit. One influential article, bearing the anxious title, "Is Wittiness Unchristian?," concluded that word entrapelia was a vox media, having
negative connotations nearly as often as positive ones. Commentators have read the conclusion and breathed a sigh of relief. The NIV renders the word "coarse joking."

But in fact this was the wrong conclusion. *Eutrapelia* is consistently used for cleverness or wit. Plato says that older people use ἐυτραπελία to ingratiate themselves to the young. Hippocrates say doctors make use of it so as not to be unpleasantly dour with their patients. *Eutrapelia* relaxes a courtroom, it makes a letter more pleasant to read, in impresses kings when used by their courtiers and it impresses soldiers when used by their generals.

The question, then, is why anybody would want to forbid *that*? Why did Ephesians object to *wittiness* as "inappropriate"? There are Mishnaic prohibitions against jesting and levity, activities that, like being "witty," might seem innocuous enough. Rabbi Akiba said, "Jesting and levity [.... ℓ....] accustom a man to lewdness [ḥ.... ℓ]" (*Aboth* 3.13). But Ephesians does *not* say "for wittiness leads to lewdness." It is precisely the absence of such an explanation that makes Ephesians more difficult to interpret. Instead of learning what ἐυτραπελία leads to, we are told that it is simply "inappropriate." But *eutrapelia* was *not* normally inappropriate. The fact of the matter is forbidding ἐυτραπελία at the end of the first century would have sounded as strange and severe as forbidding "wittiness" today. The opposite of being (*eutrapelos*) "witty" was being "austere" or inhumane—or being the sort of "rustic" who lacked the culture to make or enjoy jokes.

To be fair to Ephesians, the word ἐυτραπελία is not here used on its own; it is used with two other terms that had more pejorative connotations: "ugliness" and "stupid talk." That fact might suggest that Ephesians objects not to the best in wit but to "ugly,
stupid wit." Nonetheless, it would have been just as easy to object to "ugly, stupid buffoonery," or "ugly, stupid obscenity," thereby avoiding the suggestion that wit itself might be "inappropriate."

If we refuse to darken the sense of eutrapelia, then what are we to make of Ephesians' prohibition? Was Ephesians perhaps trying to encourage the creation of ultra-serious personae—trying to out-do the Catos and the Pythagoras's of the world? Perhaps Ephesians aspired for a community so serious that it would not tolerate any form of drollery at all. Philo admired the Therapeutae, Josephus praised the Essenes, and many people lauded the Pythagoreans for their silence, order, decorum, and solemnity. These groups' somber gravity was interpreted as proof of their extraordinary self-control (that most prized of philosophic virtues). But where so many Greek and Roman texts contrast vulgar humor with appropriate forms of humor, Ephesians contrasts wittiness with thanksgiving. Those other texts cite abstaining from drollery as the characteristic of "severe" people, but Ephesians excludes wit "for the holy."

There is another ancient Jewish text that contrasts lewd and detestable speech with giving thanks: The Community Rule from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Neither shall be heard from my mouth lewdness and iniquitous deceit, nor craftiness and lies be found on my lips. But the fruit of holiness (shall be) on my tongue, and abominations shall not be found on it. With thanksgiving hymns I will open my mouth, and my tongue shall enumerate always God's righteousness . . . (1QS 10.21-23)

In addition to contrasting bad speech with thanksgiving, 1QS also prohibits silly or light talk in a way that might resemble Eph 5.3-4. A punishment of three months is decreed for the person who "utters a foolish word" (1QS 7.9) or who "giggles inanely" (1QS 7.14). Some have concluded that Ephesians and 1QS are somehow related. But
even if we accepted that there was some sort of contact, we would have merely pushed the need for explanation back one more step. Why was 1QS opposed to lewd, disgusting talk and silly laughter?

Rather than appealing to a common source for 1QS and Ephesians, we might ask what patterns of piety, what assumptions about God, and what uses of scripture they have in common. Ephesians and several texts from Qumran imagine God to be present in the community on analogy with the way the Bible presents God as present in the temple. Baruch Bokser has shown that in the literature from Qumran and in some early rabbinic literature, the idea that God was present in the community or present in a special liturgical moment (such as prayer or the reading of scripture) led to the application of biblical rules for God's presence. I believe that this gives a fruitful model for understanding Ephesians as well. It was the holiness of the community that made certain speech inappropriate (5.3-4); this holiness derives in part from the fact that the believers have been brought into the presence of God, a sacred space in which no unseemly thing could be brought—or uttered.

**Profaning a Sanctum**

Although the Bible says God is omnipresent (Psalm 139.8), it also depicts God as dwelling in specific places such as the tabernacle, the temple, or the war camp. These spaces where God was especially present required special behavior, what Eliade calls "gestures of approach." Moses was told to take off his shoes before coming near the burning bush (Exod 3.5); the priests wore a special undergarment so that their nakedness would not show when they ascended to the altar (Exod 20.26; 28.42-43); and all of Israel had to avoid impurities before approaching the tabernacle. The Book of Numbers
applies the rules of the tabernacle to the whole camp, since it claims that God dwells in the camp (Num 5). Deut 23 states that God's presence in the war camp was incompatible with anything indecent such as nocturnal emission or defecation: "When you are encamped against your enemies you shall guard against any impropriety [\ldots]." Deuteronomy then gives instructions for keeping those who have had nocturnal emissions out of the camp and orders that defecation be kept from God's presence. Deuteronomy concludes, "Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, \ldots therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent [\ldots] among you, and turn away from you (Deut 23.15).

What we find in several of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in Josephus's description of the Essenes, and in some rabbinic literature is that this "injunction to avoid what is unseemly" was extended when the place of God's presence was redefined. In several texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the idea that the community was the locus of God's presence led them to apply the biblical laws about the tabernacle or the war camp to their whole community. In the Temple Scroll, for instance, Deuteronomy's restrictions for the war camp (Deut 23) all applied to the "whole city of the sanctuary." Similarly, in the War Scroll the idea of an eschatological battle in which God and his angels would be in the warriors' midst made the rules of Deut 23 relevant.

Some rabbinic texts applied these biblical rules to moments when "an individual acts so as to elicit the sacred" (Bokser, 287), for instance, reciting the Shema' must not be done too close to urine and excrement. The rabbinic concern with removing the profane from God's presence extends beyond physically repulsive items to inappropriate speech as well. Leviticus Rabbah interprets the "unseemly thing" (\ldots) of Deut
23.15 as "unseemly talk" (οὐκ ἐστὶν ἁγιόν), which it says means "lascivious talk"

(hο||→h ὁ̅).  

Not Fitting For Holy Ones

Ephesians also claims that the space in which the believers exist has been made holy by God's presence. Corporately the community represents "God's household" and "temple," and God dwells in them in the Spirit (2.19-22). Furthermore, the believer is said to have been "seated with Christ in heaven" (2.6). Whichever image one chooses, both the individual believer and the community exist in sacred space. Ephesians even uses cultic terms—"holy and without blemish"—for individuals and for the church corporately. These terms were used in the Septuagint for the sacrificial animals and the priests.

When Ephesians says that Christians are not to discuss and make jokes about the gentiles' sexual vices, it says that such talk is not fitting for the holy. "Fitting" (τὸ πρέπει) is always fitting for someone. Other ancient writers had said foul speech was not fitting for a good man, for a king, for a serious person, for an aristocrat, or for a well-ruled community. Yet for Ephesians, it is the holiness of the congregation that makes crass talk unacceptable.

My argument, then, is that Ephesians exhibits a sense that the believers are holy and dwell in God's holy presence. This sense led other Jewish groups to avoid profane objects or words. Keeping the profane separate from the sacred was of paramount importance because God's presence might depart. For Ephesians, the impulse to keep the profane away from the sacred resulted in a blanket prohibition against light talk, since the believers perpetually existed in sacred space.
Thus for the author of Ephesians there is no need to explain what foul language might lead to. It is simply out of place. It is not fitting for holy ones. The author and his readers might have agreed with Did. 3.3 and Pirke Aboth that lewd talk or levity could lead to illicit sex. He and his readers probably knew, along with the Wisdom of Sirach and a host of pagan moralists, that such talk might lower them in the eyes of others. But Ephesians does not give these reasons any more than Leviticus explains why a priest with a physical defect cannot enter the sanctuary: such deformity was simply deemed not to be fitting for God's holiness. Excluding εὐτροπελία was not motivated by a desire to fit in. It was motivated by a desire to keep the profane out.

5. Speech and Christian Identities

It should now be apparent that Colossians and Ephesians object to foul language for different reasons. They appear even farther apart in their approach to speech when we consider how Ephesians appropriates Colossian's advice to speak in a pleasant, piquant and witty way with outsiders.

In both Colossians and Ephesians the author asks for prayer on his behalf so that he may speak as he ought (in Colossians, the prayer is for Paul and his co-workers):
Watch Your Mouth
Jeremy F. Hultin
Aberdeen 4 September 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colossians</th>
<th>Ephesians</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[4.2] τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτερεῖτε, γρηγοροῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ ἐν εὐχαριστίᾳ</td>
<td>6.18 διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἄγρυπνοντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἄγιων</td>
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<td>4.3 προσευχόμενοι ἃμα καὶ περὶ ἑμῶν, ἵνα ὁ θεὸς ἀνοίξῃ ἑμῖν θύραν τοῦ ἱόγου λαλῆσαι τῷ μυστήριον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,</td>
<td>6.19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῇ λόγος ἐν δόξῃ τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρισά τῷ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,</td>
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<tr>
<td>δι’ ὃ καὶ δέδεμαι,</td>
<td>6.20 ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλώσει,</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 ἵνα φανερώσω αὐτὸ ὡς δὲ με λαλήσαι.</td>
<td>ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δὲ με λαλήσαι.</td>
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But if we keep reading past the end of these requests for prayer, we can see the different emphases of these two books. Colossians turns to comment on how the addressees are to conduct themselves toward outsiders: "Walk wisely toward outsiders, buying up the time. Let your conversation always be graciously winsome and seasoned with the salt of wit and pungency" (Col 4.5-6). Then Colossians says that Paul has sent Tychicus with information and encouragement (4.7-8). Nowhere in the letter does Ephesians follow Colossians more closely than here. What does it do with Colossian's advice? It omits it altogether. Ephesians goes directly from requesting prayer for Paul to sending Tychicus (6.21-22). Ephesians has no parallel to Col 4.6 whatsoever.

Several elements from Col 4.5—"walking," "wisdom," and "redeeming the time"—have been reworked and included earlier in Ephesians. But they emphasize the depravity of the world; the reference to getting along with outsiders has been dropped:

| Colossians                                                                 | Ephesians                                                                 |
| 4.5 ἐν σοφίᾳ περιπατεῖτε πρὸς τοὺς ἐξω τὸν καιρὸν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι.         | [5.15-16 βλέπετε οὕν άκριβῶς πώς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ώς ἁσοφοὶ ἄλλῳ χρησίμῳ, ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰς ἑαυτόν.] |
| 4.6 ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι, ἑλάτι ἠτμοῦνος, εἰδέναι πώς δὲ ὑμᾶς ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ ἀποκρίνεσθαι. | |
Colossians’ advice to "redeem the time" with outsiders is fleshed out in terms of using winsome speech. In Ephesians, the references to "outsiders" and "winsome speech" are gone, and the tone is transformed into something more menacing: "Watch very carefully how you conduct yourselves . . . redeem the time, *for the days are evil!*" (5.15-16).

Compared with Colossians, Ephesians has turned inward. To be sure, Colossians warns about evil and deceptive forces in the world, such as philosophy and vain deceit. Christians have to be on their guard. But they don’t have to fear everyone they meet.

Scholars are in broad agreement that Ephesians is concerned to strengthen the unity of the group. One way Ephesians rhetorically evokes this unity is by depicting it as vastly and irremediably different from the dark world outside. The outsiders not only behave differently (4.17-19; 5.7-8, 11), but they are under the in the grip of an evil power, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (2.2). The Ephesians once found themselves in this dark and godless realm (2.1-3, 5, 11-19; 4.17-19; 5.8), but are now "sealed" in God's spirit (1.13-14, cf. 1.17; 2.18; 4.4, 30; 6.17), "fellow citizens with the holy ones" (2.19).¹ Much of the Epistle

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¹ Note all the συν- words: συμπολίται (2.19), συναρμολογουμένη (2.21), συνοικοδομεῖσθε (2.22), συγκληρονόμα, σύσσωμα, συμμέτοχα (3.6). This repetition of
to the Ephesians is spent recounting the blessing of having been transferred from one realm to the other.

But it is quite likely that the recipients of this letter were socially integrated in the life of their city. The gap between the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness" was greater metaphysically than it was socially. So in addition to reminding the Ephesians of the difference and urging them to remind themselves, uses their patterns of speech to impress upon them this sense of boundary. What the gentiles do cannot even be spoken of. A unique way of speaking provides a "practical barrier," a means of separating believers from the outside world with whom they must continue to brush shoulders. What better than the mouth—always with a person, and something that ancients were always watching—to inculcate a sense of the omnipresence of God and the constant connection to the holy body of Christ? So as Ephesians seeks to inculcate a sense of sanctity, of the separation of the "holy ones" from the "sons of disobedience"; the human voice must be used, like the voices of the angels (the other "holy ones"), to sing God's praise (Eph 5.19).

σου- blessings makes the negative command in 5.7 all the more forceful: μὴ οὖν γίνεσθε συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν.