

SPIRIT AND THE CROSS, WISDOM AND COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT
A CRITICAL EXPLORATION OF 1 CORINTHIANS 2.1–3.4

Carl Stephen Sweatman

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Paul's teaching on the role of the Spirit in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, and how that role relates to the themes of the cross, wisdom and discernment in that passage and the immediate context of 1 Cor 1–4. By providing a close reading of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, this dissertation focuses on the reasons why Paul articulates and emphasises the Spirit's essential role in the proclamation of the cross, in the mediation of divine wisdom and the exercise of communal discernment. This study also investigates how this pneumatological teaching applies to Paul's further assessment of the Corinthian situation, as articulated in 1 Cor 5–15, and thus why the textual unit in which it appears occurs at such an early stage in Paul's argument.

After an introductory chapter surveying previous scholarship and situating a study of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, chapter 2 shows how Paul is addressing a situation in Corinth which emerged after his initial sojourn and in which the Corinthians employ what he sees as faulty criteria of judgment, drawn from the conventions and styles of Graeco-Roman rhetoric, in assessing the apostles as heralds of God's wisdom and themselves as wise, spiritual people. Paul counters these by arguing that the Corinthians' original acceptance of the gospel came not through persuasive speech but by the Spirit working powerfully in the message he proclaimed. Chapter 3 explores Paul's perception that the Corinthians have misconstrued the notion of revelation by defining it as a process by which one comes to know and receive divine wisdom through human ability or effort. This chapter then examines Paul's corrective response and its assertion that divine wisdom can only be known and received through divine mediation, and that the Spirit is the means by which this occurs. Chapter 4 focuses on the topic of discernment. It investigates Paul's perception that the Corinthians form their assessments by relying on human wisdom, why he holds this to be inappropriate for those who are in Christ and recipients of God's wisdom, and why he underlines that Spirit-guided discernment is the only appropriate means for judging divine wisdom and those who proclaim it.

A final chapter asks whether and how the issues examined in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 play out in 1 Cor 1–4 as a whole and then in the rest of the letter. The Corinthians' failure to rely on God's wisdom and Spirit-guided discernment and an internal stratification based on their own perceptions of wisdom and spirituality are seen as contributing to the social and ecclesial problems discussed later in the letter. At the same time what Paul has argued in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 continues to inform his response, as he appeals for lives shaped by the wisdom of the gospel of the cross and for a community united in its discernment, both made possible by the Spirit.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. Moreover, this thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed..... Date.....

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*This work is dedicated to:
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	viii
CHAPTER 1	
Introduction	9
CHAPTER 2	
The Spirit's Role in the Proclamation of the Cross	44
CHAPTER 3	
The Spirit's Role in Mediating Divine Wisdom	85
CHAPTER 4	
The Spirit's Role in Establishing Right Discernment	139
CHAPTER 5	
Conclusion: Applying Spirit-guided, Communal Discernment	182
BIBLIOGRAPHY	228

ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations used throughout this dissertation follow the standard established by the SBL Handbook of Style (1999). Those employed that do not appear in the Handbook are (listed according to abbreviation):

21KJV	21st Century King James Version
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament
BMW	Bible in the Modern World
<i>CBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CCSS	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
<i>Cons</i>	<i>Conspectus</i>
DARBY	Darby Translation
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
EC	Epworth Commentaries
EGT	Expositor's Greek Testament
ESV	English Standard Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
HTA	Historisch Theologische Auslegung
<i>JPT</i>	<i>Journal of Pentecostal Theology</i>
JPTSup	Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series
<i>JT</i>	<i>Journal of Theology</i> (United Theological Seminary)
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LWC	Living Word Commentary
<i>MSt</i>	<i>Mission Studies</i>
NCamBC	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NColBC	New Collegeville Bible Commentary
NET	The NET Bible
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NIVUK	New International Version, UK Edition
NTC	New Testament Commentary
NTT	New Testament Theology (Series)
PBM	Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PCC	Paul in Critical Contexts
PiNNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentaries
PrTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
TEF	Theological Education Fund
TGST	Tesi Gregoriana—Serie Teologia
TNIV	Today's New International Version
WYC	Wycliffe New Testament
YLT	Young's Literal Translation
ZBNT	Zürcher Bibelkommentare: Neues Testament

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Situating the Study

This study explores Paul's teaching in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 on the role of the Spirit and how that role relates to the themes of the cross, wisdom and discernment in that passage and the immediate context of 1 Cor 1–4. Moreover, this study investigates how this pneumatological teaching applies to Paul's further assessment of the Corinthian situation, as articulated in 1 Cor 5–15, and thus why the textual unit in which it appears occurs at such an early stage in Paul's argument.

1.1.1. Immediate Context

The reason for the primary focus stems from three related observations, with the last functioning as the impetus for this study. First, while the themes of Spirit, cross, wisdom and discernment appear in Paul's extant writings, whether individually or in groups, they pervade the argument of 1 Cor 1–4. Second, the particular concentration of all four themes is found specifically in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, a passage that speaks directly to both Paul's apostolic role and the Corinthians' identity 'in Christ' and how they understand and judge both. Finally, while the concentration of the four themes seems to indicate an interrelationship among them, Paul, in this passage, is specifically emphasising the priority and necessity of the Spirit's role in relation to the other three.

By providing a close reading of the text, this study will show that Paul uses the teaching found in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 to explain 1) the way in which God's Spirit is essential for the proclamation of the cross, 2) how the Spirit is the unique and necessary mediator of God's wisdom, the reception of which brings with it an epistemological transformation and 3) how God's Spirit is essential for wise communal discernment, thus enabling right thought and action in the light of the cross and the transformation wrought by God's wisdom. This study will also contend that Paul applies this pneumatological teaching as he assesses

the dilemmas noted in the remainder of the letter, thus emphasising the teaching's rhetorical force and how it shapes the whole of Paul's argument.

What is striking is that with the possible exception of 1 Cor 12–14,¹ this linkage of themes in the context of the Spirit's role is not found anywhere else in the Pauline corpus. This makes 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 an important text for gaining a broader understanding of Paul's theology, 1 Corinthians, notions of Christian identity, and Pauline pneumatology. While the unique concentration of these ideas in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 would seem to be a sufficient reason for taking on this project, there is a further reason to consider. As will be discussed below, while scholarship has investigated the particular themes of cross, Spirit, wisdom and discernment (in the Pauline letters in general and 1 Corinthians in particular), and while some have explored the relationship between two or more of these themes, no monographs have been devoted to the specific text of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, the specific collection of all four themes and their interrelationship, or specifically the Spirit's essential role in that interrelationship. This study seeks to fill that lacuna.

1.1.2. Wider Context

Alongside the two leading reasons for this study, there is a third—one that relates to the conceptual context out of and within which Pauline thought appears to operate and interact. Here I have in mind the varying (and sometimes competing) ancient notions of divine wisdom and how that wisdom not only is mediated to humanity but also becomes the framework for right or wise living. While this might appear to shift the attention toward wisdom and away from the Spirit, such a consideration is necessary in order to contextualise how Paul's thought relates to notions of wisdom and to recognise what he does specifically with such notions as he presents his argument in 1 Corinthians.

1.1.2.1. Wisdom in the Ancient Near East

Writers of the ancient world express or define the *concept* of wisdom in various ways. For some, wisdom refers to an intangible abstraction external to divine beings, yet sought after by them. For others, wisdom, while still abstract, is not

¹ The theme of the proclamation of the gospel is not explicitly found in 1 Cor 12–14. A case could possibly be made for its implicit presence, given the specific focus of those chapters, but making that case is not my intent for this study.

separate from divine beings but represents an essential attribute of divinity. However, in most instances wisdom is elevated to the status of a divine being, placed and revered alongside others in the pantheon.² Regardless of these differences, there exists a basic consistency with regard to the *function* of wisdom. As evidenced, for example, in the creation stories of the Sumerians, Babylonians, Egyptians and Assyrians, most in the ancient world understand wisdom as that which determines and maintains order or balance in the cosmos.

Thus, all beings—divine and human—must adhere to wisdom to maintain harmony in creation.³ The means for acquiring this wisdom range between a divine gift prior to birth and a learned trait through instruction.⁴ Wise living, therefore, comes to be understood as conduct that reflects harmony with the divine, wise, cosmic order. Consequently, those who do not live according to this order are seen as fools and living in direct opposition to the divine—or they are enemies of the divine. Such foolish opponents, therefore, reflect the unbalanced or chaotic forces of creation.

1.1.2.2. *Wisdom in the Graeco-Roman World*

During the Graeco-Roman period, the philosophers advocate the goal of life as grasping this (divine) wisdom and allowing it to shape and govern how an individual lives in society. The Ephesian philosopher, Heraclitus, could be seen as one of the first Greek thinkers to articulate this view of human existence.⁵ Moreover, Heraclitus is ostensibly the first to suggest the idea that the *λόγος* is the divine order of the cosmos, and only those who are truly wise can know this *λόγος* and live in harmony with it.⁶ Stoic philosophers later develop the idea of human existence as being inextricably bound to the created order—or the divine *λόγος*.

² See e.g. the Egyptian idea of *ma'at*. For the conceptual pre-history of the term, see M. Karenga, *Maat: The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt. A Study in Classical African Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 29-76.

³ As Lipson points out, in Egyptian mythology the path of the sun god Ra was determined by *ma'at*, and to deviate from that path was an affront to *ma'at*—see C. S. Lipson, 'Ancient Egyptian Rhetoric: It All Comes Down to *Maat*,' in *Rhetoric Before and Beyond the Greeks* (eds. C. S. Lipson and R. A. Binkley; Albany: State University of New York, 2004), 81.

⁴ The Egyptians appear to have struck a middle ground by suggesting a natural endowment within all humans in need of cultivation (see M. Lichtheim, *Moral Values in Ancient Egypt* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997], 15-16).

⁵ Whether or not he incorporated it from the ANE, as the Greeks did with virtually everything else, cannot be known for certain.

⁶ See Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.9; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.5.6.

However, because the Stoics are materialists in their cosmology, the λόγος is not divine in the usual abstract, intangible sense. Instead, the λόγος is divine in the sense that it creates, universally permeates and determines the existence of all creation—obviously including humanity; hence the idea that there are bits of the divine in everything and everyone. For the Stoics, those who find the ‘divine spark’ within their soul and allow it to guide and shape life according to the order of the λόγος live wisely. Alternatively, those who do not find this ‘spark’ are those who live unethical, disordered, chaotic and foolish lives. As a result, this latter group forfeits the opportunity and means for obtaining the goal of human existence, which is true happiness or εὐδαιμονία.

1.1.2.3. *Wisdom in Second-Temple Judaism*

For the Jews in the Graeco-Roman world, true wisdom (or *חכמה*) belongs to Yahweh alone, and it is by this wisdom that Yahweh creates and sustains all of creation.⁷ As such, wisdom defines not only a central attribute or characteristic of Yahweh but also how Yahweh operates within creation. Thus, Yahweh is wise and Yahweh *acts* wisely. Accordingly, the people of Yahweh are to be shaped by the wisdom of Yahweh and thus live ordered or balanced lives in Yahweh’s creation. The way in which this shaping and living occurred is variously described.

The Old Testament occasionally speaks of wisdom being obtained as a gift from Yahweh,⁸ or gained through natural⁹ and historical observations,¹⁰ as well as learned by studying from or interacting with wise individuals.¹¹ Torah instruction would later become the pivotal means for obtaining true wisdom from Yahweh as well as the touchstone for those seeking to live according to Yahweh’s wisdom. This might account for why in several Second-Temple and later Jewish texts ‘Torah’ and ‘wisdom’ appear to be synonymous—if not necessarily linked.¹² Therefore, for Jews of this period, living a life in harmony

⁷ See e.g. Job 9.4; 12.13; Ps 104.24; Isa 10.13; cf. Gen 1, 2; Ex 20.11; Pss 8, 19; 33.6-9; 102.26; 121.2; Is 40.12-25; 42.5; 45.7-9, 12; Jer 10.12; Neh 9.6; *Gen. Rab.* 9.2.

⁸ See e.g. 1 Kgs 3.6-14; 4.29-34; Job 38.36; Prov 2.6; Eccl 2.26; Dan 2.21-23.

⁹ See e.g. Job 35.11; Prov 6.6.

¹⁰ See e.g. Deut 32.39; Ps 78; Prov 19.20; Hos 14.9.

¹¹ See e.g. Job 32.7; Prov 9.9; cf. Deut 1.13, 15; 2 Sam 14.20; 16.23; Prov 12.18; 13.14.

¹² E.g. Sir 17.11; 24.1-29; *T. Levi* 13; *1 En* 42.1-2; *Bar* 3.38-40; *2 Bar* 38.4; 44.16; *4 Esd* 8.12; *Gen. Rab.* 1; Philo, *Mos* 2.3, 9; cf. Prov 8.

with the wisdom of Yahweh requires obedience to Torah because they believe that the Torah mediates the true wisdom of Yahweh. Those who live accordingly are considered to be wise or righteous, while those living contrary to Torah or Yahweh's wisdom are seen as fools, wicked or even enemies of Yahweh.

1.1.3. Controlling Questions

How, then, does the apostle Paul, as a Jewish believer in Jesus as messiah and one who believes he was called to evangelise the Graeco-Roman world, relate to and convey these differing conceptions of wisdom? How do Paul's traditional Jewish beliefs regarding Yahweh's wisdom square with his newfound understanding that this wisdom is now displayed through the death and resurrection of Jesus and mediated by God's Spirit? What differences and similarities exist between how Paul proclaims the role of wisdom and God's Spirit and the Graeco-Roman notions of wisdom and speech (or rhetoric) as ways of knowing? What role does Paul see God's Spirit playing in establishing and maintaining the community of believers, as well as the way in which believers learn or know how to live godly, wise, harmonious lives? Specifically, how does Paul understand the Spirit's role in the proclamation of the cross of Christ as God's wisdom, a wisdom that establishes a framework for communal discernment within the community of believers? These questions provide the basic framework around which this study is built.

1.2. Survey of Scholarship

Before proceeding with this study of Paul's pneumatological teaching, it is necessary to contextualise it within recent studies on 1 Corinthians. However, given the breadth and depth of scholarship on 1 Corinthians—let alone the Corinthian correspondence—and given the constraints of a focused study such as this one, I must be selective with how much material is surveyed.¹³ The results of my selectivity stem from two basic questions: 1) how do scholars define the nature of Paul's response to the Corinthian dilemma, and 2) which scholarly works address the specific Pauline themes of cross, (Holy) Spirit, wisdom and discernment in 1 Cor 1–4, either individually or in pairs or groups?

¹³ Økland's forthcoming work (*1 Corinthians Through the Centuries* [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, forthcoming]) will provide a more adequate survey of scholarship on 1 Corinthians than can be given here.

While I acknowledge the overlap between them, the relevant sources are divided into two types, each dealing with the specifics of the basic questions.

In the first section of this survey I consider the works whose interest lie in 1) locating the problems that Paul confronts in his letter and 2) examining the way in which he goes about it. The contributions in this section range in focus and levels of coverage, not to mention methodology. In the second section I consider the works whose interests lie primarily in understanding particular aspects of Paul's theology as found in 1 Cor 1–4 (e.g. cross, Spirit, wisdom, discernment). Specifically, I focus on those detailed contributions (i.e. monographs) that examine the interrelationship between two or more of the particular aspects. Similar to the first section, the contributions here are diverse in emphasis and approach.

1.2.1. Broad Scope Contributions

Two introductory points repay brief attention, as they relate to how studies of 1 Corinthians often proceed. First, the contents and structure of the letter indicate that Paul is responding to a series of concerns about and even questions from the newly established church in Corinth.¹⁴ In support of this, scholars often appeal to the internal evidence where Paul indicates his awareness of specific topics and concerns—i.e. the report from Chloe's people (cf. 1 Cor 1.11-12), the letter from the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 7.1)¹⁵ and the oral

¹⁴ While I cannot provide justification here, I assume 1) Paul's sojourn in Corinth is between late-50 or early-51 CE and mid- or late 52 CE, and 2) the time of writing takes place c. 55 CE.

¹⁵ Some argue that since the *περὶ δέ* formula first appears in connection with the letter from the Corinthians, all subsequent uses of *περὶ δέ* (i.e. 1 Cor 7.25; 8.1; 12.1; 16.1, 12) indicate that the topics discussed originate from that letter (see e.g. H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: With Introduction and Notes* [London: Methuen & Co., 1911], xxxix; J. Riggs and H. Reed, *Epistles to the Corinthians* [New York: Macmillan Company, 1922], 10; E. Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 86 n.2). However, Mitchell demonstrates how *περὶ δέ*, as a literary device, functions as 'simply a topic marker, a shorthand way of introducing the next subject of discussion', and that '[i]n itself the formula *περὶ δέ* gives no information about how the author or reader became informed of the topic, nor does it give information about the order of presentation of topics' ('Concerning ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ in 1 Corinthians,' *NovT* 31.3 [1989]: 234; *contra* Adams, who does not think Mitchell's arguments on this point are persuasive—see *Constructing the World*, 86 n.2).

Moreover, while *περὶ δέ* precedes the 'collection for the saints' in 16.1, it is not clear that it necessarily relates to a discussion-point raised by the Corinthians (cf. G. Voigt, *Gemeinsam glauben, hoffen, lieben: Paulus an die Korinther 1* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989], 159; *contra* A. Robertson and A. Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911], 383; G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 267, 809, 811; M. A. Pascuzzi, *First and Second Corinthians* [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005], 91-92; P. Perkins, *First Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012], 197. Lang sees it as a possibility—*Die*

reports (cf. 1 Cor 5.1; 11.18; 15.12[?]¹⁶), possibly transmitted by Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (cf. 1 Cor 16.17).¹⁷ Second, 1 Cor 1.11-12 in particular suggests the possible existence of divisions (σχίσματα),¹⁸ which compel some scholars to try and identify the specific groups involved—a pursuit that generally leads to varying results but no consensus.¹⁹ Since the identification, description and even enumeration of the divisions are difficult to ascertain,²⁰ and allowing for a level of ambiguity in the specific term, σχίσματα, a number of scholars describe the issue in Corinth as an *attitude* or *spirit* of divisiveness.²¹ Despite this uncertainty and ambiguity, however, it is usually maintained that Paul's

Briefe an die Korinther [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994], 245). As Mitchell points out, if 16.1 does refer to a Corinthian question then we must read the περὶ δέ of 16.12 in the same way, yet nothing in the text requires such a reading for either passage (see *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991], 291-92 n.596). It is instead likely that Paul employs the formulaic phrase to indicate nothing more than a topic change (cf. R. F. Collins, *First Corinthians* [Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999], 585, 588; C. S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 136; J. A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008], 277).

¹⁶ See 5.4.3 below.

¹⁷ While most understand Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus to be the bearers of the Corinthian letter to Paul (e.g. Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, xx-xxi; Riggs-Reed, *Epistles*, 9-10; J. C. Hurd, *The Origin of 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1965), 48-50; M. C. de Boer, 'The Composition of 1 Corinthians,' *NTS* 40.2 (1994): 230-31; C. D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 79 n.10; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 43, 138), it is possible that they delivered both the oral reports and the letter from the Corinthians (cf. F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954], 14).

¹⁸ The existence or non-existence of factious groups in Corinth and how to define them have been topics of critical inquiry throughout the history of modern interpretation. For example: while most early commentators accepted the general idea of 'factions,' Moffatt (*The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1890], xxii, 8-11), Munck (*Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* [trans. F. Clarke; London: SCM Press, 1959], 135-36) and Héring (*The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* [trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1962], 4) rejected the view in favour of bickering 'cliques,' each having its own champion. Reitzenstein interpreted the idea along the lines of pagan mystery religions, thus making the individual parties 'guilds', each having its own spiritual leader and/or progenitor (see *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance* [trans. J. E. Stealy; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Publications, 1978], 426). Conzelmann, on the other hand, suggests something akin to political parties with competing viewpoints—see *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* (ed. G. W. MacRae; trans. J. W. Leitch; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 32-34. More recently, Haacker classified the factions as nothing more than '“fan clubs” of different teachers or preachers in Corinth' (*The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Romans* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 19).

¹⁹ Alford's critique, while certainly aged is still apropos: 'Much ingenuity and labour has been spent in Germany on the four supposed distinct parties at Corinth, and the most eminent theologians have endeavoured, with very different results, to allot to each its definite place in tenets and practice' (*The Greek Testament: With a Critically Revised Text* [London: Rivingtons, 1865], 2.49).

²⁰ See J. D. G. Dunn, *1 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 27-44; cf. also C. K. Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth: Redefining the System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 1.

²¹ Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 86.

desire for unity within the church (cf. 1 Cor 1.10),²² and thus the cause for writing, is at least motivated by the *report* of divisions or divisiveness.²³ By considering the history of scholarship on 1 Corinthians we discover the various ways scholars attempt to explain the relationship between these two points.

1.2.1.1. *Identifying the Parties*

For some, the emphasis falls on identifying the party-groups mentioned in 1 Cor 1.12. Specifically, are there truly four parties,²⁴ each having its own champion? Are there only three real parties, those rallying around Paul, Apollos and Cephas, with the Christ-party being a foil;²⁵ or is the Christ-party the leading antagonist?²⁶ Alternatively, should the names be seen as merely illustrating the dialectic within nascent Christianity—i.e. Baur’s Jew-Gentile antithesis—thus reducing the true number of parties to two: Petrine and Pauline?²⁷

Associated with the question of party-groups is the extent to which their respective influence contributed to the issues addressed in Paul’s letter. Do each of the topics addressed in the letter indicate points of division in the church? Furthermore, since divisiveness is Paul’s opening concern, can we assume that if the Corinthians are divided generally they must be divided on the particulars?²⁸

²² Ciampa-Rosner disagree with this: ‘Such a reading puts “the cart before the horse.” Paul’s big goal is not unity, but the sanctification of Gentile believers that they may glorify God. . . . In 1 Corinthians Paul deals with Corinthian factionalism first in order to clear the way for this more important matter’ (‘The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach,’ *NTS* 52.2 [2006]: 214).

²³ See e.g. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 63; B. Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 28-29; D. E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 6-9. For a fuller treatment of this connection, see C. S. de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationship of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 179-232.

²⁴ N. A. Dahl, ‘Paul and the Church at Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21,’ in *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (eds. W. R. Farmer, C. F. D. Moule and R. R. Niebuhr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 322-35.

²⁵ J. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), xxx-ix.

²⁶ W. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (trans. J. E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 114.

²⁷ F. C. Baur, *Paul: The Apostle of Jesus Christ. His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrines* (trans. E. Zeller; rev. A. Menzies; London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), 1.26-68, 259-97. For a resurrection of Baur’s thesis, see G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (trans. E. Stanely Jones; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); M. D. Goulder, *Paul and the Competing Missions in Corinth* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001).

²⁸ Cf. Polhill: ‘The first four chapters of 1 Corinthians form an appropriate introduction to the letter. The problems of factionalism treated in them are at the center of the congregational difficulties which surface in the rest of the letter’ (‘The Wisdom of God and Factionalism: 1 Corinthians 1–4,’ *RevExp* 80.3 [1983]: 325 cf. Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 96).

However, scholars question this approach on two grounds: 1) nowhere in Paul's argument does he speak directly to one or more of the four groups, and 2) Paul nowhere identifies the particular beliefs or doctrines of that group—or even what beliefs or doctrines potentially caused the divisions.²⁹

1.2.1.2. Identifying the Issues

For other scholars, the emphasis falls primarily on discovering the types of issues causing trouble in Corinth. Specifically, and based on the contents of the letter, does Paul confront theological, philosophical and/or social issues in the church, and if so what are they precisely? Moreover, does the relationship between the issues discussed indicate groups of 'opponents' in Corinth or should we assume a unified antagonism towards Paul?³⁰ One advantage here is that the analysis proceeds on the basis of textual evidence.

While focusing on this primary emphasis, scholars nevertheless seek to identify the implied 'opponents.' Traditionally, three (or four!) possibilities are given: Gnostics,³¹ Hellenistic enthusiasts or spiritualists,³² adherents of Hellenistic-Jewish wisdom traditions³³ or a group of social elite in the church,³⁴

²⁹ See e.g. Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 96-97; C. R. Holladay, *First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin: Sweet Publishing Company, 1979), 29; Fee, *First Epistle*, 47-48; L. L. Welborn, 'On the Discord in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Ancient Politics,' *JBL* 106.1 (1987): 89-90; A. D. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 89-91; A. D. Litfin, *St Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Greco-Roman Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 178-80; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 16.

³⁰ Cf. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 135-67; Fee, *First Epistle*, 6-10, 47-51.

³¹ See e.g. Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 137-55, 289-93; G. Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (ed. and trans. J. H. Schütz; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982), 132-36 (though with some hesitation); D. Georgi, *The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 317; J. D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 297-302. The early work of Wilckens strongly advocated this position (see *Weisheit und Torheit: eine exegetisch-religions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zu 1 Kor 1 und 2* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1959]), while in a subsequent article he admitted that he could not be as sure (see 'Das Kreuz Christi als die Tiefe der Weisheit Gottes: Zu 1 Kor 2,1-16,' in *Theologia Crucis-Signum Crucis: Festschrift für Erich Dinkler zum 70 Geburtstag* [eds. C. Anderson and G. Klein; Tübingen: Mohr, 1979], 501-37).

³² Particularly those with an (over-)realised eschatology—see e.g. E. Käsemann, *New Testament of Questions of Today* (trans. W. J. Montague; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 82-107; J. L. Sumney, *Identifying Paul's Opponents: The Question of Method in 2 Corinthians* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), although, this argument is applied to 2 Corinthians; A. C. Thiselton, 'Realized Eschatology at Corinth,' *NTS* 24 (1978): 510-26.

³³ See e.g. B. A. Pearson, *The Pneumatikos-Psychikos Terminology in 1 Corinthians* (Missoula: University of Montana, 1973); R. A. Horsley, 'Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos: Distinctions of Spiritual Status Among the Corinthians,' *HTR* 69 (1976): 269-88; idem, 'Gnosis in Corinth: 1 Corinthians 8.1-6,' *NTS* 27.1 (1980): 32-51; J. A. Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit: An*

whether it be comprised of Jews, Greeks or Romans—or a mixture of all three.³⁵ As will be discussed later,³⁶ the Gnostic hypothesis has come under criticism and its older formulation is not widely considered viable, at least not without serious qualifications (i.e. proto- or incipient gnosticism).³⁷ While the remaining options are more plausible, two questions arise with regard to their implementation: 1) does any one of the three best account for the occasion of Paul's letter—if so which one, and 2) do these options carry the analysis of Paul's argument far enough?

1.2.1.3. *Identifying the Cause(s)*

For some, and building on the merits of the second approach, the emphasis falls on identifying the cause(s) for the types of issues that characterise the Corinthian situation. Thus, and assuming the report of divisions in general to be true, the focus is not so much on identifying the particular groups in Corinth or the specific views they espouse as it is on locating the cause for divisiveness.³⁸ How does this differ from the second approach, specifically its emphasis on theological, philosophical, and/or social categories? Whereas the second approach sought to answer questions of 'what', this third one, and assuming such categories are legitimate, nuances the inquiry by dealing with questions of 'why'. Thus, instead of asking, *what* are the specific theological, philosophical, and/or social issues addressed in Paul's letter?, this approach asks: *why* are there theological, philosophical, and/or social issues in the Corinthian church, and is it possible to identify their causes? Moreover, how does identifying such causes affect our understanding of Paul's plea for unity? This approach has

Investigation of 1 Corinthians 1.18–3.20 Against the Background of Jewish Sapiential Traditions in the Greco-Roman Period (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984).

³⁴ See e.g. Theissen, *Social Setting*, 73-96; Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 45-57; D. Gill, 'In Search of the Social Elite in the Corinthian Church,' *TynBul* 44 (1993): 323-37; R. S. Dutch, *The Educated Elite in 1 Corinthians: Education and Community Conflict in Graeco-Roman Context* (London: T&T Clark, 2005). Cf. also L. L. Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4 in the Comic-Philosophic Tradition* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005).

³⁵ See de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts*, 231.

³⁶ See 3.2.3–3.2.4 and 4.3.1.1 below.

³⁷ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 15; R. P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: A Guide for Christian Students* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 173; cf. also R. McL. Wilson, 'How Gnostic Were the Corinthians?,' *NTS* 19.1 (1972): 74; idem, 'Gnosis at Corinth,' in *Paul and Paulinism: Essays in Honour of C. K. Barrett* (eds. M. D. Hooker and S. G. Wilson; London: SPCK, 1982), 102-14.

³⁸ Cf. Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 107; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 302.

much to commend it and the works of key scholars employing it helped fuel and direct my own study. Four contributions should be noted.

1.2.1.3.1. Tübingen Redux

Still adhering to Baur's dialectic—albeit slightly modified—some scholars see divergent or dichotomous theological perspectives as the cause for the dilemma(s) in Corinth (cf. Goulder, Lüdemann). The emphasis here is not so much particular theological precepts or topics addressed in the letter, although such things do play a role. Rather, this approach seeks to locate an overarching theological framework in which such precepts could develop. Therefore, in this instance, since this framework and the details within it are theological and stand contrary to those proposed by Paul, thus creating a division between him and the Corinthians, Paul's desire for unity is *theological* or even doctrinal in nature. While some view this option as untenable or even out-dated,³⁹ and while they might be correct to question the methodological presuppositions of the approach (especially as defined by Baur), I do not think that a theological focus should be so quickly and categorically dismissed, or at least I do not think it should be viewed as necessarily separate from other lines of inquiry. It is simply reductionist to assume that theological ideas played no part in how ancient cultures defined the cosmos and society and their identity within both.⁴⁰

1.2.1.3.2. Andrew Clarke

Andrew Clarke sees the Corinthians as reflecting what occurs in the wider Graeco-Roman world: they are fascinated with social status in general and 'personality-centered politics'⁴¹ in particular. By this he means the Corinthians are aligning themselves with particular individuals within or related to the

³⁹ E.g. W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 1991), 1:38-63; R. Pickett, *The Cross in Corinth: The Social Significance of the Death of Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 39-40; Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 24; cf. Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 89-90, 95.

⁴⁰ Merklein applauds the efforts of sociological studies while at the same time acknowledges the vital connection between theological concepts and sociological realities in the ancient world—see *Der erste Brief an die Korinther: Kapitel 1-4* (Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1992), 32. The assumption that we can study the ancient world, especially its sociological and/or ideological makeup, without recourse to theological ideas or motifs reflects more the state of current historical research than the historical cultures being studied.

⁴¹ Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 92.

community, namely those who possess some level of power and/or influence.⁴² Clarke lists three key ways in which this fascination was understood and expressed in the ancient world, and ostensibly in Corinth.⁴³

First, it is possible to define party-loyalty in terms of patronage, where the esteemed leader is believed to have played a significant role in the establishment of the community. The respective groups, therefore, elevate the names of Paul, Apollos and Cephas due to assumptions concerning their role in the community's formation or identity.⁴⁴ Presumably mindful of the objection that Cephas most likely did not minister in Corinth, Clarke shows how the *reputation* of an influential leader was enough to justify claims of patronage. Thus, in this case, it would not be necessary for Cephas to have visited Corinth following Paul's departure; all that would be required is his reputation as an original apostle and presumably his association with James, the leader of the Jerusalem church.

A second way to define party-loyalty is in terms of rhetorical eloquence.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the divisions in Corinth are the result of competing opinions on the rhetorical abilities of the named ministers.⁴⁶ However, in this case, the list of champions becomes limited to Paul and Apollos;⁴⁷ Cephas is not a contender

⁴² See Marshall, who highlights the usual direction of esteem: 'the inferior who, requiring the aid of a more powerful friend, either committed himself to his protection or received various benefits of services. In return, he was obliged to show gratitude, which consisted of rendering services and providing support in any way his patron required. The patron was morally bound to protect his client, provide for him, and render assistance to him as he had need' (*Enmity in Corinth: Social Conventions in Paul's Relations with the Corinthians* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987], 143).

⁴³ See Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 93-94.

⁴⁴ For an argument supporting the possibility of Cephas ministering in Corinth, see C. K. Barrett, 'Cephas and Corinth,' in *Abraham unser Vater: Festschrift für Otto Michel* (eds. O. Betz, M. Hengel and P. Stuhlmacher; Leiden: Brill, 1963), 1-12.

⁴⁵ While the topic of rhetoric could constitute its own category of study, recent scholarship has shown an awareness of the fact that rhetorical displays are more appropriately understood when examined in their socio-historical context—see e.g. M. T. Finney, 'Conflict in Corinth: The Appropriateness of Honour-Shame as the Primary Social Context' (Ph.D. diss.; University of St Andrews, 2004).

⁴⁶ Cf. B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 41-43; idem, 'Philodemus and Paul on Rhetorical Delivery (ὑπόκρισις),' in *Philodemus and the New Testament World* (eds. J. T. Fitzgerald, D. Obbink and G. S. Holland; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 323-42.

⁴⁷ In spite of the repeated mention of Cephas in 3.22 (cf. 1.12), the explicit reference to Paul and Apollos in 3.1-5 and the double explanatory ἵνα-clauses in 4.6 strongly suggest that only the preaching abilities (or styles) of Paul and Apollos are at issue. Relying on the testimony of Acts 18.24, 1 Cor 4.6 and 2 Cor 10.10, Winter sees the Corinthians recognising Paul's abilities in writing, even though they fail to impress in person, but favouring Apollos due to his strength as a debater (see Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 41).

under this scheme. This is the least developed of Clarke's options; instead he relies on the findings of Bruce Winter. However, a number of studies after Clarke explore the dimensions of this rhetorical option.

Finally, for Clarke, it is possible to define party-loyalty in terms of political factions, since '[m]uch of the language used by Paul with regard to the situation suggests a political background.'⁴⁸ In this sense, the Corinthians are behaving like members of competing political parties, each rallying for the supremacy of their chosen leader.⁴⁹ Thus, and regardless of which possibility, since the problems in Corinth affect the social structures of the church, Paul's plea for unity in the church is one of *social* or *political* concord. Paul, therefore, exercises his authority as founding apostle in order to re-establish harmony within the community. However, Yung Suk Kim questions this approach on the grounds that since the social elite are the ones advocating harmony, true harmony cannot exist where levels of status are maintained and those on higher levels continue to define the nature of harmony for those on lower levels.⁵⁰

1.2.1.3.3. Edward Adams

While the work of Clarke sheds light on the context to which Paul writes, especially with regard to the nature of the problem(s) addressed, it seems to leave one basic question unanswered: why and/or how did this framework of thought make its way into the Corinthian community? More specifically: why and/or how is it that the Corinthians continued to operate in former ways of

⁴⁸ Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 94. Significant influence from Mitchell's work can be detected in this proposal.

⁴⁹ Clarke and others are quick to emphasise that similar to the political rallies of the day, these factions were characterised or identified by the champion and not the ideas or teachings that champion promotes (see Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*, 94; cf. Welborn, 'On the Discord in Corinth,' 91). If we assume that Paul, Apollos and Cephas ministered in Corinth, and if we further assume that each proclaimed the same gospel (in terms of essential content), the elevation of person over teaching would certainly account for the Corinthians failing to see the compatibility of content in apostolic teaching. This obviously holds true even if we assume the ministerial work of only Paul and Apollos. However, even if we accept the idea of factions identified by leaders rather than ideas/teaching, we should not overlook the perceived significance or influence of the teaching. In other words, we cannot fully separate the individual from the ideas they espouse, for both would have been under the scrutiny of the audience. Moreover, it would be the perceptions or interpretations of the audience that would spark acclaim for a chosen speaker, which would potentially lead to party formation.

⁵⁰ Y. S. Kim, *Christ's Body at Corinth: The Politics of a Metaphor* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 39-49. Admittedly, Kim's work overlooks treatments that promote a modified version of a unified body, one that embraces diversity and does so in a harmonious and Christ-like manner—see e.g. M. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 48.

thinking post-belief in the gospel? The work of Edward Adams provides a helpful explanation:⁵¹ the Corinthians rely on a faulty view of (what Berger calls) ‘world-construction’⁵² by which identity—both individual and collective—and life are defined. Moreover, the Corinthians have failed to distinguish between the ‘world’ defined by the gospel and the ‘world’ defined by their surrounding culture (i.e. weak boundaries),⁵³ and it is both this faulty view and this failure that create space for the issues in Corinth to develop.

Specifically, as Adams argues, ‘[t]he Corinthian “aberrations” are largely failures in boundary maintenance. The Corinthians were insufficiently distinguishing themselves from the surrounding society in their social practices and attitudes. Virtually every Corinthian “irregularity” stems from the social and cultural environment of the church.’⁵⁴ Adams goes on to categorise and delineate the various ‘aberrations’ as representative of the Corinthians conforming to either ‘social practices’ or ‘cultural values’ (or both).⁵⁵ In this case, the Corinthians’ life and behaviour resembled more the wisdom and ways of the world than the life defined by God’s wisdom, and as a result they were failing to live the distinctive ‘in Christ’ existence that is to follow the acceptance of God’s wisdom as proclaimed in the gospel.

Paul’s argument, therefore, seeks to correct these ‘aberrations’, and thus solve the internal problems by exhorting the Corinthians to strengthen their boundaries so as to distinguish themselves clearly from the outside world.⁵⁶ Specifically, Adams sees Paul encouraging the Corinthians to (re-)translate existing definitions of life and behaviour (i.e. ‘uncoding and recoding’)⁵⁷ so as to make appropriate sense of their new life ‘in Christ.’ Moreover, the Corinthians must recognise that in (re-)establishing appropriate boundaries via redefinition, they are not capable in themselves to maintain their distinctiveness from the world; for that they must rely on the Spirit as the means by which they can

⁵¹ Adams’ approach is indebted to the work of Clarke (see *Constructing the World*, 89).

⁵² Adams, *Constructing the World*, 3-4.

⁵³ Or, as Adams describes it: the ‘sociological distinction between “church” and “sect” ’ as developed primarily by Weber and Troeltsch (*Constructing the World*, 7-8).

⁵⁴ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 87-88 (cf. 93).

⁵⁵ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 88-92.

⁵⁶ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 93, 97-99.

⁵⁷ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 113.

‘resist the world’s pull on their lives.’⁵⁸ Given the competing frameworks of thought and the social consequences that follow, Paul’s exhortation for unity—or ‘group solidarity’⁵⁹—in this case is at once *conceptual* and *social* in nature.

While I have relied on much of Adams’ contribution, my research differs in two related ways. First, Adams ‘attempts to relate Paul’s socio-rhetorical usage [of κόσμος and κτίσις language] to the sociological process of “world-construction” in Pauline Christianity and to the question of the type of “response to the world” we encounter in the Pauline letters.’⁶⁰ My emphasis is not primarily on the language used or even how it is used, rather it is on the substance of Paul’s teaching on the Spirit’s role in accepting God’s wisdom in the gospel and applying it to life. I am not disputing the likely use of ‘world-constructing’ language; I am simply emphasising how Paul sees ‘world-construction’ as possible. Second, while certainly an element of Adams’ wider argument, the role of the Spirit receives minimal attention,⁶¹ especially as it relates to community formation, believing existence and conformity to God’s wisdom in the cross. My study examines 1) why Paul emphasises the role of the Spirit in the preaching, acceptance/believing and living out the gospel and 2) why this emphasis appears so early in the letter.

1.2.1.3.4. J. Brian Tucker

Relying on the efforts of Adams,⁶² yet differing in key ways, J. Brian Tucker nuances the discussion by arguing that ‘some in Corinth were continuing to identify primarily with key aspects of their Roman social identity rather than their identity “in Christ” and that this confusion over identities contributed to the problems within the community.’⁶³ As he develops in chapter 6, and similar to the conclusions of other sociological readings, Tucker sees the Corinthians’ confusion over identity and its disruptive consequences as a social problem and not theological.⁶⁴ For Tucker, the specific social problem that Paul confronts is

⁵⁸ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 117.

⁵⁹ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 99.

⁶⁰ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 3.

⁶¹ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 116-18.

⁶² See esp. J. B. Tucker, *You Belong to Christ: Paul and the Formation of Social Identity in 1 Corinthians 1–4* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 27, 102, 170.

⁶³ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 2.

⁶⁴ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 152-80.

an improper hierarchy for defining social-identity. Specifically, the Roman civic identity is being elevated as the primary factor and the 'in Christ' identity is marginalised, and the former is influencing how believers understand the gospel's effect on social or communal identity.⁶⁵ One of the consequences is 'an over-reliance on the world's wisdom and power (i.e. Roman imperial ideology)', which creates obstacles for the proper formation of the assembly of believers.⁶⁶ For Tucker this hierarchy simply needs to be reversed. Thus, the solution to the problem is the Corinthians' need to rely on the revelation of wisdom via God's Spirit, who is able to assist believers in knowing how to form appropriate social relationships.⁶⁷

Two related aspects of Tucker's work should be noted, the first being a relatively minor point. First, while Tucker identifies the 'Roman imperial ideology' as 'Paul's primary interlocutor',⁶⁸ it is not immediately clear what he means by that descriptor. At first, all we know is that the Corinthians held to this ideology and it was contributing to their present dilemma, as seen, according to Tucker, in 1 Cor 4.8-13; 6.1-11; 8.7-13; 10.27-11.1; and 14.1-25.⁶⁹ We must wait until chapter 4 before obtaining a glimpse of what Tucker means by Roman imperial ideology.

This brings me to the second aspect, which deals with both Tucker's definition of Roman imperial ideology and his underlying assumption about it. With regard to the former, Tucker defines the Roman imperial ideology as characterised by:⁷⁰ 1) reliance on honour and shame to define social boundaries, 2) a patron-client system to govern authority and those under authority and 3) the use of kinship language to encourage 'a sense of belonging while providing a nurturing environment in which group norms could be uncultured.'⁷¹ With regard to the underlying assumption, while it may be the case that these characteristics comprise Tucker's understanding of Roman imperial ideology, it is not clear how or why Roman imperial ideology is the only framework in which

⁶⁵ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 80-81.

⁶⁶ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 181; cf. 205-08.

⁶⁷ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 193-205.

⁶⁸ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 13; cf. 63.

⁶⁹ See Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 119-21. In each of these instances, Tucker sees the Corinthians as on good terms with the wider civic community of Corinth and Paul as viewing this contact as ideally positive but potentially damaging to the needed salient in Christ identity.

⁷⁰ See Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 105-17.

⁷¹ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 113.

these characteristics are to be understood. Moreover, it is not sufficiently clear why the ‘three status-oriented cultural phenomena (honor, patronage, and kinship) combined with the urban environment, Roman religion, and allegiance to the emperor to support the local construction of Roman social identity’⁷² is the most likely candidate for Paul’s critique.⁷³

Where Tucker’s research and mine intersect is in understanding the Spirit’s role in establishing and reprioritising the Corinthians’ identity in Christ.⁷⁴ Tucker is right to recognise the mediatorial role of the Spirit in providing the Corinthians with God’s wisdom and forming in them a new identity in Christ.⁷⁵ Moreover, Tucker points out that ‘the work of the Spirit is that which allows for correct categorization of social realities within the community of faith.’⁷⁶ This correct categorisation involves assessments of those ‘outside’ the body of believers—i.e. those not identified as ‘in Christ’—and those already ‘within’ the body—i.e. those who are ‘in Christ.’ Once again, for Tucker, the issue is that the Corinthians have over-identified with Roman imperial ideology, which is characteristic of those ‘outside’ the body, instead of allowing the Spirit to filter that ideology through the mind of Christ. This becomes a part of the larger reprioritisation process, or the reversal of social hierarchy.

While I agree with Tucker’s basic conclusion that the reprioritisation ‘creates an alternative community with a distinct ethos,’⁷⁷ I see that distinction not in terms of degree but of kind: Tucker argues for an inversion and integration of identity-forming systems of thought, whereas I argue for the replacement of the old (i.e. wisdom of the world) for the new (i.e. God’s wisdom).⁷⁸

⁷² Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 116.

⁷³ Cf. Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 3, 13.

⁷⁴ See Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 194-209.

⁷⁵ See Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 194-96.

⁷⁶ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 198; cf. 202-03.

⁷⁷ Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 124.

⁷⁸ Thus, on this point I am in agreement with Adams. On the assumption that ‘the influence of [the Corinthians’] Hellenistic environment remains the dominant force behind the beliefs and actions criticized by Paul’ (*Constructing the World*, 97), Adams sees Paul calling for clear lines of demarcation, while Tucker seems to allow for more fluidity (see *You Belong to Christ*, 170-71 n.73, where Tucker sees Adams as being too rigid in his conclusions).

1.2.2. *Specific Contributions Related to this Study*

All of the studies considered above presuppose a literary or rhetorical relationship between Paul's treatment of divisions in chapters 1–4 and the discussion of other matters in chapter 5–15. Most scholars see the topics found in the opening four chapters as indicating something about the framework of thought held by the Corinthians that Paul opposes in the rest of the letter. In the majority of cases the leading themes recognised include the cross, Spirit, wisdom and discernment, although there are differences in nuance and emphasis. While these themes are not unfamiliar to the Pauline corpus, their presence in 1 Corinthians (especially the first four chapters) is worthy of the attention they have received. The following survey will be divided into two uneven parts: the first deals with scholarly contributions related to the Pauline corpus, and the second focuses on those related to 1 Corinthians in particular.

1.2.2.1. *Themes in the Pauline Corpus*

With regard to Paul's writings,⁷⁹ some scholars have explored the significance of the cross for Paul and his preaching throughout the Graeco-Roman world.⁸⁰ Moreover, there is a renewed interest in examining the importance of the Spirit's role for Paul and how that role shapes our understanding of both his theology and the identity and life of the believing community.⁸¹ To a slightly lesser extent, though certainly not less valuable, a handful of monographs have analysed the notion of (divine) wisdom within the Pauline corpus, though often

⁷⁹ Since the focus of this study is limited to 1 Corinthians, my remarks will only briefly mention the contributions related to the Pauline corpus as a whole.

⁸⁰ E.g. C. B. Cousar, *The Theology of the Cross: The Death of Jesus in the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); P. T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); B. H. McLean, *Cursed Christ: Mediterranean Expulsion Rituals and Pauline Soteriology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

⁸¹ E.g. H. Gunkel, *Influence of the Holy Spirit: The Popular View of the Apostolic Age and the Teaching of the Apostle Paul* (trans. R. A. Harrisville and P. A. Quanbeck II; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); idem, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996); C. F. D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* (London: Mowbrays, 1978); F. Philip, *The Origins of Pauline Pneumatology: The Eschatological Bestowal of the Spirit upon Gentiles in Judaism and in the Early Developments of Paul's Theology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); J. W. Yates, *The Spirit and Creation in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Cf. also D. Coffey, 'Did You Receive the Spirit When You Believed?': *Some Basic Questions for Pneumatology* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005).

linked with Paul's view of the (Jewish) Law,⁸² while others have incorporated the categories of knowledge and prophecy in their treatments of Paul's views of wisdom.⁸³ This inclusion of ideas invited further discussions on the topic of discernment in Pauline thought and its role in or relationship to the believing community, particularly the question of ethics.⁸⁴

1.2.2.2. Themes in 1 Corinthians

With regard to discussions on Paul's first (canonical) letter to the Corinthians, the situation is similar to scholarly works on the Pauline corpus. The near parallel studies of Duane Litfin⁸⁵ and Michael Bullmore,⁸⁶ and the distinctive studies of Raymond Pickett⁸⁷ and Alexandra Brown⁸⁸ all contribute to our understanding of Paul's preaching of the cross. The works of Litfin and Bullmore stress the rhetorical aspects of Paul's argument as they relate to the Corinthians' assessment of his preaching ministry,⁸⁹ while the works of Pickett and Brown emphasise the role of the cross as a standard against which the Corinthians are to understand life.⁹⁰

On the role of the Spirit both in Paul's thinking and in the Corinthian church, the works of Birger Pearson,⁹¹ Martin Winter,⁹² Ralph Martin,⁹³ Scott

⁸² E.g. E. J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985); C. M. Pate, *The Reverse of the Curse: Paul, Wisdom and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); B. S. Rosner, *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013).

⁸³ E.g. P. W. Gooch, *Partial Knowledge: Philosophical Studies in Paul* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); I. W. Scott, *Implicit Epistemology in the Letters of Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

⁸⁴ E.g. G. Therrien, *Le discernement dans les écrits pauliniens* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1973); J. M. Gustafson, *Moral Discernment in the Christian Life: Essays in Theological Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); A. Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits: Theological and Ethical Hermeneutics in Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸⁵ Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*.

⁸⁶ M. A. Bullmore, *St Paul's Theology of Rhetorical Style: An Examination of 1 Corinthians 2.1-5 in Light of First Century Graeco-Roman Rhetorical Culture* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1995).

⁸⁷ Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*.

⁸⁸ A. R. Brown, *The Cross and Human Transformation: Paul's Apocalyptic Word in 1 Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁸⁹ An obvious difference between the two is the focus-text: Bullmore's treatment deals with only 1 Cor 2.1-5, while Litfin considers the whole of 1 Cor 1-4.

⁹⁰ The differences between Pickett and Brown are primarily methodological. Pickett approaches the subject from a socio-scientific perspective, while Brown examines the subject through a rhetorical and theological lens. Another notable difference is the material covered: Pickett selects key passages from both Corinthian letters (i.e. 1 Cor 1-4; 5-15; 2 Cor 4.7-5.19; 10-13), while Brown's treatment is almost exclusively confined to 1 Cor 1.9-2.5.

⁹¹ Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*.

Brodeur⁹⁴ and Clint Tibbs⁹⁵ can be consulted, although the latter three are confined to later portions of the letter.⁹⁶

In terms of understanding wisdom in 1 Corinthians, the studies of Ulrich Wilckens,⁹⁷ H. H. Drake Williams⁹⁸ and Harm-Jan Inkelaar⁹⁹ make valuable and distinctive contributions. While Wilckens seeks to understand Paul's wisdom-fully contrast against the gnostic background of nascent Christianity and Paul's application of the contrast to the message of the cross,¹⁰⁰ both Williams and Inkelaar examine Paul's use of Scripture as a guide for how he advocates divine wisdom for the Corinthians. And finally, the topic of discernment in Paul's letter has received due attention, as seen in the works of Dorsey McConnell¹⁰¹ and Maria Pascuzzi,¹⁰² although both of these works focus on particular chapters of 1 Corinthians—i.e. Pascuzzi addresses chapter 5, while McConnell deals with chapter 7.

There is a notable difference between these works on 1 Corinthians and those on the Pauline corpus mentioned above: the works on 1 Corinthians operate with an explicit interest in how the the themes of cross, Spirit, wisdom and discernment might overlap or interrelate. This is not to suggest that the

⁹² M. Winter, *Pneumatiker und Psychiker in Korinth: zum religionsgeschichtlichen Hintergrund von 1 Kor 2,6–3,4* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1975).

⁹³ R. P. Martin, *Spirit and Congregation: Studies in 1 Corinthians 12–15* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984).

⁹⁴ S. Brodeur, *Holy Spirit's Agency in the Resurrection of the Dead: An Exegetical-Theological Study of 1 Corinthians 15,44b-49 and Romans 8,9-13* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1996).

⁹⁵ C. Tibbs, *The Religious Experience of the Pneuma: Communication with the Spirit World in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

⁹⁶ Most contributions on the popular level reflect the tendency of focusing on the so-called 'spiritual gifts' in 1 Cor 12–14 when dealing with the Spirit in the letter—see e.g. D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987); R. L. Thomas, *Understanding Spiritual Gifts: A Verse by Verse Study of 1 Cor 12–14* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999). Cf. M. F. Unger, *The Baptism and Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1974).

⁹⁷ Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*.

⁹⁸ H. H. D. Williams, *The Wisdom of the Wise: The Presence and Function of Scripture in 1 Cor 1.18–3.23* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁹⁹ H. –J. Inkelaar, *Conflict Over Wisdom: The Theme of 1 Corinthians 1–4 Rooted in Scripture* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

¹⁰⁰ In particular, Wilckens reads Paul's wisdom language in the light of the Gnostic Sophia myth, which he sees as traditionally older than the Valentinian form, thus enabling him to make it pre-Pauline.

¹⁰¹ D. W. M. McConnell, *Paul as Teacher of Discernment: The Ethical Paradigm of 1 Corinthians 7* (New York: General Theological Seminary, 1983).

¹⁰² M. A. Pascuzzi, *Ethics, Ecclesiology and Church Discipline: A Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 5* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 1997).

works on the Pauline corpus do not interact with themes outside of their immediate focus. I am simply noting that such an interaction is not the focus of those particular studies. However, there are a few monographs where discussion of the interaction of multiple themes is the intent. For example, both Stephen Pogoloff¹⁰³ and Hans Kammler,¹⁰⁴ albeit in distinctive ways, seek to understand the role of wisdom in Paul's preaching of the cross; James Davis attempts to locate the nature of divine wisdom and the role of the Spirit as facilitator in understanding God's work in Christ;¹⁰⁵ and, though not examining 1 Corinthians exclusively, André Munzinger draws attention to the necessary relationship between the Spirit and the exercise of right discernment, especially in ethical matters.¹⁰⁶ While each of these works has its merits, none explicitly considers the further overlaps with the other themes in Paul's argument, or the particular and necessary role the Spirit plays in relation to those other themes.

Two recent works, however, do treat the overlap or interrelationship of more than two themes, and these works deserve special mention as they relate to the aims of my own research.

1.2.2.2.1. Jeffrey Lamp

The work of Jeffrey Lamp¹⁰⁷ deals exclusively with Paul's argument in 1 Cor 1.18–4.21.¹⁰⁸ Lamp attempts first to uncover the specific emphasis on wisdom (σοφία) as held by Paul—rather than the Corinthians—and thus locate the cause for Paul's emphasis on Christ as God's wisdom.¹⁰⁹ Related to this, Lamp seeks to ascertain the particular conceptual or theological background that would

¹⁰³ S. M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ H. –C. Kammler, *Kreuz und Weisheit: eine exegetische Untersuchung zu 1 Kor 1,10–3,4* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Cf. also H. Bouter, *Christ the Wisdom of God: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2* (London: Chapter Two, 1998).

¹⁰⁵ Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*. Davis' thesis is questionable on several points, not least of which is his claim that the Corinthians were boasting of their strict allegiance to Torah. Also, minimal attention is given to the role of the Spirit in Paul's letter. In fact, despite the title, the Spirit is not a primary concern for Davis' argument.

¹⁰⁶ Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*.

¹⁰⁷ J. S. Lamp, *First Corinthians 1–4 in Light of Jewish Wisdom Traditions: Christ, Wisdom and Spirituality* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 2000).

¹⁰⁸ This analysis excludes Lamp's brief appendix on 1 Cor 8.6 (see *First Corinthians*, 201–07).

¹⁰⁹ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 1–2.

allow Paul to make the Christ-wisdom connection.¹¹⁰ Here Lamp argues for Jewish wisdom or ‘sapiential’ traditions as Paul’s source,¹¹¹ especially the notions of personified wisdom,¹¹² which become a point of contrast when Paul critiques the (assumed) wisdom of the Corinthians.¹¹³

With regard to the type of wisdom adhered to by the Corinthians, Lamp sees it as the traditions associated with Graeco-Roman rhetoric.¹¹⁴ Thus, the Corinthians would define true wisdom as made manifest in persuasive, eloquent speech, whereas for Paul true wisdom is personified in the person of Jesus and it is only by the Spirit that believers can comprehend and accept that truth.¹¹⁵ While Lamp is right to stress the links between cross, Spirit and wisdom, he does not emphasise the specific interrelationship of the topics. Moreover, Lamp’s analysis does not address the Spirit’s role in discernment.

1.2.2.2.2. John Lewis

The work of John Lewis¹¹⁶ is a theological exegesis of what he calls Paul’s ‘theo-ethical reasoning.’¹¹⁷ While this work covers two Pauline letters (1 Corinthians and Galatians), which would seem to make my analysis of it here out of place, it is nevertheless pertinent given its emphasis on the interrelationship of the key themes under discussion. One of the three scholarly tendencies that Lewis seeks to correct is the denial of Paul’s ability to engage with theological and ethical dilemmas in a constructive way.¹¹⁸ Relying on and developing the work of Michael Gorman,¹¹⁹ Lewis demonstrates how the cross of Christ becomes the criterion by which one forms right theo-ethical decisions—i.e. ‘the community practice of spiritual discernment.’¹²⁰ Lewis emphasises this point on the basis of

¹¹⁰ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 3.

¹¹¹ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 7-51.

¹¹² Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 52-79.

¹¹³ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 91-115.

¹¹⁴ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 103-04.

¹¹⁵ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 155-56, 177-78.

¹¹⁶ J. G. Lewis, *Looking for Life: The Role of ‘Theo-Ethical Reasoning’ in Paul’s Religion* (London: T&T Clark International, 2007).

¹¹⁷ See Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 34.

¹¹⁸ Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 1; cf. 157. The three specific tendencies: ‘Interpreters regularly: (1) distinguish Paul’s theology from his ethics; (2) emphasize his oral preaching as the sole or primary vehicle for gospel proclamation and divine revelation; and (3) deny that Paul engages in reasoned, ethical reflections’ (ibid).

¹¹⁹ Cf. Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 15-18.

¹²⁰ Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 36.

the two problems he sees at work in Corinth: 1) inappropriate influences from worldly wisdom, and 2) a failure to engage in spiritual discernment.¹²¹

What is important to note here is that Lewis recognises these problems as central to Paul's argument in 1 Cor 1–4 and that the effect of Paul's response expands to support what he says in the rest of the letter. Thus, the theo-ethical paradigm (which becomes interchangeable with 'cruciformity') used in the opening applies throughout. However, the surprising feature of Lewis' argument is the minimal attention given to the role of the Spirit, especially in the early portion of Paul's argument to the Corinthians.¹²² This is not to suggest that Lewis marginalises the Spirit; he does say: 'As believers practice spiritual discernment by engaging in theo-ethical reasoning, they are led by the Spirit to identify the connections between experiences of new life and actions that conform to Christ's cruciform pattern.'¹²³ However, beyond this, the Spirit's role is almost tangential to Lewis' analysis of Paul's theo-ethical argument.¹²⁴

1.3. Specific Focus of this Study

1.3.1. The Argument

While the 'Controlling Questions' listed above provide the framework for my research, there is a foundational question upon which they are built: when writing to the Corinthians, does Paul confront a myriad of problems or is he refuting a particular framework of thought and using the manifold problems as illustrations of that framework? The second option seems more likely, as this study will demonstrate. In general, I contend that Paul's argument indicates the emergence of a faulty notion of (divine) wisdom and spirituality in Corinth following his apostolic sojourn, and that this faulty notion operates in accordance with the standards of human wisdom. This faulty notion has two basic consequences. First, Paul's apostolic mission and message came under scrutiny, and this scrutiny created an atmosphere of scepticism towards Paul, his message and the manner in which he presented it. Second, the Corinthians' present sense of (spiritual) identity is congruent not with God's wisdom as

¹²¹ Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 37.

¹²² For an elaboration on what Lewis merely suggests, see V. Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), esp. 171-242.

¹²³ Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 17; cf. 8, 10, 15, 26.

¹²⁴ See Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 41, 43, 59, 62-63, 65.

displayed in the cross and revealed by the Spirit, but with human wisdom as displayed in pursuits of status and fuelled by the spirit of self-interest.

To expose and combat this general problem, Paul appeals first of all to the Corinthians' original experience when they first heard and believed the gospel. The function of this appeal is to remind them of the manner of Paul's preaching, his proclamation of wisdom in the cross, their reception of and belief in that proclamation and their subsequent new life 'in Christ.' Specifically, and this brings me to the thesis of this study, Paul's appeal emphasises the necessary role of the Spirit in all aspects of that past experience. Therefore, in this study I argue that 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 functions as a pneumatological teaching, where Paul articulates his understanding of the Spirit's necessary role in the proclamation of the cross, the mediation of divine wisdom and the exercise of communal discernment, and that Paul uses this teaching to correct the Corinthians' present faulty notions of (divine) wisdom and spirituality.

1.3.2. The Chosen Method(s)

In their pursuit to understand the occasion for and content of Paul's letter, scholars have historically employed a number of different methodologies. As intimated already, older scholarship (though certainly not exclusively) tended to favour the history-of-religions approach when attempting to explain key features of Paul's theology.¹²⁵ More recently, additional methods such as social-scientific interpretations¹²⁶ and rhetorical criticism¹²⁷ have yielded insightful results concerning the norms and practices of ancient Corinth, although the latter tends to be more text-centred. Recent modifications have emerged where the social-scientific is blended with rhetorical criticism, thus

¹²⁵ See e.g. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*; Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*; Winter, *Pneumatiker und Psychiker in Korinth*.

¹²⁶ See e.g. Theissen, *Social Setting*; D. G. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*; Clarke, *Secular and Christian Leadership*; Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*.

¹²⁷ See e.g. M. Bünker, *Briefformular und rhetorische Disposition im 1 Korintherbrief* (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*; Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*; Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*; Bullmore, *Theology of Rhetorical Style*; Collins, *First Corinthians*; Lamp, *First Corinthians*; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*; cf. also A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

producing a socio-rhetorical analysis,¹²⁸ which at the very least seeks to alleviate the shortcomings of the text-only tendencies in rhetorical criticism.

With regard to the methodology adopted for this study, my priority is to understand Paul's argument as articulated in his letter to the Corinthians,¹²⁹ specifically the interrelationship of cross, Spirit, wisdom and communal discernment in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4. Given the emphasis on these themes in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 in particular and their varying emphasis throughout the letter in general, and given that such themes are historically, rhetorically, theologically and socially significant for understanding the occasion for and content of Paul's argument, I conduct my exegesis not in accordance with one particular methodology but with an awareness of the benefits that all of the recent methods provide. As Baird notes: 'the conflicts reflected in 1 Corinthians have arisen out of a variety of situations,' thus any 'analysis of [the] conflict in 1 Corinthians should not be restricted to a single method.'¹³⁰ Or as Udo Schnelle more recently stated: 'The Corinthian church was embroiled in several conflicts springing up from different causes and therefore must be understood methodologically on different planes (sociological, theological, cultural, and the history of religions).'¹³¹

While my approach is primarily exegetical, my concerns in and for this study are also admittedly theological. The reason for this is quite simple: as previous scholarship has demonstrated (cf. Schnelle's observation), Paul confronts religious, social and rhetorical issues in Corinth. I do not dispute the plausibility that such issues characterised the Corinthian church and no doubt contributed to their (internal) struggles in some form. However, my research has led me to two related conclusions. First, Paul's response to the Corinthians

¹²⁸ See e.g. D. A. Ackerman, *Lo, I Tell You a Mystery: Cross, Resurrection, and Paraenesis in the Rhetoric of 1 Corinthians* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2006); Adams, *Constructing the World*. Witherington has an entire series of commentaries that purport to be socio-rhetorical analyses. However, Aune has recently criticised Witherington for 'hijack[ing] the term "socio-rhetorical" for a project that has very little in common with what Robbins describes as "socio-rhetorical commentary"' ('Introduction,' in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* [ed. D. E. Aune; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 4).

¹²⁹ While addressing text-critical questions when they arise, I am following the text of Paul's letter as established in NA²⁷.

¹³⁰ ' "One Against the Other": Intra-Church Conflict in 1 Corinthians,' in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John. In Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. R. T. Fortna and B. R. Geventa; Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 130–31.

¹³¹ U. Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (trans. M. E. Boring; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 196 n.14.

appears to be only secondarily related to the religious, social and rhetorical issues. Second, while scholars may classify many if not all of these problems as being un-theological in nature,¹³² Paul's response to these un-theological problems is decidedly theological, specifically the pneumatological teaching found in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4. Therefore, in this study I seek to explain Paul's theological response first before applying it to his assessment of the Corinthian situation.

1.3.3. Limits of the Passage and Rhetorical Placement

Before proceeding, one question must be addressed: why set the limits of the passage to 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, a decision that seems to go against the usual or accepted rhetorical unit(s) for the argument of 1 Cor 1–4? While it is true that such a proposal is unusual or even inconsistent with most readings of 1 Corinthians, it is not entirely unprecedented.¹³³ In fact, nearly 35 years ago John Hargreaves divided the passage along these lines, labelling the argument as Paul's explanation of 'true wisdom.'¹³⁴ More recently, Raymund Schwager, Joseph Fitzmyer and Margaret Mitchell each identify 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 as a distinct unit,¹³⁵ although none provides an explicit explanation why. Before offering my explanation for setting the limits to 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, it is important to rehearse scholarly opinions on the wider argument of 1 Cor 1–4 and how that argument is usually divided rhetorically.

Given that 1 Cor 1–4 represents a stand-alone logical unit,¹³⁶ some scholars argue that these chapters were intended to circulate as an independent letter,¹³⁷ written for a purpose divorced from the rest of the letter.¹³⁸ The

¹³² See e.g. those mentioned in n.38 above; cf. also (and almost ironically, given his title) Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 234, 252, 254 (although cf. 17, 193).

¹³³ In a single passing comment, Fee refers to 2.1–3.4 (see *First Epistle*, 49) but does not identify it as a defined rhetorical unit.

¹³⁴ See J. Hargreaves, *A Guide to 1 Corinthians* (London: SPCK, 1978), 22.

¹³⁵ See R. Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?: Violence and Redemption in the Bible* (trans. M. L. Assad; New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2000), 145; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 168; M. M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.

¹³⁶ *Contra* Conzelmann, who asserts: 'This part of the letter is not a unity, neither in style nor in content' (*1 Corinthians*, 30).

¹³⁷ Fitzgerald sees these chapters as 'primarily a letter of admonition' (*Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 117—emphasis original).

contents of these chapters address concerns revealed to Paul by Chloe's people, specifically divisions within the community of believers and the effects of such divisions.¹³⁹ Advocates of this view further claim that additional reports were delivered to Paul either near or at the completion of 1 Cor 1–4. In particular, Martinus de Boer sees these new reports as coming to Paul from two distinct sources: 1) Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, relaying orally the concerns about immoral behaviour, and 2) a non-extant letter from the community raising specific questions about church practices.¹⁴⁰ Thus, while chapters 1–4 are said to speak to the issues raised by Chloe's people, chapters 5–6 and 7–16 are taken to be Paul's twofold response to these subsequent reports.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the structure of the whole letter can be ordered according to the topics discussed in 1–4, 5–6 and 7–16.

Alternatively, some critics read the entire letter as a compositional disunity, given its disjointed structure,¹⁴² or they maintain that the topics discussed are treated in an *ad hoc* manner.¹⁴³ However, due to Mitchell's work¹⁴⁴ the majority of scholars now interpret 1 Corinthians as a multi-layered argument held together by a singular aim: unity within the body of believers.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, the content of 1 Cor 1–4 is understood to be a crucial layer of Paul's argument. In the light of the compositional unity of the letter, whether original

¹³⁸ de Boer, '1 Corinthians,' 229-45. See also L. G. Rylands, *Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians* (London: Watts & Co., 1929), 115-16; Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 43-47, 69-71, 86-89, 131-42.

¹³⁹ This is predicated on the assumption that divisions do in fact exist within the church at Corinth.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. de Boer '1 Corinthians,' 232-34, 240.

¹⁴¹ This line of argument (i.e. new information in the midst of composing the initial letter occasions an additional letter) is not without precedent; it appears in discussions on the unity of 2 Corinthians and for similar reasons—see e.g. H. D. Betz, *II Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul* (ed. G. W. MacRae; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 90-91, 124-44; R. Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (trans. R. A. Harrisville; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 18; M. J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 10.

¹⁴² Cf. Weiss, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, xxxix-xliii; W. Schenk, 'Der Korintherbrief als Briefsammlung,' *ZNW* 60 (1969): 219-43; Héring, *First Epistle*, xiii-xiv.

¹⁴³ Fee, *First Epistle*, 2; G. S. Selby, 'Paul, the Seer: The Rhetorical Persona in 1 Corinthians 2.1-16,' in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays for the 1997 London Conference* (eds. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 356-57.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*.

¹⁴⁵ Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 1, 65-68; Collins, *First Corinthians*, xii, 6, 10; V. P. Furnish, *Theology of the First Letter to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12, 15-18; cf. M. J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 236-38. However, Kim opposes the idea that unity represents the controlling theme or motivation for Paul's argument (see *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 39-49).

or by redaction,¹⁴⁶ most scholars recognise 1 Cor 1–4 to be a sustained argument in its own right but one whose conclusions shape how the rest of the letter is to be read and understood.¹⁴⁷ However, Gordon Fee’s observation should be noted: ‘because [the issue of divisions] is the first item to which Paul speaks, most people tend to read the rest of the letter in light of chaps. 1–4; that is, behind every issue (e.g. 7:1-16 or 8:1–11.1) they see the Corinthians divided into parties.’¹⁴⁸ Thus, a key concern for me will not be proving the existence and effects or positions of divisions within the community. Instead, I am concerned with the reasons why Paul thinks divisions exist at all and how he responds to those reasons.

As noted above, when examining 1 Cor 1–4 either in whole or in part, scholars use various types of analyses in order to make sense of the content and structure of these four chapters. Wilhelm Wuellner, employing genre criticism, limits his treatment to 1 Cor 1–3 and reads the argument as a haggadic homily.¹⁴⁹ For Wuellner, a double Old Testament quotation, one in 1.19 and the other in 3.19-20, frames the homily with the core of the homily dealing with ‘divine judgment on human wisdom.’¹⁵⁰ Thus, incorporating examples from Israel’s past, the Pauline homily warns the Corinthians about the dangers and consequences of elevating and praising human wisdom over the ways of God.

¹⁴⁶ For theories of redaction, see e.g. Héring, *First Epistle*, xiii-xiv; Schenk, ‘Der Korintherbrief,’ 219-43; cf. also Schmithals, ‘Die Korintherbriefe als Briefsammlung,’ *ZNW* 64 (1973): 263-88.

¹⁴⁷ F. Godet, *Commentary on St Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians* (vol. 1; trans. A. Cusin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1889), 28-30; Dahl, ‘Paul and the Church,’ 317; J. S. Ruef, *Paul’s First Letter to Corinth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Book, 1971), 7; Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 144-48; B. Fiore, ‘“Covert Allusion” in 1 Corinthians 1–4,’ *CBQ* 47.1 (1985): 86-87; C. H. Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A New Commentary for Preachers* (London: SPCK, 1987), 3; Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 66-68; R. A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 32, 44; Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 135; J. M. G. Barclay, ‘1 Corinthians,’ in *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (eds. J. Barton and J. Muddiman; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1108, 1110-11; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 8-11; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 48-53; cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 147-59; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 27-29; Ciampa-Rosner, ‘Structure and Argument,’ 213-14.

¹⁴⁸ Fee, *First Epistle*, 47; *contra* Polhill who argues: ‘The first four chapters of 1 Corinthians form an appropriate introduction to the letter. The problems of factionalism treated in them are at the center of the congregational difficulties which surface in the rest of the epistle’ (‘The Wisdom of God,’ 325).

¹⁴⁹ Wuellner, ‘Haggadic Homily Genre in 1 Corinthians 1–3,’ *JBL* 89.2 (1970): 199-204.

¹⁵⁰ Wuellner, ‘Haggadic Homily,’ 201.

Vincent Branick,¹⁵¹ through source and redaction criticism, also limits his treatment to 1 Cor 1–3 yet characterises it as a ‘homiletic midrash.’¹⁵² Thus, the passage addresses the distinct topics of ‘the true wisdom of the Spirit’ and ‘the troubles in the church of Corinth.’¹⁵³ For Branick, the topic of wisdom is handled in the homilies of 1.18-31; 2.6-16 and 3.18-23 while the topic of church conflict is dealt with in the homilies of 1.17; 2.1-5 and 3.1-4.¹⁵⁴ According to Branick, the two sets of homilies were intended to be sent independently but were joined only after Paul received the troubling news from Corinth.

Nils Dahl, employing an early form of rhetorical criticism,¹⁵⁵ reads the whole argument of 1 Cor 1.10–4.21 as an ἀπολογία used by Paul to validate his ministry in Corinth.¹⁵⁶ The core of this defence is framed by the use of παρακαλῶ in 1.10 and 4.16, which suggests a hopeful response rather than an authoritative expectation, although authoritative action will be taken if necessary.¹⁵⁷ For Dahl, the core of 1.11-4.15 seeks to re-establish Paul’s credibility as an apostle and the way in which this apostolic role functioned during his time in Corinth. Inherent to this ἀπολογία are various corrections to false impressions of Paul’s message and apostolic role.¹⁵⁸ These corrective statements assist Dahl in isolating the various stages of the argument, which

¹⁵¹ See V. P. Branick, ‘Source and Redaction Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1–3,’ *JBL* 101.2 (1982): 251-69.

¹⁵² Branick, ‘Source and Redaction,’ 258.

¹⁵³ Branick, ‘Source and Redaction,’ 252

¹⁵⁴ Branick, ‘Source and Redaction,’ 264. Branick mislabels 3.18-23 as ‘3:18-33.’

¹⁵⁵ The hesitancy here stems from the fact that rhetorical criticism, as applied to biblical studies in a programmatic way, is generally held to begin with Muilenburg who suggested such an approach in 1968/1969. Later scholars, especially Kennedy, modified this approach in light of the theories proposed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

¹⁵⁶ Dahl, ‘Paul and the Church,’ 313-35; *contra* Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 128 n.28. Relying heavily upon Dahl’s analysis, Chance extends the *apologia* so that it covers 1 Cor 1–6, with chapters 5–6 functioning as a *paraenesis*—see J. B. Chance, ‘Paul’s Apology to the Corinthians,’ *PRSt* 9.2 (1982): 145-55 (esp. 154-55).

¹⁵⁷ Dahl, ‘Paul and the Church,’ 319; cf. also M. T. Finney, ‘Honor, Rhetoric and Factionalism in the Ancient World: 1 Corinthians 1–4 in Its Social Context,’ *BTB* 40.1 (2010): 29. For an incisive critique of how scholars deal with the issue of Paul’s authority in 1 Corinthians, see A. Long, *Paul and Human Rights: A Dialogue with the Father of the Corinthian Community* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 56-147.

¹⁵⁸ When viewed in conjunction with the rest of the letter, the ἀπολογία is crucial for Paul’s ability to respond to the issues raised. Thus, according to Dahl, the argument of 1 Cor 1–4 ‘has a preparatory function . . . [in that] before Paul could answer the questions raised, he had to overcome both false appraisals and false objections, and to re-establish his apostolic authority as the founder and spiritual leader of the whole church at Corinth’ (Dahl, ‘Paul and the Church,’ 326, 329; cf. also Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 9-11).

results in the following divisions: 1.10-13; 1.17-3.2; 3.5-4.6 and 4.14-21.¹⁵⁹ Litfin, employing the modified form of rhetorical criticism,¹⁶⁰ examines the letter's structure as well as Paul's style and form of public speaking as found in 1 Cor 1-4.¹⁶¹ While his treatment compares Paul specifically with the Sophistic orators from the Graeco-Roman world,¹⁶² Litfin's work essentially substantiates Dahl's apologetic reading of the text and for similar reasons.¹⁶³

Taken together, the views of Wuellner, Branick and Dahl suggest a conflict between 1) what Paul proclaimed in Corinth during his sojourn and 2) how it has been interpreted or applied since his departure. In the light of the reports given to him, Paul perceives a faulty understanding of spirituality and divine wisdom in the community, which have engendered wrongful boasting of status.¹⁶⁴ To correct this faulty understanding and subsequent conflict Paul must reclaim the legitimacy or authenticity of his apostolic role and message. Accordingly, it is possible to see 1 Cor 1-4 as both an apologetic and a polemic.¹⁶⁵ The apologetic elements defend Paul's role as an apostle and the legitimacy of his message (1.10-4.21). The polemical features confront faulty interpretations of Paul's view of spirituality and divine wisdom that have arisen in Corinth (1.18-3.23). Thus, by misconstruing Paul's apostolic role as well as his teaching on spirituality and divine wisdom, a divided community of believers has emerged in Corinth (1.10-11). By providing an apologetic for himself and a polemic against faulty views of his teaching, Paul offers a remedy for the divisions or factions within the community as well.¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, scholars have examined the content and structure of Paul's argument in the light of the features already mentioned.

¹⁵⁹ Dahl allows for fluidity in this regard so that the issues discussed in the respective divisions are not rigidly confined (see 'Paul and the Church,' 320).

¹⁶⁰ See n.143 above—i.e. the form that emerged with Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and championed by Kennedy.

¹⁶¹ Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*.

¹⁶² Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 153-55, 161, 187, 201-02.

¹⁶³ Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 149-50.

¹⁶⁴ Fee, *First Epistle*, 47-50; C. B. Cousar, '1 Corinthians 2:1-13,' *Int* 44.2 (1990): 169.

¹⁶⁵ As one scholar notes: 'Paul's letters are to be understood against the background of their specific occasion, and that occasion is more than a few times essentially polemical' (J. H. Schütz, *Paul and the Anatomy of Apostolic Authority* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], 3). Thus, Paul responds in kind.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Finney ('Honor, Rhetoric, and Factionalism,' 28), who sees factionalism as the leading cause for Paul's argument in 1 Cor 1-4.

These scholarly examinations build on recent developments within rhetorical criticism, especially the notion that Paul's letters were 'substitutes for oral communication' and 'that he shaped them in accordance with formal oral speech, using rhetorical elements recognizable as such by his addressees.'¹⁶⁷ However, the precise rhetorical divisions for 1 Cor 1–4 tend to vary among scholars and the variations depend on how the rhetorical categories are defined by the individual scholar.¹⁶⁸

For example, Ben Witherington classifies 1 Cor 1.18–4.21 as 'argument 1' of the *probatio* (1.18–16.12)¹⁶⁹ and suggests a four-part outline for this first argument: 1.18–31; 2.1–16; 3.1–23 and 4.1–21.¹⁷⁰ While Witherington's reasons for this four-part division are not explicitly clear, one can assume that he means to follow the assumed deliberative nature of the letter and to support the letter's controlling theme of unity within the body of believers. Eckhard Schnabel isolates six primary stages in Paul's argument: 1.10–17; 1.18–2.5; 2.6–16; 3.1–17; 3.18–23 and 4.1–12.¹⁷¹ These stages collectively speak to the issue of divisions within the community, what Schnabel classifies as the first of four conflicts to be

¹⁶⁷ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 35, 39; cf. 44–48. See also the emphatic assertion of Brian Peterson who claims, 'there is never any doubt that the letters [of Paul] are to be read in the context of rhetorical practice' (*Eloquence in the Proclamation of the Gospel at Corinth* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998]). For similar arguments, see G. A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984), 5–6; R. F. Collins, 'Reflections on 1 Corinthians as a Hellenistic Letter,' in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University press, 1996), 39–61; V. P. Furnish, 'Letters in the New Testament,' in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (eds. J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1268–76; cf. A. du Toit, *Focusing on Paul: Persuasion and Theological Design in Romans and Galatians* (eds. C. Breytenback and D. S. du Toit; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 23–29. However, this line of argument is difficult to sustain in the light of the fact that while a small number of rhetorical handbooks do interact with some epistolary practices, the combined disciplines of letter-writing and rhetorical instruction were not taught until at least the Byzantine period (c. 330–1453 CE)—see H. –J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 210. Prior to that period, the two disciplines were viewed and taught separately. Despite this fact, scholars continue to examine Paul's letters as substitutes for rhetorical speeches, especially 1 Corinthians.

¹⁶⁸ This phenomenon is certainly not limited to 1 Corinthians. Murphy-O'Connor provides a brief list of the various ways (a sampling of) scholars divide rhetorically the individual letters of the Pauline corpus—see *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skill* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995), 77–79.

¹⁶⁹ Dunn offers a similar outline, although he ends the *probatio* at 15.57, classifies 15.58 as the *peroratio* and 16.1–24 as the epistolary closing (see *1 Corinthians*, 24–25).

¹⁷⁰ See Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 106–36.

¹⁷¹ See E. J. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 2006), 79–269. Although, Schnabel does qualify this six-part division: 'Der erste Hauptteil des Briefs (1,10–4,21) besteht aus sieben Abschnitten' (*Der erste Brief*, 82—emphasis added), which comes from dividing the fourth stage into two: 3.1–4 and 3.5–17 (*Der erste Brief*, 83; cf. 181–218).

addressed in the letter,¹⁷² and how this issue arose out of a false understanding of wisdom. On the more elaborate side, Raymond Collins isolates 1.18–4.21 as the ‘first rhetorical demonstration’ of six within the letter, and he divides this first demonstration into eleven distinct sections: 1.18-31; 2.1-5; 2.6-16; 3.1-9; 3.10-17; 3.18-23; 4.1-5; 4.6-7; 4.8-13; 4.14-16 and 4.17-21.¹⁷³ Collins relies heavily on the structuring of rhetorical speeches as espoused by Aristotle and Cicero and sees the individual parts together as forming a persuasive argument that supports the ‘statement of purpose’ in 1 Cor 1.10.¹⁷⁴

While intermittent similarities appear in these general structures, most scholars agree on the structure of a particular segment of 1 Cor 1–4. Further agreement is found with regard to the assumed single argument of 1.18–3.4, which is said to unfold in two stages: 1.18–2.5 and 2.6–3.4.¹⁷⁵ Support for this twofold division comes from a detailed analysis of the contents. First, Paul appeals to the cross of Christ as an expression of divine wisdom, its significance in human history, Paul’s historic role in proclaiming both and the Corinthians’ original reception of all three (1.18–2.5).¹⁷⁶ Second, because he sees the believers as presently divided due to a faulty understanding of spirituality and divine wisdom, Paul defines the source of true wisdom as well as the means by which it is made known to the believers. In this case, the means is the Spirit of

¹⁷² The four conflicts that Schnabel lists are: 1.10–4.21 (‘Spaltungen in der Gemeinde’); 6.1-11 (‘Das Prozessieren von Gemeindegliedern’); 11.17-34 (‘Die Missstände beim Herrenmahl’) and 12.1–14.40 (‘Die Gaben des Geistes in der Gemeinde’)—see *Der erste Brief*, 79-269, 301-26, 625-75 and 670-861 respectively. Along with the four conflicts are what Schnabel classifies as six compromises: 5.1-13 (‘Die wilde Ehe eines Gemeindeglieds’); 6.12-20 (‘Der Verkehr mit Prostituierten’); 7.1-40 (‘Ehe und Verlobung’); 8.1–11.1 (‘Götzenopferfleisch und Götzentempel’); 11.2-16 (‘Kopfbedeckungen im Gottesdienst’) and 15.1-58 (‘Der Alltag und die Auferstehung’)—see *Der erste Brief*, 270-300; 327-47; 348-425; 426-586; 587-624 and 862-995 respectively.

¹⁷³ See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 86-202.

¹⁷⁴ Collins, *First Corinthians*, 87.

¹⁷⁵ See e.g. Fiore, ‘“Covert Allusion”,’ 87-88; Fee, *First Epistle*, 48-51, 66-128; R. B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 26-50; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 47-63; Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 135-79; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 147-295; Barclay, ‘1 Corinthians,’ 1110, 1112-14; Kammler, *Kreuz und Weisheit*, 1-2; Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 240-43; R. E. Ciampa B. S. Rosner, ‘1 Corinthians,’ in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 696; cf. Edwards who moves the starting point to 1.13 (*A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* [New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1886], xxxvii) and Talbert who moves the starting point to 1.17 (*Reading Corinthians*, 4).

¹⁷⁶ S. C. Barton argues that this rhetorical unit is marked by the apparent *inclusio* of δύνάμις θεοῦ in 1.18 and δυνάμει θεοῦ in 2.5 (‘1 Corinthians,’ in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* [eds. J. D. G. Dunn and J. W. Rogerson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 1320); although, cf. Collins (*First Corinthians*, 90), who moves the boundaries of the *inclusio* to 1.18 and 1.24.

God. Furthermore, this wisdom, mediated through God's Spirit, defines the Corinthians' relationship with God, Paul and each other (2.6–3.4).

This type of analysis provides useful clues for establishing the flow and purpose of Paul's argument, especially with the scholarly opinion that the argument of 1.18–2.5 and 2.6–3.4 function as distinct units within the argument. When examining this particular text, most scholars follow a threefold division. Schnabel's recent work is representative: 'In drei Gedankengängen behandelt Paulus das Evangelium vom gekreuzigten Messias (1,18-25) die (Orts-) Gemeinde als Gemeinde des gekreuzigten Messias (1,26-31) und die missionarische Predigt als Wort vom Kreuz (2,1-5).'¹⁷⁷ While 1 Cor 2.1-5 has an individual role within this scheme, its function and purpose are often subsumed under the larger argument of 1.18–2.5.¹⁷⁸

However, a question arises over whether or not this makes sense in light of the larger argument of 1.10–4.21. Is dividing the rhetorical units into 1.18–2.5 and 2.6–3.4 the only option, and is such a division reflective of what Paul is doing within the larger argument? Is it possible to shift the boundaries of the rhetorical units, and what would such a shift do for our understanding of Paul's argument? My contention is that the whole of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 can be read as a distinct unit and one that initiates a new stage within the larger argument. Support for this alternative reading comes first by revisiting the assumed structure of 1.10–4.21 but then recognising a particular pattern that appears to exist within the initial portion of this argument.

Following the epistolary prescript (1.1-9) Paul acknowledges the existence of divisions or factions within the believing community in Corinth (1.10-17). Furthermore, 1.10 functions as a thesis statement for the argument that follows. The post-positive γάρ in 1.11 reads as an explanatory conjunction, thus revealing the source and basic content of Paul's knowledge regarding the Corinthian situation. This situation is then briefly mentioned in 1.12-13, which can be understood as the cause for Paul's remarks in 1.10. When commentators examine the content of 1.14-17, the focus tends to be on Paul's explanation of what he did not do while in Corinth—i.e. he did not baptise many. This becomes

¹⁷⁷ Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 83.

¹⁷⁸ See D. L. Stamps, 'The Christological Premise in Pauline Theological Rhetoric: 1 Corinthians 1:4–2.5 as an Example,' in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible* (eds. S. E. Porter and D. L. Stamps; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 447.

pivotal for understanding Paul's conduct and to what he gave priority during his sojourn in Corinth. The interpretations of 1.18–2.5 as noted above then follow. However, a pattern seems to emerge beginning in 1.14 and continuing until 3.4 that has not been explicitly recognised.¹⁷⁹ The pattern is based on a categorisation of the contents of Paul's argument, and this pattern is repeated twice in 1.14–3.4.

The first occurrence is found in 1.14–31 where Paul begins with a *historical comment* regarding his original visit to Corinth (1.14–17). The manner in which 1.17 ends prepares the way for the *theological explanation* found in 1.18–25.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, the focus of 1.25 serves as a transition for the *social application* given in 1.26–31, which also unifies the preceding argument. The second occurrence is found in 2.1–3.4 where Paul begins with another *historical comment* about his initial visit to Corinth (2.1–5). The substance of that comment prepares the way for the *theological explanation* that follows in 2.6–16. Finally, Paul supplies a *social application* in 3.1–4, which unifies the foregoing argument.¹⁸¹ While 1.14–31 and 2.1–3.4 represent two individual occurrences of this threefold pattern, important similarities in content exist between them that must be kept in mind: both sections deal with Paul's original visit to Corinth, both speak to the essential substance of his message and both refer to the way in which the Corinthians responded to Paul and his message. This then forms the backdrop for examining the faulty views of Paul's apostleship and message that arose after his departure and against which Paul gives his defence.

Even if this does not satisfactorily explain the rhetorical units of the argument of 1 Cor 1–4, a focused study on 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 is nevertheless justified for it is in this passage that the themes of cross, Spirit, wisdom and discernment appear together as a part of Paul's wider argument.

¹⁷⁹ Some have hinted at it in various ways—see e.g. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), 42–49; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 32–38; Fee, *First Epistle*, 54–66; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 44–47; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 120–47.

¹⁸⁰ Lampe does recognise this as a 'fundamental theological unit' within Paul's argument ('Theological Wisdom and the "Word About the Cross": The Rhetorical Scheme of 1 Corinthians 1–4,' *Int* 44.2 [1990]: 124).

¹⁸¹ While 1 Cor 3.5–4.21 functions as a broad application of what precedes it, the two metaphors of 3.5–9 and 3.10–15, similar to 1.14–17 and 2.1–5, together appear to recall circumstances related to Paul's founding visit—i.e. a *historical comment*.

1.3.4. Summary and Aims of this Thesis

My study of Paul's pneumatological teaching in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 proceeds in four steps. First (chapter 2), I will investigate Paul's understanding of the Spirit's role in the proclamation of the cross during his initial visit to Corinth. Here I am concerned with 1) how his proclamation relates to assumed Graeco-Roman conventions of rhetorical display and notions of persuasion, and 2) why Paul negotiates this relationship by means of a strict contrast. Second (chapter 3), I will examine Paul's teaching on how the Spirit serves as the mediator of divine wisdom for the believers in Corinth, both during and following Paul's proclamation of the gospel. Here I am concerned with 1) the Spirit's role in establishing a new epistemological framework for believers, based on God's wisdom, and 2) why Paul sees this new framework as distinct from pre-existing Hellenistic and Jewish wisdom traditions. Third (chapter 4), I will explore Paul's view of the Spirit as the provider and sustainer of wise, communal discernment for believers. Here I am concerned with 1) how Paul defines the limits and nature of Spirit-led discernment for all believers, and 2) the ways in which Paul demonstrates (or exercises) the very discernment he advocates. Finally (chapter 5), and following a summary of this study's argument, I will address two major topics: 1) how the pneumatological teaching in 2.1–3.4 fits within the immediate argument of 1 Cor 1–4, specifically the issue of the Corinthians' relationship Paul (and Apollos), and, more briefly, 2) the possible ways in which this pneumatological teaching shapes and/or influences the rest of Paul's letter.

Chapter 2

THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN THE PROCLAMATION OF THE CROSS

2.1. Introduction

A significant component of 1 Cor 1–4 is the argument of 2.1–3.4, where an intriguing set of references to the role of God's Spirit in relation to Paul's apostolic preaching emerges (2.4-5, 8-12, 13-14). These references are intriguing because the way Paul defines the role of the Spirit is unique in the Pauline corpus (although cf. 1 Thess 1.5), and this uniqueness is found not only in what Paul says about this role but also in how he makes his case. What is it that Paul says about this role? In both 1 Cor 2.4-5 and 2.13-14 Paul argues that God's Spirit plays a necessary role in the proclamation of the gospel, a role that has implications for the nature of Paul's apostolic commission, especially in Corinth. Furthermore, in 1 Cor 2.8-12 Paul contends that the Spirit plays an equally important role in the comprehension of the message by those who hear it, which has implications for the nature of the message itself.

How then does Paul make this case, and why is this approach significant? Paul stresses the necessity of the Spirit's role in the proclamation and reception of the gospel in the form of a strict contrast. Specifically, Paul argues that the demonstration of the Spirit powerfully at work in the simple proclamation of the gospel (2.2-4) stands in opposition to another form of proclamation, namely, one given in wise, eloquent or persuasive (human) speech. An important result of this contrast is that Paul distinguishes his apostolic mission and message from the cultural expectations for public speakers and the conventions to which they adhered. Crucial to Paul's argument is the fact that the Corinthians believed and accepted the gospel he proclaimed in spite of the simple form in which he proclaimed it. Paul's explanation for why this is the case points away from any rhetorical ability or persuasiveness on his part and toward the power of the Spirit at work in the messenger and message.

What significance, therefore, does the particular contrast in 1 Cor 2.4 have for our understanding of what Paul is doing with the larger argument?

Why does Paul specifically contrast a proclamation given in wise, persuasive (human) speech with one that is a demonstration of the power of the Spirit? What does this contrast say about the cultural expectations and conventions of wise, eloquent or persuasive (human) speech as they relate to his apostolic role and message? Does recognising the nature of this contrast and its function help us to understand why Paul refers to the Spirit in the way he does at this particular stage of the argument? Moreover, can this contrast and its placement inform our understanding of Paul's other references to the role of the Spirit in the proclamation and reception of the gospel? These questions will guide the exploration through this present chapter, which contains two major sections.

First I will consider the historical circumstances to which Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthian church. Here I am concerned with the comparison of Paul's message and style with that of contemporaneous travelling orators, thus requiring an examination of the general nature of and expectations about rhetorical speech in the ancient world. Second, I will consider the issues about or criticisms laid against Paul and his message following his departure after his first visit to Corinth. Here I will focus on the relevant sections of Paul's argument where he responds to this situation, specifically where he contrasts his message and style with both the orators of his day and the expectations held by those who hear them. Moreover, I am concerned with why Paul distinguishes his message and style from the travelling orators in the way he does and why that distinction is vital for his response to the Corinthian situation.

2.2. Exploration of the Context

On five distinct occasions in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to wisdom and its mode of expression as they relate to the proclamation of the gospel (see 1.17; 2.1, 4, 5, 13; cf. 4.20). How Paul describes the categories of wisdom and its expression varies, presumably with the differences being shaped by the emphasis he seeks to supply. Paul begins with the simple 'wise speech' (1.17)¹ before moving to the slightly more elaborate 'superior speech or wisdom' (2.1). Paul then alternates between the specific, 'plausible words of

¹ While a number of English translations render *λόγον* as 'words' (KJV, NKJV, 21KJV, ASV, NIV, ESV, HCSB, NCV, CEV); the more general rendering, 'speech' (see NASB, NLT) or 'discourse' (DARBY) not only agrees with the original 'number' of the Greek noun but also maintains the more abstract focus of Paul's argument.

wisdom' (2.4)² and the general, 'human wisdom' (2.5) before returning again to the specific: 'words taught in accordance with human wisdom' (2.13).

Regardless of how he describes the phenomenon, Paul's tone is decidedly negative in each case; he portrays it as an invalid means for proclaiming the gospel message. More problematic, at least initially, is the lack of clarity for what Paul has in mind with such descriptions. Can we therefore be more precise about Paul's focus in these references?

² While a small number of MSS contain the brief reading, *πειθοῖς σοφίας* (p⁴⁶, F, G, Chrysostom^{mss}; although see it^{b, f, s} which reads, *πειθοῖ σοφίας*), the remaining evidence can be divided into two categories: 1) *πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις]* (see B, D, 0150, 33, 1175, 1506, 1739, 1852, 1881, 1912, it^r, vg^{ww, st}, geo¹, syr^p, Origen^{gr4/7, lat2/3}, Eusebius, Didymus^{1/3}, Chrysostom^{1/2}, Severian, Ambrose^{1/7}, Jerome^{4/5}, Pelagius, Varimandum) and 2) *πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις* (see \aleph^2 , A, C, Ψ , 6, 81, 104, 256, 263, 365, 424, 436, 459, 1241, 1319, 1573, 2127, 2464, Byz [L, P], l592, it^o, vg^{cl}, geo², slav, Origen^{gr1/7, lat1/3}, Ps-Athanasius, Cyril-Jerusalem, Apollinaris, Didymus^{2/3}, Chrysostom^{1/2}, Cyril^{2/3}, Ambrose^{2/7}). Variants in the first category include: *πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγος* (\aleph^*) and *πειθοῖ σοφίας λόγων* (syr^p, Origen^{gr1/7}, Ambrose^{1/7, [3/7]}, Jerome^{1/5}). Variants in the second category include: *πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας* (2200), *πειθοῖς σοφίας ἀνθρωπίνης λόγοις* (1962), *πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας καὶ λόγοις* (131), *πειθοῖ ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις* (1, 42, 205, 440, Cyril^{1/3}) and *πειθοῖ σοφίας ἀνθρωπίνης λόγοις* (2595). Virtually all scholars reject the second reading and its variants on the basis that it appears to be 'an explanatory gloss inserted by copyists . . . in order to identify more exactly the nuance attached to σοφίας' (B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997], 481; see also Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 215).

Even with taking *πειθοῖ[ς] σοφίας [λόγοις]* as the accepted reading, questions remain over the form and function of *πειθός* and the use or non-use of *λόγος*. The noun *πειθός* and its semantic partner *πιθανός* appear with varying frequency in Greek literature and with similar meaning—i.e. persuasion, plausibility, enticement or assurance. However, Paul uses *πειθός* in 2.4 adjectivally, a use not found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus or Classical Greek literature. How, then, is this anomaly best explained? Godet suggests that the adjectival usage existed in *spoken* Classical Greek, and Paul simply borrowed that form and employed it for the purposes of his letter (*First Epistle*, 128-29). However, no further evidence or examples of this phenomenon exists either in Paul or other Greek texts. Lietzmann and Barrett both suggest the more plausible explanation that Paul either adapted the nominal form or coined the adjectival form for the purposes of his argument (see H. Lietzmann, *An die Korinther I-II* [ed. and suppl. W. G. Kümmel; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1969], 11; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 65). Thiselton points out that such a practice 'corresponds with expected grammatical conventions for structural transformation of the cognate verb *πείθω*, *I persuade*, into a related adjective' (*First Epistle*, 216—emphasis original). The coining of a descriptive term fits well with Paul's intention, which is to distance himself from a particular *type* or *form* of wisdom—as will be argued in this chapter. The decision to render *πειθοῖς* as 'plausible' is for the purpose of making the contrast with *ἀποδείξις* explicitly clear.

While the use or non-use of *λόγος* has remained a point of scholarly discussion, the difference in meaning is primarily one of emphasis. If *λόγος* is not original to the text, then the focus of Paul's argument is on the framework of ideas related to human wisdom and the belief that such things have persuasive power if and when such things manifests themselves in eloquent speech. If, on the other hand, *λόγος* is original to the text, then the focus of Paul's argument is on the assumed persuasive power inherent in eloquent speech that flows from the framework of ideas related to human wisdom. Either option suggests that a decision in this matter does not greatly affect Paul's meaning or the sense of the passage. The only possible difference relates to whether Paul is referring to wisdom or eloquent speech as the means of persuasion. In either case, the primary focus of Paul's argument is that both belong to human wisdom and its ways of knowing, and that such things have no influence, power, persuasion or meaning when it comes to revealing and understanding God's wisdom in the cross of Christ.

By consolidating the various descriptions into a single idea, we can tentatively suggest that Paul's object of negative attention is the use of rhetoric in proclaiming the gospel. Stephen Pogoloff maintains that this specific focus would have been the obvious conclusion for someone reading Paul's letter: 'any Hellenistic reader would have taken his disclaimers to refer to rhetorical practice.'³ Does this therefore mean that Paul's readers would have taken his statements to mean a complete rejection of rhetorical ability and the use of its devices? Or would they have understood him as rejecting something else? Maybe we need to begin with a more rudimentary question: what is rhetorical ability and what were its practices or conventions, and how would this relate to Paul's apostolic mission in Corinth?

2.2.1. Survey of Graeco-Roman Rhetoric

Since a number of works cover ancient Graeco-Roman rhetoric in considerable detail,⁴ and many others have examined its application to the NT and Paul,⁵ my treatment here will only be a summary of the relevant points of ancient rhetoric, especially as they relate to Paul's claims in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4. The purpose of this summary is to assist us in determining whether Paul rejects rhetoric categorically or if the object of rejection is something else.

2.2.1.1. Types and Contexts for Rhetoric

Instruction in ancient rhetoric varied in content and emphases. Suetonius' summary of the discipline recognises that not all teachers of rhetoric instructed

³ Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 7.

⁴ See e.g. D. L. Clark, *Rhetoric in Graeco-Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957); S. C. Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists: Classical Rhetoric Refigured* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); J. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997); G. A. Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); idem, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); B. McComiskey, *Gorgias and the New Sophistic Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2001); L. Pernot, *Rhetoric in Antiquity* (trans. W. E. Higgins; Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

⁵ See e.g. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*; B. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*; D. L. Stamps, 'Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament: Ancient and Modern Evaluations of Argumentation,' in *Approaches to New Testament Study* (eds. S. E. Porter and D. Tombs; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 129-69; R. D. Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Paul* (Leuven: Peeters, 1999); C. B. Forbes, 'Paul and Rhetorical Comparison,' in *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook* (ed. J. P. Sampley; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 134-71; F. J. Long, *Ancient Rhetoric and Paul's Apology: The Compositional Unity of 2 Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

their students in the same styles or methods. Often, as Suetonius describes, the topics of instruction were rather individualised or conducted according to the desires of the teacher.⁶ In spite of this, however, a number of general features do appear consistent throughout the history of rhetorical instruction. These features can be divided broadly into two categories: 1) types of rhetorical speeches, and 2) contexts (or locations) in which the types of speeches were typically given. With regard to types of speeches, and following the divisions laid down by Aristotle, the primary rhetorical manuals list three options:⁷ deliberative, forensic and epideictic. With each type of speech, two further details should be recognised: the goal of each type of speech and the type's relationship to past, present and future.

In deliberative speeches, the orator attempts to persuade the audience either to adopt or to abandon a particular course of action at some point in the future—whether immediate or distant. These types of speeches included political proclamations aimed at shaping or changing public policy or social norms. In forensic speeches, the orator seeks to persuade the audience to accept or reject the testimony concerning a past event. These types of speech included court cases where matters of justice were decided. Finally in epideictic speeches, the orator desires to influence current opinions of notable figures (and the ideals they espouse) by lavishing praise or dispensing blame upon them. A key difference between this type and the other two is that epideictic speeches do not necessarily require a decision to be made at a speech's conclusion. Moreover, both in the early periods of rhetoric and those from the 3rd century BCE onward, epideictic speeches were primarily used for entertainment.⁸ Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes (especially), Euripides and Menander are examples of this trend.

With these observations about the types of speeches, we come to the second broad category: writers of rhetorical handbooks in the ancient world understood each type of speech to be linked with a particular context (or location). Specifically, because deliberative speeches sought to influence public

⁶ Suetonius, *Rhet.* 1.1.

⁷ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.3.3; 1.4.1–1.15.33; *Rhet. Her.* 1.2; 1.5.1–3.15.27; Cicero, *De or.* 1.137–47; idem, *Inv.* 1.5.7; idem, *Top.* 24.91; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.3.15; 3.7.1–3.9.9 (see also 3.4.1–16 for Quintilian's perspective on this threefold scheme).

⁸ See B. Witherington, *The Paul Quest: The Renewed Search for the Jew of Tarsus* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 116; Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 24.

policy they generally occurred in public assemblies or political arenas. Further, since forensic speeches sought to determine matters of legality or justice they were reserved primarily for the law courts. Finally, since epideictic speeches sought to influence general opinions, norms or values in public life they often occurred in theatres or the public square. Another important difference between the types is that both deliberative and forensic speeches were judged on the basis of the case or arguments given, whereas epideictic speeches were judged on the basis of the speaker's perceived ability or skill.

2.2.1.2. Contents and Assessment of Rhetorical Speeches

In terms of overall structure, Aristotle claimed that a speech comprises two parts: the statement of the case, and the exposition that proves it.⁹ Since rhetoric is the art of persuasion, the stress often falls on the manner in which an individual proves the stated case. Thus, the focus tends to be on the overall structure of the argument and the specific points presented within the argument. To help guide students of rhetoric in forming a persuasive speech, instructions related to form and content were typically divided into recognisable parts. As with the classifications of speeches, the individual parts remained fairly consistent throughout the history of rhetorical instruction. Aristotle labelled the parts of a speech as προοίμιον, πρόθεσις, πίστις, ἐπίλογος and διήγησις¹⁰—the final part often being reserved for forensic speeches.¹¹ The variations in this scheme can be seen in the works of Cicero, where he begins with six parts but later reduces it to four;¹² the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which provides six parts that are similar to Cicero's earlier version;¹³ and finally Quintilian, who advocates a fivefold scheme.¹⁴

⁹ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13.1.

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13.1-4. Scholars tend to view these parts of rhetorical speeches listed above as typical—see e.g. Witherington, *The Paul Quest*, 117-18; Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 69; Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 25.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.13.3.

¹² The six parts of Cicero are: *exordium*, *narratio*, *partitio*, *confirmatio*, *reprehensio* and *conclusio* (*De inv.* 27). The four-part scheme includes: *exordium*, *narratio*, *confirmatio* (with *reprehensio*) and *peroratio* (*Part. or.* 27). The correspondence between the Greek and Latin division is as follows: προοίμιον = *exordium*; πρόθεσις = *propositio* (*partitio*, *divisio*); πίστις = *probatio* (*confirmatio*, *refutatio*); ἐπίλογος = *peroratio* (*conclusio*); διήγησις = *narratio*.

¹³ I.e. *exordium*, *narratio*, *divisio*, *confirmatio*, *confutatio* and *conclusio* (*Rhet. Her.* 1.4).

¹⁴ I.e. *prooemium*, *narratio*, *probatio*, *refutatio* and *peroratio* (*Inst.* 3.9.1; 4.1-4.2; 6.1).

A brief summary of the various parts should be noted. The προοίμιον serves as the introduction to the speech and the point at which the orator established himself or herself as an able speaker.¹⁵ According to Aristotle, the establishment of ability deals with the matter of the speaker's character (or ἦθος), and how one goes about this process can dramatically affect the outcome of the speech.¹⁶ On some occasions this part of the speech also became the place for acknowledging one's opponents or the nature of the criticisms raised by them.¹⁷ If the speech is forensic,¹⁸ the διήγησις comes next and it is the place where the speaker lists the facts of the case that are agreed upon by all parties involved in the debate. The purpose here is not to expound upon the details of the facts presented but merely to state them as topics to be addressed. Since διήγησις commonly appears in forensic speeches, the proposal must 'be of a moral character,'¹⁹ which later became understood as true (or truthful).²⁰

The πρόθεσις functions as the stated aim or goal of the speech, usually given in a clear and succinct manner.²¹ Along with stating the aim or goal of the speech it supplies the framework or boundaries for what will be argued. From this framework the listener will be able to determine the flow of the argument and when the body of the speech reaches its conclusion. Quintilian states that if the aim or goal is complex, then the speaker ought to subdivide it into manageable parts and define the order in which they will be addressed.²² The πίστις represents the body of the speech or argument, the place where the speaker fulfils Aristotle's second criterion for all speeches (i.e. proving the case). The kinds of proof offered in the speech depend on the type of speech being given.²³ In a deliberative speech, the proof supports the validity of a particular

¹⁵ See Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.1-12. However, as Waterfield points out, Greek rhetoric was a discipline predominantly known and practised by men, especially in the Sophistic period where 'there were no female Sophists' ('Introduction,' in *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and the Sophists* [trans. R. Waterfield; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], xxx).

¹⁶ See Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.12.1-2.17.6.

¹⁷ See Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.14.7; *Rhet. Her.* 1.6-8.

¹⁸ Quintilian maintains that this element of a speech should 'follow immediately' after the προοίμιον (*Inst.* 4.2.1, 24).

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.16.8.

²⁰ *Rhet. Her.* 1.14, 16; cf. also Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.52-60.

²¹ Cicero, *De inv.* 1.31-33; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.5.3.

²² Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.5.1, 22-27.

²³ See Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.17.1-4; *Rhet. Her.* 2.13-26; 3.8-9, 13-15; Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.1.1-5.14.35.

course of action to be adopted or implemented by the people. In a forensic speech, the proof substantiates the credibility of the one giving the testimony and the claims being made by that person. In an epideictic speech, the proof assures the audience that the topic of discussion is either worthy or unworthy of reflection.

Finally, the ἐπίλογος operates as the conclusion of the speech. Often this portion of the speech restates the goal of the speaker and the primary points of the argument. While this feature is occasionally found in the body of the speech, the speaker will typically conclude by seeking the support of the audience through strong appeals to the emotions (πάθος). Quintilian describes such appeals as the place where ‘the power of oratory shows itself at its highest.’²⁴ However, Aristotle provides a word of caution in this regard that should not be overlooked. Early on in his treatment, Aristotle speaks negatively about appeals to the emotions of the audience. This stems from his concern that such appeals might be employed wrongly, thus tainting or steering the response in a negative direction.²⁵ Later, when dealing with the topic of emotions specifically, Aristotle suggests positively that appeals to emotions should be in agreement with both the argument as a whole and what is honourable and good.²⁶

In terms of assessment, the structure of the parts and the method of their delivery often played a crucial role in how the overall speech was judged or measured. Thus, while it was important for an orator to know the types of speeches and their essential components, it was equally vital—if not more so—for the orator to know which speech was the most effective and how to structure it so that it achieves the best result. Virtually the whole of book three of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* is devoted to this feature,²⁷ and the later rhetorical handbooks provide additional helps for how to be successful in this regard.²⁸ In terms of forming the structure, Cicero supplies one of the more succinct descriptions:

The parts of [a speech], as most authorities have stated, are invention, arrangement, expression, memory, delivery. Invention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one’s cause plausible. Arrangement is

²⁴ Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.2.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.2.5.

²⁶ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 2.2.1–2.11.7; cf. 1.9.7–12.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.1–19.

²⁸ See *Rhet. Her.* 1.3; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.3.1

the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order. Expression is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter. Memory is the firm mental grasp of matter and words. Delivery is the control of voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style.²⁹

One underlying assumption is that those hearing (and seeing) a speech would also be aware of the elements of rhetorical speeches, thus enabling them to determine whether or not the speech was in fact successful or persuasive.³⁰ A further assumption, which is really a consequence, is that orators who proved themselves to be successful or persuasive speakers were considered wise. Thus, those gifted with wisdom can know the best possible means for not only constructing a speech but also delivering that speech in a way that proves itself beneficial for those who hear it.³¹ Proof that wisdom granted the speaker a clear view of reality was found in the clarity of the message proclaimed. Thus, it was nearly axiomatic that wisdom and fine speech were viewed as essentially joined.³²

2.2.2. Graeco-Roman Rhetoric and Paul

2.2.2.1. Historical and Cultural Context

When we approach the time of Paul's ministry, two related details concerning ancient rhetoric must be taken into account. First, as Kennedy shows, Aristotle's comprehensive rhetorical theory not only went unpublished in complete form until the 1st century BCE but also was not known except by those who studied under Aristotle or were able to read portions of his work.³³ Thus, as Anderson contends, by the time of Paul the theory of Aristotle, in relation to other rhetorical theories of the time, was not widely known or adopted.³⁴ In

²⁹ Cicero, *De inv.* 1.9.

³⁰ Cf. Dutch, who contends for the possibility of elite members of the Corinthian church having such abilities, primarily because they were (thoroughly) educated in philosophy and rhetoric in the Graeco-Roman gymnasium (see *Educated Elite*, 95-167—esp. 147, 166-67).

³¹ As Cicero declares: 'wisdom without eloquence is but of little advantage to the states' (*De inv.* 1.1).

³² Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 244—noting the observations of E. Norden. It is also worth mentioning that this connection is recognised and emphasised in the wisdom instructions of the ANE.

³³ G. A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 62-63, 87-88; cf. also idem, 'Historical Survey of Rhetoric,' in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period: 330 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. S. E. Porter; Boston: Brill Academic, 2001), 22.

³⁴ See Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 42-48. Earlier in the same work, Anderson argued that Aristotelian rhetoric, as a defined science and systematically taught discipline was virtually non-existent in Paul's time (*Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 35). Smit has recently

support of this,³⁵ Anderson specifically points out that later rhetorical theories did not follow Aristotle's view of ἐνθύμημα, nor did subsequent theorists consistently maintain the distinction between ἔντεχνοι and ἄτεχνοι, and the balance between πάθος, ἦθος and λόγος does not appear in later rhetorical works,³⁶ although some did emphasise a pair of the three.³⁷ Anderson also shows that knowledge of and reliance on Aristotle's theory appear to be limited to specific elements: Theophrastus focuses primarily on λέξεις, Cicero develops the idea of τόποι and Demetrius concerns himself with ἐρμηνεία.³⁸ However, the most significant feature of Aristotle's theory that does remain throughout later developments is the listing of three types of speeches, although the emphasis they receive varies among the rhetoricians. Furthermore, epideictic speeches became more common beginning with the 3rd century BCE, and Cicero devoted most of his instruction to forensic speeches primarily because they were the most popular in his day.³⁹

Second, in spite of its revival during the latter half of the 1st century BCE, primarily due to the work of Cicero,⁴⁰ Suetonius notes that instruction in rhetoric was neither uniform nor consistent. He goes on to say that the instruction provided to students was often determined by the desires of the respective teacher. Thus, while some taught composition of eloquent speeches, others taught students how to praise or censure esteemed Greek texts, and still others gave instruction on the art of elevating certain habits and how to demean others.⁴¹ Moreover, Suetonius alludes to the fact that not all teachers in rhetoric

criticised Anderson's conclusions regarding the awareness and influence of ancient rhetorical categories in Paul's time (see "About the Idol Offerings": *Rhetoric, Social Context and Theology of Paul's Discourse in First Corinthians 8:1–11:1* [Leuven: Peeters, 2000], 41-42).

³⁵ The following are the first three of seven pieces of evidence as found in Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 47-48. The remaining four are: Aristotle's distinction between κοινά and τόποι is not repeated; Aristotle's εὐρεσις lacks the στάσις theory and a clear exposition on the parts of speech; when Aristotle does address the parts of speech, he does so under the category of τάξις; and Aristotle's classification of only one ἀρετὴ λέξεως is not continued in later theories. Kennedy seems to overlook Anderson's evidence when he asserts that the distinction between ἔντεχνοι and ἄτεχνοι, the use of πάθος, ἦθος and λόγος, and the implementation of ἐνθύμημα are '[t]he most important contributions of Aristotle to rhetorical theory' ('Historical Survey,' 20-22).

³⁶ Although, cf. Cicero, *De or.* 2.115.

³⁷ See e.g. Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.8-20.

³⁸ See Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 49-55.

³⁹ See Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 70; Long, *Ancient Rhetoric*, 23-31.

⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Rhet.* 1.1.

⁴¹ Suetonius, *Rhet.* 1.1.

during the 1st century BCE were appreciated or respected,⁴² resulting in an unpopular view of rhetorical instruction. It is quite true that it would take the writings of Cicero before a more uniform and consistent treatment of rhetorical instruction could be formulated, thus helping regain its former appeal. However, as Anderson points out, like Aristotle's theory, Cicero's rhetoric would not serve as the influential framework during his lifetime.⁴³ The work of Quintilian would be pivotal in developing Cicero's ideas into what would be considered normative rhetorical practice.⁴⁴

2.2.2.2. General Conventions

In the light of these two details, we need to consider what criteria were available in the time of Paul that would enable people to determine the success of a rhetorical speech. As noted above, epideictic speeches became more common after the start of the 3rd century BCE. Freese pins the cause of this on the fall of Greece and 'Athens [losing] her independence' following the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE.⁴⁵ As Freese continues, 'political oratory gradually declined, its place being subsequently taken by the rhetoric of the schools, characterized by a highly artificial and exaggerated style.'⁴⁶ Those most famous for this new emphasis were the travelling Sophists.⁴⁷ Not only did these travelling orators popularise a particular style of rhetoric, they also appear to have popularised a set of expectations for how a successful orator should behave and speak. These expectations or conventions repay brief attention, as they are relevant for examining the social context of Paul's ministry, comparing his style with the practices of Sophistic orators.⁴⁸

⁴² See Suetonius, *Rhet.* 1.2-6.

⁴³ See Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 87-92.

⁴⁴ See Anderson, *Ancient Rhetorical Theory*, 92-96. Although Quintilian is hesitant to 'impose on students of rhetoric a system of laws immutable as fate' (*Inst.* 2.13.1)

⁴⁵ J. H. Freese, 'Introduction,' in *The Art of Rhetoric* (trans. J. H. Freese; London: William Heinemann, 1926), xvi. For similar reasons as those of Freese, Aune recently argued that 'deliberative rhetoric became attenuated into a rhetorical exercise with no real usefulness in the real world' ('The World of Roman Hellenism,' in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* [ed. D. E. Aune; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 22).

⁴⁶ Freese, 'Introduction,' xvi.

⁴⁷ See G. A. Kennedy, 'The Genres of Rhetoric,' in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period: 300 B.C.–A.D. 400* (ed. S. E. Porter; Boston: Brill Academic, 2001), 47-48.

⁴⁸ Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, 36-38; idem, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 143-64; cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 206-07; Bullmore, *Theology of Rhetorical Style*, 208-10; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 121, 124.

An orator would first enter a city and then take steps for obtaining a receptive audience. Upon arrival this orator would intimate a desire to contribute to the welfare of the city in some way. To prove the legitimacy of his desires—not to mention his ability or competency—the orator would supply an initial speech for the leading figures of the city.⁴⁹ (On some occasions, the orator would advertise his forthcoming speech and invite members of the public to attend). From this initial speech, the leaders would determine if the populace would hear a more detailed presentation from the orator. The leaders' determination was often based on the success or persuasiveness of this first speech, which ostensibly would include the necessary and balanced components of a polished rhetorical display. It is on this point that invention, arrangement, expression, memory and display are most necessary for the orator. Those able to strike this balance and produce the desired result would be considered both wise in what they profess and worthy to be heard on a larger scale.⁵⁰ However, this seemingly formal approach does not appear to be the only means by which a Sophistic orator obtained an audience.

From the writings of Dio Chrysostom we see a number of orators displaying their skill during the time of and in the same proximity as the Olympic and Isthmian games.⁵¹ It is reasonable to assume that many of the orators in these settings had already gained acceptance in the city through the process noted above. However, it is equally reasonable to assume that during the time of the games, other travelling orators not vetted by the city's leading figures took advantage of the opportunity to display their skill to a captive audience. Moreover, Dio Chrysostom notes that many citizens where the games took place often ignored orators who were essentially well known and tended to favour the ones 'they only see at intervals or have never seen before.'⁵² In such instances, a type of rhetorical competition would often emerge, although the speeches tended to become negative or derogatory. For example, in reference to the sojourn of Diogenes in Corinth, Dio Chrysostom states:

That was the time, too, when one could hear crowds of wretched sophists around Poseidon's temple shouting and reviling one another, and their

⁴⁹ See Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 150-51.

⁵⁰ See Hays, *First Corinthians*, 37.

⁵¹ See esp. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8-9; 12.

⁵² Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 9.4.

disciples, as they were called, fighting with one another, many writers reading aloud their stupid works, many poets reciting their poems while others applauded them, many jugglers showing their tricks, many fortune-tellers interpreting fortunes, lawyers innumerable perverting judgment, and peddlers not a few peddling whatever they happen to have.⁵³

Despite this tendency or potential result, Sophistic orators using this second means of gaining an audience shared one thing with those using the first means: they sought opportunities to display their skills and receive the acclaim of those who witnessed them.

2.2.2.3. *Relevance for Studying Paul*

What relevance does this have for our understanding of Paul's ministry, particularly in Corinth? Four basic points repay attention. First, we need to be aware of and allow for developments and adaptations to existing rhetorical theories. Specifically, we need to be cautious in what we assume about Paul's knowledge and use of rhetorical elements during his ministry. This caution must be exercised for the simple fact that we cannot know how much rhetorical training Paul received (assuming that he did at all), which theories influenced him the most and what topics of instruction were most prominent in that training. Second, if we are going to compare an assumed rhetorical style for Paul with styles popular in his time, then the best option would seem to be epideictic speeches made famous by travelling Sophists.⁵⁴ However, caution must be exercised here also because, contrary to the aims of such speeches, Paul would certainly expect a decision (of some kind) to be made as a result of the proclamation of the gospel. It is also possible that Paul's style could be compared with judicial speeches, since he would be testifying about the validity of past events—either the Christ-event or his own apostolic work.

This raises a third concern however: we must realise that the contexts (or locations) commonly associated with ancient rhetoric are distinct from those in which Paul frequently proclaimed the gospel. Specifically, from what we can gather from his letters, and from recent studies on Paul's missionary strategies,

⁵³ Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 8.9.

⁵⁴ While acknowledging specific differences between Paul's rhetoric and that of the Sophists, Hug confidently asserts: 'I look upon [Paul] as a great orator, and I should even be inclined to compare him, as far as regards eloquence, to the renowned orators of antiquity—for instance, to Isocrates, whose address to Demonicus and partly to Nicocles more nearly resemble Paul in design and object' (*Introduction to the Writings of the New Testament* [trans. D. G. Wait; London: C. & J. Rivingtons, 1827], 2.341).

Paul's preaching of the gospel rarely—if ever—occurred in a public venue, let alone a court of law. Stanley Stowers notes that Paul's preaching was predominantly conducted in homes of wealthy citizens of a given city.⁵⁵ This difference in location serves as an initial piece of evidence that something is certainly distinct between how Paul proclaims the gospel and how Sophistic orators displayed their rhetorical abilities. This distinction is recognised simply because Paul's manner of preaching, and the locations in which he did it, were not consistent with the known conventions and practices of travelling orators. Therefore, if we accept that Paul's original proclamation took place in private homes and not in the public square, one conclusion becomes viable: those hearing his message would have minimal (if any) reason to compare him with Sophistic orators. To say it differently: very little—if anything—about Paul's preaching strategy would lead those who hear him to the conclusion that he is just another orator, trying to gain an audience.

Finally, and more pressing is the fact that we do not possess any of Paul's sermons in the form in which he gave them,⁵⁶ thus we have no way of knowing how much rhetoric (if any) influenced or shaped his preaching. All we have are his letters to the churches he established, and these writings are primarily responses to issues or questions that emerge following belief in the gospel. Thus, and to state it rather abruptly, Paul's letters are not the gospel message he proclaimed. This means we must be cautious in equating the purpose, form and content of the letters with the purpose, form and content of Paul's apostolic preaching. Whatever Paul does rhetorically in the letter is not necessarily an exact reflection of his rhetorical style while preaching (assuming he had one).⁵⁷ Thus, while rhetorical theory might be useful for analysing the logic and persuasiveness of his letters, it is ultimately of little benefit for understanding the manner in which Paul proclaimed the gospel. All we can do is examine what

⁵⁵ Cf. S. K. Stowers, 'Social Status, Public Speaking and Private Teaching: The Circumstances of Paul's Preaching Activity,' *NovT* 26.1 (1984): 59-82 (esp. 70; although cf. 73-74, where Stowers notes that the evidence suggests that Paul might not have limited his preaching platform so exclusively, and 80-82, where the conclusions about this evidence are rather tentative). This is, of course, excluding the portrait in Acts 17.19-32 and 19.9 of Paul proclaiming the gospel on Mars Hill and the 'school of Tyrannius' (respectively).

⁵⁶ The possible exception to this claim is Paul's letter to the church in Rome, but even that is debatable.

⁵⁷ Marshall recognises this distinction but ultimately does nothing with it (see *Enmity in Corinth*, 341; cf. 393-94). Schrage, on the other hand, does develop this point (see *Der erste Brief*, 1.81-83).

Paul says about his proclamation (or even possible style) and then draw conclusions from those statements. This is especially the case when we examine Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians and specifically the argument of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4.

2.3. Exploration of the Contrast(s)

Earlier it was noted that on five distinct occasions in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to wisdom and its expression as they relate to the proclamation of the gospel. In the light of the preceding discussion, it would appear that what Paul has in view specifically are rhetorical speech and the assumed wisdom possessed by those who are gifted with such speech. It was also noted that with each reference Paul's tone is decidedly negative, treating such things as invalid means for proclaiming the gospel. The obvious implication is that if Paul sees rhetorical speech and its assumed wisdom as invalid means for proclaiming the gospel, then Paul would certainly have rejected them during his apostolic mission in Corinth. The question that remains unanswered, however, is whether Paul rejects rhetoric categorically or if his rejection had a specific focus. Commentators have long since argued that what Paul rejected was the art of rhetorical speech,⁵⁸ an argument that remains

⁵⁸ See e.g. W. Lothian, *Expository Lectures on Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: Waugh & Innes, 1828), 20, 27, 38-44; J. Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians* (Cambridge: Brown, Shattuck and Company, 1832), 81, 84; H. Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on St Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (trans. J. E. Cox; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1851), 37-38, 47, 49-50; L. Paige, *First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Boston: Universalist Publishing House, 1867), 17-18, 26-29, 34; C. F. Kling, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1868), 24, 41, 50-53; C. Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860), 29, 31-32; H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook on the Epistles to the Corinthians* (vol. 1; trans. and ed. W. P. Dickson and F. Crombie; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1878), 35-36, 54-55; J. A. Beet, *A Commentary on St Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1882), 44-46; A. Stanley, *The Epistles of St Paul to the Corinthians: With Critical Notes and Dissertations* (London: John Murray, 1882), 36; Edwards, *First Epistle*, 44-45, 46-47; E. P. Gould, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887), 15, 21-22; C. J. Ellicott, *Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Andover: W. F. Draper, 1889), 54-55, 57; M. Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), 50-51, 58-60; J. E. McFadyen, *The Epistles to the Corinthians with Notes and Comments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 24, 36-38; Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 15-16, 29-33, 35; Riggs-Reed, *Epistles to the Corinthians*, 30, 32.

While some early commentators do not mention it specifically, the tone of their remarks suggests they had the art of rhetoric in mind—see e.g. J. G. Billroth, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. W. L. Alexander; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1837), 50-51; Godet, *First Epistle*, 123-24, 128-29; J. Boise, *Four of the Earlier Epistles of the Apostle Paul, viz First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Corinthians: Greek Text with Explanatory Notes* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1890), 36-37; J. J. Lias, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1897), 42-43 (although Lias does

prominent in discussions of Paul's ministry and writing. With regard to 1 Corinthians Lim says:

When Paul writes in 1 Cor 2:4, καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, he appears to be rejecting not human communication in general, but that specific, studied art of persuasive speech as was practised by orators and rhetoricians of the Graeco-Roman world and by at least some of the Corinthian preachers.⁵⁹

However, while it might be the case that Paul is rejecting the art of rhetoric categorically (or at least a form of it), it does not appear to be the primary focus of his repudiation.

Closer readings of the relevant passages in 1 Corinthians suggest that Paul rejects the underlying assumption that one must speak eloquently in order for the gospel message to be considered persuasive, meaningful or worthy of acceptance.⁶⁰ Moreover, Paul rejects the assumption that if one is to speak of wisdom then eloquently formed words or arguments are the necessary (or only) means by which that wisdom is made known. To apply this directly to 1 Corinthians: Paul rejects the notions that rhetorical speech and its assumed wisdom have the ability (or power) to reveal God's wisdom, especially in the message of the cross of Christ. The reasons for this conclusion about Paul's rejection will be explored in what follows. However, it is important to consider first why Paul would state this rejection in his letter to the Corinthian church, which will then assist in our understanding of its inclusion in the specific argument of 2.1–3.4. The most appropriate reason why Paul would make this case is related to the historical circumstances that arose after his departure and prior to the time of writing.

argue that Paul's opponents criticised him for being 'ignorant of the rules of rhetoric' [xx]; M. F. Sadler, *The First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians: With Notes Critical and Practical* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), 28-30; C. R. Erdman, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1928), 30-32.

⁵⁹ T. H. Lim, 'Not in Persuasive Words of Wisdom, But in the Demonstration of the Spirit and Power', *NouT* 29.2 (1987): 146 (although cf. 148). Gräbe appears to be repeating Lim's comment (although slightly modified) when he says: 'In 1 Cor 2,4 when Paul writes καὶ ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖ σοφίας ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, he appears to be rejecting that specific, studied art of persuasive speech which was practised by orators and rhetoricians of the Graeco-Roman world and by at least some of the Corinthian preachers' (*The Power of God in Paul's Letters* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 63). Cf. Fitzmyer who makes a similar claim: 'Thus Paul is rejecting explicitly the art of persuasion cultivated by the orators trained in Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition' (*First Corinthians*, 173).

⁶⁰ Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 206 n.83.

2.3.1. Historical Occasion for Paul's Response

Following his departure, Paul's apostolic mission and message came under scrutiny, and this scrutiny created an atmosphere of scepticism towards Paul, his message and the manner in which he presented it.⁶¹ While debates continue over the precise origin of this scepticism and its subsequent results, scholars agree that Paul's mission and message were being judged according to the conventions or styles of esteemed orators from the Graeco-Roman world.⁶² As stated above, ancient views of wisdom maintained the idea that persuasive speech was the verifiable proof for one's claims of possessing wisdom or being able to reveal wisdom. However, and recognised as early as Plato and as late as Tacitus, this view was often exploited to the point where persuasive speech functioned as the necessary condition for proving one's claims of possessing wisdom.⁶³ Thus, if an orator spoke persuasively about a given subject, then the audience would naturally assume that the orator was wise not only in that subject but also in those related to it.⁶⁴ The inverse of this would also be true: if an orator could not speak persuasively about a given subject, then the audience would naturally conclude that the orator was unwise not only in that subject but also in those related to it.

Paul's argument suggests that this view of wisdom is both flawed in what it assumes and inappropriate for assessing the validity of the gospel and the manner in which he proclaimed it. Moreover, the perceptions of wisdom and eloquent speech to which Paul responds are problematic because he contends that his proclamation did not rely on these criteria and because such criteria were not influential in the Corinthians' original belief and acceptance of the

⁶¹ While this suggestion obviously runs the risk of 'mirror-reading,' it is the one that best answers the question of why Paul continuously speaks about the manner in which he proclaimed his gospel.

⁶² See e.g. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 25; cf. also K. Donahue, 'From Self-Praise to Self-Boasting; Paul's Unmasking of the Conflicting Rhetorical-Linguistic Phenomena in 1 Corinthians,' (Ph.D. diss; University of St Andrews, 2008), 86–88; O. –Y. Kwon, 'A Critical Review of Recent Scholarship on the Pauline Opposition and the Nature of its Wisdom (σοφία) in 1 Corinthians 1–4,' *CBR* 8 (2010): 390–92.

⁶³ See Plato, *Gorg.*; Tacitus, *Dial.* 1.32. The complete version of Cicero's prefatory remarks about wisdom and eloquence are worth noting: 'wisdom without eloquence is but of little advantage to states, but [also] eloquence without wisdom is often most mischievous, and is never advantageous to them' (*De inv.* 1.1).

⁶⁴ This is the assumption upon which Gorgias operates—see Plato, *Gorg.* 456b–c. For more on the philosophical background for Socrates' critique of Gorgias' rhetorical enterprise, see McComiskey, *New Sophistic Rhetoric*, 17–52.

gospel. I offer this assumption for two reasons. First, if Paul did adhere to expected conventions or styles then his argument in 2.1–3.4 would ultimately collapse. An important distinction must be recognised on this point. There is a difference between 1) a person downplaying his or her abilities as a rhetorician and 2) clearly stating the non-use of rhetorical devices or methods. The former is a rhetorical device used to disarm an audience’s preconceptions about a particular speaker or the use of rhetoric in general, and its usage does not result in a contradiction. The latter operates as a statement about a known particular event or occasion, one that can be verified as either true or false. In the case of 1 Corinthians, if Paul did employ rhetoric during his original sojourn in Corinth but, in writing to the Corinthians, denies the use of rhetoric during that original visit, this would not be Paul using an acceptable rhetorical device of downplaying his abilities but a logical contradiction.

There is a second reason why I contend that Paul did not rely on rhetorical criteria and that such criteria were not influential originally for the Corinthians. If these criteria were influential during Paul’s original visit, to the same degree that they were following his departure, then the Corinthians would not have accepted the gospel he proclaimed, especially in the way he proclaimed it, because they would have considered it to be weak, unpersuasive and foolishness. Thus, while Paul’s argument to the Corinthians must show that the conventional criteria for judging an orator were not influential in the decision to accept the gospel, he must also explain why it is that the Corinthians originally accepted his message as God’s wisdom. If, therefore, rhetorical devices, methods or conventions were not the means of demonstrating the wisdom of the gospel, then what was?

2.3.2. Contrasting Rhetorical Persuasion with the Spirit’s Demonstration

2.3.2.1. Where It Begins

While the specific contrast is stated in 1 Cor 2.4, we must consider first the logical and theological basis for the contrast, a basis that appears in 1 Cor 1.17. In this latter passage, Paul states that his apostolic commission was not to baptise but to proclaim the gospel. He immediately qualifies this by saying that his proclamation would not be given in accordance with wise (human) speech,

and his reason for not relying on wise speech is because to do so would divest the cross of Christ of its power. This qualifier suggests an important cause and effect relationship. If Paul relied on wise (human) speech, then the power of the cross would necessarily be lost. The obvious implication of this would be: if Paul desired to retain the power of the cross, he could not rely on wise speech (or the framework of human wisdom) to articulate the nature of the gospel. Paul must therefore rely on other means for not only proclaiming the gospel but also being assured that it would be understood properly.

We find clues for this notion of proper understanding in 1 Cor 1.18, where Paul notes two responses to the message of the cross: those who see it as foolishness, and those who see it as the power of God. With regard to the former, the message of the cross is viewed as foolishness because of a particular framework of ideas or standards by which wisdom and folly are judged. In 1 Cor 1.20 Paul interprets this framework of ideas as σοφία τοῦ κοσμοῦ. Those who view the gospel through this framework are those who are ἀπολλυμένοις. With regard to the latter, Paul only says one thing in 1.18 about those who see the cross as God's power: they are the ones who are σωζομένοις. In view of the strict categories in 1.18, we can safely assume that neither σοφία τοῦ κοσμοῦ nor the wise speech of 1.17 were the cause for the Corinthians' original acceptance of the gospel. Moreover, if reliance on wise speech divests the cross of its power, and if Paul did not rely on wise speech when he originally proclaimed the gospel, and if the Corinthians originally accepted the gospel that Paul preached (and in the manner in which he gave it), then something else caused the Corinthians to know the cross of Christ as God's power.

The identification of the 'something else' emerges in 1 Cor 2.4-5, where Paul not only strengthens the contrast between the usual styles of proclamation and his own but also reveals why it is the Corinthians originally believed and accepted his gospel. In this passage, Paul creates a specific distinction between a message given in wise, persuasive (human) speech and one that demonstrates the power of the Spirit. At stake in this is the proclamation that Paul gave during his initial visit to Corinth, a proclamation that he describes as ὁ λόγος μου καὶ τὸ κήρυγμά μου (2.4a). Moreover, the manner in which he proclaimed the message is also at stake, a manner (or mode) that he describes as οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως (2.4b). It will

be helpful to consider both sides of this description before seeking to ascertain the relevance of Paul's claim.

2.3.2.2. *The Object of Paul's Proclamation*

The pairing of λόγος and κήρυγμα in this instance is a point of scholarly dispute worthy of close attention. The focus of this dispute is to determine what Paul means by the phrase. Some have suggested a distinction between the venues in which Paul conducted his ministry, where λόγος refers to private instruction and κήρυγμα public exhortation.⁶⁵ This would be useful if one were attempting to view Paul's modes of preaching as comparable to the Sophistic orators of his day. On this reading, Paul's visit to Corinth would be seen as following the convention of obtaining an initial hearing (κήρυγμα) before supplying a more substantial teaching (λόγος) for those who accept him. However, this reading does not account for two basic details. First, the conventional method for an incoming orator was to speak to a select audience in order to gain permission to speak to a more general one. Second, and more importantly, it was argued earlier that Paul's ministry took place primarily in the private sectors, such as homes, rather than open venues or public gatherings. If we accept the private venue as Paul's usual location for proclaiming the gospel, and if we apply this to his ministry in Corinth, we can safely assume that his proclamation of the gospel in Corinth was more private than public, which would therefore make the above distinctions between λόγος and κήρυγμα tenuous.

However, the earlier distinction between public teaching and private instruction allowed hermeneutical space for the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* to examine Paul's teaching alongside practices known from the mystery cults, especially Gnosticism.⁶⁶ The comparison between Paul and the mystery cults seemed straightforward in view of the apparent shared vocabulary—e.g. wisdom, mystery, knowledge, spirit, perfect, mature.⁶⁷ As in these mystery

⁶⁵ See Hodge, *First Epistle*, 31. Thiselton also notes Aquinas, Grotius, De Layra, Bengel and Fascher as advocating this position (see *First Epistle*, 217).

⁶⁶ See e.g. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. K. Grodel; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 1.175-81; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*; Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions*.

⁶⁷ Wilson shows that the insistence on seeing this pool of terminology as shared by Paul and the mystery religions is unjustified. Wilson argues that no credence can be given to the assumption that when terms like μυστήριον or τέλειος appear in Paul's writing they must be understood according to their use in the mystery cults (see 'How Gnostic,' 68). See also H. J.

cults, Paul's message in public was general in content whereas his private instruction revealed the secret hidden mysteries of God, which could only be revealed to the initiated.⁶⁸ Those advocating this view conclude that Paul in 2.4 refers primarily to the public message (κήρυγμα) and secondarily to the private instruction (λόγος),⁶⁹ with the latter serving as a segue for what he will say in 2.6-16. However, recent scholarship has shown that the arguments of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* prove neither the existence of Gnosticism in Corinth in the 1st century CE nor that its teachings were influential following Paul's departure.⁷⁰ More substantial is the fact that these sorts of distinctions, especially those related to supposed levels of instruction, ultimately perpetuate the very issues that Paul seeks to remedy, namely disunity within the community of believers, a disunity rooted in faulty views of divine wisdom, how that wisdom is imparted and to whom it is given.

Alternatively, in the discussion on the pairing of λόγος and κήρυγμα in 2.4, some have suggested that Paul is referring to the content and form (respectively) of his original proclamation.⁷¹ (However, some have transposed the meanings so that λόγος equals speech and κήρυγμα the content of that speech).⁷² While it is true that Paul could be describing his initial proclamation in this way, especially since he is contrasting it with conventional rhetorical

Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of Jewish Religious History* (trans. H. Knight; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 20.

⁶⁸ Schmithals argues: 'Paul also claims to be able to speak on [the topic of] "wisdom," but he does this only for the "mature." Thus his talk about wisdom does not belong to the faith-awakening and church-founding preaching of the gospel; it occurs, rather, in the reality of a post-baptismal instruction for those who are advanced' (*The Theology of the First Christians* [trans. O. C. Dean; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997], 128).

⁶⁹ If κήρυγμα were in fact Paul's primary focus in this passage, one would expect it to be listed first.

⁷⁰ See e.g. Wilson, 'How Gnostic,' 65-75; A. W. Carr, 'The Rulers of this Age—1 Cor ii.6-8,' *NTS* 23.1 (1976): 20-35 (esp. 28, 35); E. M. Yamauchi, 'Pre-Christian Gnosticism, the New Testament and Nag Hammadi in Recent Debate,' *Them* 10.1 (1984): 22-27; Fee, *First Epistle*, 11; G. E. Sterling, ' "Wisdom Among the Perfect": Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity,' *NovT* 37.4 (1995): 354-84 (esp. 383-84); S. J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 220-224 (esp. 223-24); T. E. Klutz, 'Re-Reading 1 Corinthians after *Rethinking Gnosticism*,' *JSNT* 26.2 (2003): 193-216 (esp. 194-96); Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 2-3; M. F. Bird and P. M. Sprinkle, 'Jewish Interpretation of Paul in the Last Thirty Years,' *CBR* 6.3 (2008): 355-76 (esp. 357, 360, 372). From a more practical viewpoint, Patte argues that the time between Paul's initial visit and his correspondence with the Corinthian community is too brief for the development of 'several different kinds of heresy' (*Paul's Faith and the Power of the Gospel: A Structural Introduction to the Pauline Letters* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983], 301).

⁷¹ See e.g. Godet, *First Epistle*, 128; Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 32; Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 61; Fee, *First Epistle*, 94; Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 199.

⁷² See e.g. Boise, *Earlier Epistles*, 41; Goudge, *First Epistle*, 15; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 65.

styles or expectations, it does not appear to be the most likely reason for his pairing of the terms.⁷³ It is more plausible to see λόγος and κήρυγμα as a hendiadys for the preaching of the gospel of Christ crucified.⁷⁴ While Morris argues: ‘Paul is not differentiating between the two with any exactness (Conzelmann speaks of “rhetorical duplication”), but simply uses two terms to bring out both the way he preached and the contents of his sermons’,⁷⁵ Schrage clarifies this point by saying:

Dieser Schwachheit des Verkündigers, die die Schwachheit des Gekreuzigten selbst reflektiert, korrespondiert auch die Art und Weise der Verkündigung. Die gemeinsame Beziehung von λόγος und κήρυγμα auf die Verkündigung ist zwar trotz der Wiederaufnahme des καταγγέλειν (V 1) nicht unbestritten. Aber λόγος und κήρυγμα sind ebensowenig auf Form und Inhalt zu verteilen wie auf private und öffentliche Verkündigung. Trotz des doppelten μου ist eher eine umfassende Umschreibung der apostolischen Tätigkeit beabsichtigt als eine Differenzierung, zumal alles auf V 5 zielt.⁷⁶

The aiming at 2.5 is one key point to recognise when seeking to understand the pairing of λόγος and κήρυγμα; the other is how Paul uses these terms in the preceding context, which suggests significant overlap in their respective meaning.

In 1 Cor 1.17-18, Paul employs λόγος to refer to the message he was commissioned to proclaim, specifically the message of the cross of Christ. Accordingly, Paul could reasonably describe this message in possessive terms because it represents the core of his apostolic vocation. Then in 1.23-24, Paul employs κήρυγμα to refer to the message of Christ crucified that he originally proclaimed in Corinth.⁷⁷ Here Paul could reasonably lay claim to this message in the sense that he takes ownership for what he preached. No matter which term Paul uses in these passages, two related things are constant. First, the

⁷³ Besides, such a distinction places an unnecessary strain on the terminology. See Bullmore, *Theology of Rhetorical Style*, 216; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 217.

⁷⁴ See Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 54-55; Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 205 n.79; Bullmore, *Theology of Rhetorical Style*, 21; Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 155; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 172.

⁷⁵ L. L. Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 51.

⁷⁶ Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.231.

⁷⁷ Admittedly, the text reads: ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν (1.23a). The plural could indicate collaborative preaching either between Paul and Sosthenes or Paul, Silas and Timothy (if we allow the description in Acts 18.5). Alternatively, it could serve as an inclusive statement about those who proclaim the gospel. However, in view of the larger argument of 1 Cor 1–4, Paul could be referring to his preaching and the preaching of Apollos in order to stress their unity of content, despite any supposed differences in form.

primary subject of Paul's gospel is the cross of Christ. Second, the cross of Christ is presented as the essential component of God's wisdom for bringing about salvation to the world. We find a similar twofold emphasis in 2.1-5 where Paul recounts his original proclamation of the gospel of Christ crucified (see 2.2, 4) and where the aim of this proclamation was belief in the saving power of God in the cross of Christ (see 2.5).

2.3.2.3. The Manner (or, Mode)

With λόγος and κήρυγμα being understood as Paul's gospel message, we can now consider why Paul contrasts the manner in which he proclaimed this message with the conventions of ancient rhetoric. The contrast he supplies is given in both negative and positive terms. On the negative side Paul emphatically asserts that his message did not rely on persuasive (or plausible) words of wisdom (οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις). The most likely cause for this statement is the scrutiny of Paul's message following his departure, where the criteria used to judge rhetorical speeches were applied to his apostolic preaching. This recalls one part of the twofold issue noted above where Paul's message and his role were subjected to criticism. Particularly, also mentioned above, views of rhetoric and wisdom were held in tandem so that one's ability to speak eloquently was a result of possessing wisdom, or eloquent speech proved one's ability to proclaim (or reveal) wisdom.

If the Corinthians are at present judging Paul's original proclamation according to the criteria used for rhetorical speeches, in view of Paul's claims (i.e. he proclaims a simple message [2.2], and does so without relying on superior words or wisdom [2.1]) they would certainly deem his message not only rhetorically inept but also foolish. Or, if it is historically true that Paul did not rely on rhetorical methods to proclaim the gospel, as he asserts, and if the Corinthians judged his proclamation according to the usual rhetorical criteria, his message would fail to persuade and be accepted as wise. However, Paul's argument reveals a crucial error in this assessment. While the Corinthians might hold to that conclusion now, Paul reminds them that they originally accepted his message of Christ crucified as God's wisdom, and did so in spite of his non-reliance on rhetorical conventions. We must remind ourselves of the significance of this claim and its function in Paul's argument. In saying that his

message did not rely on rhetoric and its assumed wisdom, we should not read this as Paul simply using a rhetorical device to downplay any supposed ability on his part while preaching in Corinth;⁷⁸ instead we should read it as Paul presenting a verifiable statement about the nature of his original visit.⁷⁹

With λόγος and κήρυγμα remaining the focal point of the argument, Paul asserts positively that his message relied on the demonstration of the power of God's Spirit (ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως). To understand Paul's meaning here we must consider the key points of his claim, the first being his use of ἀποδείξις. While a NT *hapax legomenon*, ἀποδείξις appears frequently in other Greek texts, and an awareness of these will inform our understanding of Paul's usage. In general, ἀποδείξις refers to a collection of ideas or data known to be true,⁸⁰ or it describes the authenticity or truthfulness of a given historical account.⁸¹ Here ἀποδείξις operates as a categorical statement about various items discussed—i.e. what is stated is accepted knowledge.

In its more specialised usage, ἀποδείξις refers to logical proofs either made in public discourse or legal argumentation. Specifically, these proofs are based on undisputed data or established facts, which can be used to refute false testimony.⁸² In terms of logic, ἀποδείξις compares with other forms of proof in a specific way. A conclusion can be considered true by virtue of the fact that it follows logically from the premises, regardless of whether or not those premises are in fact true.⁸³ Alternatively, a conclusion is deemed necessarily or absolutely true not only because it follows the premises but also because the premises are known to be true.⁸⁴ Accordingly, ἀποδείξις carries the sense of irrefutable or incontrovertible proof.

⁷⁸ *Contra* Collins, *First Corinthians*, 119.

⁷⁹ This is a point where we must recognise the distinction between what Paul does (rhetorically) in his letter and what he did during his original visit to Corinth. Schnabel is also instructive on this point: 'Das Ptz. Präs. καταγγέλλων signalisiert, dass Paulus bei seiner missionarischen Verkündigung immer, nicht nur manchmal, auf rhetorische Feuerwerke verzichtet' (*Der erste Brief*, 152-53). Cf. also Long, *Paul and Human Rights*, 85, 94, 114.

⁸⁰ E.g. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.136.1; 1.207.7; 2.148.2; cf. also Josephus, *A.J.* 8.4.1.

⁸¹ E.g. Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.1.0; 2.101.1; 4 Macc 3.19.

⁸² Specifically Polybius, *Hist.* 1.12.6; 3.1.3; 4.86.2; 5.10.3; 10.21.8; 12.5.5; cf. also Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.9.11; Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.50.2; 8.101.2; Josephus, *A.J.* 8.2.8; 3 Macc 4.20.

⁸³ See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.24.

⁸⁴ Euclid employs the term as the final word for a mathematical proof—see *Elem.* 5. Prop. 8.

What, then, is the irrefutable or incontrovertible proof to which Paul refers in 2.4? To answer that question, we must consider the other key point: the pairing of πνεῦμα and δύναμις. Earlier scholarship viewed πνεῦμα and δύναμις as separate terms referring to different phenomena that result from Paul's preaching.⁸⁵ Accordingly, πνεῦμα refers to the experiential presence of God's Spirit upon belief in the message (i.e. conversion), and δύναμις represents the miraculous signs (charismatic gifts?) that confirm the presence of God's Spirit in the believer.⁸⁶ This type of reading does seem to maintain an important connection between πνεῦμα and δύναμις that Paul would presumably endorse. In Gal 3.5 we find a similar pairing with a similar meaning: ὁ οὖν ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν. However, the passage in Galatians differs from what we see in 1 Corinthians in two related ways. First, in Galatians δύναμις is also paired with ἔργον, which more naturally suggests something miraculous (i.e. works of power), especially when both are linked with the Spirit. This pairing of ἔργον with δύναμις is lacking in 1 Cor 2.4.

Second, the Galatians passage has δύναμις in the plural, which further suggests miracles.⁸⁷ By contrast, with regard to 1 Cor 2.4, Schrage points out that if miraculous deeds (or charismatic gifts) were in view, one would expect a plural (as seen in 12.10, 12.28) rather than the singular.⁸⁸ Moreover, even if we assume that δύναμις in 2.4 refers to miraculous deeds or charismatic gifts in the same way that it does in 12.10, despite the noted differences, another key distinction must be recognised. The context of Paul's remarks in chapter 12 is post-belief whereas the context for the argument of chapter 2 is the foundation for belief, or even that which brings about belief.⁸⁹ It could be argued that if this is the case, then Paul's use of δύναμις in 2.4 means something like 'attesting

⁸⁵ See e.g. Edwards, *First Epistle*, 48.

⁸⁶ See John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the First Epistle of St Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, 6.3; Fee, *First Epistle*, 95; idem, *God's Empowering Presence*, 92-93 (see esp. n.38).

⁸⁷ Where δύναμις appears in the plural throughout the NT, it nearly always refers to miracles.

⁸⁸ Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.234. See also Gräbe, *Power of God*, 38.

⁸⁹ The Gal 3.5 passage attests to this distinction—see J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experiences of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 227.

signs’ or ‘miracles’ to prove the validity of the message proclaimed.⁹⁰ Nielsen has argued that such a reading makes the most sense of the text since God’s power, in the light of the gospel message, has a visibly verifiable effect—i.e. ἀποδείξις.⁹¹ However, this argument operates on a particular assumption about the use of ἀποδείξις, which is not necessarily the only or even primary usage or meaning, as noted above. Also, this argument assumes that miracles or attesting signs must accompany the message in order for the message to be God’s wisdom (or true), and thus worthy of acceptance (cf. Paul’s remarks in 1 Cor 1.22). Moreover, by favouring a ‘miraculous’ reading for δύναμις this argument overlooks a particular nuance of δύναμις, especially its connections with salvation language in Paul.

Penna has shown that Paul installs a more specific meaning for δύναμις, a meaning that emerges when viewed in relation to a specific two-part event in history: the cross and resurrection of Christ.⁹² Accordingly, when δύναμις appears in this context it carries a soteriological meaning, one that cannot be overlooked.⁹³ This meaning presents itself in 1 Cor 1.18, where Paul explicitly states that, for those who are being saved, the message of the cross is δύναμις θεοῦ. It should be noted that the ‘power’ is not the preaching of the cross but the soteriological power of the cross that the preaching announces. Therefore, the preaching of the cross only reveals the power of God because that power was first revealed in the cross. Then in 1 Cor 6.14 Paul equates the means by which believers will be raised with that which raised Christ, and the shared means is God’s power (διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ).

From other Pauline texts that refer to the resurrected Christ, we learn what significance the resurrection has for the life of the believer. In 2 Cor 13.4

⁹⁰ See J. Rickaby, *Notes on Paul: Corinthians, Galatians, Romans* (London: Burns and Oats, 1898), 6, 11.

⁹¹ H. K. Nielsen, ‘Paulus’ Verwendung des Begriffes Δύναμις: Eine Replik zur Kreuzestheologie,’ in *Die Paulinische Literatur und Theologie* (TS 7; ed. S. Pedersen; Århus: Forlaget Aros, 1980), 154—as cited by Gräbe, *Power of God*, 65. See also Fee (*First Epistle*, 95 [esp. n.33]), who contends that πνεῦμα and δύναμις naturally refer to ‘visible evidences of the Spirit’s presence,’ specifically the gift of tongues, otherwise the reference is ambiguous. Contrary to this perspective are Hays (*First Corinthians*, 36) and Keener (*The IVP Background Commentary: New Testament* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993], 457).

⁹² See R. Penna, ‘The Gospel as “Power of God” According to 1 Corinthians 1:18-25,’ in *Paul the Apostle* (vol. 1; trans. T. P. Wahl; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 173-80.

⁹³ Menzies argues that this nuance is entirely unique to Paul—see *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 48-49, 282-315.

the power that raised Christ is that which will enable believers to live with him. Then, in Phil 3.8-12 the power that raised Christ in the past is the means by which Paul is able to live the righteous life granted by the cross in the present. Since the focus of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 2.4 is the message of the cross, and since this message is about what God has done in the world, especially for humanity, and given that the goal of Paul's argument in 2.5 is to show the foundation for belief is God's power, it makes better sense of the text to say that δύναμις refers not to miracles but to the very essence of the cross—i.e. salvation.⁹⁴

While this might account for δύναμις, we still need to consider the other half of the pairing (i.e. πνεῦμα) and what Paul means by joining the two terms. With regard to the pairing, we can reasonably assume that Paul is referring to God's Spirit. Scholars have pointed out that the use of πνεῦμα and δύναμις together in Paul's letters constitute a hendiadys for God's Spirit,⁹⁵ and it is only in 1 Cor 2.4 and 1 Thess 1.5 that we find πνεῦμα and δύναμις joined in this way.⁹⁶ The similarities and the differences between these two passages repay close attention, for doing so will assist our understanding of Paul's view of the Spirit in the proclamation. Like 1 Cor 2.1-5, the opening verses of 1 Thessalonians recount Paul's original visit, and the object of discussion is the proclamation of the gospel message. In terms of syntax, πνεῦμα and δύναμις in both texts are linked with the conjunction καί, and the function of the pair is to describe the manner in which Paul proclaimed his message. Moreover, as in 1 Cor 2.1-5, Paul in 1 Thess 1.5 supplies a contrast when describing his style of preaching: τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν οὐκ ἐγενήθη εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν λόγῳ μόνον;⁹⁷ instead, Paul

⁹⁴ Moreover, as Conzelmann argues, miraculous signs in themselves 'beweisen nicht die Wahrheit des Wortes vom Kreuz, sondern sind ihrerseits dem Kriterium des Kreuzes unterworfen' (*Der erste Brief an die Korinther* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981], 77).

⁹⁵ See e.g. Bultmann, *Theology*, 156; Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 207; Bullmore, *Theology of Rhetorical Style*, 213-14; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 120; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 222-23; Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 156; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 173.

⁹⁶ Rom 15.13, 19 and Gal 3.5 do contain πνεῦμα and δύναμις, but their syntactical relationship and theological function in those verses are distinct from their usage here in 1 Cor 2.4. In Romans, the relationship between πνεῦμα and δύναμις is a dependent one, where πνεῦμα is a genitive of production and δύναμις is the product. In Galatians, πνεῦμα and δύναμις are depicted as distinct manifestations from the same God, one the giving of the Spirit and the other works of power or miracles (cf. Acts 8.13; 1 Cor 12.10, 28, 29; 2 Cor 12.12; Heb 2.4).

⁹⁷ Bruce reads the last phrase as, 'speech unaccompanied by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit' (*1 & 2 Thessalonians* [Waco: Word, 1982], 14).

proclaimed the gospel in Thessalonica ἐν δυνάμει καὶ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ [ἐν] πληροφορίᾳ πολλῇ. A final syntactical similarity in both texts is the emphatic correlative conjunctions οὐκ . . . ἀλλά, which Paul uses to distinguish between what he did and did not do in proclaiming the gospel message.

The differences between the two texts are clear and only require minimal attention. In 1 Thess 1.5 the order of πνεῦμα and δύναμις is reversed; the Thessalonian passage incorporates πληροφορία as a third descriptive term for Paul's preaching, and all three are prefaced with the instrumental preposition ἐν, which might suggest a threefold description for how Paul preached;⁹⁸ and πνεῦμα in 1 Thess 1.5 is qualified with ἅγιος, which could be read as 'holy spirit' or 'spirit of holiness.' One further difference between the two passages should be considered. The way in which πνεῦμα and δύναμις stand in relationship with ἀποδείξις in 1 Cor 2.4 seems to be unlike their relationship with πληροφορία in 1 Thess 1.5. In the latter text, 'complete conviction' is a part of Paul's threefold description, and it is possible that this conviction belongs to Paul,⁹⁹ whereas in 1 Cor 2.4 it is God's Spirit who provides the ἀποδείξις of the gospel.

However, upon further reflection, the difference between the two passages might not be so pronounced. In 1 Thess 1.5, Paul's stress falls on the fact that the gospel came to the Thessalonians not just in words; they also experienced it as being accompanied by the Spirit in power and complete conviction.¹⁰⁰ A similar emphasis is at work in 1 Cor 2.4 where Paul states that the Spirit was actively and powerfully involved in the proclamation of the gospel. Moreover, for Paul the cross of Christ is the power of God and the message that he proclaims not only speaks to but also relies on that power. Thus, Paul does not need human superior speech or wisdom in order to proclaim persuasively the gospel of Christ crucified; to rely on such extraneous devices would only strip the cross of its inherent power (see 1.17).¹⁰¹ Instead

⁹⁸ As suggested by G. L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 95.

⁹⁹ By this it is meant that Paul's manner of preaching revealed his full conviction (or belief) in what he proclaimed to the Thessalonians.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Long, who contends that 'spiritual experiences . . . accompanied conversion' (*Paul and Human Rights*, 224). However, Long does not elaborate on what those spiritual experiences might be.

¹⁰¹ Or to cite Lothian: 'Foreign ornaments, instead of improving [the preaching of the cross], only obscure its glory, and neutralise its power' (*Expository Lectures*, 20).

Paul relies on the powerful work of God’s Spirit to demonstrate the validity and saving power of the message.

2.3.2.4. *The Aim of ἀποδείξις πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως*

This brings us to the aim or purpose of Paul’s claim to rely on God’s Spirit in the proclamation, marked by the ἵνα-clause of 2.5. Paul openly states that he did not want the Corinthians’ faith (πίστις) to rest in human wisdom but in God’s power. Admittedly, the reading of ‘faith’ for πίστις requires explanation. Some interpret πίστις in 2.5 in light of the assumed rhetorical features of the passage, thus suggesting the reading of logical ‘proof.’¹⁰² However this suggestion not only prioritises the giving of ‘proof’ but also downplays the need for any human response to the ‘proof’ that is given. This reading also overlooks the role of the Spirit working in the message, a work that becomes foundational to the response given. Moreover this interpretation becomes cumbersome when read in light of the argument of 2.4-5, where the ‘Spirit and power’ are the ‘proof’ (ἀποδείξις) that becomes the foundation upon which the Corinthians respond, and that response is ‘faith’ (πίστις).

We must also be careful not to see this faith as merely a general religious belief or as uncritical acceptance of some abstract idea. The term is much richer and more nuanced than that. As Thiselton notes, πίστις is best ‘described as “a polymorphous concept” (like σάρξ, *flesh*, and ἀλήθεια, *truth*) since any attempt at an abstract definition encounters contexts which will not make some *single* meaning or “essence” of the term.’¹⁰³ At the very least, we can say that πίστις includes notions of complete ‘intellectual conviction’¹⁰⁴ about what is proclaimed as truth, thus making πίστις—as a response to the proclamation of the gospel—something reasonable, justifiable and worthy to possess. This type of meaning fits with what Paul is doing with his argument in 2.1-5, especially as it relates to the present scrutiny of his message and manner of proclamation. In this case, Paul reminds them that their original faith was not founded upon human eloquence or wisdom, for such things view the gospel as unreasonable,

¹⁰² Winter advocates this position—see *Philo and Paul*, 159-64.

¹⁰³ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 223.

¹⁰⁴ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 223.

not justifiable and unworthy of acceptance (i.e. πίστις).¹⁰⁵ Instead, as Paul reminds them, their original faith was founded upon the power of God in the cross of Christ, a power revealed by God's Spirit.

2.3.3. The Role of the Spirit

From the above comparison, we can begin to understand why Paul relies on the power of God's Spirit at work in the proclamation, specifically in 1 Corinthians where Paul contends that he relied on nothing else. This reliance substantiates not only his present argument in the letter but also the historical validity of his claim about his original visit. It has already been noted that Paul's apostolic mission in Corinth and the manner in which he proclaimed the gospel came under scrutiny. Since his role and message are seen as inferior to the rhetorical abilities or skills of travelling orators, he is also viewed as unwise and his message as foolishness. In response, Paul must show that these views are not only false in what they assume but were also not influential in the Corinthians' original decision about the gospel.

Since Paul preached the simple gospel of Christ crucified, a message that declares God's wisdom, and did so without the use of superior speech or (human) wisdom, an explanation must be given for why the Corinthians accepted or believed the gospel in the manner in which Paul gave it. For Paul the explanation is quite simple: it is only by relying on the power of God's Spirit that one can communicate the simple message of Christ crucified as God's wisdom, and it is only by the Spirit's power (or work) that one can accept the message as wisdom. Thus, in view of the scrutiny of his role and message, Paul claims that the Spirit worked powerfully in the original proclamation and reception of that message.

2.3.3.1. In the Proclamation (1 Cor 2.1-5, 13-14)

In saying that God's Spirit is powerfully at work in the message of Christ crucified I am stating something about the nature of Paul's role in proclaiming that message. From the Jewish perspective, especially that of Second Temple Judaism, the Spirit was often described as enabling (or empowering) and speaking through God's chosen prophet (e.g. Num 23.7; 24.2; Zech 1.6; cf. also

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 207-08.

Jub 25.14; 31.12).¹⁰⁶ Accordingly, in this regard the role of the Spirit appears to have two important functions. First, the Spirit is the means through which the divine perspective is granted to the chosen prophet, and it is from this perspective that the prophet speaks and offers guidance or judgment. Second, the Spirit is the authentication of the message proclaimed. Thus, prophets speaking the true words or oracles of God will do so only because the Spirit comes upon and empowers them to speak the message they must proclaim (see e.g. Isa 61.1; Mic 3.8). In this way, the message has authority not because the prophet speaks it but because God's Spirit authenticates what is spoken. These two functions are recognisable in Paul's reminder to the Corinthians about his apostolic sojourn and the proclamation of the gospel of Christ crucified.

I should highlight one further point as it relates not only to Paul's preaching of the cross but also the role of the Spirit in that preaching, namely the theological and historical significance of both. If the message of the cross is a message announcing the inauguration of God's kingdom, and if on the basis of 1 Cor 1.18-21 and 27-28 this message announces judgment upon the things of the world that are contrary to God, and if that judgment includes the overturning of the systems of the world and the wisdom that stands behind such systems, then it becomes clear that, for Paul, the cross of Christ is the eschatological turning point in history.¹⁰⁷ Initial confirmation for both the theological and historical significance of the message and Paul's role in proclaiming it is the role of the Spirit.

We see this by considering the Jewish belief that the giving or presence of the Spirit for or within the people of God represented the inauguration of God's kingdom (see e.g. Joel 2.28-32; Isa 11.2; 28.5; 42.1; 52.7; 59.21; 61.1).¹⁰⁸ By way

¹⁰⁶ See Menzies (*Development*, 54), who argues that this connection appears to be made by the translators of the LXX.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Beker who sees the cross as 'the *apocalyptic* turning point of history' (*Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980], 205—emphasis added). Matlock more recently argued that the language of apocalyptic has not only been taken to extremes but also not consistently applied, especially in view of its basic meaning (see *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996]).

¹⁰⁸ This argument is offered in view of Philip's observation: 'There are numerous passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that are generally considered as referring to a future outpouring of the Spirit. Two strands of thought are predominant—1) the idea that in the age to come the gift of the Spirit will be bestowed upon a messianic figure (Isa 11.2; 42.1; 61.1). The post-biblical literature (*1 Enoch* 49.2-3; 61.11-12; 62.2; *Pss Sol* 17.37; 18.7; CD 2.11-13; 11QMelch 2.18; 1QSb 5.24; cf. 4QpIsa^a 3.10-19) continue to affirm the gift of the Spirit to (a) messiah/anointed

of comparison,¹⁰⁹ the Qumran literature speaks of God as the one who establishes the mystery of his divine kingdom and reveals it to his faithful (1QS 9.18; 11.19), and the means of revelation is by God's Spirit (1QS 4.3; 1QH 12.11; 13.19). If we accept that Paul's gospel was a proclamation of the in-breaking of God's eschatological kingdom, then it becomes clear why he sees the role of God's Spirit as indispensable to his apostolic mission in Corinth.

2.3.3.1.1. The Message Proclaimed (1 Cor 2.1-5)

Throughout this chapter I have stressed a distinction not only between the ways in which the Corinthians originally viewed Paul's message and their current scepticism but also between the manner in which Paul conducted his ministry and the conventions or expectations for travelling orators. Integral to this treatment has been the idea that there is a reason for the current scepticism of Paul's mission and message, one presumably based on a particular set of standards or expectations. Linked with this is the implication that there was a reason why the Corinthians originally believed and accepted Paul's mission and message, one not based on the standards or expectations now influencing the Corinthians' scepticism. It is here in 1 Cor 2.1-5 that Paul himself explicitly underlines these observations. Specifically, it is with this passage that we find the cause for the Corinthians' original decision to see and accept the message of the cross as God's power and wisdom. Moreover, it is with this passage that we feel the weight of Paul's contrasting argument between his original mission and proclamation and the approach or methods of Sophistic orators.

To state the case bluntly: Paul argues that something other than human wisdom and eloquent speech compelled the Corinthians to understand, believe and accept the gospel as God's wisdom. Paul supplies the content to that something else in 1 Cor 2.1-5, and he does so by way of a contrast. The contrast

figure(s) during the end-time. 2) in the future age the community/nation will be endowed with the gift of the Spirit (Isa 28.5-6; 32.15; 44.3; 59.12; Ezek 36.23-31; 37.1-14; 39.29; Joel 3.1-5; Zech 12.10). However, references to the Spirit in Second Temple Judaism are diverse and both postulate a future anticipation (*Jub* 1.22-23; cf. *4 Ezra* 6.26) and acknowledge the Spirit's present availability (1QS 3.6-12; 9.3-5; 1QH 8.19; 16.11b-12; Wis 1.4-7; 7.22-25; 9.17-18; Philo *Leg* 1.31-38; *Her* 259; *Virt* 212-219) (*Origins of Pauline Pneumatology*, 32-33).

¹⁰⁹ See J. Coppens, '“Mystery” in the Theology of Saint Paul and its Parallels at Qumran,' in *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis* (ed. J. Murphy-O'Connor; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 132-58 (esp. 135-37); cf. also M. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 42-56; B. L. Gladd, *Revealing the Mysterion: The Use of Mystery in Daniel and Second Temple Judaism with its Bearing on First Corinthians* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 115-23, 127-64.

begins in 2.1, where Paul emphatically states that he did not come proclaiming the message of the cross according to ‘superior speech or wisdom’ (2.1). By the phrase, ‘superior speech or wisdom’ we can reasonably assume that Paul is referring to the ‘wisdom of the world’ (1.20) as a means for ascertaining the ways of God. Since the wisdom of the world deems the ways of God in the cross as foolishness, it is highly improbable that Paul would rely on such ways to proclaim the cross as wisdom. This suggests that Paul relied on other means because if he relied on the means of human wisdom, and by extension its mode of expression, he would not only fail to show the wisdom of God in the cross but also empty the cross of its inherent power. As an eschatological herald of what God has done in the cross of Christ, Paul simply cannot operate in accordance with such means for to do so would be to undermine both his mission and his message. Thus, in saying that he rejects the use of superior speech or wisdom Paul is not saying he employed the rhetorical device of self-deprecation in order to gain a sympathetic ear while in Corinth; he is making a logical and historical claim about his role and message that can be verified by the Corinthians’ own experience.

Paul illustrates this point by stating his singular aim during his apostolic sojourn: οὐ γὰρ ἔκρινά τι εἰδέναι ἐν ὑμῖν εἰ μὴ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τοῦτον ἐσταυρωμένον (2.2). This states the essential content of his message, which is a restating of his earlier description in 1.18-20, and it is this message that was given without the aid of superior speech or wisdom. Paul furthers his point by recalling the manner in which he came to the Corinthians, a manner that he describes as: ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ καὶ ἐν φόβῳ καὶ ἐν τρόμῳ πολλῶ (2.3). This descriptive phrase has been interpreted in various ways.

First, it has been suggested that Paul is referring to emotional distress as a result of his complete failure in Athens to persuade those hearing the gospel.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Edwards, *First Epistle*, xi-xii; Dods, *First Epistle*, 12; Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 31; Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 59; S. J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 71, 72; J. L. Gonzáles, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (New York: Orbis, 2001), 203; Pascuzzi, *First and Second Corinthians*, 7; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 172. A few scholars suggest that Paul’s failure in Athens was merely partial, although this is still portrayed as contributing to Paul’s demeanour and style of preaching in Corinth—see e.g. Goudge, *First Epistle*, 15; J. Pathrapankal, ‘From Areopagus to Corinth (Acts 17:22-31; 1 Cor 2:1-5): A Study on the Transition from the Power of Knowledge to the Power of the Spirit,’ *MSt* 23.1 (2006): 61-80; cf. also E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn; Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 319-20; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 121 n.3. For those who reject the idea of a failure in Athens as having

However, this sort of reading is not only speculative but also a psychologising of the text. Second, it has been suggested that Paul's 'weakness' in particular was physical (i.e. sickness or some ailment), thus causing him to be concerned with his effectiveness as a speaker—hence, 'fear and great trembling.'¹¹¹ However, it is possible (if not more likely) that 'weakness' in this context refers to something non-physical and denotes something akin to an inner frailty or a vulnerable or humble disposition. There are a number of instances, especially in the Pauline writings, where this type of meaning emerges.¹¹² Moreover, when φόβος and τρόμος appear together in the LXX, they function as a hendiadys illustrating the demeanour of one who is humbled by the awesome presence of God.¹¹³ When taken together ἀσθένεια, φόβος and τρόμος characterise the manner in which Paul proclaimed the gospel, a manner that stands in contrast to that of Sophistic orators of his day.¹¹⁴ Whereas Sophistic orators would come proclaiming their superior wisdom and rhetorical abilities for expounding complex subjects, Paul claims that he came to Corinth with a simple message and gave it with humility,

an effect on Paul's ministry in Corinth, see e.g. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, 172; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 63; Fee, *First Epistle*, 92; Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 152 n.92. Héring seems to play down the emotional consequence: '[1 Cor 1.17] reminds us that the Apostle, after his check at Athens (where he had adopted the language of philosophy, according to Acts 17), had decided to change his method in evangelizing the Corinthians: he had spoken bluntly and directly of the Cross of Christ' (*First Epistle*, 7-8).

¹¹¹ See e.g. Sadler, *First and Second Epistles*, 28; A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (trans. W. Montgomery; New York: H. Holt and Company, 1931), 152-55; M. Dibelius and W. G. Kümmel, *Paul* (trans. F. Clarke; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 42-43; M. Thrall, *The First and Second Letters of Paul to the Corinthians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 22-23; Fee, *First Epistle*, 92. This explanation would work if (and only if) Paul were concerned about conducting himself as a Sophistic orator.

¹¹² See e.g. Mk 14.38 (//Mt 26.41); Rom 4.19; 5.6; 9.19; 8.3, 26; 14.1, 2; 1 Cor 1.25, 27; 8.7, 10, 11, 12; 12.22; 15.43; 2 Cor 12.10; 13.3, 4, 9; Gal 4.9; Heb 4.15; 5.2; 7.18, 28; 11.34; 1Pt 3.7.

¹¹³ See e.g. Ex 15.16; Isa 19.16; Jdt 15.2.

¹¹⁴ I need to stress here that Paul's statement about himself, as it compares with the sophistic orators of his day, applies to what he says about his visit in the letter. We cannot know if Paul stated anything about his demeanour or even if he used such a statement rhetorically to make a distinction between himself and Sophistic orators when he originally proclaimed the gospel in Corinth. As was argued earlier (see 2.2.2.3 above), we need to recognise the difference between what Paul does in writing and what he does orally, and we must remember that Paul's letters are not precise reflections of either the gospel he proclaimed or the manner in which he proclaimed it. Thus, we must be cautious in concluding that Paul used ἀσθένεια, φόβος and τρόμος as a rhetorical device in order to distance himself from Sophistic orators while preaching in Corinth (although cf. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 123-24 [cf. 46 n.139]; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 116). There is simply nothing in the text that suggests Paul needed to make such a distinction or that he in fact did so during that original visit.

reverence and in complete reliance on God's power to work in and through that simple message.¹¹⁵

We see Paul's emphasis on relying on God's power when we consider how Paul concludes the contrast in 2.4, which began in 2.1 but was left unfinished. It is also in this passage that Paul explicitly distinguishes his proclamation from the Sophistic orators and their conventional styles or methods. More importantly, 1 Cor 2.4 begins to answer the question of why the Corinthians originally believed and accepted Paul's gospel message. On the basis of the preceding discussion of πνεῦμα and δύναις being a hendiadys for God's Spirit, the twofold role that the Spirit plays in prophetic utterances and Paul's belief that God has overturned the wisdom of the world and its ways of knowing, the only explanation for why the Corinthians originally believed and accepted Paul's simple, unpolished message is that God's Spirit was powerfully at work in that message.

As noted earlier, the 'power' is not the preaching of the cross but the soteriological power of the cross that the preaching announces, a power made manifest not by human wisdom or eloquence but only by God's Spirit.¹¹⁶ For Paul, the proof that this is the case is the Corinthians' own experience and their original acceptance and belief. In other words, they ought to know that such things were not based on human displays of wisdom or eloquence but on the powerful work of God's Spirit. Here, and following Thiselton once again,¹¹⁷ we can expand the earlier definition of πίστις¹¹⁸ so that Paul's emphasis is not simply on intellectual assent but spiritual conviction about the reasonableness of the gospel as God's saving wisdom, a conviction made possible by the powerful work of the Spirit in the proclamation of the gospel. Or as Dunn argues: 'their experience was not so much of intellectual persuasion, but rather

¹¹⁵ This description of his demeanour becomes another point of reference for the Corinthians in their assessment of Paul's argument concerning his original role and message.

¹¹⁶ Cf. D. L. Dabney, 'Pneumatologica Crucis: Reclaiming *Theologica Crucis* for a Theology of the Spirit Today,' *SJT* 53.4 (2000): 511-24.

¹¹⁷ See in particular his conclusion: 'This does not mean that argument or persuasion can play no role; it means that something more is involved that speaks to the heart as well as to the mind and creates a new reality (δύναις θεοῦ) for the believer' (*First Epistle*, 223).

¹¹⁸ See 71-72 above.

of being grasped by divine power, of being compelled with a whole-hearted conviction to accept and affirm Paul's message.'¹¹⁹

2.3.3.1.2. The Source of the Content Proclaimed (1 Cor 2.13-14)

In view of the remarks about the giving of the Spirit, especially as it relates to the revelation of God's wisdom, Paul in 1 Cor 2.13 argues that it is the Spirit who provides the content of what is taught. Moreover, Paul contends that it is only by the Spirit that one can discern the message of the Spirit as given by those who proclaim it; those without the Spirit fail to see and hear the message as God's wisdom (2.14). We might be tempted to read this latter point as further evidence that Paul has two different levels of instruction in mind. Accordingly, on one level Paul speaks the general words of the gospel to everyone, while on the other he proclaims to the spiritual elite the Spirit-given words of the deep truths of God. However, this perpetuates the problem that Paul seeks to remedy, namely status-seeking on the basis of an assumed superior knowledge or spirituality.

With regard to Paul's remarks about words taught by the Spirit, we might also be tempted to see this as suggesting divine instruction (or revelation) via ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking.¹²⁰ However, at least three problems arise from this reading: 1) Paul's later argument on ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking becomes logically problematic if he is referring to such things here, 2) it does not correspond with the historical circumstances of Paul's original proclamation of the gospel in Corinth and 3) it perpetuates the issue of divisiveness among the believers in Corinth.

On the first problem, as noted earlier, the context of the argument in 1 Cor 12 is post-belief whereas the context for the argument of chapter 2 is the foundation for belief, or even that which brings about belief. Moreover, even if the charismatic gift of tongues as described in chapter 12 is in view for 2.13-14, this means that only a select few would be able to understand Paul's Spirit-speech (cf. 1 Cor 14), which therefore leaves open the possibility of boasting by

¹¹⁹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 226-27; cf. also Lim, ' "Not in Persuasive Words" ', 147.

¹²⁰ Cf. MacDonald, who takes 1 Cor 2.13 as referring to tongue-speaking—see *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47. It is possible, though not certain, that Schnökel allows for this possibility when he says, 'The appropriate language is pneumatic; a pneumatic message requires a pneumatic language' (*A Manual of Hermeneutics* [trans. L. M. Rosa; ed. B. W. R. Pearson; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 51).

those who know what is proclaimed. To strengthen this point, we need to consider the second problem. In saying that Paul's reference in 1 Cor 2.13-14 deals with ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking, we are saying something about the manner in which he originally proclaimed the gospel message. However, there is nothing in the text (or other known sources) that suggests ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking were integral to the proclamation of the gospel, in terms of its specific articulation. To assume that they were leaves open the concern mentioned with the first problem (i.e. only a select few would benefit from the message given) and it does not alleviate the potential for boasting within the community. Hence the third problem: to say that 1 Cor 2.13-14 refers to ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking, and to admit that such things would only benefit a select few, would be to advocate either various levels of instruction or differing levels of spiritual insight, which then can become grounds for maintaining divisions.

We must therefore seek a solution that both avoids these three problems and explains Paul's meaning in this passage. The simplest answer comes from recalling the role of a prophet and the work of God's Spirit in that role. If the Spirit of God is the one who supplies the revelatory message of God, especially God's wisdom, and if the prophet is the one who proclaims that message, and if the Spirit is the one who authenticates what is proclaimed, then in that sense the message given is not human speech attempting to disclose the wisdom of God. Instead, the prophetic message articulates the divine wisdom that God's Spirit discloses to the prophet. Therefore, what the prophet speaks will be based on the wisdom of God, reflective of the truths of that wisdom and in harmony with what God's Spirit has revealed. Thus, Paul, as an eschatological prophet of what God has done in Christ, proclaims the wisdom of what God has done—a work that remained hidden with God throughout the ages—and the wisdom Paul proclaims is that which has been given to him by God's Spirit, and the Corinthians can know the truth of what Paul proclaims because the Spirit is also at work in the reception of that message. This follows from Paul's argument that the cause for the Corinthians' belief in the gospel was not eloquent or persuasive words of human wisdom; it was the Spirit working powerfully in the message.

2.3.3.2. *In the Reception (1 Cor 2.8-12, 15-16)*

When Paul deals with the wisdom he professed in his preaching, he makes a categorical distinction about the kind of wisdom he has in view. The wisdom of which Paul speaks is God's wisdom and not the wisdom of the world—or the wisdom of the rulers of this age.¹²¹ It must be stressed here that the wisdom Paul teaches refers to the gospel message he proclaimed and not some second-level teaching of divine wisdom only reserved for a select few.¹²² It is true that scholars, especially those of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, have read Paul's remarks about teaching wisdom to the 'perfect' as referring to a select group in Corinth. Moreover, this sort of reading also finds itself in the service of those advocating influences from mystery religions or Gnostic theology, where the recipients of the secret wisdom or knowledge are made 'perfect.'

However, these types of readings create contradictions within Paul's argument, whereby in one place he speaks against classes of believers but here acknowledges—if not endorses—distinct levels of believers.¹²³ Two additional issues arise from these types of readings. First, they lack support from the text itself, for nothing in Paul's argument suggests different levels of instruction given at different times during his ministry in Corinth. Second, they relegate what seems to be the primary focus of Paul's argument to a secondary position. Specifically, Paul's words about speaking wisdom to the 'perfect' are claims about ways of knowing, or right discernment. For the purposes of this chapter, we are concerned with Paul's view of the Spirit's role in how believers know (or rightly discern) the gospel to be God's wisdom.

2.3.3.2.1. The Wisdom God Gives (1 Cor 2.8-12)

In 1 Cor 2.6b-7, Paul begins to explain this role by asserting that God's wisdom is a mystery, one that has remained undisclosed throughout the ages. Since this

¹²¹ This distinction prohibits us from reading Paul's words in 1 Cor 2.1 as a rejection of the entire notion of wisdom.

¹²² Fatehi makes the explicit connection between σοφία θεοῦ in 1 Cor 1.17 and the gospel message—see *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 180.

¹²³ See Theissen who argues: 'The limitation to a particular circle in the community would not have been possible in the letter, since the letter was read to all in the liturgy, at which both outsiders and unbelievers could be present (1 Cor 14:16, 23ff). The announcement that "we speak wisdom among the perfect" (1 Cor 2:6*) is meaningful only in the situation of oral discourse, where the speaker can know all the addressees and where his speech occurs only once; through being fixed in a letter it becomes potentially accessible to all' (*Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* [trans. J. P. Gavin; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987], 347).

wisdom is of God and since this wisdom is an unseen (or unknown) mystery, Paul declares that the only way in which anyone other than God can know it is if God chooses to reveal it (2.11). With God's hidden wisdom being distinct from the wisdom of the world, and with God's wisdom being something that can only be known by divine revelation, Paul can readily argue the rulers of this age do not know (or understand) God's wisdom (2.6, 8). The implication is that ways of knowing rooted in human wisdom will necessarily fail to ascertain God's wisdom.

Paul further stresses the inabilities of human wisdom by stating that God has already rendered them impotent (cf. 1.20-21). Thus knowledge of God's wisdom must come through other means, in this case, God's self-revelation, a work that Paul says is performed by God's Spirit (2.10). This is why Paul emphatically states that the πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ is the only means by which believers can know the things freely given to them by God (2.12); the πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου fails in this regard because the spirit of the world is not the Spirit of God, and only the Spirit of God can know the things of God (cf. 2.11). Therefore, for Paul, the proof that the Spirit was powerfully at work in the message is found in the Corinthians' original acceptance of the gospel as God's wisdom; for it is only by such a powerful work that they could come to know (or discern) the gospel as God's wisdom.

2.3.3.2.2. God's Wisdom Employed (1 Cor 2.15-16)

Paul climaxes this point by asserting that an extension of this work of the Spirit is that those who 'have the mind of Christ' are able to know the 'mind of the Lord [God]' (2.16), which enables them to discern the things of God (i.e. wisdom), things that are foolishness to the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος (2.14). This builds on Paul's earlier claim that God's Spirit is the one who reveals the things of God, 'even the depths of God' (2.10), things which Paul now says can only be discerned by ὁ πνευματικὸς (2.15). This type of categorical distinction in how the things of God (i.e. wisdom) are understood by opposite groups follows from the distinctions that Paul has made all along.

From the start of his argument, Paul has distinguished those who see the gospel of Christ crucified as God's wisdom from those who see it as foolishness; the former are those 'being saved', the latter are those 'being destroyed' (1.18).

Throughout the specific argument of 1 Cor 2.6-16, Paul has argued that the wisdom of the world is incapable of knowing the things of God, whereas those who have the Spirit of God are able to know the wisdom of God. The distinction between the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος and ὁ πνευματικὸς, and the kind of discernment ascribed to each, is an emphatic way of maintaining the larger contrast. Moreover, it furthers Paul's case for why the Corinthians originally accepted his gospel as God's (saving) wisdom.

2.4. Conclusions

This chapter explored Paul's view of the Spirit's role in the proclamation of the cross and how that view compares with Graeco-Roman perceptions of rhetorical skill and persuasiveness. Specifically, I examined why Paul contrasts a message proclaimed in wise, eloquent or persuasive (human) speech and one that demonstrates the power of the Spirit. First, I argued that Paul's simple message was originally given in a social context where rhetorical prowess and claims of possessing wisdom were highly prized. Here I emphasised the cultural assumptions commonly held within 1st century Corinth, and how these assumptions might have played a role in how Paul's original sojourn and gospel message were received. However, it was argued, based on the textual evidence and the specific claims made by Paul, that neither Paul nor his message were originally judged according to the standards of human wisdom, specifically the standards of rhetorical skill and persuasiveness. Only after Paul departed Corinth did his role and message come under the scrutiny of human wisdom. Thus, crucial for Paul's argument is that the Corinthians originally accepted his message in the manner in which he gave it. In effect, therefore, the function of the contrast in Paul's argument is to turn the criticisms back onto the Corinthians.

Secondly, I argued that Paul supplies the reason for the Corinthians' original belief and acceptance of the gospel, in spite of the simple and unpolished way in which he proclaimed it. Here I emphasised Paul's belief that by the Spirit alone, working in and through the message of the cross, were the Corinthians able to see the message of the cross as God's wisdom. As stated above, this emphasis points away from any rhetorical ability or persuasiveness on Paul's part and toward the power of the Spirit at work in the messenger and

message. An important implication for Paul's argument is that it is by the Spirit, working in and through the message of the cross, that the Corinthians are able to see the message of the cross as God's wisdom. The only reason, for Paul, why the Corinthians are sceptical of his role and message now is because they have begun to judge both according to a different set of criteria for discerning wisdom. Thus, the contrast performs two functions: 1) it speaks to the nature of Paul's original role and message in Corinth (i.e. not dependent upon superior speech or wisdom), and 2) it answers the twofold question of what defined Paul's role and message and why that message was originally received.

Throughout this chapter, I have kept in mind how Paul views (divine) wisdom and the way in which that wisdom manifests itself. He has already articulated his views in 1.17-31 and this helps us understand why Paul argues what he does in 1 Cor 2.1-3.4, particularly about the role of God's Spirit in the proclamation and reception of the gospel. Moreover, this framework helps to reveal why Paul makes this case about the Spirit's role where he does in the argument of the letter. Paul's simple message relied on a different view of wisdom and its means of persuasion, one that stands in opposition to the competing framework as defined by the wisdom of the world. In particular, Paul believes that the wisdom of the world fails to ascertain the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world in how it defines life ultimately fosters divisiveness and competition for places of honour.

Paul therefore cannot and does not rely on the wisdom of the world and its ways of knowing as a criterion for how to ascertain God's wisdom and how harmonious life within the community is to be obtained. In view of 1 Cor 1.18-25 Paul argues that the apostolic message—ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ—alone is the criterion by which believers come to see and know God's wisdom, which in turn defines how the new life in Christ is to be lived by those who believe. Admittedly, this theme of Paul relying on a distinct framework supplied by the Spirit could not be explored in great detail within this chapter. The reason for this is because it represents a theme that stands behind Paul's understanding of the Spirit's role in the proclamation and reception, and therefore needs to be explored separately.

Chapter 3

THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN MEDIATING DIVINE WISDOM

3.1. Introduction

In 1 Cor 2.9-13, Paul articulates the Spirit's role in mediating divine wisdom. Foundational to Paul's argument is a simple truth: divine wisdom cannot be known or ascertained unless it is revealed or disclosed by the one who possesses it. For Paul this simple truth is both the problem and the solution for those in Corinth. With regard to the negative, two related points repay brief attention. First, no amount of effort or attempts on the part of the one seeking wisdom will cause the one who possesses the desired wisdom to reveal or disclose it; to say otherwise is to misconstrue the notion of revelation. Second, and by extension, no one can legitimately advocate access to divine wisdom through personal effort or even other ways of knowing, and no one can claim knowledge of divine wisdom when such wisdom has not been revealed or disclosed.

The implication of these two points must also be recognised: those to whom divine wisdom has not been revealed or disclosed are unable to discern or judge the true nature and validity of that wisdom. For Paul this inability to discern or judge follows from employing faulty criteria, whose standards of measure are limited in their capacity and diametrically opposed to what is being assessed. In the light of Paul's argument, the wisdom assessed is nothing other than the divine plan of a crucified messiah as the means for salvation, as proclaimed in the gospel, and human wisdom represents the faulty criteria that measures the gospel message of Christ and finds it wanting (or foolish). The problem, therefore, is twofold: it involves both the understanding of revelation and the framework within which discernment operates. Thus, how can the Corinthians know that the gospel of Christ crucified does in fact express God's revealed wisdom? With this in mind, we must now consider the positive side or the solution to this problem.

While Paul asserts that divine wisdom is only revealed or disclosed by the one who possesses it and that all attempts to obtain this wisdom or even discern its validity through other means will necessarily fail, he announces that the needed revelation or disclosure has in fact occurred and that God is the one who caused it. Moreover the implication, as Paul contends, is that in receiving this revelation of divine wisdom one also receives new criteria for discerning or judging the nature and validity of what is revealed.¹ It is within this context that Paul stresses the central role played by God's Spirit in both sides of the solution: the Spirit as God's agent for revelation, and the Spirit's involvement in ensuring right discernment for understanding the nature and purpose of God's wisdom. As will be discussed below, this role of the Spirit is closely tied to Paul's apostolic preaching of the gospel, a connection that is specifically relevant for the defence of his ministry.

3.2. Critical Views about 'Wisdom' in Paul's Argument

Before examining the specific argument of 2.9-13 we must consider its surrounding context (2.6-16), one that has raised a number of questions by various scholars. Many of these questions relate to the terms and content of 2.6-16, which seem to divorce that passage from the rest of Paul's argument. Accordingly, if we are to make sense of Paul's argument and also the text as it stands, then we must offer adequate responses to what Brown labels the 'notorious . . . exegetical and hermeneutical difficulties'² that generate such questions. Thus, what follows is a summary of the dilemma, specifically noting the linguistic concerns and matters of content, and a proposed solution for these specific areas.

3.2.1. Summary of the Dilemma

An apparent conflict exists between how Paul speaks of 'wisdom' in 1 Cor 2.1-5 and then in 2.6-16, a conflict that Conzelmann starkly termed a contradiction.³ The so-called contradiction is that in 2.1-5 Paul seems to reject

¹ Whether or not the reception of these new criteria is a direct or indirect result of the revelation will be addressed below.

² Brown, *Cross and Human Transformation*, 105.

³ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 57; cf. also R. Bultmann, 'Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*,' in *Faith and Understanding I* (ed. R. W. Funk; trans. L. P. Smith; London: SCM Press,

wisdom emphatically whereas in 2.6-16 he openly promotes and/or embraces it. This dilemma remains a perennial topic of discussion for Pauline scholarship,⁴ and it is one that must be addressed in order to do justice to Paul's argument, specifically as it relates to the description of his preaching ministry in Corinth.⁵ This conflict, however, does not constitute the only dilemma scholars recognise in 2.6-16.

There is also the sudden shift in person, and the uncharacteristic use of seemingly esoteric vocabulary or at least an apparent redefinition of specific Pauline ideas or terms. With regard to the shift in person,⁶ the issue is that Paul ceases using the first person singular at 2.5, adopts the first person plural throughout 2.6-16 and finally resumes singular references at 3.1. In the light of this oscillation, and since the content of 2.6-16 is deemed unrelated (historically) to the surrounding context, Walker suggests the possibility of extracting 2.6-16 without causing any disruption to the flow of the argument from 2.1-3.4.⁷ By doing so, he argues, one is left with a 'smoothly connected passage (2.1-5; 3.1-4) dealing with Paul's initial visit to the Corinthians and emphasizing both his own "weakness" (2.1-5) and the "fleshly" nature of his hearers (3.1-4).'⁸ I will address these linguistic concerns first before dealing with the issues of content.

3.2.2. Assessment of the Linguistic Features

Three points of concern about Walker's interpretation deserve close attention. First, the shift to first person plural in 2.6-16 is admittedly abrupt and this section does contain material that appears to detract from Paul's

1969), 70-72; W. O. Walker, '1 Corinthians 2.6-16: A Non-Pauline Interpolation,' *JSNT* 47 (1992): 75-94.

⁴ See e.g. Welborn, 'On the Discord in Corinth,' 104-06; Cousar, '1 Corinthians 2:1-13,' 170-73; Sterling, '“Wisdom Among the Perfect”,' 367-70. Scholarship of the mid- to late-19th century seems either unaware of or unconcerned by this apparent conflict, for it is not mentioned as an interpretative problem (although cf. Hodge, *First Epistle*, 33). A few recent interpreters have also exhibited minimal concern—see e.g. Polhill, who says nothing about it ('The Wisdom of God,' 331-33; cf. also V. P. Branick, 'Apocalyptic Paul,' *CBQ* 47.4 [1985]: 671; J. F. Smit, 'Epidictic Rhetoric in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians 1-4,' *Bib* 84 (2003): 192-94; D. Liroy, 'Divine Wisdom versus Human Wisdom: An Exegetical-Theological Analysis of 1 Corinthians 1:10-2:16,' *Cons* 8 [2009]: 51-56); Lampe refers to it but immediately dismisses it as a mistaken conclusion ('Theological Wisdom,' 127-28).

⁵ Cf. Schmithals, *Theology*, 121.

⁶ Cf. Willis, '“The Mind of Christ”,' 110.

⁷ Walker, '1 Corinthians 2.6-16,' 81-86.

⁸ Walker, '1 Corinthians 2.6-16,' 83.

recollection of his Corinthian ministry. However, the abrupt shift in person is not unusual for Paul; in 2 Corinthians he makes a similar shift ten times in the first nine chapters alone.⁹ Moreover, since scholars now generally agree that 2 Cor 1–9 constitutes a single literary unit from Paul’s hand,¹⁰ and further agree that nothing in 2 Cor 1–9 suggests an interpolation;¹¹ there is no reasonable ground to assume that such shifts necessarily create disruptions in the overall argument.¹² The same reasoning applies to 1 Corinthians.

Scholars agree that (at the very least) 1 Cor 1–4 represents a single logical (or rhetorical) argument, and that no textual evidence exists for an interpolation within those chapters;¹³ thus, other solutions must be offered for why the shift in person occurs where it does in the argument. Three options commonly are given: 1) evidence of joint authorship, or collaboration with the co-senders of

⁹ For the first person plural, see 1.3-14, 18-22; 2.14–7.2, 13–8.7, 16-24. For the first person singular, see 1.15-17, 23–2.13; 7.3-12; 8.8-15; 9.1-15.

¹⁰ I am leaving to one side the debate over whether or not 2 Cor 1–7 and 8–9 represent two of the three stages of writing 2 Corinthians. For those arguing for a literary unity of 2 Cor 1–9, from Paul’s hand (whether in stages or not), see e.g. P. E. Hughes, *Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), xxii; J. Thompson, *The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians* (Austin: R. B. Sweet Co., 1970), 14-15; J. M. Scott, *2 Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 4-5; D. E. Garland, *2 Corinthians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 38-44; J. Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 9; D. R. Hall, *The Unity of the Corinthian Correspondence* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 113-23; Harris, *Second Epistle*, 8-51; F. G. Carver, *2 Corinthians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2009), 44-45.

¹¹ While a handful of recent scholars still contend that 2 Cor 6.14–7.1 represents an interpolation—e.g. M. M. Mitchell, ‘The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics,’ in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (eds. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 27; M. L. Minor, *2 Corinthians* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 15, 131-32; cf. M. Thrall, *2 Corinthians 1–7* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 12, 32-36—this is not the majority view (see e.g. those listed in n.10 above. Cf. also, J. Lambrecht, ‘The Fragment 2 Cor vi 14–vii 1: A Plea for Its Authenticity,’ in *Studies on 2 Corinthians* [eds. R. Bieringer and J. Lambrecht; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1994], 531-49).

¹² Lambrecht concludes: ‘No break in the narrative or argument, no change in the vocabulary or tone appears to be so great that the parts could not have stood originally, one next to the other, in a single letter’ (*Second Corinthians*, 9).

¹³ Walker acknowledges this fact when he states: ‘So far as I can ascertain, such *direct* text-critical evidence does not exist with regard to 1 Cor 2.6-16²—i.e. direct evidence that would suggest an interpolation (‘1 Corinthians 2.6-16,’ 80—emphasis original). He also acknowledges that the ‘*[i]ndirect* text-critical evidence’ (80—emphasis original) does not appear to support the idea of an interpolation. The two criteria he give related to this indirect evidence are: 1) the presence of insignificant textual problems surrounding the passage in question, and/or 2) the lack of reference from post-apostolic writers to the specific passage. ‘The former suggests the possibility of attempts by different scribes to smooth out otherwise awkward transitions between original and interpolated materials; the latter that the passage in question was unknown to one or more early church writers (presumably because it was absent from their texts)’ (*ibid*).

the text, where such individuals contribute to that portion of the argument;¹⁴ 2) the use of an authorial ‘we’, where Paul speaks on behalf of the co-senders, thus maintaining primary authorship;¹⁵ or 3) emphasis on a particular point, either for the sake of establishing consistency in the apostolic witness or for marking a contrast between the apostles and their opponents.¹⁶

Second, as intimated above, virtually all scholars acknowledge the literary integrity of 1 Corinthians as a whole;¹⁷ to argue otherwise is to do so on precarious grounds. Even those who advocate partition theories for the composition of the letter nevertheless recognise the integrity with regard to the specific rhetorical units.¹⁸ For example, Schmithals, who contends for several stages of redaction in the Corinthian correspondence, affirms an unquestioned integrity for 1 Cor 1.10–3.23.¹⁹ Moreover, Schmithals sees no disruption in Paul’s argument beginning with 2.6, although he does acknowledge a significant shift beginning with that verse, and concludes: ‘The contradiction can be resolved if one determines that Paul was previously speaking [in 2.1-5] of missionary preaching and the ground of faith, but now [in 2.6–3.4] he is speaking about the message to those who stand firmly on this ground, and this is indeed probably what Paul meant.’²⁰ While Schmithals’ conclusion places the emphasis on a slightly different aspect of Paul’s argument than the one argued here, it nevertheless serves as an example of how to deal with the apparent conflicts in the text without arguing for an interpolation. I will return to this point of the discussion momentarily.

¹⁴ See E. Verhoef, ‘The Senders of the Letters to the Corinthians and the Use of “I” and “We”’, in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 417-25.

¹⁵ See esp. Kaiser, ‘A Neglected Text in Bibliology Discussions: 1 Corinthians 2:6-16,’ *WTJ* 43.2 (1981): 311. This type of claim is often made in response to the first option, which leaves open the possibility of Paul not being the sole (or, primary) author of the text. The need for such an argument appears to be for the sake of maintaining apostolic, and inspired authorship. Cf. also Fee, *First Epistle*, 101 n.13.

¹⁶ See e.g. R. W. Funk, ‘Word and World in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16,’ in *Language, Hermeneutics and the Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 275-305.

¹⁷ This is primarily due to Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*; cf. also Dunn, *1 Corinthians*, 24-25; Collins, *First Corinthians*, xiii, 6, 10; Furnish, *Theology of the First Letter*, 12, 15-18.

¹⁸ This is especially the case with regard to 1 Cor 1–4. See e.g. Rylands, *Critical Analysis*, 115-16; Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 43-47, 68-71, 86-89, 131-142; de Boer, ‘1 Corinthians,’ 229-45.

¹⁹ Schmithals, *Theology*, 121; cf. idem, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 90-91, where he places the *terminus* of the passage at 4.21.

²⁰ Schmithals, *Theology*, 128.

In the light of the second concern, I now consider the third: while seeming to digress from the remarks about his apostolic preaching, especially the role of the Spirit in that preaching, the content of 2.6-16 is in fact foundational for Paul's understanding of the importance and implications of that role.²¹ I agree with Walker on the presence of historical links between 2.1-5 and 3.1-4, however I differ with regard to the specificity of those links. Paul's focus in 3.1-4 is only secondarily concerned with his initial visit; the primary issue is the Corinthians' status at the time of writing, and that issue is essentially described as spiritual immaturity. If Paul speaks positively of the Spirit's role in the initial proclamation of the gospel (2.4-5), and if he speaks negatively about the Corinthians' current, spiritual immaturity (3.1-4), then the cause for the negative remarks must be explained.

The simplest explanation is that Paul envisages a series of events where the opposite result would have occurred—i.e. that the Corinthians would not be spiritually immature but mature. If 2.6-16 is extracted from Paul's argument, as Walker suggests, then a proper understanding of how the Spirit's relationship to the gospel and how believers become spiritually mature as a result of belief in the gospel message is left unexplained. Moreover, to extract 2.6-16 from 2.1–3.4 would diminish the force of the point made in 3.1 where the Corinthians are labelled *νήπιος*. Similarly, removing 2.6-16 from the argument would leave the parallelism of *νήπιος* and *σάρκινος* in 3.1 ambiguous and random. However, retaining 2.6-16 shows the negativity of 3.1 as a contrast to the expectations of 2.6, and it provides the necessary balance to the parallelism of *νήπιος* and *τέλειος*, *σάρκινος* and *πνευματικός*.²² More importantly, with 2.6-16 remaining original to Paul's argument, the necessity of the Spirit's role in what is to occur in the life of a believer, in the light of the gospel, comes immediately to the fore.

3.2.3. Assessment of the Content Features

With regard to the differences in the content of 2.6-16, as compared with the rest of his argument, Paul seems to advocate a wisdom teaching parallel to that of the mystery religions of the ancient world. This view held considerable

²¹ Cf. Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*, 158.

²² Cf. G. G. Findlay, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (ed. W. R. Nicoll; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897), 777, 785-86. Sterling also briefly notes these contrasts (see 'Wisdom Among the Perfect', 368).

sway since the work of Gunkel and the rise of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and its application to 1 Corinthians by Bousset.²³ Accordingly, scholars focused on specific theological themes in 2.6-16, the vocabulary associated with those themes and then compared it with similar terms and concepts in mystery religions. Specifically, much of what Paul says about hidden wisdom (or knowledge), the revelation of that wisdom only to a select few, the distinctions between spiritual and psychical people, the presence of spiritual forces or beings at work in the cosmos, access to the divine mind through a πνεῦμα, were taken as evidence for Gnostic influences, or at least Gnostic theological motifs within 2.6-16. A few studies have exposed certain methodological and historical problems for this approach and its application to 1 Cor 2.6-16, two of which repay brief attention.

First, there is an insistence on a singular understanding or meaning of key terms or ideas. Specifically, for example, in every place where μυστήριον and τέλειος occur in Hellenistic texts, it is assumed that such terms always refer to mystery religions.²⁴ This assumption is faulty since such terms or ideas are not the sole property of ancient mystery religions. The notion of μυστήριον, especially as it pertains not just to God's wisdom but also its apocalyptic revelation, appears in the Jewish texts of Daniel, *1 Enoch*, *3 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Esdras* and the Dead Sea Scrolls.²⁵ Moreover, the connection between τέλειος and wisdom, especially as it relates to those seeking God's wisdom, also appears in the works of Philo.²⁶

Similarly, with regard to another key concept in 1 Cor 2.6-16, Kovacs persuasively argues that Gnostic or even proto-gnostic interpretations are not the only (or most adequate) means for understanding the phrase 'the rulers of

²³ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913)—this connection is noted by Stuhlmacher, 'The Hermeneutical Significance of 1 Cor 2:6-16,' in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor E. Earle Ellis for His 60th Birthday* (ed. G. F. Hawthorne; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 330.

²⁴ Cf. Wilson, 'How Gnostic,' 68.

²⁵ See Dan 2.28, 29, 47; *1 Enoch* 49.2; 63.3; *3 Enoch* 9.6; 38.3; 51.3; *2 Baruch* 81.4; *4 Esdras* 14.5; 1Q27 13.3; 4Q299 2b.5; 35.1; 73.3; 1QHab 7.13-14. Cf. also 1QS 4.6; 9.18; 11.3, 5, 19.

²⁶ E.g. *Deus. Imm.* 92, where Philo speaks of 'perfect happiness' that results from God providing wisdom without human effort or request. Similarly, Philo describes wisdom from God, when revealed to a person, as the 'perfect way' to God; for it was the flesh that corrupted the way (cf. *Migr. Ab.* 38-42; *Deus. Imm.* 142-43).

this age'.²⁷ It is entirely plausible to assume awareness of Jewish apocalyptic themes or influences at work in Paul's argument in 1 Cor 2.6-16, especially in the light of his remarks concerning revealed wisdom by God's Spirit and the overturning of opposing powers. Thus, the symbolic universe of mystery religions is not the only source from which Paul could draw for the use and meaning of key terms and ideas.

Second, identifying a specific 'Gnostic' group and their particular beliefs are not straightforward exercises. As Rudolph points out: 'It is no exaggeration to number the problems of the genesis and the history of Gnosis among the most difficult which are encountered in research not only into Gnosis but also into the history of the religion of later antiquity.'²⁸ Early on, as Bultmann describes, Gnosticism 'first appeared and attracted the attention of scholars as a movement *within* the Christian religion, and for a long time it was regarded as a purely Christian movement, a perversion of the Christian faith into a speculative theology, the "acute Hellenization of Christianity".'²⁹ However, if we follow van Unnik's assessment, Gnosticism represented 'an exceptionally important rival to youthful Christianity' and yet 'it often attached itself to Christianity so tightly,'³⁰ this indicates that Gnosticism developed externally to but in conjunction with Christianity.

This last view accords well with the testimony of the Church Fathers who link the origins of Gnosticism with Simon Magus, the one from whom Irenaeus claims 'all sorts of heresies derive their origin.'³¹ Alternatively, and also bearing the support of ancient testimony, key figures in early Gnosticism were believed

²⁷ See J. L. Kovacs, 'The Archons, The Spirit and the Death of Christ: Do We Need the Hypothesis of Gnostic Opponents to Explain 1 Cor 2.6-16?', in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. J. Marcus and M. L. Soards; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 218-36.

²⁸ K. Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism* (trans. and ed. R. McL. Wilson; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 275.

²⁹ R. Bultmann, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (trans. R. H. Fuller; London: Thames & Hudson, 1956), 162—emphasis added; cf. also Roukema, who develops the idea of Gnosticism being 'a form of Hellenized Christianity', although he incorporates ideas and themes from Judaism, Christianity and Middle Platonism—see *Gnosis and Faith in Early Christianity: An Introduction to Gnosticism* (trans. J. Bowden; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 105-25.

³⁰ W. C. van Unnik, *Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings: A Preliminary Survey of the Nag Hammadi Find* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 90.

³¹ See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.23.2.

to be of Jewish origin,³² which nuances the view described by Bultmann in a more precise way. In effect, by suggesting a Jewish origin one can readily infer a pre-Christian form of Gnosticism, one that easily adapts to the later theological ideas and teaching of Christianity, since these later ideas and teachings also assert a Jewish foundation.

However, there is a methodological and even a categorical problem with each of these views: each one assumes—to varying degrees—the existence of Gnosticism as a distinct ideology and Gnostics as a distinct groups of adherents with a particular set of beliefs in the ancient world and that such a group relates in some way with nascent Christianity. Part of the trouble is that, as Williams points out,³³ “[t]here is no true consensus even among specialists in the religions of the Greco-Roman world on a definition of the category “gnosticism,” even though there is no reason why categories as such should be difficult to define.’³⁴ Williams goes on to show that while certain traits or ‘elements’ can be identified as ‘gnostic’, none of these are exclusively Gnostic. We must allow for the possibility that many of these traits or elements have roots in and grow out of existing Graeco-Roman philosophical traditions—e.g. Platonism, Neopythagoreanism.

However, Williams’ calling into question the very notion of ‘Gnosticism’ as a distinct category has not yet produced a new consensus on how to describe succinctly the mix of views such a category ostensibly represented. If, with those prior to the work of Williams, we continue to use the dubious category, then we might reasonably conclude with Wilson, for example, that it makes better sense of the evidence to say Gnosticism, as a distinctive ideology, developed its theological themes and vocabulary on a foundation of early Christian belief instead of the reverse.³⁵ As is frequently argued on this view,

³² Cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.22, where he cites the testimony of Hegesippus. See also, Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 277-82—especially 177, where he mentions (albeit briefly) the testimony of the Church Fathers.

³³ See M. A. Williams, *Rethinking ‘Gnosticism’: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3-6, 26-31.

³⁴ Williams, *Rethinking*, 4.

³⁵ ‘In point of fact, Gnosticism is fundamentally syncretistic, welding into a new synthesis elements from diverse cultures. It would be more correct to recognise the various “spheres of influences” mentioned as the *ultimate* source of particular ideas, and proceed to the attempt to trace the channels by which they passed into the developed Gnostic systems’ (R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968], 3-4). This understanding has roots in ancient views of gnostic ideas and teachings. As Perkins argues: ‘On the one hand,

there is no conclusive historical data for placing Gnostics as a definable group or Gnosticism as a set of influential theological ideas, either prior to or contemporaneous with Paul's ministry, especially in Corinth.³⁶

If, however, we take Williams' discussion seriously, one consequence must be to consider alternatives to 'Gnostic' or 'gnostic' when attempting to identify the sources of Paul's own thoughts and especially the opponents in Corinth or the ideas that Paul repudiates.³⁷ Recently Todd Klutz, following Williams' observations,³⁸ suggested a group of social elite (i.e. 'the Strong'), whose identity is shaped by perceptions of and allegiance to wisdom or knowledge³⁹ and who more readily align themselves with civic structures of the Graeco-Roman world rather than those of the church.⁴⁰ In my own discussion I shall decline the use of the label 'gnostic' and take Paul's remarks concerning divine wisdom as a sharp antithesis to philosophical notions of wisdom that were commonly espoused by various philosophical groups of his day.

3.2.4. Proposed Solution to the Dilemma

If we hold to a unified argument for at least 2.1-16, how then do we account for the sudden shift in language and the apparent difference in content between 2.1-5 and 2.6-16? Moreover, what options are available to us if we argue against either Gnostic influence in Corinth or theological motifs found in the mystery religions from the ancient world? One option is to see Paul adopting the terminology of the Corinthians' view of wisdom and spirituality, redefining it before applying it back to the circumstances to which he writes. This option accounts for the relatively unique vocabulary and conceptual data found in 2.6-16 as compared with the rest of Paul's argument, which in turn

second-century writers, both gnostic and Christian, were convinced that the fundamental structures of gnostic speculation and cult arose outside Christianity. On the other hand, identifiable gnostic sects do not appear prior to the emergence of Christianity' (*Gnosticism and the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 10).

³⁶ Thus, any 'gnostic' features in 2.6-16 are merely incipient details and themes that develop later and do so in the wake of Christianity's spread throughout the Empire. See esp. Wilson, who notes: 'it is not the separate elements in themselves which are Gnostic, but the total synthesis, the system, in which they are combined' (*Gnosis and the New Testament*, 4-5); cf. also Wilson, 'How Gnostic,' 65-74.

³⁷ Cf. Klutz, who took Williams' argument and implications and applied them to the social and historical context of Paul's letter to the Corinthians (see 'Re-Reading 1 Corinthians after Rethinking "Gnosticism"', *JSNT* 26.2 [2003]: 193-216 [esp. 206-14]).

³⁸ Cf. Williams, *Rethinking*, 51-53; Klutz, 'Re-Reading 1 Corinthians,' 203.

³⁹ See Klutz, 'Re-Reading 1 Corinthians,' 206-10.

⁴⁰ See Klutz, 'Re-Reading 1 Corinthians,' 211-14 (esp. 213-14).

keeps the content of 2.6-16 authentically Pauline (*contra* Walker). This has been a leading method for commentators examining Paul's argument in this passage.⁴¹

Another option is to read Paul's argument against the backdrop of Jewish apocalypticism and wisdom traditions. Like the first option, this keeps the content of 2.6-16 authentically Pauline yet it differs with regard to the source of that content. Here Paul is not so much appropriating ideas or concepts that are otherwise foreign to his symbolic universe; instead, Paul draws from a stream of tradition that is longstanding and intrinsic to his Jewish heritage. We see the basic features of this approach outlined in Schoeps' work on Pauline theology in general⁴² and also in Lang's remarks on 1 Cor 2.6-16 in particular.⁴³ By reading the text in this way, according to Lang, one is able to see a theory of wisdom that is pneumatic in form and content, and to understand that the bestowal of this wisdom indicates the beginning of God's eternal kingdom in the present world.

Maintaining this balance between Jewish apocalypticism and wisdom traditions is not only crucial for interpreting Paul's meaning but also necessary in the light of the apparent imbalance in recent scholarship. This imbalance tends to result from improper definitions and methodological applications of the particular concepts. Matlock has alerted us to this tendency and articulated some of the problems it creates with apocalyptic readings of Paul's theology.⁴⁴ Moreover, the imbalance comes from prioritising one approach over the other, or at least the value of one is subsumed under the other.

For example, Beker argues: 'only a consistent apocalyptic interpretation of Paul's thought is able to demonstrate its fundamental coherence'⁴⁵ and 'that the coherence of the gospel is constituted by statements that have been shaped by apocalyptic thought and, consequently, cannot be separated from their ultimate goal, the imminent apocalyptic triumph of God.'⁴⁶ This view then

⁴¹ See e.g. Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*, 27; J. Koenig, 'From Mystery to Ministry: Paul as Interpreter of Charismatic Gifts,' *USQR* 33.3/4 (1978): 168; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 56-57; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 124.

⁴² Schoeps, *Paul*, 13-50.

⁴³ See Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 38-48.

⁴⁴ See Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul*, especially chapter 4.

⁴⁵ Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 143.

⁴⁶ J. C. Beker, *The Triumph of God: The Essence of Paul's Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 20.

becomes the way in which Paul is seen articulating the message of the gospel—both in terms of content and form.⁴⁷

While apocalyptic themes can certainly be found, the Jewish wisdom traditions appear to have the strongest relevance for tracing Paul's thought in general and his argument in 1 Corinthians in particular. However, these wisdom traditions have not been explored to their fullest extent, especially as they relate to 1 Corinthians. There is much within these traditions that support ideas of divine wisdom being given to individuals, wisdom being a means for understanding the will or ways of God, wisdom providing knowledge within the individual, wisdom being the means by which a person knows what is true and good and, specifically relevant for this chapter, wisdom serving as the framework for knowing how life is to be lived in accordance with the will or ways of God. All of these can be explored without relying on assumptions that divorce Paul from his Jewish heritage and without the need to cast his thought and expression in the light of a later divergent theological system. This brings me to a final option for examining Paul's argument in 2.6-16, an option that was elaborated by Stuhlmacher⁴⁸ but has received scant attention by virtually all commentators since.

By seeing the specific argument of 1 Cor 2.6-16 within the larger logical framework of 1 Cor 1-4, Stuhlmacher reads 2.6-16 as an epistemological explanation for the theological assertions of 1.18-25.⁴⁹ For Stuhlmacher, Paul in 2.6-16 explains how the Corinthians are able to know that what he professes in 1.18-25 is in fact true or that it indeed reflects the wisdom of God. While other analyses of Paul's argument tend to prioritise the theological over the epistemological (or vice versa) with the result of diminishing any possible

⁴⁷ Beker stresses these two points: '1. The entire center of Paul's gospel is his conviction that Christ's death and resurrection have opened up a new future for the world. This future will reach its climax when the reign and triumph of God are made manifest and the whole created order attains its wonderful perfection according to God's promises to Israel. 2. The apocalyptic framework of the gospel also corresponds to the manner in which Paul proclaims it. The gospel concerning the future reign of God is brought to expression in such a way that, analogous to the incarnation of God in Christ, it embodies itself in the concrete and varied circumstances of human life. In this way Paul enables his churches to discern already in the present time signs of God's future glory. Moreover, Paul's churches are empowered by God to participate in redemptive praxis in the world, which aims at preparing the whole creation for its future glory. Paul borrows certain components of his apocalyptic gospel from the Jewish apocalyptic thought world, but modifies them because of his encounter with the exalted Christ and through the influence of Christian tradition' (*Triumph of God*, 20).

⁴⁸ Stuhlmacher, 'Hermeneutical Significance,' 328-47.

⁴⁹ Stuhlmacher, 'Hermeneutical Significance,' 332.

continuity or balance between them, Stuhlmacher's approach not only explains the two units of the argument on their own terms but also reveals the inextricable links between them.

This approach also moves the discussion from abstractions to practical applications. Accordingly, while 2.6-16 represents an epistemological explanation for the theological claims of 1.18-25, it is a theory of knowledge requiring real-life changes, changes necessitated by what is known to be true. In this case, the Corinthians are to recognise the wise salvific plan of God as displayed in the cross of Christ, and they are to live in accordance with that wisdom made known by the power of God's Spirit. Accordingly, this approach remains sensitive to the Jewish wisdom traditions that promote a balance between theory and praxis, where the life lived reflects the ideas believed.

3.3. Wisdom and Paul's Argument

To understand Paul's view of the Spirit's role in mediating divine wisdom, we must begin where he does: with the seemingly disconnected citation in 1 Cor 2.9. The apparent disconnection is largely due to the specific content of 2.9 and the lack of any reference to the Spirit. However, after considering the function of this passage its essential relationship with Paul's wider view of the Spirit as seen in 2.1–3.4 in general and 2.6-16 in particular comes to the fore.⁵⁰ However, before examining the function and relationship, I must address the dilemma concerning the source of the quotation in 2.9.

3.3.1. Source of Paul's Quotation

The prefatory formula, καθὼς γέγραπται is Paul's usual way of introducing a Scriptural quotation into his argument,⁵¹ although the formula

⁵⁰ Brown views 1 Cor 2.9-10a as foundational for understanding the larger argument of 2.6-16: 'The analysis of 2:6-16 will follow the tripartite structure of the passage by focusing on the major themes of each section. I. *Sophia tou Theou* vs. *Sophia tou Aiōnos Toutou* 2:6-8 (Wisdom of God versus Wisdom of This Age). <<Apocalyptic Signal 2:9-10a>> II. *Pneuma tou Theou* versus *Pneuma tou Kosmou* 2:10b-14 (Spirit of God versus Spirit of the World). III. *Nous tou Christou* 2:15-16 (Mind of Christ). By following the contours of this section, as it builds from the familiar antithesis at the foundation to the unfamiliar term *nous tou Christou*, we discover the structure of the cognitive transformation the text requires of the reader. Within this structure, I will argue, vv 9-10a function to signal the crucial transition without which the whole text remains obscure' (*Cross and Human Transformation*, 110-11).

⁵¹ See Rom 1.17; 2.24; 3.4, 10; 4.17; 8.36; 9.13, 33; 10.15; 11.8, 26; 15.9; 2 Cor 8.15; 9.9. On other occasions, Paul employs a slightly different formula, γέγραπται γάρ—see Rom 12.19; 14.11; 1 Cor 1.19; 3.19; Gal 3.10; 4.22, 27; cf. 1 Cor 9.9.

here in 2.9 includes the unusual initial emphatic conjunction ἀλλά.⁵² Commentators agree that Paul quotes something from Jewish literature,⁵³ and he does so because he believes that the source carries authority. However, commentators disagree on the precise text(s) or passage(s) that Paul quotes, although this assumes that he is in fact quoting faithfully from the source(s),⁵⁴ which is itself another dilemma. The common hypothesis is that Paul quotes loosely from Isa 64.4 and then from 65.17.⁵⁵ The reason for suggesting a ‘loose’ quotation of Isa 64.4 is that the stronger connections between that text and 1 Cor 2.9 are conceptual rather than linguistic. Hence, Ciampa and Rosner argue: ‘The loose form of the citation precludes any discussion of textual differences.’⁵⁶ The reason for using Isa 65.17 with 64.4 is that the specific phrase, ‘not entering into the human heart’ in 1 Cor 2.9 appears neither in the MT nor the LXX of Isa 64.4, yet it does appear in the LXX of Isa 65.17. While this joining of texts is likely, there are at least three specific details worth considering before forming any solid conclusions.⁵⁷

First, the key phrase ‘not entering into the human heart’ not only comprises a small portion of the whole Isaiah passage, specifically it is the final remark, but also reveals an adaptation to the phrase. With regard to the whole passage, emphasising what Paul ostensibly cites, the MT of Isa 65.17 reads: ‘For behold, I create new heavens and new earth and the former things will neither be remembered nor *come into mind* [וְלֹא תִעְלֶינָה עַל-לֵב]’, which the LXX renders: ‘For there shall be the new heaven and the new earth and they shall neither remember the former things nor shall they *come up upon their heart* [ἐπέλθη αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν].’ Accordingly, Paul would be employing Isa 65.17 for the sake of borrowing an otherwise incidental phrase for his quotation.

⁵² Only in two other locations does Paul begin a quotation with the emphatic phrase, ἀλλά καθὼς γέγραπται: Rom 15.3, 21.

⁵³ ‘Die typische Zitationsformel schließt eine bloße Anspielung aus’ (Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.245).

⁵⁴ See W. H. Mare and M. J. Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 29.

⁵⁵ See e.g. Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 66; Morris, *First Epistle*, 55-56; Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 84-85; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 127; Barclay, ‘1 Corinthians,’ 1113; cf. also Collins, *First Corinthians*, 131-32; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 251-52; cf. also Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 64; Fee, *First Epistle*, 108-09; R. E. Ciampa and B. S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 108.

⁵⁶ Ciampa-Rosner, *First Letter*, 108 n.30.

⁵⁷ Cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 250-51; Ciampa-Rosner, *First Letter*, 108-09.

Moreover, the Isaiah phrase is about forgetting and not remembering the things of old; Paul's emphasis is on the things of God not being known categorically. With regard to the adaptation, Paul's version reads: ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου, which adds a specificity lacking in both the MT and the LXX of Isa 65.17—still assuming this to be his source. One way to respond to this is to say that Paul quotes this text just as loosely as he quotes Isa 64.4. It is also possible that the quotation is more of what Hays terms, 'an echo'⁵⁸ whereby Paul allows the conceptual or rhetorical resonances of both Isaiah passages to be heard in his reapplication of those texts.⁵⁹

Second, and this might constitute another adaptation, the difference in verb tense between the Isa 65.17 passages and Paul's quotation cannot be ignored: the former is future while the latter is aorist. We could say Paul supplies a theological interpretation or application of the Isaiah passage for his argument. Since the Isaiah passage speaks of a coming new age when Yahweh makes all things new, and since Paul believes that expected new age has been inaugurated in Christ, Isaiah's future hope is therefore a past event from the perspective of Paul. Moreover, since the establishment of a new age and thus a new creation are parts of the divine plan for the salvation of all things, and since Paul believes that this plan has remained a mystery (i.e. hidden) until the advent of Christ, its inability to be perceived by human wisdom suits Paul's argument quite well. This agreement finds additional support if we assume Paul joins Isa 65.17 with 64.4, the latter dealing with divine ways not previously known. The trouble here is that we cannot be sure if Paul combined both texts in this way to make this precise connection. Moreover, we cannot be sure that Paul only had these passages from Isaiah in mind; it is equally possible that he also drew from other sources (e.g. Isa 52.15 or Jer 3.16).

Finally, the concluding phrase in Paul's quotation (ὃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν) brings us back to the dilemma of source, for this specific phrase appears nowhere else in Jewish literature.⁶⁰ Moreover, we can be sure that Paul is not adapting an Isaiah passage to suit his argument, for what he says

⁵⁸ For what Hays means by 'echoes' and how this might shape our reading of Paul's letters, see *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1-33.

⁵⁹ This obviously assumes an above-average awareness or knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Corinthians believers—an assumption that Hays does not explain or support.

⁶⁰ Although something close to this appears in Deut 7.9; Neh 1.5; Ps 97.10.

in 1 Cor 2.9 clearly departs from Isa 64.4c. Thus, we must look elsewhere to find a likely source. The closest parallel comes from the Second Temple Jewish text, Sirach, which reads: καὶ ἐχορήγησεν αὐτὴν τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν (1.10). Two similarities between this passage and the one cited in 1 Cor 2.9 are worth noting: 1) the subject of the action in both cases is God, and 2) the indirect object of the action are τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν.

A third similarity exists, but it is one that must be drawn from the context of both passages. In Sirach 1.10 the direct object is (lady) wisdom, referred to in this passage with the personal pronoun, αὐτή; in 1 Cor 2.9, the direct object is the salvific plan of God, vaguely referred to in this passage with the definite relative pronoun, ὃ. As will be stressed below, Paul's argument reveals that the cross of Christ is the enactment of God's wisdom as the means of salvation, and only those who love God can know such things. However this third similarity signals a key difference between the two texts: Sirach appears to operate on an assumed hypostatic view of wisdom, whereas Paul simply ignores such a view here.⁶¹ However, it must be said that this difference would not necessarily prevent Paul from using Sirach 1.10 as his source, especially if we maintain the earlier assumption about loose quotations.

In the light of these difficulties, various solutions to these problems have been given. One suggestion is that Paul quotes the relevant material from memory and does so quite badly,⁶² which would account for the differences in style and content or adaptations between the original and his use of them. Schrage rejects this view for at least Isa 52.15 since Paul quotes the same passage in Rom 15.21 and does so with great precision; thus, as Schrage

⁶¹ If anything we might say Paul redefines the hypostatic view of lady wisdom into a wisdom Christology, although Fee has offered a cogent case against such a suggestion—see *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 594-630; cf. also A. van Roon, 'The Relation Between Christ and the Wisdom of God According to Paul,' *NouT* 16.3 (1974): 207-39. The earlier assessment of Whiteley bears repeating: 'When St. Paul speaks of Christ in terms of Wisdom his intention is not to identify Him with an hypostatization of Wisdom, but to ascribe to Him the function of being God's agent in creation, revelation and redemption. In fact, the "Wisdom Christology" of St. Paul may be summed up in this words: What Wisdom meant to the Jews was part of what Jesus Christ meant for St. Paul' (*The Theology of St. Paul* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964], 112).

⁶² 'But since it is only passages from the *canonical* Scriptures that are ever cited by Paul with καθὼς γέγραπ., we must at the same time assume that he *intended* to do so here also, but *by some confusion of memory took the apocryphal saying for a canonical passage possibly from the prophecies*, to which the passage of kindred sound in Isaiah might easily give occasion' (Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical*, 65-66—emphasis original). Cf. also Barrett, *First Epistle*, 73.

intimates, it would be odd for Paul to remember the passage accurately in one letter (i.e. Rom 15.21) while citing it wrongly in another (i.e. 1 Cor 2.9).⁶³ This oddity would be all the more surprising given the close span of time within which 1 Corinthians and Romans were composed.

Another proposed solution is that Paul draws from sources outside of the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, both Origen and Ambrosiaster contend that Paul's quotation in 1 Cor 2.9 comes from the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.⁶⁴ However, as Fitzmyer points out, the *Apocalypse of Elijah* not only represents a later Christian text but also contains no statements resembling what we see in Paul's quotation.⁶⁵ Fitzmyer also mentions a number of other assumed sources from which Paul could mine for his quotation;⁶⁶ however, each of these texts post-date Paul's life and therefore cannot be considered as viable source material.

A final suggestion is that Paul quotes from a source no longer extant,⁶⁷ or simply borrows from a Jewish stream of tradition known in his day. Evidence for this comes from a similar quotation found in the *Gospel of Thomas* and Pseudo-Philo. In *Thomas* the quote reads: 'I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind' (17). While this text most plausibly dates to the 2nd century CE, the tradition it assumes places the substance and terminology of the saying within the ministry of Jesus, thus making it pre-existing source material for Paul's usage.⁶⁸

In Pseudo-Philo it reads: 'What eye has not seen and ear has not heard and has not surged in a human heart' (*LAB* 26.13).⁶⁹ This represents the closest parallel to what we find in 1 Cor 2.9. However, as Fitzmyer demonstrates, *LAB* post-dates Paul and 'is, practically speaking, unaware of Christianity and

⁶³ See Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.245.

⁶⁴ Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 27.9; Ambrosiaster, *Ad Cor Prim* 2.9.

⁶⁵ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 178.

⁶⁶ The alternatives mentioned include: *Ascen. Isa.* 11.34; *1 Clem* 34.8; *Gos. Thom* 17; (*Eth*) *Apoc. Ezra*; (*Syr*) *Apoc. Dan.*; *Apoc. Ps-Hipp.*; *Apoc. Pet.*; (*Arab.*) *Gos. Ps-Jn.*; (*Eth*) *Gos. Mary*; *Ep. Ps-Titus* (see Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 178).

⁶⁷ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 44-45.

⁶⁸ On the other hand, it is equally plausible that *Thomas* borrows the wording from Paul yet understands its meaning as originating from Jesus. This suggestion came from T. Klutz during a personal conversation at a conference in 2011.

⁶⁹ Translation from Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 179.

specifically of the Pauline letters',⁷⁰ thus making it difficult to prove literary dependence between them.⁷¹ At best all we can suggest in this regard is that both draw from an unknown source or tradition. This, however, leaves open the question of how we handle the prefatory formula to the quotation.

To follow the conclusion of Stanley, we could say that '[i]n view of the difficulty of determining what text [or source] Paul had in mind in adducing this quotation, it would be presumptuous to offer any analysis of the way Paul handles the wording of his *Vorlage* in 1 Cor 2.9.'⁷² Or, as dissatisfying as it seems, we might have to admit ignorance in this regard and allow the source(s) to remain a mystery and trust that Paul believed they possessed authority—at least in what they affirm. Alternatively, we could say Paul relies not so much on what the explicit text says but its logical and theological relevance. This brings me to the discussion of the quotation's function.

3.3.2. Function of Paul's Quotation

One reason why the emphasis might fall not on a specific source but on the relevance of the claim is the kinds of proposed sources and their theological tenor. All of the proposed sources for Paul's quotation share to varying degrees an apocalyptic view of the world and God's future dealings with creation. Moreover, in each of the proposed sources divine wisdom plays a role not only in how these apocalyptic events unfold but also how they are understood. Momentarily leaving to one side the question of the initial and ambiguous pronoun ὅς and its antecedent, we must consider Paul's vague reference to things unseen, unheard and unattained.

The specific phraseology of eyes not seeing nor ears hearing is reminiscent of OT prophetic announcements, specifically the announcements concerning those ignorant of the ways in which God sovereignly operates over creation and shapes the events of history in accordance with the divine will (cf.

⁷⁰ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 179.

⁷¹ Although Reinmuth appears to argue the opposite—see 'LAB 40,4 und die Krise der Weisheit im 1 Korintherbrief: Ein Beitrag zu den hermeneutischen Voraussetzungen der paulinischen Argumentation,' in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 471-78. Reinmuth explores the possibility of an argumentative approach that relies on yet reshapes narrative elements to reinforce a theological truth. This approach, for Reinmuth, can be found in both *LAB* and Paul's letters—specifically 1 Corinthians—and the similarities suggest some awareness between the two.

⁷² C. D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation and Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 189.

Isa 6.9-10; Jer 5.21; Ezek 12.2).⁷³ Conversely, the language of eyes seeing and ears hearing also has OT parallels where the emphasis is on those who know or shall know the ways or will of God (cf. Job 42.5; Isa 32.3; 43.8; 64.4). Relevant for my purposes is how the respective groups are defined: the ignorant are those who have rebelled against God and act contrary to the divine will, while the ones who possess knowledge are faithful to God and live according to the divine will.

If we understand the object of what eyes see and ears hear as the ways or will of God, then we can begin to make sense of the significance of such things (not) entering the human heart (i.e. ἐπι καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη). At least within Judaism the heart served as the seat for wisdom,⁷⁴ specifically the place where God's gift of wisdom is received.⁷⁵ Equipped with this wisdom the heart becomes the source from which a person derives his or her understanding of life and how to live in harmony with the wisdom of God.⁷⁶

Alternatively, those who refuse to allow such wisdom to govern their lives or receive such wisdom will not be able to define life wisely or live in harmony with the wisdom of God. Specifically, the way of life espoused by this latter group is portrayed not only as opposed to the ways of God⁷⁷ but also as a path that leads to darkness or death.⁷⁸ In broader terms, defining life apart from or in contradistinction to the wisdom of God is depicted as the way of folly or foolishness,⁷⁹ and it is understood to be the sharp antithesis to the way of righteousness—i.e. life lived according to God's wisdom. It is therefore not

⁷³ Greenberg's remarks are worth noting: 'In those passages [i.e. Is 6.9 and Jer 5.21], however, it is the stupidity and mindlessness of the people that is denounced . . . , while here [in Ez 12.2] it is their wilfulness. Having eyes "to see" (that can see) and ears "to hear" (that can hear) they have refused to use them, "for they are a rebellious house" ' (*Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1983], 208-09).

⁷⁴ See e.g. Job 9.4; 37.24; Prov 10.8; 16.21, 23; 18.15; Eccl 8.5. For a fuller examination of this theme in both Jewish and Egyptian wisdom texts, see N. Shupak, *Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage's Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Friborg: University Press, 1993), 297-311.

⁷⁵ See e.g. 1 Kgs 3.12; Eccl 1.13, 16, 17; 2.3; Sir 6.37.

⁷⁶ This theme is a particular emphasis within Jewish wisdom literature, one that attempts to inculcate a specific means for defining and interpreting reality, or establish a particular worldview, which then determines how Israel was to live. Cf. L. H. Schiffmann, *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple & Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1991), 32; J. L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 10.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Pss 50.10; 119.155; Prov 28.4.

⁷⁸ For 'darkness' see e.g. Job 10.22; 23.17; Pss 10.10-14; 11.2; 35.6; Prov 2.13; 20.20; Eccl 2.14; 6.4. For 'death' see e.g. Pss 6.5; 7.13; 49.14, 17; 55.15; 107.18; Prov 2.18; 5.5; 7.27; 14.12.

⁷⁹ See e.g. Pss 14.1 (//53.1); 49.12-14; 74.22; 93.6; 94.8; Prov 1.7; 10.8, 14, 21; 12.15, 23; 13.20; 14.16 24; 15.2, 5, 7, 14, 20; 16.22; 18.2; 19.29; 24.7.

uncommon in Jewish wisdom texts to find a marked dualism between the righteous (wise) and the wicked (fools),⁸⁰ a theme that has relevance specifically for 1 Cor 2.9 but also the wider argument of 1 Cor 1.14–3.4.

We begin to see traces of this dualism when we consider the final clause of Paul's quotation: ἃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν (2.9c). On one side there are those who love God and receive from God because of that love, while, by implication, on the other side there are those who do not receive because they do not love God. This would seem to create a natural cause-and-effect relationship between the ideas of receiving from and loving God. However, what is the object received and is it contingent upon one's love for God? This brings me to the issue of the initial, ambiguous relative pronoun ὅς. Part of the concern is identifying the most natural antecedent for the pronoun, for which scholars have suggested various possibilities. For example, Morris suggests that it refers to 'the wonderful things that God has made ready for those who love him'⁸¹—a reading that appears to combine the essence of both 2.9c and 2.12-13. This suggestion, however, does very little to explain the referent in a precise way; it merely offers a broad idea.

Ostensibly trying to avoid generalities, Schrage links ὅς with either the specific concept of 'glory' in 2.7 or the basic idea of the gift of salvation for those who believe.⁸² However glory and the gift of salvation are each singular ideas whereas the pronoun in 2.9 is plural,⁸³ a dilemma that Morris' reading avoided with the gloss, 'wonderful things.' Moreover the precision of Schrage's suggestion becomes difficult to sustain when the rest of Paul's argument is considered—i.e. he is concerned with more than the notion of 'glory' and the gift of salvation. For Paul the concern deals with *how* that glory is revealed and obtained and what it means for those who receive it—i.e. those who are being saved. With this wider emphasis in view, Grosheide and others connect the

⁸⁰ See e.g. Job 3.17; 9.22; Pss 1; 7.9; 11.5-7; 31.17; 32.10; 34.21; 37.10-11, 16, 21, 28, 39-40; 58.3-11; 68.2-3; 75.8-10; 82; 91.7, 12; 112.6-10; Prov 2.21-22; 3.33; 4.18-19; 21.12, 18, 29; 24.16; 25.26; 28.12, 28; 29.2, 7, 16; Eccl 7.15; 8.14. Cf. esp. Prov 10.1–18.24.

⁸¹ Morris, *First Epistle*, 56—emphasis removed.

⁸² Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.256.

⁸³ Scholars advocating this view tend to offer no explanation for the dilemma—see e.g. Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 66-67; G. Deluz, *A Companion to 1 Corinthians* (ed. and trans. G. E. Watt; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), 28; Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 85; Mare-Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians*, 28; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 38-39; M. L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 59-60; Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 169-70.

relative pronoun with ‘the wisdom of God in Christ which the world did not acknowledge.’⁸⁴ While this reading corresponds with the focus of Paul’s argument in a more consistent way, it does not avoid the dilemma of a plural pronoun referring to a singular idea.

However, Fee’s comments in this regard are worth noting, for they appear to address this dilemma in a way that is both fair to the syntax and consistent with the argument.⁸⁵ Specifically, according to Fee, the quotation of 2.9 is divided into four lines:

- (1) ἃ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν
- (2) καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσεν
- (3) καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη
- (4) ἃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαῶσιν αὐτόν

Fee argues that the relative pronoun in line 4 refers back to the implied—albeit ambiguous—objects in lines 1-3, thus making them the objects of the main verb in line 4 (i.e. things which God has prepared). Admittedly, this reading settles the use of the plural in line 4, yet it does not account for the plural pronoun in line 1. One option would be to consider the meaning of the whole quotation, noting the particular emphasis of line 4, in the light of Paul’s surrounding argument. Specifically, Paul in 2.6-8 stresses what he does speak, and that the substance of that message is God’s wisdom, wisdom which is hidden in mystery, the mystery of salvation via a crucifixion and how this wise mystery remained unknown to the rulers of this age.

All of this, therefore, collectively forms the substance of the gospel message, represents the ‘things’ which God has prepared and revealed ‘for those who love him.’ Moreover, the notion of some receiving God’s wisdom and others not reflects a similar idea found in 1.18, where some judge the word of the cross to be foolishness while others know it to be God’s power, and it is the latter who are being saved while the former are being destroyed. This then ties in with 2.1-5 where the Corinthians’ faith is rooted in the power of God, in the cross of Christ, made known to them through Paul’s apostolic preaching of Christ

⁸⁴ Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 66-67. A small number of commentators say virtually nothing about the antecedent—see e.g. Barrett, *First Epistle*, 73; Lietzmann, *An die Korinther*, 13; Rief, *First Letter*, 19; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 127; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 132. Conzelmann suggests that the entire structure of the passage makes it impossible to know anything for certain—Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 64.

⁸⁵ Fee, *First Epistle*, 107-08.

crucified. It is precisely this preaching, especially its content that receives the derogatory label, ‘foolishness’; yet it is precisely this foolishness that Paul proclaims to be God’s wisdom.

With regard to the implied recipients of 2.9, this object of discussion (i.e. God’s wisdom) necessarily applies to both those who receive and those who do not know, and the distinction relates to how this wisdom is understood by both parties. As intimated above, in 2.6-7 Paul emphasises the otherness of this wisdom with regard to its origin or source, and he does so in two forms: a negative and a positive. As a negative, Paul specifically states that the wisdom he declares is not derived from ‘the rulers of this age’ (2.6), or it is a wisdom that the rulers of this age would not proclaim. As a positive, he asserts it as wisdom from God (2.7). Moreover by stressing the mysteriousness and hiddenness of God’s wisdom (2.7), Paul not only further separates it from the wisdom of ‘the rulers of this age’ but also intimates why they are ignorant of it—i.e. it is not theirs. Moreover, it is beyond the reach of *any* human.

For Paul, proof that the rulers of this age are ignorant of God’s mysterious and hidden wisdom is the very act of them crucifying Christ (see 2.8);⁸⁶ or as Grosheide puts it: ‘[t]o condemn Him to the ignominy of a cross is evidence of unbelief and of not acknowledging the wisdom of God who revealed Himself in Christ’s glory.’⁸⁷ This corresponds with Paul’s earlier claims in 1.18-25 where he notes the divergent views concerning the message of the cross. As noted before, in 1.18 Paul distinguishes between those who see the message of the cross as folly and those who see it as God’s power. Moreover Paul stresses the idea that the former are being destroyed (1.18a) while the latter are being saved (1.18b). This corresponds with the earlier OT portrayals of wicked fools rejecting God’s wisdom, thus bringing about darkness or death, and righteous wise receiving God’s wisdom, thus bringing about life or salvation. The antithesis of 1.18-25 appears to be carried over to Paul’s remarks in 2.9, where he emphasises the contrast between those who fail to see, hear and receive God’s wisdom with those who receive what is prepared for them.

However, when we come to 2.9 and recognise its object as God’s wisdom, and when we consider this in the light of Paul’s remarks in 2.7-8, we seem to

⁸⁶ A further discussion of this passage will be given below.

⁸⁷ Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 66.

encounter a dilemma for which there is no solution. If God's wisdom is hidden, mysterious and reserved only for a select group, and if human wisdom is incapable of locating and plumbing the depths of this wisdom, how then can the specific group in 2.9 come to know or obtain that which has been prepared for them? Part of the solution is implied in the statement, ὃ ἠτοίμασεν ὁ θεὸς τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν, while the remainder of the solution is emphatically given in 2.10a. With regard to the implied solution, the idea of something prepared suggests the potential for bestowal and receipt, which further suggest active and passive participants in the transaction. Here in 2.9c the participants are loosely described: God is the active agent in preparing 'the things,' and those who love God are the passive recipients of what God has prepared.⁸⁸ All that remains is for the transaction to occur, something Paul announces in 2.10-13 as having taken place.

Before considering that announcement, we should briefly note the qualifier 'those who love' God, which alters the usual expectation for how one obtains divine wisdom. The usual expectation would be knowledge, whereby God blesses those who strive to know the things of God by granting them access to the unseen riches of divine wisdom. Thus, Paul's readers would have expected, 'those who *know* God.' However, this suggests a sufficient ability within the human mind to achieve such things, yet it is precisely this notion that Paul repudiates. This follows from a comparison of what Paul says and a similar theme expressed in Jer 5, where the prophet announces God's judgment on the people for their 'rebellious heart' (5.23). Specifically, Jeremiah calls them a 'foolish and heartless people' (5.21a), those 'who have eyes but do not see; who have ears but do not hear' (5.21b-c).

As Fretheim notes, '[t]he problem is not one of ignorance, however, as if to say that with a little more knowledge, the issue could be resolved. The language is relational; the issue is that they do not know the LORD, which leads to a foolish life of evil rather than good.'⁸⁹ Similarly for Paul, the solution is not knowledge, since no amount or exercise of knowledge will ever be adequate for obtaining access to God's hidden wisdom. Moreover, Paul has already stressed

⁸⁸ The phrase 'passive recipients' simply refers to the fact that they do not initiate the transaction.

⁸⁹ T. E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 114.

this reality and the fact that God has rendered the power of human wisdom impotent, thus making it incapable of achieving what it desires. The solution is relational: it is love for God. This prepares the way for what Paul says in 2.10-13, where he explicitly states how those who love God come to know God's wisdom.

3.3.3. *God's Wisdom and the Mediation of the Spirit*

Specifically in 1 Cor 2.10-13 Paul's expresses his understanding of the agency of the Spirit in revealing the hidden, divine wisdom to believers. This expression can be divided into four parts, each of which will be examined below in order to draw out their individual significance and their collective relevance for the rest of Paul's argument.

3.3.3.1. Agency of the Spirit

First, in 2.10a Paul asserts the simple reality concerning the agency of the Spirit in revealing divine wisdom. In the light of the discussion above, since we can be confident that the object of revelation is God's wisdom, we can now begin to see how the quotation in 2.9 functions in Paul's argument. While it is certainly possible to view the quotation as support for or a conclusion to the claims of 2.6-8, or even to see it as a supporting hinge on which the logical transition between 2.6-8 and 2.10-16 swings, it is more likely that Paul's focus is not on the external details of the quotation but rests squarely on the internal logic of what is quoted.

Thus, agreeing with Lamp, the quotation supplied 'appears to be more focused on illustrating Paul's point rather than proving it from Scripture.'⁹⁰ In other words, as the quotation asserts, the things of God are completely inaccessible to humans and human wisdom. The only way in which the inaccessible things of God become accessible is by God's initiative; no amount of human effort or wise attempts will alter this reality.⁹¹ However, with the

⁹⁰ Lamp, *First Corinthians*, 165-66.

⁹¹ Cf. Tillich: 'the human spirit is unable to compel the divine Spirit to enter the human spirit. The attempt to do so belongs directly to the ambiguities of religion and indirectly to the ambiguities of culture and morality. If religious devotion, moral obedience, or scientific honesty could compel the divine Spirit to "descend" to us, the Spirit which "descended" would be the human spirit in a religious disguise' (*Systematic Theology* [Digwell Place: James Nisbet & Co., 1964], 3.119-20).

emphatic conjunction δέ in 2.10,⁹² Paul announces that such inaccessibility no longer exists because God has made wisdom accessible by the Spirit.⁹³ This brings me to the second part of Paul's understanding of the Spirit's role in mediating wisdom.

3.3.3.2. *Necessity of the Agency*

In 1 Cor 2.10b-11 Paul explains why the Spirit must be the agent of revelation.⁹⁴ Admittedly, Paul's remarks here are more or less tangential to his primary claim about the Spirit's necessary role in revealing divine wisdom; however the tangent is ultimately germane to the argument of 2.9-13. Paul begins his explanation with a brief statement about what the Spirit is able to do (i.e. τὸ πνεῦμα πάντα ἐραυνᾷ [2.10b]), and the extent to which this occurs (i.e. καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ [2.10c]).⁹⁵ This type of claim has a bearing not only on Paul's understanding of the Spirit as a revelatory agent (2.10a) but also the nature and scope of what is revealed. Thus, if this Spirit is able to search all things, and if the extent of 'all things' includes knowing the depths of God,⁹⁶ then at the very least we can safely assume that this Spirit possesses an ability or capacity to know things only God can know, which further suggests that this Spirit shares a unique (or privileged) relationship with God. Moreover, if this unique relationship and ability or capacity to know are admitted, then we can further assume that the Spirit as a chosen revelatory agent would act in accordance with that relationship and disclose only that which is consistent with God's wisdom.

⁹² The loose use of the connective δέ (⋈ A C D G P Ψ 33 81 614 *Byz al*) is entirely in Paul's manner, whereas γάρ, though strongly supported by p⁴⁶ B 1739 Clement *al*, has the appearance of being an improvement introduced by copyists' (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 481).

⁹³ A small number of manuscripts support the inclusion of the personal pronoun αὐτός following διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος (⋈² D F G Ψ *Byz latt syr sa^{ms} bo^{ms} Epiphanius Speculum*), presumably to supply (theological) clarity for the nature of the Spirit in relation to God. However, the absence of αὐτός in other key manuscripts (p⁴⁶ ⋈* A B C 630 1739 1881 *pc sa bo Clement*) supports the omission as being original. As Thiselton argues: 'Had the word *his* been original, it is difficult to understand both its lack of early support and why it should have been omitted' (*First Epistle*, 255; cf. also Collins, *First Corinthians*, 132).

⁹⁴ This follows Collins: 'Paul uses an explanatory *gar* to explain why it is that the Spirit of God is the one who has revealed the mystery and divine wisdom' (*First Corinthians*, 132-33).

⁹⁵ 'To these depths of God the plan of salvation in Christ Jesus also belongs as Rom 11.33 bears out' (Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 68).

⁹⁶ Cf. Dan 2.22; 2Bar 14.8-9; Wis 7.22-30; 9.9-18.

Then, in 1 Cor 2.11 Paul goes on to explain why the Spirit must be the chosen agent of revelation,⁹⁷ and he does so in a particular way. A number of scholars have argued that Paul employs a logical (or rhetorical) device known as the ‘like by like’ principle.⁹⁸ According to Gärtner, this principle appears in four strands of tradition: the Stoics, Hermetic writings, Gnostics and Philo.⁹⁹ Gärtner contends that the principle was often employed by Greek thinkers in order ‘to understand the world and man, the rules governing the world and man’s ethical actions’ and even ‘how man can be capable of knowing God.’¹⁰⁰ However, Gärtner’s thesis fails to persuade for two reasons.

First, the principle in these traditions applies more to how humans can come to know as God knows and therefore think or reason like God.¹⁰¹ Such an emphasis is quite separate from Paul’s argument. Secondly, and more foundational, the traditions in question, with the possible exception of Philo,¹⁰² present the path of knowing as bottom-up, from humanity to God, which is also contrary to Paul’s argument. Other scholars are more inclined to see Paul’s remarks as nothing more than simple analogy,¹⁰³ one that not only remains consistent with Paul’s thought but also does not require a complex device for whose existence there is little evidence. This alternative is the one adopted here.

The simple analogy, therefore, is that only the spirit of a person can know the (innermost) things of that person. The only way in which those innermost things can be known by others is if the one who possesses them decides to reveal them. Until such a decision or time, the innermost things of that individual remain hidden. Similarly, for Paul’s argument, only the Spirit of God can know

⁹⁷ For those who argue similarly, see Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 69; Fee, *First Epistle*, 111-12; Mare-Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians*, 30; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 133.

⁹⁸ E.g. Gärtner, ‘The Pauline and Johannine Idea of “to Know God” Against the Hellenistic Background,’ *NTS* 14.2 (1968): 209-31; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 66; Fee, *First Epistle*, 111-12; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 127-28; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 180.

⁹⁹ Gärtner, ‘Pauline and Johannine,’ 209.

¹⁰⁰ Gärtner, ‘Pauline and Johannine,’ 210.

¹⁰¹ Specifically, humans—by their own efforts and/or wisdom—seek to know and reason like the divine, thus making them more or less equal with the divine. Where Gärtner’s thesis fails is in both the comparison and anticipated results of the ‘like by like’ principle he surveys. For him, humans are able to think or reason *like* the divine whereas for Paul it is impossible for a human to know the thoughts of God because humans are *unlike* God. Davis stresses a similar point—see *Wisdom and Spirit*, 111.

¹⁰² Gärtner does acknowledge that the Philo tradition presents the human mind (νοῦς) as incapable of knowing God even though the former has an essential connection with the latter via the πνεῦμα—see ‘Pauline and Johannine,’ 213-15.

¹⁰³ See e.g. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 258-59.

the (innermost) things of God—or, in this case, ‘the depths of God.’ Before dealing with what Paul is saying, we must be clear about what he is not advocating with this analogy.

First, a small number of scholars have suggested that Paul’s meaning in 2.11 points to an awareness of a subconscious or *ego* within the human being, and that this is what he refers to with the term, $\piνεῦμα$.¹⁰⁴ Second, others have taken Paul’s use of $\piνεῦμα$ as being synonymous with the human mind, which represents a broader category than a subconscious or *ego*.¹⁰⁵ While this latter interpretation aligns better with ancient anthropological views, such views do not appear to be Paul’s primary concern in this text.¹⁰⁶ Paul’s focus is the inherent logic of the analogy itself—i.e. the innermost things of a person or even a divine being cannot be known unless that person or divine being discloses them. We can be confident of such a focus given that Paul’s argument is dealing with the very nature and act of revelation, specifically the depths of God being revealed $\tauοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν$.

3.3.3.3. *Nature of the Agent*

In 2.12, Paul offers a word of assurance concerning the nature of the Spirit as God’s agent of revelation. It is also at this point that Paul resumes his initial claim in 2.10a, which was broken off momentarily by the explanation of 2.10b-11. Paul immediately presents a categorical distinction, one that involves the ‘spirit of the world’ and ‘the Spirit from God.’ I will return to the question of what Paul means by these phrases later; for now it is important only to recognise the nature of the distinction and its essential function for Paul’s argument. With regard to the nature of the distinction, Paul is quite clear: the one is not the other.¹⁰⁷ In the light of what Paul has said about the wisdom of this age and how that wisdom represents a particular way of knowing, one incapable of ascertaining God’s wisdom, and since only God’s Spirit has access

¹⁰⁴ See Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 69; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ See e.g. Ruef, *First Letter*, 19; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 66.

¹⁰⁶ See e.g. Fee, *First Epistle*, 112; Mare-Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians*, 30; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 128.

¹⁰⁷ In saying, ‘the nature of the distinction,’ I am referring to both the concept and the ontology of ‘spirit’. The recent work of Rabens emphasises the need for clarity on this distinction, particularly the idea of God’s Spirit as material or physical substance and whether or not Paul actually thought in or used such terms—see *Holy Spirit and Ethics*, 13-15, 17-19, 25-29.

to and is the revealer of God's wisdom, it makes sense for Paul to categorise the wisdom of this age as 'the spirit of the world.'

This brings me to the functional aspect of the distinction, which is to assure the Corinthians that they have not received a spirit that is unable to know God's wisdom; instead they have received the one who is able to know the wisdom of God—or even the depths of God. The result of this, as Paul goes on to say in 2.12b, is that the Corinthian believers can know the things freely given to them by God. The ambiguous *τὰ* appears to have two likely referents.

Immediately, and grammatically, it relates to what Paul states in 2.13-14a, an argument I will return to shortly. However, 'things' also seems to relate back to Paul's claims in 2.9—i.e. the things unseen, unheard and divinely prepared. The obvious implication would be if the Corinthians received 'the spirit of the world' they would be those who do not see, do not hear and do not partake of what is prepared. Yet because they have received 'the Spirit of God' they are able to see, hear and partake of the things of God, for it is only by this Spirit that such things can be revealed and known. This follows from the earlier point about the nature of the Spirit described in 2.10b and the content of what is revealed as noted in 2.9.

3.3.3.4. Apostolic Preaching and the Agency of Spirit-Revelation

In 2.13, Paul anchors the substance of his message to the revelation of the Spirit, which brings me back to the question of the immediate referent for *τὰ* in 2.12b. Particularly relevant here is the connection between what believers know as a result of receiving God's Spirit and the things which Paul teaches,¹⁰⁸ specifically things *ἐν διδασκατοῖς πνεύματος* and things only discerned by the Spirit. Moreover, we must recognise the links between what is known and what is received and how the Spirit plays a role in the entire process. To begin in reverse, in 2.12 Paul states that 'we have received . . . the Spirit from God', which establishes the necessary condition for him to say, 'we know the things freely given to us'; and it is precisely these things that Paul says, 'we speak'.

In keeping with the reception of God's Spirit, and the revelation of the things of God as a result, Paul qualifies the nature of his speaking in negative

¹⁰⁸ I will return later to the dilemma of the plural, *λαλοῦμεν* in this passage and who are the most likely referents.

and positive terms. Negatively, he affirms that his speaking was οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς λόγος ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας, an affirmation that reflects his earlier claims in 2.4 (cf. also 1.17), and positively he asserts that his speaking was ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος, which also bears connections with 2.4. What exactly is Paul saying with this contrast, specifically the notion of the Spirit teaching, and how does it affect his overall argument?

Since 2.13 is the third time Paul uses λαλέω to describe his wisdom instruction (cf. 2.6a, 7a), and since the object of the initial λαλέω is ‘wisdom,’ and since Paul identifies the recipients of this wisdom as οἱ τελείοι, one might be tempted to read Paul’s remarks in 2.13 as evidence of a deeper level of instruction vis-à-vis the more basic teaching of the *kerygma* in 2.1-5. Accordingly, that which he proclaims in general for the initial gospel message represents the basic *kerygma*, whereas the Spirit-teaching of divine wisdom is reserved only for the spiritual elite.

However, as noted earlier,¹⁰⁹ this reading perpetuates that which Paul seeks to correct—i.e. status-seeking on the basis of an assumed superior knowledge or spirituality. Willis argues that it is

most unlikely that having opposed divisiveness on the basis of the *Corinthians*’ wisdom, Paul would sponsor a similar division with *his own* teaching. Would not this encourage the Pauline faction? It would seem most awkward in the midst of an argument against divisiveness that Paul would endorse any bi-level divisions of believers!¹¹⁰

Thus, we must consider alternative ways for understanding Paul’s meaning in this passage.

One alternative, in the light of the revelation idea, is that Paul refers to a kind of wisdom instruction via ecstatic speech, particularly tongue-speaking.¹¹¹ Such a reading would be possible in the light of the immediate connection between the relative pronoun in 2.13 and its antecedent, τὰ χαρισθέντα in 2.12b, which would also appear to relate to Paul’s earlier remarks in 1.7 where the cognate, χάρισμα is used. This reading appears to garner additional support by virtue of the connection between these gracious gifts and what is spoken to the

¹⁰⁹ See 78-79 above.

¹¹⁰ Willis, ‘“The Mind of Christ”’, 120-21—emphasis original; cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 128.

¹¹¹ Cf. Koenig, ‘From Mystery to Ministry,’ 170, 172; D. Nichols, ‘The Problem of Two-Level Christianity at Corinth,’ *Pneuma* 11.2 (1989): 107-08.

πνεύματικός. Moreover, as Horsley points out, in chapters 12-14 ‘the *pneumatika* are clearly the special spiritual gifts such as glossolalia and ecstatic prophecy, and *pneumatikos* refers to the special standing of one who enjoys such spiritual gifts.’¹¹²

However, this alternative creates historical problems with regard to Paul’s initial proclamation, which is a major focus of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4. The implications of and most plausible inferences drawn from Paul’s statement in 1 Cor 2.1-5 are that he spoke not only in simple speech but also speech that was intelligible or recognisable.¹¹³ The only way this could be avoided is if one presupposes varying levels of instruction, where the initial proclamation was given in simple, intelligible or recognisable speech whereas the deeper instruction involved a message given in ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking.¹¹⁴ Even if these problems and conjectured solutions were set aside, the fundamental dilemma remains: a two-tiered body of believers is created, and Paul is explicitly arguing against a divided body.

A more plausible solution would be to re-examine the specific contrast that Paul establishes and then recognise the function of the phrase πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες with regard to that contrast. First, the controlling verb of 2.13 is λαλέω, and in the light of the preceding discussion we can be sure that the initial relative pronoun of 2.13 refers to all the things God graciously gives, which would certainly include wisdom, thus making such things the object of λαλέω. The contrast is established by the emphatic comparative conjunction formula, οὐκ . . . ἀλλά, and the specificity of the contrast deals with a distinction between modes of speaking wisdom.

On both sides of the contrast lies the prepositional phrase, ἐν διδακτοῖς, which not only qualifies the aspect of speaking but also suggests ways of instruction or knowing. It appears to be this latter nuance that is in view, for Paul distinguishes instruction given through ‘human words of wisdom’ from

¹¹² Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,’ 270.

¹¹³ Scott, summarising Gooch, argues ‘that the Spirit’s revelation retains a cognitive content (“wisdom” in 2:6, 7) which can be expressed by human language (2:7, 13), and that the “words taught by the Spirit” are “words serving interpretation (v. 13) and investigation (v. 14) rather than expressing nonrational ecstasy”’ (*Implicit Epistemology*, 45 n.124—quotes from Gooch, *Partial Knowledge*, 37).

¹¹⁴ Instruction via ecstatic speech or tongue-speaking presupposes a group able to understand what is articulated, which then leaves open the possibility of boasting of superiority by that group.

instruction given through ‘[the] Spirit.’ This has a ready parallel in 2.4, where Paul emphatically states that he did not rely on wise, persuasive speech¹¹⁵ but on the demonstration of the power of the Spirit in what he asserts was an unpolished message. Thus, Paul’s contrast in 2.13 is best seen not only as a continuation or re-emphasis of the contrast in 2.4 but also of the one pervading the entire argument—i.e. human wisdom and its ways of knowing versus God’s wisdom and ways of knowing.

Second the phrase, πνευματικοῖς πνευματικῶς συγκρίνοντες plays an important role in emphasising Paul’s argument about the distinct ways of knowing. However, this phrase is one of the more troubling aspects of this text, in terms of its translation and interpretation. To begin with, the meaning of συγκρίνω remains a point of dispute among scholars: Grosheide favours the idea of comparing or judging,¹¹⁶ the former being parallel to Paul’s use of συγκρίνω in 2 Cor 10.12;¹¹⁷ Barrett extends the range to include interpreting, composing or combining;¹¹⁸ and Fee advocates the inclusion of discerning, ‘in the sense of being able to make appropriate “judgments” about what God is doing in the world.’¹¹⁹ While these definitions contribute to our understanding of the term and its usage, they seem to operate within the same semantic range, sharing various degrees of overlap.

In each case, the proposed definitions stress the idea of examining two or more things together and recognising, in a rational way, their harmony or interrelatedness. We should at least be aware of this fluidity before making decisions about its exact meaning in 2.13. The other difficulty with the phrase is the repeated use of πνευματικός, albeit in different cases, and what precisely Paul means by each (or both). Moreover, the ambiguity in the term’s gender allows it to be used as either masculine or neuter, a distinction that affects how

¹¹⁵ The textual variant, πειθοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις in 2.4 suggests that scribes were aware of this thematic parallel.

¹¹⁶ Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 72. Admittedly, Grosheide allows for ‘combining’ but dismisses it. Morris, however, finds ‘combining’ to be the more plausible reading—see *First Epistle*, 58.

¹¹⁷ Fee (*First Epistle*, 115) recognises this parallel but says the idea of comparing ‘does not seem appropriate here’ in 1 Cor 2.13, yet he does not provide any explanation for his conclusion.

¹¹⁸ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 76. Morris soundly rejects ‘interpreting’ (see *First Epistle*, 58; *contra* Fee, *First Epistle*, 115, although he opts for ‘explaining’); Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 89; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 128; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 135; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 182.

¹¹⁹ Fee, *First Epistle*, 117.

one interprets Paul's claim. Fitzmyer offers a helpful summary of the four leading options for how to deal with this phrase,¹²⁰ each taking into consideration the gender of πνευματικός and the meaning and use of συγκρίνω.

First, it is possible to read both πνευματικοῖς and πνευματικά as neuter in gender, thus interpreted as 'spiritual things,' and to translate the verb συγκρίνω as 'compare,' similar to what appears in 2 Cor 10.12. The resultant phrase would then be rendered: 'comparing spiritual realities with spiritual realities.' Fitzmyer rightly points out that 'since the [participle] *Synkrinontes* modifies the subject of *laloumen*, it is not a question of receiving *pneumatika*, but of proclaiming them.'¹²¹ Second, it is possible to read πνευματικά as neuter on its own, πνευματικοῖς as masculine and modifying 'words' in 2.13a and translate συγκρίνοντες as 'interpreting,' similar to what appears in Gen 40.8, 16, 22; 41.12; Jdg 7.15; Dan 5.7 (LXX). The phrase would then be read as: 'interpreting spiritual realities in spiritual terms.' This is the option that Fitzmyer prefers; however the others must still be considered.

Third, it is possible to maintain a neuter reading for πνευματικά and a translation of 'interpreting' for συγκρίνοντες, yet take πνευματικοῖς as a masculine substantive, which then results in a reading of: 'interpreting spiritual realities for spiritual people.' Fitzmyer objects to this option for a surprising reason: '[it] anticipates the antithesis of vv. 14-15.'¹²² However this anticipation appears to be precisely what is happening within Paul's argument, thus making this option more likely. The final possibility returns to the decision of reading both πνευματικά and πνευματικοῖς as neuter, yet translates συγκρίνοντες as 'combining' or 'fitting together.' The resultant phrase is then rendered: 'fitting spiritual things to spiritual expression.' Fitzmyer offers no explanation for why this option could not be viable or why it should be rejected.

However, it appears as though the whole endeavour seeks to understand the phrase in isolation. Lang offers an approach that examines the components of the phrase in turn and then applies the whole statement back to the argument, an approach that requires several vital steps.¹²³ First, both uses of

¹²⁰ See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 181-82.

¹²¹ See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 182.

¹²² See Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 182.

¹²³ Lang argues along similar lines—see *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 45-46.

πνευματικός are read as neuter in gender, although a gloss for this usage will be withheld for now. Second, one must take into consideration that the first πνευματικός is in the dative case while the second is in the accusative. Third, one must not only allow συγκρίνω to operate (initially) within its immediate context, thus recognising its syntactical relationship to the two uses of πνευματικός, but also rely on the general (albeit fluid) definition of συγκρίνω as stated above. Thus, the act of examining two or more things together and recognising, in a rational way, their harmony or interrelatedness applies to the two uses of πνευματικός—one being the object and the other being the means. From this the reader can supply appropriate glosses for the two terms: for the dative use, ‘spiritual means’; for the accusative, ‘spiritual things.’ Accordingly, the phrase could be rendered, ‘defining spiritual things by spiritual means.’ Finally, the entire phrase is seen as qualifying Paul’s primary remarks in 2.13—i.e. it explains what it means to speak in words taught by the Spirit by specifying how those words are received and comprehended.

Since the object of the message is God’s wisdom, which suggests the content of the message is spiritual in nature and origin, and since that wisdom can only be revealed by God’s Spirit, which makes knowledge of that wisdom dependent upon the agency of the Spirit, as Lang argues, ‘[t]he nature and manner of speech should correspond to the origin of knowledge. The wisdom of God can only be made known by the Spirit of God, according to the rule that like is known by like.’¹²⁴ This correspondence is precisely what Paul is stressing with regard to his spoken message in Corinth.

However, this correspondence has another facet that cannot be overlooked: the criterion by which Paul speaks the message of God’s wisdom is the same criterion by which that message is understood and judged.¹²⁵ Thus, just as Paul relies on the powerful work of the Spirit to reveal God’s wisdom in a message not relying on rhetorical flair, the Corinthians must rely on the same Spirit for a correct understanding and acquisition of that wisdom even when delivered through an unpolished message. However, the substance of Paul’s argument suggests that the Corinthians are now interpreting or judging his original message according to a criterion that is not ‘spiritual.’ They appear to

¹²⁴ Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 45.

¹²⁵ See Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 67.

be judging the message through human wisdom; they are employing a human criterion to interpret spiritual content, a strategy that ultimately fails because like is not interpreting by like.

Paul then explains what he asserts in 2.13 with another contrast in 2.14-15, this time pitting the ‘natural person’ (ψυχικός) against the ‘spiritual person’ (πνευματικός).¹²⁶ Scholars remain divided over how to address this terminology. Some maintain that the explicit terms and the specific distinction provide further evidence for a Gnostic or proto-Gnostic influence on Pauline thought, where the ‘natural’ person is the one not illuminated by the secret γνῶσις while the ‘spiritual’ person is.¹²⁷ As a result, it is only the ‘spiritual’ person who has access to the secret knowledge or wisdom imparted by God—presumably through Paul’s additional, selective or exclusive post-gospel teaching—while the ‘natural’ person remains ignorant of such things. While avoiding the idea of a Gnostic influence, yet wanting to explain the apparent uniqueness of Paul’s description, others have argued that he merely adopts the language or terms used within Corinth, which might have been influenced by Gnostic or proto-gnostic teaching.¹²⁸ Thus, Paul is once again portrayed as taking on the ideas of his opponents, subverting and redefining those ideas for his argument.¹²⁹

However, neither of these explanations is necessary, especially the Gnostic reading, for understanding Paul’s meaning or determining the source of his ideas.¹³⁰ Moreover, both readings presuppose an internal dichotomy where there are ‘natural’ and ‘spiritual’ believers. This not only perpetuates the faulty assumption of a tiered body of believers in Corinth, it also overlooks the clear distinction and the force of that distinction in Paul’s argument, not just in 2.14-15 but also 2.1–3.4. Paul’s explicit claims about the ‘natural person’ are directed

¹²⁶ I will deal with Paul’s reference to the ‘spiritual person’ later in this chapter.

¹²⁷ See e.g. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 70-80; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 229. Cf. also Bultmann, *Theology*, 165-66, 174; Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms*, 121-23; G. Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. F. W. Horn; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 62.

¹²⁸ See e.g. Winter, *Pneumatiker und Psychiker in Korinth*, 231-32.

¹²⁹ Cf. Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*, 27, 34-40; Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 99, 114-17, 125-26; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 61-62. Litfin is sceptical of this approach—see *Theology of Proclamation*, 214 n.2.

¹³⁰ As Scott reminds us: ‘Paul frequently describes believers as possessing the Spirit, and in Gal 6:1 he designates the Galatian believers as οἱ πνευματικοί. While the adjective ψυχικός is used by Paul only in 1 Cor, the opposition between those with the Spirit and those without it is hardly uncharacteristic of Paul, and the adjective ψυχικός would not have been recognized in the first century as technical vocabulary’ (*Implicit Epistemology*, 37 n.92).

toward non-believers, not a particular (non-illuminated) group of believers. Evidence for this initially comes from the fact that the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος οὐ δέχεται τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ θεοῦ· μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γνῶναι, ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται (2.14).

This echoes Paul's earlier claims about the rulers of this age not knowing God's wisdom, and their ignorance was primarily due to their not having (or receiving) the revelation of God's Spirit, whereas believers do know God's wisdom and that knowledge is explicitly tied to having (or receiving) the Spirit's revelation. Moreover, the charge of foolishness laid against God's wisdom characterises those who are being destroyed, while those who know it to be God's power are characterised as those being saved. Thus, Paul's distinction here in 2.14 is consistent with the one he makes throughout—i.e. those who belong to God and those who do not. It is therefore not appropriate to see his remarks about the 'natural person' as referring to a type of lower-level believer.

3.4. Spirit, Wisdom and Gospel in Corinth

Earlier it was argued that the *object* of revelation in 2.9-13 is God's wisdom and that God's Spirit is the necessary agent for mediating this wisdom. I now turn my attention to the question of what precisely is revealed, or: what is the *content* of that revelation? My concern here is not only identifying the content and the Spirit's role in disclosing that content but also its relationship to Paul's ministry in Corinth and the problems that arise following his departure. Therefore I must examine the elements of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 2.6-16 in the light of the larger argument of 1 Cor 2.1-3.4.

3.4.1. Gospel Proclaimed as God's Wisdom

After describing the manner in which he proclaimed the gospel of Christ crucified (2.1-5), specifically that he did not depend on assumed superior (human) speech or wisdom, Paul goes on to announce the wisdom he does proclaim (2.6-16) and how that wisdom is meant to shape the Corinthians' thinking and behaviour (cf. 3.1-4). As noted above, Paul's announcement of proclaiming a wisdom message in 2.6-16 appears to conflict with his rejection of

wisdom in 2.1-5, thus leading a few scholars to see a contradiction.¹³¹ However the apparent contradiction persists only if one fails to interpret the ‘wisdom’ of 2.1-5 as distinct from the ‘wisdom’ of 2.6-16. One part of the distinction pertains to Paul’s remarks about the two wisdoms, especially his specific focus in those remarks. On a basic level, the ‘wisdom’ of 2.1-5 is concerned with the form or expression whereas the ‘wisdom’ of 2.6-16 deals with the content or substance.

More substantially, as argued in the previous chapter, Paul’s rejection of wisdom (and wise speech) in 2.1-5 is not a wholesale rejection of wisdom; instead, he rejects a particular kind or form of wisdom, one he deems incapable of revealing the mystery of God as displayed in the cross of Christ. Naturally, this rejection of a particular form does not entail the discontinuation or discrediting of the notion of wisdom, especially divine wisdom. The rejection simply asserts that a particular approach or form is unable to ascertain that divine wisdom.

Therefore, Paul’s rejection of (or his refusal to employ) human wisdom to proclaim the gospel of Christ crucified does not imply that his gospel is necessarily unwise or devoid of wisdom. The way Paul continues his argument in 2.6, with the emphatic conjunction *δέ*, stresses this very point: while he rejects human wisdom and wise speech as a means for knowing divine wisdom, he does speak a message that is in fact wisdom. When one views things in this way, especially the distinction made between 2.1-5 and 2.6-16, two things become clear. First, Paul is neither diverting from his earlier claims nor contradicting himself; he is elaborating on a distinction that has been at work since 1.18, especially as it relates to his apostolic mission and preaching. Second, in recognising that what Paul rejects in 2.1-5 is a particular *form* for proclaiming the gospel, one sees that the central focus of his argument has not changed; he is still concerned with the content or nature of the gospel message and how that message is being interpreted by the Corinthians.

Specifically, Paul continues to stress the distinctive and incompatible ways in which people can know God’s wisdom and that only one of these ways is effectual. Taking these points together, we are led to the conclusion that the wisdom of which Paul speaks in 2.6-16 is another way of referring to the gospel

¹³¹ Again see e.g. Bultmann, ‘Karl Barth,’ 70-72; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 57; Walker, ‘1 Corinthians 2.6-16,’ 75-94.

message he proclaims in 2.1-5. Specifically, as Schnabel argues: ‘In V. 6-16 erläutert Paulus die Verkündigung und die Erkenntnis des gekreuzigten Messias als rettende Weisheit Gottes.’¹³² However, before we examine how the gospel is God’s wisdom and the relationship of the Spirit with that wisdom, we must address two hermeneutical concerns.

3.4.1.1. Identifying the ‘Speaker(s)’ of the Gospel

The first deals with the shift from the first-person singular in 2.1-5 to the first-person plural in 2.6-16. As noted above, scholarly opinion about this shift essentially falls into three categories: 1) those viewing the shift as evidence of joint authorship, or collaboration with the co-senders of the letter, where such individuals contribute to that portion of the argument; 2) those arguing for the use of an authorial ‘we’, where Paul speaks on behalf of the co-senders, thus maintaining primary authorship; or 3) those interpreting the shift as emphasising a particular point, either for the sake of establishing consistency in the apostolic witness or for marking a contrast between themselves and their opponents. With regard to the last, it is possible that Paul is contrasting himself (and ostensibly those carrying out the apostolic message) with those who either proclaim a different gospel or rely on a form and style of wisdom different from his own. Functionally, this interpretation speaks to the content of Paul’s remarks and the overall scope of his argument. However, this interpretation fails to identify specifically who are included in the ‘we’ and why the shift occurs.

With regard to the first two options, they share a similarity in that those collectively referred to as ‘we’ are the ones involved in the composition of the letter. Unlike the third option, these two seek to identify those who make up the ‘we.’ However, while this identification could be established by the implication of Paul’s argument, it does not fit the immediate aims or purpose of his argument or explain why he must present the case he does. Accordingly,

¹³² Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 163. Prior to this, Schnabel highlights a number of textual features that suggest the unity of 2.1-16: ‘Der Abschnitt 2,6-16 is mit 2,1-5 eng verbunden: 1. In V. 1 bezeichnet Paulus seine Verkündigung mit der ungewöhnlichen Formulierung τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, die er in V. 7 aufgreift, wo er seine Predigtstätigkeit mit der Wendung θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστήριῳ beschreibt. 2. In V 4 verwendet Paulus (zum ersten Mal in 1Kor) die Vokabel πνεῦμα, die in V. 10 aufgegriffen wird und sodann in dem gesamten Abschnitt eine wichtige Rolle spielt (V. 11.12.13.14). 3. Die antithetische Aussage von V. 4 hat in V. 13 eine deutliche Parallele: ὁ λόγος μου καὶ το κήρυγμά μου (V. 4a) entspricht ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν (V. 13a), οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖ σοφίας (V. 4b) entspricht οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας (V. 13a [sic]) und ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως (V. 4c) entspricht ἀλλ’ ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος (V. 13c)’ (ibid).

Sosthenes (the stated co-sender of the letter in 1.1) and his role in Paul's apostolic mission and message are not matters of dispute in the letter, nor is his name listed among those around whom the Corinthians are rallying. Thus, to include Sosthenes in the 'we' portion of Paul's argument would seem rather curious or even unexpected for the Corinthians. This leaves us with the third option, which offers us a way into dealing with Paul's argument in an appropriate manner.

Earlier it was argued that the shift in 'person' in 2.1-16 is not unique in Paul's letters in general and the same could be said for 1 Corinthians in particular. From 1.4-17 Paul speaks primarily in the first-person singular; with 1.18 he shifts to the first-person plural and maintains it until 1.31.¹³³ Then in 2.1-5 he reverts to the first-person singular only to adopt the first-person plural for 2.6-16 before returning once again to the first-person singular from 3.1 onward. The point of interest is that the shift to the plural occurs when Paul speaks about the preaching of the gospel in general (1.23; 2.6, 7; cf. 2.13), and he employs the singular when he defends his particular expression of it (1.17; 2.1-4; 3.1-4). The need for a defence suggests criticisms laid against Paul's style or form of preaching, criticisms based partly on preconceived notions of public speaking and possibly comparisons between Paul's style and another's. Can we know anything about the possibility of a 'rival' preacher in Corinth, one whose style or form is appealing to or in harmony with the usual expectations?

From Acts we see Paul originally teaching on his own (Acts 18.4), even though he was ostensibly accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla (18.1-3) and even after the arrival of Timothy and Silas (see 18.5-7). The narrative of Acts supplies no information about preachers other than Paul in Corinth during his sojourn,¹³⁴ nor are there any suggestions that Aquila, Priscilla, Timothy or Silas took part in the original proclamation of the gospel. The only other reference to

¹³³ This claim about this particular rhetorical unit is excluding the first-person singular used in 1.31, for that usage simply follows the quotation cited.

¹³⁴ However cf. Voigt: 'Ist auch Petrus in Korinth gewesen? Unmöglich ist es nicht, unternimmt doch auch er Missionsreisen (9.4f). Zwar besteht seit dem Apostelkonzil die Abmachung, daß die Jerusalemer "Säulen" unter den Juden predigen sollen, während Paulus der Heidenapostel ist (Gal 2,9); aber wir finden Petrus auch in Antiochien (Gal 2,11), und der 1.Petr (wie immer man die literarische Echtheitsfrage beantworten mag) kennt Beziehungen zu Gemeinden in Pontus, Galatien, Kappadozien, der Provinz Asien und Bithynien. Schon möglich, daß Petrus auch in Korinth gewesen ist. Judenchristen in Korinth mögen in ihm "ihren" Mann und den vollgültigen "Apostel" gesehen haben, wogegen die apostolische Vollmacht des Paulus bestritten ist' (*Gemeinsam*, 19).

someone coming to Corinth is the passing mention of Apollos in Acts 19.1. If we accept the description of Apollos as ἀνὴρ λόγιος, δυνατὸς ὧν ἐν ταῖς γραφαῖς (Acts 18.24c, e), and if we accept the argument that Paul's proclamation, following his departure, is being measured according to the criterion of wise, persuasive (human) speech, then we might assume that Paul's mission and message are being viewed as in some way distinct from or even subordinate to that of Apollos.¹³⁵

Thus, Paul at least seeks to show the Corinthians that he and Apollos are not to be pitted against each other because they are both speaking God's wisdom.¹³⁶ However, it might be better to see the focus of Paul's argument as an attempt to reorient the way in which the Corinthians are judging the gospel message in general. If this is the case, then we could broaden the boundaries of what Paul means by 'we', where he is referring to the apostolic witness (see 2,6a, 7a, 13; cf. also 3.1-4; 4.1, 6, 9; 9.1-12; 15.11). However, we must be careful not to apply this plurality too rigidly, for there are occasions when Paul has in mind more than himself and the apostolic witness; in these other cases, he seems to be speaking of all believers (see 2.7b, 10, 12, 16).

3.4.1.2. *Identifying the Recipients of the Gospel*

The second concern deals with identifying the stated recipients in 2.6: οἱ τελεῖοι. By following the approach of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* it is possible to read οἱ τελεῖοι as referring to a select group of believers who receive deeper levels of instruction, where the content of this instruction is a secret wisdom or knowledge. This further instruction thus refers to that which is given only to this select group and that which is ostensibly given beyond the initial proclamation. Moreover, this reading also finds itself in the service of those advocating influence from mystery religions or Gnostic theology, where the recipients of the secret wisdom or knowledge are made 'perfect' or 'complete' as a result of the additional teaching. However, as I argued earlier, these types of interpretations create contradictions within Paul's argument, whereby in one place he speaks against classes or levels of believers yet here acknowledges—if not praises or even advocates—varying levels. These interpretations also create

¹³⁵ Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 253.

¹³⁶ See Voigt, *Gemeinsam*, 19.

historical problems for scholars attempting to reconstruct the circumstances and proceedings of Paul's original visit to Corinth.

The historical problems created stem from the fact that nothing in the text suggests differing levels or times of instruction given during Paul's ministry in Corinth; such suggestions can only be assumed for the sake of the argument advanced—i.e. Paul is referring to varying levels of instruction, one for the initial proclamation and another for a select few. Moreover, the logic of Paul's argument stresses both the manner in which he proclaimed the gospel and the manner in which it was received or understood, a stress that has as its primary reference the original proclamation of the gospel; nothing in Paul's argument suggests an additional period of second-level instruction.

Therefore, since it is not likely that Paul is thinking of a select group of believers who receive deeper, secret teaching—to do so would undermine his plea for unity, and since it is equally unlikely for Paul to be thinking of an additional time of instruction for a select group—to do so is to go beyond the textual evidence, we must seek a more reasonable explanation for Paul's use of οἱ τελεῖοι and his purpose for employing this description at this stage in the argument. To ascertain this purpose, we must examine two related details.

First, it is possible to read τέλειος as 'perfect' in the sense of having complete knowledge via divine wisdom. Thus, τέλειος refers to those who have been given God's wisdom and it is only by such blessing that they can consider themselves perfect or complete in mind and soul. This interpretation still applies to the situation in Corinth, where status-seeking on the basis of perfected knowledge and spirituality emerge prior to Paul's writing. Accordingly, Paul could be seen as using τέλειος in 2.6-16 in a subversive manner—i.e. he adopts the terminology of the Corinthians, empties its meaning or interpretation, fills it with his own (corrected?) meaning or interpretation and throws it back to them. However, before following this reading we must take into consideration the argument beyond 2.6-16, specifically Paul's remarks in 3.1-4.

In this larger context we find what appears to be an explicit contrast between τέλειος in 2.6-16 and νηπίος in 3.1-4. Initially, in the light of this awareness, we can assume that Paul's argument focuses more on the question of maturity in knowledge rather than the existence of knowledge within the

believer. Accordingly, τέλειος could be read as ‘mature’ or ‘fully developed,’ a reading not incongruent with the theological results of receiving divine wisdom. As Sterling points out, Philo often speaks of the truly wise individual as one who is mature or whose mind (νοῦς) is fully developed; and, in keeping with his commitment to the Platonic notion of ideas and forms, Philo sees τέλειος as referring to the person who has developed into the ideal, whereas νηπίος represents the person who is still in formation.¹³⁷ This contrast between τέλειος and νηπίος and its significance can be an appropriate framework for understanding Paul’s argument, which bears striking similarities to that of Philo. This brings me to the second point.

If this contrast and definition of terms apply to Paul’s argument, then we can assume that he envisages an expectation of what a believer truly is: one to whom God’s wisdom has been given, and one who is able to see, know and even rightly discern God’s wisdom in the cross of Christ. As discussed already, this ability to see, know and discern results from the Spirit’s role not only in mediating the kind of wisdom of which Paul speaks but also in providing the framework within which that wisdom can be ascertained. With this expectation in mind, Paul not only argues for what should be the case for believers but also uses this expectation as a point of comparison for the Corinthians at present. Thus, in one sense τέλειος applies to the believers in Corinth yet in another sense it does not. With regard to the affirmative, we know that Paul is using τέλειος as a descriptor for the Corinthians, and we know this by noticing how he refers to the believers and the context in which he does so.¹³⁸

On the two previous occasions when Paul speaks of God’s wisdom and its relationship to a particular group, specifically the believers in Corinth, he employs a dative construct to stress the connection: αὐτοῖς τοῖς κλητοῖς . . . θεοῦ σοφίαν (1.24); ἡμῖν . . . σοφία ἀπὸ θεοῦ (1.30). In the first instance, the implication is believers; in the second, Paul explicitly says, ‘us’, which most naturally refers to believers in Corinth—Paul included. A similar pattern emerges in 2.6, where Paul states: σοφίαν . . . τοῖς τελείοις. While the genitive use of θεός is lacking in this instance, it can be safely assumed in view of Paul’s

¹³⁷ *Post.* 152; *Agr.* 9; *Sobr.* 9; *Migr.* 46; *Congr.* 154; *Somn.* 2.10; cf. *Spec.* 2.32; 3.119; *Hypoth.* 8.11.3—all noted in Sterling, ‘“Wisdom Among the Perfect”,’ 373.

¹³⁸ This follows Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 213-14.

argument, especially in the light of what he embraces (see 2.7). Moreover, when we consider Paul's remarks in 2.10 (ἡμῖν δὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος) and take the unstated object as God's wisdom, we see that Paul not only has in mind believers (2.6) but also himself (2.10). Therefore, by comparing the way Paul uses τέλειος with how he uses other identifying terms throughout his argument, we find that τέλειος is simply another way of referring to those who believe the gospel.

However, with regard to the negative (i.e. that τέλειος does not apply to the Corinthians), Paul uses this idealised state against the Corinthians in order to further his case that they are not at present interpreting God's wisdom by God's wisdom. If we follow the assumption that Paul's message is being critiqued through the lens of human wisdom and that lens causes the Corinthians to see his message as foolishness, then they distinguish themselves from the one who is fully developed by God's wisdom and the one who operates according to what God's Spirit reveals. Paul emphasises this dilemma in 2.14-15, where he defines two types of interpreters: ψυχικός and πνευματικός, which, as argued earlier, is an expansion of Paul's claim in 2.13.

In terms of comparison, therefore, Paul is suggesting that those critical of his message are interpreting it as ψυχικός, whereas they should be interpreting it as πνευματικός. This also applies to a vital (albeit implicit) feature of Paul's larger case: the Corinthians originally accepted Paul's message as God's wisdom in the manner in which he proclaimed it, whereas now they are asserting it to be foolishness. In terms of this implied contrast applying to Paul's argument: while the Corinthians began as and still should be τέλειος (2.6-16), at present they are not τέλειος but are in fact νηπίος (3.1-4). It is to this idea of originally accepting the message as God's wisdom that I now turn.

3.4.1.3. Identifying the Gospel as Wisdom

When Paul defines the content of the apostolic witness, he begins with a general description, which is cast in positive and negative terms, before clarifying his meaning with a specific claim. With regard to the general description, he states positively that 'we speak wisdom' (2.6a) but, negatively, this wisdom originates 'neither from this age nor the rulers of this age' (2.6b). Implicit in this negative remark are two related points, both of which have been stressed already. First,

in asserting that the wisdom they speak does not come from this age or its rulers Paul appears to be re-emphasising his earlier claims in 2.1 and 2.4, which were also restatements of his remarks in 1.18-21. If this connection exists, then we can begin to understand Paul's negative remarks about wisdom here in 2.6b—i.e. he does not speak of (or from) a wisdom that is both incapable of knowing God's wisdom and supplanted by God's wisdom. Thus, in this first instance, Paul is claiming that the wisdom proclaimed does not have the appearance of wisdom, if judged according to the standards of worldly wisdom.

The second implication deals with the substance or content of the wisdom as proclaimed in the apostolic witness. Accordingly, by stressing in a negative way that their wisdom is not from this age, the apostles are emphasising the substantial difference between their message and a message that would be proclaimed by the wise of this age. To say it differently: the message of the apostolic proclamation is wisdom, although it is one that the wise of this age deem foolishness according to the standards of worldly wisdom. This distinction was made in 1.18-25,¹³⁹ where those being destroyed judge the gospel (i.e. ὁ λόγος τοῦ σταυροῦ) to be foolishness, and where the wisdom of this world could not—ostensibly by its own merits or abilities—know the wisdom of God.

The idea of being destroyed resurfaces with Paul's claim in 2.6b when he further defines the wisdom and rulers of this age; he defines them as those passing away or being abolished. Moreover, the idea of incapability will emerge again when Paul elaborates on this point in 2.8. The obvious inference is that Paul would not rely on something touted to be the means for ascertaining divine wisdom when such means are not only under God's curse (cf. 1.20d) but also completely impotent for truly knowing God's wisdom.

After offering a general description, cast in both positive and negative terms, Paul proceeds to clarify his meaning in a specific way. He emphatically states that the apostolic witness speaks God's wisdom, one that has been hidden in mystery before the ages (or prior to creation). By defining this wisdom as God's wisdom Paul emphasises its otherness in terms of source, content and, by implication, its potential for being known. Moreover, in emphasising this

¹³⁹ A similar distinction that further supports our argument that the gospel message is wisdom, as presented here in 2.6-16.

threefold otherness Paul further stresses the firm separation between God's wisdom and human wisdom, a separation that has run like a thread through the main portion of his argument. For Paul, the source of the wisdom proclaimed is from God, not this world or its self-professed wise; the content is determined and filled according to God, not human wisdom; and its potential for being known is actualised only through God's decision, not persuaded or coerced by human means or cleverness.

Furthermore, Paul intensifies the separation by defining God's wisdom as hidden in mystery, which not only carries significance for his immediate claim but also the wider theological truths of his argument. The immediate significance pertains to the unobtainable or unknowable nature of God's wisdom, not just for the self-professed wise but also for all people. The wider significance relates to the eschatological nature and reality of God's wisdom being revealed in the world through the Christ-event.¹⁴⁰ This coincides with Paul's understanding of the Spirit's role in revealing God's wisdom, especially in the gospel of Christ crucified, and how those who accept this revelation are constituted as the people of God.

Thus, Paul can affirm that God's wisdom, which hitherto remained hidden in mystery, was προώρισεν . . . πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν (2.7b). The 'our' of this claim most naturally refers to those who already accepted the gospel of Christ crucified and know it to be God's wisdom. This accords well with Paul's earlier claim that the word of the cross is 'foolishness to those who are perishing' but 'God's power to us who are being saved' (1.18), with God's power being the means of that salvation process. Moreover, the Corinthians placed their 'faith' in that power and not in human wisdom (2.5), which views that power as weakness.

3.4.2. Gospel Rejected as God's Wisdom

This brings me to the opponents of the gospel as God's wisdom, a group already alluded to in Paul's argument. Here I am concerned with their identity in general and the reason for their rejection of the gospel in particular. As will be argued below, this portion of Paul's argument simply functions as a contrast

¹⁴⁰ Scroggs argues, 'this motif is common to wisdom-apocalyptic theology' ('Paul: ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΝΥΕΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ,' *NTS* 14 [1967]: 41).

for the larger purpose of affirming the validity of the Corinthians' original acceptance of and faith in the gospel that Paul proclaimed.

3.4.2.1. Identifying those Rejecting the Gospel as Wisdom

Considerable debate surrounds the identity of those whom Paul categorises as 'rulers of this age' (2.6b, 8a). First, in view of the apocalyptic tenor of Paul's argument, it is certainly possible to understand this phrase as referring to (evil) spiritual forces or beings at work in the cosmos.¹⁴¹ Such an understanding would not be foreign either to Paul's theological heritage or that of the Corinthians, both allowed for the possibility of such forces or beings at work in creation—albeit in an unseen way.

On the other hand, it is equally possible to understand 'rulers of this age' as referring to human authorities.¹⁴² This view accounts for the explicit accusation in 2.8 about such rulers crucifying Christ, and does so without creating further historical or hermeneutical difficulties—e.g. how can spiritual forces literally crucify Christ, and how can such forces be blamed when the passage clearly shows the crucifixion to be the work of human decision and action? However, this view has been criticised because its relevance only applies to ancient notions of the cosmos, where spiritual forces or beings are inherent to the conceptual fabric of an age steeped in mythological traditions.¹⁴³ Now such forces or beings are understood as representing evil ideas or deeds inherent to humanity, or they are mere descriptions of abstract concepts.¹⁴⁴

However, an alternate view is often suggested that appears to synthesise the first two. Here the 'rulers of this age' refers to spiritual forces or beings that

¹⁴¹ For those promoting this view, see e.g. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 60-64; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 70-72; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 61; C. E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities & Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1992), 101-04. Finney criticises those who hold this view by saying they 'have missed seeing the political basis and thrust of Paul's own gospel' ('Conflict in Corinth,' 113 n.1).

¹⁴² For those promoting this view, see e.g. Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 36; G. Miller, 'ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου—A New Look at 1 Corinthians 2.6-8,' *JBL* 91.4 (1972): 526-28; Carr, 'The Rulers of this Age,' 20-35; Fee, *First Epistle*, 103; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 44; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 93; Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 38.

¹⁴³ Admittedly, this is not a criticism if one is attempting to understand Paul in his own context.

¹⁴⁴ In response to this criticism, Thiselton argues: 'Paul stands closer to Jewish apocalyptic than to Western individualism from Descartes to the late twentieth century. Humankind is more than a collection of individual entities or agents, but a corporeity within which evil and evil forces become endemic and structural' (*First Epistle*, 238).

influence or use human authorities to carry out their desires or schemes.¹⁴⁵ Like the first view, this one was not without precedent in the ancient world and could therefore be a plausible explanation for both Paul and the Corinthians.

Cullmann argues this, at least for Paul, on the basis that ‘abundantly attested late Jewish belief that all peoples are ruled through angels is present particularly in the Book of Daniel, in the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, and in the Book of Enoch, and it can be shown to be present also in the Talmud and Midrash.’¹⁴⁶

Moreover this view is able to avoid the historical and hermeneutical dilemma noted above by revealing the guilty parties involved in the crucifixion as both spiritual beings and human authorities. As Caird argues: ‘Behind Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas, behind the Roman state and the Jewish religion of which these men were the earthly representatives, Paul discerned the existence of angelic rulers who shared with their human agents the responsibility for the crucifixion.’¹⁴⁷ This would certainly maintain the intensity of Paul’s remarks concerning divine judgment on those who reject God’s wisdom and salvation in Christ: God’s judgment is not bestowed upon either spiritual powers or human authorities but upon both. A central problem with the assessments of Cullman and Caird is that they misread (or misapply) the ancient texts used to support their views. Specifically, as Lincoln points out, in the Jewish texts ‘the powers are *behind* the state’ or nations; the texts do not say the state or nation *and* the human rulers within them are the powers.¹⁴⁸

While all three options have their individual merits, they all seem to operate on the assumption that Paul is concerned with identifying the ‘rulers’ in an explicit way. For example Carr suggests a distinction between the use of the singular and the plural forms of ἄρχων, where the singular always refers to spiritual beings and the plural always speaks of human authorities, specifically

¹⁴⁵ For those promoting this view, see e.g. O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. F. V. Filson; London: SCM Press, 1951), 190-95; G. B. Caird, *Principalities and Powers: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), 15-22; Scroggs, ‘ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΙΝΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ,’ 41-44; Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 59.

¹⁴⁶ Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, 193; cf. also Caird, *Principalities and Powers*, 5-8.

¹⁴⁷ Caird, *Principalities and Powers*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ See A. T. Lincoln, ‘Liberation from the Powers: Supernatural Spirits or Societal Structures?’, in *The Bible and Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson* (eds. M. D. Carroll R., D. J. A. Clines and P. R. Davies; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 339-40, 341-42. Quote from 342.

political leaders.¹⁴⁹ Thus, because Paul uses the plural in 2.6b and 2.8a he must be thinking of the political rulers responsible for the death of Jesus, namely Herod and Pilate.¹⁵⁰ However, such an identification does not appear to be Paul's concern or even the point of his argument.

It is entirely possible that Paul uses 'rulers of this age' ambiguously and thus as applicable to either spiritual forces or human authorities (or both), and an explicit identification is not necessary for Paul's argument.¹⁵¹ Thus, the phrase might serve as a reference for anything or anyone opposed to God's wisdom. Moreover, this has ties with Paul's earlier argument about the unexpected reversal of how wisdom is known and to whom it is given (cf. 1.18-20, 26-28). God's wisdom is not given to and made known by the elite of the world with superior wisdom and speech; it is given to those who are weak and lowly, and it is made known by those who humbly proclaim its simplicity by the power of the Spirit (cf. 2.1-5).

3.4.2.2. Cause for Rejection

Whether we identify the opponents of the gospel as spiritual beings or human authorities (or both), the cause of their rejection remains the same: they neither have God's Spirit nor rely on that Spirit to reveal God's hidden wisdom. Admittedly, while this cause is not explicitly stated in 2.6-16, Paul provides logical clues that lead to this conclusion. A key passage in this regard is 2.7-8 where Paul specifically states the wisdom of the gospel and how this gospel was not judged wise by the rulers of this age. We know that God's wisdom (2.7a) is the focus of the passage because it remains the focus throughout the argument. With the possible exception of the explanatory clause of 2.8b-c, God's wisdom is the object—whether stated or unstated—of all the verbal ideas. God's wisdom is what the apostles *speak* (2.7a), it is that which *remained hidden* in a mystery (2.7a), it is that which God *predestined* before the ages (2.7b) and it is that which *remained unknown* by the rulers of this age (2.8a). Setting aside the explanatory argument of 2.8b for a moment, we need to consider the implications of these claims.

¹⁴⁹ See Carr, 'The Rulers of this Age,' 23-24.

¹⁵⁰ Schnabel (*Der erste Brief*, 166, 168) sees Caiaphas and Pilate as the rulers in question.

¹⁵¹ Admittedly, the phrase 'rulers of this age' in 1.20 suggests human rulers or authorities, which might serve as a ready parallel for Paul's usage of the phrase here in 2.6b and 2.8a.

First, and beginning with the last component, the emphasis on the ignorance of the rulers continues the theme of human wisdom's impotence in knowing God's wisdom. Thus, we are here reminded of the earlier discussion on the source, content and disclosure of God's wisdom, and the argument that no amount of human effort or ability can ascertain that wisdom. Moreover, the verbal aspect of this ignorance suggests a perpetual state, which further confirms the incapacity of human wisdom to ever know God's wisdom by its own means.

Second, and continuing in reverse, the wisdom of God and its revelation were predestined, not only for a particular time (cf. Gal 4.4) but also a particular people (cf. 1 Cor 2.9c-10a). This additionally affirms the idea of no amount of human effort or ability ascertaining God's wisdom, and the argument of disclosure being the sole decision of the one who possesses that wisdom. If God predestines wisdom and its revelation, then God also determines when and how it will occur and be made known.

Third, until that time wisdom was kept secret; however, and this brings me to the fourth point, the wisdom of God has emerged from its hidden, secret state through the preaching of the gospel and the powerful work of God's Spirit. With regard to Paul's own ministry, as argued in the previous chapter, this preaching took on the *form* of a simple proclamation and its *content* focused primarily on Christ crucified as God's wise means of salvation. It appears to be precisely this form and content that the rulers of this age would deem foolish and therefore reject.¹⁵²

However, for Paul this rejection of the gospel message as wisdom represents a milder form of a more intense and even grotesque rejection: Christ as God's wise means of salvation (cf. 1.30). This brings me to the statement of 2.8b. This passage, in relation to what precedes, functions as an explanation or logical consequence of the initial claim of 2.8a. Paul stresses the intensity of his argument via a second-class condition, where he assumes the protasis to be false and the outcome in the apodosis is contingent upon the reality of the protasis. Thus, Paul's argument could be restated as: εἰ ἔγνωσαν (which they did not), ἄν ἐσταύρωσαν οὐκ τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης (which they did). The contingency in

¹⁵² Cf. again Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.231.

question is the possession of knowledge, specifically knowledge of who Christ is and the mission he came to fulfil.

However, since the rulers lacked this necessary knowledge, they failed to recognise the identity of Jesus as God's true messiah and therefore executed him, but not simply because of a failure to recognise Jesus' identity and how God's wisdom could be manifest in and through the person and mission of Jesus.¹⁵³ Thus, we can initially say: just as the rulers were unable to know or discern the revelation of God's wise plan in the cross of Jesus, the rulers were also unable to know or discern God's wisdom in the proclamation of the cross.¹⁵⁴ We can be sure that knowledge is the focus of the argument at this point because Paul's remarks in 2.9-12 have knowledge as the central theme, specifically knowledge that God's wisdom has been revealed and that the revelation is mediated by God's Spirit.

3.4.3. Gospel Known to be God's Wisdom

As stressed already, the Corinthians know the message originally proclaimed to them to be God's wisdom, and the way in which they know this is by the mediating role of God's Spirit. Throughout Paul's argument the emphasis has fallen on this role, specifically its necessity and its exclusivity. The analogy of 2.11 provides the basic framework for understanding the necessity of the Spirit's role, which also underlies Paul's remarks in 2.8-9 and 2.13-14, while 2.12 secures Paul's views on the exclusivity of that role, which also underlies his contrasting claims in 2.4, 6-7 and 15. It is to this latter quality of the Spirit's role that I now turn, for it represents a defining characteristic of Paul's larger argument. Specifically, it functions as his assessment of why the Corinthians originally believed his message but are now questioning its authenticity, or at least its description as God's wisdom.

¹⁵³ Specifically, they failed to see Jesus as 'the Lord of glory'—a phrase that appears only here, James 2.1 and, as Lang mentions, *1 Enoch* 22.14 (cf. 63.2) where the phrase is a 'predicate for God' (Lang, *Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 44; cf. also Thiselton [*First Epistle*, 246], who adds *1 Enoch* 25.3, 7; 27.3, 4 [cf. 66.2]; and Fitzmyer [*First Corinthians*, 177], who adds *1 Enoch* 27.5; 36.4; 40.3).

¹⁵⁴ This follows Lang's argument: 'In den Versen 8 und 9 argumentiert Paulus für seine Aussage, dass die Vertreter der Weisheit dieser Welt die im Kreuz Jesu offenbarte Weisheit Gottes nicht erkannt haben, mit einen doppelten Hinweis: auf das geschichtliche Ereignis der Kreuzigung Jesu und auf ein Wort der Schrift' (*Die Briefe an die Korinther*, 43).

3.4.3.1. Competing Spirits of Knowledge

In 2.12 Paul definitively states, ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου ἐλάβομεν ἀλλὰ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν. A perennial question in this regard is what Paul means by τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου, since it is not a phrase used by him elsewhere nor is it one that he clearly defines in this passage. The closest we come to a parallel usage is found in 2 Cor 11.4, where he speaks of the regrettable possibility of receiving ‘another spirit’ (πνεῦμα ἕτερον). However this reference is nearly as vague in meaning as our 2.12 passage. Since the phrase appears nowhere else in the NT or the LXX¹⁵⁵ a possible source is provided by similar ideas or concepts found in the Hellenistic world, specifically elements of Stoic philosophy.¹⁵⁶

Stoic philosophy argues for an essential—if not elemental—connectivity between all of creation and the (impersonal) divine. The Stoics expressed this connectivity not only with their materialistic view of the cosmos,¹⁵⁷ which included a physical understanding of the divine, the mind and the soul,¹⁵⁸ but also with their idea that fire constituted the foundational element for creation.¹⁵⁹ With fire being the foundational element, it was understood to be the reason (i.e. λόγος) or cause for creation, thus giving it a divine status.¹⁶⁰ Thus fire and λόγος were interchangeable ideas for what the Stoics classified as ‘god.’

From this the Stoics assumed that if the divine λόγος (or fire) was elemental to all creation, then all living beings were intimately linked with the divine, which gave way to the idea of a ‘divine spark’ within the human soul.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the Stoics believed that a cosmic πνεῦμα facilitated the connectivity between creation and the divine λόγος,¹⁶² and it was this πνεῦμα that allowed humanity to know the ways of the divine as displayed in the order of the cosmos.

¹⁵⁵ See Collins, *First Corinthians*, 134.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. D. B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 9-15; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 260-61.

¹⁵⁷ See R. Scott, *The Pauline Epistles: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1909), 58.

¹⁵⁸ See E. Zeller, *Outlines of the History of Greek Philosophy* (trans. L. R. Palmer; rev. W. Nestle; New York: Meridian, 1955), 233-34; cf. also J. Sellars, *Stoicism* (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 106.

¹⁵⁹ See F. C. Copleston, *History of Philosophy* (London: Search Press, 1946), 1.387-88. Diogenes notes that the Stoics espoused a harmonious view of fire and the other elements—i.e. air, water and earth (see *Zeno*, 70).

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 44b; Aetius, 46a.

¹⁶¹ See e.g. Seneca, *Epis.* 41.2; 92.30; Epictetus, *Diss.* 1.14.13-15; 2.8.11-13.

¹⁶² See Cicero, *Nat. Gods* 2.19, 24.

However, it was the responsibility of the individual to recognise this reality, by awaking the divine spark within, and all the knowledge gained to bring that person to a point where he or she ultimately merges into the divine, thus making them just as impersonal as the divine they seek.¹⁶³

Such a view of creation is diametrically opposed to the theological tradition out of which Paul forms his argument. For Paul there is a categorical distinction between God, creation and humanity; and while God is portrayed as the one responsible for creating the cosmos and humanity, there are no elemental links between them. Specifically, there is no πνεῦμα that unites all things or ensures order to the cosmos. At the very least, we would seem to have an adequate conceptual candidate for Paul's polemic in 2.12.

While a Stoic cosmology, especially its views on πνεῦμα, might explain the conceptual context for Paul's argument, we cannot be sure that this context applies specifically to the Corinthians' understanding of creation or even acquiring wisdom. Moreover, such a reading appears to require more than the text can provide. It seems more reasonable to take what Paul says in 2.12 as another contrast between human wisdom and God's wisdom. Paul simply classifies the wisdom of this age (or human wisdom) as τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου for the sake of contrasting it with τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.¹⁶⁴ This fits with Paul's previous remarks about the Spirit of God being the only means by which the wisdom of God can be known; the wisdom of this age is incapable or powerless to obtain access to God's wisdom. Specifically, the contrast in 2.12 follows directly from the truth established in the analogy in 2.11. Moreover, the idea of mediation by God's Spirit vis-à-vis the spirit of the world not only sets the condition for the purpose clause of 2.12b, which relates back to the implication of 2.9-10, it also prepares the way for Paul's contrast in 2.13, and even 2.14-15.

As argued earlier, since the contrast of 2.13 deals first of all with two forms of speech, only one of which is able to reveal God's wisdom, and secondly with how the message spoken is understood to be God's wisdom, Paul's

¹⁶³ Cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Med.* 4.21; Dio Cassius, *Rome* 52.4.3.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 112-13; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 261-63; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 181. However, Davis critically says 'the strength of this view lies precisely in the lack of a more convincing reason as to why Paul might choose to coin the phrase' (*Wisdom and Spirit*, 110).

argument in 2.12 exclusively and succinctly defines the only means by which God's wisdom can be known. However, when we take the wider argument into consideration, we find further support for such an exclusive claim (see 2.4, 6-7, 15). Collectively Paul's argument in these verses shows that without the Spirit's mediating role, the cross of Christ as God's wise plan of salvation would remain unknown (or undisclosed), and no amount of human effort, ability or wisdom could obtain access to that which is hidden in mystery.

3.4.3.2. Spiritual Knowledge, Spiritual Discernment

In 2.15-16 Paul applies this discussion on knowing God's wisdom through the mediating role of the Spirit to the defence of his apostolic ministry. I conclude this on the basis of two features in the argument. First, it is within the immediate context of 2.14-15 that Paul articulates not only the Spirit's necessary role in revealing God's wisdom through his and Apollos' teaching but also the Spirit's role in enabling the Corinthians to see the gospel-teaching as God's wisdom. Since the focus of Paul's argument is an attempt to reorient the way in which the Corinthians are judging the gospel message in general, and since Paul's aim is to show the Corinthians that they originally accepted and believed his initial proclamation as God's wisdom—something made possible only by the Spirit, it is crucial for Paul here to stress the Spirit's role in the proclamation and acceptance. Second, it is precisely with the contrast of 2.14-15 that Paul isolates the two ways in which God's wisdom is judged: the 'natural' way is effectively Spirit-less and therefore unable to discern correctly God's wisdom in the gospel message, while the 'spiritual' way is guided by the Spirit so that the things of God can be discerned.

When we come to the details of Paul's argument in 2.15-16, we find Paul not only implicitly indicting the Corinthians for their false judgment of his message but also employing his own criteria for his critique of their false judgment. The claim, ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει [τὰ] πάντα shares the expectations in Paul's views on τέλειος. Thus, in keeping with what I argued earlier, πνευματικός should not be read as a reference to an elite believer or one who has received additional, secret instruction from either Paul or Apollos. Instead, πνευματικός while functioning as a synonym for τέλειος represents another way for Paul to describe a believer—i.e. one who has accepted the gospel

of Christ crucified (2.4-5) and received God's Spirit (2.10, 12). However, there is another layer to Paul's use of *πνευματικός* that we must recognise. The idea of 'examining everything' calls to mind Paul's assertion in 2.10b, where the Spirit of God 'searches all things, even the depths of God.'

Ideally, the *πνευματικός* would employ the Spirit-given criterion to assess the merits of any and all messages purported to be God's wisdom (cf. 2.14c). As a corollary, the *πνευματικός* would be able to utilise the same criterion to discern when a message claims to be God's wisdom but ultimately arises from human wisdom. The same, however, is not true for discerning God's wisdom and the messenger of such wisdom by using criteria inherent to the *ψυχικός*, hence *αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ' οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται* (2.15b). It is in the light of this ideal state that Paul implicitly indicts the Corinthians and employs his own criteria to do so. Thus, the Corinthians are relying on 'natural' criteria to assess the merits of his gospel as God's wisdom.

As a result, they are judging it to be foolishness and by extension they are accusing Paul of being unwise, or one not endowed with divine wisdom. Following Paul's logic, this twofold assessment is rendered invalid because it relies on faulty (or powerless) criteria.¹⁶⁵ However, if the Corinthians employed the Spirit-given criteria and examined both Paul and Apollos' message, they would have discerned God's wisdom in the content of both, despite the differences in form. Paul is able to make this implicit accusation because he certainly views himself as a *πνευματικός*, thus allowing him to 'examine all things'—e.g. the criteria by which the Corinthians are judging him—and expose it for what it is.

3.5. Conclusions

This chapter examined in detail Paul's understanding and teaching on the Spirit's role in mediating divine wisdom. I proceeded with one central theme in mind: divine wisdom cannot be known or ascertained unless it is revealed or disclosed by the one who possesses it. This theme was characterised as both the problem and the solution for those in Corinth. The problem relates to the reality that no amount of human effort or wisdom would be able to obtain access to

¹⁶⁵ This might relate to Paul's lack of concern about being judged by the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 4.3).

God's wisdom. The solution relates to the fact that God has revealed wisdom, and that the means by which this occurred was the mediating agency of God's Spirit. Implicit to this analysis was the added problem that the Corinthians, following Paul's departure began to assess the merits of his proclamation as God's wisdom, and the criterion of their assessment was that which arises from human wisdom.

Thus, just as the initial solution to the initial problem was God's Spirit, Paul argues a finely constructed case for the Corinthians' need to rely on God's Spirit once again to settle the new problem. My primary goal here was to establish Paul's understanding of the Spirit's exclusive role in not only mediating God's wisdom but also establishing a criterion for discerning that wisdom and its expression. I also stressed the fact that Paul used this understanding to indict the Corinthians for judging his message according to faulty criteria; he also employed this understanding to critique the Corinthians' assessment of his proclamation. It was argued that this faulty assessment stands as a crucial problem that requires Paul's immediate response. The extent of this problem will become the focus of the next chapter, where I will discuss the role of the Spirit in establishing and maintaining communal discernment.

Chapter 4

THE SPIRIT'S ROLE IN ESTABLISHING RIGHT DISCERNMENT

4.1. Introduction

Following the logical climax of 1 Cor 2.10-13, Paul in 2.14-15 distinguishes two modes of discernment as they relate to one's capacity for knowing God's wisdom. As should be clear from his previous remarks, Paul is keen to prioritise one mode as the most appropriate (or the only) means for discerning God's wisdom and to reject the assumed value and effectiveness of the other mode. To contextualise this reading, I will begin this chapter with a brief summary of Paul's thought up to 1 Cor 2.14-15. After this summary, I will examine the details and implications of Paul's distinction between the two modes of discernment. Specifically I will consider Paul's view of the Spirit's role in discernment, how that role manifests itself in the life of the believing community and how this Spirit-given discernment is the only mode appropriate for 'spiritual' people.

Moreover I will stress the ways in which Paul relies on Spirit-given discernment as he critiques the present dilemma in Corinth (3.1-4), especially as it relates to the manner in which the Corinthians are currently assessing his apostolic mission and message. One important implication follows from this argument: whereas the Corinthians exercised spiritual, communal discernment in the original acceptance of both the gospel as God's wisdom and Paul as an apostolic witness, the present situation suggests, by seeing the gospel as foolishness and Paul as an inadequate or unskilled witness, they are now exercising a discernment guided by human wisdom. Thus, Paul must persuade the Corinthians, as a unified community, to rely again solely on God's wisdom and to be guided by the discernment of God's Spirit.

4.2. Reconsidering the Progression of Thought

Before examining Paul's distinction between the two modes of discernment, it will be helpful to reconsider briefly at least three salient details

of his argument leading up to 1 Cor 2.14-15. First, implicitly since 1 Cor 1.18 but explicitly in 2.6-16, Paul polarises two types of wisdom (or ways of knowing) and only one is to characterise the community of believers. On the one hand there is the wisdom of this age (or of this world), while on the other there is God's wisdom, and confusing the one with the other (or even attempting to blend the two) is for Paul unacceptable. It is unacceptable not just because God has rendered the wisdom of the world foolish (1.20) but also because, even if God did not render it foolish, the wisdom of the world is incapable of ever ascertaining God's wisdom (cf. 2.9, 11, 14). It is unacceptable (even foolish) to employ what will ultimately fail in its efforts to achieve. For Paul one example of this incapability can be found in the decision of the rulers of this age to crucify Christ—i.e. had they known, they would not have done it (see 2.8). A broader example, and one related specifically to the Corinthian context, would be the faulty assessment of the gospel message, an assessment that sees the message of Christ crucified as foolishness (1.18, 23).

Second, and related to the first, Paul articulates the differences in how the respective types of wisdom are expressed and even the means by which wisdom is judged. For those relying on the wisdom of this age (or of this world), wisdom is manifest through eloquent and persuasive speech (cf. 2.1, 4); thus the one who speaks accordingly is deemed wise, or is seen as possessing wisdom. In terms of function it is the polished, rhetorical form and eloquence of delivery that bring about the persuasiveness or believability of the speech (cf. 2.4). For those relying on God's wisdom, however, the proof or conviction concerning the validity of the message comes from the demonstrable power of the Spirit; thus, those who speak God's wisdom are deemed wise not because they adhere to particular forms or patterns of speech but because the content reflects God's revealed wisdom and relies on God's means of persuasion (2.4-5), which in this case is the Spirit at work in the message.

Finally, and linked with the previous two aspects of his argument, Paul emphasises the distinction between the types of wisdom by differentiating their respective forms of revelation and, by extension, their ways of knowing (or discernment). For the wisdom of this age, wisdom is revealed and learned via the teaching (or instruction) of the sages (cf. 1.20). These sages often profess to know the ways of the divine and claim the ability to teach others also how to

know the divine and thus obtain wisdom. Proof for such claims, and that wisdom has been revealed, comes in the form of things more or less tangible or experiential—i.e. either a miraculous sign or a polished and eloquent speech. In this case the sage possesses the authority and power of the divine to perform mighty tasks, or the gods and/or goddesses have blessed the sage with the ability to speak eloquently. Thus, the link between the sage’s teaching and the evidence of his or her assumed wisdom becomes the criterion for determining the validity of others who claim to be wise or profess wisdom, especially divine wisdom. However, for Paul, neither miraculous signs nor polished and eloquent speeches are necessary proofs for one’s claim of wisdom,¹ nor are such things appropriate criteria for judging claims of wisdom. Moreover, Paul rejects the notion that divine wisdom can be ascertained and even taught via human effort and understanding; instead, for Paul divine wisdom can only be known if God chooses to reveal it. Furthermore when this wisdom is revealed, it brings with it a new criterion for judging (or discerning) all other messages and, by extension, messengers who profess wisdom or claim to be wise.

When we come to the climactic statement in 1 Cor 2.10-13, we find Paul addressing these themes and distinctly separating the two types of wisdom and their respective means of expression. We see this primarily with the ἐλάβομεν, εἶδῶμεν and λαλοῦμεν verbal sequence in 2.12-13,² which carries with it an explicit and implicit polemic. In terms of reception, Paul asserts that the believers have received God’s Spirit and not the spirit of the world. The focus here is explicitly on the *means* of revelation and implicitly on the appropriateness of one over the other. With regard to knowledge, Paul briefly highlights the ‘things graciously given by God’ to believers, which in this instance refers to salvation in Christ crucified and how this means of salvation is a necessary component within God’s wise plan. Accordingly, believers now know the things of God because of the Spirit’s mediating role while the rulers of this age do not know because they do not have God’s Spirit. Thus, the focus here is explicitly on *what* is revealed and implicitly why the message revealed is wise instead of foolishness. Finally, in terms of speech, Paul reminds the Corinthians

¹ Cf. Garland who plainly states: ‘If the message does not come with authenticating signs or sophisticated wisdom (1:22), it whizzes right by those dependent only on natural faculties’ (1 *Corinthians*, 101).

² See Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 107.

not only of his manner of speech but also its content and how both depended on the Spirit's powerful work. The focus here, therefore, is explicitly on the *manner* of proclaiming the revelation (i.e. 'in words not taught by human wisdom') and implicitly on the adequacy of one way over the other. When taken together, the verbal sequence in 2.12-13 is the foundation upon which Paul builds his argument for how believers form right conclusions concerning the things of God—specifically the message of salvation and those who proclaim it.

4.3. Paul's Two Modes of Discernment

This brings us to the two modes of discernment briefly noted in 1 Cor 2.14-15, which will be labelled, 'discernment of the "natural" person' and 'discernment of the "spiritual" person.' Admittedly, Paul's specific remarks in 2.14-15 about these two are neither exhaustive nor elucidating in themselves; he simply makes his point and then carries on with the rest of the argument. However, as we have just seen, the claims of 2.14-16 follow from all that Paul argued previously, especially the distinctions between types of wisdom and their respective ways of knowing. Thus, we can allow Paul's previous claims to inform and guide our discussion. However, before proceeding we must address the question of categories—or the terminology Paul uses in his argument. Here we will briefly survey the three main views found among scholars before emphasising a fourth possible solution.

4.3.1. Origin, Meaning and Use of ψυχικός and πνευματικός

As noted in the previous chapter,³ while there is general agreement that Paul uses ψυχικός as a categorical term, distinct from πνευματικός, scholars remain divided on what Paul means by the term. Specifically there is the question of origins, where some view the terminology as coming from the Corinthian enthusiasts.⁴ Accordingly, the terminology does not originate with Paul. Those advocating this view therefore see Paul appropriating the terms, emptying them of their original meaning and refilling them with his own before

³ See the conclusion of 3.3.3.4 above.

⁴ See e.g. Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*; idem, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Horsley, 'Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,' 269-88; Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 114-25.

applying them back to the enthusiasts—albeit in a critical fashion.⁵ The assumption that Paul borrows the language or terminology is usually based on the observation ‘that ψυχικός is found only in 1 Corinthians, and by the fact that πνευματικός, though it occurs elsewhere in Paul’s epistles, is found no less than fifteen times in 1 Corinthians.’⁶ If it is true that the terminology comes from the enthusiasts in Corinth, and if Paul does in fact appropriate and redefine the terms for his purposes, then we need to ask: how did the enthusiasts define them, and from where (if applicable) did such terms emerge? On both counts, two views are generally presented with a third functioning as a type of synthesis of the first two.⁷

4.3.1.1. Gnosticism⁸

On the one hand, some view the origin and meaning of the terms in the light of Gnosticism.⁹ Here Paul’s distinction between ψυχικός and πνευματικός is said to reflect the Gnostic idea that ψυχικός refers to the person not illumined by divine wisdom (or more specifically, γνῶσις) and πνευματικός refers to the one who is. This would seem to parallel Paul’s earlier remarks about those having the πνεῦμα as those having access to the divine, with the implication that those

⁵ So Pearson: ‘It has been determined that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 2.1-16, has skilfully used the language of his opponents, and has turned it back against them by interpreting their language in an apocalyptic fashion’ (*Pneumatikos-Psychikos*, 41; cf. idem, ‘Philo, Gnosis and the New Testament,’ in *New Testament and Gnosis* [eds. A. H. B. Logan and A. J. M. Wedderburn; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 75). Or as Bünker excitedly puts it: ‘er stellt ihre eigenen Anschauungen in den Dienst seiner Sache (2,6-16): Die Protagonisten der Parteien werden mit ihren eigenen Waffen geschlagen’ (*Briefformular*, 56). See also Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*, 71; *contra* Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 14, 32, 35.

⁶ Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 116 (cf. also Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 299). Davis’ argument with regard to ψυχικός holds true only if he is referring to the Pauline corpus, for 1 Corinthians is the only Pauline letter that contains this term. If however Davis is referring the entire NT, then his argument is mistaken for the term appears in Jam 3.15 and Jude 19. A more pressing concern is that the logic of Davis’ argument would have to say tongues and prophecy are Corinthian categories since they are more prevalent in 1 Corinthians than any other Pauline letter. Davis seems to overlook the possibility that the terminology is prevalent because the issue is especially problematic in Corinth.

⁷ Here I am following the categories found in Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 114-25.

⁸ I am assuming my earlier discussion on 90-93 about the problems with this category and am employing the terminology here simply to interact with those who have made it the primary explanation for Paul’s use of the two terms under investigation.

⁹ See e.g. Wilckens, *Weisheit und Torheit*; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*. Jewett offers a modified version of the Gnostic hypothesis—see *Paul’s Anthropological Terms: A Study of Their Use in Conflict Settings* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 23-40 (esp. 36-40). In particular, Jewett argues (40): ‘the main opponents of Paul within the Corinthian congregation itself were radical enthusiasts who can be termed Gnostics because of their belief in salvation through σοφία/γνῶσις and because of their consistently dualistic world view.’

without the πνεῦμα remain ignorant of such things. Moreover, those advocating this reading appear to have additional support from extant Gnostic texts that occasionally contrast ψυχικός and πνευματικός in a similar way.¹⁰ Thus it seems we have a possible source for the enthusiasts' terminology and meaning, which could suggest we have a likely object for Paul's polemic—i.e. Gnostic views of spirituality. As Pagels argues:

This passage commands great attention from gnostic theologians. Here, they claim, Paul clearly distinguishes the *psychic* from the *pneumatic* nature. He declares that the demiurge, being psychic, 'does not comprehend the things of the spirit,' since 'being psychic, knew neither his Mother, who was pneumatic, nor her seeds, nor the aions of the pleroma'; he was 'foolish, and lacked understanding, imagining that he himself made the cosmos. But he was ignorant that Sophia, the Mother, the Ogdoad, was really the cause of his activity.['] Those who, like the demiurge, are psychic have received only the 'spirit of the cosmos' (2:12) and consequently lack understanding of pneumatic realities.¹¹

However, Barclay criticises this type of approach as 'misguided in its attempts to trace the "roots" of language in Greek "mysticism" or "Gnosticism": it relied on later texts which were themselves influenced by Christianity, or it grossly exaggerated the significance of only vaguely parallel patterns of vocabulary.'¹² Moreover, while acknowledging the possibility that Paul adopts the language of the enthusiasts in Corinth in order to subvert their theological positions, Barclay remains cautious to accept such conclusions. Specifically, 'much depends here on a subtle "mirror reading" which presumes Paul's unusual vocabulary is explicable *only if* it is derived from the Corinthians' usage; and we know too little about the Corinthians to go much beyond speculation in these matters.'¹³

4.3.1.2. Hellenistic Judaism

Others trace the origin and meaning to Hellenistic Judaism, specifically the parallels with Philo of Alexandria.¹⁴ Explicit attention is drawn first to Philo's

¹⁰ Scroggs' response to the ostensible parallels between Paul's language and that of the Gnostics is worth noting: 'Paul never uses the noun ψυχή in a negative sense as do the gnostics' (ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ,' 52).

¹¹ E. H. Pagels, *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 59.

¹² J. M. G. Barclay, 'Πνευματικός in the Social Dialect of Pauline Christianity,' in *The Holy Spirit and Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn* (eds. G. N. Stanton, B. W. Longenecker and S. C. Barton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 160; cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, 94.

¹³ Barclay, 'Πνευματικός in the Social Dialect,' 162—emphasis added.

¹⁴ See e.g. Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*, 11-12, 17-21.

commentary on the creation account, in which he interprets humanity as divided into two parts: a mortal body (lower nature) and an immortal spirit (higher nature). Furthermore, and to use Philo's dualistic language, the πνεῦμα not only refers to the higher nature of a person but also its source of life, while the ψυχή refers to the lower nature, one empowered or sustained by blood—just as in all creatures. While Philo sees both natures as divinely given at birth, only the πνεῦμα is able to attain the goal for which humanity was created, and that is the true knowledge of God. As Pearson explicitly states:

This ability does not belong to man's natural soul (*psyche*) but is given him by God in creation by virtue of the divine spirit breathed into man. Thus man's higher soul, his 'mind' [νοῦς] or 'spirit' [πνεῦμα] enables him to rise above the level of his earthly and sense-perceptive soul and to receive impressions from the heavenly sphere.¹⁵

Functionally, Pearson's reading of the πνευματικός-ψυχικός distinction, in relating or even defining spiritual status, parallels the line of reasoning of those who favour a Gnostic reading.¹⁶ However, and responding to the entire theory, Horsley raises three objections to Pearson's hypothesis, especially the distinctions, the grounds on which they are made and the assumed results that follow from them.¹⁷

First, the specific categorical distinction between πνευματικός and ψυχικός cannot be found either in Philo or other Hellenistic Jewish texts. While ψυχικός appears in Philo several times and πνευματικός even less, in neither case do the terms bear the meaning or engage with each other in the way Pearson suggests. Second, neither Philo nor the specific text, *Wisdom of Solomon*, articulates an anthropological dualism of soul and spirit, where the two are contrasted and one is of lesser value than the other. Moreover, nothing in Philo

¹⁵ Pearson, *Pneumatikos-Psychikos*, 54. As Logan describes it: 'the Demiurge breathes into the man's face so that he becomes psychic, but a Golem whom the powers cannot raise because of their weakness, even as, despite their persistence, they cannot trap the image which had appeared to them because of their ignorance of its power. And it is only after the Spirit sees the psychic man on the earth, comes forth from the adamantine (*adamantinos*) earth, descends and settles in him that man becomes a living soul (*psychê*, cf. Gen 2:7) and is named Adam since he was found moving on the ground' (*Gnostic Truth and Christian Heresy: A Study in the History of Gnosticism* [London: Continuum, 1996], 188).

¹⁶ Cf. C. Mihaila, *The Paul-Apollos Relationship and Paul's Stance Toward Greco-Roman Rhetoric: An Exegetical and Socio-historical Study of 1 Corinthians 1–4* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 75.

¹⁷ Horsley, 'Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,' 271-73. In a later work Pearson acknowledges these criticisms and accepts the validity of the first and third (see, 'Philo, Gnosis and the New Testament,' 75-76). Yet, Pearson remains convinced about the legitimacy of the second.

or Wisdom suggests that the terms function as descriptions for spiritual status—i.e. ψυχή referring to a lower level and πνεῦμα referring to a higher one. For Horsley, it is difficult to account for Pearson’s emphatic adjectival use of such terms as representing contrasting forms of existence when the use and meaning of the terms in Philo and Wisdom do not support such an emphasis. Finally, the literary testimony of the time does not reveal ‘among Hellenistic Jews a preference for the term “spirit” (πνεῦμα) instead of “mind” (νοῦς) for the higher, rational part of the soul. Actually the terms “soul” (ψυχή), “spirit” (πνεῦμα), “mind” (νοῦς or διάνοια), “rational soul” (λογικὴ ψυχή), etc. are largely parallel or interchangeable in Philo and Wisdom.’¹⁸ Moreover, Philo’s treatment does not focus primarily on divisions of spirituality; instead his claims reflect more of the Platonic dualism of a mortal body vs. an immortal soul.¹⁹ When applied to 1 Corinthians, as Lee points out: ‘In 1 Cor 2.12-15 and 15.44-46 . . . Paul argues on the basis of the antithetical juxtaposition of ψυχικός and πνευματικός, not on the Platonic dualism of σῶμα and ψυχή.’²⁰

4.3.1.3. Hellenistic Jewish ‘gnosis’

As a type of synthesis between the first two views, Horsley suggests a broader and more thematic reading of both Gnosticism and Hellenistic Judaism (i.e. Philo).²¹ Explicitly Horsley emphasises the soteriological distinctions between πνευματικός and ψυχικός, rather than the anthropological, and then compares these distinctions with what we see in Paul (cf. 1 Cor 2.14-15; 15.44-46). Admittedly, given the lack of πνευματικός-ψυχικός language in Philo specifically, before understanding how such terminology was used in Corinth one must determine how such language compares with what Philo does say. Here,

¹⁸ Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,’ 271-72.

¹⁹ Both Wolfson and Goodenough argue for a relationship between Philo and Platonic philosophy—as noted by D. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 10. Russell nuanced things slightly different: ‘The philosopher Philo, who was a contemporary of Christ, is the best illustration of Greek influence on the Jews in the sphere of thought. While orthodox in religion, Philo is, in philosophy, primarily a Platonist; other important influences are those of the Stoics and Neo-pythagoreans’ (*History of Western Philosophy* [London: Routledge, 2004], 303; cf. Schenck, who argues for similar influences [*A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 3, 38-40, 56-64]).

²⁰ S. M. Lee, *The Cosmic Drama of Salvation: A Study of Paul’s Undisputed Writings from Anthropological and Cosmological Perspectives* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 37 n.126.

²¹ See esp. Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,’ 269-88; idem, ‘Wisdom of Word and Words of Wisdom in Corinth,’ *CBQ* 39.2 (1977): 224-39; idem, ‘Gnosis in Corinth,’ 32-51.

Horsley offers a ready parallel: *πνευματικός* refers to the ‘heavenly’ person and *ψυχικός* refers to the ‘earthly’—the one being immortal or incorruptible, the other mortal or corruptible (cf. *Leg. All.* 1.31). After examining a number of key texts, Horsley argues: ‘it is clear that the heavenly *anthrōpos* and the earthly *anthrōpos*, the two types of humanity, are paradigms, based in creation texts, of different levels of religious endowment or status in the Hellenistic Jewish tradition represented by Philo.’²² This two-tier reading of humanity appears to have additional support from the comparable analogies of *τελείος* vs. *νήπιος* and *γαλά* vs. *βρῶμα*, where those who are *νήπιοι* and receive *γαλά* comprise the lower status (or lesser endowment) while those who are *τελείοι* and receive *βρῶμα* comprise the higher status (or greater endowment). The element that distinguishes the two halves is the possession of *σοφία*: ‘For it is through the possession of *sophia* that the soul attains exalted status as perfect, nobly-born, rich, king, immortal, heavenly.’²³

However, Horsley’s approach is not without its difficulties, two of which repay brief attention. First, Horsley’s theory operates on the assumption of a one-to-one relationship between *πνευματικός-ψυχικός* language and immortal-mortal concepts; without this assumption, the theory does not work. Since the *πνευματικός-ψυχικός* language does not exist in the context of Philo’s explanation of Gen 2.7 yet the immortal-mortal concepts do, and since Horsley assumes a parallelism between the two, he can readily transfer the nuances of the immortal-mortal concepts in Philo to the *πνευματικός-ψυχικός* language in 1 Corinthians, thus offering an ostensibly better understanding of the theology of Paul’s opponents in Corinth. However, as Mihaila points out, such a reading must assume that a ‘Philonic theology is present in Corinth,’²⁴ presumably introduced via the teaching of Apollos, a native of Alexandria. Thus, since Philo of Alexandria’s theology exemplifies a workable synthesis of Judaism and Hellenistic thought, and since Apollos hails from Alexandria as an eloquent man, powerful in the Scriptures, then, according to Horsley, it makes sense to assume that Apollos was familiar with (or at least aware of) Philo’s theology, was

²² Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,’ 279-80.

²³ Horsley, ‘Pneumatikos vs. Psychikos,’ 285.

²⁴ Mihaila, *Paul-Apollos Relationship*, 77.

influenced by it and carried it with him during his brief sojourn in Corinth.²⁵ However, this brings us to the second difficulty. The confident historical reconstruction of the Corinthians' situation, specifically their theological perspective or influence, is based upon Horsley's speculative assumptions about that situation.²⁶

4.3.1.4. A Simple Contrast

How then can we address Paul's language in 1 Cor 2.14-15, specifically the distinction between πνευματικός and ψυχικός? The simplest approach would be to see Paul employing these terms in a rather basic way, relying on their general lexical or etymological nuances.²⁷ Thus, for Paul the adjective ψυχικός merely refers to the physical nature or substance of a human being. Even if we wanted to assume Gnostic or proto-gnostic influences in Corinth, this basic meaning would not be unacceptable. As Logan shows, key gnostic texts describe the nature of the psychic person in substantive or material terms—i.e. 'bone, sinew, flesh, marrow, blood, skin and hair.'²⁸ Moreover, a distinction is maintained between the creation of a psychic person and that person having soul. Speaking of the text, *On the Origin of the World*, Logan states it this way: 'Man thus

²⁵ Specifically, Horsley contends: 'In the person of Apollos there is even a possible historical link between the Hellenistic Jewish tradition represented by Philo and the Corinthian situation, although such a direct link is hardly necessary for the analogy to be valid and helpful, given the general mobility of people, ideas, and religious cults in the Hellenistic-Roman world' ('Wisdom of Word,' 231). Cf. also Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 130. Liftin, however, rejects this line of reasoning—see *Theology of Proclamation*, 231-32, 240.

²⁶ See again Barclay's earlier remarks: 'we know too little about the Corinthians to go much beyond speculation in these matters' ('Πνευματικός in the Social Dialect,' 162).

A fourth, and equally speculative theory is the one put forth by Ellis (see, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity: New Testament Essays* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], xiii-xvii, 21-44). Here Ellis contends that the pneumatics in Corinth, who are also Paul's opponents, were initially Paul's travelling companions and fellow-workers in his apostolic mission (see 30, 38). Thus, the pneumatics were neither gnostic teachers nor Judaizing missionaries operating in direct antithesis to Paul's ministry. Instead, they were Jewish-Christians who originally supported the apostolic mission but then abused their special gifting of divine revelation and prophecy (via inspired, ecstatic speech—cf. 22, 27, 66), an abuse that subsequently affected their teaching on spirituality and ethics. For Paul this abuse can be described as stemming from a faulty notion of wisdom. Moreover, since they were originally a part of Paul's mission, and thus aware of the nature and meaning of the gospel message, '[t]hey provoke a strong response from the Apostle, who sees in their ethics and in their teaching a departure from the rule of Scripture and from the Christocentric model for Christian maturity. They have put their faith in human wisdom and, failing to recognize their gifts as a manifestation of grace, they have become boastful' (xiv).

²⁷ This is not to suggest that scholars (especially those just mentioned) are either unaware of this approach or ignoring it all together.

²⁸ Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 189.

formed is described as becoming psychic (*psychikos*), although the text stoutly denies that he yet has a soul.²⁹

Conversely, for Paul the adjective *πνευματικός* refers to one who is filled with or is characterised by God's Spirit—i.e. he or she is a Spirit-person or is spiritual. Here we should recognise a key point of overlap between the terms, yet also note their distinction. With regard to overlap, for one to be *πνευματικός* he or she must first be *ψυχικός* in the general sense (i.e. a physical creature); Paul does not envision 'spiritual people' as disembodied entities.³⁰ However, and with regard to the distinction, Paul does allow for the possibility of being *ψυχικός* without being *πνευματικός*. This type of nuance is more theological than anthropological. In terms of Jewish anthropology, it would be impossible for a 'natural' person to exist without a soul or God's life-giving breath;³¹ yet theologically it is possible for a 'natural' person to live physically without God's Spirit, which both facilitates prophetic insight and speech and engenders a life harmonious to the ways (or wisdom) of God (Ezek 36.26-28; cf. Jer 31.31-34). In the light of the broader distinction, two implications follow: 1) *ψυχικοί* are not *πνευματικοί* by the simple fact that they lack God's Spirit, and 2) from a soteriological perspective, *ψυχικοί* (i.e. those without the Spirit) represent those who are being destroyed, while *πνευματικοί* (i.e. those with the Spirit) represent those being saved.

We may expand this distinction one step further. Since the *ψυχικοί* are not *πνευματικοί*, and since Paul equates *πνευματικοί* with the *τελειοί*,³² we can safely conclude that the *ψυχικοί* are not *τελειοί*. This follows from the

²⁹ Logan, *Gnostic Truth*, 190.

³⁰ Paul's remarks in 1 Cor 15.35-54b equally do not support the idea of disembodied spirits. As Finney argues: 'Paul claims that the true *pneumatikos*, the true person of the spirit, is one who will have the transformed resurrection body. But he also makes clear (vv. 45-49) that the terms *ψυχή* and *πνεῦμα* are not simply descriptive categories for the "essence" or composition of the body. Rather, they serve to demarcate the first body in terms of its "earthly" characteristics, which are suitable for the present age upon the earth; and the second body, the *pneumatic* body, in terms of its supernatural characteristics which will be suitable for the future heavenly age. As v. 45 goes on to explain, the supernatural dimension comes from the body's transformation by Christ himself, who, through his own resurrection, became "a life-giving Spirit." Here, Fee succinctly observes that, "The transformed body is not composed of "spirit," it is a *body* adapted to the eschatological existence that is under the ultimate domination of the Spirit"' ('Conflict in Corinth,' 292-93).

³¹ Cf. Gen 2.7; Isa 42.5; Job 12.10. When this breath or life-giving spirit is withdrawn, the person dies (see Job 34.14; Ps 104.29-30).

³² See e.g. R. Schnackenburg, 'Christian Adulthood According to the Apostle Paul,' *CBQ* 25.3 (1963): 357, 359; *contra* Scroggs, 'ΣΟΦΟΣ and ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΣ,' 47 n.5.

assumption that the τελειοί are those who receive the Spirit of God, which therefore constitutes them as πνευματικοί, while the ψυχικοί lack God's Spirit, and Paul could not conceive of someone being πνευματικός without God's Spirit. Given the tenor of Paul's remarks in 1 Cor 2.14-15 in particular and 1 Cor 1.18–3.4 in general, it would seem as though he is emphasising the basic distinction noted above—i.e. ψυχικός refers to one without God's Spirit, πνευματικός refers to one with God's Spirit. This simple contrast becomes vital when we consider the details of Paul's argument and their relationship to the themes of having/receiving God's Spirit and the ability to know or discern the things of God (i.e. divine wisdom), especially those things related to salvation. It is from the basic distinction between ψυχικός and πνευματικός that Paul contrasts the two modes or ways of knowing (or modes of discernment).

4.3.2. Discernment of the 'Natural' Person

Before examining the details of this, two initial and related observations must be recognised. First, and by comparison, what Paul says about the 'natural' person in 2.14 is noticeably longer and more detailed than his comments about the 'spiritual' person in 2.15. Moreover, Paul's remarks about 'spiritual' people appear to be unrelated or unconnected to what he says about 'natural' people in 2.14. Thus, if we understand Paul as creating a contrast between the two, then the relationship is not readily seen. Specifically, the focus in 2.14 is on the 'natural' person's refusal to accept the things of God's Spirit and that person's decision to view such things as folly.³³ This refusal is based on his or her inability to know because he or she does not measure them according to the Spirit. However, the focus in 2.15 is on the 'spiritual' person's ability to judge or discern all things while at the same time remaining immune from the judgment or assessment of others.³⁴

A likely solution for the apparent disjointedness comes when we consider the second observation: while contrasting the 'natural' and the 'spiritual' person

³³ As Robertson-Plummer helpfully point out, οὐ δέχεται does not refer to an inability; it refers instead to a posture of resistance, or non-acceptance (see *First Epistle*, 49).

³⁴ While the focus of his remarks is more specific than mine, Dunn's observation in this regard is worth noting: '*Pneumatika* (spiritual things/gifts) should be subjected to scrutiny and evaluated, but not *pneumatikoi* (spiritual people). The charisma of evaluating does not include the passing of opinions about this or that man's worth or status; it is confined to the investigation and evaluation of particular charismata on the occasion of their manifestation' (*Jesus and the Spirit*, 235).

in general, Paul also contrasts the particular ways of knowing and how such ways manifest themselves. In this way, we see Paul working with clear recognisable opposites: ‘natural’ vs. ‘spiritual’ and inability vs. ability to discern the things of the Spirit. Moreover we see Paul—albeit implicitly—furthering his overall case: the ‘natural’ person sees the message of Christ crucified and its proclaimer as foolish, whereas the ‘spiritual’ person sees the message and messenger as wise. With this basic idea in mind, we now turn our attention first to the categories themselves and then to Paul’s treatment of the two modes of discernment.

4.3.2.1. *Definition of the Category (ψυχικός άνθρωπος)*

Paul appears to define ‘natural’ discernment negatively. Specifically Paul identifies it as not spiritual or not of the Spirit. (Admittedly, this is based on the details and conclusions drawn from the other half of the definition.) Moreover, Paul states that the ‘natural’ person does not receive or accept the things of the Spirit of God (2.14a). The specificity of the giver relates back to Paul’s remarks in 2.12, where he distinguished τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου from τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ. Thus we can say that Paul associates the ‘natural’ person with those who have not received τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ,³⁵ which then explains why such people do not receive the things of the Spirit, why they see these things as foolishness and why they are unable to know otherwise (μωρία γὰρ αὐτῷ ἐστὶν καὶ οὐ δύναται γινῶσαι). As with the specificity of the giver, the connection between having/receiving τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ and the ability to know the things of God’s Spirit relates to the resultant clause in 2.12: ἵνα εἰδῶμεν τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ χαρισθέντα ἡμῖν.

Therefore if knowing the things of God is contingent upon having the Spirit of God (cf. 2.11), and if the ‘natural’ person has not received God’s Spirit, then it follows that they cannot (or are unable to) know the things of God revealed by the Spirit. Yet more is involved than a divinely-given capacity or ability to know; for Paul the knowledge given by the Spirit carries with it a framework for *how* to know (or discern) the things of God. Thus, the ‘natural’

³⁵ Cf. J. –M. Sevrin, ‘La gnose à Corinthe. Questions de méthode et observations sur 1 Co 1,17–3,3,’ in *The Corinthian Correspondence* (ed. R. Bieringer; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 135.

person not only fails to receive the things of God's Spirit but he or she lacks the ability to understand the things of God ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται (2.14c). As Litfin observes: since the things of God can only be spiritually discerned, and since it is only God's Spirit who reveals the wisdom of Christ crucified, and since the 'natural' person does not have God's Spirit, which therefore implies he or she must discern the message of Christ crucified by other means, we cannot be surprised that such a person considers this message to be foolishness, since 'foolishness' is the conclusion formed when the message is measured via human wisdom.³⁶ This reinforces my original point regarding the identification or nature of this form of discernment—i.e. it is not spiritual; it is merely human.³⁷

4.3.2.2. *Basic Characteristics*

When we see this discernment in the light of Paul's earlier remarks about human wisdom (1.18–2.13), a few important conclusions follow. First, 'natural' discernment is rooted in the categories of human wisdom and that wisdom's criteria for examining the teachings of others, especially those purporting to be wise. This stresses the source and manner of knowing, a stress that helps Paul distinguish it from the mode of discernment he advocates. Second, 'natural' discernment is exercised through the efforts of the individual and that person's ability not only to reason on his or her own but also to assess the merits of another's teaching. This stresses the dependence upon the particular source and manner of knowing, which in this case is human wisdom. Third, 'natural' discernment supports individualistic or even self-interested perspectives. This stresses the motivation for either asserting one's views or judging the merits of another's, which often results in self-praise or boasting.³⁸ Finally, such efforts and abilities are ultimately limited in scope and effect. This follows from two key points in Paul's argument: 1) God has rendered human wisdom impotent in being able to know true (divine) wisdom (1.19-20), and 2) only through divine self-disclosure can God's wisdom be known (2.9-11); human wisdom and effort

³⁶ Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 220.

³⁷ We can add here Paul's claim in 2.13 with regard to how the things of God are taught not in accordance with wise human speech but in accordance with the Spirit, or πνευματικῶς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες. To teach the things of God by means of wise human speech would be attempting to discern spiritual things by human means, yet Paul has already rejected this approach as not only illogical but also completely incapable of achieving its goal.

³⁸ Cf. esp. Finney, 'Conflict in Corinth,' 44-45, 84-87, 114-19; Donahue, 'From Self-Praise to Self-Boasting,' 79-84.

on their own cannot know what has not been revealed. None of these features, either individually or collectively, represent the type of discernment that Paul has in mind for those who believe.

4.3.3. Discernment of the ‘Spiritual’ Person

We come now to the second part of Paul’s contrast, which he describes as the discernment exercised by the ‘spiritual’ person. Given the paucity of explicit details in 2.15 regarding this mode of discernment, we will need to consider the implications of what Paul says elsewhere in his argument about the Spirit’s role in relation to divine wisdom and the believer. Here we will follow a similar line of inquiry as we did with the topic of ‘natural’ discernment.

4.3.3.1. Definition of the Category (ὁ πνευματικός)

As noted earlier, what Paul says about discernment of the ‘spiritual’ person is noticeably shorter than his remarks about discernment of the ‘natural’ person. Moreover we referred to the apparent imbalance of the contrast in the sense that Paul’s comments about the ‘spiritual’ person do not necessarily respond to or appear in a similar form as the remarks about the ‘natural’ person. Instead, Paul issues two related claims and then presses on with his argument. However, when we consider the claims he does make—albeit briefly—we see not only a clear distinction between the two modes of discernment but also a vital clue for where Paul is taking the argument. Specifically, in the short remarks of 2.15 Paul prepares the Corinthians for the next stage of his argument, which is in itself an example of the discernment he advocates. However, before we examine that next stage and what he is doing, we need to consider the two related claims about ‘spiritual’ discernment.

First, Paul emphatically asserts, ὁ δὲ πνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει πάντα (2.15a).³⁹ The use of ἀνακρίνω and πνευματικός links this statement with what Paul said in the previous clause (i.e. ὅτι πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται [2.14d]). The link is important not only for identification purposes but also for articulating what the ‘spiritual’ person is able to do. It was noted above that the ‘natural’ person cannot be πνευματικός simply because he or she lacks the Spirit.

³⁹ p⁴⁶, A, C and D* include τὰ before πάντα whereas ⋈, B and D² lack the article. The inclusion is explained as a way for clearly identifying πάντα as a neuter plural rather than a masculine singular accusative (see Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 271).

Moreover, it was argued that this lack of the Spirit explains the ‘natural’ person’s inability to discern the things of God’s Spirit, for it is only by God’s Spirit that such things are made known and understood. Conversely, since the ‘spiritual’ person (by definition) has God’s Spirit, and since it is only by God’s Spirit that such things are made known and understood, he or she is able to discern the things of God. This ability follows from what Paul says negatively about the ‘natural’ person in 2.14. Thus, through ‘spiritual’ discernment one has the ability to know (reversing 2.14c), and the object of what is known is discerned to be wise (reversing 2.14b), and it is known to be wise because the believers have received God’s Spirit who is the agent of divine revelation (reversing 2.14a).

This connection of ideas becomes clearer when we recognise the links between πάντα here in 2.15 and its use in 2.10. Since the Spirit πάντα ἐραυνᾷ, καὶ τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ (2.10b), and in the light of Paul’s claim that ἐλάβομεν . . . τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ (2.12a), it would not be too much to assume that God’s Spirit is able to assist the πνευματικός in discerning πάντα (2.15). While Fitzmyer rightly points out that the scope of πάντα in this context refers ‘not only [to the] affairs of this world or age, but also “what comes from God’s Spirit,” and the “gifts bestowed on us by God” (v 12),’⁴⁰ there is an additional and more immediate connection to be recognised. Specifically, Paul appears to have in mind the proclamation of the gospel of Christ crucified as God’s wisdom, a wisdom revealed by the Spirit and a proclamation that relies on the Spirit’s powerful work in the both the preacher and audience. We can assume Paul has this focus in mind, given the likelihood that he is confronting those who interpret both the message and messenger as foolish.⁴¹ We can further assume that Paul wants the Corinthians to see the assessment of message and messenger as essential for judging other ‘inspired’ teachers and their claims to divine wisdom, or that their inspired messages correspond with the gospel of Christ crucified. Thus, if one claims divine wisdom or inspired speech and yet the substance of the message does not correspond with how God’s revelation occurs, that person, in spite of their claims, cannot be considered a true witness (cf. Gal 1.6-9).

⁴⁰ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 184.

⁴¹ Cf. Pickett, *Cross in Corinth*, 62-66, 68-69, 71-74.

Paul contends, in the second and related claim about the ‘spiritual’ person, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑπ’ οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται (2.15b). While the claim as a whole is worthy of attention, we must first address a seemingly minor detail: the shift from the active to passive use of ἀνακρίνω. In the previous clause, Paul describes the πνευματικός as the one exercising discernment; here the πνευματικός is the recipient or object of discernment. As the remainder of the clause suggests, the one judging or critiquing the πνευματικός can ostensibly be either a fellow believer or a non-believer. Given the emphatic negativity of the claim it would appear that Paul advocates absolute immunity for the πνευματικός when being judged. If we assume that Paul’s opponents in Corinth are claiming superior status as a result of inflated views of spirituality, then this promise of immunity seems counterproductive for Paul’s case against these spiritual elite.⁴² Moreover, if this immunity does in fact exist in this way, then Paul has no ground or support for repudiating the claims of the elite; by his own definition they would be exempt. However, as 1 Cor 14.29 suggests, the claims (or even inspired words) of the πνευματικός (in this instance, προφήτης) are certainly open to critique and should be measured by spiritual standards (i.e. πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες [2.13b]). The immunity would therefore seem to apply to one’s status as πνευματικός but not to the manifestations of that status (e.g. πνεύματικα, χάρισμα).⁴³ However, we could say the status and manifestations are immune to the criticisms of those who judge both according to the standards of human wisdom. Given the explicit contrast between ψυχικός and πνευματικός in 2.14-15, and the wider context of the argument, this latter immunity seems to be Paul’s primary claim.

4.3.3.2. Basic Characteristics

When we see this discernment in the light of Paul’s earlier remarks about divine wisdom (1.18–2.13), a few important conclusions follow. First, ‘spiritual’ discernment is rooted in the categories of divine wisdom and that wisdom’s criteria for examining the teachings of others, especially those purporting to be wise. This stresses the source and manner of knowing, a stress that helps Paul

⁴² This tension in the text is an underlying reason why Thiselton views 2.15 as a quotation of the elite in Corinth (see *First Epistle*, 272-74).

⁴³ See again Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 235.

maintain the separation between this form and ‘natural’ discernment. Second, ‘spiritual’ discernment is exercised through the Spirit’s work and the Spirit’s ability to know and reveal the depths of God. This stresses the dependence upon the particular source and manner of knowing, which in this case is God’s wisdom. Third, ‘spiritual’ discernment is not limited in its ability or scope. This follows from two key points in Paul’s argument: 1) God has given the Spirit to those who believe, a Spirit who knows all things, even the depths of God (2.10-11), and 2) because of divine self-disclosure, God’s wisdom can be known and this wisdom forms the basis upon which all other wisdom-teachings are judged (2.15). Finally, ‘spiritual’ discernment benefits the community, especially when the community collectively relies on Spirit-given insight or guidance. For Paul, while on the verge of being circular, it is this collective exercise of discernment for the benefit of the whole—and not the exaltation of an individual—that characterises the whole body as πνευματικός.

4.3.4. Condition(s) for Right Discernment

We must now consider the conclusion of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 2.6-16, not only as it relates to the issue of discernment but also the larger topic of receiving and accepting God’s wisdom via the Spirit. Specifically, we seek to understand what justifies right discernment (i.e. whether there are basic conditions or criteria) and how Paul goes about supporting that case. We will address this in reverse by first focusing on the scriptural quotation in 2.16, which seems to function as his support, and then examine the relationship between the substance of that quotation and Paul’s preceding remarks on spiritual discernment.

4.3.4.1. Paul’s Appeal to Scripture

Paul ends the argument of 1 Cor 2.6-16 with a scriptural quotation, one presumably employed to validate his preceding claims.⁴⁴ Similar to the quotation in 2.9, Paul’s usage here in 2.16 repays close attention. Commentators maintain that Paul’s source is Isa 40.13 and that he follows the LXX rather than the MT.⁴⁵ When we consider the respective contents of the

⁴⁴ See Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 128.

⁴⁵ Heil suggests that it not only ‘comes from Isa 40:13 but is [also] reminiscent of many other OT texts with a similar form and content [which] heightens the likeliness that the implied

sources, Paul's use of the LXX might come as a surprise. Part of this stems from the fact that the MT provides textual (if not linguistic) support for the idea of how one knows via the Spirit—a crucial feature to Paul's argument in 2.10-12. In the MT the 'Spirit of the Lord' is the direct object, the one measured by an individual (מִי־תִכֵּן יְרוּחַ־אֵת יְהוָה וְאִישׁ עֲצָמוֹ יוֹדִיעֵנּוּ). The verb תִּכֵּן carries with it the idea of 'measuring' or 'balancing', an idea that relates well with Paul's concept of discernment—i.e. examining two or more things together and recognising, in a rational way, their harmony or interrelatedness. Thus it seems strange that Paul does not rely on this reading when making his case in 2.6-16. Why then does he use the LXX instead of the MT? While it might be tempting to say that Paul was either unfamiliar with the MT or he simply favoured the LXX over the MT,⁴⁶ these options are far from provable with any degree of certainty.⁴⁷ It is more likely that Paul follows the LXX because he uses it more often than the MT,⁴⁸ and that he is writing in Greek to a Greek-speaking audience, thus making the LXX a more suitable choice.

However, by considering the overall logic of 2.6-16, we see that the LXX is not only a more suitable text for his audience but that its particular reading makes better sense of Paul's argument and therefore becomes the more useful source.⁴⁹ Before proceeding, we need to examine two key differences that emerge in the LXX: 1) the direct object is 'the mind of the Lord',⁵⁰ and 2) the verbal idea is knowing rather than measuring. Thus, the LXX reads: τίς ἔγνω νοῦν κυρίου καὶ τίς αὐτοῦ σύμβουλος ἐγένετο ὅς συμβιβᾷ αὐτόν. From this we can begin to see why Paul uses the LXX version of this passage for his argument. Throughout the argument of 2.6-16 the primary object of discussion has been

audience recognizes it as an allusion to scripture' (*The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 74-75).

⁴⁶ Lindemann favours the idea that Paul was unfamiliar with the MT on the basis that if he was familiar with it, he would have recognised that *רוח* makes a better case (see *Der erste Korintherbrief* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000], 74).

⁴⁷ This also applies to the theories that suggest Paul was operating from memory and simply misquoted or remembered badly.

⁴⁸ To say that Paul uses the LXX more often is different from saying he favours the LXX. While it is true that favouring a text can be proven by the amount of use, it is also true that frequent use can occur out of either necessity or familiarity—i.e. the text used is the most readily available.

⁴⁹ Cf. Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 74.

⁵⁰ It is sometimes argued (e.g. Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 129; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 47) that the translators of the Septuagint read *רוח* as synonymous with *νοῦς*, evidenced by the substitution of the former with the latter, and Paul simply operated with the same flexibility.

the wisdom of God; the Spirit of God, as the mediator of divine wisdom is secondary, although that is not to say of lesser value. Moreover, Paul has been dealing with not only a particular kind of wisdom but also its particular source. Thus, if Paul were to quote from the MT the focus would seem to fall on the *mediator* of wisdom (i.e. the Spirit) rather than the *source* of wisdom (i.e. the Lord [God]). This is made more acute by the fact that Paul has stressed the Spirit's role in directing the believer to God as both the source and provider of true wisdom. By employing the LXX Paul is not only able to maintain the primary focus of the discussion (i.e. the wisdom of God), he is also able to maintain the secondary concept of knowing the will and ways of God through the means that God provides (i.e. the Spirit).

One further detail needs to be addressed. In both the LXX and the MT, the question in the Isaiah passage and the expected response is negative. Thus, whether we read it as 'who has measured the Spirit of the Lord' (MT) or 'who has known the mind of the Lord' (LXX), the anticipated answer is an emphatic, 'no one.'⁵¹ This negative response comports well with Paul's earlier analogy in 2.11, and it adds further support to his claim in 2.14. However, with the emphatic conjunction $\delta\epsilon$ in 2.16 preceding his conclusion, Paul reverses the expected response and suggests that it is possible to 'know the mind of the Lord', yet this possibility is contingent upon specific conditions and the appropriate use of such conditions.⁵² One of the stated conditions is the fact that believers 'have the mind of Christ' (2.16c); the other, although not explicitly stated in 2.16, is the reception and presence of the Spirit. This brings us to the next topic of our investigation.

4.3.4.2. *The 'Mind of Christ'*

Here we deal with the specific conditions and their appropriate use for knowing 'the mind of the Lord.' Immediately we are struck by the change from 'the mind of the Lord' in the quotation to 'the mind of Christ' in the exhortation.⁵³ This shift did not go unnoticed by later scribes, for a small number of manuscripts

⁵¹ Cf. Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*, 39-40.

⁵² So Heil: 'Although the "positive" statement in 2:16b contradicts the expected negative answer of the rhetorical question in the scriptural reference, it does not lessen or eliminate its effects on the audience as a rhetorical question' (*Rhetorical Role of Scripture*, 71 n.8).

⁵³ For, 'we have the mind of Christ' as an exhortation, cf. Collins, *First Corinthians*, 127.

read κυρίου instead of Χριστοῦ in 2.16b.⁵⁴ However, the use of Χριστοῦ not only has stronger attestation,⁵⁵ it also maintains the flow of Paul's overall argument, specifically its Christological focus.⁵⁶ In 1 Cor 1.10 Paul admonishes the Corinthians to be united in speech and for their mind and judgment to be restored to perfection (κατηρτισμένοι). This desire appears to be prompted by the news of party-formations among believers in Corinth, specifically the potential of groups rallying around particular names. For Paul party-formations (whether actual or merely potential) carry with them the danger of dividing the church, which Paul equates with the person of Christ (cf. 1.13)—a theme he will continue in chapter 12. However, if we look closely at the structure of his argument in 1.10, we can see the specific focus of Paul's exhortation: the disharmony in speech and behaviour (i.e. rallying around names, community divisions) ultimately results from a faulty mind and flawed judgment.

Therefore, Paul's argument is not directed at particular groups or factions (*per se*); instead, he speaks to the underlying cause that provides space not only for disharmonious speech but also flawed judgments concerning the nature and effect of the gospel message. For Paul the nature of the gospel is God's wisdom displayed in the cross of Christ as a means for salvation, and one primary effect of this event is the complete reversal of ideas and how such ideas are judged. In particular, the cross radically alters notions of wisdom and how that wisdom is conveyed, understood and obtained by believers. Moreover, with this alteration comes a new framework for how the transformed life is to be lived. For Paul the transformed life is lived in the light of the cross, for it is by the cross that believers' lives are (re)defined. As Paul says in Phil 2.5-11, a believer's attitude (or mindset) is to reflect not only Christ's faithful, humble and obedient disposition towards the ways of God (i.e. the wise plan of salvation) but also Christ's willingness to endure public humiliation and shame on a cross. Here we see a strong connection between what the cross of Christ represents and how believers are to understand and live life. To put this differently, the way in

⁵⁴ Specifically B, D*, F, G, 81, it, Ambrosiaster and Pelagius.

⁵⁵ See p⁴⁶, 8, A, C, D¹, Ψ, 048, 0289^{vid}, 33, 1739, 20, vg, syr, cop, Epiphanius.

⁵⁶ Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.267.

which believers view the world and themselves is through the lens of the cross, and those with the mind of Christ will live a cruciform life.⁵⁷

We find a similar emphasis at work in Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians. In particular, the cruciform life defined by the mind of Christ results in unity and not division. Noting the same connections with Philipians, Brown argues: 'When the mind of Christ is embraced, unity in the Body of Christ, the church, is regained (Phil 2:5; 4:2). Likewise, in 1 Corinthians, possession of the consciously cruciform mind is what makes possible the unity Paul calls for in 1:10, the mindful servanthood outlined in chapters 3–4'.⁵⁸ As Paul argues in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, because he proclaimed the wisdom of God in the cross of Christ and the Corinthians originally accepted it as such, from that point of acceptance they became recipients of the mind of Christ. Accordingly, and ideally, the Corinthians' view of the world and themselves is no longer determined by the standards of the world (i.e. human wisdom), standards that were rendered impotent and foolish by the cross. Especially crucial for our purposes is Paul's view of the Spirit's role in this entire process. We have already noted Paul's belief that the Spirit was powerfully at work in the proclamation and reception of the gospel, and that a central feature of this work was the Spirit's role in revealing God's wisdom displayed in the cross of Christ. Here we find Paul's belief that the Spirit plays an equally crucial role in providing the framework within which the cross of Christ can be understood as God's wisdom and how that wisdom defines new life in Christ. In particular we see that the notion of having 'the mind of Christ' is necessarily linked with the idea of Spirit-given and guided discernment.⁵⁹

4.3.4.3. *Presence and Guidance of the Spirit*

We come now to the second condition for right discernment, a condition not explicitly stated as such but one inherent to Paul's larger argument. Specifically

⁵⁷ Cf. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 39. More to the point: 'Paul's Christ paradigm is not simply an appropriate pattern for relational power, it communicates something fundamental about the shape of true humanity: that it should be cruciform, following (μιμηταί μου γίνεσθε καθὼς ἐκάλω Χριστοῦ, 1 Cor 11.1) and called into fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1.9)' (Long, *Paul and Human Rights*, 175).

⁵⁸ A. R. Brown, 'Apocalyptic Transformation in Paul's Discourse on the Cross,' *WW* 16.4 (1996): 435. Cf. Goudge: 'If we "have the mind of Christ," we must share His character. Spirituality of mind and party-spirit cannot exist together' (*First Epistle*, 23).

⁵⁹ Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 219.

I am referring to the presence of the Spirit in the lives of believers and the new epistemological framework within which believers understand and live life. According to Paul's claims in 2.11, 12 and 14, knowledge of God's wisdom is dependent upon receiving God's Spirit; without the Spirit it is impossible to know the things of God. In other key Pauline texts, a similar connection between believers having the Spirit and their ability to know and live according to God's ways is emphasised (e.g. Rom 8.5-17; Phil 2.1-11; cf. Eph 3.14-19; 4.1-6). When we recognise this connection, especially in relation to having 'the mind of Christ,' and apply it to the notion of discernment, we must state clearly the implications of this connection. Specifically, in having 'the mind of Christ,' given by God's revelation via the Spirit, does this mean the believer's mind is superseded? In other words, when a teacher proclaims an inspired message to others, does the Spirit's activity override or relegate the teacher's abilities in order to sustain and communicate the inspired nature of the message?⁶⁰ Moreover, are those hearing the message able to discern the validity of the message (as inspired by God) through their own reasoning or does the Spirit overshadow their abilities? Or does Paul offer a balance between human ability and divine activity for the entire process, both for the teacher and for the listener? Let us consider two options for dealing with this particular issue before mentioning a more plausible reading.

In one sense we could say Paul envisages a dichotomy of Spirit-revelation and human rationality, especially in view of his earlier polarisation of God's wisdom and human wisdom, with the former overturning the latter. Thus, those who have God's Spirit and therefore the 'mind of Christ' are no longer operating in accordance with their own abilities or faculties; all inspired messages are formulated, proclaimed and understood by the work of the Spirit, filtered through 'the mind of Christ.' Moreover, with 'the mind of Christ' representing a standard of wise living, definitions of ethical norms and behaviours are solely the product of divine revelation and therefore can only be understood via the illumination of the Spirit. Accordingly, since God's wisdom in the cross has rendered powerless human wisdom, and since God's wisdom can only be revealed or made known via God's Spirit and apart from human ability, Spirit-

⁶⁰ Aune helpfully shows that ancient Greek notions of 'inspiration' presupposed a displacement of the human mind by the divine voice (see *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 24-33).

revelation and discernment about the cross also render powerless human reasoning.⁶¹ However, Paul's polemic deals with ways (or modes) of knowing and the success or failure of those employing the respective ways. As a result, the failure or success is not linked with inability or ability on the part of the individual; instead the focus falls on the success or failure of the specific mode of knowing by which an individual seeks to understand. Therefore, since we can say the Spirit is the one who reveals the overturning of human wisdom by God's wisdom as the way of knowing, it does not seem appropriate to say the Spirit's activity necessarily overturns the abilities of human rationality.

In another sense, especially in view of the situation to which Paul writes, we could say Paul advocates a more rational or reasoned approach to discernment vis-à-vis one dependent upon ecstatic spiritual experiences. Thus, because some of the Corinthians are boasting of spiritual superiority, exemplified in their practice of divinely inspired speech (non-rational utterances?) and their claims for prophetic insight via special revelation (or divine possession),⁶² Paul offers balance to the situation through his 'insistence on the superiority of rational, nonecstatic behaviour and communication.'⁶³ This becomes particularly relevant for Paul's argument in 1 Cor 14, where he favours intelligible speech, which uplifts the entire community, over unintelligible utterances, which provide no real benefit for the whole and divide the community into parts—e.g. those able to speak in ecstatic utterances, and those who cannot. If, however, prophetic insight or inspired teachings via non-rational speech are going to take place in the community, Paul insists they be

⁶¹ Munzinger criticises Schnabel for 'relegat[ing] the use of reason for discerning the will of God to a near irrelevant position, since the external "binding norms" are sufficient' (*Discerning the Spirits*, 145). Specifically Schnabel contends that standard reason is not 'particularly relevant for the substantiation of Christian moral behaviour, since it never provides the final word in questions of Christian life-style, nor cancels or invalidates God's norms and commandments, nor is it relevant for discerning and deciding basic moral questions, as these have been decided already in God's eternally valid revelation. The believer's reason is relevant for questions of minor importance and for deciding how (not whether!) the binding norms of, and the guiding criteria for, moral behaviour are to be realized *in actu*' (*Law and Wisdom*, 332). However, the preceding context for Schnabel's argument does not seem to warrant such a criticism, for Schnabel emphasises the necessary interrelationship between a renewed mind and God's Spirit—especially for discerning the ways or wisdom of God (see Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom*, 329-32).

⁶² See A. R. Hunt, *The Inspired Body: Paul, the Corinthians, and Divine Inspiration* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996), 71-76.

⁶³ Hunt, *Inspired Body*, 127. Though he specifically focuses on 1 Cor 14, Callan's arguments on Paul's view of inspired prophecy reach a similar conclusion to that of Hunt—see T. Callan, 'Prophecy and Ecstasy in Greco-Roman Religion and 1 Corinthians,' *NovT* 28.2 (1985): 125-40.

made comprehensible through an interpreter or translator. As Aune says: ‘Rather than reject prophesying out of hand, Paul recommends that [believers] allow the Spirit of God to speak through prophets and then retain that which is good and profitable and reject that which is regarded as evil and worthless.’⁶⁴ Accordingly, distinguishing between good and evil, profitable and worthless involves a more reasoned or rational evaluation of what is communicated and therefore applicable to the community. When applied to the context of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4, this would suggest the idea of rationally discerning what is of God and what is not; God’s wisdom vs. human wisdom.

However, as Munzinger points out, both of these options presuppose an antithesis or dualism between Spirit and mind—or ‘faith versus reason and the supernatural versus the natural.’⁶⁵ For Munzinger, this dualism is not only difficult to sustain but also inconsistent with Paul’s wider views on Spirit and mind, especially in a soteriological context.⁶⁶ We arrive at this by noting some key points. First, Paul insists that God’s Spirit is necessarily distinct from the individual—much less that person’s mind.⁶⁷ Second, while endowed with abilities to reason or rationalise, the human mind is incapable of ascertaining the things or ways of God; only God can reveal such things. Third, the revelation involves the Spirit mediating God’s wisdom to the believer, and for Paul this mediation is tied to the proclamation of the gospel. Fourth, while Paul sees the Spirit as working powerfully in the mind of the individual, bringing about a proper understanding of God’s wisdom in the cross of Christ, this powerful work is not synonymous with an absolute displacement of human reason or a complete suspension of mental faculties. As intimated in Rom 10.8–15, Paul assumes a conscious decision on the part of the one accepting the gospel of Christ as the message of God’s salvation. Moreover, Paul ‘is keen that his listeners understand his message, and an important criterion for proper worship is that it is conducted in an intelligible manner.’⁶⁸ Thus, and finally, Paul believes this powerful work of the Spirit includes the transformation or

⁶⁴ Aune, *Prophecy*, 219.

⁶⁵ See Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*, 146. Cf. also Scott, *Implicit Epistemology*, 58–68.

⁶⁶ See Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*, 147–84.

⁶⁷ As noted in the previous chapter, Paul’s arguments in this respect must be contrasted with those of the Stoics, who advocate an essential, inherent link between the individual and the divine.

⁶⁸ Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*, 152.

renewing of the mind, the point at which human wisdom is replaced with God's wisdom; 'natural' discernment is exchanged for 'spiritual' discernment. However, Paul does not view this transformation and exchange as the Spirit supplanting the human mind or reason. Accordingly, this transformation brings with it new ways of thinking and therefore a new understanding for how to live, and Paul expects (or assumes) that all believers operate according to this new standard.

4.3.4.4. *Summary of Conditions*

Thus, for Paul, having the 'mind of Christ' not only enables believers to know and rightly discern the wisdom of God (or the things of God) as revealed by the Spirit; it also operates as a new framework for understanding life and knowing how to live according to God's wisdom. Specifically, this new epistemology defines appropriate behaviours and equips believers with the ability to recognise or discern when the boundaries of appropriateness are either confused or transgressed. The believers (or the *πνευματικοί*) are further equipped to know how to correct not only the faulty behaviour but also recognise the process of thought that enabled it to happen. In the case of the Corinthians, their struggles can be seen as emanating from two basic and related problems: 1) a faulty understanding of both wisdom and spirituality, exemplified by the issue of boasting of status, and 2) a faulty criterion for assessing things and persons claiming to be wise and spiritual.

For Paul the solution to both problems comes when the entire community defines and discerns both wisdom and spirituality with the mind of Christ, as given and maintained by the Spirit. Moreover, having this mind and mode of discernment are manifest in how the believers live, not only personally but also with each other as a community. Specifically, for Paul, the life lived is one that is humble, self-sacrificing and others-focused; it is a life that reflects the reality of the cross.⁶⁹ With the argument of 1 Cor 2.1-5, Paul shows his own

⁶⁹ As Cox summarises: 'the hallmark of those who are truly *πνευματικοί* is the mind of Christ (*νοῦς Χριστοῦ*, 1 Cor 2:16), a mind that is not puffed up with *γνώσις* but is built up by *ἀγαπή θεοῦ* (1 Cor 8:1-3). The mind of Christ manifests itself in believers not in liberty that comes from knowledge but self-sacrifice in accordance with Christ's sacrifice (8:7-13)' (*By the Same Word: Creation and Salvation in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007], 160). We should also recall Fee's assessment: 'This paragraph [1 Cor 2.6-16] has endured a most unfortunate history of application in the church. Paul's own point has been almost totally lost in favor of an interpretation nearly 180 degrees the opposite of his intent.'

apostolic mission as operating within this particular framework, and uses it as an example to be imitated by the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 4.16).⁷⁰

4.4. Paul's Use of Spiritual Discernment

When we come to Paul's remarks in 1 Cor 3.1-4 we find him offering an assessment of the Corinthian situation, an assessment that not only appeals to the Corinthians' own experience (both past and present) but also employs the criteria for spiritual discernment. In this section of the chapter we will focus on these two features of Paul's assessment. However, before we address these we must be clear about the relationship between this passage and the rest of Paul's argument—specifically, what is its logical or rhetorical function?

4.4.1. Situating Paul's Assessment

Commentators agree that with 1 Cor 3.1 Paul begins a new stage of the argument, signalled by the repeated use of *καὶ γὰρ ἀδελφοί* (cf. 2.1).⁷¹ Where disagreement occurs is with how this new line of argument relates to both what precedes and follows. Bünker, under the assumption that 1.10–4.21 represents an elaborate rhetorical letter, reads 3.1 as initiating the *probatio* of Paul's argument.⁷² However, in view of the assumed deliberative and apologetic aims of the argument, Bünker consequently downplays the importance of God's wisdom (revealed by God's Spirit) so that the issues of party-strife and apostolic authority become the primary foci. Or to say this more negatively: Bünker's

Almost every form of spiritual elitism, “deeper life” movement, and “second blessing” doctrine has appealed to this text. To receive the Spirit according to their special expression paves the way for people to know “deeper truths” about God. One special brand of this elitism surfaces among some who have pushed the possibility of “faith” to the extreme, and regularly make a “special revelation” from the Spirit their final court of appeal. Other “lesser” brothers and sisters are simply living below their full privileges in Christ. Indeed, some advocates of this form of spirituality bid fair to repeat the Corinthian error in its totality. What is painful about so much of this is not simply the improper use of this passage, but that so often it is accompanied by a toning down of the message of the cross. In fact one is hard-pressed to hear the content of “God's wisdom” ever expounded as the paradigm for truly Christian living' (*First Epistle*, 120)

⁷⁰ As Tuckett argues: ‘the wisdom that Paul will concede and accept for the mature (2.6-16) is the wisdom that comes from the mind of Christ (v. 16). It is the gospel of Christ crucified, and the claim that this gospel is exemplified in his own apostolic existence, that provides the fundamental basis for Paul's attempt to change the self-understanding of the Corinthians’ (‘Paul, Scripture and Ethics: Some Reflections,’ *NTS* 46.3 [2000]: 423-24; cf. Hunt, *Inspired Body*, 93).

⁷¹ See e.g. Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 77; A. Strobel, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1989), 74-75; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.280; J. Kremer, *Der erste Brief and die Korinther* (Regensburger: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1997), 66-67; Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 76-77.

⁷² Bünker, *Briefformular*, 17-18.

reading ultimately severs the necessary connection between a proper understanding of God's wisdom and how that understanding engenders appropriate relations, not just amongst the Corinthians but also the Corinthians and Paul.

Davis, on the other hand, appears to emphasise the relational solidarity Paul desires. In particular, while there are distinctions between believers and non-believers, because of the presence of the Spirit no distinction should exist within the body of believers. Thus:

1 Co 3.1-4 should be recognized as the natural and integral counterpart to 1 Co 2.14-16. There Paul affirms . . . that no Christian may be called ψυχικός. For inasmuch as every Christian possesses the Spirit and comprehends the spiritual wisdom contained within the kerygma, that one is πνευματικός. But in 1 Co 3.1-4, Paul shows up the one-sidedness of a purely sapiential criterion, by affirming that Christians become πνευματικοί, (that is, mature), as they reject the deeds and understanding of the flesh, and pursue the control and enlightenment of the Spirit.⁷³

While Davis recognises the important links between 2.14-16 and 3.1-4, the latter is not merely a counterpart of the former; Paul's remarks in 3.1-4 relate to and expand earlier portions of his argument in crucial ways, and such portions should not be overlooked. Moreover Davis' treatment deals primarily with specific views of wisdom and only secondarily with the issue of party-strife.

However, Kuck offers a reading for the whole of 1.10–4.21 which sees 'false valuations of wisdom' and party-strife as 'complementary'⁷⁴ concerns for Paul. In terms of structure,⁷⁵ following the general introduction and thesis (1.10-17) Paul addresses the topic of wisdom (1.18–2.16), where he offers a corrective for the Corinthians' distorted view of it. Then, as a reminder of the plea for unity among believers, 3.1-4 functions as a transition from the discussion of wisdom to that of party-strife, the latter being the substance of 3.5–4.5. The remainder of the argument (4.6-31) serves as Paul's attempt to recapitulate his primary concerns, but to do so in the light of what he has just argued. This reading has commendable aspects, one of which, as Kuck states, is that it

⁷³ Davis, *Wisdom and Spirit*, 130-31.

⁷⁴ D. W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul's Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 154.

⁷⁵ What follows is a summary of Kuck, *Judgment and Community*, 154-55.

can be used as a key to understanding Paul's analysis of the situation and his rhetorical aim. Paul sees the fundamental problem in the Corinthian church to be a tendency for individuals to seek status in the congregation on the basis of their demonstration of spiritual wisdom. One visible result of this pursuit of spiritual status has been a divisive weighing of the community's teachers against one another.⁷⁶

While this reading is able to hold in balance the 'complementary' topics of party-strife and faulty views of wisdom, and while we can certainly read 3.1-4 as being a part of that balance, it is not helpful to see it simply as a transitional statement. The content and function of 3.1-4 play an integral role for sustaining the balance of Paul's discussion and why he opposes divisions and faulty views of wisdom. We will keep this role in mind as we proceed.

4.4.2. Appeal to the Corinthians' Present Situation

We now turn our attention to the content of 3.1-4, specifically the appeal to the Corinthians' present situation. Since this letter is not Paul's first contact with the Corinthians, we need to consider which one he likely has in mind and for what reason. It is possible to assume that Paul returns once more to the circumstances of his original visit.⁷⁷ This assumption rests not only on the thematic parallels associated with *καὶ γὰρ ἀδελφοί* (cf. 2.1; 3.1), but also on the implied time references of the verbal ideas specifically in 3.1-2b. Accordingly, the acts of speaking and giving metaphorical sustenance are portrayed as past events, and given the context of the argument it would make sense to assume that these past events refer to Paul's original proclamation.⁷⁸ On the surface, this reading accounts for why Paul says it was impossible for him to speak to the Corinthians then as *πνευματικοί*—i.e. when he first arrived they had not yet heard or received the gospel and therefore could not be recipients of God's Spirit. However, given the rest of the argument—especially Paul's description of the Corinthians as, *ἐν Χριστῷ*—this reading seems to create more problems than it solves.⁷⁹ Thus we must consider an alternative.

A second possibility would be to assume that Paul has in mind the non-extant letter mentioned in 1 Cor 5.9, a letter that *predates* the composition of 1

⁷⁶ Kuck, *Judgment and Community*, 155.

⁷⁷ Cf. Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 100; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 142; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 105. So also by implication, see Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 52 (cf. 29).

⁷⁸ Cf. Hunt, *Inspired Body*, 93-94.

⁷⁹ To paraphrase Fee: one cannot be in Christ and lack God's Spirit (see *First Epistle*, 123).

Corinthians. Given Paul's summary in 5.9-13, specifically the emphasis on proper treatment of immoral people both within the community and those not identified with it,⁸⁰ we could say this lost letter was occasioned by the Corinthians' failure to exercise spiritual discernment properly, a failure resulting from an immature spirituality. The implication of 5.9-13 is that the Corinthians were welcoming and associating with immoral people who call themselves ἀδελφοί, and were therefore obscuring the line between those 'in Christ' and those who are not.⁸¹

This approach would account for not only the past-tense references in 3.1-2b but also Paul's description of the Corinthians as both σαρκινοί and νηπιὸν ἐν Χριστῷ. If the summary of 5.9-13 is any indication of their behaviour or actions since receiving the gospel, then these descriptions are apropos. However, apart from the reference to his past experience with the Corinthians, there is nothing in 3.1-2b that would lead us to conclude Paul is referring specifically to the non-extant letter. If he were thinking of that letter here in 3.1-2b, we would expect a reference similar to what we have in 5.9—i.e. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ.

A third possibility assumes that Paul is referring to the duration of his 18-month sojourn in Corinth (cf. Acts 18.11),⁸² which includes not only the initial proclamation to and the establishment of the ἐκκλησία but also the early stages of its development. Sensitive to theories of group formation, Robertson reminds us that '[d]evelopmentally speaking, the Corinthian community at the time of Paul's writing lay far closer to "brand new" than to "firmly established"'.⁸³ Accordingly, we should not expect to find a perfect community operating according to God's wisdom absolutely, much less employing Spirit-led discernment consistently; there might be some in Corinth who do so, but certainly not all.

⁸⁰ Cf. Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 1.388-89.

⁸¹ This obscuring of the line is what raises concerns for Paul about the identity of the community of believers. As Meeks points out, Pauline churches 'enjoyed an unusual degree of intimacy, high levels of interaction among members, and a very strong sense of internal cohesion and of distinction both from outsiders and from "the world"' (*First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], 74; cf. also Tucker, *You Belong to Christ*, 224).

⁸² Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 78; Morris, *First Epistle*, 61.

⁸³ Robertson, *Conflict in Corinth*, 8.

Superficially this would seem to bring us back to the issue of a stratification of believers in Corinth. However, as Fee contends, given the context Paul does not intend ‘to suggest classes of Christians or grades of spirituality, but to get them to stop *thinking* like the people of this present age. [Moreover], he wants them to stop *behaving* like the people of the present age, which is the point at hand.’⁸⁴ The tension between God’s wisdom and the world’s and the relationship between thought and behaviour are what prevent Paul’s remarks from being seen as endorsing levels or tiers of belief. Therefore we should not read the focus as dealing with internal stratification; instead the focus remains on the distinction between those within the community (believers) and those without (non-believers). For Paul the Corinthians, while ἐν Χριστῷ, are thinking and behaving as though they are not—a result of relying on worldly wisdom rather than God’s, mediated by the Spirit.⁸⁵

This reading is preferable for at least two reasons. First, it has the advantage of accounting for the implied time references in the passage. In doing so, it raises an intriguing observation. If it is true that 3.1-2b refers to the whole of Paul’s original sojourn, and if the description he provides relates to that 18-month period, it would seem the Corinthians began to exhibit early on traits not necessarily in harmony with their believing the gospel and receiving God’s Spirit. In other words, this reading would suggest that the Corinthians began to think and behave in ways contrary to God’s wisdom, or ways not in accordance with the revelation of God’s Spirit, while Paul was still with them. Thus, Paul’s awareness of the problems in Corinth—specifically faulty views of wisdom and spirituality—came not simply from the reports delivered to him by Chloe’s people; his awareness is initially based on first-hand experience, only to be confirmed by the subsequent report. Second, this reading accounts for the specific details of the passage, or how Paul describes the Corinthians and his interactions with them. Let us consider each of these in turn.

⁸⁴ Fee, *First Epistle*, 122—emphasis original.

⁸⁵ Both Inkelaar and Tucker, while independent of each other, are helpful on this point when taken together. For Inkelaar, the ‘conflict [in Corinth] presented in the text is not a conflict between movements, parties, leaders, or traditions but a conflict between two manifestations of wisdom’ (*Conflict Over Wisdom*, 20). For Tucker, the manifestation of wisdom would be the criterion by which the Corinthians identify themselves, not only as individual believers but as a community in Christ. The conflict Tucker emphasises is that some Corinthians ‘were continuing to identify primarily with key aspects of their Roman social identity rather than their identity “in Christ”’ (*You Belong to Christ*, 2).

4.4.2.1. *The Corinthians as σαρκινοί*

While some commentators see Paul giving the term a slightly different nuance in 3.3, his use of *σάρκινος* here in 3.1 is virtually synonymous with *ψυχικός* in 2.14—i.e. those without God’s Spirit.⁸⁶ However, Kuck cautions that we must be careful not to draw too close a parallel between *σάρκινος* and *ψυχικός*.⁸⁷ The reason for the caution stems from an awareness of what Paul is doing in 3.1-2b in relation to what he does in 2.14-16. While the time reference in 3.1-2b calls to mind Paul’s preaching ministry in Corinth, he does not wish to say the Corinthians are now exactly as they were then when he first arrived; something marks them now as changed. The change in mind can simply be described as the Corinthians having/receiving the Spirit upon belief. Thus, as Kuck observes, ‘Paul cannot use *ψυχικός*, because he does not intend to call their [present] faith into question’;⁸⁸ rhetorically the recollection is employed for the sake of comparing the Corinthians’ present status with how they were initially.

Moreover, by labelling this present status *σάρκινος* instead of *ψυχικός*, Paul is calling attention to the moral aspects associated with the former in a way that parallels his description of *τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός* (see Gal 5.19-21). Thus, with regard to the Corinthian situation, the question is not the reality of the Spirit’s presence in the believing community but the morality of those claiming to be spiritual. On this reading, the Corinthians’ status is portrayed as *spiritual* in the sense that they received God’s Spirit when they first believed; yet their *behaviour* and ways of thinking make it appear as though they do not have God’s Spirit.⁸⁹ Accordingly, for Paul, the Corinthians *appear* to be people of flesh and not of the Spirit.

4.4.2.2. *The Corinthians as νηπίοι ἐν Χριστῷ*

Admittedly, *νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ* is difficult to interpret for the simple fact that it appears nowhere else in the NT. Commentators therefore offer varying

⁸⁶ See e.g. Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 36, 49; B. A. Pearson, ‘Hellenistic-Jewish Wisdom Speculation and Paul,’ in *Aspects of Wisdom in Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. R. L. Wilken; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 64 n.45. *Contra* Fee, *First Epistle*, 124.

⁸⁷ See Kuck, *Judgment and Community*, 159-60.

⁸⁸ Kuck, *Judgment and Community*, 160; cf. Godet, *First Epistle*, 164-65.

⁸⁹ Cf. J. Francis, ‘“As Babes in Christ”—Some Proposals Regarding 1 Corinthians 3:1-3,’ *JSNT* 7 (1980): 41; C. T. Rhyne, ‘1 Corinthians 3:1-9,’ *Int* 44.2 (1990): 175-76; N. Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Epworth, 1992), 28.

suggestions for how to understand this unique description. Some assume that the phrase relates to an early period of faith in Christ, where the Corinthian believers are simply beginning their process of maturity.⁹⁰ This would seem to make sense in the light of Paul's use of τέλειος in 2.6, which serves as the ideal or desired goal of Christian existence. On this reading, one begins as an infant and then progresses toward spiritual adulthood.⁹¹ In terms of how to know when the transition occurs, one scholar interprets 'babes in Christ' to mean those 'who as yet [have] not manifest the gifts of the Spirit, or who [have] not yet been taken into full membership'.⁹² This reading, however, creates space for internal boasting of spiritual status—a possibility that Paul rejects. Others suggest a double meaning for νήπιος where on the one hand it refers to how the Corinthians are behaving—i.e. like immature children—while on the other hand it refers to the infancy of their belief.⁹³ Thus, behaving like immature children is reason enough for believers needing to progress or mature in their faith.⁹⁴

This second option seems to account for the basic features of the metaphor and it harmonises two key related details: 1) Paul's remarks in 3.1-2b as a description of the Corinthians since the proclamation of the gospel—especially their current status,⁹⁵ and thus 2) the distinction between non-belief

⁹⁰ See C. A. A. Scott, *Christianity According to St Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 173, 175; L. G. Cox, 'Sin in Believers,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 1 (1966): 30; H. T. S. Blaney, 'St Paul's Posture on Speaking in Unknown Tongues,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 8 (1973): 53, 55.

⁹¹ Wesley employs this analogy when defining the nature of Christian perfection, wrought by the work of the Spirit: 'I do not say, that every real Christian can declare with the Marquis de Renty, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of "babes," but rather of "fathers in Christ"' ('On the Trinity,' sermon 60 in *Sermons on Several Occasions* [vol. 2; New York: B. Waugh and T. Mason, 1836], 24; cf. idem, 'Letter VII,' in *Original Letters, by the Rev. John Wesley and His Friends* [ed. J. Priestly; Birmingham: Thomas Pearson, 1791], 32; idem, *Christian Perfection* [Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1800], 22, 42, 125).

⁹² Nichols, 'Two-Level Christianity,' 109.

⁹³ Koenig, 'From Mystery to Ministry,' 168; J. D. Ekem, '“Spiritual Gifts” or “Spiritual Persons”? 1 Corinthians 12:1a Revisited,' *Neot* 38.1 (2004): 58.

⁹⁴ Cf. T. Engberg-Pedersen, 'The Gospel and Social Practice according to 1 Corinthians,' *NTS* 33.4 (1987): 567-68.

⁹⁵ Deluz's argument in this regard is not entirely helpful: 'When Paul came for the first time to preach the Gospel in Corinth, the Christians there were still *babes in Christ*' (*Companion to 1 Corinthians*, 33—emphasis original). In this way, it seems as though the Corinthians were already believers when Paul came to them initially. However, as Hunt contends: 'Since, at the time of Paul's initial preaching, the Corinthians could not already have been Christians, Paul clearly could not have spoken to them *then* (cf. λαλέω in 3:1) as he does *now* after their conversion (cf. the same verb in 2:6). . . . Moreover, before they were Christians, they could not have been πνευματικοί (3:1) since such a term signifies existence in the Spirit' (*Inspired Body*,

and belief, and how Paul's use of νήπιος is linked with that distinction and not stages of belief. Syntactically and logically the phrase ὡς νηπίοις ἐν Χριστῷ is intimately tied to the descriptive phrase ὡς σαρκίνοις, with the former being an alternate way of expressing the latter.⁹⁶ Accordingly, since I said σάρκινος refers to the moral or behavioural status of the Corinthians at the time of Paul's writing, I must also say νήπιος describes the same status.

By seeing νήπιος in this way, instead of primarily as a reference to an infantile faith in need of maturing, though that becomes a part of it, we are better able to square what Paul says here with what he claims about the Corinthians in 1.5-7. As Francis points out, if we read νήπιος in 3.1 as indicating the Corinthians' *present* failure to advance or grow in faith, this then conflicts with Paul's admonishing them in 1.5-7 for being enriched in all things, lacking in nothing.⁹⁷ Thus we would have to say that Paul is either inconsistent in 3.1 when compared with 1.5-7 or he merely feigns gratitude in 1.5-7.⁹⁸ If, however, we take νήπιος as a qualitative description of one's moral thinking and behaviour, rather than a point on a faith-continuum, then we avoid both the potential inconsistency and the issue of false praise. Or, as Francis puts it: 'As an alternative, . . . Paul is rebuking his readers not because they are babes still, and had not progressed further, but because they were in fact being childish, a condition contrary to being spiritual.'⁹⁹

Before proceeding, we should examine at least two reasons for interpreting νήπιος as both qualitative and 'a condition contrary to being spiritual' or mature (cf. 2.6). First, semantically, while νήπιος does describe a particular stage in human growth, it also carries the general idea of immaturity or being underdeveloped cognitively or even behaviourally. This type of nuance emphasises or describes the lack of what is desired or should be the case, and when specifically applied to knowledge it bears the pejorative meaning of folly

93-94—emphasis added; cf. I. Edman, *The Mind of Paul* [New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935], 178).

⁹⁶ Godet, *First Epistle*, 165.

⁹⁷ Francis, '“As Babes in Christ”', 43; cf. Godet, *First Epistle*, 165.

⁹⁸ Conzelmann sees a disagreement between 3.3 and 1.5, yet explains the conflict by labelling 3.3 'an *ad hoc* statement' (*1 Corinthians*, 72).

⁹⁹ Francis, '“As Babes in Christ”', 43.

or foolishness.¹⁰⁰ The second reason is theological. When we read the whole of Paul's argument, especially the contrast between folly and wisdom, unbelief and belief, 'natural' and 'spiritual', we see νήπιος as an appropriate counterpart to τέλειος in 2.6, the latter referring to those who have received God's wisdom by the revelation of the Spirit. As noted earlier, a consequence of this involves a new way of knowing (or discerning)—i.e. it is characterized as Spirit-given and led. Thus, νήπιος maintains the overall contrast that has been at work all along, namely not only the distinction between those who believe and from those who do not but also the manner of thinking and behaving within the distinctive groups. For Paul the distinction therefore is not infant-faith versus adult-faith—a topic that presupposes stages of belief—but incomplete (or foolish) knowledge versus complete (or wise) knowledge.

4.4.2.3. *The Diet of γάλα and βρῶμα*

In keeping with the idea that 3.1-2b refers to Paul's original sojourn in Corinth, we must examine Paul's metaphor of sustenance and how it relates to his apostolic work. Some commentators read the metaphor of γάλα and βρῶμα as referring not just to levels of content in Paul's teaching but also to when such levels would be appropriately taught. On this reading, γάλα refers to Paul's initial proclamation where the absolute basics of the gospel were presented, and βρῶμα refers to a more intimate or in-depth wisdom teaching reserved for a later period in spiritual maturity. An example of this approach is found in Grosheide who takes γάλα as simple 'missionary preaching' and βρῶμα as 'preaching to convinced Christians in which it is possible to unfold the full richness, the magnificence of the gospel.'¹⁰¹

In a slightly more nuanced way, Robertson and Plummer interpret γάλα as the message of Christ crucified in 2.2 and βρῶμα as the explanation of the revelation of God's wisdom to the believer in 2.6-13.¹⁰² The underlying assumption is that this deeper-level teaching (βρῶμα) was not a part of the original proclamation (γάλα); Paul withheld it from the Corinthians until they

¹⁰⁰ This reflects other Pauline texts using νήπιος that refer not only to those ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ἡμεθα δεδουλωμένοι, before the revelation of Christ (Gal 4.3), but also those under the tutelage of blind-guides and foolish teachers (Rom 2.19-20).

¹⁰¹ Grosheide, *First Epistle*, 79.

¹⁰² Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 52.

were able to receive it.¹⁰³ However, this reading seems to perpetuate the idea of levels of spirituality in Corinth—or stages of Christian belief—when part of Paul’s argument is distinguishing believers from non-believers, especially their respective ways of knowing. In the other part, which can be seen as the thrust of the argument, Paul subverts the claims of those in Corinth who claim spiritual superiority and think they are able to consume true ‘meat’, by calling them ‘babes’ (i.e. inferior) who can only handle ‘milk’.

Other commentators read γάλα and βρώμα together as referring to nourishment in general rather than competing types or degrees of substance or consistency.¹⁰⁴ Part of the reasoning for taking the terms together as referring to a single action is that the entire phrase represents a zeugma, or an elliptical expression used for rhetorical effect. Specifically, both γάλα and βρώμα are accusatives for the single verb, ποτίζω and it would make little sense to say, ‘I did not give you solid food to drink.’ If Paul were indeed speaking of a distinction between types of teaching, metaphorically distinguished by γάλα and βρώμα, then we would expect him to supply verbal ideas appropriate to the imagery. In this case, ποτίζω for γάλα and ἐσθίω for βρώμα (cf. 1 Cor 11.26). Given that he uses only one verb, which technically only applies to one of the accusatives,¹⁰⁵ it makes better sense (on this reading) to say he is referring to something more general—i.e. nourishment.

However, despite the apparent parallel between 1) γάλα and βρώμα and 2) general nourishment, Paul does seem to indicate a distinction between the *types* of nourishment and that each is conducive for a particular context. This distinction is made apparent by the negative οὐ in 3.2b as indicating what he did not supply to the Corinthians, over and against the affirmative claim in 3.2a.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Cf. Goudge, *First Epistle*, 23; Deluz, *Companion to 1 Corinthians*, 34; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 71; Talbert, *Reading Corinthians*, 6; Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 101; Mare-Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians*, 33; Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 40. Morris appears to argue with the same assumption, however it is admittedly uncertain given the relative vagueness of his treatment (see *First Epistle*, 1986, 61; cf. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 67). Litfin rightly points out that ‘Paul never equates βρώμα with σοφία and it is misleading for commentators to conflate 3.2 with 2.6 in such a way as to make it appear that he does’ (*Theology of Proclamation*, 222).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. e.g. M. D. Hooker, ‘Hard Sayings: 1 Cor 3:2,’ *Theology* 69 (1966): 20-21; Fee, *First Epistle*, 125-26; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 291-92; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 106-08; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 2008), 187.

¹⁰⁵ Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 70 n.4.

¹⁰⁶ Schnackenburg mistakenly reads the ‘nourishment’ of 3.2a as the contents of the letter to the Corinthians (see ‘Christian Adulthood,’ 357).

Thus, by stating that he initially gave the Corinthians γάλα and not βρώμα, Paul stresses the point that he made necessary concessions for the Corinthians by supplying them with food conducive for their maturity—i.e. νηπίους ἐν Χριστῷ.¹⁰⁷ What is problematic now, at the time of writing, is that the Corinthians—despite their own views or perceptions—have not matured and cannot therefore receive solid food. Instead, they have remained as they originally were—i.e. νηπίους ἐν Χριστῷ, only able to ingest milk. Therefore, once again, Paul must now make concessions to accommodate their present (spiritual) immaturity, despite what their actual spiritual status is—i.e. πνεύματικοι.

4.4.2.4. *Relevance of the Appeal*

The specifics of the initial appeal in 3.1-2b are crucial for our understanding of Paul's larger argument. The rhetorical function of this appeal is not only to situate the Corinthians' present dilemma, in the sense that they are essentially thinking and behaving as though they lacked God's Spirit, but also to stress emphatically the theological tension between what they should be and what they are.¹⁰⁸ Paul achieves this by first reminding them of his original visit and their change of status as a result of that visit—i.e. from non-believers to 'in Christ.' Moreover, Paul reminds the Corinthians of how he 'nourished' them when he initially arrived: he fed them in accordance to their need. However, while their past soteriological status underwent a significant change post-gospel, their present epistemological framework—and by extension, behaviour—evidences no recognisable change. Hence, the Corinthians do not exhibit the characteristics of πνευματικοί thus inhibiting Paul from providing suitable nourishment. All of

¹⁰⁷ While the initial focus falls on the kind of food given, there is the secondary emphasis that Paul is the one who initially supplied the appropriate food (cf. B. R. Gaventa, 'Mother's Milk and Ministry in 1 Corinthians 3,' in *Theology and Ethics in Paul and His Interpreters: Essays in Honor of Victor Paul Furnish* [eds. E. H. Lovering, Jr. and J. L. Sumney; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996], 101-13). This imagery is reflected in his later comment in 3.6, when he alters the metaphor and emphasises his role as the one who supplies (or 'plants') the seed—i.e. the gospel. Moreover, the imagery of providing drink and its relationship to initial belief in the gospel is also reflected in Paul's later comments in 12.13: καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν . . . καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν. Especially relevant for our purposes are the ties between 'drink' and the Spirit noted here in 12.13 and the implications of Paul's argument in 3.1-2, for it was in supplying the Corinthians with 'drink' (the gospel) that they received the Spirit and thus became 'spiritual' people.

¹⁰⁸ As Schnabel observes: 'Der Abschnitt 3,1-4 behandelt die Orientierung der Korinther an menschlichen Maßstäben, die ihrem tatsächlichen Status als „Vollkommene“ widerspricht' (*Der erste Brief*, 183).

this establishes one side of the contrast Paul seeks to make, a contrast used explicitly to move the Corinthians away from the ways of thinking and behaving that are in opposition to the wisdom of God and the mind of Christ.

4.4.3. Paul Employing Spiritual Discernment

When we come to the second portion of Paul's assessment (3.2c-4), we see him shifting the focus from his original visit to the present situation. This shift is signalled by the emphatic phrase, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε· ἔτι γὰρ σαρκικοί ἐστε (3.2c-3a). These two accusations share a cause-and-effect relationship: at present the Corinthians are unable to receive proper nourishment because (γὰρ) they are still σαρκικοί. Scholars often point out the subtle transition from σαρκινός in 3.1 to σαρκικός here in 3.3 and attempt to tease out its importance for Paul's argument.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, σαρκινός describes the 'stuff' of a person's makeup while σαρκικός refers to the ethical or moral dimension of the person's existence. However, Thiselton objects to this approach because the distinction is made on the grounds of morphology rather than semantics.¹¹⁰ As an alternative, Thiselton notes both the overlap in essential meaning between the two terms and the distinctive emphases on that essential meaning. Specifically, Thiselton reads σαρκινός as a 'descriptive' term while σαρκικός is 'evaluative';¹¹¹ the one defines life as ostensibly without the Spirit, while the other stresses the negative theological consequences of that life.

In this way, σαρκικός carries with it ideas similar to what we see in Paul's use of σάρξ elsewhere,¹¹² specifically as a way of being that is in opposition to the ways of God.¹¹³ In Rom 8.4-9, Paul emphasises the fact that, because of the work of Christ, believers are no longer to live in the sphere of the 'flesh' or they

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. Fee, *First Epistle*, 124-27 (cf. 121 ns.1, 3); Kistemaker, *Exposition*, 102, 104; Mare-Harris, *1, 2 Corinthians*, 34; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 143-44; Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 66-68; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 109.

¹¹⁰ See Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 288-89, 291-93.

¹¹¹ Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 293.

¹¹² Watson lists the three major ways in which 'flesh' language appears in Paul's letters (see *First Epistle*, 28). In one sense, the meaning is benign; it simply refers to a category of being (cf. Rom 4.1; 1 Cor 1.26). In a second sense, it describes the mortality of humanity as a result of separation from God. Accordingly, 'flesh' emphasises the weakness and frailty of human existence (cf. Rom 6.19; 8.3; 2 Cor 4.11). Finally, 'flesh' language in Paul stresses the reality and effects of sinfulness, and how the 'flesh' manifests that reality in how a person lives—i.e. in opposition to the ways of God (cf. Rom 7.5, 18; 8.3-12). Cf. also Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 288-89.

¹¹³ Cf. B. J. Malina and J. J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 186.

are no longer to be governed by the ways of the ‘flesh.’ Instead, their minds (and by extension their lives) are to operate in accordance with the Spirit (οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες τὰ τῆς σαρκὸς φρονοῦσιν, οἱ δὲ κατὰ πνεῦμα τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος [Rom 8.5]).¹¹⁴ In Gal 5.16-17 we see Paul stressing the reality that while believers are to live in accordance with the Spirit, the life of the ‘flesh’ continues to be a possibility—i.e. it is possible for believers to slip back into the ways of the ‘flesh.’ However, in both Galatians and 1 Corinthians, Paul does not endorse compatibility between the life of the ‘flesh’ and life in the Spirit; the believer cannot live in both worlds.

Thus, with the revelation of God’s wisdom via the Spirit and the subsequent result of having ‘the mind of Christ’, Paul expects this twofold reality to manifest itself in both thought and behaviour (cf. Gal 5.22). This expectation becomes the standard against which Paul measures the Corinthians’ present situation in 3.2c-4. In other words Paul compares the ideal picture of the τέλειος/πνευματικός of 2.6-16, an ideal that should be actualised by those who have the Spirit and ‘the mind of Christ’, with the reality that the Corinthians do not at present reflect (nor have they in the past reflected) this ideal picture.

Given the fact that Paul’s argument thus far has dealt with the question of knowledge (or ways of knowing), the ability to know and how such things affect life in the community and the world, it should not surprise us that Paul’s brief comparison addresses a similar connection. Specifically, by calling the Corinthians σαρκικοί, Paul suggests that they are operating according to a standard other than the Spirit—much less the mind of Christ. Instead, the Corinthians are operating according to the standard (or mindset) which they possessed before Paul arrived to proclaim the gospel, a standard that is not ‘spiritual’ but ‘of the flesh.’ The fundamental problem for Paul is that this should not be the case, since as a result of the gospel the standard ‘of the flesh’ was replaced with the ‘spiritual’ standard—i.e. the mind of Christ, given by God’s Spirit.

It is here that we find Paul stressing the connection between mindset and behaviour, specifically when he asks, οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε καὶ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε; (3.3c). In this instance σαρκικός refers to the mindset at work, and

¹¹⁴ Cf. Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 40.

the copulative verb suggests a state-of-being, and περιπατέω refers to the expression or behaviour that follows, which Paul further qualifies as κατὰ ἄνθρωπον. The justification (or evidence) Paul gives for his claim is the existence of ‘jealousy’ and ‘strife’ within the community of believers.¹¹⁵ For Paul jealousy and strife are recognisable manifestations not of the Spirit or the mind of Christ but of the flesh, which is in opposition to the Spirit (cf. Rom 13.13; 2 Cor 12.20; Gal 5.20).¹¹⁶

Moreover, for Paul ‘jealousy’ and ‘strife’ are not endorsed by the gospel; neither are they motivated by love nor concerned with the benefit of the community. Instead, ‘jealousy’ and ‘strife’ are the result of the mindset characterised or even shaped by self-love and self-interest.¹¹⁷ However, as Paul argues elsewhere, οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις (Gal 5.24). It is from this ‘crucifixion’ that those who belong to Christ are granted a new life in Christ via the Spirit, which therefore means this new life is to be lived in accordance with ‘the mind of Christ’ given by Spirit.¹¹⁸ This expectation stands behind Paul’s present critique of the Corinthians, for it is precisely this expectation that they have failed to meet.

Paul completes this stage of his argument by restating his earlier concern in 1.11-12, although this time he provides an explanation for the dilemma. Specifically Paul asks: ὅταν γὰρ λέγη τις· ἐγὼ μὲν εἶμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δὲ· ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ, οὐκ ἄνθρωποι ἐστε; (3.4). The focus here is not so much on a particular instance in the recent past or a possible future occurrence, nor is it

¹¹⁵ A few key manuscripts add a third term to this list: διχοστασία (see p⁴⁶, D, G, 33, 614, 20, a, b, syr, Irenaeus, Cyprian). However, a wider manuscript tradition supports the lack of the term (see p¹¹, 8, A, B, C, P, Ψ, 0289, 81, 630, 1175, 1506, 1739, 1881, r, vul, cop, Clement, Origen, Ambrosiaster). As Metzger points out, the inclusion of the term is accounted for by a scribe’s familiarity with the vice-list in Gal 5.20, which includes διχοστασία (see *Textual Commentary*, 482-83).

¹¹⁶ Paul at least sees ‘strife’ as influential in the party-spirit noted in 1.11-12, with the result that the body of Christ is being divided.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic*, 69.

¹¹⁸ It is worth noting Paul’s use of κατὰ πνεῦμα περιπατεῖν in Rom 8.4, 5, which functions as a conceptual antithesis to the κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖν here in 3.3. Moreover, as Schnabel points out: ‘the phrase κατὰ πνεῦμα περιπατεῖν . . . implies that the Spirit is not only the foundation and power of the Christian life but also indicates the “how” of Christian behaviour’ (*Law and Wisdom*, 327).

primarily about specific individuals, though that does play a role;¹¹⁹ rather the focus is on the act itself. For Paul, the moment someone claims allegiance to a person or a specific name is evidence of that person thinking and behaving like a mere human (cf. 2.14) rather than one filled with and guided by the Spirit—i.e. πνευματικός.¹²⁰ For in asserting allegiance to a name or another person, that assertion is neither motivated by love nor the benefit of the community as a whole; rather the effects of the assertion are division and selfish admiration or elevation of specific individuals.

All of this, for Paul, is inconsistent with the message of the gospel and the life (and mindset) that is expected of those who have embraced the gospel as God’s wisdom (cf. 1.26-31). Moreover, we see Paul continuing to emphasise the links between mindset and expression or behaviour, and in the light of his remarks about the ‘natural’ person in 2.14 and the similar terminology employed in an equally similar polemical fashion, we can see Paul’s rebuke here in 3.4 as a comparison between what the Corinthians should be and what they are. The force or sting of his argument is that their behaviour betrays no difference when, because of the Spirit (and the assumed transformation of mind and life), there should be a radical difference. However, there appears to be something else at work in Paul’s critique of the Corinthian situation, something implicit yet foundational.

4.4.4. Paul’s Implicit Expectation and Rebuke

We have established that Paul is addressing the Corinthians’ current status, in that he sees them behaving as though they did not have the Spirit. Moreover, I have maintained that Paul is concerned about the type of discernment the Corinthians are employing to assess the gospel and Paul as an apostolic witness. In this case that type of discernment is characterised as ‘natural’ and defined by human wisdom, a form of wisdom that Paul sees as inadequate and inappropriate for judging both the message of God’s wisdom in

¹¹⁹ Although it is worth pointing out that the list of options in this regard has been reduced to two, rather than the four mentioned in 1.12. Because of this narrowing of focus, there does seem to be a concern with Paul and Apollos in particular. However it appears as though Paul stresses these names to illustrate or provide specific examples of how the Corinthians’ faulty human ways of thinking operate.

¹²⁰ A small number of manuscripts replace ἄνθρωποι with σαρκικοί (N², Ψ, 20, syr), presumably either to maintain continuity with 3.3 (i.e. οὐχὶ σαρκικοί ἐστε) or to stress the contrast between ‘spirit’ and ‘flesh’.

the cross and those who proclaim it. Within what Paul says, there is an implicit expectation and therefore rebuke in the light of the fact that the Corinthians received God's Spirit when they first believed. The expectation is that the manner of thought or discernment exercised by the Corinthians should be that which proceeds from God's Spirit.

Moreover, since the reception of God's Spirit brings with it a new paradigm of thought (or epistemology), and this new paradigm necessarily alters how believers understand and live life, Paul expects the Corinthians, as spiritual people, to live in accordance with 'the mind of Christ.' The implicit rebuke in all of this is that the Corinthians have not relied on what they have received from God, and the effect of this can be illustrated in their divisiveness or self-interested desires to rally around particular names. In other words, they are collectively not acting as Spirit-led people, living in accordance with the singular mind of Christ; instead they are acting as mere humans who divide themselves according to status, defined by the categories of human wisdom. We could reasonably say their lack of Spirit-led communal discernment, filtered through the cross and the mind of Christ, stands behind the dilemmas they currently face. Thus, another side of Paul's rebuke is that if this Spirit-led communal discernment were operating in Corinth, they could have either prevented or settled the issues they now bring to the Apostle. We will explore this theme in the final chapter.

4.5. Conclusions

This chapter set out to explore Paul's differentiation between two types of discernment. We found that Paul sees only one type as appropriate for those who belong to Christ, whereas the other type has no place in the believing community. The appropriateness of the one over the other was demonstrated in the fact that only spiritual discernment can know the things of God, specifically that which is revealed by God's Spirit, which in turn defines the new life in Christ; natural discernment fails on all of these counts. From this we examined the particular details of Paul's assessment of the Corinthian situation. It was shown here that Paul remained consistent with his own explanation of what constitutes spiritual discernment and how it is exercised. Paul was able to discern the root cause for the dilemma(s) in Corinth and respond accordingly.

Implicit in this is the rebuke that if the Corinthians relied on the same spiritual discernment, they would not have formed negative conclusions about the nature of the gospel or Paul's apostolic witness and they would have handled their conflicts appropriately. However, as it is, the Corinthians lack the unity of mind necessary for right discernment of what is God's wisdom and how that wisdom shapes true spiritual life.

Chapter 5

APPLYING SPIRIT-GUIDED, COMMUNAL DISCERNMENT

5.1. Introduction

To conclude this study, I return to some basic questions posed at the beginning that have hitherto gone unanswered, or at least have not received explicit attention. These questions can be divided broadly into two categories: thematic and rhetorical. First, what is the relationship between Paul's pneumatological teaching in 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 and the rest of the letter? Specifically, how do the interrelated themes of Spirit, cross, wisdom and discernment apply to the immediate context of 3.5–4.21, which deals with the Corinthians' assessment of the apostolic ministry, and the wider context of chapters 5–15, which addresses the Corinthians' particular communal (and ecclesial) struggles? Following a summary of thematic relationships, the bulk of this chapter will engage with these questions.

Second, why does the pneumatological teaching of 2.1–3.4 appear where it does in Paul's argument? Why does Paul not articulate this teaching when dealing with the topic of 'spiritual things' in chapter 12–14? More specifically, what is the purpose of offering this pneumatological teaching sooner rather than later? What are the rhetorical and theological implications for such an early placement? These questions will be taken up in the final portion of this chapter.

5.2. Summary of Thematic Relationships

This summary serves two functions. First, it consolidates the findings of this entire study on the themes of Spirit, cross, wisdom and discernment. In general, this summary emphasises the interrelationship of these four themes and in particular the Spirit's essential role in the proclamation of the cross, the mediation of divine wisdom and the establishment and exercise of communal discernment. Second, this summary provides the basic framework for examining the rest of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians, especially the way in which the key themes relate to or even influence that argument.

5.2.1. *Cross and the Spirit*

With the theme of the cross, Paul emphasises his role as a proclaimer of ‘the word of the cross’ (1.18a), a role that could be classified as a divine (Christological) commission (cf. 1.17a-b). Implicit to this emphasis is the link between identity and behaviour—i.e. how Paul conducts himself as an apostolic herald follows directly from who he is and what he is called to be. This identity-behaviour connection is further bound up with the message he proclaims—i.e. all that Paul does and how he views himself are intimately tied to the gospel of Christ crucified.

And just as the cross is a sign of shame, folly and weakness in the eyes of the world, so too are Paul’s message, person and manner of preaching. Paul proclaimed God’s ‘folly’ of the cross (1.21) and nothing else (2.2), and he recognised the humiliation of the cross and declared it with humble reverence (2.3). Furthermore, Paul’s proclamation reflected the unadorned nature of the cross by his unpolished manner of speech (2.1, 4a), for if he relied on eloquent speech he would not only fail to reflect the nature of the cross but also portray it as something other than what it is. Or, as he asserts: to rely on wise, human speech would rob the message of the cross of its divine power (1.17c-d). Instead, he relies on (what he sees as) the only means by which the power of the cross is made manifest: the work of God’s Spirit (2.4b).

This powerful work of the Spirit engenders faith in those who hear the gospel message (2.5), a faith that sees (or knows) ‘the word of the cross’ as God’s power resulting in salvation (1.18). For Paul this work, faith and salvation represent the new reality and identity for the Corinthians (1.2). Thus, the Corinthians are to define their identity not in accordance with how the (wisdom of the) world determines such things; their new reality and identity are to be measured and assessed by the nature and power of the cross. Paul illustrates this by combining the world’s view of the cross with the world’s perception of (many of) those within the Corinthian assembly: just as the cross is a sign of folly, weakness, defeat, and reserved for the lowest of society, God’s salvation comes to those without world-defined wisdom, power and nobility (cf. 1.26).¹

¹ Bailey argues that Paul’s threefold description of not many wise, not many powerful and not many well-born is not exclusively reserved for the Corinthians; it applies to all churches in the whole of nascent Christianity (see *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* [London: SPCK, 2011], 82-84; cf. also Héring, *First Epistle*, 1-2).

Moreover, Paul insists that just as the cross (through God's wisdom) became the sign of honour, power and salvation (1.27-28), so too the believers in Corinth (through the cross of Christ) become persons of divinely chosen worth, a status that is reflected in humble and reverent praise (cf. 1.30-31). Accordingly, because of their new reality and identity, Paul expects the Corinthians to see themselves as reflections of God's work in the cross, made manifest to and established among them by the powerful work of the Spirit.

5.2.2. Wisdom and the Spirit

With the theme of wisdom, Paul stresses his commitment to proclaiming 'the word of the cross' as the power and wisdom of God, despite the world's criticism of it (cf. 1.18a, 21-23). For Paul this wisdom represents 1) that which is given by God to those who believe, and 2) a way of knowing how to define life and live accordingly. God's wisdom thus becomes an epistemological framework within which believers understand and live life. This emphasis on the nature and source of wisdom found original expression in Paul's proclamation of the cross as God's wise means of salvation and life, revealed to the Corinthians by God's Spirit (2.10-12).

Thus, as noted above, the cross functions as the (visible) standard for how the believers in Corinth should measure or define themselves as participants in God's new life (or reality). Moreover, Paul insists that the God-given wisdom is necessarily distinct from the wisdom of the world (2.12), and that the former has overturned the latter (1.19, 20d). Furthermore, and as a consequence, those who receive the Spirit's revelation of God's wisdom no longer rely on that which is incapable of knowing or ascertaining God's wisdom, for that which is human cannot know what is divine (2.11, 14). Accordingly, it is only by God's wisdom that believers can know how the cross 1) has the power to give life and 2) becomes the standard by which new life is defined; human wisdom sees this as utter foolishness.

It was precisely this 'foolishness' that Paul says he initially proclaimed to the Corinthians, and it was this 'foolishness' that they originally believed and accepted as God's (true) wisdom (1.23-24, 30-31; 2.6-8). Since Paul understands the Spirit to be the only means by which such wisdom is known to be of God, we are not surprised by his claim that the Corinthians originally

believed and accepted the gospel because of the powerful work of the Spirit (2.4-5). Moreover, within this claim Paul emphasises this point by noting the distinct and contrasting ways of knowing the wisdom (or ways) of God. While human wisdom sees sophisticated reasoning and eloquent speech as hallmarks of (worldly) wisdom, Paul denounces such things as inappropriate (and incapable) means for ascertaining God's wisdom (cf. 2.1-4).

Moreover, while the world sees sophisticated reasoning and eloquent speech as useful for supporting one's claim of possessing wisdom, this support is contingent upon certain presuppositions about wisdom and what it reveals—things which Paul also sees as inadequate (1.20, 27-28). The world expects wise proclamations to be characterised by rhetorical flair, polished eloquence and even boasting of one's abilities,² whereas God's wisdom is revealed by the power of the Spirit, working through plain speech and the speaker's reverent disposition (2.1-3). By referring to and describing his apostolic preaching in the way he does, we can reasonably conclude that Paul's allegiance to the message he proclaims and his faithful reliance on the Spirit's work suggest that he was operating in accordance with the new epistemological framework he advocates.

5.2.3. Discernment and the Spirit

It is only when we near the end of Paul's pneumatological teaching in 2.1–3.4 that we find emphasis on Spirit-led discernment. However, considering the flow of the argument the delay is appropriate and understandable. For Paul, spiritual discernment operates in accordance with God's wisdom, as displayed in the cross, and that wisdom is revealed via the Spirit working through the proclamation of the cross. This progression of thought 1) stresses the logical connections between discernment, wisdom and revelation, and 2) reflects the historical circumstances of Paul's apostolic ministry in Corinth.

With regard to the latter point, Paul uses his argument as both a reminder and a point of contrast. As a reminder, historically speaking Paul came to Corinth in order to proclaim the message of God's salvific plan for the world (cf. 1.17-18; 2.1). In the wisdom of God, this plan involved an unthinkable yet necessary act to bring about salvation: a crucified messiah. However, this act is only unthinkable or foolish when judged according to human wisdom.

² Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 209.

Thus, in order for the Corinthians to see this divine act as both wise and essential, they needed an alternative framework of thought and standard of measure (or judgment). For Paul, God provided both of these through the work of the Spirit, and the evidence for this divine provision was the Corinthians' acceptance and belief in the cross as the enactment of God's saving wisdom (cf. 1.18b; 2.5, 9, 10, 15).

Paul therefore uses this historical circumstance (or series of events) as one side of a contrast, and this side represents the basis for measuring the Corinthians' present situation. Specifically, Paul emphasises the fact that his apostolic ministry displayed humble obedience to his divine commission of proclaiming God's wisdom (cf. 2.3), ostensibly in accordance with God's means (cf. 2.13), and this faithfulness to God's wisdom and means played a vital role in the Corinthians' original belief. However, this does not appear to be the present view of the Corinthians, who now assess and value Paul's apostolic ministry on the basis of human wisdom, a criterion that Paul sees as faulty or inappropriate.

As intimated earlier in the argument, Paul portrays the Corinthians' assessment as faulty because it illustrates the point that human wisdom cannot know and accept the things of God, which are spiritual in nature (2.14; cf. 2.11). To judge the apostolic witness and the gospel message in accordance with human wisdom and discernment is to rely on criteria other than what God provides to those who believe, and relying on such things is characteristic of those not of God. As Paul states, such reliance represents those who are of the flesh and not of God's Spirit (cf. 3.1-4).

However, Paul reveals that this faulty assessment is not limited to his own ministry. The Corinthians have presumably applied the same (faulty) criteria to the ministry of Apollos,³ which results in the Corinthians ostensibly favouring Apollos over Paul.⁴ Therefore, the Corinthians' present faulty assessment (or judgment) of both the apostolic witness and the nature of the message proclaimed forms the other side of the contrast.

³ While he does mention Cephas along with himself and Apollos at 1.12 (and Christ), the primary focus of Paul's argument is the Corinthians' faulty assessment of himself and Apollos.

⁴ Litfin might be overstating things when he asserts: '[Apollos] was an ἀνὴρ λόγιος and this had its effect in Corinth. The opponents fell before his eloquence and this in turn pleased and impressed the Corinthians believers' (*Theology of Proclamation*, 241).

5.3. Applications to the Immediate Context (1 Cor 3.5–4.21)

As 1 Cor 3.3-4 indicates, Paul's focus beginning with 3.5 remains on the issue of divisive attitudes in the believing community (cf. 1.10-12). However, a noticeable shift occurs in how Paul deals with this dilemma: in 1.10-12 he merely acknowledges the report of believers rallying around particular names,⁵ while in 3.5–4.21 he confronts the Corinthians' faulty assessment of the apostolic witness that ostensibly led to the issue of sloganeering. Thus, Paul moves beyond the report *that* believers are rallying around names and instead focuses particularly on the nature, cause and effects of sloganeering. Specifically, as stated in 3.3-4, Paul characterises rallying around names as an example of party-strife (ἔρις) and jealousy, characteristics he links with behaviour that is 'fleshly' and 'according to human ways of being' (κατὰ ἄνθρωπον περιπατεῖτε).

Moreover, in the light of Paul's wider aims, party-strife and jealousy are endemic to human wisdom, all of which stand in contrast to God's wisdom (or way of being), characterised by concord and love. In 3.5–4.21, therefore, Paul uses the Corinthians' present assessment of his apostolic ministry and the report of sloganeering as evidence that they are operating in accordance with human wisdom rather than God's. Thus, as will be demonstrated, the goal of Paul's critique is twofold: 1) to show up the faulty judgment of the Corinthians, especially as it relates to assessing the apostolic witness, and 2) to reveal what wise, Spirit-led communal discernment entails and the effects it is to have on community life. We can see this emphasis by first considering the basic shape and content of Paul's argument.

5.3.1. Overview of the Argument

Similarly to how he argues in both 1.14-31 and 2.1–3.4, Paul begins the argument of 3.5–4.21 by recalling the nature and role of the apostolic witness in Corinth. Two notable points of differences with the present argument, in relation to the other two, are: 1) the subjects of comparison and 2) the specificity of Paul's description. With regard to the first point, the stress in 1.14-31 and 2.1–3.4 appears to fall on Paul as a herald of God's wisdom and how he compares to Sophistic orators in Hellenistic culture. Thus the Corinthians are

⁵ Even if there are not actual divisions in the community around specific names, Paul shows an awareness of divisions concerning specific practices (cf. 1 Cor 11.17-34 [esp. 11.18-19]).

measuring Paul's abilities against those found in the secular world. However, the stress in 3.5–4.21 appears to fall on how Paul compares to the abilities of Apollos. Therefore, the focus here shifts from the Corinthians comparing Paul with 'external' orators to comparing him 'internally' with another proclaimer of the gospel. Despite the shift in focus, Paul sees the Corinthians employing the same worldly- (or humanly-) defined criteria in both cases and it is the application of these criteria that is problematic, and it is this problematic application that Paul confronts.

With regard to the second point, in both 1.14-17 and 2.1-5, Paul's definition of the apostolic witness is mostly one of negativity. While positive remarks do emerge,⁶ Paul describes his role primarily in terms of what it is not. Moreover, he seems to leave it to the Corinthians to draw the appropriate conclusions, which in both cases should be: 1) Paul's ministry is not characterised by baptism, only preaching the gospel, and 2) that he proclaims the gospel not as a rhetorician (or one bound to rhetorical conventions or devices) but as one who, aided by the Spirit, speaks plainly the power of the cross of Christ. By comparison, Paul's two descriptive metaphors in 3.6-15 define (or portray) the apostolic witness clearly and he appears to supply for the Corinthians the necessary implications. Specifically, the apostolic witness is characterised as lowly, dependent and collaborative and not something to exalt or esteem according to judgments about individual preachers. For Paul, the ability to make this distinction is determined by the criteria used, and right assessments of the apostolic witness prevail only when the Corinthians reject the criteria of human wisdom and adhere to the criterion of God's wisdom as displayed in the cross and revealed by the Spirit.

5.3.2. Paul's Critique of the Corinthians' Assessment

While Cephas' name resurfaces at 1 Cor 3.22, the final question in 3.4 suggests that Paul and Apollos are the true objects of sloganeering in Corinth, or, at the very least, their names are the most relevant for the issue at hand.⁷

⁶ E.g. 'to preach the gospel' (1.17b), 'my message and my preaching were . . . in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (2.4).

⁷ Moreover, Paul does not say in 4.6 that he applies his argument also to Cephas; he only applies it to himself and Apollos. This would further suggest that Paul does not see Cephas' name as playing as significant a role in the Corinthian 'party' dilemma as do the names of Paul and Apollos. On the question of how the Corinthians come to know the name of Cephas,

Thus, beginning with 3.5 and signalled by the post-positive conjunction, οὐν,⁸ Paul directs his attention to this particular dilemma and especially its underlying cause. This focus on the underlying cause is revealed in part by how Paul broaches the subject. When describing himself and Apollos, Paul begins by surprisingly asking, ‘*what* is Apollos?’ and ‘*what* is Paul?’⁹ rather than the expected (and more appropriate) question, ‘*who* is?’¹⁰

Moreover, Paul supplies his own answer by labelling himself and Apollos as (mere) servants, appointed by God. While I am conscious of the risk of mirror-reading, it appears as though Paul employs servant imagery in order to overturn loftier portrayals of himself and Apollos as given by the Corinthians. This, then, would indicate that Paul’s concern deals with evaluative assumptions about himself and Apollos as held by the Corinthians, evaluations that ostensibly led to (or fuelled) the formation of parties with specific champions.¹¹ If this is the case, then we should expect Paul’s response to be one addressing not specific parties but the (faulty) standard by which the Corinthians judge the apostolic witness and esteem one preacher over another.

Hogeterp suggests awareness of the name as the result of communication shared between churches in the Diaspora and not necessarily because Cephas ever visited Corinth (*contra* Barrett, ‘Cephas and Corinth’). Specifically he argues: ‘These interactions may have provided the Corinthians with information about the Christian Jews of the Jerusalem church who are often called saints by Paul’ (*Paul and God’s Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence* [Leuven: Peeters, 2006], 310; cf. also Furnish, *Theology of the First Letter*, 10). Richardson, on the other hand, is sceptical of contact with other churches—especially Jerusalem—and contends for the likelihood ‘that Apollos and Cephas were themselves considerably greater irritants in the Corinthian situation than is sometimes imagined’ (‘On the Absence of “Anti-Judaism” in 1 Corinthians,’ in *Paul and the Gospels*, vol. 1 of *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity* [eds. P. Richardson, with D. Granskou; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986], 63, 65). Richardson’s case for Apollos being personally responsible is based on a rather tenuous interpretation of key passages, and he offers no compelling proof that Cephas ever visited Corinth other than to cite Barrett’s article.

⁸ Robertson-Plummer read οὐν as a logical transition, one required by the reference to Paul and Apollos in 3.4 (see *First Epistle*, 56), whereas Barrett takes it as ‘resumptive’ rather than purely ‘argumentative’ (*First Epistle*, 83).

⁹ A handful of later MSS transpose the names (cf. D^b, L, Ψ, 6, 88, 104, 326, 915, syr^{p,h}, arm, eth). ‘This transposition was obviously made out of deference to the greater prominence of Paul and because of the sequence in ver. 4’ (Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 483).

¹⁰ For MSS that read τῆς, see p^{46vid}, 8², C, D, F, G, Ψ, 1881, 20, syr. For MSS that read τῷ, see 8^{*}, A, B, 0298, 33, 81, 1175, 1506, 1739. Collins sees no substantial difference in effect by using either term (see *First Corinthians*, 145).

¹¹ My underlying assumption here is that neither Paul nor Apollos were instrumental in the formation of parties or groups in Corinth (cf. Chrysostom, *Corinthians*, 3.4-5).

5.3.2.1. Apostolic Witness

In the opening metaphor (3.6-9), by characterising his work as planting and Apollos' as watering, Paul emphasises a necessary relationship between the two types of work: planting without watering is fruitless, and watering without planting is superfluous. A similar emphasis appears when Paul changes metaphors (3.10-15) and describes his initial work in Corinth as laying a foundation (3.10b), 'which is Jesus Christ' (3.11b—i.e. the proclamation of the cross [cf. 2.2]). And while Apollos is not specifically named in this metaphor, his work is no doubt in mind when Paul says 'another is building on' the foundation he laid (3.10c).¹² In terms of construction, and similar to the logic of the agricultural metaphor, laying a foundation without building upon it is a wasted effort, and attempting to build where no foundation exists is utter folly.

Thus, in both illustrations, Paul acknowledges that his initial work in Corinth was supplemented by the efforts of Apollos and Paul is in no way offended or threatened by this additional work.¹³ This appears especially with the building metaphor: as long as the foundation is the same, Paul is not concerned with either how others build upon it or what materials they use (cf. 3.13-15);¹⁴ although, he does encourage considered thought (ἐκάστος δὲ βλέπων πῶς ἐποικοδομῆ [3.10c]).

With these images, Paul rejects any view that sees one type of apostolic work as superior to another and the related assumption that only the superior type is necessary.¹⁵ For Paul, while his work was historically prior to that of Apollos, both types of work are collaborative and compatible with each other. However, Paul stresses the fact that apostolic cooperation is rooted in something more substantial, possibly to avoid claims of superiority based on

¹² Given the surrounding context, the pairing of the nominative singular ἄλλος and the third singular ἐποικοδομῶ as a contrast to Paul's work of 'laying the foundation', Apollos' supplementary work appears to be the immediate referent. Cf. Litfin, *Theology of Proclamation*, 224-25.

¹³ Cf. Dodd: 'Paul's role cannot be separated from that of Apollos, according to the logic of his argument, as the foundation cannot be separated from what is built on top' (*Paul's Paradigmatic 'I': Personal Example as Literary Strategy* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 56).

¹⁴ Cf. L. G. Cox ('The "Straw" in the Believer—1 Corinthians 3.12,' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 12 [1977]: 34-38), who argues for the two different categories of material as representing the two different types of believer—i.e. wood, hay and straw refer to believers governed by the flesh, and gold, silver and precious stones refer to mature believers.

¹⁵ Cf. Godet, *First Epistle*, 1.176.

chronology. With the diversity of apostolic roles still in view, Paul first describes his and Apollos' particular work as carried out in obedience to the task given to them by God (καὶ ἐκάστῳ ὡς ὁ κύριος ἔδωκεν [3.5d]). We know that Paul views his apostolic role as a commission to proclaim the gospel (cf. 1.17), which relates to laying the foundation of Jesus Christ in Corinth (cf. 3.10-11), and that he fulfilled this role without needing to rely on human wisdom or eloquence. If we accept the testimony of Acts (cf. 18.24-28), Apollos' ministry was characterised by open and powerful debates (i.e. διακατηλέγγετο δημοσίᾳ) concerning Jesus' messiahship as demonstrated in the Scriptures.

Thus, if the portrait of Acts is correct with regard to Apollos' ministry, and if we assume that Paul's experience with Apollos mirrored this portrait, then we can reasonably conclude that Paul would see Apollos' role as divinely appointed and Apollos as a faithful steward of that role (cf. 4.1).¹⁶ This would certainly lend support to the supplementary nature of the apostolic tasks (cf. 3.6-9) and Paul's distinction between types of materials used in building upon a single foundation (cf. 3.13-15). Moreover, Paul stresses the point that despite the tasks assigned to him and Apollos, the success of the work performed—in this case the Corinthians' salvation—belongs to God alone. This particular stress would therefore function as a contrast for 1) notions of human capability and 2) identify formation on the basis of assumed capabilities.

This twofold stress is found specifically in the first metaphor. As Paul states in 3.7, neither his work nor Apollos' is necessarily sufficient for bringing about the desired result (i.e. belief/salvation); only God causes the growth (3.7; cf. 3.6). Paul emphasises this point first in how he describes the processes (i.e. a simple aorist is used for the servants' work whereas the imperfect is used for God's work),¹⁷ and second by the simultaneous relegation of the servants and the exaltation of the Lord/Master (3.7).¹⁸ While the servants labour in the field, not only do both the field and the servants belong to God but the field and servants are also dependent upon God for the work that is done, for only God is

¹⁶ Horsley makes the passing comment: 'While Paul insists that he is an apostle, he never refers to Apollos as an apostle' (*1 Corinthians*, 63; *contra* Héring [*First Epistle*, 1], who thinks Paul 'implicitly' applies the title 'apostle' to Apollos in 4.6).

¹⁷ Cf. Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief*, 81.

¹⁸ It is worth noting not only the number of references to θεός in 1 Cor 3.6-9 (5 times) but also the emphatic placement of θεός in 3.7.

able to cause the crop to grow.¹⁹ This reflects Paul's earlier claim that neither his word nor message caused the Corinthians to believe in the gospel; it was only by the work of God's Spirit that the Corinthians placed their faith in God's power to save (cf. 2.4-5). If, therefore, the Corinthians are rallying around the names of Paul and Apollos, they are doing so on the basis of faulty views of the apostolic witness, particularly the assumption that the apostles are responsible for salvation, which stands in direct conflict with Paul's hope in 2.5.

This faulty assumption results from a faulty understanding of dependence. While the Corinthians are dependent upon the apostolic witness to receive the proclamation of the gospel, the Corinthians are ultimately dependent upon God alone to effect the salvation proclaimed in that gospel. However, because they see themselves as the product of the farmhands' labour and therefore belonging to the farmhands, the Corinthians have implicitly exposed their continued reliance on faulty criteria (i.e. human wisdom) and their implicit rejection of the criteria inherent to their new identity in Christ (i.e. God's wisdom). And because of their continued reliance on human wisdom, the Corinthians have failed to see Paul and Apollos as θεοῦ συνεργοί²⁰ and themselves as θεοῦ οἰκοδομή, and it is this faulty conception that Paul seeks to remedy.

5.3.2.2. God's (Subversive) Wisdom

The Corinthians' failure to see and discern such things is, according to Paul, due to the more pressing failure of not relying on God's wisdom and relying instead

¹⁹ The imagery of people as a field not only has ties with Jewish literature, thus explaining the likely source for Paul's use of such imagery, but also particular eschatological motifs within that literature and imagery. Specifically, Wolff lists the references to God's people (i.e. Israel) described as a field, vineyard or planted garden (cf. Num 24.5-6; Isa 5.1-7; 60.1-3, 21; Jer 2.21; Eze 36.9)—see Wolff, *Der erste Brief*, 67, as noted by Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 302. Keener also mentions the passages where 'God promised to "plant" or "build" his people (Jer 1.10; 24.6; 31.28; 42.10; cf. Sir 49.7; 1QS 8.5-6; 11.8)' (*1-2 Corinthians*, 42). Moreover, Bailey recently stressed the parallels between 1 Cor 3.5-9 and Isa 41.19; 44.3-4; 60.21 and 61.3, where we find descriptions of fields being planted and cultivated—see *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes*, 124-25. The obvious difference between the two is that in Isaiah God is the primary agent in planting and watering the crop, whereas in 1 Corinthians Paul describes himself as the one who plants and Apollos as the one who waters. Despite this difference, the fundamental similarity is that in both God is the one who produces (or brings about) the crop.

²⁰ It is possible to read θεοῦ γάρ ἔσμεν συνεργοί as Paul and Apollos working together *with* God, which the NASB suggests (cf. also NIV, ESV, KJV, ASV). However, it is equally possible to read the phrase as, working together *for* God (cf. NRSV). Furnish shows how this decision must be made not on lexical or grammatical grounds but on the basis of Paul's usual meaning of συνεργοί (see 'Fellow Workers in God's Service,' *JBL* 80.4 [1961]: 364-65). Thus, the rendering given by the NRSV is more appropriate.

on human wisdom. Evidence for this is found in the Corinthians' decision to celebrate or boast in specific individuals (cf. 3.3b-4, 21) rather than boast in the cross of Christ as God's wise means of salvation (cf. 1.30-31; 3.22-23). For Paul, two basic and related consequences arise with this particular failure. First, by adopting and relying upon human wisdom, the Corinthians are trusting a system of thought that is both contrary to and now rendered powerless by God's wisdom. This is reminiscent of Paul's earlier claims: just as in 1.18-25 and 2.6-13 Paul stressed the 'upside-down'²¹ nature and subverting role of God's wisdom, here we find him following a similar line (or pattern) of argumentation.

An important difference, however, is the angle of focus: in the earlier treatments, God's wisdom was portrayed as folly from the perspective of the world; in the present instance (3.18-23, esp. 19-20), worldly wisdom is portrayed as folly from God's perspective.²² It would appear that Paul highlights this difference in order to accentuate the distinction between pre- and post-belief notions of wisdom. In his earlier claims, Paul stresses God's wisdom as folly when viewed from a pre-faith perspective (i.e. it is foolish by the standards of the world), whereas here the world's wisdom is folly from a post-faith perspective (i.e. it is foolish by the standards of God's wisdom).

Second, by adopting and relying upon human wisdom, the Corinthians operate within an epistemological framework that is both limited in what it contains and incapable of comprehending anything outside of itself. As noted in the earlier analogy in 2.11 and the application in 2.12-13, human wisdom in itself cannot know the things of God. Just as knowledge of the other is dependent upon the other's self-disclosure, the only way in which the things of God are known is through divine revelation, and no amount of human effort or superior (human) wisdom will alter that reality. However, Paul clearly says an alteration has taken place via God's Spirit (cf. 2.10, 12) and that this Spirit is distinct from 'the spirit of the world' (2.12b).

Moreover, Paul suggests that with this revelation comes a new framework of thought (or a new 'mind' [cf. 2.16]), one able to comprehend what is otherwise unknowable by or even comprehensible to human wisdom (or 'the

²¹ Cf. Thiselton (*First Epistle*, 321), who refers to Allo and Witherington as describing 1 Cor 3.18 in a similar way.

²² Litfin makes a similar case, but moves the shift to 2.6-16—see *Theology of Proclamation*, 213-16.

spirit of the world’). Thus, to become truly wise (cf. 3.18) requires the adoption of what is otherwise deemed foolish by the standards of the world (cf. 1.18-23; 3.19a). Therefore, paradoxically, only if anyone’s claims to wisdom are measured by the ‘foolishness’ of God can he or she be considered truly wise.²³

However, by adopting and relying upon human wisdom, the Corinthians’ claim to wisdom reveals their folly and by such claims they are identifying themselves not as people of the Spirit but as ‘merely human’ (cf. 2.14), those who think and live childishly and according to the flesh (cf. 3.1-4). Moreover, for Paul, this faulty view has created an attitude and a means of defining community relationships that reflect not God’s wisdom in the cross but the wisdom of the world, which is in part characterised by prideful boasting in status and illustrated by rallying around human names.

Thus the Corinthians now fail to see not only the gospel of Christ crucified as God’s wise act of sacrificial self-giving love for the world but also how God’s wisdom is to shape and define their new life ‘in Christ’, and they fail to see things properly because they are relying on other means for discerning the ways of God. Therefore, Paul’s solution is clear: only when the Corinthians rely (once again) upon the wisdom of God, as displayed in the cross and mediated by the Spirit, will they be able to see the gospel message *as* God’s wisdom and know how to live as a community ‘in Christ.’ And only when the Corinthians rely on God’s Spirit—and not the spirit of the world—will they find true wisdom.

5.3.2.3. Spirit-led Communal Discernment

This brings us to Paul’s emphasis on the Corinthians’ need for Spirit-led discernment and for this discernment to emanate from Spirit-revealed wisdom. In particular, Paul stresses that only through Spirit-led discernment will the Corinthians know their identity ‘in Christ’ and the entailments that come with that knowledge, especially the ability to form right judgments about themselves

²³ Paul’s aphorism in 3.18 does appear to echo Socratic views of wisdom, which portray self-admitted folly as the beginning and mark of true wisdom (cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 321). However, Paul’s focus is not so much about self-deprecation as it is contrasting systems of thought (cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 151). Thus, Paul’s claim here in 3.18 echoes more the Jewish wisdom teachings, which contrast the ways of God with the ways of the world—the former as representing true wisdom and the latter as true folly. Moreover, the qualifying phrase ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ recalls the earlier contrast between God’s wisdom and the wisdom τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦτου (2.6; cf. wisdom τοῦ κόσμου [1.20])

and others (cf. 3.21–4.13). Thus, if they relied on God’s wisdom and exercised wise discernment, the Corinthians would recognise both the compatible and servant role of the apostles and the true nature of their relationship with the apostles. Specifically, the Corinthians would not esteem one apostolic herald over another on the basis of perceived superior abilities or talents. Related to this, the Corinthians would not perceive the apostles to be men worthy of praise but conduits through whom God is exalted (3.21a; cf. 1.31), for the aim of the apostolic work is not to bring glory to the apostles but to allow God’s powerful work to manifest itself through their faithful service (cf. 3.7-8; 4.1).

However, following Paul’s departure, the Corinthians began to view their new identity ‘in Christ’ (crucified) by other means, and the resultant picture bore little resemblance to the image of the cross. Whereas Paul sees the cross as uniting under one name all who believe, he hears of (some) Corinthian believers dividing themselves and rallying around multiple names (cf. 1.11-12). Furthermore, where the cross represents a sign of weakness, shame and humiliation, yet is able to impart new life and a new identity for those who believe, some in Corinth take their new life and identity as a sign of power, honour and prestige (4.10) and a legitimate cause for personal boasting.

Moreover, it appears as though some in Corinth use their faulty notion of new life and identity as the standard by which they can judge the validity of the apostolic witness (3.18-20). In doing so the Corinthians reveal that they rely not on the criterion of the cross given by the Spirit but on one of their own making. For if they relied on the criterion of the cross, the Corinthians would now see Paul and the apostolic witness not only as mere servants and contracted builders (3.6-15), thus inadequate objects of praise, but also the very embodiment of what the cross represents: foolish, weak, without honour, ridiculed, persecuted and socially on a par with common criminals (4.10-13).

Additionally, the Corinthians would identify the apostles not as external or disconnected from them but as divinely commissioned to and thus united with them (cf. 3.21b-22). Here Paul rejects the notion of the Corinthians belonging to key figures and advocates instead the reality that the apostles belong to the Corinthians.²⁴ However, for Paul, the sense of belonging to the apostles must be understood within the wider (theological) context of

²⁴ This accords with Paul’s earlier image of himself and Apollos as farmhands in God’s field.

relationships: while the apostles may belong to the Corinthians, in the sense that God commissioned them to Corinth (cf. 3.5, 9), the Corinthians ultimately belong to Christ (cf. 3.23a), about whom the apostles proclaimed and in whom the Corinthians believed (cf. 2.1-5). The implication is: if the apostles were sent by God to Corinth as heralds of Christ crucified, and if the Corinthians belong to Christ because of their faith in the message proclaimed, for the Corinthians to identify themselves with one of the apostles is faulty, inappropriate and misguided, for such an identification subverts (or inverts) the relationship hierarchy established by God in Christ. Moreover, it is also limiting or reducing the benefits that come to the Corinthians in Christ. For the Corinthians to tie themselves to a particular herald of the gospel is to fail to see that all things belong to them (cf. 3.21-22).

In this way, Paul accuses the Corinthians of failing to judge or discern properly both the role of the apostolic witness and the relational status shared between them, and they have failed because they rely on faulty criteria in making such judgments. However, Paul indicates that he is not concerned about the faulty judgments laid against him by the Corinthians (4.3), presumably due to their reliance on faulty criteria (cf. 2.14), but because he knows that only God can cast final judgment, which comes only at the eschaton (cf. 4.4-5). This claim reflects Paul's earlier assertion in the second metaphor about one's work being tested (or revealed) in the day of fire (cf. 3.13),²⁵ and

²⁵ Fishburne contends that the metaphor of 3.10-15 echoes both the vocabulary and theology of *T. Ab.* 13, and that Paul is dependent upon this specific text (see, '1 Corinthians iii.10-15 and the *Testament of Abraham*,' *NTS* 17.1 [1970]: 109-115; cf. Davis, who seems to accept this view without reflection [*Wisdom and Spirit*, 220 n.189]). Fishburne makes this connection on the assumption that the *Testament* predates 1 Corinthians (cf. Rowland, who offers the tentative date of c. 50 CE—see *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* [London: SPCK, 1982], 259), *contra* Sanders, who sees the textual history as too prolonged to allow for Paul's literary dependence (see 'Testament of Abraham. A New Translation and Introduction,' in *Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Garden City, Doubleday, 1983], 878 n.54). Sanders concludes: 'It seems best to assume a date for the original of c. A.D. 100, plus or minus twenty-five years' (ibid. 875; cf. also G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 258; J. J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 7, 35, 252). Recently Herms noted: 'Allison . . . has demonstrated that several sections in the longer Greek recension of the *Testament of Abraham* do not appear in the shorter (and older) Greek versions and thereby reflect later 'Christian' insertions into the text. Further, in the specific case of *T. Ab.* 13.12-13, Allison demonstrates that on the basis of its parallelism, the dependence of the *Testament of Abraham* upon Paul's metaphor in 1 Cor 3.14-15 is assured . . . Thus, the evidence of date and literary development suggests that Fishburne's proposal is anachronistic and ultimately unfruitful ('"Being Saved without Honor": A Conceptual Link between 1 Corinthians 3 and 1 Enoch 50?,' *JSNT* 29.2 [2006]: 190).

therefore premature judgments made by any one other than God (or the Lord [cf. 4.4-5]) are both haughty and inappropriate.

5.3.3. Concluding Remarks on 1 Cor 3.5–4.21

One of the striking features of this pneumatological teaching, and the framework it provides, is that Paul applies it both to himself (and the apostolic witness) and the Corinthians. This is striking for at least two reasons. First, Paul demonstrates not only that his manner of preaching reflects the nature of the cross but also that his view of life (and in this case, salvation) is shaped by God's wisdom as displayed in the cross. Moreover, the discernment Paul uses to instruct the Corinthians is the same discernment they should have employed in their present assessment of the gospel, its proclaimers and their own identity in Christ. In this way Paul reveals that he relies on the spiritual discernment he advocates as he critiques the behaviours and judgments of those causing trouble in the Corinthian church. As Lewis argues, Paul's discernment reflects his instruction to 'the Corinthians that Christ's cruciform pattern of self-giving love for others, supremely manifest in his death on the cross, has become the new behavioural standard for both Jews and Greeks in God's new age.'²⁶ Accordingly, this cruciform pattern as the new framework for life becomes the lens through which Paul critiques (and corrects) the Corinthian dilemma(s), a critique that unfolds in 1 Cor 5–15.

Second, the implication of Paul's wider argument is that the Corinthians have failed to reflect the nature of the cross, to be shaped by God's wisdom and to rely on Spirit-given discernment. With each of the topics addressed in the letter, Paul reveals either how the Corinthians have failed to filter the issues

Moreover, as Fitzmyer and Kirk have shown, it is more likely that both Paul and the writer of the *Testament* drew from a common Jewish tradition, although Paul develops his point in a different direction—see Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 200; A. N. Kirk, 'Building with the Corinthians: Human Persons as the Building Materials of 1 Corinthians 3.12 and the "Work" of 3.13-15,' *NTS* 58.4 [2012]: 567-68. For Paul, while the construction is destroyed by fire, the builder does not suffer absolute punishment, whereas in the *Testament*: 'The sunlike angel, who holds the balance in his hand, this is the archangel Dokiël, the righteous balance-bearer, and he weighs the righteous deeds and the sins with the righteousness of God. And the fiery and merciless angel, who holds the fire in his hand, this is the archangel Purouel, who has authority over fire, and he tests the work of men through fire. And if the fire burns up the work of anyone, immediately the angel of judgment takes him and carries him away to the place of sinners, a most bitter place of punishment' (*T. Ab.* A13.10-12 [Sanders]). Furthermore, in Paul's argument the act of judgment is performed by God whereas in the *Testament* it is carried out by specific archangels.

²⁶ Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 37; cf. also Long, *Paul and Human Rights*, 98.

through this new matrix or how they should rightly do so in the future. I will develop this in the next section. What is crucial to recognise now is that in critiquing the Corinthians Paul is (again) employing and relying on the framework of thought he advocates; he does what he desires the Corinthians to do for themselves. And as I have stressed throughout this study, necessary for this critique of the spiritual life is Paul's insistence that only this new framework is appropriate for those 'in Christ', for it is the only way for spiritual people to discern spiritual things (cf. 1 Cor 2.15). Or to say this negatively: the life, thought and behaviour of those 'in Christ' cannot be discerned by human (or worldly) wisdom, for such wisdom is not from God and it judges the things of God as folly (cf. 1 Cor 2.14).

5.4. Applications to the Wider Context (1 Cor 5–15)

As should be clear from the preceding argument, Paul stresses the need for the Corinthian believers to exercise wise, Spirit-led discernment rooted in God's revealed wisdom. We do not need to venture too far into the letter to find reasons for this stress, especially as it applies to a variety of situations in everyday life. Beginning with 1 Cor 5.1, Paul transitions from the topic of the Corinthians' relationship with himself and Apollos to topics pertaining to their relationship with society and each other as a believing community. The need for this specific focus relates to Paul's expectations of the Corinthian assembly being what Horsley calls an 'alternative society,'²⁷ one whose identity and life are shaped not by the wisdom of the world but God's wisdom displayed in the cross and revealed by the Spirit.

This emphasis on a distinctive identity follows from Paul's earlier stress on the kind of wisdom that believers possess, a wisdom that is contrary to the wisdom of the world and defines the way in which spiritual persons are to live their new life 'in Christ.' Accordingly, and beginning with chapter 5, we encounter what could be classified as competing ways of ordering or defining life, especially life that is wise and spiritual. Given the flow of Paul's

²⁷ See R. A. Horsley, '1 Corinthians: A Case Study of Paul's Assembly as Alternative Society,' in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. R. A. Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 242-52.

argument,²⁸ we can divide his interaction with these competing ways into three sections: 1) wise, communal discernment in every day life in society, 2) proper notions of identity and spiritual expression in worship and 3) communal hope in the life to come. In what follows, I will survey the instances where Paul illustrates the difference in ways of thinking and does so in a way that reflects (or even assumes) the pneumatological teaching of 2.1–3.4.

5.4.1. Wise Situational Discernment

In this first section (1 Cor 5.1–11.1), Paul addresses a number of issues where the Corinthians should be exercising wise, communal discernment in every day life. Many if not all of these concerns are situational, thus requiring a specific response. As sometimes noted, in this instance we see Paul ‘thinking on his feet’,²⁹ but doing so (presumably) in accordance with the Spirit-led discernment he advocates for all those ‘in Christ.’ Here I will focus on two key responses from Paul: 1 Cor 5–6 and 1 Cor 8.1–11.1. What is particularly telling about these responses is that Paul assumes a degree of pre-existing knowledge among the Corinthians, knowledge that would have otherwise assisted in their own decisions. In some cases, this knowledge is based on his own teaching to them; in others, it refers to traditions or even the Hebrew Scriptures; while in some it is more general, in the sense that the Corinthians simply possess it as common knowledge or that which is discernable via the Spirit.

5.4.1.1. Moral Judgments and Secular Counsel (1 Cor 5–6)

The argument here can be divided into three major parts. First, in 1 Cor 5.1–11 Paul confronts the interrelated issues of inappropriate sexual practices and the

²⁸ I am here assuming the general divisions of 1 Cor 5–15, where the lines are drawn according to the topics discussed. Thus: immoral conduct and lawsuits (5.1–6.20); marriage relations (7.1–40); idol food (8.1–11.1); liturgical practices (11.2–34); spiritual manifestations (12.1–14.40); and resurrection (15.1–58). Some scholars, however, move the beginning of 12.1–14.40 to 11.2, partly because both 11.2–34 and 12.1–14.40 deal with matters of ecclesial practice and/or behaviour (see e.g. Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 258–60; Fotopoulos, ‘1 Corinthians,’ in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (ed. D. E. Aune; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 427; Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 132). Moreover, as Thiselton points out, the combination of the two units is necessary for seeing chapters 12–14 ‘within the broader theological framework of 11:2–14:40 in deliberate continuity with 8:1–11:1, and indeed ultimately with 1:1–4:21’ (*First Epistle*, 900).

²⁹ M. D. Hooker, *Paul: A Beginner’s Guide* (Oxford: One World, 2008), 32; N. K. Gupta, ‘The Theo-Logic of Paul’s Ethics in Recent Research: Crosscurrents and Future Directions in Scholarship in the Last Forty Years,’ *CBR* 7.3 (2009): 347.

Corinthians' failure to judge them as such.³⁰ Paul's reference in 5.9-11 to his previous letter suggests that the problem at hand is an *internal* one,³¹ and not one brought into the assembly by a non-believer (or group of non-believers).³² It is generally assumed that the member(s) engaging in such practices is a powerful or influential patron in the church, one who is abusing his privileged status. It is also assumed that the failure of the Corinthians to correct and/or disciple this patron is rooted in their (selfish) desire to retain the benefits that come from keeping the patron in good standing.³³ However, Paul's argument does not move along such specific lines. What is clear is that Paul opposes the action *in toto* (cf. 5.5), regardless of who performs it, and he admonishes the Corinthians collectively for not repudiating the inappropriate behaviour. Moreover, instead of knowing better (cf. οὐκ οἶδατε [5.6b]) and responding accordingly, Paul sees the Corinthians as having become arrogant or complacent (πεφυσιωμένοι [5.2; cf. 4.6, 18-19]) in their judgment of what is right behaviour for those 'in Christ' and as having simply allowed the inappropriate behaviour to occur.

Second, in 1 Cor 5.12–6.11 Paul deals with an issue that follows from the preceding part, specifically the Corinthians' failure to rely on God's wisdom in making right judgments. Three times in this argument Paul reminds the Corinthians that they have the appropriate knowledge and ability to settle their own internal disputes (cf. οὐκ οἶδατε [6.2, 3, 9]). Paul also declares that this knowledge and ability are superior to those of the world, for what they possess is from God whereas that which the world possesses is not. This recalls Paul's earlier argument where he describes believers as recipients of God's Spirit and having the 'mind of Christ', which enables them to discern (or judge) all things, while those who have not received God's Spirit are incapable of right discernment—especially of spiritual matters (cf. 2.10-15). If such were the case, then there would be no need for Corinthian believers to seek external (secular) counsel, for there must be at least one in the community who is wise (cf. 6.5). However, the Corinthians fail to rely on the wisdom (or knowledge) they possess

³⁰ Cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, 90.

³¹ Cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, 86 n.3.

³² Cf. 1 Cor 5.1b, 12-13, which further suggest that the issue is an internal one.

³³ Cf. J. K. Chow, *Patronage and Power: A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 139.

via the Spirit, evidenced by their inability to judge properly the life and behaviour of their own.³⁴ More problematic, by desiring secular counsel to settle their disputes, the Corinthians are *de facto* rejecting the wisdom of God and seeking after the wisdom of the world.³⁵ In this way they are showing themselves to be people of flesh and not led by the Spirit.

Finally, in 1 Cor 6.12-20 Paul anchors his argument to the wider issue of the Corinthians' proper understanding of their new identity in Christ. In the light of what he says in 5.1-6.11, we discover here that Paul is critiquing a particular mind-set and way of knowing/judging, one contrary to the one the Corinthians should be following. Scholars see Paul in 6.12a reciting a maxim or behavioural slogan of the Corinthians (πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν),³⁶ one that ostensibly 1) enables members to engage in inappropriate actions and 2) justifies the lack of critical judgment. Paul's immediate rejoinder (ἀλλ' οὐ πάντα συμφέρει), however, introduces the necessary wise consideration that is lacking in the Corinthians' slogan—i.e. while all things are allowable, not all allowable things are inherently good. This is especially the case for those 'in Christ' and who now live according to the Spirit (6.15-19; cf. 6.9-11).

Thus, Paul critiques (and rejects) the assumption that goodness is determined by what is sanctioned. Instead, Paul emphasises the link between what is appropriate (i.e. good) and identity (and its source). In this case the Corinthians are members of Christ's body and their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (or spirit of holiness), and as such all that they do is to glorify God. This twofold identification recalls Paul's earlier claims about the Corinthians being recipients of God's Spirit (cf. 2.10-12), and thus the temple of the Spirit (3.16), having the mind of Christ (so as to discern all things [cf. 2.15-16]) and living lives distinct from the ways and wisdom of the world, which is under God's judgment (cf. 6.9-10).

5.4.1.2. *Idol Food and (Divine) Judgment (1 Cor 8.1-11.1)*

The argument here can be divided into three major sections, with the middle one being subdivided further into two parts. On the ends of the argument are

³⁴ This inability to judge makes better sense of Paul's language of 'judgment' in 5.12-6.11, which does initially seem to carry a nuance of condemnation (or casting guilty verdicts).

³⁵ Cf. Adams, *Constructing the World*, 127-28.

³⁶ Cf. Lewis, *Looking for Life*, 87; Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 460.

Paul's discussions concerning idol food (8.1-13; 10.14–11.1), with the middle portion functioning as a two-part example (9.1-27; 10.1-13) illustrating the wider principle articulated in the surrounding discussion.³⁷ What is this wider principle? From 6.12 Paul has been exhorting the believers in Corinth to be mindful and discerning of each other and not behave in ways that would cause offence. In this particular instance, since some in Corinth appear to have inflated (and faulty) views of knowledge, which in turn foster attitudes of superiority—or possibly moral exemption (8.1-3; cf. 5.1-11)—Paul emphasises the need for humility of mind and practice.

Specifically, while it may be true that knowledge of only one God can assuage the consciences of some (8.4-6), not all possess such knowledge to the same degree and effect (cf. 8.7), which implies that not all consciences are equally clear. Thus, while one might eat food sacrificed to pagan idols/gods on the basis that such idols/gods are nothing, and therefore the food is not dedicated to them, another might not be able to make that distinction and thus remain faithful to God alone. Thus, as Paul suggests in 8.7-13, to encourage or even require those without this knowledge to eat idol food without fear or moral concern is misguided and destructive. In this way, the behaviour and/or practices of those claiming (superior) knowledge are motivated by self-interest and not the needs of the other (cf. 8.1c-d). Furthermore, to behave and instruct in such ways fails to show love for others and fails to reflect the knowledge they claim to possess.

With regard to the latter point, claims to superior or complete knowledge without acts of love do not reflect the manner of revelation. It was through an act of love (i.e. the cross) that knowledge of God became a possibility, and it was because of love for God that the Corinthians came to know the wisdom of God, an ability made possible by the power and revelation of God's Spirit. And it is because of the work of God's Spirit that the Corinthians have received 'the mind of Christ' (2.16) by which they understand themselves not only as individual believers but also as a unified body and are able to discern how the body is to function. As Paul will demonstrate later (i.e. 1 Cor 12–14), one of the primary functions of the body is the loving edification—or building up—of the whole, not

³⁷ This basic outline follows the suggestion of Gooch—see *Dangerous Food: 1 Corinthians 8–10 in Its Context* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1993), 49.

the elevation of the individual (or certain individuals) because of assumed or perceived knowledge. As Maria Pascuzzi points out: ‘knowledge is not an unqualified good. It can puff up with pride, whereas love builds up.’³⁸ The ability to discern when knowledge is properly used or when it is being employed in the interest of the self comes from a reliance on God’s wisdom.

Paul’s first illustration in 9.1-27 reveals how he lives in accordance with the wisdom he proclaims. The reason for emphasising this relationship seems to be twofold. On the one hand, Paul appears to be mindful of the criticisms made against either himself or his ministry in Corinth (or both), and he uses this illustration to demonstrate the valuelessness of such criticisms. On the other hand, Paul must substantiate not only his role as an apostle but also the way in which he lives out that role if he wants to use (or justify) his own life and ministry as an example worthy of following (cf. 9.3-12). To achieve this, Paul first appeals to the entitlements available to him as the community’s founding apostle. In this case, Paul is entitled to general provisions as well as food in lieu of payment for labours performed (cf. 9.4-7, 10)—the latter being supported by a Mosaic principle (cf. 9.8-9). Paul even states he has the right to receive these entitlements (cf. 9.11-12a), at least on the basis of usual customs.

However, Paul declares that he foregoes such things ‘so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ’ (9.12b). He therefore relinquishes both what is entitled to him and the authority he has to receive such things, and he does so for the sake of the Corinthians and the cause of the gospel. Then in 9.13-27 Paul supports his case by re-emphasising the nature of his calling and his faithful obedience to it. The effect of this stage of the argument is that Paul’s ministry in Corinth does not resemble or reflect either travelling orators or patrons, but instead reflects the wisdom of God as displayed in the cross. What Paul does is characterised by self-giving, surrendering acts of love, and he does ‘all things for the sake of the gospel’ (9.23).

Following this illustration, Paul uses Israel’s disobedience in the wilderness as an illustration, this time emphasising what happens when self-interested (or idolatrous) behaviour encounters divine judgment (cf. 10.1-10). Such an illustration is required for two reasons. First, the repetition of *τινες* in the application of the illustration (cf. 10.7, 8, 9, 10) suggests that *some* in

³⁸ Pascuzzi, *First and Second Corinthians*, 53.

Corinth were behaving in ways that reflect Israel's disobedience. The implication is that, like those of Israel, the actions of a few carry devastating consequences that affect the whole community, although not directly. Only those who were truly at fault suffered divine judgment; yet the full weight and meaning of such judgment does not go unnoticed by those who remain.

This brings me to the second reason: leaving the parallel or typology of 10.1-4 aside, the focus of the passage deals with the identity of Israel as God's people. However, this identity alone was not sufficient to protect them from divine judgment if their behaviour or actions stood in opposition to the ways of God. Paul provides key examples of such unacceptable behaviour—idolatry, immorality, testing/tempting God or grumbling with discontent (10.7, 8, 9, 10). The implication therefore is quite simple: if some of the Israelites, as God's chosen people, disobeyed God and behaved in ways contrary to God and were not spared from divine judgment, those in Corinth who identify themselves as 'in Christ' yet behave in similar ways will also not escape the judgment that is to come. The means of escape, which Paul describes as divinely provided, most plausibly refers to the Spirit-given mind of Christ which enables believers (i.e. those who are truly spiritual) to know how to live in accordance with the ways of God, thus equipping them with the means to resist temptation.

It is worth noting that the incompatibility between the ways of the world and the lives of those 'in Christ', illustrated in 10.20-22, reflects Paul's earlier teaching in 6.12-20 about the nature and role of the 'body.' Specifically, 'the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord' (6.13c-d) and the 'body is a temple of the Holy Spirit' (6.19) in and through which God is to be glorified (cf. 6.20). Moreover, Paul's teaching in 6.12-20 is prefaced with the two-part assertion, 'all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable' (6.12a-b) and the climax of his teaching of 10.14–11.1 is the repeated claim, 'all things are lawful, but not all things are profitable' (10.23). Taken together we could assume that Paul's remarks on the incompatibility between the ways of the world and the lives of those 'in Christ' is anchored in his understanding of believers being the temple of the Holy Spirit, an identity made manifest in their life and behaviour.

5.4.2. *Community of Believers as Christ's Assembled Body*

In this second section (1 Cor 11.2–14.40), Paul moves from dealing in general with situations related to every day life in society to those related in particular to the assembly of believers. However, while there is a shift in focus Paul maintains the emphasis on the need for those ‘in Christ’ to understand their new identity as distinct from those who are not. Linked with this emphasis is Paul’s stress on the competing wisdom by which life is defined (i.e. the wisdom of the world vs. God’s wisdom) and the Corinthians’ need to adhere to God’s wisdom alone, since it is only from that wisdom that they receive their identity and know how to be a community. The argument of this section can be (loosely) divided into two major sections. In the first section (11.2-34), Paul deals with what could be classified as ‘liturgical’ matters,³⁹ in this case prayer and the Lord’s Supper. In the second section, (12.1–14.40), Paul confronts the issue of what scholars often call, ‘spiritual gifts.’⁴⁰ With regard to these two sections, and in the light of Paul’s argument, I have decided to (re-)label the first, ‘Traditions and Communal Meals’ and the second, ‘Communal Worship.’

5.4.2.1. *Traditions and Communal Meals (1 Cor 11.2-34)*

Following the request for the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ (11.1), Paul moves into a discussion concerning the identity and practices of the believing assembly.⁴¹ Even though there is a shift in focus (i.e. from society in general to the assembly in particular), we see Paul maintaining the emphasis on the need for those ‘in Christ’ to be distinguished from those who are not. More specifically, we see Paul continuing to stress the competing wisdoms by which life is defined (i.e. the wisdom of the world vs. God’s wisdom) and the Corinthians’ need to be identified appropriately. Paul begins by desiring the Corinthians to know (or understand [θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς εἰδέναι]) the authority (or headship [κεφαλῆ]) of Christ (11.3), a teaching that they may have already

³⁹ E.g. R. Oster, *1 Corinthians* (Joplin: College Press, 1995), 243; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 405, 426. Cf. Pascuzzi (*First and Second*, 62), who limits the designation to only 11.2-16, and Collins (*First Corinthians*, 394-95), who shifts it to chapter 14.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 259; Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 204; Fee, *First Epistle*, 575-76; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 445; Ekem, ‘“Spiritual Gifts” or “Spiritual Persons”’, 54-74; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 456. While most commentators provide the gloss, ‘spiritual things’ for τῶν πνευματικῶν, they nevertheless prefer ‘spiritual gifts’ when referring to the topic of discussion.

⁴¹ Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 491.

received in some form (cf. 11.2). By establishing this relationship, Paul is able to confront the specific issue of what is honourable practice in the church for both men and women (cf. 11.4-15). While some read Paul as advocating ecclesial hierarchy on the basis of gender (via the created order),⁴² the text suggests that Paul's concern is with maintaining the divinely appointed and necessary compatibility between males and females.⁴³ This perspective follows the line of reasoning displayed earlier when Paul compared his role in the apostolic mission to that of Apollos' (cf. 3.5-15), and that both were dependent upon God.

However, we should note that Paul's primary emphasis, as intimated in 11.3, is humanity's ultimate dependence upon God (11.12c). Implicit to the passage, we see Paul first anchoring the Corinthians' collective identity (and their perceptions of it) to Christ and it is from that identity they are to assess themselves and define behaviour. In this case, they are to recognise what is honourable and what is not and conduct themselves accordingly. Second, and presumably contingent upon abilities via the Spirit's indwelling presence, Paul desires that the Corinthians formulate appropriate judgments on their own in this regard (cf. 11.13-15). He desires this for them primarily because it appears that they are not making such judgments. In fact, the judgments they do make are creating problems amongst themselves (11.17-18), which brings us to the next example: proper behaviour at communal meals (cf. 11.20-34), specifically honouring Christ through concern for the other.

Based on the prefatory remarks of 11.19-22, Paul shows his awareness of the inappropriate and divisive behaviour in the assembly during communal meals (cf. 11.18: ἀκούω σχίσματα ἐν ὑμῖν), specifically the meal intended to signify their unity. Paul's indictment against the Corinthians is that they have failed to discern their own actions. In particular, some in Corinth fail to see how their behaviour does not reflect the nature of the cross, and how this failed identification leads to faulty views of each other. More specifically, some in

⁴² See e.g. Héring, *First Epistle*, 102-10; P. T. Butler, *Studies in First Corinthians* (Joplin: College Press, 1985), 201-05. While it may be true that the Jewish creation story describes man created first and woman created from him, Paul's emphasis is that neither is superior to the other—either by created order or by virtue of inherent traits or abilities.

⁴³ Cf. Barrett, *First Epistle*, 247-58; Hargreaves, *Guide to 1 Corinthians*, 142-47; Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 138-41. Wire shifts this emphasis so that she advocates of compatibility are those female prophets loyal to the flourishing theological feminism in Corinth—see A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 130.

Corinth appear to be excluding those of lesser socio-economic means (or status) from the Lord's Supper on the basis of that lower status. Not only does such an exclusion fail to recall the Corinthians' own calling (cf. 1.26), it also functions as an extension of the earlier problem of divisions via sloganeering (cf. 1.11-12). In both cases, for Paul, the cause is rooted in faulty notions of wisdom and spirituality, specifically believers are relying on the wisdom of the world, despite its being overturned by God, rather than relying on God's wisdom revealed by the Spirit. And similar to Paul's earlier exhortation, the solution here in 11.20-34 involves right assessment of each other's place and value in the light of the cross, an assessment that reveals communal unity, and this assessment can only be made by those relying on 'the mind of Christ' as given by the Spirit.

5.4.2.2. *Communal Worship (1 Cor 12–14)*

When we come to chapters 12–14 we discover further examples of internal stratification, only now the categorical distinctions and levels of hierarchy are not socially determined. Instead, we see evidence of distinctions made on an assumed hierarchy of spirituality, one in which those ostensibly on 'lower' levels are deemed less important while those on 'higher' ones are to be esteemed and imitated by others in the community. How then does this dilemma, as found in the argument of 1 Cor 12–14, relate to our analysis of 2.1–3.4?⁴⁴ Given the scope of this final chapter, I can only examine the basic, thematic details of 1 Cor 12–14 and their relationship to 2.1–3.4; I will not be engaging in detailed exegesis of the former argument. Moreover, I will not attempt to engage fully in the

⁴⁴ Admittedly, pairing 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 with chapters 12–14 for the purpose of critical inquiry is not novel. Hunt previously examined the parallels between 2.6-16 and 12–14, noting the 'clear lexical and thematic similarities' in an able fashion (see *Inspired Body*, 109-39—quoted, 109). While much of my study follows Hunt's findings, I seek to develop his argument in other ways. In particular, Hunt underplays the relevance of 1 Cor 13, not only for 12–14 but also its relationship with key themes in 2.1–3.4. This is surprising given Hunt's ostensible response to seeing 1 Cor 13 as merely a literary flourish: 'Far from being an ethereal, flighty poem, 1 Corinthians 13 is firmly planted in reality and is crucial for a reading of chapters 12 and 14' (*Inspired Body*, 117-18 n.18). However, when it comes to his own discussion, Hunt only gives passing comments on chapter 13—see e.g. *Inspired Body*, 117, 119, 121, 139. Hunt also fails to emphasise both the interplay of Spirit, wisdom and proclamation, and especially the need for discernment within the 'inspired body' as found in 1 Cor 12–14. This interplay of the major themes is not clearly expressed and the specific need for *communal* discernment is only incidental to Hunt's argument. For a more recent and succinct treatment of the links between 1 Cor 1–4 and 1 Cor 12–14, see F. Voss, *Das Wort vom Kreuz und die menschliche Vernunft eine Untersuchung zur Soteriologie des 1 Korintherbriefes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002), 29-40. For a different (though slightly idiosyncratic) perspective on the connections between 1 Cor 1–4 and 12–14, and the reasons that underlie them, see Wire, *Women Prophets*, 39-71, 135-58.

scholarly debate on the specific nature, purpose and/or duration of ‘spiritual gifts’; to enter that discussion would take me beyond the limits of this study and it would require me to re-tread well-trodden territory.⁴⁵ My concern in this section, therefore, is to stress the basic contours of the argument of 1 Cor 12–14 and recognise its leading themes and their possible links with 2.1–3.4.

5.4.2.2.1. Contours of the Argument

Virtually all commentators agree that 1 Cor 12–14 is a single rhetorical unit where Paul addresses a new topic,⁴⁶ one signalled by the formulaic *περὶ δέ*. However, not all agree on how to define the specific and rather ambiguous designation, *τῶν πνευματικῶν*, which can be read as either a masculine or neuter plural. If we read the phrase as masculine, then the designation refers to spiritual *people*,⁴⁷ whereas if read as neuter, it refers to spiritual *things* (or ‘gifts’). A decision between the two options cannot be made on the basis of Pauline usage, for there are instances in the letter where both forms are used.⁴⁸ How are we to decide in this case whether he is speaking about people or things?⁴⁹ The argument of 1 Cor 12–14 shows Paul’s concern to be primarily with displays of spirituality and only secondarily with those persons who exhibit or display such things.⁵⁰ Moreover, by noting the stages of the argument we see that Paul deals with particular displays of spirituality. Specifically, in 1 Cor 12.8–10, 28–30 Paul begins with a list of roughly eleven provisions of the Spirit; in 1

⁴⁵ See e.g. H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), 359–409; D. Bridge and D. Phipers, *Spiritual Gifts and the Church* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1974); Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*; J. Koenig, *Charismata: God’s Gifts for God’s People* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978); R. A. N. Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church: An Exploration Into the Gifts of the Spirit During the First Three Centuries of the Christian Church* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984); Martin, *Spirit and Congregation*; Carson, *Showing the Spirit*; S. S. Schatzmann, *Pauline Theology of Charismata* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1989); idem, ‘Purpose and Function of Gifts in 1 Corinthians,’ *SwJT* 45.1 (2002): 53–68; J. Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993); M. Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2006).

⁴⁶ For a recent analysis on the rhetorical unity of this passage, see J. E. A. Chiu, *1 Cor 12–14: Literary Structure and Theology* (Rome: Editrice Pontifica Instituto Biblico, 2007).

⁴⁷ See e.g. Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 194; Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth*, 171–72.

⁴⁸ For the masculine, see 1 Cor 2.15; 3.1; 14.37. For the neuter, see 1 Cor 2.13; 9.11; 10.3–4; 14.1b.

⁴⁹ Both Morris (*First Epistle*, 163) and Thiselton (*First Epistle*, 901) appear to be indifferent to this dilemma.

⁵⁰ Cf. G. D. Fee, ‘Gifts of the Spirit,’ in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (eds. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin and D. G. Reid; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 341.

Cor 13.1-3, 8 the list is reduced to three (although he introduces three others); and in 1 Cor 14.1-40 the discussion focuses on only two: tongues and prophecy.⁵¹

Furthermore, given this narrowing of focus and the fact that tongues and prophecy are relativized in the longer listing,⁵² it would seem that these two are a particular problem in the Corinthian assembly, and Paul seeks to *correct* the faulty views associated with them.⁵³ However, a deeper problem seems to be at work. Given the rhetorical placement of chapter 13,⁵⁴ this deeper problem is the absence of self-giving sacrificial love, which contributes to the faulty understanding of ‘spiritual things’ and their misguided implementation in the worshipping community, which in turn leads to the potential for internal stratification. As Mitchell shows, the subject of chapter 14 deals with the edification of the church, which represents a central aim of chapter 12 with chapter 13 being the means by which it takes place.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the absence of love represents the Corinthians’ failure to reflect the nature of the gospel, which they originally accepted and believed because of their love for God (cf. 1.23-24; 2.2, 4-5, 9-10), which united them all ‘in Christ.’ Thus, while Mitchell is right to stress the thematic parallels between unity (or ‘concord’) and love as vital for Paul’s wider aims for reconciliation,⁵⁶ we cannot overlook Paul’s

⁵¹ Cf. Perkins, who qualifies tongues as ‘praying in tongues’ (*First Corinthians*, 133). However, it is not quite clear why she makes this distinction.

⁵² In saying prophecy and tongues are relativized I am merely drawing attention to the idea that Paul relegates them to a lesser position because the Corinthians have unjustly elevated them to signs (or indicators) of spiritual superiority—see Keener, *1–2 Corinthians*, 101; although cf. F. W. Horn, ‘Holy Spirit,’ in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D. N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3.273.

⁵³ This follows Horsley, who says the tone of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 12–14 reveals that it ‘is corrective, not simply informative: it challenges the Corinthian spirituals’ orientation as well as their spiritual practice’ (*1 Corinthians*, 166). Fee, on the other hand, takes things further than Horsley: ‘Paul’s answer is intended to be *corrective*, not instructional or informational. Thus, even if they presented themselves to Paul with a question (or questions), his response seems to take *exception* to their viewpoint, not simply to inform them in areas where they lack understanding’ (*First Epistle*, 570-71—emphasis original).

⁵⁴ A number of scholars see chapter 13 as either 1) a digression or 2) an otherwise separate piece brought into the argument for rhetorical effect. For those advocating the first option, see Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 285; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 264; Collins, *First Corinthians*, 605; cf. Keener (*1–2 Corinthians*, 107), who brackets the rhetorical digression as 12.31–13.13. For those advocating the second option, see Héring, *First Epistle*, 134; Barrett, *First Epistle*, 297. However, I agree both with Fitzmyer, who views the discussion on love as ‘the *climax* of what Paul has been teaching in chap. 12 about the *pneumatika* and the diverse kinds of them’ (*First Corinthians*, 488—emphasis original) and with Horrell, who takes chapter 13 as rhetorically preparatory for what Paul argues in chapter 14 (see *Social Ethos*, 182-83).

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 270.

⁵⁶ Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 165-71.

emphasis on the Corinthians' need for their spirituality to reflect that which identifies them 'in Christ.'

5.4.2.2.2. Leading Themes

In chapter 12 Paul deals with the importance of God, via the Spirit, equipping the members with gifts (of grace) for building up the body of Christ (12.4-7, 24b-25; cf. 2.12; 3.10). Noteworthy is the emphasis in 12.8 and 10c on Spirit-given wisdom and Spirit-given discernment, two gifts that Paul described earlier as characterising who the Corinthians are and how they should view themselves (2.6, 10, 15-16; cf. 3.16-20). There is, however, a noticeable difference between the two texts, one that relates to the recipients of wisdom and those who practice discernment.⁵⁷ While in 2.1–3.4, we are left with the impression that all believers receive God's wisdom via the Spirit and are able to exercise Spirit-led discernment, here in chapters 12–14 Paul suggests that not all are equipped in this way. In fact, it appears as though Paul is declaring that 'to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit' (12.8a) and 'to another the discernment of the spirits' (12.10c), and that 'the Spirit works all these things distributing to each one individually just as he wills' (12.11). How then do we address the apparent distinctions between what Paul says in 2.1–3.4 and what he states here in chapter 12?

Part of the solution can be seen in the distinctive emphases in the two passages, specifically in relation to the 'word of the cross' as God's revealed wisdom and the Corinthians' identity with that wisdom. While in 2.1–3.4 Paul emphasises the proclamation of the cross as the means by which the Corinthians' identity was originally formed, in 12–14 Paul stresses the need for their identity to continue to reflect the message of the cross. Paul's specific remarks in 1 Cor 12–14 address matters relevant to worship in the believing assembly, worship ostensibly involving exhortations related to the gospel. Thus, Paul's remarks presuppose not only a worship setting but also an awareness of how and why such an assembly exists. Accordingly, it is by the Spirit's revelation that the Corinthians believed and accepted God's wisdom as displayed in the cross and identified themselves with that wisdom (2.4-5, 6).

⁵⁷ Cf. M. J. Cartledge, 'Charismatic Prophecy: A Definition and Description,' *JPT* 5 (1994): 96.

And it is through the Spirit that the Corinthians are able not only to discern how God's wisdom in the cross redefines life but also how to assess their lives as reflections of that wisdom (cf. 12.3-11; 14.1-40).

However, Paul sees the Corinthians at present as reflecting neither the message of the cross nor the new identity it bestows. Instead they reflect a wisdom that is wholly different. As noted above, the argument of chapter 12 suggests an internal stratification based on an assumed definition and hierarchy of spirituality. Moreover, the Corinthians appear to be relying on a faulty criterion to justify this stratification, one that prioritises ecstatic speech and prophetic utterances as superior displays of spirituality. The effect of this view of spirituality and the valuations applied to it could be seen as the Corinthians attempting to create or establish a uniform spirituality. Thus, all who speak in ecstatic tongues or prophetic utterances reflect what it means to be truly spiritual. However, Paul indicates that not all spiritual things are necessarily from God, despite appearances, and therefore there is a need to discern or test such things in order to determine their legitimacy (cf. 1Thess 5.19-21). For Paul the test is quite simple (cf. 12.3):⁵⁸ all (spirit-inspired) utterances that curse Christ cannot be from God, whereas all utterances that proclaim Christ as Lord are consistent with what the Spirit reveals. It is worth noting that with this 'test' Paul is subtly arguing against the Corinthians' faulty notion of spirituality. *All* who curse Jesus are not led by the Spirit (i.e. spiritual), and *all* who confess Christ as Lord are led by the Spirit (i.e. spiritual).⁵⁹ The implication of tying spirituality to this inclusive confession is that it applies to *all* who believe; spirituality is not the exclusive state of only those who practice ostensibly superior pneumatic abilities.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cf. Barrett, *First Epistle*, 281. There is debate on whether or not the contrasting expressions noted in 12.3 represent actual claims made in the Corinthian assembly, to which Paul responds.

⁵⁹ As Hays argues: 'Anyone who utters that confession (not just mouthing the words but making a self-involving confession of the lordship of Jesus) is ipso facto in the sphere of the Holy Spirit's power' (*First Corinthians*, 208).

⁶⁰ As Bassler summarises: 'Since Paul is concerned to refute those Corinthians who claim their gift of glossolalia is a special, perhaps unique, demonstration of spirit possession, he opens his response in vv 1-3 by presenting a radically different perspective. Noting the simple baptismal confession, Jesus is Lord, can only be uttered under the influence of the Holy Spirit (v 3b), Paul undermines any pneumatic elitism. All Christians make this confession, thus all Christians, not a tongue-speaking few, are πνευματικοί' ('1 Cor 12:3—Curse and Confession in context,' *JBL* 101.3 [1982]: 416).

Related to this is the additional (and more substantial) problem of the Corinthians constructing their own 'building' and doing so in accordance with their own perceptions of what it should be. By insisting that the body, as a worshipping community, be characterised by uniformity in spiritual expression, and by encouraging (if not requiring) uniformity the Corinthians are creating a body that is not functionally unified but deformed. For Paul, this construction is not only faulty in itself but also in direct conflict with God's wisdom and work, and he proves this by way of a metaphor.⁶¹ Just as the human body, *as a body*, cannot function if it exists as only a single member (or body part), the believing assembly, as the body of Christ, cannot operate properly and effectively if it prioritises one spiritual manifestation over all the others. Such a 'body' simply does not work. Moreover, as Paul argues in 12.18 and 24b-16, it is God who organised the body in such a way that harmony of the whole is contingent upon the diverse functions of the parts. This emphasis on God as creator and organiser not only recalls Paul's argument concerning God's preordained plan of salvation and benefits for those who accept it (cf. 2.7-9, 13), but also reflects the appropriate cause for boasting. God's purposeful organisation of the body, the specific will of the Spirit when distributing gifts of grace, the divine revelation of the mystery of the cross and the unlikely calling of the Corinthians all militate against self-boasting (cf. 1.30-31; 6.19-20).

For Paul, the Corinthians' failure to reflect who they are meant to be, their faulty valuations of certain members and their self-boasting are linked with a much larger problem: their failure to rely on and exhibit love for each other now, a love they collectively exhibited for God when they first believed (cf. 2.9). As we can see from Paul's description in 13.4-7, the love in question is a particular kind—or it is characterised by specific traits or attributes. Horsley suggests that Paul's description of love is an implicit accusation against the Corinthians, in that they have failed to reflect the love that Paul expounds.⁶² Specifically, boasting of status, relegation of 'lesser' members, prideful claims of knowledge, behaving with little to no regard for others, not condemning

⁶¹ For a summary on the nature and rhetorical use of the 'body' metaphor, see Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 157-58; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 178-79.

⁶² Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 177.

unrighteousness (or immoral actions) but allowing them to persist; all of these and more fail to exhibit true, divine love—as displayed in the cross.

It is equally possible that Paul finally articulates the concept of (divine) love, which has been at work throughout the argument—albeit in subtle ways (cf. 2.9; 4.21; 8.1, 3). Moreover, Paul’s definition also seems to stand in opposition to the Corinthians’ notion of what love is and how it is expressed. Thus, Paul’s definition of love functions as a criterion against which the Corinthians’ behaviour can (and should) be measured. Accordingly, by recalling the argument thus far, it becomes clear that the Corinthians’ behaviours reflect more the ways of the world, or life according to the flesh, and are therefore inappropriate for those who are ‘in Christ.’

They are inappropriate because they do not correspond with the specific definition of love and because they fail to reflect the love of God revealed in the cross and the new life it provides by the power of the Spirit. Moreover, the behaviours are inappropriate because they contradict the love the Corinthians displayed toward God when they first believed, a love that ostensibly reflected the definition in 13.4-7. True love humbly seeks after the things of God in accordance with the ways of God and characterises those who are ‘mature’, whereas faulty love endeavours to satisfy the self in accordance with what the world deems permissible—or what Paul characterises as that which is fleshly or childish. However, the implication of Paul’s argument in 2.1–3.4 is that the Corinthians, because of their acceptance of the gospel and the reception of God’s Spirit, are no longer to be defined by that which is fleshly (i.e. of the world) or childish. In a simple analogy, Paul appeals to himself once again in order to illustrate the needed transition (cf. 13.11). Just as childish limits of knowledge, ways of reasoning and displays of love are inappropriate for adulthood; the ways of the world are inappropriate for those ‘in Christ.’ Thus, we should not overlook the emphasis on the kind of love, types of knowledge and levels of (spiritual) maturity in chapter 13 as it relates to Paul’s earlier critique in 2.6–3.4. As in his earlier remarks, Paul here in chapter 13 admonishes the Corinthians to grow up and live not only in accordance with the ways of God but also with whom they have been called to be. While this admonishment is certainly far-reaching in application, a more immediate concern requires its presence at this stage in Paul’s argument.

When we come to chapter 14, it becomes quite clear that Paul's description of love is essential for his critique of the Corinthians' behaviour in their worship. Immediately, we see connections with what Paul has said about the so-called spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and 13.1-3, specifically how they are empty and meaningless if not governed by (divine) love, which is the 'more excellent way' (12.31b). In this sense, chapter 14 functions as a further example of this view. In terms of the wider argument, we also find links with Paul's aphorism in 8.1c-d. Specifically, Paul is concerned with how the Corinthians understand spirituality and how that understanding is being used in destructive ways—i.e. establishing a hierarchy of spirituality based on faulty criteria, and by extension marginalising those who do not operate (or exist) on 'higher' levels. Thus, as chapter 14 reveals, it is the arrogance of knowledge concerning what it means to be spiritual that divides the community (according to its own terms), and it is the absence of love that sustains such divisions. In keeping with the theme of 12.31, chapter 14 shows that the Corinthians are not conducting themselves in accordance to the 'more excellent way.'

As the argument of chapter 14 bears out, Paul's concern with the Corinthians' worship deals with the elevation of specific 'gifts' as defining criteria for spirituality and knowledge of or access to God's revelation. In particular, the 'gifts' in mind are tongues and prophecy. However, scholars recognise that a closer examination of the argument suggests that the phenomenon of tongues was more problematic in Corinth than prophetic speech.⁶³ Granting this, it does not alter the focus of Paul's critique, which confronts a misunderstanding and misuse of tongues as an indicator or even criterion for defining spirituality. Paul appears to distinguish circumstances for when tongues can be used, one involving the individual and the other the believing community, and both share a singular purpose: edification. Thus, and to speak in rather broad terms, we can say that Paul's critique of the Corinthians' view of tongues is two-pronged: function and intelligibility. In terms of functionality, Paul identifies the purpose of tongues as edification for the one who speaks it (14.4), which is predicated on the idea that this tongue is

⁶³ Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 571-74, 597-98; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 176-77; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 509.

spoken only to God by the individual (14.2). This intimacy is reinforced by the qualifier, οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἀκούει, πνεύματι δὲ λαλεῖ μυστήρια (14.2b-c).

If, however, a ‘tongue’ is going to be uttered in a communal worship setting then there must be interpretation, ἵνα ἡ ἐκκλησία οἰκοδομὴν λάβῃ (14.5e). The structure of this passages reveals that the edification for the whole community is dependent upon the interpretation of what the individual speaks. The logical implication is that edification does not occur where there is no interpretation. Paul supports this in 14.10-11 where he asserts: if speaking in tongues goes without interpretation, then the meaning of what is spoken cannot be discerned, since it is otherwise incomprehensible. And if the meaning cannot be discerned, then the incomprehensible message becomes meaningless or impotent for the edification of the community. Edification only occurs when an inspired message is intelligible. By contrast, not only is the function of prophecy beneficial for the whole community (cf. 14.4b, 12), it also relies on a form of speech that can be readily known and understood by all who hear it (cf. 14.6). However, the prophetic message must still be discerned as in harmony with God’s revealed wisdom.

With the allowance for ‘tongues’ in a communal worship setting, Paul suggests an overarching criterion for the practice of such things, yet it is one that has been at work all along. If a single person speaks in a tongue, he or she should also pray for the ability to interpret what is said (cf. 14.13). Thus, we see Paul again stressing the need for intelligibility. This consciousness of speaking in an unknown (angelic?) tongue and the conscious decision to seek interpretation suggests that Paul is arguing against ecstatic speech as being characterised by a disengaged or overturned mind. When Philo speaks of similar experiences, he describes the mind of the individual as being by-passed or subverted.⁶⁴ Moreover, what is telling about Philo’s treatment is that his emphasis falls on the form and not the content of what is spoken in the ecstatic state. In other words, it seems as though the form determined the legitimacy of an inspired message or utterance and not the message itself.

A similar understanding seems to be at work in Corinth, where either form takes priority over content or speaking by the Spirit is prized over speaking

⁶⁴ See *Her.* 259, 264-65; *QG* 3.9; *Mos* 2.188-91.

with the mind. Paul appears to be confronting this notion when he claims, ἀλλὰ ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ θέλω πέντε λόγους τῷ νοί μου λαλῆσαι, ἵνα καὶ ἄλλους κατηχήσω, ἢ μυρίους λόγους ἐν γλώσση (14.19). While the idea of ‘teaching others’ certainly relates to Paul’s remarks in 14.3, we cannot help but notice the force of his meaning by his use of κατηχέω when contrasting prophecy and tongues. Specifically, Paul is stressing the reality that when seeking to instruct the community in a meaningful and coherent way, only intelligible words can achieve this goal.⁶⁵ When a myriad of spiritual words spoken by an individual are unintelligible to the whole, they are not beneficial to the community in a meaningful way. All such spiritual words can do is edify the one who speaks them. Or as Barrett suggests, while a myriad of spiritual utterances might strengthen one’s spirituality, that is all they can do and should therefore be expressed to God alone (cf. 14.2).⁶⁶

Following an explanation of how spirituality appears to outsiders (14.20-25), Paul elaborates on the communal function of not just prophecy and tongues but all things spiritual (14.26-40). Specifically in 14.26-33, Paul argues that all things done in the believing community should be done for the edification of the whole; they are not opportunities for personal boasting. This mindfulness of others reflects not only the type of love that is to exist within the community, but also the maturity of mind expected of those ‘in Christ.’ It is the childish mind and the lack of (divine) love that lead to immature or even chaotic behaviour and a prioritising of self-interest over the needs of others. For Paul, such things belong to the former way of life; they no longer (are to) have any influence on those who belong to Christ and are living in accordance with God’s wisdom, as revealed by the Spirit. Those who believe or live otherwise, and claim spiritual inspiration to do so, are not only misconstruing what God has revealed (cf. 14.38) but also placing themselves under God’s judgment. This theme of coming under God’s judgment for acting or behaving in accordance with what God has revealed is an intensification of earlier judgment themes (cf. 3.10-15; 10.1-10; 11.27-33). What is striking is that, as with the earlier emphases, the

⁶⁵ Cf. Fee, *First Epistle*, 675-76. Fitzmyer states it plainly: ‘in a Christian liturgical gathering, five words uttered with rational intelligibility will have more hortatory and didactic effect than thousands of twitterings in tongues’ (*First Corinthians*, 518).

⁶⁶ Barrett, *First Epistle*, 322; Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 113.

notion of judgment is associated with how the community is identified and functions—i.e. how it is built.

One of the leading reasons why Paul pleads for order in worship relates to how the believing community presents itself to the outside world in such a setting. This emphasis is seen primarily in the argument of 14.20-25. Here Paul alerts the Corinthians to the possible accusation from outsiders of madness, due to the chaotic events and incomprehensible speech that take place in worship gatherings (cf. 14.23). While it is true that in such cases the Corinthians could appeal to Paul's remarks in 2.13-15 (i.e. spiritual persons are immune to the accusations of 'unspiritual' people), Paul's admonition for deference to the 'weaker' person would seem to trump such an appeal (cf. 9.1-14). If those 'in Christ' are to be God's called community, identified by the sacrificial, self-giving love of Christ, then this community must prioritise reflecting that identity rather than relishing assumed spiritual immunity. If individual members of the community are to show deference in behaviour for the struggles of other members so as not to cause a hindrance to faith in the gospel, the same applies to how the community as a whole is to behave before 'the world' and for precisely the same reason.

Thus, reflecting the reality that God has created for the world in and through Christ crucified has apologetic value. This becomes more acute when we recall the idea that social structures and/or expectations are to reflect or be in harmony with the (divine) wisdom to which they adhere or profess. Serious consequences result when this harmony fails to be maintained, both by the individual and the entire community. With regard to the individual, failure to live in harmony with the professed wisdom is perceived as an act of folly at best or subversive to the community at worst. In such cases the seditious person is to be removed in order to preserve the integrity of the community (cf. 1 Cor 5.1-2, 5, 13).

With regard to the community, failure to live in accordance with its professed wisdom creates space for accusations of false or misguided wisdom and weakness or insufficiency with regard to the divine. In effect, the integrity of God is at stake when the community fails in this regard. Thus when Paul claims, οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀκαταστασίας ὁ θεὸς ἀλλὰ εἰρήνης (14.33a), he is promoting a reality or standard that the Corinthian believers are to reflect.

However, when the Corinthian community conducts its worship (of God) in a chaotic manner and an outsider witnesses such an event, the conclusion drawn about the God worshipped is not ‘peace’ but ‘anarchy.’⁶⁷ Moreover, the spiritual experiences or displays noted in 1 Cor 14 are not exclusive to God’s people but are practiced in pagan cults in the Graeco-Roman world. And since such experiences or displays in these other cults are characterised by ecstasy, frenzy and/or chaos, an outside observer of the Corinthian community, when ecstatic tongues are manifold, would see no distinction between it and other pagan services of worship. Yet Paul has already reminded the Corinthians that they are no longer to be characterised by what they once were (cf. 12.1-2); they must be characterised now by their identity in the Spirit (cf. 12.13).

Thus to engage in practices that both present a false or misguided view of God (and divine wisdom) and show no clear distinction between the ‘society’ God creates in Christ and the ‘society’ of the world, is to offer unconsciously a polemic against rather than an apologetic for the truth of the gospel. However, by living in accordance with God’s wisdom as displayed in the cross and revealed by the Spirit, the Corinthians (ideally) become what Horsley terms, an ‘alternative society’⁶⁸ in and through which the legitimacy of the gospel is made manifest. In effect the Corinthians become the evidence that through the cross of Christ God is redeeming the world and bringing about its restoration.

5.4.3. The Hope of the Resurrected ‘Spiritual’ Body

Some commentators describe 1 Cor 15 as Paul abruptly initiating a new topic,⁶⁹ one that appears to be only loosely related to what precedes it.⁷⁰ This designation seems natural when comparing the way Paul introduces this discussion with how he begins his treatment of earlier topics. Ordinarily in the letter, Paul starts with an acknowledgement of the issue being addressed, whether this awareness came about in oral or written form (cf. 5.1; 7.1; 8.1; 11.18; 12.1; 16.1, 12). However, Paul does not directly state how the issue

⁶⁷ For translating ἀκαταστασία as ‘anarchy’ rather than the softer term, ‘confusion,’ see Mitchell, *Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 172-73.

⁶⁸ See Horsley, ‘Paul’s Assembly as Alternative Society,’ 242-52.

⁶⁹ See e.g. Fee, *First Epistle*, 713; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 682.

⁷⁰ Schmithals represents an extreme position when he sees chapter 15 as canonically misplaced. In its present location, Schmithals argues, it ‘breaks the connection of 16:1 (περὶ τῆς λογιᾶς) with the statements περὶ τῶν πνευματικῶν in chaps. 12–14’ (*Gnosticism at Corinth*, 91). For Schmithals, chapter 15 belongs after 11.34.

discussed in chapter 15 came to his attention.⁷¹ Moreover, it is not immediately clear what the issue is precisely, because Paul's discussion begins without the topical marker, *περὶ δέ κτλ.*⁷² We have to wait until 15.12 before Paul introduces the topic—i.e. some in Corinth are 'saying that there is no resurrection of the dead' (15.12c)⁷³—but even then we can only guess at the true nature of the problem.⁷⁴ One suggestion is an (over-) realised eschatology, whereby some in Corinth believe they now live in a resurrected state. As Lincoln points out: 'Their life in the Spirit with its abundance of charismatic gifts seemed to them proof that they were already enjoying the eschatological blessings of freedom and fullness associated with its consummation.'⁷⁵ The effects of this belief seems to branch off in two directions.

On the one hand, this eschatological view of the self leads to a sense of moral freedom, whereby the behaviours of the one 'in Christ' are immune from judgment because the individual is already perfected (spiritually). In this sense, we can see how Paul's remarks throughout 1 Cor 5–14 confront not only the specific dilemmas addressed but also this eschatological view that stands behind the dilemmas. On the other hand, the (over-) realised eschatology leads to denying the future resurrection of believers (cf. 15.12), although they do not deny the past resurrection of Christ. In fact, Christ's resurrection is essential for their belief: it is because of Christ's past resurrection that the spiritual elite in Corinth can claim to be living in a perfected state of spiritual existence now, and

⁷¹ Voigt rejects the idea that, in this particular instance, word came to Paul in *written* form, and merely entertains the possibility that Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus relayed the report—presumably in oral form (see *Gemeinsam*, 133; cf. also Barrett, *First Epistle*, 335; J. R. Asher, *Polarity and Change: A Study of Metaphysics, Rhetoric, and Resurrection* [J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2000], 65 n.118).

⁷² A detail particularly troubling for Hurd (see *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 91-92).

⁷³ Thiselton argues: 'Most commentators believe that few if any [in Corinth] denied the resurrection of *Christ*; but some failed to follow through the eschatological and ethical entailments of what it meant to share in Christ's resurrection, not least corporately as his body' (*First Epistle*, 1176—emphasis original).

⁷⁴ Thiselton (*First Epistle* 1172-76) lists four leading opinions within scholarship: 1) some in Corinth fail to grasp the notion of a post-mortem existence; 2) some in Corinth believe that the resurrection already occurred; 3) some in Corinth are baffled by the notion of a *bodily* resurrection; and 4) various groups of believers in Corinth each hold different (mis)understandings of the resurrection, likely either one or an amalgam of the other three suggestions.

⁷⁵ A. T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul's Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 33.

that they will continue to do so (unchanged) at the (future) parousia of Christ.⁷⁶ However, Paul counters this view first by labelling Christ's past resurrection as ἀπαρχή (15.20), which implies a subsequent resurrection (at least in this case for τῶν κεκοιμημένων), and second by asserting ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα βασιλείαν θεοῦ κληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται (15.50b), which means an ontological change must occur before the one 'in Christ' can live in spiritual perfection.⁷⁷ Since the final resurrection has not yet occurred, no one claiming to be spiritual exists in the (anticipated) perfected state.

By considering the way in which Paul makes his case, we can discern a twofold line of argumentation where he seeks 1) to expose the absurdity of denying the resurrection, along with its logical and theological consequences, and 2) to articulate the appropriate understanding of resurrection and its effects on life. Following what is often called the *narratio* (15.1-11),⁷⁸ the argument of chapter 15 divides generally into two parts: 15.12-34 and 15.35-57.⁷⁹ In the first part, Paul addresses the faulty perceptions of the resurrection as an experienced event (15.12-19). Specifically, and on the basis of the report given to him (cf. 15.12), Paul articulates the results of denying the resurrection of the faithful. He then counters this by explaining the consequences for the future, given the reality of Christ's resurrection (15.20-28),⁸⁰ and how those consequences have

⁷⁶ Cf. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 35-36.

⁷⁷ I use the phrase, 'ontological change' in the light of Paul's argument in 15.50-54, where he describes the necessary transformation from perishable to imperishable bodies, and from mortal to immortal bodies.

⁷⁸ While Eriksson and others define it as 15.3-11 (*Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* [Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998], 249; D. F. Watson, 'Paul's Rhetorical Strategy in 1 Cor 15,' in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (eds. S. E. Porter and T. H. Olbricht; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 236; Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 292; W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchen Verlag, 2001], 4.17) and Collins limits it only to 15.3b-5 (*First Corinthians*, 526), Thiselton and others see the whole of 15.1-11 as the *narratio* (cf. *First Epistle*, 1177; Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 122-23; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 540-41, 544).

⁷⁹ This general two-part division of the argument follows the reading of most commentators—see e.g. Robertson-Plummer, *First Epistle*, 329-30; Fee, *First Epistle*, 714; Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, 197; Schrage, *Der erste Brief*, 4:108, 266; Keener, *1-2 Corinthians*, 125, 129. Conzelmann (*1 Corinthians*, 263-93) and Fitzmyer (*First Corinthians*, 540) advocate three parts following the *narratio*: 15.12-34, 35-49, 50-58 (cf. Mitchell [*Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 286], who includes the *narratio* in the first part—thus, 15.1-34).

⁸⁰ Cf. Asher, who suggests: 'The doctrine that Paul is presenting here is probably his own innovation. . . . The doctrine of the eschatological resurrection in second temple Judaism apparently consisted of only a one-time, collective resurrection (Dan 12:1-3 and 2 Macc 7:9-14). The doctrine of a two-stage resurrection (Christ's and the eschatological) is probably a development of Pauline Christology and, as such, is unique to the early Christians' (*Polarity and Change*, 61 n.101).

present-life implications (15.29-34).⁸¹ In the second part, Paul addresses the specific issue of the nature (or form) of the future transformed, resurrected body and how it is even possible (15.35-49), before stressing the necessity of this transformation for believers living in God's eschatological kingdom (15.50-57).

While the problem of (over-) realised eschatology might be at work in Corinth, the twofold construction of his argument indicates that Paul confronts the wider problem of the Corinthians relying on faulty notions of wisdom and spirituality that produce this faulty eschatology. This means we once again encounter the dilemma of how the Corinthians are at present defining life and the inappropriate criteria they employ to do so. A leading emphasis throughout is the proper understanding of what it means to be a spiritual person, especially in the light of Christ's work on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

Specifically, while the spiritual life is one that begins at a particular point, its fullness (or perfection) is not an immediate state obtained post-belief and post-reception of God's Spirit. Rather, one's spiritual existence matures throughout the life of the believer, empowered and guided by the Spirit. At the very least, we can say Paul stresses the point that no one can achieve spiritual perfection prior to the eschaton, for it is only at the eschaton that believers receive imperishable, immortal, (true) spiritual bodies. To stress this distinction Paul employs the contrasting language of ψυχικός and πνευματικός (cf. 15.42-46) which appeared earlier in 2.14-15 although with a slightly different emphasis.

In 2.14-15 Paul uses ψυχικός and πνευματικός to differentiate between the one without and the one with God's Spirit, thus making a (soteriological?) distinction in terms of identity. On the basis of his preceding analogy on different types of 'flesh' (σάρξ) in 15.39-41, here in 15.42-46 Paul isolates two types of bodies: one related to the present age and the other kept for the age to come, thus making an ontological distinction between the types (cf. 15.44b).⁸² In this instance, ψυχικός is the body (σῶμα) reserved for life in this present age whereas πνευματικός is the body (σῶμα) for life in the age to come. While much debate surrounds whether the 'spiritual body' is the 'natural body' reconstituted

⁸¹ Walker recently argued for this portion as another 'non-Pauline interpolation' (see '1 Corinthians 15:29-34 as a Non-Pauline Interpolation,' *CBQ* 68.1 [2007]: 84-103).

⁸² The specific construction of the claim (i.e. εἰ ἔστιν . . . ἔστιν καί) bears out this distinction.

or an entirely new form of existence,⁸³ we can be sure that Paul (at least) believes that the ‘natural body’ cannot inhabit the age to come.⁸⁴ This is borne out when we examine the descriptions Paul gives to the two types of body (15.42-43): the ‘natural body’ is perishable, dishonourable and weak, whereas the ‘spiritual body’ is imperishable, glorious and powerful. From the perspective of God’s wisdom, the characteristics of the ‘natural body’ reflect the nature of the present age while those of the ‘spiritual body’ reflect the age to come. Therefore, since the present age is passing away and the future age is dawning, and since that future age can only be inhabited by a ‘body’ suited specifically for it, a transformation must take place; one cannot simply transfer from one state of existence to another in the same ‘body.’

Thus, while maintaining the separate nuances with these terms in their particular contexts, two vital points should be considered. The first point deals with the force of Paul’s argument in both places. While the precise meaning of ψυχικός and πνευματικός might differ in 2.14-15 and 15.42-46, the function of the distinction remains the same in both texts. For Paul, just as the ‘natural’ person cannot claim to be ‘spiritual’, because they lack that which would identify them as such (i.e. the indwelling presence of the Spirit), a person in this age cannot claim to possess a ‘spiritual’ body, because the time when such a body is required and given has not come. The second point of consistency relates to the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer and the relationship of the Spirit’s work to the person of Christ. In 2.14-15, with regard to the soteriological distinction, it is only by the presence of the Spirit that one can know and discern the (mysterious) things of God (i.e. salvation in the cross), an ability that is characteristic of (only) those who are identified with and have the mind of Christ. In 15.42-46, with regard to the ontological distinction, it is only by the ‘last Adam’ (i.e. Christ), the one who is the ‘life-giving spirit’, that one can partake in the new age of God’s wise (mysterious) plan (cf. 15.50-52), because they are recipients of Christ’s Spirit, who gives new life and exercises the power of transformation for this age and the age to come.⁸⁵

⁸³ For a summary of this debate, see Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 593-94.

⁸⁴ A similar emphasis is found in 15.50.

⁸⁵ Cf. Thiselton, *First Epistle*, 1284.

Along with these specific links is a larger thematic connection, one that brings me back to the question of chapter 15's logical relationship to the rest of the letter. Earlier it was noted that scholars often describe this chapter as seemingly disconnected from what precedes it. However, in 15.1-5 Paul reminds the Corinthians of the thematic (and theological) connection between cross and resurrection, a series of events that Paul sees as inherent to the gospel, and stresses that this gospel is precisely what they believed and accepted during his first sojourn. Moreover, earlier in his argument Paul reminds the Corinthians of their response of faith to the gospel (1.17-18, 21, 23; 2.4-5; 4.15; cf. 15.1-2, 11) and that the result of this faith is an on-going movement toward salvation (1.18; 4.5; cf. 15.22), which culminates in life in God's new age. This indicates another type of relationship between chapter 15 and the rest of Paul's argument, and in this case it is theological. Specifically, as Barth pointed out,⁸⁶ chapter 15 functions as the culmination of both God's restorative power in the cross and the eschatological themes that have pervaded the argument (cf. 1.7-8; 3.10-15; 4.5; 6.13-14; 7.29-31; 11.26), of which the cross is a vital one.

5.4.4. Concluding Remarks on 1 Cor 5–15

Paul's critique of the Corinthian believers' situation, as given in 1 Cor 5–15, suggests a failure not only to live out the wisdom of God but also to allow the transformative power of the Spirit to work within and amongst them. Instead of living in the light of the cross and in humble anticipation of the resurrection, Paul sees the Corinthians as claiming a perfected (spiritual resurrection) existence while their behaviours or practices resemble those that the cross has already condemned. The inconsistency between word and deed represents only part of the problem; Paul's leading concern is the Corinthians' line of thought that justifies such an inconsistency. Paul is concerned because such thinking is not in agreement with what God has revealed through the Spirit, nor is it

⁸⁶ See K. Barth, *Resurrection of the Dead* (trans. H. J. Stenning; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 101. More recently, Ackerman nuanced this view by stressing the intended ethical effect of this rhetorical construction. Specifically he argues: "Throughout the letter, Paul focuses upon the *present* behaviors and beliefs of the Corinthians. He refers to the *past* specifically in chapters 1–4 and the *future* in chapter 15 in order to influence the *present* situation in Corinth. The divine plan was *revealed* in the past (*apokalypsen*, 2:10) with Christ's death and resurrection and will be *completed* in the future (*telos*, 15:24) with Christ's coming again and the resurrection of those "in Christ." Paul's expressed purpose for the Corinthians, then, is for them to live as believers in communion with Christ in the *interim* time between these two points in history" (*Lo, I Tell You a Mystery*, 3—emphasis original).

consistent with the transformation of mind and thought which the Spirit provides for those who embrace God's wisdom. Paul throughout his argument has shown the Corinthians' failure to rely on Spirit-led, communal discernment in both their public life and life as a believing assembly. Rather than seek God's available wisdom so as to govern their lives in a manner worthy of the cross, they have sought after a wisdom that, while rendered futile (by God in the cross), is accommodating to their faulty spirituality. As a result, this futile wisdom carries the potential of rendering belief in the complete gospel message vain (cf. 15.1; 1.17), for it legitimates belief according to criteria that necessarily denigrate the true nature of the gospel.

Thus, Paul's argument is framed by a reminder of the life that begins at the cross and hopes for the life that comes with resurrection, and the life lived in between reflects this tension, a tension that some scholars describe as 'cruciformity.' Cruciformity describes the new life in Christ, whereby the believer carries the 'dying of Jesus' (2 Cor 4.10) and endures 'the process of dying yet living.'⁸⁷ Moreover, it is a cross-shaped existence made possible by the transformation of life and mind wrought by the Spirit. As Munzinger argues: 'For Paul the Spirit is the *sine qua non* of the new life. Not that the individual but the πνεῦμα is ultimately responsible for the new set of attitudes of the "cruciform" character.'⁸⁸ Cruciformity also allows the believer to see beyond the temporality of 'the process of dying yet living' and to be assured of the eternity of true life that begins with the resurrection.⁸⁹

5.5. Summary of Rhetorical Relationships

At the beginning of this chapter I asked: why does the pneumatological teaching of 2.1–3.4 appear where it does in Paul's argument? Why does Paul not articulate this teaching when dealing with the topic of 'spiritual things' in

⁸⁷ Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 390.

⁸⁸ Munzinger, *Discerning the Spirits*, 173.

⁸⁹ Cf. Barth: 'The dignity of the cross is provisional, indicating the provisional nature of the Christian existence and all sanctification. The crown of life is more than this. It is of the very essence of the cross carried by Christians that it has a goal, and therefore an end, and therefore its time. It signifies the setting of a term. That is why is it so bitter. But this limitation is not itself ultimate. Borne in participation in the suffering of Jesus, it will cease at the very point to which the suffering of Jesus points in the power of His resurrection, and therefore to which our suffering also points in company with His. It is not our cross which is eternal, but, when we have borne it, the future life revealed by the crucifixion of Jesus' (*Church Dogmatics* [trans. G. W. Bromiley; eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958] 4.2: 613).

chapter 12–14? More specifically, what is the purpose of offering this pneumatological teaching sooner rather than later? What are the rhetorical and theological implications for such an early placement? To answer these questions we must return to the details concerning the occasion for Paul's letter, specifically the dilemma(s) in Corinth that emerged after his departure. I have argued that Paul's letter confronts faulty notions of divine wisdom and spirituality, and that these notions affect not only the Corinthians' assessment of Paul and his preaching but also themselves as spiritual people, recipients of God's wisdom and Spirit.

In one sense, these two 'problem' areas establish the basic framework for Paul's response—i.e. chapters 1–4 deal with the Corinthians' post-departure view(s) of Paul, and chapters 5–15 deal with the Corinthians' subsequent view(s) of themselves. Close examination of the text reveals that in both parts of this framework, Paul's answer is the same: the dilemmas exist because the Corinthians are neither relying on God's wisdom as revealed to them by the Spirit nor exercising wise, communal discernment; they are instead relying on a wisdom and a self-interested form of judgment that are inappropriate for those 'in Christ.' Thus, in this first sense, the pneumatological teaching appears early in order to anchor Paul's response to the twofold dilemma.

In another sense, the two 'problem' areas also reveal a present cause-and-effect relationship that is contrary to the one that characterised the Corinthians' original experience—i.e. the beginning of their new life in Christ. When Paul originally came to Corinth and proclaimed the message of Christ crucified, the Corinthians not only accepted Paul as an apostolic witness but also believed and accepted his message as God's wisdom. For Paul, this belief and acceptance came about not through rhetorical display or eloquence but by the demonstrable, powerful work of the Spirit (1 Cor 2.1, 4-5). This work also involved an epistemological transformation enabling the Corinthians to know how to interpret their new life 'in Christ' and live in accordance with God's wisdom, a transformation and ability made possible by the giving of the Spirit.

However, the Corinthians began to rely on human wisdom (or the wisdom of the world) in order to judge the validity of both Paul and his message as representative of wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1–4). Moreover, they started to rely on the criteria established by human wisdom so as to identify or even define

themselves and others as ‘wise’ and ‘spiritual’ (cf. 1 Cor 5–15). Paul’s answer to both problems is clear: the Corinthians must recall their original beginning as God’s (spiritual) people, defined by God’s wisdom revealed by the Spirit, and no longer seek to be identified by anything else (cf. Gal 3.3). Thus, in this second sense, the pneumatological teaching appears early so as to reflect the historical circumstances of the Corinthians’ original experience, in contrast to their present situation.

If the Corinthians were exercising wise (communal) discernment now, then their assessments of both Paul and themselves would be filtered through the Spirit-given criterion of ‘the mind of Christ.’ As I have argued, for Paul ‘the mind of Christ’ represents both an identity and way of knowing shaped by the cross, for it is through the wisdom of the cross and by the power of the Spirit that believers are united under the name of Christ. Thus, if the Corinthians were relying on Spirit-guided discernment, an ability resulting from their acceptance of God’s wisdom, revealed by the Spirit in the proclamation of the cross, Paul’s corrective and plea for unity would be unnecessary. However, since Paul sees the Corinthians relying on a wisdom other than God’s and seeking to define what it means to be spiritual through a criterion other than that given by the Spirit, and this twofold choice ostensibly creates space for divisive problems to emerge, Paul’s corrective response is necessary.

However it must be said that this response is more than a plea for unity amongst believers: Paul’s focus seeks to articulate the wisdom and means by which it is known appropriate for those ‘in Christ.’ Therefore, I contend that Paul’s early emphasis on the Spirit’s role in the proclamation of the cross, the mediation of divine wisdom and the exercise of wise, communal discernment shapes how the argument of 1 Corinthians unfolds.⁹⁰ In saying this I am not ignoring or downplaying the crucial themes of unity and concord; instead I am simply emphasising the point that this pneumatological teaching functions as Paul’s explanation for *how* unity and concord are re-established in the Corinthian assembly.

This discussion about Paul’s pneumatological teaching appearing at an early stage in the argument of the letter underlines what this dissertation as a

⁹⁰ This follows from my earlier argument concerning the theological nature of Paul’s response.

whole has claimed about the significance of this teaching as Paul's response to the Corinthian situation. As noted throughout, the teaching functions as a corrective to the faulty notions of divine wisdom and spirituality. In summary, the pneumatological teaching of 1 Cor 2.1–3.4 is meant to address the Corinthians' views about the apostolic message (and messenger), the nature and scope of divine wisdom and what it means to be a spiritual and single-minded community, whose identity, life and behaviour are to be defined by the wisdom of God in the cross of Christ. For Paul, such a community is made possible not through 'a wisdom of this age' (2.6) nor through 'the spirit of the world' (2.12) but only by the essential, wise and powerful work of the Spirit of God.

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